

Your journey into psychology

www.bps.org.uk/careers



The British
Psychological Society

A degree in psychology offers not only a pathway to becoming a psychologist, but also the knowledge and skills that you can apply in a wide range of careers.

Professor Ann Colley, CPsychol
Chief Executive, The British Psychological Society



Who we are and what we do

The British Psychological Society is the representative body for psychology and psychologists in the United Kingdom and is a registered charity.

The Society promotes excellence and ethical practice in the science, education and practical applications of psychology.

Our core purposes are to:

- be the Learned Society and Professional Body for the discipline
- make psychology accessible to all
- promote and advance the discipline
- be the authoritative and public voice of psychology
- determine and ensure the highest standards in all we do.



As applied psychologists we have a real opportunity, based on research, knowledge and experience, to help individuals or groups to develop positive solutions, to identify preferred futures or to work towards improved performance on a variety of issues.

Richard Walsh, CPsychol AFBPsS

What is psychology and why do we need it?

Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and behaviour.

We need psychology as it can give us a clearer picture on how we think, act, react and communicate with others.

Psychology has a big impact on all areas of life, particularly in education, health, the economy, industry and crime.

Psychologists work in many different areas of society and are concerned with problems such as:

- making sure that people are happy at work and perform to the best of their abilities
- supporting the police, courts and prison service to perform more effectively

- assisting athletes and sports people to perform better
- helping people to overcome depression, stress, trauma or phobias
- easing the effects of parental divorce on children
- speeding up recovery from brain injury
- helping stop or prevent bullying at school or in the workplace
- ensuring that school pupils and students are being taught in the most effective way.

Psychologists help by applying scientific methods to obtain a better understanding

of behaviour. This includes observing, measuring, testing and carrying out statistical analysis with individuals and groups to gain relevant information to support different situations. This enables psychologists to find solutions to problems in various settings.

Where to start?

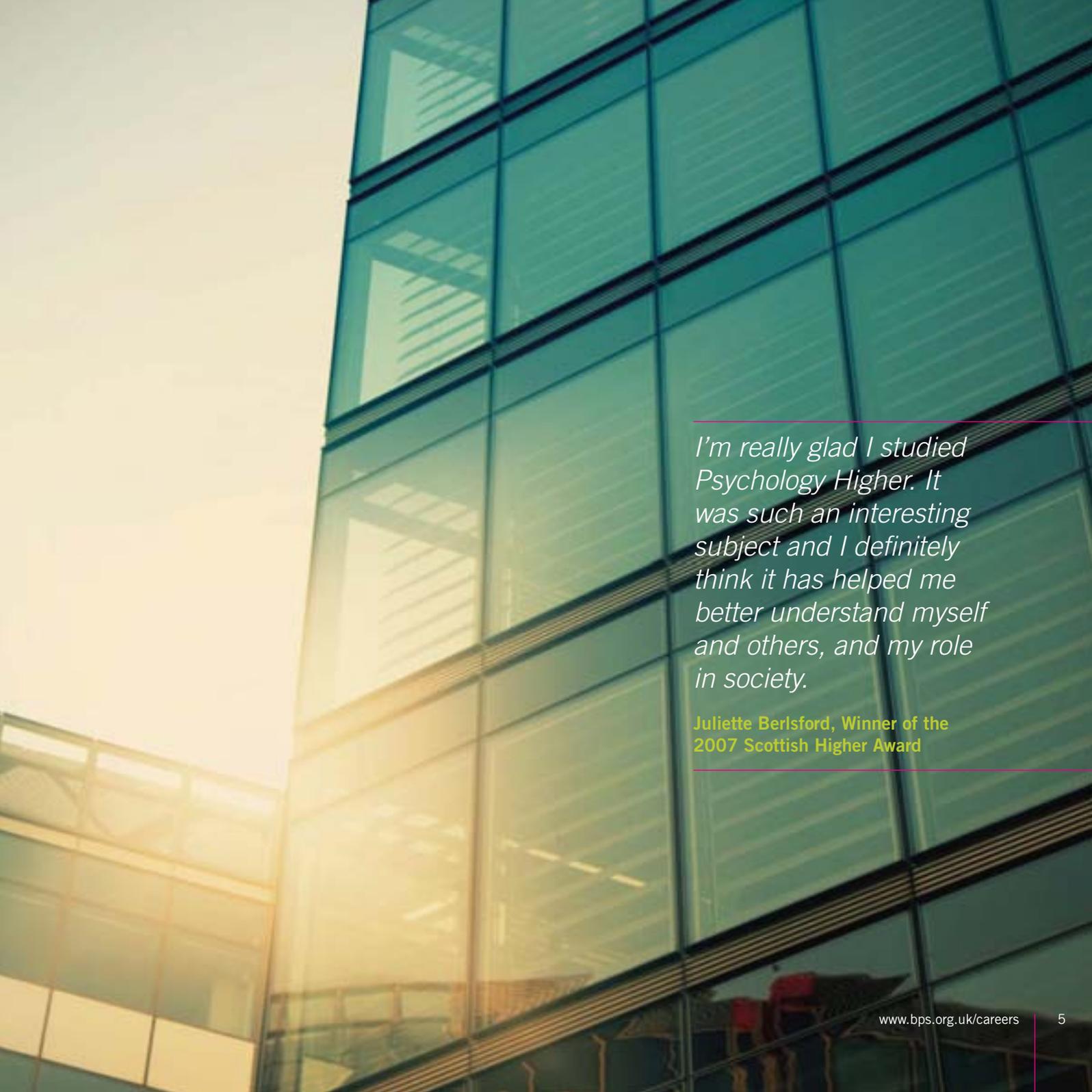
Many schools and colleges now offer a variety of psychology courses.

