

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

Information for Applicants

“Applied behaviour analysis (ABA) is the science in which procedures [usually] derived from the principles of behaviour are systematically applied to improve socially significant behaviour to a meaningful degree, and to demonstrate experimentally that the procedures employed were responsible for the improvement ...”¹. The effectiveness of ABA has been shown in a wide range of areas including education, special education, dementia care, organisational management, parent training, occupational safety, sports psychology, and clinical psychology. ABA is often recommended as the best-practice approach for working with people with intellectual disabilities and/or pervasive development disorders (e.g. autism). Behaviour analytic methods can be used to evaluate almost any treatment/intervention.

Worldwide demand for competent behaviour analysts exceeds current supply, especially in the education of, and remediation of behavioural problems in, children with pervasive development such as autism. The Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) administers the international professional certification process for behaviour analysts (www.bacb.com). The programme offered in the School of Psychology at The University of Auckland was, in 2002, the first outside the USA to obtain course sequence approval from the BACB. We offer one-, two- and three- year programmes of postgraduate study in ABA. The 3-year programme meets the *educational* requirements of the BACB professional credential Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA). Since 2006, our BACB-approved practicum courses are accepted toward the BCBA eligibility requirements in the Supervised Independent Fieldwork experience category. Successful completion of the three-year programme will also make a graduate eligible to apply to the New Zealand Psychologists Board (NZPB) to be a Registered Psychologist (<http://www.psychologistsboard.org.nz/>). In 2018 the ABA programme obtained NZPB accreditation until 2025.

Those who will benefit most from the ABA programme start with a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology including undergraduate level knowledge about behaviour analysis (or learning), have a commitment to using scientifically-supported interventions to improve people’s lives, and have practical experience in service-providing agencies.

Programme Structure

This programme satisfies the regulations for a number of degrees and diplomas and requires that a student enrol in a different degree or diploma each year. Consequently, students can undertake one, two or three years of full-time study and earn a new qualification each year. In addition, this structure offers the flexibility to accommodate students who have already completed other postgraduate qualifications. (See more details under Individualised Programmes below). The degrees/diplomas and courses in which students should enrol are described below.

YEAR 1

First year students with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a major in Psychology should apply to enrol in the Postgraduate Diploma of Arts (PGDipArts), specialisation in ABA Those with a Bachelor of Science (BSc) and a major in Psychology should enrol in the Postgraduate Diploma of Science (PGDipSci)², specialisation

¹ Cooper, J.O., Heron, T.E., & Heward, W.L. (2007). Applied behaviour analysis (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson

² BSc(Hons) or BA(Hons) are alternatives to PGDipSc/Arts in exceptional circumstances – consult ABA programme staff

in ABA. Both the PGDipArts and the PGDipSci require a full-time³ student to enrol in courses that have a total value of 120 points.

STRUCTURE

Essential core courses

PSYCH 750	Applied Behaviour Analysis: Methods	30 points
PSYCH 751	Applied Behaviour Analysis: Behaviour Modification	30 points
PSYCH 754	Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities	15 points
PSYCH 741	Communicating Behaviourally	15 points
PSYCH 749	ABA Ethics	15 points
PSYCH 759	Advanced Behaviour	15 points

Graduates of Year 1 will have earned either the PGDipArts or PGDipSci degree.

Course Descriptions can be found on the webpage: <https://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/our-courses/postgraduate-courses.html>

YEAR 2

Graduates from Year I can apply to enrol in the Masters-by-thesis-only toward either a Master of Science (MSc) or a Master of Arts (MA) in Psychology. This degree requires a student to conduct research and submit a thesis describing that research. The thesis is worth 120 points

There will be regular research students' workshop/seminar sessions each week during the year arranged by ABA programme staff. These will count towards BACB coursework eligibility and students must attend.

Passing the thesis is required for a Master's degree at The University of Auckland, and the BACB require that a student has a Master's degree to be eligible for certification as a BCBA. Students can, therefore, conduct thesis research that is not strictly behaviour analytic and so be supervised by any member of academic staff in the School of Psychology.

Students completing and passing the thesis will be eligible to apply for a place in the Year 3 ABA courses, or to apply for enrolment in the School of Psychology's PhD programme if they do not wish to complete the educational and experiential requirements for BCBA eligibility.

YEAR 3

Mission Statement: This specialised programme is designed to equip graduates with sufficient knowledge, skills and abilities in the essential elements of applied behaviour analysis to provide responsible behaviour analytic services. Responsible services are those that are effective and protect clients, the public and the professions (ABA and Psychologist) when the student graduates to their first job as a newly-qualified applied behaviour analyst and Registered Psychologist. The programme provide s the rationale and skills for graduates to maintain up-to-date knowledge of the methods and procedures of applied behaviour analysis throughout their careers.

Graduates of Year 2 can apply to enrol in the Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Psychology (PGDipAppPsych). Part-time enrolment for Year 3 is not encouraged. Master's thesis must be submitted and marked before the student can start the third year of the programme.

³ Consult the Director of the Programme about requirements for part-time study.

