M.A. PROGRAM
SOCIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PROGRAM IN SOCIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Program in Social-Organizational Psychology is concerned with the various contexts (interpersonal, group, intergroup, and interorganizational) in which human behavior occurs; the ways in which groups of individuals interact and influence these contexts; and how these interactions can be understood, studied, and modified through theory, research, and various types of interventions.

The programs provide advanced training in the concepts, research methods, and applications of social-organizational psychology. They are designed to prepare students to engage in research, consultation, and teaching in educational, business, governmental, and community organizations. Emphasis is placed on the acquisition of basic concepts and methods applicable to diverse institutional and organizational contexts.

Courses in these programs are supplemented by other programs and departments at Teachers College and Columbia University. With the help of a faculty advisor, students select courses with consideration given to their academic backgrounds, work experiences, and career objectives.

PROGRAM FOCUS

The 45-point M.A. program is designed to provide proficiency and advanced knowledge in the psychology of organizations. Qualified students are given the opportunity to develop their program in a manner consistent with their career interests, capacities, and background.

The program provides courses at Teachers College and other areas of Columbia University, particularly the Graduate School of Business. The program awards one general degree entitled “Psychology: Organizational”. Students may decide to pursue a broadly based program and therefore take a variety of courses, or they may concentrate their courses in a more specific area such as human resource management, organization change and consultation, or conflict resolution.
The program is designed to provide education leading to professional employment or to continuation of graduate work beyond the master’s degree. Students are often employed in positions typically found within the human resource function, organization consulting, or some project management role for middle or large-size organizations. These include positions in global learning, career development and counseling, organizational effectiveness, personnel research, organization development and consultation, employee relations, and human resource planning and strategy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ADMISSIONS

How do I apply?

Applications are available from the Teachers College Office of Admissions. You may call the office at (212) 678-3710. In addition, information and forms can be found at: <http://www.tc.edu/admissions/>.

PLEASE NOTE: For online application to the M.A. program you must select PSYCHOLOGY: ORGANIZATIONAL as the program title.

For which terms, may I apply for admission?

Applications are reviewed throughout the year. Students are considered for the Fall, Spring, and Summer terms. The deadlines are as follows:

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<th>TERM</th>
<th>PRIORITY DEADLINE</th>
<th>FINAL DEADLINE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>January 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Summer</td>
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<td>Spring</td>
<td>January 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>November 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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What is required for admission consideration?

Persons from a variety of academic backgrounds and work experiences may qualify for admission to the program. Primary consideration for admission is given to previous academic record, work experiences, letters of reference, GRE scores, and the personal statement. The GRE general test is required for M.A. applicants. In lieu of the GRE, applicants may submit GMAT scores.
What are the criteria for acceptance into the M.A. program?

In determining qualifications for admission, we use a compensatory model whereby weakness in one area can be compensated for by strength in another area. By virtue of this evaluation process, we look at the entire profile of each applicant across a number of different areas. A strong applicant is one with a solid and consistent record of achievement in various domains. In general, we focus on intellectual capacity, fit to the social-organizational psychology program, relevant background and experience, and dedication and commitment to obtaining the M.A. degree.

In evaluating your application, we examine each of the required items for admission with a careful review. There are NO MINIMUM scores or GPAs. Our goal is to determine your individual merits and potential contributions to the field as well to the entering class. We seek students who are committed to developing and furthering their knowledge of social-organizational psychology. In addition, students must be committed to a scientist-practitioner model that combines both theory and practice. Students must desire solid academic training and professional development that focuses on analytical problem-solving and coherent synthesis of information.

Do I need to have an undergraduate degree in psychology?

No. Although many of our students majored in psychology for their baccalaureate studies, it is not essential under the current 45-credit M.A. program. Our students come with a rich mix of undergraduate majors including biology, business, chemistry, communications, economics, engineering, English, history, political science, sociology, and theology.

How high do my GRE scores need to be?

To reiterate, we do not require a minimum GRE score. In the past, the GRE scores (sum of verbal and quantitative components) have been:

Average GRE scores of those accepted: 1120
Range of GRE scores of those accepted: 900-1590
How high do my grades need to be?

