

# PhD in Psychology

Cutting-edge insights into individuals,  
organisations and societies



SMU

SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT  
UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH  
DEGREES

SCHOOL OF  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

## Message from the Dean



Our doctoral programme in Psychology is designed to prepare students to conduct original research that will lead to the award of a PhD degree.

The programme is designed and taught by scholars who are themselves professors of psychology, many with a breadth of experience teaching in different parts of the world, and all experts in a variety of fields of psychological research.

Students who complete this course of study undertake a rigorous training programme that involves learning from their professors and each other. The programme prepares them well not only for careers in academia but also for work in government and industry wherever having research skills, as well as an understanding of psychology, is an advantage.

**Chandran Kukathas**

Lee Kong Chian Chair Professor of Political Science  
Dean, School of Social Sciences

## Message from the Programme Director

To manage and solve societal challenges facing the global world, it is key to understand how our mind functions and why we act the way we do. At SMU, the PhD in Psychology aims to train the next generation of research scholars who can offer novel insights on real-world issues. Through participating in interactive seminars and engaging in independent projects, students gain both content knowledge and hands-on skills for being a competent and ethical researcher in psychology. Graduates from the programme are well trained for research-related careers in both academia and industry.

Our faculty are prolific scholars in their fields of study. Some of them hold leadership positions in professional organisations, including journal editors and elected fellows. With individualised supervision, students work closely with one or a few faculty mentors on research projects of their interest.

Our School of Social Sciences is frequently visited by researchers both within and outside of Singapore. Students have excellent opportunities to build up their professional networks and to pursue collaborative research in psychology as well as in interdisciplinary areas. Having acquired the critical thinking and analytical skills, our students are well prepared to pursue frontier research in psychological science.

**Angela Leung**

Associate Professor of Psychology  
Programme Director, PhD in Psychology  
School of Social Sciences





# Programme Structure

A PhD student will typically focus on coursework in the first one to two years, followed by conducting the Master's thesis and PhD dissertation research in subsequent years.

The PhD framework is as follows:

- 6 Foundation Courses (6 Course Units)
- 2 Electives (2 Course Units)
- Empirical Research Project (1 Course Unit)
- Master's Thesis (12 Course Units)
- 3 Advanced Research Topics (ART) Courses (3 Course Units)
- PhD Dissertation (28 Course Units)

The coursework is intended to lay the groundwork in preparation for the dissertation research. A student in the programme will be required to finish a Master's thesis by submitting the written thesis and orally defending it. The student will then have to sit for a PhD Qualifying Examination (QE), which will assess his or her mastery of the foundation required for the next stage of the PhD programme – the dissertation. The dissertation is a student's original work in his or her specialised area through independent research. The dissertation is marked by the following two major milestones.

## Oral Defence of the Dissertation Proposal

This is an oral presentation of the proposed topic to a Dissertation Committee. A written dissertation proposal will have to be submitted before the presentation. A supervisor, with the expertise in the chosen topic, will be appointed. He or she guides and mentors the student throughout the dissertation work.

## Oral Defence and Completion of the PhD Dissertation

This is an oral presentation of the written dissertation report to the Committee. After possible revision(s) to the report and upon fulfilment of all necessary requirements, the Committee will recommend to the University to award the PhD degree. Students will also attain a MPhil degree upon completion of the PhD programme.

**The PhD in Psychology programme is designed to equip students with doctoral-level knowledge in research methodology and substantive content knowledge in psychology, with a focus on areas in experimental, social, personality and organisational psychology.**



# Admission and Application

## Admission Requirements

**Good Bachelor's degree in Psychology or a relevant Bachelor's degree.**

**Graduate Record Examination (GRE) results taken within five years prior to the application.**

Applicants who graduated with a Bachelor's degree (in any discipline) from the Singapore autonomous universities are exempted from this requirement.

## Application Information

The PhD in Psychology is a full-time programme. The University's application window is listed below.

Intake	Opening Date for Application	Closing Date for Application
August	1 August (of prior year)*	31 October (of prior year)*
	1 November (of prior year)	31 January (of intake year)

\* Candidates applying during this period would be given priority for consideration of scholarships.

Details on the application procedure can be found at <http://smu.sg/phd-psychology>.

# Financial Assistance Schemes

SMU awards three types of scholarships and fellowships on a competitive basis. We assess applicants for different award schemes either at the time of admission based on qualification and suitability for these schemes or during their PhD journey based on their outstanding academic performance.

## SMU Scholarship

The scholarship covers registration and subsidised tuition fees. This scheme also provides successful recipients with monthly living stipends.\* The scholarship is renewed yearly, conditioned on good academic performance, for a maximum duration of four years. Beyond the scholarship duration, students who have been on the scholarship may receive continued support through research and teaching assistantships or industry grants.

## SMU Presidential Doctoral Fellowship

The SMU Presidential Doctoral Fellowship\* is awarded to existing PhD students who have outstanding academic performance. The Fellowship is a one-year award.