These include GCSE, the International Baccalaureate, AS and A2 Level or the Scottish NQ Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

GCSE psychology provides students with an introduction to the world of psychology. AS/A2 Level and Scottish Higher courses take this further and look at how ideas and theories are developed.

Your local school or college will be able to provide you with more information.





I'm really glad I studied Psychology Higher. It was such an interesting subject and I definitely think it has helped me better understand myself and others, and my role in society.

Juliette Berlsford, Winner of the 2007 Scottish Higher Award



What qualifications do I need to apply for a psychology degree?

Applicants to degree courses will normally need to demonstrate good numeracy and literacy skills and an ability to handle scientific concepts.

Biology, mathematics, english, history, economics and similar arts or social science subjects are all useful preparation for a degree course. Many universities now require at least one science A Level.

A or AS Level Psychology is not normally required to get onto a degree course but taking an A Level or GCSE in psychology can give you a head start in the subject. For more information on specific entry requirements please contact institutions or go to the University Central Admissions Service website: www.ucas.com

The Society accredits undergraduate degree courses that will give you eligibility for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC). You will need to have GBC if you want to apply for Society accredited postgraduate training courses and become a Chartered Psychologist.

You can find a full list of Society accredited undergraduate degree courses on our website at www.bps.org.uk/careers

What should I expect from a psychology degree?

The exact content of an undergraduate degree can vary from one university to another.