We have no absolute cut-off for GPAs, but a B average is expected. In the past, GPA’s have been:

- Average GPA of those accepted: 3.48
- Range of GPA of those accepted: 3.0-4.0

Is work experience required?

Work experience helps students grasp the practical significance of the various theories and research they study. Thus, you should have some previous organizational experience. This may be in the form of full-time or part-time work. We also value volunteer work.

Will it help my chances of acceptance if I talk with faculty members before submitting my application?

Talking with or meeting with faculty members prior to applying will not promote your chances of acceptance. However, faculty members and current students are available to discuss any additional questions you might have about the program. Once acceptance decisions have been made, accepted applicants are afforded formal opportunities to meet with faculty and students to discuss the program. This usually begins on Registration/Orientation Day.

May I submit a writing sample?

You are welcome to include a writing sample, but this is not required. If you decide to submit one, it should be an individually authored paper. Writing samples can take on many forms. For instance, you may submit a research-oriented paper such as an honors project, master’s thesis, or class paper. Generally speaking, a writing sample is a paper that shows your writing skills and your ability to present ideas coherently, concisely, and convincingly.
What is the time frame for admission decisions? When will I know if I have been accepted?

Applications are reviewed regularly. Generally speaking, we notify applicants around the following time periods:
- Fall and Summer Priority Applications: Mid-March to Beginning of April
- Fall and Summer Applications Received by the Final Deadline: Mid-April to Late May
- Spring Applications Received by the Final Deadline: Mid-November

How many students begin the program each semester?

The number of students we admit varies from year to year and semester to semester. Typically, the range for an entering class is as follows:

- Fall: 60-70
- Spring: 20-30
- Summer: 20-30

How can I increase my chances of being accepted?

- Review your application thoroughly before submitting it to ensure that you have provided all requested information, and have corrected any typos and errors.
- Make sure your application file is complete and submitted by the deadline.
- Take the GRE more than once, particularly if your scores are low the first time.
- Ask for letters of recommendation from people who know your academic, research, and/or work experience well enough to provide detailed information and thorough evaluative comments.
- Clarify your career goals before applying. Consider why you need a M.A. to meet those career goals.
- Learn about and demonstrate an understanding of the area of social-organizational psychology.
- Gain relevant work experience if you do not have any, which can include part-time work or volunteer activities.
ENROLLMENT AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

May I receive credit for previous graduate work or waive out of a core course?

Selected core level 1 courses may be waived or substituted with additional elective courses depending on the person’s undergraduate background, graduate study and work experience. In order to waive out of a course or request a substitution course, the student is responsible for demonstrating that his/her previous undergraduate and/or graduate course work is redundant with material covered in the petitioned course.

The student must provide a variety of materials to establish that a redundancy exists. Examples of relevant material include, but are not limited to, a combination of the following:

- undergraduate and/or graduate transcript indicating that relevant course work was taken and that the student received a grade of B or higher in these courses;
- a syllabus or syllabi (i.e. more than a basic course description) indicating the topics covered in their previously taken course(s);
- relevant thesis work;
- serving as a teaching assistant for related courses;
- serving as a research assistant for a professor working on topics related to the petitioned course.

A student interested in petitioning to waive out of a class should speak to the instructor of the course as well as their faculty advisor to determine if the waiver is appropriate. Exemption from any course remains at the discretion of the faculty advisor.

If the waiver is granted, the student must select a replacement course. Because the M.A. program maintains a minimum academic residency of 45 credits to be taken at Teachers College, we do not accept transfer credits from previous graduate work. Although not a prerequisite, a significant number of our students complete graduate work prior to starting the social-organizational psychology program. These areas include counseling psychology, developmental psychology, social work, law, business, public health, journalism, and education.

May I enroll as a part-time student?

Yes. In fact, approximately 60-65% of our students work full-time and take classes part-time. Many of our classes are offered from 5:10 pm-6:50 pm and 7:20 pm-9:00
pm. We also have a few elective courses available during the weekends and via distance learning. In addition, we typically host networking events and colloquium speakers during the evenings.

**Must I declare my enrollment status as either full-time or part-time?**

No. You do not need to declare your enrollment status as either full-time or part-time because we do not differentiate between the two groups. The full-time and part-time students are provided equal services and support.

