Psychology Student

Employability Guide

from University to Career

Caprice Lantz

The
Higher
Education
Academy **Psychology Network**

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The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network

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'Studying undergraduate psychology can help you to prepare more broadly for a variety of careers by developing your mind, mature judgement and graduate skills...'

Introduction

Ask a non-psychologist what psychology is all about and you may get some surprising answers. Some will say psychology teaches you to read minds; others that it is not truly a science; still others that it is simply common sense. While such misconceptions abound among those without a psychology background, surprisingly two misconceptions permeate the psychology community itself regarding psychology careers. The first one is that some think that a bachelor's degree is enough to become a psychologist. The second is many think that most psychology students become psychologists (Lantz and Reddy, 2010).

While some undergraduate 'ologies (e.g. meteorology) lead directly to careers in those fields, becoming a professional psychologist requires two or three years of additional postgraduate study and supervised experience. While many students go on to pursue this goal, some students decide they do not want to invest in the additional time it takes. Others who persist find that there can be significant competition to get on postgraduate courses (Lantz and Reddy, 2010). For example, in 2010 about one in five or 21% of applicants for clinical psychology courses were successful (Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology, 2010). While competition varies by year and by the course, some do find it challenging to gain entry. Therefore, advanced preparation is important.

If you are studying psychology because you truly want to become a psychologist, this guide is not to dissuade you from that goal but to provide realistic information that can help you in the process. With this aim it provides an overview of the traditional areas of psychology along with some emerging career paths you may not have thought about. It also provides tips regarding acquiring work experience and applying to postgraduate programmes as well as exercises and information which can help you to better articulate your career goals and sell yourself both on paper and during work experience or admissions interviews.

If you aren't sure about your career goals, this guide is also for you. Many students study psychology because it's interesting, provides many options or they are not sure what they want to do. In fact, the majority, about 80% of UK psychology graduates go on to careers related to or outside of psychology.

I felt that doing a degree in psychology would give me lots of options when I graduated (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). – Laura Kingston, Research Technician, Centre for Appearance Research, University of the West of England

> I took an Access course for mature students and part of it dealt with psychology...I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to work with people but a lot of why I pursued the degree had to do with personal achievement (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). – Linda Farmer, Drug Support Worker, Social care charity

> I chose Psychology because it was an interesting subject rather than it being a necessary step to a career I had in mind. I … chose something general that I hoped would be interesting (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Tom Liversidge, Learning Technologies Developer, University of Manchester

Studying undergraduate psychology can help you to prepare more broadly for a variety of careers by developing your mind, mature judgement and graduate skills (Lantz and Reddy, 2010). Indeed, broad preparation is one of the positive sides of non-vocational courses. However, it is important to also be aware of the downside; specifically that finding a career focus and later a job can be more of a challenge. Some research has found that graduates of non-vocational courses are more than twice as likely to be unemployed compared to those completing vocational courses (Institute for Employment Research, 1999). As well, some research suggests under-employment - working in jobs not requiring a degree - can also be a problem.

The challenges that some psychology graduates face in finding suitable job opportunities may be due to narrowing down the breadth of opportunities available to them as well as changing or unclear career goals. While it is fine and even expected for you to be uncertain about what you want to do, this can become a problem when career exploration and decisions are put off and you graduate in need of a job but without direction.

> It may be especially difficult for psychology students to become employment-focused because of the breadth of the degree and its open-endedness…it may be a challenge for students to isolate early on the types of skills they have that an employer may deem important [KPMG] (Hugh-Jones and Sutherland, 2007, p. 5).

These facts are important for you to know. Not to discourage you but to encourage you to contemplate career options early so you can be better prepared when you graduate. In our work around employability, we have talked with many psychology graduates about their educational backgrounds and careers. Most said that while the psychology degree gave them valuable skills and experience, they wished they had started career preparation sooner.

> I really enjoyed psychology though it was hard to find a specific career. I don't think I got enough guidance. I don't think I even knew where to look for guidance or that there was guidance available. I wish I'd known that I could ask any question I wanted of my tutors at university... I was just shy of being demanding. People usually want to help, but they need to be asked (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Emma Lyndon-Stanford, Independent Drama Teacher, Dreamas

If you are not sure about your career direction, you can use this guide to develop a better understanding of your interests and skills, find a career direction, obtain relevant experience and land a job when you graduate.

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'Review your goals and action plans regularly to ensure you are on track.'

1. Career Planning

This section introduces concepts that are important in the career planning process (personal development planning, reflection, goal setting and action planning), and which are relevant to using this guide and working with tutors, careers advisors and others involved in supporting your development. It also provides a timeline of suggested activities to undertake during undergraduate studies.

Personal development planning

Personal development planning (PDP) is the process of tracking your learning experiences, progress and achievements, and taking charge of your personal and career development. It includes a range of thinking and planning activities to help you work out where you are now, where you want to go in the future and what you need to do to get there (Higher Education Academy, n.d.).

In psychological terms, PDP is based on metacognitive processes, that is, thinking about thinking. In the context of PDP, this involves being aware of thought processes and actions and exerting conscious control over them in order to maximise learning. Figure 1 shows a diagram of PDP. It involves doing something, reflecting on what you did and making plans based on these reflections.

PDP is at the heart of this guide because it contains a variety of activities designed to help you reflect on your learning, develop plans, identify career interests and seek opportunities to develop skills and experiences in line with your interests.

Most universities now offer programmes or support systems for PDP although this varies widely between and within institutions. Different terminology may be used to describe PDP and support may be provided centrally or built into course programmes. They might be part of academic review in tutorials, reflective elements within assignments, skills development monitoring, or action-planning materials to help identify goals. PDP can help you evaluate your learning from modules, identify strengths and weaknesses and explore ways to improve your grades.

Activities and resources are now also often linked with initiatives such as the institutional employability awards being developed across the UK to help students evidence the 'added value' of wider learning gained from extra-curricular experiences. These include recognition of volunteering, involvement with student societies, skills and qualities gained from work-based placements, and above all the student's ability to understand who they are becoming and what they can offer. Increasingly e-portfolio tools are also being introduced to provide not only a personal space for the collection and presentation of learning achievements, but also to facilitate ongoing reflective practice which is invaluable to personal development, encouraging the recording of your feelings, reactions, insights and ideas.

Find out what PDP support is available in your institution. If you find that there is support, you can use this guide in conjunction with what your institution offers. Take the guide along to meetings with your PDP tutor to explore how it might be used. If you find that there is limited support for PDP on your programme, this guide provides an excellent starting point to chart your learning journey. However, also consider consulting your university careers service to find out how they can help you with future planning.

The next part of this section explains the key components in the PDP (reflection, goal setting and action planning) all of which will help you to use this guide most effectively.

Reflection

Reflection is the process of thinking about and sorting through ideas, feelings, attitudes and experiences in order to gain new insights. Reflection is the ability to look back at experiences and to make sense of them in order to repeat what worked well and to learn from mistakes. The example about Joe illustrated in Figure 1, shows how reflection fits into the process of PDP.

SET GOALS CREATE ACTION PLANS
Joe wants to figure out how to motivate team members to work with him. He creates action plans which include reading up on team work and getting involved in activities requiring teamwork.

Personal Development Planning

DO
Joe completes a team project for his introduction to psychology module

REFLECT
Reflecting on the team project, Joe realises that he had difficulties because he seemed to be doing all the work.

Figure 1: Adapted with permission from Bridges CETL: *http://bridgescetl.beds.ac.uk*

PDP helps you:
- become more aware of skills you have;
- identify and develop skills you need;
- focus in on possible career options;
- describe yourself on a CV and in interviews;
- work out what you want to achieve and how to achieve it;
- become more independent and confident; and
- build a source of information for job and course applications.

(Quality Assurance Agency, 2000)

Reflection helps you to:
- understand how you are learning and using that learning;
- identify, while in a situation, the best action to take;
- recognise your strengths and weaknesses, and how you can improve;
- see how far you are achieving your goals and what the barriers might be;
- consider how you could fill any skill or knowledge gaps; and
- increase self-awareness and personal effectiveness.

You may be tempted to reflect by simply thinking through things. However, writing down reflections can help you to clarify your thoughts and focus ideas. For example, writing notes on your experience on a course module or a work placement will help you extract your key learning and action points and enable you to apply these elsewhere. This process will help you to move towards 'thinking on your feet' thereby reflecting intuitively while something is happening in order to take appropriate action. Your study modules will frequently require elements of evaluation, review, reflection and self-assessment, but developing a habit of reflection in all situations will prove an invaluable life skill for work-based roles.

Exercise 1 overleaf is designed to enable you to try out reflection on a topic of your choice to become familiar with how it works.

Reflection is about…….Making sense….

Standing back….Repetition………

Deeper honesty....Weighing up......Clarity...

Understanding….Making judgments.

It helps you move from the *What? When? and Who? to the Why? and How?*

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Exercise 1: Reflection

1. Select an incident from your studies so far or your work-based experience.........perhaps something which made you feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied in some way.

2. Brainstorm words describing your fears, hopes, impressions, reactions and attitudes in relation to the incident. Write these here.

3. Consider the following questions which might help you think about the experience.
    What happened?.........How did you feel?.........Did you express your feelings? How?.........Did you do anything else at the time as a result of this incident?.........What were the consequences?.........Did your responses enable you to gain anything positive from the situation?

4. Did you learn anything.........about yourself.........about handling other people.........about that situation? Would you react differently another time? How? Why?

5. Highlight anything you learned about yourself from the experience.

This guide contains a variety of reflective activities in Section 2 as well as the appendices. In the activities, you might include reflective comments indicating the particular learning experiences or incidents in which you developed transferable skills, competencies and qualities. Be sure to detail any insights and understanding gained about yourself through the reflection process. It may also help to talk over your reflections with a course tutor, careers adviser or friend.

Reflection tips

- Reflect regularly, for example after each assignment, at the end of each module, work placement, teamwork experience and term. Any complex event or situation can benefit from reflection.

- Use tools, questions and prompts if these are helpful.

- Include anything that helps you consider your motivation, reactions and experiences in greater depth.

- Consider different perspectives such as those of other people involved.

- Be honest in writing about things you find difficult or challenging.

- Try and link your learning with, for example, other modules, work-based learning, voluntary activities; look for patterns or themes.

- Use feedback from tutors, lecturers, supervisors, peers or colleagues constructively.

- Think positively about moving yourself and your skills forward; develop action plans for what to do next.

Acknowledgement to Watton, Collings and Moon, (2001) *Reflective Writing*.

Goal setting and action planning

Specifically defining your goals and the steps necessary to achieve them (action plans) can help move you along the path of personal development. Both play key roles in personal development planning.

Goals can relate to features of your academic work, reading journal articles more effectively for example, or developing competencies or skills (learning how to lead people or use Excel), they can be exploratory (for example, finding out what behavioural support workers do), or can be directed towards specific career goals (finding a job in human resources). It is important to choose goals that you can realistically achieve. Whilst you might want to make £50K in your first year out of university, this is unlikely to be achievable. You may have several goals that you are working on at once, for example learning to take more effective notes, developing leadership skills and learning about job opportunities.

An action plan is a statement of a goal that you want to achieve followed by a list of actions necessary to achieve that goal. A broad goal such as finding a job may require a series of action plans so that you do not get lost in the process. Appendix A (page 132) provides a blank action plan for your use.

'If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there.' Lewis Carroll

Whilst goal setting and action planning can be done anytime, we suggest that you set goals and create action plans at least at the end of each term in order to plan what you will do for the coming term. However, before establishing goals and action plans, it can be helpful to reflect on your experiences over the term to see what goals might be most appropriate as well as to consolidate your learning. You can do this by using the course reflection activity (Appendix C, page 135) and work experience log and reflection sheet (Appendix D, page 137) and by reviewing your assessments in Section 2.

As noted, action planning begins with a goal. Let's take Joe from the example in Figure 1 on page 10. After reflecting on his experience of teamwork, Joe decided to set a goal and create an action plan for enhancing team work skills. Action Plan I is an example of what his plan might look like.

Action plan I	Complete by:
Goal: Develop teamwork skills	December 31
Steps to achieve the goal	
◉ Research four campus clubs or activities I might get involved in.	September 1
◉ Decide which activities would be most interesting/appropriate. Consider starting one of my own if I cannot find any of interest.	September 10
◉ Join clubs or activities.	September 30
◉ Volunteer to be part of a committee or small group to undertake a project.	October 15
◉ Reflect on my experience to find out if I have met my goal. If not, develop another action plan to find other opportunities.	December 31

Action planning can also be used to learn about job possibilities. Let's say that Dave is trying to decide between pursuing a job as a behavioural support worker or a teaching assistant. Action Plan II is an example of what his action plan might look like.

'In reality, there is no set timetable for career preparation.'

Action plan II	Complete by:
Goal: Gather enough information about behavioural support workers and teaching assistants to make an informed choice about which career to pursue.	December 15
Steps to achieve the goal	
■ Review any similar career case studies on the Psychology Network and Prospects websites.	September 10
■ Visit careers service and find out what information they have about these jobs.	October 1
■ Find two people who work in behavioural support and two who work as teaching assistants.	October 12
■ Develop questions to ask to learn about careers.	October 15
■ Contact people I have identified to arrange meetings by phone or in person.	November 15
■ Use the decision-making model to make final decision consulting with careers adviser, tutor, lecturer, or other person for support.	December 15

Action planning can also be used to pursue a particular career path. This planning may be somewhat more complicated and require sub-steps or even separate action plans. Let's say that Lucy has decided that she wants a job in marketing after graduation. Action Plan III provides an example of what her action plan might look like.

As mentioned you should strive to set goals and create action plans at the beginning of each term, however you may need to do it more frequently depending on the time scale you set for yourself. It is also helpful to review your action plans periodically to check your progress and to ensure that you are on track.

Reflecting, learning about yourself and pursuing goals are all part of personal development planning. They are important not only for your own self-discovery and career development, but also because they provide a record of what you have done that will prove invaluable in pursuing postgraduate study, sponsorship or jobs. For example, a CV needs to describe your progress to date and requires a clear

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understanding of who you are and what you can offer. Material from your reflective activities can help you to develop your CV. Also, in interviews, employers like to hear detailed examples of experiences that you have had. It is easy to forget the 'story' element of your experience, perhaps how you coped with a challenging situation in a volunteering role, or how your particular contribution influenced the outcome on a team project. Keeping a record of your skills and achievements from study, work placements and other activities can help.

The appendices in this guide provide PDP activities, such as the work-experience log, which include record keeping. It may also be helpful to keep tutorial records and assignment feedback, together with notes or comments you have received from lecturers and others to help you track your progress. Notes can be short bullet-pointed entries and only take a few minutes of reflection time. If you keep regular records, each week or fortnight or at the end of each module or assignment, you will build a rich resource to draw upon.

Action plan III	Complete by:
Goal: Obtain a position as a marketing assistant upon graduation.	August 2013
Steps to achieve the goal	
⬤ Enrol in market research module.	January 2012
⬤ Prepare a CV and covering letter.	April 2012
⬤ Learn about and practise interview skills.	Early May 2012
⬤ Identify possible work placements and send CVs and covering letters.	Late May 2012
⬤ Draft plans for final year project on marketing research topic.	June 2012
⬤ Locate a summer work placement related to market research.	June 2012
⬤ Follow up on CVs and schedule interview.	August 2012
⬤ Complete work placement.	August 2012
⬤ Reflect on what I have learned from work placement.	September 2012
⬤ Learn where related jobs are listed and become familiar with skills sought by employers.	September 2012
⬤ Identify skills that I lack and establish action plans to develop them.	September 2012
⬤ Join marketing research organisations and begin reading relevant publications.	October 2012
⬤ Begin telling friends, lecturers, colleagues, etc. that I will be looking for a position in market research when I graduate.	December 2012
⬤ Update CV with information from work placement and final project.	January 2013
⬤ Develop job search strategy and begin job search.	March 2013

Presenting your story: PDP to support self-presentation and employability

Drawing together these two elements of PDP - 'looking back' (reflection) and 'looking forward' (goal-setting and action-planning) - is important for any form of self-presentation, whether an application for postgraduate study, sponsorship, a job application or an academic profile. For example, a CV needs to describe your progress to date and requires a clear understanding of who you are and what you can offer, but it must also be targeted to a role or organisation, and should demonstrate your motivation and the ability to justify your choices. Every time you need to present yourself to an interested party you will need to describe these two parts of your personal story – where you have come from and where you plan to go.

Throughout the Guide you will find many examples and tips on how to present yourself in application and selection processes, but remember that your PDP records will prove an invaluable source to draw upon for the evidence of your personal development which is so valued by employers. The skills assessment in Section 2 will help you collect relevant examples of evidence for self-presentation.

The appendices also provide prompts to record your experiences, such as keeping a work-experience log, and it may be helpful to keep tutorial records and assignment feedback, together with notes or comments to help you track your progress. Your notes can be short bullet-pointed entries, for example in an e-portfolio, and only take a few minutes of reflection time, perhaps each week or fortnight or at the end of each module/assignment.

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'Every time you present yourself to an interested party you will need to describe… where you have come from and where you hope to go.'

Timelines

Students progress through courses at different rates. You may be a full-time, part-time, conversion or a mature student. You may have to work while completing your course or be free to work as and when you choose. Your course may require three or four years of study. The timelines on the following pages provide what might be seen as an ideal for career preparation based on the traditional three-year full-time undergraduate student. In reality, there are increasingly fewer traditional students and there is no set timetable for career preparation. This timeline is presented as simply a guide.

Year one timeline

September - December

Your first term at university can be a challenge with the possibility of new living arrangements, friends and activities, along with a new level of work required for success in psychology. Still try to begin investigating opportunities now so that you can plan ahead.

☐ Read Sections 1 to 5 of this guide better to understand career possibilities and what to do to prepare during your course.

☐ Participate in induction week. Join activities of interest to you.

☐ Register with careers service and the university student employability service, if available.

☐ Find out when work experience fairs are taking place and prepare accordingly. This is important for competitive areas such as clinical psychology or transferring to law, where relevant placements can be important starting from year one.

☐ Join the student members' group of the British Psychological Society or other relevant organisation, (e.g. Psychological Society of Ireland) and find out about relevant events.

☐ Explore the availability of personal development planning (PDP) as described in Section 2.

January - March

With one term behind you, it may be easier to follow through on things you learned last term.

☐ Use Section 2 to begin the self-assessment process. Visit the careers services and/or your PDP tutor for help. Continue to refer back to this section as you progress through your course.

☐ Get involved in campus activities that will help you to develop new skills and experiences. Maintain these throughout your course to ensure continual development.

☐ Consider exploring career options through work shadowing (i.e., spending some time with someone in their work place).

☐ Consider options for volunteering, work placements, summer jobs or overseas work experiences.

☐ Learn about the importance of networking and work towards building your network of contacts as discussed in Section 5.

April - June

The first year is coming to a close but before you celebrate, plan.

☐ Use Section 5 to learn about researching careers and Section 6 to learn about decision-making.

☐ Consider study abroad programmes such as Erasmus *(www.erasmus.ac.uk)*.

☐ Apply for summer volunteer work, work placements or jobs based on what you've learned about yourself.

☐ Discuss options for second year with tutors and people in the jobs that interest you.

☐ Investigate what previous graduates are doing now.

July - August

Use your summer holiday to test out career ideas, learn about work environments and develop skills. Consider the following options choosing those that best fit your situation. Refer to 'Getting work experience' (Section 7, page 99) for tips on making the most of your experiences.

☐ Try out various work placements (two to five weeks) experiencing different roles, seeing which you enjoy; do a longer work placement in a career area of interest; work in paid employment in something that will help you to gain skills and experience useful to your career; gain work experience abroad.

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Year two timeline

September - December

The start of year two is a time for reflection, planning and action. Consult with your PDP tutor or careers service to reflect on your experiences, make career decisions and develop action plans.

☐ Begin actively researching different jobs and identifying those of interest using Section 5 (page 91).

☐ Consider options for your independent research project related to your career interests.

☐ Participate in careers service events and workshops now and throughout your course.

☐ Consider applying for vacation placements for Christmas and Easter.

☐ Considering a sandwich year placement? Ask your department or careers service for help in identifying potential placements and apply early.

☐ Considering social work, law or teaching? Begin relevant voluntary work.

January - March

If you have not already done so, consider the following:

☐ Develop a CV relating the details of your experience and education to your career interests using Section 9 (page 111).

☐ Develop a profile of yourself that you can use to describe yourself to employers.

☐ Attend relevant careers fairs, employer campus visits and career talks sponsored by your careers service or psychology department.

☐ Considering postgraduate study overseas? Start researching now. The process can take up to 18 months.

☐ Consider how you will spend your summer. Perhaps gaining experience and developing networking contacts through a summer job, volunteer post, work placement or overseas opportunities?

April - June

Ensure your summer plans are in motion and act on the following as needed.

☐ Learn about interviewing skills through workshops or doing mock interviews with careers service if available.

☐ Ensure you know how to get the most from your summer work experiences using Section 7 (page 99).

☐ Considering postgraduate courses and scholarships? Act now. Closing dates can be more than 12 months before courses start.

July - August

Use your summer holiday to gain experience and skills that will build your CV and make you more attractive to employers or postgraduate courses. Consider the following ideas choosing those that best fit your situation.

☐ Try out various work placements (two to five weeks) experiencing different roles, seeing which you enjoy; do a longer work placement in a career area of interest; work in paid employment in something that will help you to gain skills and experience useful to your career; gain work experience abroad.

Year three timeline

September - December

You may be busy with your third year project but don't lose sight of your career goals.

☐ Reflect upon your work experiences and course thus far to gain a clearer picture of your skills, interests, values, personal qualities and career goals.

☐ Update your CV based on your reflections relating summer experiences to career goals.

☐ Ensure everyone you know is aware you are graduating soon and will be looking for a job (if applicable).