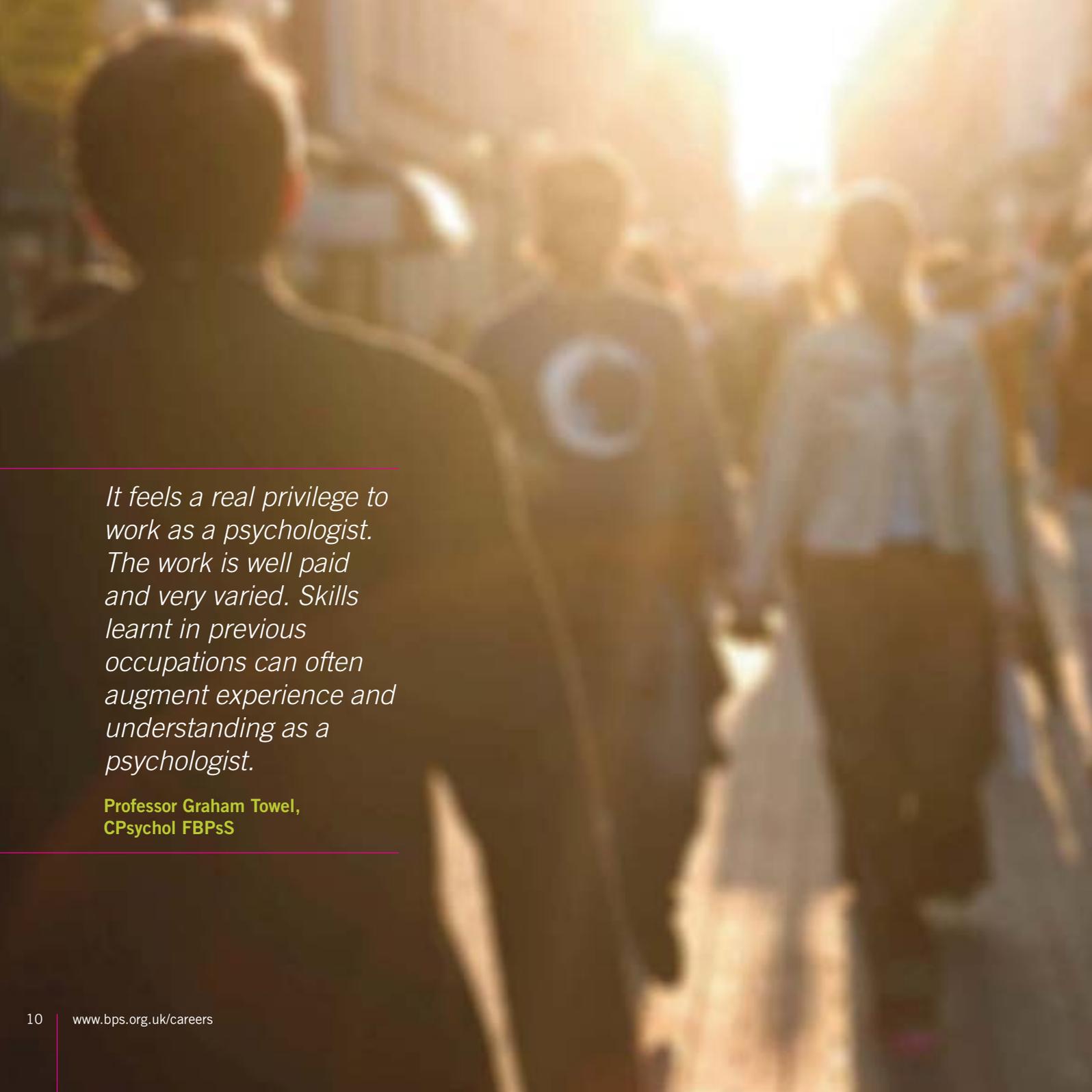
Society accredited courses will include:

- **Biological psychology** – how the brain influences behaviour, the effects of hormones, how it can be affected by drugs
 - **Cognitive psychology** – how we remember, learn, think, reason, perceive, speak and understand
 - **Developmental psychology** – how humans develop physically, mentally and socially during childhood and adolescence and their life span
 - **Social psychology** – how human behaviour and experience are affected by the social context such as in groups and relationships
 - **Individual differences** – why people have different personalities, how we can measure intelligence, how we treat mental disorders
- **Conceptual and historical issues** – how psychological explanations have changed over time and key debates which shape its future
 - **Research methods** – how to conduct quantitative and qualitative methods, research design, data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Many degrees allow students to select modules in addition to the core content. All will include some form of independent project and practical work.

For information regarding specific course content, contact universities directly.





It feels a real privilege to work as a psychologist. The work is well paid and very varied. Skills learnt in previous occupations can often augment experience and understanding as a psychologist.

**Professor Graham Towel,
CPsychol FBPSS**



What if I have a degree in another subject?

If you hold a degree that is not accredited by the Society, you have the option of undertaking an accredited conversion course.

This is an alternative to completing an undergraduate degree, which usually takes 3 years full-time to complete. An accredited conversion course can take around half that time and will give you eligibility for GBC.

There are different variations of accredited conversion courses available in the UK that will all meet the necessary requirements for GBC.

For information on entry requirements, fees, time scales and funding you will need to contact universities directly. You can find a full list of accredited conversion courses on the Society website.

What skills do Psychologists need?