**How long will it take me to complete the degree?**

Typically, full-time students complete their program within one and a half calendar years or two academic years, and our part-time students complete their program in approximately three years.

Part-time students usually take 2 to 3 classes per term and full-time students enroll in 4 to 5 classes per term.

**How much does it cost to study at Teachers College?**

In 2006-2007, the tuition rate was $975 per credit plus student fees. To receive additional information on tuition payments, see the Student Accounts’ website. You may also make arrangements for your firm’s tuition payment plan with the TC Office of Student Accounts.


In addition, there are limited opportunities for financial support through assistantships, work-study programs, internships, and various other employment opportunities.

Student Aid: [http://www.tc.columbia.edu/financialaid/](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/financialaid/)

Human Resources: [http://www.tc.columbia.edu/administration/hr/](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/administration/hr/)


**Are teaching/graduate assistantships available?**

A limited number of assistantships are available on-campus. However, with regard to the Social-Organizational Psychology program, only in rare cases may advanced M.A. students act as a TA (Teaching Assistant) or GA (Graduate Assistant) for a Social-Organizational Psychology course, and only then if it is a Core 1 course.
Remuneration for a TA position is $800, and for a GA position may be up to $1,500 and up to 3 scholarship points.

What other part-time work options are available to social-organizational psychology students?

Many students work part-time in organizations to supplement their income, and most students maintain a full-time internship with a firm during the summer months. To help students with this process, the TC Office of Career Services hosts workshops, posts employment opportunities, and links mentors with current students.

Career Services: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/careerservices/detail.asp

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

How many students are in the program?

There are approximately 250 students in the M.A. program for social-organizational psychology. Of those, typically 60-65% of the students are enrolled part-time.

Where do students typically live?

Students commute from around the Tri-State area. Students who relocate to New York City usually live near the university on the Upper West Side of Manhattan or graduate housing on campus.

Where are social-organizational psychology students from?

Social-organizational psychology students come from all over the United States, as well as from Canada, China, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nigeria, Turkey, and many other countries.

What is the average age of new students?

On average, students tend to be in their late-twenties and early thirties when starting the program. However the age range is wide, from early twenties to late sixties.
INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAM RECOGNITION

What is the relationship between Teachers College and Columbia University?

Teachers College is an affiliate of Columbia University. The College has its own administration and budget, while having access to resources of Columbia University, such as the library, health services, recreational center, and so forth.

All degrees are granted by Columbia University.

What kind of recognition has Teachers College and the social-organizational psychology program received?

Teachers College has been consistently ranked on U.S. News & World Report’s list of top graduate schools in education. Moreover, the social-organizational psychology program has been recognized as one of the best in the country due to its comprehensive approach to preparing graduates (Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research, 1998, p. 215). According to a study in the July 2004 Industrial-Organizational Psychologist (2004, p. 28), the M.A. and Ph.D. programs in social-organizational psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University rank in the Top 10 nationally for overall performance. Specifically, the overall weighted index places the Ph.D. program at No. 7 and the M.A. program at No. 9. In addition, in a ranking based on graduate programs in organization development and change at the M.A. level, OD practitioners from around the nation ranked this program at No. 4 overall (OD Practitioner, 1998, p. 36)

Equally important, a number of the social-organizational psychology faculty have received national awards and recognition for their contributions to research and practice.
THE PROGRAM

What are the major requirements for the M.A. program?

A minimum of 45 course credits is required for the M.A. degree in social-organizational psychology. The program curriculum is comprised of major courses consisting of five required core courses, four required advanced core courses, other elective/concentration courses, and three out of program courses at Teachers College. In addition, a comprehensive exam is required. For more specific details of these requirements, please consult the Academic Catalog.

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<tr>
<th>COURSES</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Core Level 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• 4 courses @ 3 points each</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Core Level 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• 5 courses @ 3 points each</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Breadth Requirement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• 3 courses @ at least 2 points each</td>
<td>6-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Non-ORLJ</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• must be taken at Teachers College</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Elective/Concentration Courses</strong></td>
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<td>• ORLJ -or-</td>
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<td>• Non-ORLJ (course(s) must be at least 2 credits)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehensive Exam</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Am I required to have a concentration?