☐ Attend relevant presentations from employers, careers fairs or postgraduate fairs.

☐ Interested in Clinical or Educational Psychology, Primary PGCE, Diploma in Law conversion course, Post Graduate Social Work course or the Civil Service Fast Stream? Apply now. Note, some courses (e.g., Clinical) will not consider you without additional experience or may have other specific application requirements.

☐ Considering postgraduate studies in the US? Take Graduate Record Exam and/or Graduate Management Admissions Test in October or November.

☐ Considering work with a large organisation? Apply now for graduate training schemes.

☐ Interested in postgraduate research at your institution? Talk to your tutor and ask about possibilities.

☐ Considering postgraduate studies elsewhere? Research opportunities now.

January - March

If you have been preparing all along, there might not be much to do!

☐ Considering other postgraduate courses including secondary PGCEs? Apply now for places and for postgraduate funding from Research Councils.

☐ Write a cover letter and review this with your careers service to check your understanding of appropriate cover letter format and content.

☐ Become familiar (if you are not already) with job postings from online sources and elsewhere.

April - June

If you have sorted your career goals; gained relevant experience; developed a good CV, interviewing skills and a network of contacts; you will be in a good position to take the final steps in your transition from university to career or postgraduate study.

☐ Review Section 11 (page 121) on developing a job search strategy and see careers service for advice.

☐ Remind everyone in your network (if appropriate) that you are actively looking for a job and ask for advice.

☐ Identify organisations that are of interest to you and make speculative enquiries.

☐ Apply for jobs in local and national newspapers, internet sites, careers service listings and register with job agencies.

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Website Bridges CETL: www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl

'...understand how to set yourself apart from graduates on other courses particularly when looking for jobs outside of psychology...'

2. Personal Profile

Developing a good understanding of yourself through both assessment and reflection is important. This section includes a series of assessments that will help you to make an inventory and reflect upon your skills, values, attributes and work preferences and to develop an overall picture of who you are and what you have to offer employers. We refer to this as your personal profile. If you know you want to be a professional psychologist, complete these assessments with a view to confirming your career choice, gaining a better understanding of yourself and preparing to sell yourself to postgraduate admission tutors or work experience employers. If you are open to various career possibilities, complete these assessments with a view to gaining a better understanding of yourself and identifying careers of interest to you.

While you can complete these assessments on your own, it is likely to be helpful to discuss them with a careers adviser, PDP tutor or someone else who can help you to make sense of your findings. Careers advisers may be particularly helpful as they will have access to more sophisticated assessments that can help you to more thoroughly explore your career options.

Aim to complete these assessments at the beginning of your second term in order to get a sense of where you are and what developmental steps you might need to take. How often you revisit these assessments is ultimately up to you, however, you will want to review them more than once as you change and develop during your course. Be sure to use pencil or transfer your results into an electronic format that you can easily update.

Skills

Students from any discipline develop a range of skills such as literacy and IT skills. However, each discipline cultivates slightly different skills. An undergraduate psychology degree involves an independent research project requiring students to handle data, conduct analysis and produce a substantial piece of writing. It also helps students to develop substantial knowledge regarding human behaviour. The same is not true of many other disciplines and it is important to understand how to set yourself apart from graduates on other courses particularly when looking for jobs outside of psychology as some research suggests that employers do not readily see the difference between psychology graduates and those from other disciplines (Hugh-Jones and Sutherland, 2007).

Skills assessment

Part 1 of the skills assessment provides a list of skills many of which are developed to some extent as part of your study of psychology. Others include those which employers often seek. Try to gain some experience with each of these skills during your course. Use the spaces in column one to describe and reflect upon each skill. Reflection will give you a better understanding of your skills and will help you to prepare to evidence them to employers. Column two is designed to allow you to rate your proficiency with each skill and column three allows you to rate how much you enjoy using each skill. This information is necessary for completing part 2 in which you will categorise these skills based upon enjoyment and level of experience with them. Your skills can fall into one of four categories as follows:

- **Key skills** are those skills that you enjoy using and are good at. These are the skills that you should add to your personal profile, look for opportunities to use throughout your course, highlight on your CV and talk about during interviews.

- **Developmental skills** are those skills that you enjoy using but may not be very good at yet. These are skills that you should look for opportunities to develop further through volunteer or paid opportunities during your course as well as in potential job opportunities after you graduate. The goal here is to transform these from developmental to key skills.

- **Auxiliary skills** are those skills that you have learned to perform reasonably well but that you do not enjoy using. While you might still put these on your CV and pursue jobs that utilise them, try to avoid choosing jobs that emphasise their use as you will find that using them regularly is difficult to do in the long term.

- **Weaknesses** are skills that you do not enjoy using and do not perform to a very high standard. Everyone has weaknesses. While some weaknesses must be addressed so that they become auxiliary skills (e.g. everyone has to be able to write a coherent letter or email) others may be avoided almost entirely by making appropriate career choices.

If you can make career choices which maximise your key and developmental skills, make occasional use of your auxiliary skills and minimise your weaknesses, you will substantially increase your chances of having a more satisfying and successful career. This may not always be easy to do, especially if jobs are scarce or you are just starting out, but this is the current wisdom of both careers advisors and positive psychologists and you would do well to keep it in mind whenever you are faced with career choices.

Both parts of this exercise can be used at any point during your course and can be revisited at any time. Ideally try to complete both parts at the beginning of your second term and review and update them at the beginning of each subsequent term in order to reflect upon your skill development as it occurs and determine which skills to develop. Be sure to complete both parts of this exercise prior to adding skills to your profile or before you write or update your CV. This will ensure you are highlighting the most appropriate skills.

Skills Assessment (part 1)

For each skill (e.g. research, analysis, etc) do the following:

1. Review the skill listed. Reflect on how you have developed the skill (see page 13 for reflection tips) and record your reflections in the space provided in column one.
2. Rate your level of proficiency with the skill in column two.
3. Rate your enjoyment of using the skill in column three thinking about to what extent, if any, you would like to use each skill in future.
4. At the end of the exercise, review the list of additional skills that you may wish to add to the exercise and reflect upon.
5. Complete part 2 of this exercise.

Proficiency Level	Enjoyment Level
1–little	1–none
2–some	2–some
3–confident	3–yes
4–very confident	4-definitely

Analysis and problem solving involves finding and comparing information from various sources and identifying issues and relationships, coming to conclusions based on logical evaluation of information and determining the best course of action. This might include analysis of literature to formulate a research question, choosing methodologies or qualitatively or quantitatively analysing data. *When you are presented with a problem, what are your considerations when gathering information, weighing possibilities and deciding how to proceed?*

Planning and organising involves developing plans of action including making proper assignments and allocating resources to reach particular goals. *How do you typically plan and manage things in your life such as your day or your studies? How do you differentiate priorities, deal with deadlines? How did you plan your research project?*

Attending to detail involves paying attention to even small issues to ensure that tasks are accomplished thoroughly. *How have you dealt with minor considerations of a larger task such as verifying references, checking written work, verifying facts, etc?*

Skills Assessment (part 1)

Handling data and information involves collecting and/or storing information. This may be data generated from your research study. *What were your important considerations for collecting, storing and retrieving data for your study? Do you have other data management experiences?*

Technical skills involve developing and maintaining expertise in the use of various software packages (e.g. spreadsheets, word processing, graphics, statistical analysis, email, web browsing). *What skills have you developed in the use of technology? How did you acquire those skills and what have you used them for? How do you keep up to date on the new changes in technology? How might staying up to date with technology be important in an organisation?*

Interpersonal skills involve an understanding of human motivation, emotion and personality which supports working with or responding to people appropriately and effectively. *Can you describe a situation when you demonstrated interpersonal sensitivity? How can interpersonal sensitivity benefit you in a job situation?*

Team working skills involve applying interpersonal insight to developing effective relationships with people at many levels within organisations or teams. The study of group dynamics or organisational development could contribute to knowledge in this area. *Reflect on your experiences with working in teams including situations where things went well and situations where they did not go well. What makes a team effective? Is there a particular role that you commonly play in teams?*

Skills Assessment (part 1)

Listening effectively means being able to pull out key information in listening to others and demonstrating this verbally and nonverbally. *What are your strategies for listening? How do you let people know that you have heard them and taken their views into account? Can you give an example of when you have demonstrated good listening skills?*

Oral communication skills involve being able to verbally communicate your ideas to others. While this may be done individually and in teams it might also involve presentations. *How have you demonstrated effective oral communication skills?*

Written communication skills involve being able to express ideas in writing appropriately and accurately. The writing involved in psychology courses typically provides students with experience in this area. *Describe a time when you wrote a document or report that was particularly well done or well received. What made it good?*

Learning involves the active pursuit of ongoing opportunities to expand your knowledge as well as encouraging such learning in others. A strong learning orientation enables you to work independently so that you are able to learn what you need to learn in order to be successful in your chosen career. Learning has much to do with Personal Development Planning (page 9) which involves making a conscious effort to develop career and learning plans and to pursue personal and professional goals on an ongoing basis. *What have you done outside required study to develop your knowledge, skills and experience? What is your personal development plan?*

Skills Assessment (part 1)

Influencing means being able to persuade others by effectively communicating individually and in groups. *Describe a time when you convinced a sceptical or resistant person to follow your suggested course of action. How did you approach it? What happened?*

Decision making involves weighing possibilities in order to make effective decisions. See Section 6 (page 95) for an example of a decision making model. *Describe a time when you had to make an important or difficult decision, in other words when the decision was unpopular or controversial, you had to make it with incomplete information or you just found it difficult. What process did you go through and how did you convince others to go along with you?*

Initiating skills or using initiative involves proactively suggesting ideas, identifying new opportunities and volunteering to work in areas outside of normal responsibilities. *Can you recall a time when you demonstrated initiative such as undertaking a new project, volunteering for an unpopular task or making a new idea into reality? How important is it to demonstrate initiative and why?*

Skills Assessment (part 1)

Stress management skills include those that help you to perform well under pressure. *Can you recall a time when you were stressed and how you handled the situation? This could be dealing with an unpleasant supervisor or changing or conflicting priorities, undertaking a last minute presentation or virtually any situation that you found stressful. What are your strategies for managing stress? How do you feel about working in potentially stressful jobs?*

Leadership skills include those that help you to direct the actions of others effectively. *Can you recall a time when you had a leadership role? If so, describe your leadership style. Consider how you gained commitment from individuals, rewarded work, delegated responsibilities and managed disagreements.*

Questioning involves asking questions effectively and appropriately to obtain information. *Reflect on a situation in which you had to ask questions to get information you needed. What was your approach? Are there more effective ways of asking questions? What are they?*

Skills Assessment (part 1)

There are many skills other than those listed above which can be valuable in the workplace. Choose those skills from the list below that you have experience with or wish to develop. Add them in the spaces to follow. Describe them and reflect upon how you have developed them.

	Proficiency Level 1–little 2–some 3–confident 4–very confident	Enjoyment Level 1–none 2–some 3–yes 4-definitely

Skills Assessment (part 1)

Other skills

Administering	Entertaining	Proof-reading
Advising	Establishing	Reading
Appraising	Evaluating	Reconciling
Buying	Experimenting	Recording
Calculating	Filing	Reporting
Checking	Guiding	Representing
Classifying	Hiring	Reviewing
Collating	Improving	Scheduling
Collecting	Inspecting	Selling
Comparing	Instructing	Sorting
Consolidating	Multi-tasking	Studying
Corresponding	Interviewing	Supporting others
Creating	Judging	Testing
Delegating	Managing	Translating
Developing	Motivating	Travelling
Directing	Negotiating	Teaching
Editing	Planning	Validating
Encouraging	Programming	Verifying
Enforcing	Promoting	

Skills Assessment (part 2)

After you have completed part 1 of this assessment, part 2 allows you to categorise your skills based upon how much you enjoy using them as well as your level of experience with them. Review page 24 if necessary to understand the matrix below.

1. Review each skill and transfer it into the appropriate quadrant below.
2. Add all of your key skills and developmental skills to your profile on page 44. Add those auxiliary skills that you think might be somewhat important to your future job to your profile.
3. Consider developing an action plan to enhance your developmental skills (see page 13).
4. Remember to revisit this exercise at the end of each term to determine how your skills have developed.

	High Enjoyment (3 or 4)	**Low Enjoyment (1 or 2)**
High Proficiency Level (3 or 4)	Key skills	Auxiliary skills
Low Proficiency Level (1 or 2)	Developmental skills	Weaknesses

Values

Values are principles or standards that you feel are important in your work. Values are an important part of career exploration, partially because they relate to motivation. If you find work that meets your values, you are likely to feel more motivated to put in your best effort and may therefore be more successful in your work. Some people find that values assessments are actually more helpful in focusing in on careers than interest assessments (Brown and Brooks, 1996), possibly because they help them to define what is truly important to them.

Renowned career psychologist Donald Super developed a values assessment tool to assist individuals in making career choices. His original assessment included 15 values which included intrinsic, extrinsic and concomitant values that influence people's motivation to work and help to determine their occupational and career goals (Brown and Brooks, 1996). While others continue to research values, there is no clearly agreed upon list and values remain somewhat individual.

Values Assessment

The following assessment will help you to identify and describe your work related values.

1.	Review the values below and tick the box next to those that you feel are most important to you in your work. Add any more values that are important to you.

2.	Select eight values that are most important to you and write them in the spaces provided on the next page. Then reflect on what each value means to you.

3.	When you are confident in the values that you have chosen, add up to eight of your most important values to your profile on page 44. Life experiences can change what is important to you at any given time. Revisit this exercise at least once a year to determine if your values have changed.

☐ Helping society	☐ Personal balance	☐ Creativity
☐ Competence	☐ Working alone	☐ Community
☐ Friendship	☐ Structure	☐ Advancement
☐ Helping others	☐ Aesthetics	☐ Belonging
☐ Authority	☐ Integrity	☐ Financial gain
☐ Respect	☐ Varied work	☐ Prestige
☐ Fairness	☐ Artistic expression	☐ Teamwork
☐ Power	☐ Independence	☐ Recognition
☐ Security/stability	☐ Knowledge	☐ Open communication
☐ Honesty	☐ Work environment	
☐ Competition	☐ Autonomy	
☐ Fun	☐ Adventure	
☐ Working with others	☐ Tradition	
☐ Challenge	☐ Achievement	

Exercise 1: Values assessment

Describe your most important values using the spaces below

Examples:	
Fun	*Working in a relaxed place where people enjoy themselves while being productive.*
Structure	*Having clearly defined work tasks so that I know what is expected of me.*
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

The Values assessment was adapted from the Career Action Center, Cupertino, California.

Attributes

Attributes characterise the way in which individuals typically conduct themselves and react to situations. Some argue that attributes are innate while others suggest they are learned. There are certain positive attributes that employers typically seek in employees. For instance, employers typically seek to hire individuals who are assertive (behave in confident yet positive ways) as opposed to individuals who are passive (behave submissively without question) or aggressive (behave in pushy or domineering ways). It is important to know what attributes you possess in order to sell yourself appropriately in your covering letters, CV and during job interviews. Understanding your attributes can also help you to choose work environments and jobs that best suit you as different work environments and jobs will favour certain attributes. For example, an advertising agency hiring someone to generate ad ideas is likely to value someone who is creative and forward-thinking as opposed to someone who is methodical and analytical although all can be considered positive attributes.

Attributes Assessment

The following lists attributes that are generally viewed as positive. As in previous assessments, it is not only important to identify your attributes but also to reflect upon them so that you are able to explain them to others.

1.   Review the attributes listed below. Circle eight attributes that you think best describe you. If you have trouble deciding consider what makes you unique or special, separates you from your peers; what lecturers, fellow students or co-workers have said about you.

2.   Write the attributes you circled in the spaces on page 37. If you don't see an attribute that describes you, add it.

3.   Next to each of your attributes, write a statement that illustrates how you have demonstrated it. It is easy to say 'I'm adaptable', but what employers want is for you to be able to say how you have been adaptable by giving specific examples.

4.   When you feel confident that you have identified attributes that accurately describe you, add them to your profile on page 44. Revisit this assessment at least once a year to see if there are qualities that you have developed recently that more accurately describe you.

Accurate	Deliberate	Idealistic	Original	Retiring
Adaptable	Decisive	Imaginative	Outgoing	Self-starting
Adventurous	Democratic	Independent	Painstaking	Sensible
Ambitious	Dependable	Individualistic	Patient	Sensitive
Analytical	Detail oriented	Industrious	Perceptive	Serious
Articulate	Determined	Informal	Persevering	Shrewd
Artistic	Dignified	Ingenious	Persistent	Sincere
Assertive	Diplomatic	Innovative	Persuasive	Sociable
Athletic	Eager	Inquisitive	Playful	Spontaneous
Authoritative	Easy-going	Inspirational	Pleasant	Stable
Bold	Efficient	Insightful	Poised	Stalwart
Broad-minded	Eloquent	Intelligent	Polite	Steady
Businesslike	Empathetic	Interculturally competent	Positive	Strong
Calm	Energetic		Politically-aware	Successful
Candid	Enterprising	Intuitive	Practical	Sympathetic
Capable	Enthusiastic	Kind	Precise	Tactful
Careful	Ethical	Leisurely	Professional	Teachable
Cautious	Extroverted	Light-hearted	Progressive	Tenacious
Charming	Fair-minded	Likeable	Prudent	Thorough
Cheerful	Firm	Logical	Purposeful	Thoughtful
Clear-thinking	Flexible	Loyal	Pressure-resistant	Tolerant
Clever	Forceful	Mature	Punctual	Tough
Compassionate	Formal	Methodical	Productive	Trusting
Competent	Future-oriented	Meticulous	Quick	Trustworthy
Competitive	Frank	Moderate	Quick-witted	Unassuming
Confident	Friendly	Modest	Rational	Understanding
Congenial	Frugal	Motivated	Realistic	Unexcitable
Conscientious	Generous	Obliging	Reasonable	Uninhibited
Considerate	Gentle	Observant	Reflective	Verbal
Conventional	Good-natured	Open-minded	Relaxed	Versatile
Cooperative	Gregarious	Opportunistic	Reliable	Vivacious
Courageous	Healthy	Optimistic	Reserved	Warm
Creative	Helpful	Open	Resourceful	Wise
Curious	Honest	Orderly	Responsible	Witty
Daring	Humorous	Organised	Responsive	

Describe your most important attributes using the boxes below

Example Attributes

Motivated	I worked full-time while balancing my family responsibilities and completing my degree.
Assertive	When I couldn't find companies that interested me through my university career services, I did some research on my own, found a company that I was interested in and approached them about a work placement.
Persevering	I had major difficulties recruiting subjects for my study. Even my supervisor was worried that I wouldn't be able to meet the deadlines. However, I found additional methods of recruiting, found enough subjects and managed to complete on time.
My attribute	**How I have demonstrated this attribute.**

Work Preferences

Learning about your work preferences can also help you to sort out job possibilities. Work preferences relate to what you are looking for in a job such as work environment, location, company size, worker relationships, etc. Preferences can be similar to values although values tend to be necessary elements whereas preferences tend to be things that you would like to have but are not essential. As you complete the following exercise, if you find that one of the following is in the 'have to have' category, it may actually be a value. For instance, if you feel that working with people is absolutely necessary for you to feel satisfied, this may be a value (see page 33). In other cases, preferences may be the result of external circumstances which might still be considered values if they are very important. For instance, you may need a flexible work schedule because you are a single parent with a small child.

Work Preferences Assessment

Imagine yourself in your ideal job and answer the questions to follow. If you don't know the answers to many questions, you may need to think about these and do some research to clarify your preferences or find out what is realistic.

Once you have completed the assessment, circle the six work preferences that are most important to you. When you are confident about your work preferences, add them to your profile on page 44. We suggest you complete this assessment at the start of your second term in order to start thinking about your work preferences. Revisit it at least once a year to see if your preferences have changed.

1.   Are you office-based, mobile, home-based, work in a client/customer space or outdoors?

2.   Is your job in a studio, office, factory, laboratory, institution or elsewhere?

3.   Do you travel within the UK or beyond? How often do you travel?

4.   Is your employer a large multi-national, a medium-sized enterprise, a small company or are you self-employed or contractual?

5.   Do you work in a charity, government, educational or commercial environment?

6.   Do you work normal nine-to-five hours, shift work, flexitime, part-time, or whatever hours are required?

7.   In what geographic area do you work? North Yorkshire, the UK, Europe or beyond?

8.   How far are you willing to commute to work?

9.   Do you work with large groups, small groups, all kinds of groups, with individuals, independently or in a variety of ways?

10.   Do you supervise others or aspire to be a manager or director?

11.   Do you have a lot of contact, very little contact or some contact with people?

12. Do you work under pressure imposed by others or a system, under pressure imposed by yourself or with little to no time pressure?

13. Do you work in a cooperative team-oriented environment or a competitive environment?

14. Do your work duties change a lot and offer variety, are they fairly routine, or are they somewhat consistent but change now and again?

15. Do you typically start new projects or tasks, maintain projects or tasks, or do both?

16. What are your co-workers like?

17. Does your job require you to be organised, goal oriented and timely, or flexible, open to possibilities and process-oriented?

18. Does your job constantly require you to learn new things and develop new skills? Is it a comfortable routine or is it somewhere in between?

19. Does your job keep growing to keep up with your ideas and keep you interested or do you stay close to your assigned duties.

20. Are you most rewarded by the work itself, good pay and benefits or plenty of thanks from supervisors, colleagues or clients?

21. How much money do you want to/can you make (realistically)?

22. Write down any other preferences that come to mind.

The Work Preferences assessment was adapted with permission from Institution of Psychological Sciences, University of Leeds.

