

Frequently Asked Questions

About Waivers, CTS, ISM, Minor, Graduate School, and General Questions

About waivers

Q: I have taken IB, CBSE, ISC psychology. Am I still allowed to take Gateway?

A: Yes

Q: I have taken IB, CBSE, ISC psychology. Should I still take Gateway?

A: In terms of content, you probably won't learn much above and beyond what you already did. But in terms of how you think about psychology, you may still benefit.

Q: I am granted a waiver for Gateway because I have taken IB, CBSE, ISC psychology. Am I allowed to take Core Domain courses?

A: Yes. But bear in mind that for Core Domain courses, UG3 students have priority, followed by UG2, and lastly UG1.

Q: I am granted a waiver for Gateway because I have taken IB, CBSE, ISC psychology. Should I proceed straight on to take Core Domain courses?

A: You already have the necessary prerequisite knowledge to tackle a Core Domain course, but you must be prepared to "switch gears". Students who do not switch gears fast enough struggle with Core Domain courses.

Q: Can I take a Core Domain and Gateway concurrently?

A: No. Think of Gateway as a course that builds the 5-brick base of your knowledge pyramid, on top of which you stack Core Domains. Doing a Core Domain and Gateway concurrently means that you are likely to have one brick floating in mid air without the underlying foundation below.

About CTS

Q: Is CTS necessary for a major or minor?

A: No, but it can count towards a major or minor as an elective.

Q: Will I lose out if I don't take a CTS in psychology?

A: No. You will be forced to think critically in every psychology module.

About ISM

Q: What is an Independent Study Module (ISM)?

A: ISMs are research modules. In general, students can do theoretical research (write review papers) or empirical research (e.g., conducting experiments), or both (e.g., propose a topic, run an experiment, then write results up). Different professors have different ways of conducting an ISM, so you should really consult each professor to know what they expect.

Q: Is doing an ISM important?

A: Because it is a research module, you will gain research experience. Research experience is very important if you want to go on to masters/PhD degree. But even if you do not want to, and you are just simply curious at how knowledge is produced, or you want to try your hands at producing new knowledge instead of absorbing knowledge, then doing an ISM is a way you can explore. In some sense, every theory that you know now stems from a research idea, which then turns into an exercise to find empirical evidence to prove/disprove your hypothesis.

About minor

Q: Will I be able to complete a minor in 6 semesters?

A: Unlikely, but this also depends on whether you are (1) taking any summer courses; (2) have been granted waivers to Gateway and/or SRM I; (3) whether OAA allows you to take 6 courses a semester; and (4) whether there will be module clashes. Module clashes happen far more often than people realize. You should always prioritize your major modules when they clash with your minor modules.

Q: Are there any disadvantages of doing a minor in psychology?

A: Completing a minor means that you have to take a certain set of courses, some of which may not align well with your career interests. For example, you may be Computer Science major with a keen interest in analyses of neural signals. If you were to do a minor, you would have to complete at least one course in Group B, whereas it may be more beneficial for you to do an elective in Neuroscience.

Q: Are there any advantages of doing a minor in psychology?

A: Having a minor on your transcript may not contribute as much to your career as you think it does, and any contribution likely decreases with the number of job transitions you go through. Take a minor if you are broadly interested in the subject. It is the skills that will stay with you, not what is in your transcript.

About graduate school

Q: What are my chances of getting into a graduate school?

A: If you are able to self-fund, chances are much higher. If you are seeking funding from the host university, chances are very low (around 5%).

Q: How can I increase my chances of getting into a graduate school?

A: Good grades, positive attitude towards learning, extensive research experience, good work ethics, and good GRE scores (for US schools).

Q: Can I do a graduate degree in continental Europe?

A: That depends. For applied degrees (e.g., I/O, clinical), you often need to know the country's language because there will be practicum and people (e.g., patients) may be uncomfortable interacting with you in a foreign language. For research degrees, this is less of a problem in countries such as the Netherlands where English literacy is high.

General questions

Q: Are psychology courses writing intensive?

A: Relative to humanities and social sciences (political science, sociology), our assignments typically do not require that many words or pages. But scientific writing has its unique challenges.

Q: Why is the psychology programme so rigid, with 8 compulsory modules?

A: Universities abroad either follow a tree structure (like ours) or a track structure (e.g., social psychology track). But all reputable universities have similar requirements, where you are strongly grounded in theoretical domains before electives.

Q: Why are there prerequisites for electives?

A: Just like walking is a precursor to running, having prerequisites means that you are building upon previously mastered material, thereby allowing you to learn more.

Q: What are the most important modules in psychology?

A: SRM I and SRM II. These are the two courses that set you apart from disciplines like math, political science, and sociology.