No, a concentration is not required for the M.A. program; however, within the program, you may elect to concentrate in any one of three areas:

• human resource management,
• organization change and consultation,
• conflict resolution.
What options are available to students to gain practical experience as part of the program? How relevant will the content of the courses and experience in the program be to the real-world?

The program requires students to complete at least two practice-based courses. Group Dynamics, a course that incorporates theory and practice, is required and the students must select from at least one of the following practica in change and consultation, conflict resolution, and organizational internship.

Moreover, the faculty are actively engaged in current issues that organizations face. Many are organizational consultants, coaches, and advisors. Not surprisingly, our courses integrate theory and practice as well as useful models and frameworks to analyze and implement changes to real world problems. In addition, we offer a variety of applied courses including:

- Practicum in Change and Consultation
- Fieldwork in Organization Consulting
- Small Group Interventions
- Coaching
- Career Counseling and Development
- Basic Practicum in Conflict Resolution
- Internship, Community Mediation
- Organizational Internship

How do I obtain the Certificate in Conflict Resolution?

Through enrollment of a particular set of courses and one semester of a conflict resolution internship, students are awarded the Certificate of Attendance in Conflict Resolution. This level of study is aimed at developing the core competencies for reflective scholar/practitioners working in conflict resolution. These courses may be incorporated into your M.A. degree requirements.

To find out more details about the course requirements, feel free to contact the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at (212) 678-3402 or stop by Room 232, Horace Mann Hall.

Is there a comprehensive exam?

The Comprehensive Exam is designed to ensure that students graduating from the Organizational Psychology Program are knowledgeable in the primary, foundational areas of the field, including but not limited to, the theories of organizational psychology, human resource management, and behavioral research. The exam is administered three times a year -- once in the Fall, Spring, and Summer. Exam dates are announced at least one semester in-advance. More information is provided at Orientation/Registration Day and reminders are sent via the listserv.
CAREER OBJECTIVES & PROSPECTS

What kind of jobs do students get after obtaining their M.A. in social-organizational psychology?

Graduates of the M.A. in social-organizational psychology program find jobs in small boutique firms, education institutions, not-for-profits and large global organizations in internal/external organization development, training and development, change management, human resources, research, executive coaching and consulting. Alumni of the program have assumed roles as Change Management Associates, Research Associates, Human Resources Generalists, Employee Relations Specialists, Organizational Development Consultants, HR Leadership Program Associates, Training and Development Managers, Leadership Facilitators and Senior Consultants.

Are career/placement services available to students?
Teachers College Career Services (TCCS) is committed to guiding all TC students and alumni throughout the different phases of the career development process. Whether you are entering a new field, advancing within your current profession, or changing directions, Career Services will help you identify and develop the skills and resources needed to achieve your career goals. TCCS is not a placement service but is a resource and assistance center for students and alumni. A sample of the services offered by the office include resume and cover letter reviews, mock interviews, career development workshops, and an alumni mentoring program. In addition, TCCS sponsors “Careers of the Month” -- a series of specialized programs spotlighting career interests of individual departments with the assistance of student organizations, academic department staff, faculty, alumni and employers. Past events for the social-organizational psychology program have included networking events, panel discussions and career fairs to name a few. For additional information, please visit the TCCS website at <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/careerservices/detail.asp >.
Are there internship opportunities to enhance my professional standing?

While an internship is not required in the curriculum, some students have found it helpful to supplement their coursework with internship or work experiences. The majority of internship opportunities available at TCCS are for the summer – both paid and unpaid. Interviews for these opportunities tend to take place early in the spring semester. However, there are internships available during the fall and spring semesters as well. Interviews for these opportunities tend to happen on a rolling basis. The following are examples of internships and related part-time work experiences of our M.A. students: OD consulting interns, HR Leadership Program interns, Research Associate interns, Metrics interns, Training and Development interns. Some of the organizations that recruit at TCCS are American Express, Bank of New York, Citigroup, Colgate-Palmolive General Electric, and IBM.

In 2006, Johnson & Johnson identified Teachers College Program in Social-Organizational Psychology as one of five target Universities for its Human Resources Leadership Development Program (HRLDP). J&J’s HRLDP is a two and a half year rotational program that provides recent master’s-level graduates in human resources or related disciplines the opportunity to accelerate their career growth.