Evaluating your career plans and prospects

If you have completed the preceding exercises, you will be well on your way to confirming or exploring career choices. This section is designed to further that work by explaining John Holland's theory of occupational choice which has had a major impact on applied psychology and the work of careers advisers. Holland suggests that people look for environments that match their vocational personalities by allowing them to use their favoured skills and express their values and attributes (Gottfredson and Holland, 1996). Holland's theory suggests that people and occupational environments can be classified into six types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional. Descriptions of the types can be found on page 42. Figure 2 overleaf illustrates the relationships between the types. Types that are closer together on the hexagon are more closely related than those further apart. For instance, Social and Enterprising which are contiguous on the hexagon are somewhat similar in that they both involve people, whereas Artistic and Conventional, opposite on the hexagon, are very different with Artistic involving originality, creativity and unconventionality and Conventional involving conforming and orderliness.
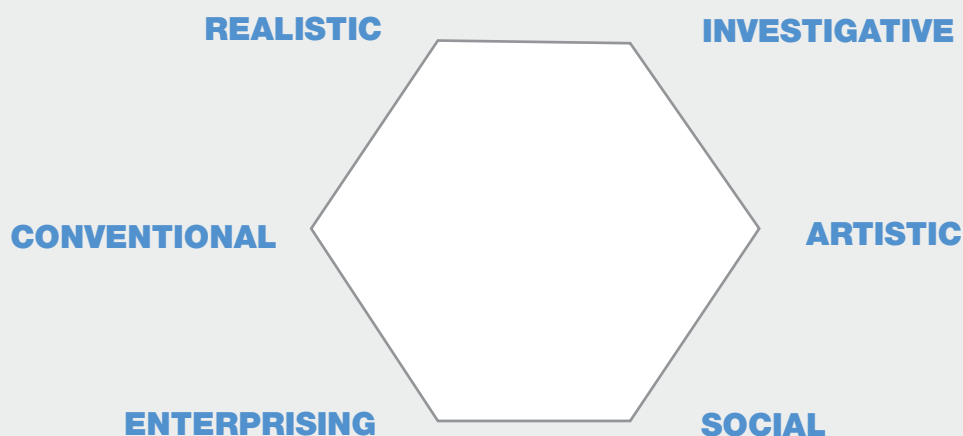
Figure 2: Holland vocational types (Gottfredson and Holland, 1996)

Most occupations are a combination of two or three types. For instance, a laboratory technician involves both knowledge seeking (Investigative) and hands-on work with samples and lab equipment (Realistic). Likewise, people are typically a combination of two or three types. For instance, counsellors who work with people in order to help them to overcome problems are often Social, Enterprising and Artistic. Research psychologists who are more interested in coming up with possible explanations behind human behaviour in laboratory settings are more likely to be Investigative, Realistic and Artistic. By learning more about your type, you can more easily identify areas of professional psychology and other occupations for which you will be more suited.

Holland Assessment

The assessment below provides an overview of each of the Holland types. By reviewing this assessment you may be able to see how the skills, values and attributes that you have identified earlier in this section correspond with Holland types. The assessment also provides a few occupations that are associated with each of the Holland types and which people who score particularly high on that type tend to pursue.

Review the traits, skills and abilities, work interests and job titles under each occupational area and put a tick next to the words in each column that describe or appeal to you.

Count up your ticks in each column and write the totals in the boxes below. The two or three types you scored highest on make up your Holland type.

Once you have identified the types that best describe you, consider what it is about those types that you find appealing. For example, if you think that Social is one of your occupational types, consider what it is about Social that is appealing. Is it that you enjoy helping people? Is it that you are interested in understanding why people behave as they do? Do you like meeting new people all the time? Do you like to lead people? If you have not already guessed, there are many ways in which Social as well as all of the Holland types can be expressed through occupations. The challenge lies in determining the ways in which you wish to express them.

Based on your consideration of the results write a few lines to describe what each type means for you in terms of a career. For example, one student who came up with the results of Social, Artistic and Enterprising (SAE) noted the following:

- Social: I enjoy helping others.
- Artistic: I enjoy finding new ways to do things and expressing myself in writing.
- Enterprising: I am good at leading groups and being in charge.

This person eventually went into teaching where she finds satisfaction in coming up with innovative ways to help students with special needs to learn. However, there are a variety of SAE careers she could have pursued.

Once you are comfortable with your Holland code and have written a description of the letters in your code, transfer them to your profile page on page 44.

This Holland-like assessment is both quick and unofficial. It is provided simply to confirm your earlier assessments and/or to give you ideas regarding possible career paths. In completing it, you may find you have questions. Perhaps your scores on most areas were similar or you had scores on opposite sides of the hexagon and don't know what this means. Perhaps your career plans do not match at all with the Holland type that you came up with. These are issues beyond the scope of this guide and would best be discussed with a careers adviser. University careers offices can be extremely helpful in career exploration and they typically offer official career assessments.

If you wish to learn more about the Holland or potential careers on your own you might find the following websites useful.

Self-directed Search: This website allows you to take the Self-Directed Search and to receive personalised results at a minimal cost (about £3). It is an official assessment based on Holland theory. It also provides additional information on Holland types which are available free of charge (www.self-directed-search.com).

Rouge Community College Student Services: This website provides an unofficial Holland-like assessment that provides results which link to a wide variety of job titles which you can explore elsewhere online (www.roguecc.edu/Counseling/HollandCodes).

Interests assessment

	Realistic	Investigative	Artistic	Social	Enterprising	Conventional
Traits	Scientific Mechanical Quiet Reserved Unassuming Practical Nature loving Problem solver Athletic Action/present oriented Common sense Honest	Scientific Analytical Intellectual Inquisitive Mechanical Scholarly Broad interests Precise Thorough Independent Original Future oriented	Broad interests Expressive Dreamy Idealistic Imaginative Intellectual Non-conforming Original Rebellious Sensitive Intuitive	Helpful Enthusiastic Friendly Kind Persuasive Insightful Sincere Trusting Understanding Generous Receptive Sociable Warm	Capable Good leader Assertive Enthusiastic Extroverted Persuasive Power seeking Shrewd Sociable Confident Persistent Adventurous Ambitious	Organised Practical-minded Shrewd Speculative Conforming Conventional Conscientious Efficient Neat Stable Thorough Accurate
Skills and abilities	Mechanical ability Technical ability Athletic ability Using machines Horticulture	Mechanical Intelligent Academic Research Mathmatical Science minded	Artistic talent or knowledge Foreign language ability Design ability	Interpersonal Teaching Training Social Educational Leadership Selling	Leadership Selling Promoting Educational Business Clerical Interpersonal Public speaking	Record keeping Statistics Clerical Business Scheduling Mathematical
Work interests	Working with things (e.g.,tools, machines, animals) to achieve tangible results. Often involves building, fixing things, or working with hands.	Working with data to explore ideas, analyse possibilities, solve or study problems.	Working with ideas to create new products or processes. Often involves writing, acting, singing, photography or design.	Working with people to help or develop them. Often involves team work and close contact with others.	Working with people and data. Often involves meeting, leading or persuading others or negotiating, decision making and politics.	Working with data involving numbers, records, or machines in a set and orderly way.
Jobs	Aircraft controller Cook Truck driver Plumber Surveyor Mechanic Electrician Printer Farmer Police officer Forester Optician Pilot	Biologist Chemist Physicist Architect Physician Engineer Technical writer Computer analyst Professor Web designer Audiologist Dietician Pharmacist	Designer Photographer Composer Musician Film director Writer Editor Actor Graphic artist Architect Trainer English teacher Translator	Teacher Clergy Nurse Counsellor Psychologist Physical therapist Librarian Social worker Speech therapist Community service director	Sales manager or representative Business exec TV producer Buyer Lawyer Reporter Financial planner Estate agent Entrepreneur Foreign service officer	Bookkeeper Banker Tax expert Accountant Actuary Insurance clerk Computer operator Court reporter Office clerk Para legal Administrator
Greatest ability in	Mechanics	Science	Arts	Human Relations	Leadership	Business
Total Ticks:						

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Developing a personal profile

While no job is perfect, the more you are able to work in areas that interest you, that coincide with your values and preferences and that use skills you enjoy, the more likely it is that you will be satisfied and successful at work. Once you have completed the self-assessments in this section and transferred your answers to your profile on page 44, the profile will serve as an overview of your skills, attributes, values and preferences. Viewing everything on one page can help you to get a clearer picture of what you are seeking in a career as well as what you have to offer employers.

In the centre of the profile page, you will notice a circle we refer to as your core statement. Your core statement is what will motivate you to work and gain satisfaction from your job. Everyone's core is different and should be based on the self-assessments. Obviously not all of your preferences, skills, interests, etc. will fit, so you will have to choose those that are most important. While no job will be perfect, and especially in many cases your first job, attempting to define what you are looking for and what you have to offer can help you to pinpoint jobs that will lead to satisfying career choices. To help you in writing your core statement below are examples of what others have written. You may also want to review an example of a completed profile in Appendix E (page 139).

'Security, stability and clearly defined work tasks to make use of my organised and methodical approach to work.'

'To use communication and interpersonal skills to help others and to enable me to learn, work independently and use my creativity.'

'To use skills in leadership, communication and diplomacy while working as part of a team. Flexible - to reserve time for family.'

'A fast-paced environment that involves working with a variety of people or projects and provides opportunity for initiative and motivation to be rewarded.'

Although you may have completed your assessments and perhaps your profile, you still may not be sure what career paths to consider because you don't know what jobs are available. The following section discusses career options within professional psychology and beyond. Your careers office will also house a wide variety of information related to career options.

Personal Profile:

What my Holland code means to me (page 42)

Skills (page 32)

Key	Developmental	Auxiliary

Preferences (page 38)

Values (page 34)

Attributes (page 37)

Adapted with permission from Cook Consultants www.kcooknet.com

The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network

Further notes:

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Websites

Cook Consultants: www.kcooknet.com/about.html
Institute of Psychological Science, University of Leeds: www.psyc.leeds.ac.uk

'Get as much experience as you can in any one area that interests you through paid or voluntary work'

3. Career Options

Psychology is a popular course. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, in 2008/9 there were 62,365 undergraduate students studying psychology with 12,635 graduating with a first degree. As mentioned, about 20% of these graduates will become psychologists while the majority will work in other areas. This section provides an overview of where psychology graduates work, and covers:

> 3.1 Traditional psychologist careers;
>
> 3.2 New, emerging and related psychology careers;
>
> 3.3 Health social care related opportunities;
>
> 3.4 Further career options.

Traditional psychologist careers

Becoming a practitioner psychologist requires training beyond an undergraduate degree, typically about three years of additional study. The Health Professions Council (HPC) is the independent organisation that ensures professionals in health and social care meet regulatory standards in order to protect the public from poor professional practice. Since July 2009, the HPC has been regulating areas of applied psychology. Today anyone calling themselves a registered psychologist, practitioner psychologist, clinical psychologist, counselling psychologist, educational psychologist, forensic psychologist, health psychologist, occupational psychologist, or sport and exercise psychologist has to be registered with the HPC, and to have successfully completed a HPC approved training course or to have been grand-parented onto the register. Therefore, students interested in becoming one of these types of psychologists should ensure that the postgraduate course they choose is accredited by the HPC. A list of approved courses is available on the HPC website (www.hpc-uk.org).

Until July 2009, the British Psychological Society (BPS) was responsible for the voluntary regulation of psychology through the operation of a non-statutory register of Chartered Psychologists. While the HPC has taken over this role, today the BPS still serves as the professional body for psychology, supports the development of the discipline, and provides training leading to qualifications in some areas of psychology. In addition, as part of their previous role in regulating psychology, they currently offer their own accreditation of undergraduate and postgraduate courses which leads to 'Chartered Psychologist' status. While being a Chartered Psychologist is not required to practise in the fields outlined above, having Chartered Psychologist status is a long established and widely recognised qualification; therefore

students may still wish to pursue it in addition to the required HPC registration. Students who are interested in becoming Chartered Psychologists must first achieve the BPS Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC) (previously called Graduate Basis of Registration (GBR)). GBC requires graduation from a BPS accredited undergraduate degree course or an equivalent overseas qualification. Those who have not graduated from an accredited course can take a one-year conversion course in order meet this requirement. Undergraduate degrees or conversion courses must then be followed by the completion of a BPS-approved postgraduate course. BPS-approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses can be found on the BPS website (www.bps.org.uk).

Whilst the HPC does not currently require students to complete certain approved undergraduate degree courses, it does require students to complete certain approved postgraduate courses and these courses typically require a 2.2 or better from a BPS-approved undergraduate course to gain admission. Students interested in becoming any one of the above types of psychologists should check the HPC website to identify courses that have HPC approval especially as there may be changes over the next few years as the HPC establishes itself as the new regulatory body for these areas of psychology.

While there can be competition for places on postgraduate courses, competition can vary based on the course and the institution. Those considering particular courses would do well to check the websites of individual departments to determine what makes for a strong applicant and then strive to do what is necessary to become competitive.

The following provides brief overviews of HPC regulated areas of applied psychology. Note that the BPS provides more comprehensive coverage of each of these areas as well as the required qualification routes on their career pages (www.bps.org.uk/careers). As well, The Psychology Network's student career information page provides videos featuring psychologists talking about their work (www.pnarchive.org).

Clinical psychology

Clinical psychologists apply the science of psychology to help reduce psychological distress and enhance psychological and physical well-being. They achieve this through working with individuals, families and organisations and often assess clients using interviews, psychometric tests and behavioural observations. The results of assessment then inform the intervention offered to clients or systems, based on the current evidence base. As applied scientists, clinical psychologists therefore have a responsibility to ensure that they remain up-to-date with new psychological research and adjust their practice accordingly. Clinical psychologists' work includes the treatment of anxiety and depression, serious and enduring mental illness, adjustment to physical illness, neurological disorders, addictive behaviours, childhood behaviour disorders and personal and family relationship difficulties. They work with people across the life-span and with people with learning disabilities and people with physical health problems.

Most clinical psychologists work within the National Health Service (NHS) in hospitals, health centres, GP surgeries, community mental health teams and alongside other professions (e.g., social workers, nurses, doctors, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists).

To become a clinical psychologist, individuals must complete a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology or have an equivalent qualification recognised by the HPC. Admission to postgraduate courses currently requires the prior completion of an accredited undergraduate course, the completion of a conversion course, or an equivalent. Places on clinical psychology doctorate courses are one of the most sought after amongst psychology students and as such, competition is tough. According to the Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology (CHPCCP), in 2010, 21% or one in five applicants were successful. In addition to a good honours degree, most courses require at least a year of relevant experience (typically in an assistant psychologist role) and a 2.1 or higher. The most sought after and competitive roles for gaining relevant

experience are those of assistant psychologist or research assistant. However, relevant experience can also be gained in paid or unpaid roles such as Social Worker, Nursing Assistant and Care Worker. Students who achieve less than a 2.1 may still gain access to courses although this might mean completing a Masters level qualification as well before applying. It is best to consult individual institutions regarding their entry requirements which do vary.

Historically the majority of those entering the field of clinical psychology have been white females. However, the BPS Division of Clinical Psychology (DCP) has been working to increase practitioner diversity by actively encouraging applications from men, Black Minority and Ethnic (BME) community members, mature students with non-traditional backgrounds and people with disabilities. For more information including a film on becoming a clinical psychologist, visit the DCP careers website (www.bps.org.uk/dcp/clinical_psychology/dcp_home.cfm). The DCP has also produced a website with more information regarding clinical psychology careers (http://www.clinicalpsychology.org.uk/).

For anyone wishing to pursue a career in Clinical Psychology my advice would be to get some hands on experience voluntary or otherwise in the mental health or learning disability fields. Establish links with qualified Clinical Psychologists through Special Interest Groups offered by the BPS and if you have not published already, try to be in the process of publishing something when you apply. Additionally, for applicants from lower socio-economic backgrounds and/or black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds unfortunately clinical psychology as a profession in the UK still has a lot to learn with regards to engaging communities and for example understanding the impact of socio-economic stress on mental health, in terms of how services are delivered. Furthermore, individuals from lower socio-economic and BME backgrounds are under-represented in the profession. Consequently if you choose to, you have a valuable contribution to make and your voice is important. – Dr Gail Coleman, Clinical Psychology Unit, Department of Psychology, University of Sheffield

Funding for students on doctorate clinical psychology courses is provided by the National Health Service (NHS). Being accepted on a clinical course means that you will also be employed as a Trainee Clinical Psychologist and paid a salary by the NHS as you study. Self-funding or being funded by other sources, according to the CHPCCP, is typically not possible. As well, because students are funded by the NHS and graduates are expected to work for the NHS, those who are from countries that are outside of the European Union and who do not have the right to work in the UK are typically not considered for clinical course admission. For more information on admission to doctorate level clinical psychology courses, visit the CHPCCP website (www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp).

Masters level courses that are related to clinical psychology or provide an introduction to the area are offered at a growing number of institutions. While a Masters level qualification could help make candidates more competitive in applying to doctorate level courses, they can also help to lead to roles that are ends in themselves such as Counsellor or Assistant Psychologist. Unfortunately little funding is available for such courses, and the NHS in England does not currently fund them. However, in Northern Ireland and Scotland, new funded roles such as Associate Psychologist or Clinical Associate based on Masters level qualifications in particular areas (e.g. primary care, children and adolescents) are being developed.

The BPS has a range of support groups for members at different stages of their careers including the Division of Clinical Psychologists Prequalification Group (www.bps.org.uk) aimed at those working in pre-training roles such as Support Worker, Graduate Primary Care Mental Health Worker, Research Assistant, Assistant Psychologist and Clinical Doctorate Trainees. The 'Psychclick' website also provides a list of regional support groups for graduates aiming for a career in clinical psychology (www.psyclick.org.uk/groups). Clin Psy is a website for those aspiring to careers in clinical psychology. It includes a discussion forum, chat area and bookstore (www.clinpsy.org.uk).

Educational psychology

Educational psychologists address concerns of children and young people who experience social, emotional, or learning difficulties. They may work directly with children by providing such services as counselling or assessment. They may also work with parents, teachers and related professionals in helping them to better understand and work with children experiencing difficulties.

Most educational psychologists work with local education authorities in schools, colleges, nurseries and special units. Although they most often work with teachers and parents, they are often in touch with professionals from the department of education, health, and social services. Increasingly they also work as independent consultants.

To become an educational psychologist, individuals must complete a Doctorate in Educational Psychology or have an equivalent qualification recognised by the HPC. Admission to postgraduate courses currently requires the prior completion of an accredited undergraduate course, the completion of a conversion course, or an equivalent. Postgraduate places on educational psychology courses are highly sought after amongst psychology students. In addition to a good honours degree, many courses require relevant experience and a 2.1 or higher. Relevant experience can include working in paid or unpaid roles with children and young people such as Teacher, Learning Support Assistant, Educational Social Worker, and Care Worker. Students who achieve less than a 2.1 may still gain access to courses although this might include completing a Masters qualification before applying. It is best to consult individual departments regarding their entry requirements which do vary.

Educational psychology is a three-year course in which students usually spend the first year in study and the next two years gaining practical experience through employment with a local authority alongside studies. Typically applicants should be UK residents and be eligible to work in the UK.

Some funding for students on educational psychology postgraduate courses is provided by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and local authorities. Some unfunded places may be available.

At the time of writing (June 2011), the government is reviewing the roles of the educational psychologist. This has put the recruitment of postgraduate students for this course on hold for 2011. For the current status of applications, consult the CWDC (www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/educational-psychology). The BPS Division of Educational & Child Psychology also maintains up-to-date information on educational psychology (www.bps.org.uk/decp/decp_home.cfm).

Counselling psychology

Counselling psychology is one of the areas of applied psychology. Counselling psychologists apply psychological theories and research to helping people in individual or group therapy. They work from a humanistic philosophy. Within the therapeutic relationship they undertake tasks such as assessing clients which may involve the use of psychometric tests, and reporting and evaluating progress. They often work as part of multidisciplinary teams in the NHS, industry, commerce, prisons, schools or universities. However they may also practise privately or work as independent consultants.

Students who are interested in becoming Counselling Psychologists need to complete one of the approved training routes as outlined below or have an equivalent qualification recognised by the HPC.

1. Complete the BPS Qualification in Counselling Psychology (QCoP).

2. Complete an accredited Doctorate in Counselling Psychology.

Admission to doctorate level courses currently requires the prior completion of an accredited undergraduate course, the completion of a conversion course (if necessary), or an equivalent. Similar to other courses in psychology, counselling psychology courses can be competitive requiring a good honours degree with a 2.1 or higher and related experience. Application guidelines suggest that prospective students complete a relevant Masters degree prior to enrolling on the Qualification (www.bps.org.uk/qcop); or a counselling skills course at the certificate or diploma level (see university course entry criteria).

The HPC approved the BPS QCoP training route in September 2010. This route, sometimes referred to as the independent route, offers an alternative to traditional doctorate level counselling psychology courses and may provide students with increased levels of flexibility in both timings and costs. It is often, but not necessarily, undertaken by those who have prior experience and training in a related field, and are seeking some accreditation of existing competence towards their training process. Students would do well to consult the BPS QCoP candidate handbook as well as individual departmental websites to choose the most appropriate route. Full details of QCoP can be found at (www.bps.org.uk/qcop).

Counselling careers outside of counselling psychology

While Masters level courses in counselling psychology or other non-BPS counselling masters qualifications might be good preparation for doctorate level applications, these qualifications can also lead to roles that are an end in themselves (e.g. Counsellor). Overleaf, Ruth Drury who recently graduated with a BA Honours in Art and Psychology from the University of Reading describes her choice to study for a Certificate in Counselling Psychology at City University, London.

I chose the course as I felt it would give me a chance to explore different theoretical approaches and ideas before making a decision on whether to embark on the more demanding PsychD course or some other therapeutic training. I think having some basic grounding in counselling psychology will help me make a more informed choice about the orientation and training approach which would best suit me.

