

Master of Behaviour Analysis | Frequently asked questions

Q. When do applications open and close for this programme?

A. Master of Behaviour Analysis (MBehAnalysis) applications open each year on 1 September and close 15 October. There is only one intake per year (February).

Q. What do applicants need to have studied as an undergraduate in order to be considered as an applicant?

A. Applicants need an undergraduate degree with majors in related subjects (for example, Psychology, Education, Health Science), and have passed at least 75 points at Stage 3 or 700-level with a B-average grade or higher. The University Calendar provides more details.

Q. What is the structure of the degree?

A. Year 1 comprises taught courses with some practical elements. We teach a curriculum that aligns with international curricula or content areas set out by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (bacb.com). Year 2 is a thesis (i.e., research) conducted in the area of behaviour analysis.

Q. Do I have to find my own supervisor for the thesis?

A. No. In about August, we ask Year 1 students to indicate the preferences for topic areas offered by staff in the Behaviour Analysis Programme. We then match students to supervisors in our team.

Q. Can this course be taken by distance learning?

A. No. The course requires on the spot supervision during the clinical components and therefore needs to be taken on the campus.

Q. Can this course be taken part time?

A. Partly but only in exceptional circumstances. The two years are carefully programmed so that the papers build on the learning from previous papers. Clinical work is a continuing part of the course and interruptions in the learning and demonstration of clinical skills by the student could make it very difficult to pass in that aspect of the course. The taught courses could be taken part-time (i.e., spread across multiple years) but the thesis cannot be undertaken parttime.

Q. What is the length of the academic year?

A. Year 1 courses are taught during the university semester times. However, it is important to know that most research projects in Year 2 will require students to be available outside of university semester teaching weeks.

Q. What sort of clinical experience do I need to get to strengthen my application for the MBehAnalysis and the subsequent PGDipAppPsych (Internship)?

A. Direct work with people who receive behaviour-analytic or psychological experiences is really valuable (paid or unpaid). Examples are teaching aide, rehabilitation assistant, activities team, and carer across disability, brain injury, dementia, mental health, and other services. Direct contact is preferred over phone line services or consultative roles. The purpose of the experience is to gain an understanding of the sorts of settings in which behaviour analysts / behavioural psychologists work, including how staff are required to spend their time, common challenges in the settings, and exposure to potential recipients of services.

Q. What are the career options once the student has graduated from this course?

A. The graduate can apply for behaviour support positions advertised in health, education, councils and other organisations throughout New Zealand and overseas. It is not recommended that graduates practise independently until they have at least 3 years of general practice. Completing the MBehAnalysis results in eligibility to apply for the Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Psychology (Year 3 internship). Entry to this year is by separate application and completion of the PGDipAppPsych results in eligibility to be a registered psychologist in New Zealand. You must complete both the MBehAnalysis and PGDipAppPsych to be eligible to be a registered psychologist.

Q. Is the programme focused on supporting autistic people or people with intellectual disabilities?

A. No. While we do support those groups and have graduates doing great work with autistic people and people with disabilities, the focus of the Master of Behaviour Analysis is to give clinical and professional skills to people who wish to use the science to improve the quality of life of anyone who might want or need our services. We work alongside (and our graduates support) a range of people - people with dementia, brain injury, autistic people, people with disabilities, in large organisations, forensics, mental health, large-scale behaviour change etc. We teach modern, scientifically-informed, ethical and professional practice of behaviour analysis that adopts a strength-based approach.

Q. What hidden financial costs may there be in this course?

A. An appropriate standard of dress is required when the student is involved in clinical work with clients. Costs stemming from travel to/from clinical placements / thesis host and accommodation when out of Auckland are met by the student, as are immunisation costs for immunisations required by the placement / thesis host. For those with children/dependents there may be associated costs, because the course requires full day attendance during placement times, which may extend into school holiday periods.

Q. How many get in to this course... is it competitive?

A. Sixteen students are selected each year. A shortlist is compiled from the applications and those short-listed applicants are interviewed. After interviewing has been completed, the 16 students are selected. It is competitive to gain a place.

Q. Are students who have English as their second language able to apply?

A. Yes. Behaviour analysts service a multicultural community, so it is important that we are representative of that community. However, it is important that an applicant's spoken and written English is clearly understandable and that they are able to read and understand textbooks in English.

Q. Can previous study in behaviour analysis be cross-credited?

A. Maybe. We could evaluate this on a case-by-case basis, but due to the importance of learning the full curriculum, we may require students with prior study to complete all of our courses.

Q. How can an applicant best prepare for applying to this programme?

A. Ensure that their undergraduate degree matches the specifications as set down in the University Calendar.

Look for paid or unpaid experience relevant to behaviour analysis (see answer above).

Find out about behaviour analysis as a field, and its applications (for example, [Welcome - Association for Behavior Analysis International](#), [Society for Behaviour Analysis Aotearoa New Zealand](#)).