

# Getting Psychology Related Work Experience

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Many Psychology students are keen to gain relevant work experience whilst at university. This might be to try out an area of work that interests them, to assist entry onto postgraduate study, which will enable them to work toward achieving the status of Chartered Psychologist status, or simply to have a greater chance of obtaining graduate employment in a field which uses their knowledge and skills.

Admissions tutors for psychology training programmes will often require you to demonstrate relevant work experience to gain a place on their course – further details will be given on the website for each programme. Work experience is a great way to gain insight into a psychology career and can give you the opportunity to find out whether you enjoy this type of work. Don't wait until your final year to start building this up, but try to actively seek out any opportunities which will bring you into contact with the client group you are ultimately keen to work with. So for instance, if your goal is eventually to train as a Clinical Psychologist, experience of working with adults or children with mental health issues will be invaluable. If it is hard to get paid work of this type, voluntary work can help you to gain relevant experience. Consider what type of people you want to work with and contact relevant local organisations and charities.

You may find it hard to organise placements directly with psychologists until you have completed your degree, but to identify psychologists working in your area you may wish to search the British Psychological Society's (BPS) 'Directory of Chartered Psychologists', via their website:

<http://www.bps.org.uk/psychology-public/find-psychologist/find-psychologist>

There are also a number of useful websites which you might like to refer to for voluntary opportunities:

Sheffield Volunteering <http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/sheffield-volunteering>

Do-it <http://www.do-it.org.uk/>

Timebank <http://timebank.org.uk/>

V-inspired <http://vinspired.com/>

Volunteering England <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/>

For a more detailed insight into what type of experience is most relevant for each of the chartered psychology career pathways, refer to the relevant section of the BPS website:

<http://careers.bps.org.uk/>

## Experience towards Chartered Psychologists Pathways

The most sought after experience for Clinical Psychology is that of 'assistant psychologist' or 'research assistant'. There is a high level of competition for assistant psychologist positions so it is important to think



about gaining relevant work experience as soon as you decide this is your preferred career path. The Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology provides information about relevant experience on its website at <https://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/BasicEntryExperience.html>.

You will need to gain experience in the sorts of settings where clinical psychologists work such as hospitals, day-care units and community multi-professional teams, working with the type of clients which clinical psychologists see e.g. adults with mental health problems, older people, those with learning difficulties, children with psychological difficulties, people who have substance abuse problems and offenders.

Voluntary experience and related paid positions such as nursing assistant, social worker, care assistant or other opportunities in relevant settings will all help to build your skills and understanding of the profession. Once graduated there are also opportunities under the government initiative of Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) for paid employment in roles such as Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner, Low Intensity Therapist etc.

Counselling Psychology courses may require applicants to have completed a basic counselling skills course and/or gained relevant experience. For more information, check the websites for the courses that you are considering, and contact the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) for details about where to find counselling skills courses (<http://www.bacp.co.uk/>).

For Educational Psychology, settings in which relevant experience is likely to be gained include work as a teacher, a graduate assistant in an educational psychology service, a learning support assistant, an educational social worker, a learning mentor, a speech and language therapist, a care worker and a worker in early years settings. Voluntary experience of various kinds may assist applicants in demonstrating a breadth of relevant experience. Whatever kind of work has been done, courses will be primarily interested in what applicants have learnt from the experience that is relevant to work as an educational psychologist and how they have been able to apply the knowledge of psychology gained through their first degree.

Universities offering the accredited Masters in Forensic Psychology will decide upon the type and nature of experience required and will often provide information about their requirements on their website. Prior experience of work, volunteering or research in a forensic setting such as victim support, the police, prison service or relevant charities can be beneficial. Identify the courses you are interested in, check their websites for further information and, if necessary, approach the course tutors directly to see if they can provide you with a profile of the type of experience a successful applicant will have gained.

## Other work experience

If you are looking for some work experience in an area related to your future career plans, a good starting point is to refer to the occupational profile for the role you are interested in on the Prospects website and identify the kind of experience which is generally required:

[http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types\\_of\\_jobs\\_browse\\_all.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs_browse_all.htm)

The Careers Service advertises part-time term time and vacation jobs through its Jobshop in the Students' Union and on its website: [www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs)

The Careers Service also runs an Employers on Campus programme offering a range of opportunities to meet employers through presentations, networking events and fairs. Employers attending these events will often provide information about placement and internship opportunities, enabling you to find out more about getting work experience with their organisations. Further information is available through the Careers Service **Career Connect** accessed via MUSE and the Employers on Campus pages at <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/events/oncampus>.

The Degree with Employment Experience provides an opportunity to spend a year in employment as a recognised part of your degree programme. Further information about this option can be found at <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/placements/students/year>.

You also have opportunities to gain work experience through the following programmes:

- On Campus Placements – 100 hour paid project-based placements in academic and professional services departments within the University :  
<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/placements/students/oncampus>
- Taste of Work for students with little or no work experience:  
<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/advice/tasteofwork>

## Further Resources

- University of Sheffield Careers Connect service via MUSE or <http://shef.prospects.ac.uk/> . Includes information about part time jobs, internships and placements.
- British Psychological Society Appointments Memorandum <http://www.appmemo.co.uk/>
- British Psychology Society Careers Webpages <http://www.bps.org.uk/careers-in-psychology>
- British Psychological Society Youtube media centre - series of short videos on the main psychology career areas <https://www.youtube.com/user/bpsmediacentre> - see Careers in Psychology section.
- Careers in Psychology <http://www.careersinpsychology.co.uk/>
- Careers with my degree <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/degree/psy>
- Clearing house for Clinical Psychologists [www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/)
- H.E. Academy Psychology Student Employability Guide  
[http://www.agcas.org.uk/agcas\\_resources/431-Psychology-Employability-Guides-](http://www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/431-Psychology-Employability-Guides-)
- Jobs and careers in the Justice system <http://www.justice.gov.uk/jobs>
- NHS Careers Website – what can I do with my degree?  
<http://www.whatcanidowithmydegree.nhs.uk/LandingPageViewer.aspx?DegreeId=2309>
- NHS Jobs Website <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- Prospects - Options with psychology including case studies  
[http://www.prospects.ac.uk/options\\_psychology.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/options_psychology.htm)
- Rate my Placement: <http://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/>
- Resources for International Students: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/inter>
- Sheffield Undergraduate Research Experience: <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/sure>
- Skills acquired by Psychology Graduates  
<http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/students/skills/skillspsy.pdf>
- Substance Misuse – [http://www.fdap.org.uk/careers\\_guidance.php](http://www.fdap.org.uk/careers_guidance.php)
- Target Jobs <http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/degree-subjects-your-options/301050-what-can-i-do-with-a-psychology-degree>