For undergraduates interested in taking a similar path, I would recommend getting experience in support roles as early as possible and to work with as wide a range of people as possible to increase experience and understanding of working with individuals in different circumstances. Working as a volunteer, in organisations such as Rethink or Samaritans, can greatly improve practical skills and understanding of the demands of this kind of work and will provide a platform from which to move to one-to-one counselling interactions as soon as the appropriate qualifications have been attained. – Ruth Drury, Postgraduate Certificate student, City University, London

For more information on counselling skills, certificate and diploma courses, consult the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (www.bacp.co.uk) and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (www.psychotherapy.org.uk). Some departmental admission websites suggest that international students are eligible for courses if admission requirements (e.g. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores) are met.

Consult the BPS Division of Counselling Psychology (www.bps.org.uk/dcop/home/home_home.cfm) for additional information about careers in counselling psychology.

Occupational psychology

Occupational psychologists are interested in how people operate in the workplace and how they can help organisations to maximize worker performance while helping employees to enjoy their jobs. Occupational psychology is broad in that it relates to other fields including time management, ergonomics, work environments, personnel management, etc. Occupational psychologists typically work with employees, managers, trade union representatives, and personnel and training offices. They may work as consultants or for large public and private sector organisations. The Civil Service is one of the largest employers of Occupational psychologists. Laura Dancer who completed an MSc in Occupational Psychology at Nottingham University describes her job as an Independent Business Psychologist.

I work as a freelance consultant for several different organisations, which means varied working hours and locations! I could be working from home one day writing reports or travelling to different places in the UK to work as an assessor for clients running assessment centres for recruitment. I only recently went self-employed, having before worked as a Business Psychologist for a consultancy… Now that I am self-employed I tend to do more of the delivery and design of the assessment and development work than project managing the process, which I prefer (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). – Laura Dancer, Independent Business Psychologist

To become an occupational psychologist, individuals need to complete an MSc and BPS Stage 2 training or have an equivalent qualification recognised by the HPC. While the BPS did offer Stage 1 training which would have substituted for a Masters degree, this is currently being phased out.

Admission to postgraduate courses currently requires the prior completion of an accredited undergraduate course, the completion of a conversion course, or an equivalent. Postgraduate university course admission requirements can be competitive often requiring a 2.1 or better. Courses do vary in terms of admission requirements as well as other features. The BPS suggests that their course offers students increased levels of flexibility. It is best to consult individual institutions/departments to learn about admission requirements and differences in courses.

Although a limited number of departments offer Doctoral level study in occupational psychology, currently the few courses that exist are geared more towards those who have already achieved or nearly achieved Stage 2 training. Patrick Tissington, Senior Lecturer at Aston Business School in Birmingham, completed a BSc in Cognitive Science and went on to complete a PhD in Occupational Psychology at the University of Aberdeen. Below he discusses his reasons for pursuing a PhD.

> I was interested in doing a PhD and aggressively pursued this. As a former sales director I applied sales techniques to securing PhD studentships. While in the end I was offered five studentships, I took the one related to fire service research because the topic looked interesting and I really liked my future supervisor whom I had previously met at a BPS conference.
>
> My doctoral research was about understanding how fire commanders are able to make life and death decisions under extreme pressure. My work took me to fire incidents, computer simulators and some lab tasks. The results have changed the way fire officers are trained and I am still - 10 years later - working with the emergency services. This is typical for PhD research in occupational psychology in that it crosses the boundaries between theory and practice and between academic researchers and practitioners.
>
> Dr Patrick Tissington, Senior Lecturer, Aston Business School

Consult the BPS Division of Occupational Psychology (DOP) for more information on careers in occupational psychology (www.bps.org.uk/dop/dop_home.cfm).

Health psychology

Health psychology uses psychological methods to promote change in behaviour, attitude and thinking about illness and health. Although health psychology has been a recognised profession in the UK for more than 10 years, there are new areas of work emerging. Health promotion and prevention of 'lifestyle' diseases is a key objective for the Department of Health with a shift from the treatment of disease to the maintenance of health and prevention of illness. In the future, for example, health psychologists may be more involved in health promotion campaigns (Forshaw, 2007). Another area potentially growing for health psychologists is work around rehabilitation of individuals on health related benefits. For example, evidence suggests that organisations such as WorkDirections, which deliver Government-funded employment programmes, recruit health professionals specialising in psychology.

Currently the NHS is the main employer of applied health psychologists although many also work in academia. However, opportunities do exist with independent providers that offer support to people dealing with issues such as obesity, addictions, eating disorders, mental illness or those living with health problems such as chronic fatigue syndrome or coronary heart disease.

Students who are interested in becoming Health Psychologists need to complete the BPS Stage 1 and Stage 2 training in Health Psychology as outlined below or have an equivalent qualification recognised by the HPC. There are currently two approved training routes.

1. Complete an accredited MSc in Health Psychology (equivalent to BPS Stage 1) and a BPS Stage 2 Qualification in Health Psychology (QHP).

2. Complete an accredited Doctorate in Health Psychology. Note that not all Health psychology doctoral courses are equivalent to Stage 1 and 2 BPS training. Check with the HPC or BPS to determine which courses are approved.

Admission to postgraduate courses currently requires the prior completion of an accredited undergraduate course, the completion of a conversion course, or an equivalent. Postgraduate course entry requirements can be competitive. Doctoral programme entry requirements typically include a 2.1 from an accredited undergraduate degree course plus an MSc in Health Psychology. Admission to MSc and BPS Stage 2 QHP courses can also be competitive. Courses do vary in terms of admission requirements as well as other features. The BPS suggests that their Stage 2 course, often referred to as the independent route, offers students increased levels of flexibility. It is best to consult individual institutions/departments to learn about admission requirements and course differences.

My advice to anyone who might want to be a health psychologist is to get as much experience as possible and get advice from other trainees and qualified health psychologists. Don't be put off - the requirements can sound very daunting but once you have written the supervision plan then it easier to get your head round the process. I found the book Health Psychology in Practice by Michie and Abraham invaluable. – Dr Debbie Smith, Research Associate, The University of Manchester

Of note is that there are some Health Psychology related courses that are open to students who do not meet minimum criteria for admission to a Health Psychology MSc. Some universities offer accredited courses in Health Psychology alongside non-accredited courses (e.g. MSc Psychology and Health). Students who ultimately want to become 'Health Psychologists' need to be aware of the differences in such courses. However, students who would be satisfied with related careers may wish to consider non-accredited courses. Likewise, students may wish to complete a Masters without continuing on to a Doctorate or Stage 2 QHP. Liz Hughes, who completed an MSc in Health Psychology at the University of Bath, followed such a path. Below she describes her work in a Health Psychology related job:

> QUIT is an independent charity whose aim is to save lives by helping smokers to stop smoking. QUIT employs people like me to go into schools and corporations to give preventative talks about smoking as well as to provide support and resources to help those that do smoke to quit… Working for a charity has provided me with loads of responsibility and, because there is little training, I had to learn as I went along. Every day is different. For example, one day I might be talking to a group of 350 school children and another day doing one-to-one counselling (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Liz Hughes, Regional Project Manager, QUIT

Consult the BPS Division of Health Psychology (DHP) which provides additional information on careers in Health Psychology as well as the results of a 2006 survey indicating where Health Psychologists are employed (www.bps.org.uk/dhp/dhp_home.cfm).

Sport and Exercise psychology

Sports psychologists are interested in how to help athletes psychologically prepare to compete and to deal with the demands of competition and training. Sport psychologists undertake work such as counselling referees on dealing with job stress, advising coaches on the development of athletic teams, and helping athletes resolve psychological and emotional problems that may result from injuries.

Exercise psychologists are interested in how to apply psychology to motivate people to exercise. Exercise psychologists help clients to set exercise goals and reap the maximum amount of benefit from participation in exercise. Typically individuals specialise in sport or exercise psychology, but not both. Both work in a range of settings that often combine work in the field with teaching and research positions.

Students interested in becoming Sport and Exercise Psychologists need to complete Stage 1 and Stage 2 training or have an equivalent qualification recognised by the HPC. There are currently two approved training routes.

1. Complete Stage 1 and Stage 2 BPS Qualifications in Sport and Exercise Psychology.

2. Complete an accredited MSc in Sport and Exercise Psychology (equivalent to Stage 1) and a BPS Stage 2 Qualification in Sport and Exercise Psychology.

Admission to postgraduate courses currently requires the prior completion of an accredited undergraduate course, the completion of a conversion course, or an equivalent. Postgraduate university courses can be competitive requiring a 2.1 or better. Admission to MSc and BPS Stage 2 courses can be competitive. Courses do vary in terms of admission requirements as well as other features. The BPS suggests that their course offers students increased levels of flexibility. It is best to consult individual institutions/departments to learn about admission requirements and course differences.

Students who do not meet entry requirements for accredited courses may wish to consider alternative but related degrees. Some universities offer accredited courses in Sport and Exercise Psychology alongside non-accredited courses (e.g. MSc in Applied Sport and Exercise Psychology). While such courses can lead to related careers, they cannot lead to a career as a Sport or Exercise Psychologist which is an important consideration.

While becoming a Sport and Exercise Psychologist does not require the completion of a PhD, students may wish to consider pursuing one as Andrew Manley describes below:

I was keen to pursue a career as an applied practitioner in sport and exercise psychology and after seeking advice from professionals in this area, I was advised by many that a PhD would be an essential requirement. One professional justified his recommendation for me to consider applying for a PhD by commenting: 'Have a look at the current list of accredited and chartered sport and exercise psychologists and see how many of them have "Dr" before their name.' His point had been made and I began my PhD studies shortly afterwards.

There has always been a high level of competition for jobs in this field. Many practising sport and exercise psychologists in the UK are employed as full time university lecturers or researchers. In light of recent cuts to higher education funding, competition for places is likely to become especially fierce. Students who are interested in this field need to be proactive by going out and finding opportunities (e.g. volunteering) to develop skills rather than expecting opportunities to fall into their lap. – Dr Andrew Manley, Senior Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Psychology, Carnegie Faculty Leeds Metropolitan University

Consult the BPS Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology (www.bps.org.uk/spex/spex_home.cfm) for additional information as well as the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) (www.bases.org.uk).

Forensic psychology

Interest in forensic psychology has grown in recent years. Fictional television dramas such as CSI, Silent Witness and Waking the Dead often lead students to think all forensic psychologists are criminal profilers. While work in criminal profiling does exist, opportunities may be somewhat limited with most forensic psychologists working in other areas related to the criminal justice system. Forensic psychologists are involved in a variety of work. They develop and deliver offender treatment programmes, engage in research to support practice, analyse statistics on prisoners, provide evidence in courts and advise parole boards. They provide advice on public policy and new laws and help to assess the psychological state of criminals. The UK Prison Service employs the largest number of forensic psychologists although rehabilitation units, secure hospitals, probation services and private consultancies also employ forensic psychologists.

Students who are interested in becoming Forensic Psychologists need to complete one of the approved training routes as outlined below or have an equivalent qualification recognised by the HPC.

1. Complete an accredited MSc in Forensic Psychology and the
   BPS Stage 2 Qualification in Forensic Psychology.
2. Complete an accredited Doctoral degree in Forensic Psychology.

Admission to postgraduate courses currently requires the prior completion of an accredited undergraduate course, the completion of a conversion course, or an equivalent. Admission to postgraduate courses can be competitive requiring a 2:1 or above and in some cases related experience. Admission to courses can be competitive. Courses do vary in terms of admission requirements as well as other features. The BPS suggests that their course offers students increased levels of flexibility. It is best to consult individual institutions/departments to learn about admission requirements and course differences.

Students who do not qualify for accredited courses may wish to consider other courses. In some cases universities offer accredited courses in forensic psychology alongside non-accredited courses (e.g. Forensic Psychology Studies). Such degrees are an option and may well lead on to related positions; however, they cannot lead on to careers as a forensic psychologist. While becoming a qualified forensic psychologist is a goal for many students, there are a variety of other opportunities related to this area of psychology that do not require as much study or accredited courses. For instance, Traci Tracy completed a BSc in Psychology from the Open University and now works for HM Prison Service.

> I am based at area headquarters so my day differs quite a bit from a Psychological Assistant based at a prison…Although predominantly office based, my work can involve going into prisons…to assess prisoners' suitability to take part in offending behaviour programmes or to look at various issues, from investigating the quality of life for prisoners to assessing the risks and needs of prisoners. Psychological Assistants who work in prisons are more involved in delivering programmes to prisoners, such as Enhanced Thinking Skills, Sex Offender Treatment, etc. (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).
>
> - Traci Tracy, Forensic Psychological Assistant, HM Prison Service

Traci notes that while her position requires only GCSE/O-levels and some previous experience working with offenders, most people in her position have first degrees and some have Masters. She notes that this position is a common stepping-stone to the next position up (Trainee Forensic Psychologist). While some use such positions as stepping stones to continue on to accredited postgraduate study, others find these hands-on sorts of roles provide all the challenge they need.

Consult the BPS Division of Forensic Psychology (DFP) for additional information (www.bps.org.uk/dfp/dfp_home.cfm). Also consider consulting the websites of individual employers which sometimes provide useful information (e.g. HM Prison Service (http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/careersandjobs/).

New, emerging and related areas of psychology

Thus far we have described the traditional 'psychologist' career paths for those interested in becoming professional psychologists. However, there are additional opportunities in a wide variety of new, emerging and related areas of psychology that do not currently fall under HPC regulation. This section provides a review of some of these areas. While additional training or postgraduate qualifications are necessary to enter or advance in some, for others an undergraduate degree may be enough.

Neuropsychology

Interest in and funding for neuropsychology research has increased substantially in recent years. Neuropsychology combines psychology and neuroscience in the study of the brain's relationship to psychological processes and behaviour. Neuropsychologists may work in clinical settings where they assess or treat patients who have suffered brain injury, stroke, toxic and metabolic disorders, tumours and neuro-degenerative diseases. They may also work in academic settings and be involved in research and teaching. Some also act as consultants in industry or in pharmaceutical companies related to research on new drugs or other areas.

Psychology students might also be interested in careers specifically in neuroscience that focus on the brain and nervous system. Although neuroscience is offered as a first-degree course, because the field is so complex, students from many different first-degree courses go into it. Neuroscientists often work in academic research and pharmaceutical companies, but also other areas such as management consultancy and banking. While that may sound surprising, some evidence suggests that an understanding of neural network models can predict fluctuations in the stock market (Academy of Medical Sciences, n.d.).

Neuropsychology and neuroscience both require study beyond a Bachelor's degree. The BPS provides information on training and careers in neuropsychology (www.bps.org.uk/don). The British Neuroscience Association offers a free introductory guide on neuroscience which provides an overview of the field as well as careers information on their website (www.bna.org.uk). Postgraduate programmes in neuropsychology and neuroscience are widely offered.

Coaching psychology

The boundary between counselling and coaching psychology is somewhat blurred, therefore it is important for anyone interested in this area of work to consider what the terms mean in order to make the right choices about training and development. Myles Downey in *Effective Coaching* (1999) defines coaching as 'the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another'.

Coaches operate by using a variety of models and techniques to enable individuals to develop and become more effective. Coaching psychologists help individuals improve their well-being and performance by using coaching models that are grounded in adult learning or psychology (Palmer and Cavanagh, 2006). Coaching psychology is considered to be an emerging psychological discipline and in 2004 the British Psychological Society established a Special Group of Coaching Psychology in recognition of this development (www.sgcp.org.uk).

People who work as coaches come from a diverse range of professions and work in a variety of settings. For instance, sometimes highly successful business managers and leaders use their experience to coach and develop others. As well, those with psychology backgrounds translate their knowledge of psychology into coaching careers. Coaches work on a freelance or one-to-one basis with private clients, for organisations coaching employees, or for consultancies. Alternatively they may be employed by organisations in roles in human resources, teaching, research, training, counselling, health care or employment advice. Coaches may work with clients on issues such as performance at work; achieving life/work balance; setting and achieving goals; improving health and well being; stress management, leadership; and career and personal development. Unlike the chartered areas of psychology, finding advertised vacancies may be challenging as job titles may not be labelled coaching psychologist.

Since the field of coaching is largely unregulated there is no accredited route into either coaching or coaching psychology, therefore you do not necessarily need an advanced degree to become a coach. However, anyone considering training as a coach would be advised to consider getting a recognised qualification at the highest level possible and finding routes to gain practical experience in the field. It is also advisable to search for courses that subscribe to the standards, ethics and guidelines provided by coaching and mentoring bodies such as the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC)

(www.emccouncil.org), or the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS) (www.apecs.org). Certificate, diploma and Masters level coaching courses are readily available, although some are offered as combined coaching and mentoring. Private companies, collaborative ventures between universities and private education providers, and universities, all offer courses in coaching. The BPS recommends that you look for courses run by chartered psychologists and which are accredited by a university. It is also worth looking for Masters level coaching courses that take a psychological perspective. Some universities are developing PhD opportunities for coaching psychology and coaching research such as City University's Coaching Psychology Unit and Oxford Brookes University that offer Doctorates in Coaching and Mentoring.

Although this area does seem to be growing in popularity, it is unclear how many jobs are actually available. While the emergence of the BPS coaching special interest group is an indicator, part of its mission is to distinguish the work of coaching psychologists from that of coaches from other disciplines (Grant, 2004). Therefore their interests may focus around research and regulation as opposed to the number of specific job openings.

Environmental psychology

Environmental psychologists are interested in how people interact with and use their environments. They may be involved in researching and improving work environments to increase employee satisfaction and productivity, or contribute to the planning, design and management of buildings for public use such as schools, hospitals and housing developments (Jarrett, 2006).

Although this field has been around for many years, some speculate that it might grow as the world's heightened sensitivity to environmental issues continues to expand.

Environmental psychology overlaps with other fields including architecture, ecology and sociology. This multidisciplinary quality makes it somewhat confusing for students to pursue careers in this area. Chris Spencer, Professor of Environmental Psychology at the University of Sheffield noted that there are no clear career paths for undergraduates studying in this area. However, there are many potential careers for graduates who go out and find opportunities.

One such example is Hilary Barker, a psychology graduate from the University of Sheffield. Hilary was keen to pursue work in environmental psychology, but didn't know where to start. She asked her lecturers what companies did related work. She researched DEGW, a strategic design consultancy company and approached them about doing a work placement. While they didn't have work placements, her persistence led them to create one for her. Three months later, they hired her full-time. Hilary describes DEGW and her work below. Read her complete career case study on The Psychology Network's career case study page (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).

DEGW conducts research for clients on their work environments to improve things like employee satisfaction and productivity. In addition, we provide strategic briefing advice for new and existing buildings based on the needs of the end users in order to ensure building supply meets organisational demand. To do this we employ a unique mix of people including architects, designers and social scientists (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Hilary Barker, Workplace Consultant, DEGW

If you undertake relevant modules, projects or work experiences during your undergraduate study, you may be able to find work in environmental psychology with a first degree as was Hilary's experience. Modules in topics such as human factors, psychology of design, or environmental psychology are highly relevant. A Masters level qualification might make you more marketable; however, since this is an emerging area, there are very few specialist Masters courses available. At the time of publication only the University of Surrey offers an MSc in Environmental Psychology. Alternative Masters programmes that could have relevant modules in environmental psychology and design include Occupational Health Psychology, Industrial Psychology, Human Factors, Health Ergonomics or Design.

Marketing or consumer psychology

It is difficult to define marketing psychology because information about this area of work is limited and cuts across similar areas of work such as marketing and market research.

This area of work is concerned with understanding the psychological aspects of consumer buying behaviour in a variety of contexts. Marketing or consumer psychologists use psychological methods to understand why people choose to buy something and what influences their choices. Eleanor Atton, describes her work in market research below.

Put simply, we work towards understanding consumers and help to put their 'voice' at the heart of organisations so companies can develop and market consumer oriented brands. Whether it's coming up with ideas for new products, determining how a brand should position and communicate itself, finding out how people live their lives or shop, strategic consumer insight can be invaluable and that's what we deliver. Our clients typically include companies classed as 'Fast Moving Consumer Goods' (FMCG) as well as retail companies such as Sainsbury, Carlsberg, or Homebase, though I could end up working for any company that has something to bring to market! My role is very fast paced and everyday involves being a master chameleon, changing my spots to meet the different roles involved. I might be pitching for new business, setting up a research project, conducting fieldwork by moderating a focus group or hanging out in a consumer home, or analysing data to figure out what it all means for the brand in question, or presenting research findings to the client (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Eleanor Atton, Associate Director, Razor Research

While adverts asking for marketing psychologists are unlikely to appear, suitable vacancies may occur within market research, advertising, pubic relations, branding, product design or development, or web marketing. Eleanor noted that 'there are lots of great opportunities for psychology graduates in market research, whether you have a quantitative or qualitative background and are looking for an agency or client role. The best place to look for job adverts is on industry portal websites like MR Web, Brand Republic, and Research Live. You can also contact companies directly. Most agencies are listed on industry body websites such as the Association for Qualitative Research (AQR) (www.aqr.org.uk) or the Market Research Society (MRS) (www.mrs.org.uk). Or you can simply conduct a Google search yourself, which is where I started!' Read Eleanor's complete career case study on The Psychology Network's career case study page.

Graduates may be able to enter marketing roles without postgraduate qualifications. However, relevant work experience is usually required to enter marketing or market research roles. Completing a joint honours first degree in a subject such as marketing with psychology, taking marketing or consumer behaviour modules, completing a market research undergraduate project, or undertaking market research work placements will all prove advantageous when applying for jobs in this area. The authors found no specific postgraduate qualifications in marketing psychology, however there are plenty of postgraduate courses in marketing and a limited number in areas such as economics, business and consumer psychology.

