FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY

Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) Program

Combined Clinical-School Program in Health Service Psychology

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

Essential Requirements for Admission, Progression, and Completion

Purpose

These standards describe the essential abilities and functional requirements students must be able to demonstrate, with or without reasonable accommodations, to participate safely and successfully in the FMU PsyD Program and to attain the competencies expected in doctoral education and training in health service psychology.

Effective: August 2026

This document supplements the PsyD Program Handbook and applicable University policies.

Purpose and Scope

The Francis Marion University Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) Program is a combined Clinical-School doctoral program in Health Service Psychology. The program follows a practitioner-scholar model and prepares students for evidence-based, ethical, and culturally responsive practice across clinical, school, healthcare, and community settings, with particular attention to children, adolescents, families, rural communities, and underserved populations.

Doctoral training includes full-time, in-person coursework; supervised practicum experiences; assessment, intervention, consultation, prevention, and supervision activities; comprehensive examinations; scholarly work; a doctoral culminating project; and a full-time doctoral internship. Training is sequential, cumulative, and graded in complexity. As students progress, they assume increasing responsibility and must demonstrate increasingly integrated professional judgment and competence.

Technical standards identify essential functional requirements of this training. They are not intended to describe a particular physical, sensory, communication, or cognitive method for meeting a requirement. Students may use reasonable accommodations and adaptive strategies when those approaches permit them to achieve the same essential educational, clinical, ethical, and professional outcomes.

Core principle

The Program evaluates whether a student can meet essential standards of performance and professional competence, not whether the student performs them in one prescribed manner. Disability status or the use of reasonable accommodations, by itself, does not indicate lack of fitness for doctoral training or professional practice.

Relationship to Program Competencies

The technical standards support the Program's required profession-wide competencies and its responsibility to prepare graduates for entry-level practice in health service psychology. Students must be able to acquire, integrate, and demonstrate competence in the following areas across coursework, practicum, internship preparation, and other required training experiences:

Research	**Ethical and legal standards**	**Individual and cultural diversity**
Professional values, attitudes, and behaviors	**Communication and interpersonal skills**	**Assessment**
Intervention	**Supervision**	**Consultation and interprofessional/interdisciplinary skills**

General Expectations

Students must meet these standards throughout enrollment. The specific demands of a training activity may vary by course, practicum site, service population, and stage of professional development. The Program may assess performance through coursework, direct observation, supervision, competency evaluations, clinical work products, comprehensive examinations, benchmark reviews, and other established evaluation procedures.

Technical Standards

1. Cognitive, Academic, and Integrative Abilities

Students must be able to learn, reason, synthesize, and apply information at the level required for doctoral education and professional practice.

- Acquire and retain substantial psychological knowledge and integrate information across biological, cognitive, affective, developmental, social, cultural, educational, behavioral, and systems perspectives.
- Use critical thinking, scientific reasoning, clinical judgment, and data-based decision making to formulate and evaluate hypotheses, case conceptualizations, recommendations, and plans of action.
- Interpret empirical literature, psychological data, records, observations, interviews, test results, progress-monitoring data, and other relevant information accurately and in context.
- Recognize limits of knowledge and competence, identify when additional information or consultation is needed, and revise conclusions when evidence warrants.

2. Communication Abilities

Students must be able to receive, understand, produce, and exchange information effectively with individuals and groups across academic and professional settings.

- Communicate clearly, accurately, respectfully, and professionally in spoken, written, nonverbal, electronic, or other accessible forms of communication.
- Comprehend and use professional language and concepts and adapt communication to clients, caregivers, educators, healthcare professionals, supervisors, colleagues, and other audiences.
- Conduct interviews, provide feedback, explain psychological concepts and findings, document services, and participate meaningfully in supervision, consultation, and interprofessional communication.
- Manage difficult, emotionally charged, or high-stakes communication while maintaining professionalism and attention to the needs and safety of others.

3. Observation, Assessment, and Information-Gathering Abilities

Students must be able to obtain and use information needed for competent psychological assessment, intervention, consultation, and professional decision making.