Psychologists have a diverse range of skills, from effective communication to planning and project management.

On completing an accredited psychology undergraduate or conversion programme, you would have the skills to:

- comprehend and use data sufficiently by understanding, analysing and presenting complex ideas
- retrieve and organise information successfully through various sources
- engage in effective team work
- problem solve and reason scientifically
- to consider alternative approaches and solutions
- make critical judgements and evaluations to gain different perspectives on a variety of issues
- be sensitive to contextual and interpersonal factors, including behaviour and social interaction
- use personal planning and project management skills to become more independent and pragmatic.

Psychology is a versatile subject that can give you skills needed in other areas such as humanities, science and statistics.

Studying psychology can help you pursue postgraduate training as well as finding employment in a variety of sectors including education, business, health and the media.

Applied psychologists combine knowledge with enthusiasm, flexibility, and resilience to bring about positive changes for both individuals and organisations.

Dr Jennifer Unwin, CPsychol AFBPsS





Work experience is a win-win situation. The intern gets exposure to a workplace and an employer, tests out applying some concept or theory they've read about, develops new competencies and skills, and receives meaningful feedback from an experienced person. In return, the employer gets extra resources and possibly even new insights; also, their applicant pool is now broadened.

Dr Gene Johnson, CPsychol AFBPsS



What work experience will I need?

Work experience is a great way to gain a practical insight into psychology.

It is also vital for progression to postgraduate study, as well as finding employment. Work experience can demonstrate that you are a dedicated candidate with applied psychological knowledge and it will advance your application to make you stand out from the crowd.

It is a good idea to build up work experience as soon as you can. In most cases you will have to gain experience on a voluntary basis before you can apply for a paid position.

Below are some ideas of where you can undertake work experience:

- Hospitals
- Schools and colleges
- Nursing homes
- Sports teams
- Social services
- Local authorities
- Prison service
- Probation service.

The type of work experience you will need depends on the area of psychology you want to go into. Many universities have specific requirements on work experience; therefore, it is best to contact course providers for their criteria.

What is a Chartered Psychologist?

Becoming a Chartered Psychologist reflects the highest standard of psychological knowledge and expertise, allowing the use of the designated title ‘CPsychol’.

It is the benchmark of professional recognition demonstrating a mark of experience, competence and reputation for anyone looking to learn from, consult or employ a psychologist.

In order to become a Chartered Psychologist, you will need to gain GBC and then complete a further

three years of Society accredited postgraduate training in one of the following disciplines:

- Clinical psychology
- Counselling psychology
- Educational psychology
- Forensic psychology

- Health psychology
- Occupational psychology
- Sport and exercise psychology
- Teaching and research psychology.

More detailed information on the qualifications required to become a Chartered Psychologist is available on the Society’s website:

www.bps.org.uk/careers



Chartered status has also affected how I'm perceived and it has certainly helped my career development.

Dr Joanne Thatcher, CPsychol CSci

Clinical psychology

What is it?

Clinical psychology aims to reduce psychological distress and to enhance the promotion of psychological well-being.

Clinical psychologists deal with a wide range of mental and physical health problems including addiction, anxiety, depression, learning difficulties and relationship issues.

They may undertake a clinical assessment to investigate a clients' situation. There are a variety of methods available including psychometric tests, interviews and direct observation of behaviour. Assessment may lead to advice, counselling or therapy.

Where do they work?

Clinical psychologists work largely in health and social care settings such as hospitals, health centres, community mental health teams, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and social services. They often work in a team with other health professionals and practitioners. Most are employed by the National Health Service (NHS), but some work in private practice.

Counselling psychology

What is it?

Counselling psychologists focus on working with a tailored psychological formulation to improve psychological functioning and well-being, working collaboratively with people across a diverse range of disciplines.

Counselling psychologists deal with a wide range of mental health problems concerning life issues including bereavement, domestic violence, sexual abuse, traumas and relationship issues.

They understand diagnosis and the medical context to mental health problems and work with the individual's unique subjective psychological experience to empower their recovery and alleviate distress.

Where do they work?

Counselling psychologists work in hospitals (acute admissions, psychiatric intensive care, rehabilitation), health centres, Improving Access to Psychological Therapy Services, Community Mental Health Teams and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. They also work within private hospitals, private practice, forensic settings, industry, education, research and corporate institutions.