Parapsychology

Television shows such as Ghost Hunters, Paranormal State and Ghost Adventures can make for interesting viewing and often capture the interest of students who then want to know how to pursue careers in parapsychology. Unfortunately, the media does much to confuse the scientifically based field of parapsychology with 'sensational, unscientific beliefs and stories about "the paranormal"' (Parapsychological Association, 2008). While students sometimes think that the study of parapsychology is about ghost hunting, actually, parapsychology is the scientific study of paranormal activity which encourages students to critically evaluate evidence that goes against our current understanding of the world.

While parapsychology contributes to the understanding of the paranormal in general, it also contributes to the field of psychopathology. Surveys enquiring about various types of paranormal beliefs and experiences (e.g. extra-sensory perception, life after death) find that the majority of people believe in some type of paranormal phenomena and large percentages claim to have had paranormal experiences. Paranormal experiences can sometimes lead individuals to experience increased levels of stress, major life changes and mental illness. Therefore, exploring such phenomena is important to enhance our understanding and work with people who might suffer as a result of such experiences.

The scientific study of parapsychology has grown in recent years with 16 UK universities offering courses in this area (Carr, 2008). However, according to the Parapsychological Association it is still considered a somewhat 'marginal' field by mainstream psychology and career opportunities are somewhat limited (2008). The Society for Psychical Research (SPR), one of the important professional bodies supporting the scientific advancement of parapsychology, suggests that most opportunities relate to careers in academic research but that even these opportunities can be 'few and far between' (2009).

A good idea when pursuing an academic career in parapsychology is to ensure that you can teach other core areas of psychology, so that you have different strengths to offer a University Psychology Department.

– Dr Ian Baker, Psychology Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, Health & Sciences, University of Derby

While career opportunities directly in parapsychology may be limited, the study of parapsychology can prepare students well to work in a variety of careers as it fosters the development of critical thinking as well as knowledge and experience of research methods. More information about parapsychology and careers in this area is available through the Parapsychological Association (http://www.parapsych.org) and the Society for Psychical Research (http://www.spr.ac.uk/main/).

Animal and pet psychology

Research into animal behaviour, welfare and rehabilitation is growing as evidenced by the number of universities offering relevant undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. Universities offering relevant study programmes such as Salford and Exeter indicate that animal psychology crosses over into areas such as animal behaviour research, counselling, training, human psychology and biology.

Roger Mugford is one example of someone working in this field. Roger, who completed an undergraduate degree in zoology and psychology at the University of Hull and later a PhD, founded and now runs the Animal Behaviour Centre in Surrey. There he treats animal behaviour problems as well as providing consultancy services ranging from testifying in animal court trials to offering advice on food bowl design. He has also written several books on animal behaviour and is considered a leader in UK animal psychology (Akwagyiram, 2005).

While it may be possible to enter the field of animal behaviour with a relevant first degree such as veterinary medicine, psychology, animal behaviour or one of the biological sciences, Dr Mugford suggests at least an undergraduate degree that touches on both physiology and psychology if not postgraduate study as well. Masters level study in companion animal behaviour counselling (see University of Southampton), or animal behaviour (see University of Exeter) are options, as well as consideration of a PhD focusing on animal behaviour.

There may be opportunities to work in the field of animal behaviour within zoos, laboratories, wildlife offices, eco-tourism, animal welfare charities, policy-making organisations such as DEFRA and research centres. However, according to the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (www.apbc.org.uk) opportunities to work for organisations as pet behaviour counsellors seem to be limited with most working on a freelance basis (2010).

Teaching and research in psychology

Many psychology students go into teaching in Higher Education (HE), Further Education (FE) and sixth-form colleges where Psychology is often taught at GCSE and A level. Teaching at any of these levels means sharing subject matter knowledge with students so having passion and enthusiasm is important. Work in any of these areas also involves administrative responsibilities such as serving on committees, supporting students, and developing courses. In HE and to a lesser extent in FE those that teach also conduct research and publish articles in relevant journals to support the development of the subject. While there are some research only or teaching only positions, most HE positions require a combination of the two. Teaching in HE typically requires a PhD although some are able to secure positions without one. Likewise having publications in peer reviewed journals is very important as these provide evidence

of the ability to produce high quality research. Below, psychology lecturer Kristie Soar elaborates on what it takes to apply for HE lecturing positions. Read Kristie's complete career case study on The Psychology Network's career case study page.

> Having publications, either published or in press, is important when applying for lectureships. Also, presenting at conferences demonstrates to employers that you are able to communicate your research effectively. An awareness of government white papers on current issues in HE is important. For example, in the current climate, before going to interviews, it would be important to know and to be able to talk about the impact of tuition fees. It's also important to look at the employer's vision of their university and the school's/department plan, i.e. their wants and needs and future directions. Of course, experience of delivering tutorials and lectures as well as marking is invaluable, but most importantly you should demonstrate that you are disciplined, motivated and interested (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). – Dr Kristie Soar, Principal Psychology Lecturer, University of East London

The BPS Division of Teachers and Researchers in Psychology (DTRP) (www.bps.org.uk/dtrp/dtrp_home.cfm) is the primary group that provides support and information for those teaching psychology in HE.

School teaching has received a lot of attention in recent years due to shortages of available teachers particularly in maths and science. According to a recent survey, 3.6% of psychology graduates go on to study for a school teaching qualification (Prospects, 2009). Teaching in state run secondary or primary schools in England or Wales requires Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) which can be obtained by going through initial teacher training (ITT) or by demonstrating that required standards have been met. For those who already have a first degree, a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is one way to gain QTS. The PGCE is a one-year full-time programme involving placements and study of teaching. There are also employment-based options such as the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) which allow you to teach and get paid while gaining the qualification. GTP can take three months to one year to complete depending upon previous teaching experience. For more information on these programmes visit the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) website (www.tda.gov.uk).

Psychology graduates can find it difficult to enter teaching through either of these routes. For the secondary age range, PGCE applicants must show evidence that at least half of their degree subject was in a national curriculum subject. Psychology is not currently in the national curriculum, so psychology graduates usually attempt to show they have sufficient mathematics content (from the statistics elements) or biology elements. If you are thinking of entering teaching, consider taking electives in national curriculum subjects if possible, and focus your dissertation on a relevant subject such as one related to learning or developmental psychology. You may also consider postgraduate programmes that specialise in psychology teaching.

Simon Knight, a psychology/philosophy graduate and sixth form teacher offers the following advice to students interested in a career teaching school. Read Simon's complete career case study on The Psychology Network's career case study page.

Certainly in my application and interview, I traced my 'selling points' back to A-level. Because psychology isn't a national curriculum subject, ideally you want to show you can teach something else too – my A-levels in religious studies, history and sociology provided some evidence of this. I was also fortunate as my undergrad degree was in Philosophy and Psychology – so again, I could show subject knowledge outside of psychology.

Because of the small number of places (26 on my course at the Institute of Education in London split across sociology/politics/psychology) and institutions running the course, you'll need to show some experience with young people. This is particularly true at the moment with more applicants than in previous years. If your university runs 'AimHigher' events or mentoring in schools, I'd recommend getting involved. Significantly, everyone on my course had at least some experience working with young people, and only one (out of 26) was straight out of undergrad (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). – Simon Knight, Teacher, Saffron Walden County High

Of note is that if you are a qualified teacher from an EU country, you are eligible to apply for UK teaching positions. If you qualified as a teacher in a country outside the European Economic Area, you may be able to work in England as a temporary or unqualified teacher for a period of time while you gain your QTS. The Overseas Trained Teacher Programme (OTTP) available through the TDA website provides details. Similar opportunities for teaching and getting into teacher training are available in Scotland and Northern Ireland and more information can be found through Teach In Scotland (www.teachinginscotland.com) and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland (www.deni.gov.uk).

Human computer interaction (HCI)

HCI, colloquially referred to as cyber psychology is the study of the interaction between people and computers. Interest in this area has grown as individuals increasingly use the internet for online shopping, finding advice and information, engaging in social networks such as Facebook, as well as gambling, video gaming and taking online learning courses. As well, this area is concerned with human interactions with other types of technology such as game consoles, mobile phones, PDAs and aircraft consoles. Psychologists working in this field suggest it is an area that is growing extremely rapidly (Joinson, McKenna, Postmes and Reips, 2007).

Because this area overlaps with computer science and organisational psychology, and involves so many different types of technologies, it is difficult to illustrate the full range of job possibilities or job titles. However, descriptions of the 'user experience field' and 'e-learning' below provide some ideas.

User experience field
The user experience field (UX) seeks to understand the experience and satisfaction of individuals who use technology devices or systems. User experience work generally involves researching the way in which consumers use technology to ensure user-friendly products or services or to help businesses to maximise their earning potential by understanding how to attract and retain customers. Stuart Booth, Psychology PhD from the University of Sheffield, works as Head of User Experience Research at phuQube, an online design agency in London. Stuart describes his work as mostly qualitative, involving interviews, focus groups and online surveys. He further notes that the field is growing by about 25% per year and that there are ample opportunities for the right people.

The sort of organisations offering opportunities in the UX field include specialist consultancies who advise clients selling a range of consumer products such as mobile phones, software, games, e-commerce (web-based) services or household equipment. Some organisations conducting work in this field, particularly those working in website usability, use eye tracking technology, human behavioural analysis and cognitive techniques to underpin their work. Look for job titles such as Graduate Usability Analyst, Usability Practitioner, User Experience Architect or Information Architect. Some jobs may be open to those with only a first degree; however others require additional postgraduate qualifications. Stuart suggests a Masters or PhD in human-computer interaction or similar subject as well as relevant experience. Read Stuart's complete career case study on The Psychology Network's career case study page.

Stuart Booth

E-learning

E-learning is concerned with the use of technology, often web based, in education. It involves considering how people acquire skills and information when technology is involved in learning. E-learning is used in training employees as well as in teaching in further and higher education. Psychology students interested in learning as well as technology might be particularly suited for this area of work which could involve a variety of roles from sales to customer service and applications development.

Opportunities related to e-learning might be advertised as e-learning Publications Editor, Content Developer, Instructional Designer or e-learning Coordinator. Tom Liversidge, psychology graduate from the University of Manchester, now works for the Clinical Psychology department as a Learning Technologies Developer. His role involves creating online tools to support teaching and learning. While his undergraduate connections with Manchester might have helped him get into his job, he had to take a Web Development course after graduating as well as gain relevant experience before getting this position. He notes that if psychology students are interested in a career similar to his, they will need to develop the necessary skills to show employers they can do the work. Read Tom's complete career case study on The Psychology Network's career case study page.

You will be competing against people with computer science backgrounds, so will have to put a positive spin on your psychology degree and focus on what extra skills it has given you over the competition (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010)! - Tom Liversidge, Learning Technologies Developer.

Other possibilities related to HCI include the prevention or treatment of technology addictions (BBC, 2006), the use of video games to treat mental health disorders (Chuang, 2005) or social anxiety (Bradbury, 2005), or developing social networks. HCI is a very active and growing area of research which opens up possibilities to work as a research assistant or to pursue postgraduate studies and carry out research.

If you are interested in this area take relevant undergraduate modules and pursue a related dissertation topic and work experiences. Finding postgraduate opportunities might require some creative searching: try identifying psychology academics with research interests in related areas. Academics may be located within research centres that span a range of disciplines such as computing, social psychology, counselling, information systems, or computer-mediated communication (Joinson, et al., 2007). Alternatively, postgraduate work in technology may be advisable depending upon interest areas.

Concluding thoughts on psychology related careers

The above outlines some career areas within or very closely related to psychology. Before deciding to pursue a career in any area, be sure to check the state of the current job market and recruitment trends, particularly in areas that may be subject to government policy.

As noted, some of the areas described do not necessarily require a postgraduate qualification so if you are interested in pursuing them you may be able to qualify by undertaking related modules, relevant work experiences and choosing related dissertation topics. As one graduate suggests:

> Get as much experience as you can in any area that interests you through paid or voluntary work – especially in the first year of university. Not only will you probably be helping someone out, volunteering will help you develop your own interests in psychology. This will be especially advantageous in your third year in choosing the modules that interest you, and in giving you original ideas for the third year project. These are things I wish I had got involved in when I was a student (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Laura Kingston, BSc Psychology, University of the West of England (UWE), Research Technician, UWE.

Read Laura's complete career case study on The Psychology Network's career case study page.

For areas that do require additional study, whilst postgraduate qualifications may be available, it is important to realise that some psychology courses reflect new areas of research interest but may not easily translate into job opportunities, particularly if you want to apply knowledge outside of academia. Be sure to investigate the sorts of jobs that graduates from similar courses go on to pursue. Find this out by talking to course directors, asking alumni from your course, asking individual institutions for graduate destination information and reviewing graduate destination information from all UK universities through the Unistats website (www.unistats.com).

Health and social care related opportunities

There are opportunities for psychology graduates to work within health and social care either within the public sector (e.g. NHS (www.nhs.uk)), the private sector (e.g. Priory (www.prioryhealthcare.com)), or the voluntary/third sector (e.g. Rethink (www.rethink.org)), which is becoming a major provider of health care particularly within mental health. Some opportunities that are related to psychology will require further training or experience and include psychologist (working in clinical, counselling, health or forensic psychology as described earlier in this section), social worker, mental health nurse, occupational therapist, arts therapist, psychotherapist, graduate mental health worker, psychiatrist and roles emerging through the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) initiative such as psychological wellbeing practitioner and high intensity therapist.

Other roles providing more basic healthcare in a variety of health and social care settings which are available will not require so much training such as assistant practitioner, healthcare assistant, nursing assistant and care assistant. There are also limited opportunities in the NHS for assistant psychologists, psychology assistants and research assistants.

Additionally psychology graduates can work in roles in the healthcare sector that are less psychology-related such as GP practice manager and management trainee.

The following provides an overview of many of these roles within the NHS and elsewhere - some of which represent long term career opportunities and others which tend to be designed for those seeking experience to gain admission to postgraduate courses.

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Related Roles

According to the Mental Health Foundation about one in four people experience mental health problems each year with many going untreated or only being offered the choice of medication by their GPs.

A recent and major investment by the Government in psychological therapies referred to as IAPT has resulted in the creation of new mental health roles designed to provide better public access to approved interventions for common mental health problems such as depression and anxiety disorders. These positions are often of interest to psychology graduates who want to work in mental health type positions but are not prepared to pursue a doctoral level qualification. Psychology students are well placed to pursue such roles.

It should be noted that IAPT roles were specifically created to attract individuals interested in this career path and not those seeking experience to gain entry to doctoral courses. Other positions (e.g. psychology assistant, assistant psychologist) are more suitable for that purpose. The following provides a brief description of these roles. More detailed information can be found on the IAPT website (www.iapt.nhs.uk).

IAPT services are commissioned by the local NHS Primary Care Trust (PCT) which may provide the services directly and/or commission them through organisations such as Mind, Rethink or Turning Point.

Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners

Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners (PWPs), were introduced in 2007 as part of the Department of Health IAPT programme. Qualified PWPs are trained to provide high volume, low intensity interventions to clients with mild to moderate anxiety and depression using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approaches.

Trainee PWPs are employed by NHS Primary Care Trusts and based usually in GP surgeries which provide supervised IAPT services. They attend a one year low intensity training programme including day release, for a postgraduate qualification. To apply, candidates should have some experience of work in local mental health services or local communities and a proven interest in working with clients.

Some job adverts seek applicants who have already completed their qualification whilst others accept applicants who are able to train alongside their roles. Posts are advertised on the NHS Jobs website as well as in local newspapers and with charities such as Rethink and Turning Point. For more detailed information regarding these roles, download the Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner Best Practice Guide (2010) from www.iapt.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/pwp-best-practice-guide-iapt-web-final.pdf or visit the NHS Careers PWP website (www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/details/Default.aspx?Id=2070)

Various higher education institutions offer approved PWP training courses. These are listed on the BPS website. Non EEA/EU applicants will usually be able to apply, but may only be considered if the vacancy cannot be filled by an EEA applicant. Each individual vacancy advertised on the NHS Jobs website will indicate whether or not it is open to non-EEA/EU applicants – so prospective applicants must check carefully before applying.

High Intensity Therapists

High Intensity Therapists work with clients suffering from anxiety, depression and other complex problems that require more in-depth therapy than provided by PWPs. They work with people from a variety of backgrounds helping to assess their needs, plan and implement interventions and evaluate therapy outcomes. High intensity therapists will have extensive existing experience working within mental health services either as a therapist (e.g. clinical psychologist, psychotherapist, counsellor) or as a mental health practitioner (e.g. community psychiatric nurse, occupational therapist). Several thousand additional therapists have been trained in recent years through the establishment of approximately 30 new courses within England. When hired as a trainee in this role, training includes a one year post-graduate diploma with usually two days within a university and three days working within an IAPT service.

High intensity roles are not suitable for psychology graduates with a first degree only unless they have very significant experience of working in mental health settings. Guidance suggests that those with at least the equivalent of two years of experience as a PWP would be suited to apply – although they will be competing with applicants who have clinical qualifications and are registered healthcare professionals. Jobs are advertised by the NHS but also in local newspapers and through charities such as Mind and Rethink. Similar to PWP roles, non EEA/EU applicants may be able to apply, but may only be considered if the vacancy cannot be filled by an EEA applicant. Check advertised vacancy guidelines before applying.

While the above opportunities are relatively new developments for the NHS, the following are some of the roles which have traditionally been available and which are often of interest to psychology students.

Psychology Assistant and Assistant Psychology roles

The NHS has traditionally funded psychology assistant and assistant psychology posts, especially in services where there might have been difficulties recruiting qualified staff. These roles provide opportunities to work with a range of clients including children, adults, the elderly and those with learning disabilities, in a range of settings such as primary care, acute in-patient services, early intervention services, child and adolescent services and community mental health teams. Detailed information on Psychology Assistant posts is available through the BPS website. Minimum requirements vary for these posts but most ask for a minimum of graduation from a BPS accredited degree course plus relevant experience with postgraduate training considered desirable. The BPS Good Practice Guidelines for these roles note that most assistant psychologists take up these posts in order to gain the necessary experience to apply to a postgraduate course.

Community Development Workers, Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

People who work in community development are responsible for improving mental health services to meet the needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. Community Development Workers (CDW) were introduced in 2006 with target numbers of 500 staff in post by the end of 2007. Although the funding is provided by the NHS, CDWs are not always employed directly by Primary Care Trusts and can be based in local authorities, mental health trusts and the independent healthcare sector. The role involves staff training, developing diverse community resources, promoting services, and breaking down barriers to accessing services.

No specific postgraduate qualification is required but experience of working with BME community groups is essential; ability to speak a community language, and experience of health and social care delivery or a relevant qualification may also be required (Department of Health, 2006).   For more information, see the Community Development Workers for Black and Minority Ethic Communities handbook available from the NHS. Such roles may be suitable for those seeking to develop experience for postgraduate course applications.

Support, Time and Recovery Workers

Established in 2003, Support, Time and Recovery (STR) Workers work within community mental health teams to support users of mental health services by giving practical support and helping them access resources to maintain their independence. This role does not require a degree level qualification but usually requires experience of mental health services or working in health and social care. There are senior level posts available which may be more attractive to graduates but these usually require experience of managing staff and resources and experience of mental health systems and service delivery. Positions are available with the NHS, voluntary and private sectors (Department of Health, 2008). Degrees are not typically required for STR roles and they may be suitable for those seeking to develop experience for postgraduate course applications.

NHS roles under development

The NHS is developing and piloting additional roles in various local areas to help meet specific gaps in mental health services. For example, in the Northampton area, the role of Individual Peer Supporter has been created to provide support to people who are experiencing mental distress. Peer Supporters are people who are in recovery themselves and have undergone training to provide support (Taylor and Lavender, 2007).

In the Hampshire and the Avon and Wiltshire Primary Care Trusts, Mental Health Practitioners provide a mixture of clinical and other health care interventions in various settings, including in-patient care. These roles are somewhat similar to mental health nursing as they are designed to work with people with serious and chronic mental health problems. Practitioners work toward a postgraduate diploma in Mental Health Studies and can progress to Masters level to qualify as a Mental Health Practitioner (Taylor and Lavender, 2007). The University of Southampton (2011) provides one such programme and notes that most of their students have an undergraduate degree in psychology. Mental Health Practitioner roles are also available in other areas of the UK including Lancashire, Nottingham and South London (although they may not offer the same postgraduate study opportunities) so relocation is not necessarily required to take up one of these positions.

If public demand continues to exceed services provided, it is likely that further role developments within the NHS and private providers may occur in future. Students interested in such roles would do well to check the NHS, IAPT and BPS websites for the latest information. A final piece of advice is that when searching for jobs with the NHS or elsewhere, be creative in the use of search terms. Not all relevant roles will have 'psychology' in the title. For example, to turn up counselling related jobs available through the NHS website, use the 'search by skills' field on the advanced search page trying terms such as 'talking therapies', 'counselling', 'dependency', 'psychological', 'substance' or 'alcohol dependency'.

Scottish opportunities

Similar to the situation in England, the Scottish government has developed an initiative to train more individuals to address the growing demand for psychological interventions. As such the following roles have been developed.

Clinical Associate in Applied Psychology (CAAP)

CAAP roles, available only in Scotland, involve the delivery of psychological interventions for common mental health problems in a variety of mental health and primary care settings. Focusing on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approaches, associates can work with children, young people or adults and entry to this role is possible with the postgraduate qualification of Clinical Associate in Applied Psychology.

Clinical Associate programmes are open to psychology graduates who have graduated from a BPS accredited undergraduate course. The University of Edinburgh (MSc in Applied Psychology for Children and Young People) and the Universities of Dundee and Stirling (joint MSc in Psychological Therapy in Primary Care for Working with Adults) currently offer programmes leading to Clinical Associate qualifications. Places on these programmes are competitive. One department notes a 5-15% acceptance rate.

