Rehabilitation and Participation Science

The Rehabilitation and Participation Science (RAPS) PhD program aims to develop rehabilitation scientists whose research questions are chosen based explicitly on their potential to generate fundamental knowledge that will enhance health, improve quality of life, and reduce illness and disability. As in other scientific disciplines, our doctoral training model is that of the mentored apprenticeship, wherein students devote the majority of their time to research activities beginning in the first semester and become increasingly independent. Students may choose to study in rehabilitation neuroscience, pediatric rehabilitation, outcome science, community health, and productive aging.

A full-time, 12-month commitment to graduate education is expected of all students enrolled in the RAPS PhD program. A tuition stipend and fellowship is provided to accomplish the degree, and an opportunity exists for teaching assistantships. Graduates of the RAPS PhD program will be prepared for careers as independent scientists and academicians in research universities, research institutes, or industry settings.

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Faculty

Chair
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PhD, Washington University
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Professor
Scott Frey
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Assistant Professors
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Instructor
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Instructor in Occupational Therapy and Neurology
PhD, Washington University Program in Physical Therapy
OTR/L, ATP, Texas Christian University

Degree Requirements

PhD in Rehabilitation and Participation Science (RAPS)

Applicant Background

RAPS PhD students may enter the program from a variety of clinical or scientific backgrounds. Current students hold degrees in occupational therapy, engineering, and neurobiology. All chose to pursue the RAPS PhD degree because of their desire to improve rehabilitation practices and thus people's lives. Prerequisites will vary somewhat depending on the student's desired area of specialization. Prior research experience is strongly encouraged. If one or two prerequisites are missing prior to admission they can be taken concurrently with required RAPS courses, but will not count for required credits.

Curriculum

Students in the RAPS PhD program must complete at least 72 units: 32-34 units of formal course work and 38-40 units of research/reading (including both pre-dissertation and dissertation credits). The objective of training mechanisms is to provide students with three levels of knowledge: Breadth, Depth, and Focus.
• **Breadth** will be achieved by completing a small number of core courses. Success will be demonstrated by course performance. Further, breadth will also come from participation in the biweekly RAPS seminars that all students and faculty are expected to attend. These provide exposure to research plans and progress, as well as a forum for mandatory discussion of ethics and scientific integrity issues.

• **Depth** will be acquired through courses specific to the student's unique research focus. This will be assessed through successful completion of the qualifying exam.

• **Focus** will occur through participation in small graduate seminars in the RAPS PhD and other programs and, most essentially, through active engagement in research. This will ultimately be evaluated by the dissertation and its oral defense.

**Core Courses**

- Theories, Models and Classifications of Rehabilitation and Participation Science (RAPS, 3 units)
- Intermediate Graduate Statistics (Psych, 3 units)
- Advanced Graduate Statistics (Psych, 3 units)
- Research Design and Methods (Psych, 3 units)
- RAPS Seminar: Science and Ethics (RAPS, 0 units)
- Individual meeting with Graduate Career Strategist plus five workshops or equivalent courses

Prior graduate courses that explicitly meet the course requirements may be considered (syllabi must be submitted for review and approval of the RAPS PhD Chair). In no case will the transferred courses accepted for the core and elective course requirements exceed 21 units.

**Elective Units**

Elective courses will be chosen to provide the background necessary to support development of the student's unique research focus. Prior graduate-level credits will be considered if they explicitly relate to the student's research interests (syllabi must be submitted for review and approval by the student's PhD mentor).

**Research Units**

It is expected that all students will be involved in research beginning in their first semester and continuing through completion of the degree. Prior to completion of course work and the competency exam, each student is expected to spend at least 15-20 hours per week actively engaged in research. After passing the competency exam, students are expected to work full-time on their dissertation and other research projects. It is anticipated that these efforts will lead to refereed publications.

It is possible that a student may find that his or her interests lie in an area different from that originally selected. In this case, the student may switch laboratories and mentors with the approval of the RAPS PhD Chair and necessary adjustments in course and laboratory experiences.