

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 your other activities, 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 of the transferable skills which all graduate employers require, for example: communication; numeracy; information technology; independent learning; and the ability to work in teams.

Psychology courses accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS) (<http://www.bps.org.uk>) contain substantial teaching on statistics and research methodology, as well as scientific methods. Because of these areas of study, psychology students are able to understand and manipulate both quantitative and qualitative data, use computers and problem solve effectively. Consequently, psychology graduates are well placed to move into research or numeracy-based careers such as market research, academia and accounting. Psychology students also develop many of the skills of humanities graduates, such as critical thinking and essay writing.

Only a small proportion of psychology undergraduates progress to be chartered psychologists. If you want to move into this area of work, 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 can be beneficial, e.g. working with children or adults with learning difficulties; mentoring; befriending; working in care homes or with those who are mentally distressed.

Job options

Bear in mind that it's not just your degree discipline that determines your options. Look at [your degree... what next?](#) for informed advice on career planning and graduate employment, or take a look at [what jobs would suit me?](#) a helpful starting point for self-analysis.

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. Higher education lecturers also perform significant amounts of research in their specialist area.
- [Health psychologist](#) - usually employed within the National Health Service (see NHS Careers

<http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk>)), working to promote attitude and behaviour change in relation to health, often working on a specific behavioural area e.g. reducing drinking..

- [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 some of the jobs listed here might not be first jobs for many graduates, they are among the many realistic possibilities with your degree, provided you can demonstrate you have the attributes employers are looking for. It's also worth noting that many graduate vacancies don't specify particular degree disciplines, so don't restrict your thinking to the jobs listed here.

[Explore types of jobs](#) to find out more about the above options and related jobs.

Career areas

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 [your degree...what next?](#)

Psychology is the third most popular degree subject with nearly 9,000 students graduating from first degrees in psychology in 2006 (British Psychological Society (BPS) (<http://www.bps.org.uk>), Annual Report 2007). This proportion increases annually. Approximately one in ten of these graduates will eventually become a chartered psychologist.

First destination data for psychology graduates can be misleading as many new graduates enter their first job simply to gain the necessary experience to progress onto further study in order to achieve chartered status.

In 2007, six months after graduation, more than half of psychology graduates were in full or part-time work, moving into a wide range of jobs in a variety of sectors. However a substantial minority were in non-graduate roles, such as clerical and secretarial positions, retail, catering or bar work. Of those who entered graduate-level jobs, social and welfare occupations

were the most popular, with 13% entering this type of work followed by management roles in various sectors.

Where are the jobs?

The National Health Service (see NHS Careers (<http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk>)), 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 throughout your working life. [Explore job sectors](#) for further information on all the above employment areas.

Further study

In 2007, six months after graduation, over a quarter of psychology graduates were in full or part-time study. Further postgraduate training and study is a requirement to become a chartered psychologist (there are alternative routes to chartered status but very few people use these routes). Even so, there are only slightly more psychology graduates entering postgraduate study straight away relative to the general graduate population.

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 as teachers as a route into educational psychology. Whilst a teaching qualification is no longer a requirement for this profession it is still recommended as the most popular route. For those entering clinical psychology, a three-year doctorate is required, though few graduates are able to enter this immediately after their undergraduate degree. Other popular non psychology specific 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 thinking [about postgrad study](#). [Find courses and research](#) to identify your options; you can also [apply for courses online](#).

Look at [funding my further study](#) for more details relating to finance and the application process.

What next?

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. For something different, check out [self-employment](#) and [flexible working](#) or explore [working and studying abroad](#).

This should have started you thinking about your future. Whether you are in the early stages of career planning, or you have definite ideas about what you want to do, you will find further information to help you in the following sections:

- Analyse your skills, interests and motivations to find out [what jobs would suit me?](#)
- [Explore types of jobs](#) to find out about entry requirements, salaries and working conditions.
- [Explore job sectors](#) for hints on breaking into various industries.
- [Find graduate employers](#) and see what they have to offer.

- Look at the advice on [applications, CVs and interviews](#).
- Get [work experience](#) through vacation work or a work placement.
- [Find courses and research](#) and investigate postgraduate study opportunities.
- If you have already graduated, get online [interactive advice](#).
- Visit [your university careers service](#) for a wealth of advice and resources to help with your career planning.

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