

Options with psychology

Your skills

Over the course of your degree you develop a good mix of subject specific and technical skills as well as transferable core skills. Consider these alongside other achievements, such as paid work, volunteering, family responsibilities, sport, membership of societies, leadership roles, etc. Think about how these can be used as evidence of your skills and personal attributes. Then you can start to market and sell who you really are, identify what you may be lacking and consider how to improve your profile.

Psychology degrees develop many transferable skills such as: communication; numeracy; critical thinking; information technology (IT); and independent learning. All of these are highly valued by employers. In addition, the strong emphasis on research methodology and statistics in psychology means graduates are well placed to move into research or numeracy-based careers such as market research, academia and accounting. Learning statistics will help develop your IT skills through specific software packages such as SPSS. These are suitable for use in any career.

If you want to move onto work as a chartered psychologist, it is vital to undertake as much work experience as possible whilst on your undergraduate degree. Placements in clinical psychology can be notoriously difficult to access but any relevant paid or voluntary work will help, eg working with people with learning difficulties; mentoring; befriending; working in care homes or with those who are mentally distressed.

Employment prospects

Every year, statistics are collected to show what HE students do immediately after graduation. These can be a useful guide but, in reality, with the data being collected within just six months of graduation, many graduates are travelling, waiting to start a course, paying off debts, getting work experience or still deciding what they want to do. For further information about some of the areas of employment commonly entered by graduates of any degree discipline, check out 'What Do Graduates Do?' and the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Your Degree... What Next?'

There are over 40,000 students studying psychology each year in the UK at all levels. Not all will progress to work as psychologists. It is estimated around 15-20% will eventually become chartered psychologists. Many new graduates enter their first job simply to gain experience. This will enable them to access the further training they need to become chartered.

In 2005, nearly half of psychology graduates had entered full-time work six months after leaving their course, moving into a wide range of jobs in a variety of sectors. Of those employed, 17% were in clerical and secretarial positions; 13% were in the social work and welfare professions; 11% were in retail, catering and bar work; 7.5% were in managerial positions; and 6% had gone into business and finance.

Job options

Bear in mind that it's not just your degree discipline that determines your options. Get hold of the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Your Degree... What Next?' from your careers service. This looks more generally at the options for today's graduates and offers informed advice on career planning. Or try 'What jobs would suit me?', an online career planning tool, at www.prospects.ac.uk/links/ppanner.

You can choose between jobs that are degree-related or those that appeal because they use other interests or elements of your

degree.

Jobs directly related to your degree

- [Clinical psychologist](#) - uses psychology to reduce mental distress in overcoming psychological difficulties. The role involves developing evidence-based practice and conducting research.
- [Educational psychologist](#) - uses psychology to identify and support children or young people who are experiencing problems within an educational setting, with the aim of enhancing their learning.
- [Forensic psychologist \(prison and probation services\)](#) - uses psychology to assess and treat offenders.
- [Further education lecturer](#) or [Higher education lecturer](#) - teaches psychology in colleges and higher education institutions, mainly to people over 16.
- [Health psychologist](#) - usually employed within The National Health Service (NHS), working to promote attitude and behaviour change in relation to health.
- [Occupational psychologist](#) - applies psychology to solve organisational problems including recruitment, selection and assessment, training, work design and dealing with change.

Jobs where your degree would be useful

- [Careers adviser/personal adviser \(careers\)](#) - works with young people or adults providing information, advice and guidance, either individually or through groupwork.
- [Counsellor](#) - works with individuals, couples or small groups to help people problem solve and cope with difficulties or distressing incidents, e.g. rape counselling.
- [Human resources officer](#) - advises on and implements policies relating to the use of human resources including employee planning, recruitment, training and welfare.
- [Psychotherapist](#) - works with individuals or small groups to treat mental or physical disorders through a process of psychological treatment. Often a specialism of other roles such as social work, medicine, or clinical psychology.
- [Retail manager](#) - responsible for the day-to-day management of a department or store: managing staff; implementing policies and procedures; and ensuring sales targets are met.

Although for many graduates the jobs listed here might not be their first, they are among the many realistic possibilities with your degree, provided you can demonstrate you have the attributes employers are looking for. It's worth noting that many graduate vacancies don't specify particular degree disciplines.

To find out more about the above options and other jobs, see AGCAS Occupational Profiles and other sources of occupational information available in careers services. Occupational Profiles are also available on www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations.

Where are the jobs?

The National Health Service (NHS), local councils, and multinational organisations are all major employers of psychology graduates. Most health-related professionals work in multidisciplinary teams throughout the country. Non-health-related jobs can also be found in a variety of geographic areas.

Take a look at the following sectors for further information:

- [Health](#) - explores both primary and secondary care roles in the health sector;
- [Social care](#) - investigates jobs which meet the needs of

those coping with problems such as poverty, life crisis, and emotional ill health.

Career management is an ongoing process, one that you'll no doubt develop all your working life. For further information on all the above employment areas, visit

www.prospects.ac.uk/links/sectorbs or ask to see the AGCAS Sector Briefings at your careers service.

Further study

In 2005, almost a quarter of psychology graduates were studying either full or part-time six months after leaving their course. As postgraduate training is a requirement for chartership as a psychologist (there are alternative routes to charterships but very few people use these routes) many graduates will enter training immediately.

Popular courses include one-year MSc programmes in forensic, occupational, health or sport and exercise psychology. Other graduates take a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), or Scottish Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), to qualify themselves as teachers as a route into educational psychology. Other popular programmes include human resource management, marketing and public relations.

These trends show only what previous graduates in your subject did immediately upon graduating. Over the course of their career - the first few years in particular - many others will opt for some form of further study, either part-time or full-time. If further study interests you, start by taking a look at the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Postgraduate Study and Research' or the 'Further study' section of www.prospects.ac.uk. For a comprehensive list of courses, see 'Prospects Postgraduate Directory'.

Refer too to the 'Prospects Postgraduate Funding Guide', the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Postgraduate Study and Research' and AGCAS Vocational Course Surveys for further details relating to finance and the application process.

Other options

Don't forget there are alternatives to entering employment or postgraduate study, such as taking time out, volunteering or travelling. Longer term, you may want to consider starting your own business. Check out the AGCAS Special Interest booklets 'Beyond Nine to Five: Flexible Working', 'Self-employment' and 'Working Abroad', all available from your careers service.

What next?

This should have started you thinking about your future. Whatever stage you are at, your careers service will be able to help you. A huge number of resources, including most of those mentioned here, plus a wide range of other services, including individual careers guidance, employer presentations and workshops on topics such as successful applications and interview techniques, are likely to be on offer.

A full list of useful resources plus case studies of graduates in this subject can also be found on www.prospects.ac.uk/links/options.

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