The program features two main components: rotational assignments and training. Rotational assignments may take place in benefits, compensation, recruiting, or training and development and allow graduates to work side-by-side with senior human resources leaders to implement critical strategies that can impact the future of each organization. The training features in-depth classroom and online instruction which helps develop the skills and knowledge required for leadership in the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies.

Do M.A. students continue their education in doctoral programs?

The majority of student in the program do not pursue doctoral studies after completing their master’s degree. However, approximately 5% of graduates annually pursue doctoral studies.

STUDENT LIFE

What kinds of activities outside the classroom are available?

The M.A. program in social-organizational psychology hosts a number of events for students to promote learning outside the classroom and foster a sense of community within the program. Every semester, we offer networking opportunities and a guest
panel to discuss current issues in the field. In addition, we encourage students to engage in committee work with faculty and staff to help with planning colloquia and speakers, social gatherings and parties, recruiting new students for the program, and so forth. Several student-run clubs aligned with the field are available for membership as well. These include The Organization and Human Development Consulting Club (OHDCC), the Columbia Chapter for the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), and the Columbia Chapter of the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD).

Students are encouraged to join student chapters of professional associations as well as enroll under national memberships for organizations, such as the METRO Applied Psychology, Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology (SIOP), the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), and OD Network. In addition, students are encouraged to attend and participate in professional conferences as well as take advantage of opportunities within the Columbia University system and the New York City area.

What is the atmosphere like within the program?

The atmosphere within the social-organizational psychology program can be described as collaborative, friendly, and relatively informal. Oftentimes, students work in groups on assignments or get together socially. Program faculty are accessible to students, and they are supportive and open to students’ ideas, questions, and concerns.

What kinds of student activities/organizations are there?

There are about 25 student organizations at Teachers College, representing various aspects of the school’s diverse student body. In addition, Student Life organizes a range of activities on a regular basis, including workshops, social events, and networking opportunities. For more information, please visit the Student Activities and Programs website at <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/studentactivities/ >.

VALUE OF THE M.A. IN SOCIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

What are the advantages of obtaining a M.A. degree from Columbia University?

• CURRICULUM
  Our alumni refer to the current M.A. program as “cutting-edge” and “essential” to the various roles one can take with a social-organizational psychology degree. You will engage in dialogue regarding emerging concepts and practices facing businesses, governments, schools, and other organizations.

• HUMAN CAPITAL
Your courses will be taught by nationally and internationally known scholar-practitioners. Moreover, you will participate in a collegial environment that stresses networking with our faculty, alumni, and community of leaders: your student colleagues.

**LOCATION**

New York City’s multicultural, urban environment informs almost everything that Teachers College does. The City is an extension of the classroom. We, like the City, are continuously changing and improving, and we support a global community to prepare you for the global economy. Your surroundings will foster your graduate study, research, and professional development. This vibrant City also provides unique venues for our students to network through cultural, intellectual, and athletic and recreational activities. For instance, our students frequently interact at theaters, museums, concerts, lectures, and discussion groups. Moreover, New York City is the headquarters to some of the largest firms and the base for many industries. These elements enhance your educational experience and improve your opportunities to exploring new concepts, lessons, and strategies.

**RESOURCES**

Besides holding one of the world’s most impressive library collections and scholarly electronic resources, Teachers College and Columbia University offer colloquia and debates from noted academics and international dignitaries as well as from other well-known writers and speakers. Furthermore, the facilities support learning with multiple computer labs, wireless capabilities for computers, free downloads of selected computer programs, an advanced course management system, a sophisticated student information system, listserv communications, a well staffed student support services center, health services center, student union, fitness center, housing and residence life office, an electronic job search database, an on-campus computer sales office, a dedicated education and applied psychology bookstore, several theatres, and much more.

**ALUMNI**

Over the years, we have prepared and nurtured successful individuals, who have gone on to become partners at consulting firms, executives at leading multinational corporations, managers of human resource divisions, organization change agents, community leaders with active agenda, and professors at prestigious universities. You will find our alumni around the world with a significant presence in the fields of human resource management, organization development, and mediation/conflict resolution. Repeatedly, our alumni express their gratitude for the breadth and depth of their course content, their levels of preparation with true life examples and applications as well as their ability to link theory to practice with ease.