



HONOURS PROGRAM WITH A CERTIFICATE IN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION PROCESS (updated January 2007)

Introduction

The field of forensic psychology is concerned with the application of psychological theories and research in the criminal justice system. Although graduate training in forensic psychology is available in Canada, there are few training opportunities at the undergraduate level. With the view that undergraduate education in forensic psychology will provide an important foundation for the development of professional skills in this area, Dalhousie became the first university in Canada to offer such a program. The Forensic Certificate program at Dalhousie University now provides psychology undergraduate students the opportunity to concentrate their studies in forensic psychology, complementing their standard BA/BSc honours program requirements. This program provides students with information about the various roles that psychologists play in the justice system, psychological aspects of criminal behaviour and investigation, the assessment of risk for violence, and the psychology of crime victims and witnesses. *In addition to academic training, students will receive hands-on experience through the completion of two practica in forensic settings (see below).*

Employment opportunities for a student with a Certificate in Forensic Psychology could include working in parole, correctional, and victim service contexts. More importantly, it can provide students with an advantage in gaining admission into competitive graduate programs that lead to a career in forensic psychology. Students also are well positioned to pursue further professional training in legal studies, policing, criminology, forensic research, and government/corrections.

Certificate Program Outline

Students in the Certificate in Forensic Psychology program receive a 4-year, 20-credit BSc or BA Honours degree in Psychology, and a "Certificate" verifying that they have specialized in forensic psychology. Students must commit to a specialization in forensic psychology after gaining acceptance into the Honours program at the end of their second year or the beginning of their third year of studies.

Coordinator

Dr. Stephen Porter, Department of Psychology, Dalhousie University

Curriculum Requirements

(Please refer to the calendar for additional details). Students interested in the Forensic Certificate Program will first register for the standard BSc or BA program in Psychology. They will then follow the BSc or BA program (see "A Student's Guide to Psychology Classes") with attention to the specific requirements of the certificate program. Below are the requirements for the program.

Courses

Psychology

Psychology 3224.03: Forensic Psychology (A- or better)

Psychology 4000.03: Senior Seminar on a "forensic" topic, broadly defined (A- or better)

Psychology 4224.03: Topics in Forensic Psychology seminar (A- or better)

Psychology 4500.06: Honours Thesis (A- or better). The thesis must address a "forensic" topic, broadly defined.

Non-Psychology Courses

Students will also be required to take two relevant courses in Sociology as part of their degree elective requirements. Students will need to complete:

SOSA 2180.06: Sociology of Crime and Criminal Justice

and ONE of:

SOSA 3275.03: Crime and Public Policy

SOSA 3281.03: Youth Crime

SOSA 3285.03: Sociology of Law

SOSA 3295.03: Society and the Police

Students must obtain a minimum B- in each of these non-Psychology courses.

Practicum Requirements

Students in the certificate program will be required to complete **two practica** in approved forensic settings in Nova Scotia. The minimum number of hours for practica will be 160 hours (four full-time weeks which can be spread throughout the school year or during the summer months). Each practicum will allow a student to: (1) observe/shadow psychologists and other forensic staff in their work, (2) receive relevant on-the-job training, and (3) work with a trained staff member during their interactions with crime victims and/or criminal offenders. Students will be evaluated by the practicum supervisor at the end of the practicum. Grading will be Pass or Fail, as evaluated according to pre-set criteria depending on the practicum site (e.g. attendance, acquisition of relevant knowledge, ethical behavior, etc.). Students will complete their practica either in the summer following their second, third, or fourth year in their program. This will be decided on an individual basis. The practica may or may not be paid depending on the setting.

Practicum Sites

As of January, 2007, there are three confirmed practicum sites for the required practica:

1. **Springhill Institution** (medium security federal prison) Department of Psychology: Springhill, Nova Scotia (Practicum Coordinator: Mr. Jeff Earle, Psychologist).
2. **Halifax Federal Parole Office:** Halifax, Nova Scotia
3. **Nova Scotia Hospital Forensic Services:** Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (Practicum Coordinator: Dr. Angela Connors, Psychologist)
4. **East Coast Forensic Psychiatric Hospital:** Burnside Industrial Park, Nova Scotia (Practicum Coordinators: Dr. Andrew Starzomski and Dr. Brad Kelln)

Admission Criteria

Applications will be accepted **only** from students who have been admitted to the honours program at the completion of their second year of study at Dalhousie. This typically requires a GPA of at least 3.7 in first- and second-year Psychology classes. Admission of honours students to the Certificate Program will occur on a competitive basis. It is estimated that only 3 or 4 students per year will be accepted into this program. Qualified applicants will have to undergo an interview by the selection committee. Acceptance will be based on both academic performance and possession of interpersonal skills suitable for work with forensic staff and populations.

Application Process

After gaining admission to the honours program, students interested in applying for the Certificate in Forensic Psychology should:

1. Submit a one-page cover letter which includes: student name, student number, statement of interest, and reason for applying (please be brief). Obtain and attach a statement from the Psychology honours committee, confirming acceptance into the honours program.
2. Arrange to have an official transcript forwarded to the Forensic Certificate Selection Committee

Please send this information to the **Forensic Certificate Selection Committee**, c/o Main Office, Department of Psychology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS B3H 4J1.