For ABA students, this diploma requires a student to enrol in:

PSYCH 651	Practicum	60 points
PSYCH 728	Portfolio in ABA	30 points
PSYCH 730	Professional Psychology Practice in New Zealand	15 points
PSYCH 757	Advanced Applied Behaviour Analysis	15 points

The Practicum will involve 1500 hours over 12 months of supervised practical work in settings where behaviour- analytic services are valued. The actual settings in which students work will be negotiated with each student individually, but all students will conduct practical work for at least 30 hours per week. The student’s primary duties during the Practicum will involve designing, implementing and monitoring behaviour analysis programs, and/or overseeing the implementation of behaviour analysis programmes by others.

To comply with New Zealand Law, PGDipAppPsych students must apply for NZPB registration under the “Intern Psychologist” scope of practice, before commencing the Practicum. Payment for registration is the students’ responsibility.

Graduates of Year 3 will have satisfied the degree, coursework and experiential requirements to sit the examination for the Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA) credential. They are eligible to apply to the NZPB for registration as a Psychologist.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS: <https://www.calendar.auckland.ac.nz/en/courses/faculty-of-science/psychology.html>

Individualised Programmes

Enrolment in individual courses toward a Certificate of Proficiency is available for students who already have postgraduate qualifications, have passed some behaviour-analytic courses, but require further coursework for BCBA eligibility. Students interested in the Certificate of Proficiency should email Andrea Mead (a.mead@auckland.ac.nz) for advice prior to applying formally.

A set of undergraduate courses in Psychology can be recommended for students who wish to enrol in the Year 1 courses and have a Bachelor’s degree but without a major in Psychology. These courses are known as bridging courses, and a student enrolling in these courses will enrol in a Transitional Certificate. For information about Transitional Certificate courses, email scifac@auckland.ac.nz.

Study for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) can be negotiated initially between a prospective applicant and Academic staff.

Application and Selection Processes

YEAR 1

Applications can be made from September to November for entry in the next academic year, which starts in March each year. Forms will be available online in September on the following link:

<https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/science/about-the-faculty/school-of-psychology/forms-and-guides.html>

Completed forms should be lodged with the School before the 1st of December. Programme staff will notify applicants of their decision in by mid December.

Generally the limit is 16 students.

YEAR 2

There are a limited number of places available for students wanting thesis supervision by staff teaching ABA courses, and students will be selected by negotiation with these staff. Nevertheless, a number of other staff are able to supervise behaviour analytic research. In fact, any member of the academic staff in the School of Psychology could supervise the research towards the thesis because this research need not be behaviour analytic in approach. Acceptance into the Year 1 courses does not guarantee any particular staff member as a Thesis Supervisor in Year 2. Students must obtain a B+ average and pass soft skill requirements in first year to be guaranteed supervision by an ABA staff member. Students not meeting these requirements should talk with staff about options for obtaining their degree. Once agreement for supervision has been reached with a staff member, students should submit the MA/MSc Application form to the School prior to the due date shown on the form. This form is available online: <http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/en/for/future-postgraduates/fp-admission-and-enrolment/fp-application-forms.html>.

YEAR 3

Entry to the PGDipAppPsych and the associated courses in Year 3 will be limited depending on the availability of supervisors for the Practicum. Students wishing to enrol in the PGDipAppPsych and the Year 3 ABA courses must have either an MSc or MA in Psychology (or other equivalent qualifications) but neither degree will guarantee a place in these courses. Applicants should apply via Student Services Online and complete the Application form for PGDipAppPsych Specialising in Applied Behaviour Analysis. This form is available online: <http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/en/for/future-postgraduates/fp-admission-and-enrolment/fp-application-forms.html>.

Applications should be lodged with the School of Psychology before the 1st of November. Interviews will be conducted in November with a selected number of the applicants. Applicants will be notified of the outcome before December. Students interested in the PGDipAppPsych are advised to contact the ABA programme staff for discussion before applying formally.

Selection Criteria

Programme staff will consider an applicant's academic record, work experience, career aspirations, intended programme of study, and personal qualities when selecting students for 'reserved' places in Year 1 or Year 3 courses. Preference will be given to those signalling a commitment to seeing BACB certification and obtaining employment as a Behaviour Analyst in New Zealand. The School's affirmative action policy for Maori and Pacific Islands students will also be applied.

The selection of students for the Master's thesis in Year 2 by individual staff members is less formal than Year 1 and Year 3 selection. The factors that are usually considered by staff include the similarity between his/her and the student's research interests, how academically prepared a student is for that research, clinical skill level, and resources available in the School or via the student for the research.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the ABA Programme Director, Dr Katrina Phillips at kj.phillips@auckland.ac.nz. General enquiries about postgraduate studies in Psychology and online enrolment via Student Services Online should be directed to psych-admintamaki@auckland.ac.nz.

Graduates of universities overseas and/or those without New Zealand citizenship or permanent resident status should correspond with the International Students Office (international@auckland.ac.nz; phone: +64 9 373 7599 ext. 87556). Enquiries about fees should be made to fees@auckland.ac.nz.

Although every reasonable effort is made to ensure accuracy, the information in this document is provided as a general guide only for students and is subject to alteration. All students enrolling at The University of Auckland must consult its official document, the Calendar of The University of Auckland, to ensure that they are aware of and comply with all regulations, requirements and policies.