Educational psychology

What is it?

Educational psychology is concerned with children and young people in educational and early years settings.

Educational psychologists tackle challenges such as learning difficulties, social and emotional problems, issues around disability as well as more complex developmental disorders.

They work in a variety of ways including observations, interviews and assessments and offer consultation, advice and support to teachers, parents, the wider community as well as the young people concerned. They research innovative ways of helping vulnerable young people and often train teachers, learning support assistants and others working with children.

Where do they work?

Local authorities (LAs) employ the majority of educational psychologists working in schools, colleges, nurseries and special units although increasing numbers are working directly in schools, academies and other educational settings. They regularly liaise with other professionals from education, health and social services. A growing number work as independent or private consultants.

Forensic psychology

What is it?

Forensic psychology is devoted to psychological aspects of legal processes in courts. The term is also often used to refer to investigative and criminological psychology: applying psychological theory to criminal investigation, understanding psychological problems associated with criminal behaviour, and the treatment of those who have committed offences.

Daily key tasks can include piloting and implementing treatment programmes; modifying offender behaviour; responding to the changing needs of staff and prisoners as well as reducing stress for staff and prisoners. Forensic psychologists also provide hard research evidence to support practice including undertaking statistical analysis for prisoner profiling, giving evidence in courts, plus advising parole boards and mental health tribunals.

Where do they work?

The largest employer in the UK is the HM Prison Service. Forensic psychologists are also employed by rehabilitation units, secure hospitals; social services and in university departments or private consultancy.

Health psychology

What is it?

Health psychology is concerned with people's experiences of health and illness.

Health psychologists use their knowledge of psychology and health to promote general well-being and understand physical illness. They are specially trained to help people deal with the psychological and emotional aspects of health and illness as well as supporting people who are chronically ill. Health psychologists promote healthier lifestyles and try to find ways to encourage people to improve their health. For example, they may help people to lose weight or stop smoking. Health psychologists also use their skills to try to improve the healthcare system. For example, they may advise doctors about better ways to communicate with their patients.

Where do they work?

Health psychologists are represented in a number of settings, such as hospitals, academic health research units, health authorities, university departments and also in consultancy practice. They may deal with problems identified by health care agencies, including NHS Trusts and health authorities. This is in addition to also working alongside other medical professionals such as GP's, nurses and rehabilitation therapists. Health psychologists may also deal with organisations and employees outside the health care system.

Neuropsychology

What is it?

Neuropsychology is concerned with the assessment and rehabilitation of people with brain injury or other neurological disease. They work with people of all ages dealing with patients who have had traumatic brain injury, strokes, toxic and metabolic disorders, tumours and neuro-degenerative diseases.

Neuropsychologists require not only general clinical skills and knowledge of the broad range of mental health problems, but also a substantial degree of specialist knowledge in the neurosciences.

Neuropsychology is a post qualification discipline, in which you first need to be a Chartered Psychologist within the field of clinical or educational psychology.

Where do they work?

Neuropsychologists most commonly work in acute settings, usually in regional neuroscience centres where their main focus is on the early effects of trauma, neurosurgery and neurological diseases. They also work in rehabilitation centres providing post-acute assessment, training and support for people who have sustained brain injury, or who have other neurological problems.

Occupational psychology

What is it?

Occupational psychology delivers tangible benefits by enhancing the effectiveness of organisations and developing the performance, motivation and well-being of people in the workplace.

Occupational psychologists apply the science of psychology to work. They develop and apply a range of tools and interventions, including psychometrics and assessment, learning and development, stress-management, organisational change, coaching and job design.

Where do they work?

Occupational psychologists work with organisations and businesses of all sizes across the private, public and third sectors. You will find Occupational psychologists working in government and public services, in leadership development centres and consultancies. They work alongside other professionals such as managers, HR, union representatives, training advisors and specialist staff within client organisations.

Research and Academic psychology

What is it?

Research in psychology requires the application of skills and knowledge to scientifically hypothesise about an aspect of human behaviour, then to test it, analyse it and communicate the results.