## SMU Multidisciplinary Doctoral Fellowship

The SMU Multidisciplinary Doctoral Fellowship\* is awarded to existing PhD students whose research output show the use of techniques from two or more fields of research. This Fellowship is also a one-year award.

\* The stipend rates are published at <http://smu.sg/phd> and are subject to change.



# A Unique University in Vibrant Singapore



SMU has been designed to provide a different model of university education in Singapore.

## A Strong and Innovative Research Culture

- Internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching conducted by faculty members who joined us from top universities.
- Faculty members collaborate on cross-disciplinary work to generate impactful and real-world relevant ideas, over and above research in their own disciplines.
- Faculty members establish research centres and institutes to conduct problem-driven research and influence industry practice across a wide range of topics.

## A Different Learning Approach

- Faculty members encourage an interactive learning environment through inquiry, participation and teamwork.
- Seminar-style teaching in small classes optimises student-instructor interaction.

## State-of-the-Art Infrastructure

- Research support includes proprietary and published databases.
- SMU's library provides access to many scientific journals, electronic books and other necessary publications and materials.

Being in the heart of the city, students will have easy access to industry partners who provide research data and validation platforms.

Each School has dedicated personnel to take care of students' administrative needs. Furthermore, many SMU research centres and institutes provide post-doctoral fellowships and/or research assistantships that add value to students' research experience.



**Cheng Chi-Ying**  
Associate Professor of Psychology

Our psychology professors jointly provide a diverse range of expertise, with specialisations in social, cultural, industrial and organisational, personality, cognitive, developmental and evolutionary psychology. We are fully dedicated to mentoring PhD students through research apprenticeships, facilitating their acquisition of knowledge and skills from research formulation and study design to measurement, data collection, data analysis and interpretation of results. We believe in research that is both rigorous and relevant, which provides evidence-based approaches to address real-world problems.



**Jacinth Tan**  
Assistant Professor of Psychology

The PhD programme at SMU provides a rigorous training in both basic and applied research, which gears students towards generating important knowledge and using them to solve real-world problems, be it in the communities, organisations, or the broader society. Our faculty research backgrounds and portfolios are diverse and strong, with many of them recognised internationally for their work and impact in their respective fields. As such, our students are exposed to a variety of research areas and are equipped with fundamental skills in conducting independent research, based on the most updated and the best research practices. Although students work primarily with one faculty mentor, a number of them are also actively engaged in projects with other faculty members, which helps to broaden their perspectives and skills. The faculty members are also warm, supportive and committed to grooming students to become competent and innovative scholars and problem-solvers.



**Brandon Koh Yuan Rui**

I pursued a PhD to fuel my passion to learn and to share what I have learned. I must say that I have been very happy to have pursued my PhD in Psychology at SMU, which has certainly provided me an immersive and enriching environment to pursue my passion. I am extremely grateful for the tutelage of my advisor, Professor Angela Leung. She is very productive with research and at the same time highly nurturing as a supervisor, and has definitely made a tremendous positive impact throughout my journey at SMU. It is the people who make the place, and SMU certainly has some of the most passionate and nurturing professors I have encountered.



**Sean Lee Teck Hao**

The SMU PhD in Psychology programme provides rigorous and well-rounded research training. The programme's curriculum ensures that we are not only competent in our core research domain, but are also well-versed in the other domains of Psychology. Our faculty members are esteemed, prolific researchers who have extensive networks of collaborators around the world. Yet, they are very approachable and are generous in providing resources and support to us budding researchers. We often have opportunities to interact closely and work on collaborative research projects with them and their contacts. Additionally, the school frequently invites distinguished guests to hold talks and workshops, providing us the opportunity to interact with and learn from some of the very best in the field. Overall, the programme has shaped me into a competent researcher who is well-prepared to take on future academic jobs.



**Nadhilla Velda Melia**

SMU's PhD in Psychology programme has provided an excellent environment for the development of my research and critical thinking skills. Each class consists of interesting and extensive discussions with my peers and professors and is fertile ground for new research ideas and potential collaborations. Everyone is given the opportunity to share their ideas and it is a very welcoming environment to do so. This programme gives us the freedom to explore our research interests and develop our full potential.



**Joanne Tan Qin Ying**

My undergraduate research and on-the-job experience made me realise my passion for learning and understanding more about the people and the world around me. SMU's PhD in Psychology programme has provided me with such opportunities to delve into my specific research interest—the impact of media and technology on psychological functioning. Coursework has broadened my knowledge of my research area using different perspectives—from reviewing how media relates to organisational behaviour and well-being, to proposing studies related to personality, cognitive psychology and social psychology. The small cohort size allows us to learn from and gather direct feedback from professors, who are experts in their field. Outside of classes, I work closely and collaborate with like-minded peers who are also enthusiastic about research. All these provide a beneficial learning environment to hone my skills as a researcher and pursue my passions.



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