Places on the relevant courses are currently funded by the NHS. When students are accepted on these courses, they become NHS employees and work alongside studies. Therefore students must have a full work permit in order to apply. Courses run from February to January as opposed to the traditional academic term times. Graduating students are not automatically provided with NHS jobs and are free to apply for jobs elsewhere throughout the UK. Recent statistics provided by one department suggest a possible slow down in the hiring of clinical associates working with adults with 60% of the 2009 cohort employed in posts.

Northern Ireland opportunities

Similar to the situation in England, in June 2010 the Strategy for the Development of Psychological Therapies was launched to expand mental health services in Northern Ireland. Part of this expansion includes the creation of 200+ new positions within Northern Ireland that carry the titles psychology assistant and associate psychologist.

Research Assistant/Assistant Psychologist/Associate Psychologist roles
The responsibilities of the posts listed above vary and can include delivering low intensity interventions, conducting assessments with clients with less complex mental health needs and conducting service-related research. The NHS employs individuals in these roles in all specialisms. While previous experience is not required to apply, securing such posts is extremely competitive in Northern Ireland and previous clinical and research experience is definitely important. Experience can be developed through volunteer opportunities or through related posts (e.g. Behavioural Support Worker) which are sometimes available.

Queen's University Belfast offers training for these roles in the form of a Diploma/MSc course. To apply for the course individuals need a first or upper second class honours degree from a BPS/HPC accredited university undergraduate course. As well, individuals need to have secured an assistant/associate psychologist post as of the start date of the course. Some fee bursaries may be available through the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) (http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/). In previous years, up to 80% of student fees have been funded by DHSS, with students self-funding the remaining amount.

The above roles are typically advertised on the Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland website (http://www.n-i.nhs.uk/), the HSCRecruit website (http://www.hscrecruit.com/) and through local newspapers such as the Belfast Telegraph (http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/).

Further career options for psychology graduates

If you want to use your psychology degree to move into yet other career fields, there is ample opportunity. Many employers view the Bachelor's degree as a generic qualification that enables students to apply for graduate level jobs. More than 50% of vacancies advertised are open to graduates from any degree subject (Prospects, n.d.).

Table 1 shows the professions pursued by psychology graduates across the country which may provide ideas about employment options. Reviewing case studies of careers pursued by psychology graduates can also help you to think about career options. The following highlights some of the careers paths pursued by psychology graduates most of whom have a first degree. Their complete career case studies as well as many others are available on The Psychology Network's career case studies page (www.pnarchive.org/s.php?p=139).

Professions pursued by psychology graduates

13.9%	Social and welfare professions
13.7%	Other clerical and secretarial occupations
13.7%	Retail, catering, waiting and bar staff
8.1%	Commercial, industrial and public sector managers
6.7%	Business and financial professions
4.4%	Other professional and technical occupations
3.8%	Education professions
3.7%	Marketing, sales and advertising professions
2.7%	Health professions
2.1%	Numerical clerks and cashiers
1.4%	Arts, design, culture and sports professions
1.0%	Information technology professions
0.9%	Scientific research, analysis and development; legal and engineering professions

Table 1: Adapted from Prospects (2009)   24% of graduates pursued other or unknown professions or continued studies

Graduate Trainee Manager, Centrica

Nick Williams, a psychology graduate from the University of York, has been working his way through Centrica's two-year graduate management training programme. After he completes this programme, he will be eligible to apply for a number of management related positions within Centrica.

> Many skills I learned during my psychology degree have been transferable...such as adaptability, being open-minded and diverse, being able to give and receive constructive criticism, group interaction... (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Nick Williams, Graduate Trainee Manager, Centrica

International Commercial Associate, HSBC Bank

Ian Clarke completed a Psychology and Marketing degree from Lancaster University. In his current position at HSBC Bank, Ian manages an international business portfolio of approximately 60 commercial customers. His role includes maintaining accounts, attracting new customers and providing financial products such as pensions, investments, finance and insurance. Ian notes below how his psychology degree helped to prepare him for this job.

> People wonder why I ever went into banking if I did psychology. I don't class myself as a banker; I class myself as a manager. Whether I am managing a group of people or a customer portfolio, I use the same skills. When negotiating with customers or trying to meet their needs, you have to be able to read body language, understand what people are thinking, and what is important to them. Psychology helped me to develop a better understanding of people and to be able to analyse people's behaviour. This is also useful when working with teams, where group dynamics are important (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Ian Clarke, International Commercial Associate, HSBC Bank

Human Resources Assistant, Cancer Research UK

Kavita Shanker completed a BSc in Psychology at University College London. She says that she chose to study psychology because of the many career possibilities that were open to psychology graduates. In her current role as Human Resources Assistant, she organises, coordinates and evaluates development programmes for employees. One of her current projects involves analysing individual performance across the whole organisation in order to more effectively motivate staff. Below Kavita describes how she got her job.

> After finishing university, I realised I needed to gain some experience. That was why I had a three-month internship with Cancer Research UK… At the end of my first three month placement, one of my co-workers rang me asking if I wanted to cover a worker who was on sick leave for a month. I took the opportunity straight away, and one month turned in to six months, as they kept extending my work period! I guess this is a good example and stresses how important networking can be for your career (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010)! – Kavita Shanker, Human Resources Assistant, Cancer Research UK

Thinking Skills Programme Facilitator and Resettlement Manager, HMP Wormwood Scrubs Prison

After completing a social science Access course and a Psychology undergraduate degree, Keeley Taverner eventually went to work for HMP Wormwood Scrubs Prison. At Wormwood, part of her role includes facilitating Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which is a six-week programme that aims to help offenders to modify their thinking and behaviour. In her role she works closely with community probation officers as well as Wormwood's internal Psychology Department. For students who are interested in getting into this type of work Keeley suggests the following:

I believe volunteering is invaluable, and I don't think I would be in my post today if I had not devoted my free time to it. I would recommend that individuals pursue their passions, and be open to exploring broad experiences from diverse arenas to aid themselves on this journey. Self reflection is a powerful factor, and don't be afraid to question yourself, about your personal motivations for wanting to enter into a particular career (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). – Keeley Taverner, Thinking Skills Programme Facilitator and Resettlement Manager, HMP Wormwood Scrubs Prison

Desk Officer, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Rosie Dyas got a first in her BSc Psychology course at the University of Portsmouth. She joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by applying through their graduate Fast Stream programme (www.faststream.gov.uk). In her post as a Desk Officer, she serves as the point of contact for various countries and contributes to developing UK policy and relations with other countries. This involves working with foreign embassies, the EU and charities as well as MPs. When asked about applying for her job she noted the following:

I looked at several graduate schemes through the Prospects and the civil service gateway websites…I knew I wanted to travel so was attracted to the Foreign Office... The competition for Fast Stream is high, but I decided to apply anyway and was amazed when I got the job! For students interested in the Foreign Office a strong interest in foreign affairs, language skills (particularly difficult languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, etc.) and overseas experience is an advantage. Reading the Economist and the foreign affairs sections of other papers is also a good start. The Fast Stream gateway website gives further details of the skills to develop. It might also be worth practising verbal/numeric selection tests as a lot of people get knocked out at the initial online stages of the Fast Stream assessments because they don't perform well on these tests (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).
– Rosie Dyas, Desk Officer, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Career Consultant, University of Leeds Careers Service

Gill Barber, who completed a BA at Liverpool University and later a postgraduate diploma, describes her job working in a careers service as diverse. She provides careers advice to students and graduates, works with departments to deliver career planning sessions and builds relationships with graduate employers. When asked how her study of psychology relates to her job she noted the following:

> In careers guidance, we use a lot of psychological principles. Career development theories are based in psychology. I use personality assessments with students such as the Myers Briggs as well as ability tests. These have their roots in psychology. Really, so much of what I do relates to psychology (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Gill Barber, Career Consultant, University of Leeds Careers Service

Development Worker, Northern Refugee Centre

Helen Todd, who completed a BA in Psychology and Philosophy from the University of Sheffield and an MSc in Leadership for Sustainable Development, supports the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the South Yorkshire community. Her job involves going out into communities to run awareness training and overseeing the development of empowerment groups for refugee women. When asked how psychology relates to her job she noted:

> My psychology degree gives me a different perspective from many of the people that I work with. Some people think that people will easily change attitudes because they will believe what you say. I think that there are certain factors that help to change attitudes. Knowing this helps me be more effective in influencing people (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Helen Todd, Development Worker, Northern Refugee Centre

Freelance Writer

Rachel Glazier, who completed a BSc in Psychology at City University London, writes articles on a variety of topics for trade and consumer magazines, as well as newspapers and websites focusing on beauty, food, travel and environmental topics. She also does copywriting and editorials for adverts and press releases. When asked how she went from psychology to writing she explained:

> I had no particular career goals ... coming into the end of my second year, I still wasn't sure what I wanted to do ... I ran and got elected to a communications post in the students' union. This allowed me to take a one year paid sabbatical. It was a great opportunity to get work experience, regroup and gain the momentum that I needed to finish my degree ... This experience is what started me on the path of writing (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Rachel Glazier, Freelance Writer

Academic Coordinator, Higher Education Academy Psychology Network

Marina Crowe, who completed a BSc Psychology (Hons) at the University of Leeds (York St John University), works at the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network. Marina says her job involves multiple projects including a benchmarking study of e-learning, collating resources for teaching, organising networking group meetings and handling submissions for the Psychology Learning and Teaching journal (PLAT). When asked what advice she had for psychology students in thinking about future careers, she noted the following:

> Look at the bigger picture! Don't think that your degree means you are pigeon-holed; there are many doors which could open for you leading to a variety of careers (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).
> - Marina Crowe, Academic Coordinator, Higher Education Academy Psychology Network

Account Executive, Marketing

Jade Cavella, who completed a BSc in Psychology from the University of Edinburgh, works for a large marketing agency. Her role as Account Executive provides a substantial amount of variety. Her work has included large print campaigns and television advertisements as well as small scale brand development projects. When projects begin, she typically meets with clients to assess their needs; then liaises with internal staff members who collaborate to create, plan, and produce a final product. In terms of how her psychology degree helped to prepare her for this job, Jade notes the following:

> Undertaking a literature review as part of my psychology degree was great preparation for my current role. I continuously conduct background research on a variety of products some of which I have no experience with like, for example, darts! My psychology background has been helpful in other respects as well. For instance, we often look at advertising statistics when planning strategy so my statistics background is very helpful. As well, some psychology theories relate directly to my work and I sometimes refer back to them when planning advertising campaign strategies (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).
> – Jade Cavella, Account Executive in Marketing

There are truly many options available to psychology graduates and the above describe just some. To learn more about the psychology graduates mentioned above, plus others highlighted throughout this guide, visit The Psychology Network's career case studies page (www.pnarchive.org/s.php?p=139).

Websites

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP): www.bacp.co.uk

British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES): www.bases.org.uk

Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS): www.apecs.org

Association for Qualitative Research (AQR): www.aqr.org.uk

Belfast Telegraph: http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/

British Neuroscience Association: www.bna.org.uk

British Psychological Society (BPS): www.bps.org.uk

British Psychological Society Careers information: www.bps.org.uk/careers

British Psychological Society division websites:
    Division of Clinical Psychology (DCP): www.bps.org.uk/dcp/dcp_home.cfm
    Division of Counselling Psychology (DCoP): www.bps.org.uk/dcop/home/home_home.cfm
    Division of Educational & Child Psychology (DECP): www.bps.org.uk/decp/decp_home.cfm
    Division of Forensic Psychology (DFP): www.bps.org.uk/dfp/dfp_home.cfm
    Division of Health Psychology (DHP): www.bps.org.uk/dhp/dhp_home.cfm
    Division of Neuropsychology (DoN): www.bps.org.uk/don
    Division of Occupational Psychology (DOP): www.bps.org.uk/dop/dop_home.cfm
    Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology (DSEP): www.bps.org.uk/spex/spex_home.cfm
    Division of Teachers and Researchers in Psychology (DTRP): www.bps.org.uk/dtrp/dtrp_home.cfm

Department of Education in Northern Ireland: www.deni.gov.uk

Division of Clinical Psychology careers sites: www.clinicalpsychology.org.uk and www.bps.org.uk/dcp/clinical_psychology/dcp_home.cfm

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC): www.cwdcouncil.org.uk

Clin Psy: www.clinpsy.org.uk

Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology (CHPCCP): www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp

Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS): (http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/)

Division of Clinical Psychologists (DCP) Prequalification Group: www.bps.org.uk/dcp/clinical_psychology/become_a_cp/pqg/pqg_home.cfm

European Mentoring and Coaching Council: www.emccouncil.org

Foreign and Commonwealth Office graduate Fast Stream programme: www.faststream.gov.uk

Health Professions Council (HPC) List of Approved Courses: www.hpc-uk.org

HM Prison Service: www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/careersandjobs/

Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT): www.iapt.nhs.uk

Market Research Society (MRS): www.mrs.org.uk

NHS Careers: www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

National Health Service (NHS): www.nhs.uk

NHS Jobs: www.jobs.nhs.uk (vacancies in the NHS in England and Wales)

Parapsychological Association: www.parapsych.org

Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS): www.apecs.org

Priory: www.prioryhealthcare.com

Psychclick: www.psyclick.org.uk/groups

Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner Best Practice Guide: www.iapt.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/pwp-best-practice-guide-iapt-web-final.pdf

Rethink: www.rethink.org

Psychology Network: www.pnarchive.org

Qualifications in Counselling Psychology: www.bps.org.uk/qcop

Society for Psychical Research (SPR): www.spr.ac.uk

Special Group of Coaching Psychology: www.sgcp.org.uk

Teach In Scotland: www.teachinginscotland.com

Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA): www.tda.gov.uk

UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP): www.psychotherapy.org.uk

Unistats: www.unistats.com

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'As more students now gain higher education qualifications, a university degree has become a basic requirement...'

4. The Job Market

An understanding of the job market is important whether you are considering careers within or outside of psychology. An understanding of the job market involves considering the numbers of qualified people looking for jobs, the jobs available and the resulting employment patterns. In recent years much discussion focused on the developing knowledge economy, for example, how employers are increasingly in need of more highly skilled employees, thought to be those with at least an undergraduate degree. Some evidence supports this suggesting that employers increasingly seek graduate-level candidates for formerly non-graduate jobs. The Institute for Employment Research created a new category of jobs called 'new graduate occupations' which includes those areas of employment that are new or expanding and where entry into career areas has changed and now typically requires a degree. Examples of such positions include marketing and sales managers, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, management accountants, welfare, housing and probation officers (Elias and Purcell, 2003). While these opportunities seem to be increasing, it is unclear as to whether they are the result of changing job requirements or the increased number of graduates. However, the number of students attending universities has more than doubled for men and tripled for women over the past few decades leading to larger numbers of graduates.

As more students now gain higher education qualifications, a university degree has become a basic requirement for more competitive jobs, and graduates must do more to truly be competitive (Brown and Hesketh, 2004). Employability depends upon students' abilities to meet job requirements as well as how they compare to their peers who are also seeking jobs. Standing out from the competition is more important than ever in the current economic climate. 2009 saw the first graduate casualties of the UK recession. Sectors such as banking and IT were hit particularly hard with some employers significantly reducing or even suspending their graduate intake and many closing their recruitment campaigns early. The projection through to 2012 is not particularly favourable, in part due to the £81 billion cut in public spending decided upon by the government in the autumn of 2010 (BBC, 2010). These cuts will impact employment and benefits in health, education, police and the Home Office, the legal system, social care and housing; virtually all areas of government (Guardian, 2010). At the time of writing, UK unemployment stood at nearly 8% according to statistics published by the HRM Guide (www.hrmguide.co.uk) and, for new graduates, unemployment is slightly higher with the latest figures from the HESA Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education Survey (www.hesa.ac.uk) reporting a 10% unemployment rate. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported unemployment rates for new graduates in the last part of 2010 to be 11.6% or one out of five new graduates unemployed which is the highest level reported in 10 years (ONS, 2011).

Despite this challenging economic climate, the UK's largest graduate employers have reported two consecutive years of increasing recruitment and, although vacancies remain below pre-recession levels, three-fifths of employers expect to employ more graduates in 2011, with the number of vacancies increasing by 9.4%. So, although the current job market is tough, there are still opportunities. A tight job market simply means that it is more important than ever for graduates to adopt a long-term approach to planning and preparation. Gaining work experience (via internships, sandwich placements or voluntary work) can be crucial and government initiatives such as the Graduate Talent Pool (http://graduatetalentpool.direct.gov.uk) which help students to find internships launched in 2009 in response to rising levels of graduate unemployment. In terms of finding jobs after graduation, solid research and considerable time spent on high-quality applications is essential. When employers are receiving high numbers of applications they will expect graduates to be even more career focused, rejecting those who do not appear committed to the role/sector. While it may be tempting to grab the first job available, resisting panic moves and thinking how first jobs can contribute to longer term goals remains an important message.

While the number of highly qualified graduates seeking jobs and the availability of jobs are important considerations, there are other trends influencing the job market which can impact the availability of opportunities, not least how students prepare themselves for those opportunities. The remainder of this section reviews such changes.

Globalisation and the global job market growth

As the world economy becomes increasingly international so too does the labour market. UK employers receive applications from all over the world and many target workers from other countries which has made the UK workforce substantially more diverse. UK graduates also have more opportunities to work abroad if they so choose. Forty-six European countries including the UK have now signed up for the Bologna Process which has created a system through which educational qualifications earned in one country can be understood in another. Within the discipline, the European Certificate in Psychology (Europsy), which outlines requirements for psychology Bachelor's and Master's degrees, was launched widely in Europe in 2010. Bologna and Europsy attest to the concerted efforts being made by government bodies to promote the transferability of qualifications and the mobility of graduates in general (Trapp and Upton, 2010).

These factors point towards the need for graduates to ensure that they are equipped to work in a global marketplace. Developing a better understanding of other cultures and customs and learning to interact effectively with individuals from other cultures, often referred to as intercultural competence (ICC), can contribute towards making graduates more marketable. Research suggests that graduates who are seen as more international (e.g. have studied abroad) have the advantage over those who are not. The international diversity now present on many UK campuses can provide opportunities for students to develop ICC through cross-cultural friendships and study opportunities. Learning a second or third language can also be helpful and UK students can further their international experience by participating in exchange or study and work abroad programmes. Erasmus (www.erasmus.ac.uk), for instance, allows students to study for a period of time in one of 31 countries. To date approximately two million students have studied through Erasmus and increasing numbers of countries (e.g. Malta, Turkey, Denmark) now offer psychology courses in English making them more

attractive to UK students (Trapp and Upton, 2010). Many former Erasmus students go on to careers linked to their international experiences.

Damian Terrill, quoted below, who completed a BA in Psychology at Bath Spa University, migrated to New Zealand shortly after finishing his degree.

> I would most definitely recommend any students considering working internationally to gain experience overseas...[it] adds depth to a CV and demonstrates a distinct level of commitment to long-term career aspirations (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).
> - Damian Terrill, Probation Officer, New Zealand Department of Corrections, Community Probation & Psychological Services

Rosie Dyas, who completed a BSc Psychology (Hons) at the University of Portsmouth, now works in the UK in a position related to foreign affairs. She notes:

> I am the main point of contact for the countries I cover and am contributing to developing UK policy and relations with other countries...The work is very varied, including a lot of overseas travel. My office looks for people with language skills and with an interest in foreign/international affairs (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Rosie Dyas, Desk Officer, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Industrial changes

Historically many people could expect to get a job with an organisation and to be there for many years if not for life with job security and career progression guaranteed. However, changes that took place in the 1990s have transformed today's job market. Today, positions come into existence almost overnight and established positions can disappear rapidly. This change is partially the result of increased international competition which has encouraged employers to streamline their organisations to reduce costs. This streamlining resulted in redundancies and a process of reducing hierachies known as 'delayering' (Kettley, 1995). For example, Hewlett-Packard set a goal to reduce its workforce by 2,400 people in 1993 with the aim of reducing numbers and creating a flatter organisational structure. Citibank underwent a similar change by introducing a matrix management structure thereby reducing layers of management (McGovern et al., 1998). This restructuring has not only diminished job security but also promotion potential.

> We used to be a very stable business and people could come in at a very young age and see that they could retire with us. This is changing. People do not have that expectation and we cannot deliver it. We made 130 people redundant out of 3,500 last year and we never used to do that. There was a lot of concern and people are feeling insecure (McGovern et al., 1998 p. 10). Senior manager, W. H. Smith News

In addition to the diminished potential to find a career for life and more limited potential for promotions, employers may increasingly expect more from graduates in terms of working cross-functionally (Kettley, 1995) as well as taking responsibility for their own careers and ensuring that they maintain skills required by employers. People who want to be promoted are increasingly expected to move themselves forward which is why personal development planning (PDP) is so important (see Section 1 for more on PDP). The Citibank company handbook notes that employees at Citibank are not guaranteed a career but the chance to pursue one. After the implementation of a redundancy programme, Hewlett-Packard stated that it no longer provided 'guaranteed employment' but 'guaranteed employability' which means that employees who kept up to date with their skills and gained wide experience while maintaining high performance standards could be assured of a job (McGovern et al., 1998 p. 469).

More than ever, graduates need to ensure that they have the resilience, initiative and ability to learn and adapt in order to avoid redundancy and to be able to move into other employment situations as needed (Beagrie, 2004). Also it is important for graduates to understand that lateral job moves may be more common and that promotion potential may be limited. This will require changing employers as well as independently taking responsibility for career development. Finally, since delayering tends to result in a greater emphasis on teamwork and cross-functional work, it also points the way towards skills that are particularly relevant in today's workplace.

Growth in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)

When graduates are looking for jobs, they often think of applying to large organisations such as Deloitte or the NHS. However, in recent years the number of SMEs has increased and according to the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, they now account for 99.9% of all UK companies and well over half (59.8%) of jobs (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2010). Small enterprises include those businesses that have between one and 49 employees whilst medium enterprises have between 50 and 249. One of the factors that has led to their growth is that larger organisations now outsource some of their activities to external organisations since it is less expensive and more efficient. For example, they often outsource aspects of human resources, logistics, IT, finance and maintenance. Additionally, e-commerce created opportunities for SMEs to increase their customer base and operate internationally.