Research underpins much of the teaching and practice of psychology as it provides the evidence-base for psychological theory and the effectiveness of treatments, interventions, tests and teaching methods.

Typically academics or researchers in higher education undertake both research and teaching and lecturing.

Where do they work?

Most researchers are employed in higher education institutions or specialist research units; however, others are employed in a wide variety of contexts - including the food and drink industries, pharmaceutical industries, marketing, government departments (such as the Ministry of Defence) and the NHS.

Sport and Exercise psychology

What is it?

Sport psychology's predominant aim is to help athletes prepare psychologically for the demands of competition and training. Examples of the work sport psychologists carry out include counselling referees to deal with the stressful and demanding aspects of their role, advising coaches on how to build cohesion within their squad of athletes, and helping athletes with personal development and the psychological consequences of sustaining an injury.

Exercise psychology is primarily concerned with the application of psychology to increase exercise participation and motivational levels in the general public. Examples of the work they do include optimising the benefits that can be derived from exercise participation and helping individual clients with the implementation of goal-setting strategies.

Practitioners typically specialise in either the sport or exercise branches, though some work equally in both fields.

Where do they work?

Sport and exercise psychologists work in a wide range of settings with a diverse range of clients participating in recreational, amateur, and elite levels of competition.

Some sport psychologists work as private consultants or hold full-time positions with professional sports teams or national governing bodies of sport. Most combine their consultancy work with teaching and research or also work in other areas such as the clinical and occupational domains.

Exercise psychologists combine consultancy with teaching and research careers. The work of exercise psychologists might involve GP exercise referral and setting up and evaluating exercise programmes in employment, prison and psychiatric contexts.

Teaching psychology

What is it?

Teachers of psychology work across a variety of academic levels to deliver a psychological education to their students in order for them to gain skills, knowledge and qualifications.

Teachers within schools teach psychology at GCSE, A Level, Scottish Higher or as part of the International Baccalaureate; teachers or lecturers within higher education are mainly engaged in teaching psychology on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Teachers often combine a career in teaching with research.

Where do they do it?

Teachers mainly work in schools, colleges and higher educational institutions. Students include diverse cohorts from 14-19 year olds at secondary schools to adult learning and CPD training for professionals.

Health Professions Council (HPC) and the Regulation of Psychologists

The Health Professions Council (HPC) is the regulator for Practitioner Psychologists in the UK.

In order to use the following titles, psychologists must have their qualifications approved by the HPC and be listed on their register:

- Clinical psychologist
- Counselling psychologist
- Educational psychologist
- Forensic psychologist
- Health psychologist
- Occupational psychologist
- Sport and Exercise psychologist
- Registered psychologist
- Practitioner psychologist.

Please contact the HPC for more information on the regulation of psychologists and details on their approval process.

Join the Society

Joining the Society is an important part of becoming a psychologist.

It provides recognition of professional status and reflects your aspiration to represent the highest possible professional standards.

Collectively, our membership has a powerful voice in raising the profile of psychology, developing standards and advancing the discipline. Our members matters to us, and we continue to look at adding value to Society membership through additional member benefits such as:

- **Psychologist Appointments** – job vacancies and careers advice
- **Journals** – free online access to the Society's academic journals and selected Wiley-Blackwell journals
- **The Psychologist** – free subscription to the Society's monthly magazine
- **Books** – discount of 30% on books from BPS Blackwell and 20% discount on selected books from Oxford University Press
- **Library membership** – access Europe's largest psychology library at Senate House in London
- A range of high street **discounts and offers**.

For more information on joining the Society, please contact our membership team:

t: +44 (0)116 252 9911

e: membership@bps.org.uk

w: www.bps.org.uk/membership



Membership of the British Psychological Society and CPsychol are strong indicators that a psychologist has the experience and knowledge to hold positions of responsibility in what is a very challenging field.

Professor Ray Bull, CPsychol HonFBPsS



If you would like more information on careers in psychology and postgraduate study, call our careers information line or email:

t: +44 (0)116 252 9534

e: careers@bpshelpdesk.org.uk

How useful was this booklet? We would be interested to hear any suggestions or comments you may have. Please email careers@bpshelpdesk.org.uk



For further information on the work of the Society please visit our website or contact us at:

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