- Attend to and interpret relevant behavioral, contextual, interpersonal, and environmental information using available and appropriate methods.
- Gather information from multiple sources, including interviews, records, observations, standardized instruments, collateral informants, and direct service activities.
- Administer, score, interpret, or otherwise use assessment methods and technologies as required by the training activity, with accommodations or adaptive methods when appropriate and consistent with test standards and valid practice.
- Recognize clinically significant changes, risk indicators, urgent concerns, and information that requires timely communication to a supervisor or other responsible professional.

4. Interpersonal and Relational Abilities

Health service psychology requires sustained professional relationships. Students must be able to establish and maintain relationships that support effective learning and service delivery.

- Develop and maintain effective working relationships with clients, families, peers, faculty, supervisors, supervisees, educators, healthcare professionals, community partners, and other stakeholders.
- Demonstrate empathy, respect, appropriate boundaries, reliability, collaboration, and sensitivity to power, role, and context.
- Participate constructively in teams and groups, negotiate disagreement, repair relational strain when appropriate, and work effectively with people whose identities, experiences, values, or worldviews differ from their own.
- Maintain professional behavior during stress, ambiguity, interpersonal conflict, corrective feedback, and other challenging circumstances.

5. Professional, Ethical, and Self-Regulatory Abilities

Students must be able to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the ethical, legal, and professional responsibilities of psychologists in training.

- Act with integrity, accountability, appropriate professional deportment, and concern for the welfare and rights of others.
- Recognize ethical and legal issues, use appropriate decision-making processes, protect confidentiality and privacy, and comply with applicable laws, policies, professional standards, and supervisory directives.
- Monitor personal and professional functioning sufficiently to recognize factors that may affect judgment, reliability, learning, client care, or professional effectiveness.
- Use appropriate self-care, consultation, supervision, support, and remediation resources when needed to maintain competent and safe performance.
- Manage time, responsibilities, records, deadlines, and transitions in a manner consistent with academic, clinical, and professional obligations.

6. Responsiveness to Supervision, Evaluation, and Professional Development

Because competence develops through supervised practice and feedback, students must be able to participate fully in evaluation and remediation processes.

- Seek, receive, consider, and respond professionally to supervision, feedback, evaluation, and instruction, including feedback that is corrective or difficult to hear.
- Engage in self-reflection regarding strengths, limitations, biases, professional identity, interpersonal impact, and areas requiring further development.
- Demonstrate behavioral change, skill development, or other improvement when feedback, supervision, or a formal remediation plan identifies a performance concern.
- Provide supervisors and faculty with information reasonably necessary to evaluate competence, protect clients, and determine readiness for increased responsibility.

7. Cultural Responsiveness and Work Across Difference

Students must be able to engage in professional activities in ways that reflect respect for cultural and individual differences and the ethical responsibilities of health service psychologists.

- Examine how personal history, identities, assumptions, attitudes, values, privilege, and biases may influence professional understanding and interaction.
- Integrate cultural and contextual information, including intersectionality, into assessment, intervention, consultation, research, supervision, and professional relationships.
- Work effectively and respectfully with individuals and communities whose identities, backgrounds, beliefs, experiences, or worldviews differ from the student's own.
- Navigate value conflicts or tensions without imposing personal beliefs and while maintaining professional responsibilities, ethical standards, and respect for the rights and dignity of others.

8. Applied Practice, Safety, and Participation in Training Environments

Students must be able to participate in the full range of required academic and supervised professional experiences and perform essential activities in a manner that protects clients, students, colleagues, and the public.

- Participate in required in-person coursework, practicum, assessment, intervention, consultation, supervision, professional meetings, and other scheduled training activities, with reasonable accommodations as applicable.
- Function in educational, healthcare, behavioral health, community, and other approved training settings and adapt to the legitimate operational requirements of those settings.
- Use required equipment, records systems, communication platforms, testing materials, and other technologies with sufficient competence to complete assigned responsibilities while protecting privacy and security.
- Respond appropriately to emergencies, safety concerns, mandated reporting situations, risk-management needs, and other circumstances requiring timely professional action or consultation.
- Meet site-specific requirements that are essential to safe and lawful participation in a particular practicum or internship setting, recognizing that some external sites may have requirements beyond those of the University.

Reasonable Accommodations and Accessibility

Francis Marion University and the PsyD Program are committed to equitable access. Qualified students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the University's established accessibility process. Accessibility services are coordinated through Testing, Counseling, and Special Services or the University office designated to perform that function.