Although SMEs have always recruited graduates, their growth means there are more opportunities available. Because SMEs often have small budgets for recruitment, their jobs might not be widely advertised. Therefore graduates have to make an extra effort to locate these companies, however the pay-offs can be worth it. SMEs often provide opportunities for graduates to contribute more to the organisation earlier in their careers which can lead to earlier promotion. Also, getting hired can be quicker and easier than with larger more bureaucratic organisations. One psychology postgraduate from the University of Sussex who works for a small research firm commented:

> While there are lots of well-known larger companies, don't overlook the smaller ones that might have more flexible hiring processes (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).
>
> - Eleanor Atton, Associate Director, Razor Research

While there are many pluses to working for an SME, the downside might be that they tend to offer less training and expect quicker returns on the graduates they recruit (McNair, 2003). As well, working for SMEs can sometimes mean smaller benefit and remuneration packages when companies don't have a lot of money to spend.

While SMEs might provide good opportunities for new graduates they may be more challenging to locate. A recent survey suggests that while 84% of large companies have links with universities which help students to uncover work experience and job opportunities, only half of companies that have between 50 and 199 employees have links with universities. Students can locate some SMEs by consulting *The Sunday Times* which publishes a list of the top 100 best SMEs to work for. For more information about small business start ups, visit www.smallbusiness.co.uk.

Flexible work arrangements

The increasing use of technology and the change from an economy based on manufacturing to one based on service have fuelled changes in the way people work (McOrmond, 2004). To some extent, traditional full-time jobs have declined (though they still make up the majority of employment opportunities) and flexible employment arrangements such as temporary, contractual, part-time or freelance work are becoming more common (Trade Union Congress, 2005). This shift towards flexible work arrangements results from the changing needs of employers, as well as the needs of employees desiring flexible work options (Trade Union Congress, 2005; McOrmond, 2004). The following provides descriptions of flexible work arrangements common today.

Self-employment

Approximately 10% of workers in the UK are self-employed, that is, they have set up their own small business and provide services directly to customers (Weir, 2003). Despite the recent economic downturn, the recent reports suggest that the creation of new businesses and self-employment have held up (HM Government, 2010). Self-employed individuals may employ people to work for them or they may be working on their own full or part-time, on a casual freelance basis or they may run some type of franchise. The number of self-employed people increased in the early 1990s as people began to be aware of the potential to run small businesses and unemployment affected more people. It has increased even more since 2002 particularly in the areas of banking, finance, insurance, construction, education, health and public administration (Lindsay and Macaulay, 2004).

Benefits of being self-employed include being your own boss, deciding upon your own work hours and choosing to pursue work that you enjoy. As one psychology graduate notes:

> The best part of my job is flexibility. I can work when I want and am not tied to any particular organisation so can develop relationships with several different Business Psychology Consultancies to get my name known in the industry. On the downside, the life of a freelance Psychologist can be lonely, especially if I'm writing a lot of reports for several days at a time (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010)! - Laura Dancer, Freelance Business Psychologist
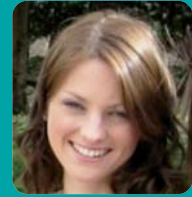
While being self-employed is an option, it is one to be carefully considered by new graduates as self-employment typically means being extremely self-motivated, working independently from home or elsewhere and being able to sell yourself or your products to generate income. Some self-employed people find that it is easier to become self-employed after they have some experience behind them. Laura, who completed an MSc in Occupational Psychology at Nottingham University, further noted:

> In terms of my freelance work, I could not do what I do now without first understanding the work that goes into putting these centres together and managing the client relationships. I have the confidence now to be independent but it has taken me a couple of years of working within an organisation to get here (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).
> - Laura Dancer, Freelance Business Psychologist

If you are interested in self-employment, check to see what support is offered by your university. For example, the University of York houses the White Rose Centre for Excellence in the Teaching and Learning of Enterprise which provides computer facilities, video conferencing, resources and help for students wanting to start their own business. They also run events such as the Entrepreneurs' Boot Camp. Other national support is also available through the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship's flyingstart programme (http://www.ncge.org.uk) which provides a host of events and fellowships for graduates with entrepreneurial ideas.

Portfolio working

Portfolio working refers to a variety of work patterns such as working with more than one employer on a part-time basis or being both employed and self-employed.

Portfolio working can lead to the development of multiple income streams which contribute to financial security. However, portfolio working can require a very high level of organisational skill, the confidence to cope with different work styles and the ability to work to deadlines. Paul, who obtained a Psychology PhD from King's College London, juggles the position of Postdoctoral Researcher with part-time work as the Editor of GRADBritain as well as providing research consultation to another company. He comments:

> Having so many roles, it is sometimes hard to balance time effectively. I manage to cope by making the most of techie gadgets such as my PDA phone to get email on the move (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Paul Wicks, Portfolio Career

Portfolio careers might be a possibility for graduates who would like to test the waters in different areas and have flexibility in their schedules. It might also provide an opportunity for those with entrepreneurial interests to develop small business ideas whilst bringing in income from other sources. However, some specialised experience is likely to be necessary in order to obtain appropriate roles.

Short-term contracts and grants

Individuals who work on short-term contracts or grants work for a fixed period of time, often between six months to three years, after which their work comes to an end or continues only if additional funding is secured. Short-term contracts and grants are becoming increasingly common. Some people choose to work on specific short-term projects, for others it is a reflection of the increasing tendency of employers to offer work in this way. Short-term contracts are common in areas such as IT and computing where specific projects are undertaken that will be completed during a limited period of time and particular skills are in demand.

For other employment areas, such as academic research, short-term funding is simply the way employment opportunities work. Kathryn Robb, Psychology PhD who works for the Cancer Research UK, Health Behaviour Research Centre, University College London, notes:

> Most research studies only run for a short period of time so contracts are short making for less job stability. However, good researchers usually don't struggle to find other contracts. You know when your funding is going to run out so you apply for other funding or jobs (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). Kathryn Robb, Postdoctoral Researcher

Whilst short-term contracts may look unattractive to graduates looking for full-time work, contract positions can lead to valuable experience and offers of permanent employment. Tom Liversidge, psychology graduate and Learning Technologies Developer at the University of Manchester, noted that he gained necessary technology experience doing contract work with the university before being offered a permanent position.

Temporary jobs

Temporary agencies employ people to work with a variety of organisations for short periods of time and a recent survey found that 77% of employers have used temporary employees (Matthews, 2007) and recent statistics show that use of temporary workers has increased recently possibly due to the uncertain economic climate (onrec.com, 2010). When employers reduce their permanent workforce, they sometimes rely on temporary employees to fill the gaps left behind (de Graff-Zijl and Berkhout, 2007), as temporary employees tend to be less expensive for companies to employ.

For graduates who are uncertain of their career plans, temporary jobs can help to clarify career interests by testing out different work environments and exploring career possibilities while generating income. Temping can lead to skill development as well as permanent offers of employment as in the case of Mark who works in central administration at the University of Warwick (Davies, n.d.). He noted: 'I came into the job as a temp expecting to work a few days, but I wanted to stay because of the variety of work and the work environment.'

Whilst there is potential in temping, graduates should proceed with some caution as temping positions may not always lead to permanent jobs or provide many opportunities for training and skill development. However, a successful period of temping can provide a foot in the door and evidence of flexibility and ability to learn new systems quickly and effectively.

Flexible career options can be a plus in today's job market and options such as temporary work and short-term contracts may make it easier for graduates to take more time in developing career plans after graduation. However, for graduates who wish to settle into careers quickly, trends suggest that employers increasingly seek more highly skilled and flexible employees and that it may take longer to get a meaningful job.

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Entrepreneur: http://www.entrepreneur.com/

Erasmus: www.erasmus.ac.uk

Graduate Talent Pool: http://graduatetalentpool.direct.gov.uk

British Psychological Society, Division of Clinical Psychology: www.dcp.bps.org.uk

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education Survey: http://www.hesa.ac.uk

HRM Guide: www.hrmguide.co.uk

National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship: http://www.ncge.org.uk/

Office of National Statistics (ONS): http://www.statistics.gov.uk

The Sunday Times 100 Best Companies 2010: http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/career_and_jobs/best_100_companies/best_100_tables/

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'The best way to learn about jobs is to go directly to the source.'

5. Learning about Careers

If you have done some work on your Personal Profile, see Section 2, and read through careers pursued by psychology graduates, see Section 3, you may have some ideas about job opportunities that you might want to pursue. That's great! But don't stop there. Too often students abandon the career exploration process too soon and without knowing enough about what particular jobs entail. What you need to know about jobs will vary based on your situation. What are the typical work hours? Where are these kinds of jobs located? Will there be many opportunities in future? How much do such jobs pay? Is there promotion potential? What is the typical work environment like? These are just some of the possible questions to consider before you settle on a particular job or career path. After all, you wouldn't want to spend months or years pursuing a career that you later found out had very limited career opportunities or was simply not for you, would you?

Once you have three or four job titles or specific career areas that are of interest to you, then you are ready to do more in-depth exploring. While you can have more than three or four options to explore (and may also be considering travel or further studies), you will need to research each one of your ideas in order to make informed decisions. Therefore try to keep the number to a manageable minimum.

The best way to learn about jobs is to go directly to the source, that is, talk to people who work in those jobs or who recruit people into those jobs; this is networking for career information. Not only can this sort of networking help you to gain first hand perspectives, it can also lead you to meet people who may help you find a work placement or job later. However, before doing any networking, be sure to conduct some background research so that you don't waste your time or anyone else's asking questions that you could easily answer yourself! There are many sources of information that can help you to do this but perhaps two of the richest are your university careers office and the internet.

University careers services

If you are a current student or recent graduate, you will have access to your university careers information room. Career information rooms vary in the quantity and quality of career information available. However, they should be one of your first stops as they can house many important resources such as career books, employer literature, labour market information, occupational profiles and booklets and computer-aided guidance systems. Also careers staff will be able to direct you to appropriate information.

If you no longer live near the university where you graduated or are an online student, check with your local university careers service as they often have reciprocity agreements with other universities that will allow you to use their facilities.

Internet research

The internet provides a wealth of career information. Consider starting with the following sites:

- The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network site *(www.pnarchive.org)* maintains a list of career case studies of psychology graduates many of which are referred to in this guide. These case studies can give you an idea of how other psychology graduates have used their degrees, what their jobs entail and offer a wealth of advice.

- Professional Organisations – Most professional organisations provide information on careers in their field, for example the British Psychological Society *(www.bps.org.uk)*. If you are interested in occupations outside of psychology, it is worth seeing what professional organisations exist in your area of interest.

- The Graduate Prospects website *(www.prospects.ac.uk)* offers descriptions of a variety of jobs.

- Job Listings – Depending upon the kind of job you are looking for, look at online newspapers like The Guardian for job listings. If you have a particular career area in mind, consider seeking out specialist newspapers. For instance, if you want to work in Higher Education, *The Times Higher Education* supplement lists jobs available in this area. If you want to work in a specific geographic area, look at job listings on local newspaper websites. From these listings, you can gain a basic understanding of what various positions require. Often you can back track to the employer who posted the position to find the actual job description and more detailed information. You can also gain a sense of how many jobs in various areas are available which will help you to determine how competitive the area might be.

- Employer Websites – As well as providing you with a feel for various companies, employer websites often list vacancies and job descriptions. Reviewing employer sites is also a good way to get background information on employers that might interest you.

Networking for career information

After consulting the above sources and gaining as much information as possible on your own, you are ready to get some individual perspectives. Networking for career information involves contacting and talking to people who work in jobs or recruit people to work in jobs that are of interest to you. While you may feel hesitant about contacting people, remember that most people do enjoy talking about what they do and want to help others. It is rare that someone will say they cannot spend 20 minutes talking about their career to help a student sort out career options. If you are not sure what to do, you can learn more about networking in Section 8. However, a general rule of thumb when networking for career information is to talk to more than one person in a particular job type in order to gain a balanced perspective. You would not want one person's bad experience in a job to colour your entire view.

Talk to people working in the industry or position you wish to work in – this gives you insight into the realities of the role and can help you decide whether it would suit your skills and personality. Many Occupational Psychology jobs within the private sector aren't advertised externally so knowing people in the industry you want to be in can mean you get to apply for opportunities you may not have found out about otherwise. (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010) - Elouise Leonard-Cross, BSc (Hons) Psychology, MSc Occupational Psychology, Training Manager, NHS Business Services Authority.

Websites

Graduate Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk

Higher Education Academy Psychology Network: www.pnarchive.org

Higher Education Academy Psychology Network. (2010). Careers for psychology graduates.
[Career case studies]. Retrieved on 4 November 2010 from: http://www.pnarchive.org/s.php?p=139

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'...there are probably many different jobs
that you could do with equal satisfaction
and success.'

6. Career Decision Making

The preceding sections have encouraged you to learn about yourself and about career options. Once you have done this you will need to make decisions. If you have already made a decision you are happy with, great, you can skip this section. However, if you are struggling to decide what to do, you might find this section useful.

Research suggests that people make career decisions in three ways: dependently, intuitively and rationally (Phillips, Friedlander, Pazienza and Kost, 1985). Those who make dependent career decisions wait for others or circumstances to determine what happens. Those who make intuitive career decisions base their decisions upon instinct, how they feel at the moment or fantasies about what jobs might be like. Sometimes things work out just fine for people who make dependent or intuitive career decisions. You might know people who have landed happily in jobs because of happenstance, gut instinct or both. They are fortunate. There are others who have landed in jobs who are not so happy but find it difficult to make a change. Researchers suggest that individuals who use dependent or intuitive strategies do so because they have not gathered enough information about themselves or career possibilities to make informed choices (Singh and Greenhaus, 2003). If this is you, you may need to do more homework if you want to base your career decision on the third option, rational decision making, which, it turns out, tends to be the most effective method (Singh and Greenhaus, 2003). Rational career decision making includes investing time and effort to explore your interests, learn about careers and make considered choices by weighing pros and cons. This is the method suggested throughout this guide and the following provides a model for rational career decision making which you might find useful.

The four-stage rational career decision-making model
1. Decide whether a decision needs to be made and what the decision is.
2. Gather all the information you need.
3. Analyse the information and come to a conclusion.
4. Develop an action plan to implement your decision.

We will consider these stages in turn along with how you can implement each.

Stage 1: What is the decision?

To make a decision effectively choices have to be limited to three or four options at a time. This may require more than one decision. For example, David is deciding what to do after his course and is considering six choices:

Apply to take a PGCE course to become a Spanish teacher
Apply to a doctorate course to study Counselling Psychology
Pursue Child Behavioural Support Worker Job
Pursue Teaching Assistant Job
Pursue FE Tutor job

David needs to narrow down his choice to three or four options at most and in this example there are at least one and possibly two decisions to be made:

Decision 1: Further study or work
Decision 2: Behavioural Support Worker, Teaching Assistant

Stage 2: Gathering information

Information gathering can be time consuming but it is important that David is thorough with it in order to make an informed choice. He starts by brainstorming and listing the pros and cons. He then gathers together everything he knows about the options having collected information from careers service, relevant websites and talking to people who have pursued various options as discussed in Section 5. David may even decide that he needs hands-on experience in order to make a decision. Therefore, he may job shadow someone he has interviewed or even undertake a short work experience. In any case, when David believes he has enough information to make an informed choice, he can move onto stage three.

Stage 3: Analysing information and making the decision

A weighted list of pros and cons can be effective in making important decisions. In this approach David must first decide which factors are important to him (these will be different for everyone) and then decide how important they are relative to each other by rating them on a scale from 1 (not important) to 10 (very important) with cons receiving a negative score and pros receiving a positive score. Then the total scores for each are added to determine the final score for each option. David's balance sheet is shown below.

Further Study		Travel		Get a Job	
Pros	**Cons**	**Pros**	**Cons**	**Pros**	**Cons**
Enhance career prospects + 8	Costly -8	Exciting +10	Costly -8	Get on career ladder + 5	Miss out on travel -9
Make parents happy +4		Enhance international experience/ language skills +8		Start earning + 5	
				Start paying off loan + 5	
				Make parents happy + 4	
Pro: +12	Con: -8	Pro: +18	Con: -8	Pro: +19	Con: -9
Total Further Study +4		**Total Travel +10**		**Total Job +10**	

These total scores are an objective data point to help David decide which option is best. However, it is important that David also considers how he feels about the outcome. This may sound like intuition, and it is. While intuition alone is not particularly effective, combined with rational decision-making, it leads to more effective career decisions (Singh and Greenhaus, 2003). At this point David needs to reflect on the scores from his balance sheet. Reflecting on his responses at this stage will help him to establish what the best choice is – he may identify factors he didn't put on his list of pros and cons, or recognise that he did not put enough weighting on one issue or that he needs to adjust scores for individual items. What is most important is that he has enough information about himself and his possible choices and has reflected on these carefully.

Stage 4: Action planning

Once a career decision has been made, it is important to develop a plan of how to prepare. This might include undertaking work experience, improving language skills or doing some volunteer work. If you have not already done so, visit Section 1 to learn more about creating an action plan to pursue your career goal.

Making decisions can be anxiety provoking especially when it comes to careers. You may be afraid of making the wrong decision or making a decision that you will later regret. Remember that there are probably many different jobs that you could do with equal satisfaction and success. So there is not necessarily one right choice or one right job. Also, there is room for change especially in today's quickly changing job market. A recent report highlighting examples of the kinds of jobs and careers that are likely to become available in the next 30 years includes virtually unheard of job titles such as Nano-medic, Old-age wellness manager, New scientists ethicist, Culturalization therapist, Avatar manager, Cybrarians and Social networking worker (Talwar & Hancock, 2010).

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Singh, R. & Greenhaus, J. H. (2003). The relation between career decision-making strategies and person-job fit: A study of job changers. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*. 64, 198-221.

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'The top UK employers report that half of all posts will be filled by individuals with previous work experience.'
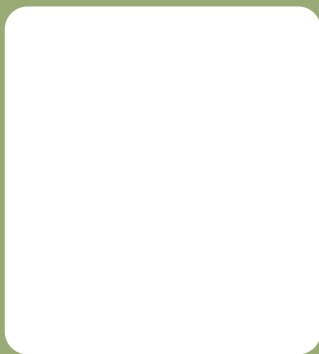
7. Getting Work Experience

Work experience is important. The top UK employers report that half of all posts will be filled by individuals with previous work experience or individuals who already have work experience with their particular company. Empirical studies show that students who undertake work experiences find jobs more quickly and easily (Little, et al., 2006) and in fact, some students who do not have experience find they have to get it after graduation before moving into paid roles.

> When I first graduated, I couldn't find a job because I had no related experience. So I volunteered with a mental health organisation that allowed me to get experience, meet people and enhance my CV… It took me six months gaining experience through additional volunteer work to find a job (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Linda Farmer, Mental Health Worker, Social Care Charity

If you are preparing to apply for psychology postgraduate study, depending upon the course you plan to apply for, work experience may be critical. Clinical psychology doctoral courses, for example, require relevant experience. Many are reputed to prefer candidates with experience as an assistant psychologist or research assistant, although some courses consider other relevant paid or unpaid experience in roles such as social worker, nursing assistant and care worker. While Section 3 provides brief descriptions of work experiences relevant to applying to different psychology postgraduate courses, the following provides general suggestions on obtaining work experience whether a postgraduate course or paid employment is your goal.

There are a wide variety of ways to gain work experience and the best way to do it really depends upon your situation as well as what is available through your department or institution. Some departments offer a sandwich year (i.e. a year of work experience integrated within the degree course) and many offer work placement modules. Structured programmes such as these provide support and advice in securing and undertaking work placements and are highly recommended. However, if they are not available to you, centralised support may be available through university careers service offices. You may also consider national programmes such as STEP (www.step.org.uk) that assist students in finding paid work placements.

Work experience can be also be gained independently undertaking work during holidays, part time alongside your course or through volunteering in your spare time. Of course, you do not have to wait for opportunities to be advertised. Consider approaching organisations of interest to you which can help you to gain experience and may lead to a permanent job someday. If you are unsure how to do this, see Section 8 which talks about networking.

One of my lecturers gave me the names of some companies that worked in the area of environmental psychology. I looked up DEGW and immediately became interested in them. They had an email address on their website saying that if you like what we do and think you are the kind of person that could work with us, let us know. I emailed them and told them I was a third year psychology student, was really interested in what they did and wanted to put theory into practice by doing an internship. They emailed me back saying they were interested but I heard nothing back…so I emailed them again. This process repeated several times until finally I arranged an informal meeting with them. Although they didn't have internships, I kind of pressed the issue and even offered to work for them for free... I finally had more of an official interview and just when I was graduating in July, they offered me a three-month (paid!) internship. Towards the end of my internship, I told them that I really wanted to work there and they gave me a one-year junior consultant contract and a pay rise. Here I am two years later as a consultant (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010) - Hilary Barker, Workplace Consultant, DEGW

Although students usually need money and like to be paid for undertaking work experiences, paid work placements may be difficult to find. Many students have to settle for unpaid or volunteer experience. Although not monetarily rewarding, volunteering does provide experience and demonstrates your level of motivation to employers. Three-quarters of the top 200 UK employers noted that they prefer to employ candidates with volunteer experience and well over half said that volunteer experience can sometimes be more valuable than paid experience (Higher Education Academy, 2005).

…volunteering is work experience with the added possibility that the act of choosing to be a volunteer can show greater initiative and commitment. - Mike Killingley, Senior Manager Executive Education, HSBC (Higher Education Academy, 2005).