Students are not required to disclose a disability to PsyD faculty in order to apply to the Program. A student who seeks an accommodation is responsible for initiating the University accommodation process and providing documentation as required by University policy. The accessibility office determines eligibility for accommodations and, when appropriate, works with the student and relevant University or Program personnel to implement approved accommodations.

Reasonable accommodations may modify the manner in which a student accesses or demonstrates an essential requirement. They do not eliminate an essential academic, clinical, ethical, or professional requirement; fundamentally alter the nature of the Program or a required training experience; lower established competency standards; or compromise client, student, trainee, or public safety.

Because practicum and internship occur in external professional settings, implementation of accommodations may require coordination with a training site. The Program will work in good faith with the student, the University accessibility office, and the site to determine how approved accommodations can be implemented while preserving essential training requirements, applicable law, professional standards, valid assessment practice, and safety.

Accommodation Process

Step	What to Expect
1. Request	The student contacts the University accessibility office and requests accommodations through the established process.
2. Review	The University determines eligibility and identifies reasonable accommodations based on documented need and the demands of the educational or training activity.
3. Implementation	Approved accommodations are communicated and implemented through the appropriate University and Program procedures. Site-based training may require coordination with the practicum or internship setting.
4. Reassessment	If the demands of training change, or if an accommodation is not effective, the student may request review or modification through the University process.

Ongoing Review of Ability to Meet Technical Standards

Meeting the technical standards is an ongoing requirement. Concerns may arise from academic performance, professional conduct, clinical work, direct observation, supervision, competency evaluations, or other documented training activities. When concerns occur, the Program will address them through the evaluation, feedback, remediation, due process, grievance, and appeal procedures described in the PsyD Program Handbook and applicable University policies.

A concern about a student's performance should be evaluated in relation to the essential requirement at issue, the student's actual functioning, available evidence, and any approved reasonable accommodations. The Program should not infer inability to meet a technical standard solely from a diagnosis, disability, demographic characteristic, or use of an accommodation.

Student Responsibility

Students share responsibility for maintaining readiness to participate in doctoral training. Students are expected to:

- Understand the essential requirements of the Program and seek clarification when expectations are unclear.
- Communicate promptly with appropriate University or Program personnel when an accommodation, support, or change in an approved accommodation may be needed.
- Use supervision and consultation appropriately and disclose information relevant to safe and competent performance when required by professional, ethical, site, or Program expectations.
- Follow Program, University, practicum, internship, ethical, legal, and professional requirements throughout training.

Program Responsibility

The PsyD Program is responsible for applying these standards in a manner that is educationally relevant, individualized, nondiscriminatory, and consistent with applicable law and University policy. The Program will base decisions about progression and completion on demonstrated performance in essential academic and professional requirements and on established competency standards.

Alignment With Program and Accreditation Expectations

These Technical Standards are designed to complement the FMU PsyD Program Handbook and the Program's competency-based evaluation system. They reflect the following features of the FMU PsyD Program and the APA Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology:

- Preparation for broad and general entry-level practice in health service psychology within a combined Clinical-School model.
- Sequential, cumulative, and graded training that integrates scientific evidence and professional practice.
- Demonstration of required profession-wide competencies, including ethical and legal standards, individual and cultural diversity, professional values and attitudes, communication and interpersonal skills, assessment, intervention, supervision, and consultation.
- A supportive and encouraging learning environment that avoids restricting program access on grounds irrelevant to success in graduate training or the profession.
- Evaluation of student competence through multiple methods and protection of due process, fair treatment, and student rights.
- Use of reasonable accommodations and accessibility procedures for qualified students with disabilities while preserving essential competency, training, and safety requirements.

Reference Framework

American Psychological Association, Commission on Accreditation. (2026). Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology.

American Psychological Association, Commission on Accreditation. (2026). Implementing Regulations, Section C: IR C-8 D (Profession-Wide Competencies), IR C-9 D (Diversity Education and Training), and doctoral standards related to student selection, supportive learning environments, public disclosure, and due process.

Francis Marion University. (2026-2027). Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) Program Handbook.

Francis Marion University PsyD Program. (2026). APA Doctoral Self-Study and associated competency materials.

Questions about these standards

Prospective or current students may contact the PsyD Program for clarification about essential program requirements. Questions or requests related to disability accommodations should be directed to the University office responsible for accessibility services.