As well, in some sectors, volunteer work can be critical as noted below by one psychology graduate:

Get out and do as much volunteering as you can. I graduated with a 2.1. I could have worked harder and got a first but it wouldn't have made a difference to my career. Don't think your degree class is the be all and end all. In this field, it is the work you have done that will get you hired. Many of the paid staff were once volunteers (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010). - Helen Todd, Refugee Development Worker, Northern Refugee Centre
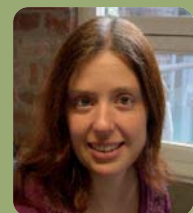
The *Guardian* (http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/jobs/volunteering), Do-it (www.do-it.org.uk) and a variety of other websites advertise volunteer opportunities. Volunteer jobs are also advertised alongside paid opportunities, for example on Jobs 4 Students (www.justjobs4students.co.uk).

Another consideration in choosing and undertaking work experience or volunteer work is ensuring that the experience allows you to develop skills and experiences that will enhance your postgraduate application or job qualifications. The Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology (www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp) notes that 'whatever kind of work you do, courses are primarily interested in what you have learnt from your experiences, both personally and professionally.' The same is true of employers. As such, setting goals and reflecting upon experiences is essential. Prior to starting any work or volunteer experience, be sure to outline your objectives so that you are clear about what you want to learn. During your work experience, review your objectives periodically and make notes of things that stand out to you. As your experience comes to a close, reflect back on it and note what you have learnt and what skills you have developed, along with what it means for your future. This will help you to get more out of the experience, prepare you to explain your learning to employers or admissions tutors and provide content for your CV. Your department or careers office might offer materials that you can use to reflect upon work experiences. You can also use the Work Experience Log (Appendix D, page 137) located at the end of this guide.

Work experience tips

Get the most out of your work experiences by keeping the following in mind.

✓ **Learn independently.** Employers often expect you to learn things on your own rather than have close training or supervision. Demonstrate your ability to do this and use the opportunity to impress them.

✓ **Take initiative.** Ask for tasks or identify tasks that need doing. Don't just wait for work to come to you.

✓ **Show enthusiasm.** If you're positive and helpful you will make a positive impression and may be asked to get involved in the more interesting or important projects.

✓ **Clarify uncertainties.** Ensure that you are clear about what the employer expects of you. If you are not, ask questions. It's better to clarify and ensure you are heading in the right direction rather than make a lot of progress heading in the wrong direction.

✓ **Get feedback.** Whilst it is important to get feedback from your supervisor at the end of your work experience, it is also helpful to get feedback as you are undertaking your experience so that you have the opportunity to develop areas that are problematic.

✓ **Build your network.** Use the time you spend at your work experience wisely. Learn about the organisation and career possibilities by talking to people in different jobs about what they do, how they got into their job, etc. Don't just quietly stay at your desk. Get to know people.

✓ **Maintain your network.** When you complete your volunteer or work experience, stay in contact with people you have met. They may be a good reference for you or may offer you a job someday.

✓ **Seek support.** Not all work or volunteer experiences are a perfect fit. If you are having problems, talk it over with a tutor or careers adviser.

Adapted with permission from University of Leeds, Work Placement Centre
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/workplacementcentre/students_onplacement_making.html

Box 1 provides some additional tips about getting the most from work experiences. In addition, the Psychology Network's work experience podcast page (http://www.pnarchive.org/s.php?p=333) houses a collection of podcasts featuring psychology graduates as well as employers discussing the value of work experience. In her podcast, one psychology graduate notes:

> Just to reiterate that it [work experience] is a valuable thing. You're going to go into a very competitive market, you can have top class degrees, you can have Firsts and everything but there are going to be a lot of people out there with those and it's the people who've also got relevant skills and practical skills and practical experience that is just going to get you that step further...
>
> - Clare Moloney, Health Psychology Specialist, Atlantis Healthcare

In this section we have focused on getting experience to further your qualifications. However, work experience can act as career exploration. Some people find that it is easier to rule out careers prospects by trying them out.

Work placement
Suzanne Maskre, BA Psychology Graduate Business Partnership

> I received an email about vacation work experience and was inspired to apply as my existing vacation work wasn't providing me with any useful experience.
>
> I completed a number of stand-alone projects…These included web design, team development tutoring and data analysis. I developed so many skills…MS Project, MS FrontPage, Team Development Training, report-writing, analysis of large sets of data, literature searches, confidence, time management and deadline meeting. I feel that my work experience…has been as great in its contribution to my success as my degree has. I am a strong believer that in order to succeed you must make yourself stand out from the crowd, and work experience is an excellent way of doing that (National Council for Work Experience, n.d.A).

Work placement
Helen Kerr, BSc Psychology, Nationwide Future Environmental Services

> I am interested in pursuing a career in occupational psychology and wanted to gain some business experience. I read about this programme in my university careers office – it seemed like a great way to gain business experience so I applied.
>
> My project concerned helping Future…in developing a more professional image and generating a larger…client market. I was asked to create a brochure with inserts detailing Future's key services and case studies of UK projects they had completed, along with evidence of quality assurance.
>
> Early on in the planning stage I found the placement a challenge because I had no…marketing background so I used my psychology knowledge about how people perceive things.
>
> The placement has given me a fantastic insight into business and shows me the 'real world of work' and most definitely confirmed my interest in occupational psychology, and entering into business and the graduate market. (National Council for Work Experience, n.d.B).

Work placement
Michaela Lock, BA Psychology, Clifton Primary School

I wanted to know if teaching was for me and thought working as a teaching assistant unpaid would help me find the information I needed.

As a teaching assistant, I took children on trips, had my own group of six children who I taught literacy and numeracy among other subjects. I also helped with rehearsals for school productions, swimming with a student with severe learning difficulties, creating displays, marking work, etc.

Through this experience, I developed skills in teaching... the biggest skill I developed was increased confidence, this has been invaluable in completing my final year.

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National Council for Work Experience. (n.d.B). *Case study – Helen Kerr*. Retrieved on 20 February 2008 from: http://www.work-experience.org/ncwe.rd/casestudies_73.jsp.

Websites

Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology: www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp

Do-it: www.do-it.org.uk

Guardian volunteer jobs: http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/jobs/volunteering/

Jobs 4 Students: www.justjobs4students.co.uk

Work Experience Podcasts: http://www.pnarchive.org/s.php?p=333

STEP: www.step.org.uk

'About 80% of jobs are filled by word of mouth before they are advertised.'

'Often people say that networking is who you know; with virtual networking it is more about who knows you.'

8. Networking

Jody Clegg began waitressing at a golf club while she was still in school to make some extra money. Her job allowed her to get to know some regular customers many of whom were professionals. Later when she attended university, she continued to waitress at the golf club in the summer. Two of her customers offered her work placements which she did in her spare time. When she graduated, one offered her a job.

Networking is simply developing relationships with people. In Section 5, we briefly discussed using networking as a way to learn about careers. It is also a key tool in finding jobs and work placements. Graduates surveyed four years after graduation (Purcell, Elias, Davies and Wilton, 2005) noted that their most important source of job information came from networking. About 80% of available jobs are filled by word of mouth before they are advertised (Careers Scotland, 2008; Dickler, 2009; Hansen, n.d.).

If you are a student in your first or second year, you may think that it is too soon to think about networking. However, more than half (57%) of employers in one survey noted that the best time for students to establish relationships with them is during their first and second years at university and an additional 20% noted that it is best to do this even before starting a university course (Department of Trade and Industry, 2003). Not only do employers want you to seek them out as a student, but being a student makes it easier to approach employers because the stakes are lower. You are not looking for a job, you are looking to establish connections with people who can help you to sort out your career prospects and gain work experience.

Most people have a network made up of friends, neighbours, previous classmates, co-workers, etc. While some people seem to have a naturally extensive network, others find they have to work at expanding theirs. For people that are not naturally gregarious, this might require considerable effort. However, if you spend time building your network while you are a student, when you are ready to graduate and look for a job, you will find the job search faster and easier because you will have a larger number of people who might be able to help you. However, if you are graduating and find yourself without a wide network to draw upon, you can still use networking techniques to establish new contacts and find jobs.

Networking can be done both formally and informally. Informally, you can simply seek out and get to know people who might help you to develop your future career prospects. You can do this by becoming involved in certain activities and putting yourself in certain situations where you will meet people who can then become part of your network. These activities include:

1. Undertaking one or more work placements, a sandwich year, summer work experience or volunteer work in your area of interest.
2. Participating in job shadowing.
3. Undertaking a dissertation that involves liaisons with outside organisations you might someday want to work for.
4. Joining and getting involved in professional associations.
5. Getting involved in related student organisations.
6. Participating in online networking groups.

I was at an industry event and got to chatting with someone from this company who said they were expanding. So the next day I guessed his email address, sent my CV on spec and it went from there [I got hired]. - Stuart Booth, Psychology PhD, Head of User Experience Research, phunQube . (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).

Unlike informal networking, formal networking involves strategically locating, contacting and meeting with people who can help you to get career information or to find a work placement or a job. Whatever your networking goal, the general rules are the same. The following provides suggestions regarding things to consider before, during and after making formal networking contacts.

Before networking meetings

1. **Identify people to network with.** Friends, family members, lecturers, fellow students and careers advisers can help you to identify people. As well, you can find people through associations, company websites and through online networking sites. If you are networking for career information, you might prefer to talk with individuals who are working in jobs of interest to you. If you are networking to find a work placement or job, it is probably more effective to talk to those that have the power to hire you such as managers or heads of divisions or departments, not human resources professionals (unless you plan to work in human resources).

2. **Research your contact.** You may well be able to find information on the person you wish to talk with online. Organisations often have employee profiles online or you may find information on Linkedin (www.linkedin.com). Take the time to find out about the person and prepare questions that show you know about their background. If the person has a psychology degree, be sure to ask how it has helped them in their career.

3. **Research your contact's organisation.** Be sure that you know as much as you can about your contact's organisation in order to put their comments into context and to ensure that you do not ask questions that you could easily find the answers to on your own.

4. **Decide how you will introduce yourself.** It is helpful to think about how you will present yourself to the person and it may be helpful to make a few notes in case you get nervous.

5. **Develop a list of possible questions.** Asking open-ended questions can help you to stimulate discussion. This will also be an opportunity to demonstrate the research you have done to show that this contact is important to you. The questions you ask will vary based on your goals, the research you have already done and what is important to you. Appendix F (page 140) provides sample networking questions.

6. **Plan your contacts by prioritising your list.** Don't start at the top. Gain skill and confidence by starting with people who are not as high priority as others. It may also help to practise with a friend or family member before actually talking to a networking contact. Make initial contact with people by phone or email. If calling, be sure to be prepared in case the person would like to talk with you during that call. Appendix G (page 142) provides sample approach emails. Appendix H (page 143) provides example phone introductions.

7. **Set up a meeting.** If possible, set up an in-person meeting because it provides a better opportunity to get to know the person and learn about the work environment. Consider asking the person to meet in an information location which can make for a more relaxed meeting. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, talking by phone is fine.

8. **Prepare a CV.** Be sure to have a good CV prepared and take a few copies with you, or, if you have a phone meeting, email your CV ahead. Providing the contact with your CV helps the person get an immediate picture of your background. As well, you can ask for feedback on it. While you don't have to use the feedback, your CV makes a useful talking point. Finally, you might want to leave your CV with them if you are interested in a job or work placement with their organisation.

…it's more a case of who you know and not what you know. It sounds very cliche, but unfortunately it's been very, very true over the period I was looking for a job. A lot of advice that I got was from writing letters to people, saying 'Can you suggest anyone I could talk to in terms of trying to get work experience or a foot in the door...'

- Futures Trader, Financial Services (Purcell, et al., 2005, page 85).

During networking meetings

- Dress as if you were the person in the job or possibly a little better.
- Be on time or arrive five minutes early.
- Offer a firm handshake, smile and make good eye contact.
- Never make negative comments about your university or previous or current employers.
- Be sure to adhere to the time frame that you set up. If you are running over time and have not finished, ask the person if there is time for a few more questions.
- Say thank you at the end of the meeting.

After networking meetings

Always send a thank you note within 48 hours by post or email to show your appreciation. If it is appropriate, stay in touch with people with whom you make contact – particularly if you are going to pursue a job in their area. If this is the case, be sure to make this person part of your network. If you are a student networking for information, consider following up with the person to ask about job shadowing or doing a work placement. If you were looking for a job or work placement, even if they have nothing currently available, maintain the relationship by updating them on your progress periodically. In either case, if you do maintain a relationship, be sure to look for ways that you can be helpful to the person such as forwarding them articles of interest, offering to volunteer to help out on a project, etc.
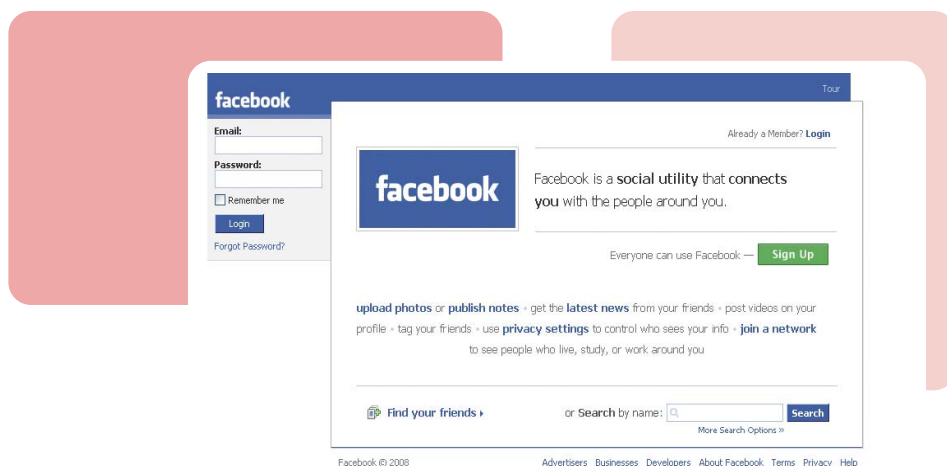
Networking online

Joe couldn't find a job after graduation. Since he was interested in working with people with disabilities, he organised a volunteer position as a disability support worker at a local non-profit organisation. Soon after taking the position he joined a nationwide disability adviser email list. On this list, advisers posed questions and advertised disability-related conferences and jobs. Joe occasionally posed questions and when possible, responded to other people's questions suggesting resources and information. A few months later, someone posted a job on the list that interested Joe, so he applied. The person who reviewed his CV remembered him from discussions on the email list, invited him for an interview and offered him a job.

Virtual networking can begin with email. Exchanging email with individuals or groups is one way to get to know people without leaving your desk. Virtual networking can be a powerful tool as illustrated in the above example. With each email exchange, Joe had the opportunity to build his reputation among colleagues he never actually met. Often people say that networking is who you know; with virtual networking, it is more about who knows you.

A new kind of virtual networking has evolved in recent years with social networking sites. You may already be a member of some of these sites such as Facebook (facebook.com) or Myspace (myspace.com). A recent survey by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), (Swain, 2007), noted that 65% of sixth-form students planning to go to university participated in social networking sites on a regular basis. Although most of these sites were designed for social networking, they can have an impact on careers which can be positive - or negative.

In terms of the positive, sites such as Facebook can help you to link up with others with similar interests. *The Independent* (Swain, 2007) noted that some people are using it for educational as well as social purposes with students establishing Facebook groups around course modules and departments encouraging prospective students to sign up to departmental Facebook groups. A group of postgraduate students who teach psychology recently established a Facebook group to exchange information and support around teaching, a career that many hope to pursue. Students who participate in this kind of nationwide support network have the potential to get to know and communicate with others in their field. This can be helpful in obtaining short-term career support and long-term career prospects.

While these sites hold much potential, presently their evils seem to get more air-time. Perhaps because social networking sites began as a medium of staying in contact with friends, members often post a variety of material that reflects badly upon them such as references to drug use, pictures of wild nights at the pub and potentially sexist or violent comments. As noted recently (Swain, 2007, page 1): 'Social networking sites are defined by their lack of boundaries. Those signing up to them decide what to put there—it could be violent, sexist or

defamatory, and then they decide who can see it.' This can be a problem for students. Again, online networking gives you the power to establish a reputation for yourself—good or bad. Some students and graduates find out too late that employers may look at their social networking profiles. One story (Finder, 2006) noted how a small consulting company reviewed the Facebook profile of a graduate under consideration for a summer work placement. Their review, which found references to drug use, ended his candidacy; and this is not an isolated case. Checking up on candidates online is a growing practice (Finder, 2006) and other stories (Lifehack.org, n.d.) recount individuals being fired from jobs because of inappropriate information posted on social networking sites.

In addition to social networking sites like Facebook, there are other networking sites set up specifically for career networking such as Linkedin (www.linkedin.com). There are many other message boards, email lists, blogs, etc., that provide career networking opportunities. As a student or soon-to-be graduate, your time would be well spent in investigating and participating, where possible, in virtual networking opportunities. However, keep in mind that these technologies are having an increasing impact on careers and ensure that the impact on your career is positive.

Networking is an important tool not just in career exploration and finding a work placement or your first job. Maintaining a good network throughout your career can help you to change jobs should you decide to leave or are made redundant. The above text provides basic information regarding networking. However, be sure to visit your university careers service office which will house a wealth of additional information and may be able to help you to identify venues through which to network and possibly employers for you to network with.

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Websites

Facebook: www.facebook.com
Linkedin: www.linkedin.com
Myspace: www.myspace.com

'A CV is a sample of your work. If it is poorly written, has typos or other problems, it can diminish if not eliminate your chances of being considered for employment.'

9. Creating a CV

With many employers now asking for online job applications you may wonder about the importance of having a good CV. While it is true that some larger employers rely less on CVs for selecting graduates, most medium sized employers use CVs for selection and, for small employers, CVs are one of the primary means of recruiting.

A CV is a sample of your work. If it is poorly written, has typos or other problems, it can diminish if not eliminate your chances of being considered for employment. Likewise employers spend only a few minutes reviewing a CV. It must be concise, to the point and capture attention. The following guidelines can help you draft or update your CV. However, we recommend that you have your CV reviewed by a university careers adviser or another person experienced with CV development. Appendix I provides a number of 'before' and 'after' CV examples which you might find useful.

General guidelines

A CV is a marketing tool not a comprehensive job or educational history. Include those things that will entice an employer to interview you and omit details that will not. Things such as a list of references, postal codes, supervisor's name or salary history will not help persuade an employer to interview you. These things are more suited to application forms.

When preparing to write your CV, review the exercises that you have completed in this guide, particularly your skill and qualities assessments as well as your work experience logs and reflections. These things can help you to develop CV content. In addition, information generated from your involvement in Personal Development Planning (PDP) will also be helpful. In terms of general rules:

- Be sure to list your strongest qualifications first.
- Make your CV concise by eliminating excess wording such as personal pronouns like 'me' and 'I'.
- Use consistent and proper punctuation, abbreviations and formatting.
- Run a spell check and proofread and have others proofread your CV.
- Do not put 'CV' or 'Curriculum Vitae' on the top of your CV - it should be obvious what it is.
- Long CVs are reserved for the highly experienced or those applying to an academic position where an appendix of publications is required. A typical student or new graduate CV is one to two pages of A4.

There are two primary aspects to consider when developing a CV: content (information about your background) and format (what your CV looks like). There are a number of sections typically included in CVs. The following presents tips for sections predominantly focusing on content and then goes on to address format.
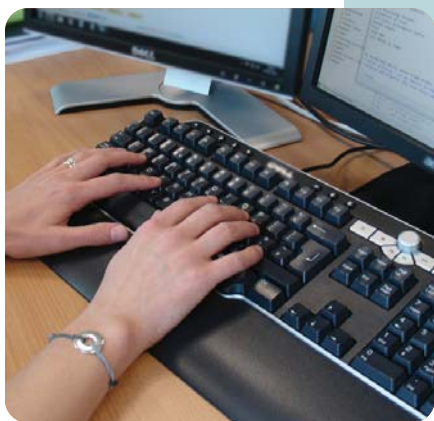
CV content

Contact information

This section is important because employers need to know how to get in touch with you. As such it usually (though not always) goes first on your CV.

- Name in a font as large or larger than other fonts on the page so that it stands out.

- Permanent and/or local address depending upon which makes the most sense.

- Home or mobile phone numbers. Be sure to have your voice mail in working order with a professional message.

- Email address. Be sure to have an appropriate email address (i.e., not *bombshellbabe@hotmail.com*).

- URL of your home page only if content is relevant to the position.

Profile

A profile is important. It gives employers an overview of your skills, experiences and what is unique about you. It also indicates what job you are looking for as well as what employers should look for in your CV. This section can be called a profile, personal profile, career objective, career focus, overview or highlights of qualifications. The title is a matter of preference and is not as important as the content. Ensure the following:

- Focus on what you have to offer rather than what the employer can offer you.

- Specify what experience and unique qualities you have to offer.

- Indicate your career field (e.g. market research, personnel) and if possible specify the job for which you are applying.

What is wrong with the following example?

> I am looking for a position with a company that will make full use of my educational and work experiences and provide a comprehensive training programme and promotion potential.

The above example tells employers nothing about what the person has to offer nor does it state the position he or she is looking for. It only mentions the desire for training and promotion which is self-serving rather than focused on how the person could help the organisation.

Now consider this example.

> Recent honours graduate seeking position as Marketing Assistant with Bandura Ltd. Gained experience working in teams and analysing product market during a summer work placement. Conducted market research project involving 12 interviews and four focus groups for my undergraduate thesis.

By reading the summary above the employer gains a good overview of the candidate's qualifications as well as what position he or she is seeking and knows what to look for in the body of the CV.

Education

For current students and recent graduates, the education section is of primary importance and typically comes directly after the summary. However, if you have experience that is more important, the education section may be moved down on the CV. Consider the following in developing this section:

- List in reverse chronological order.
- Title of dissertation. Include or not depending upon its relevance to the job you are applying for.
- Specify that your course was in psychology and relate it to the position you are applying for if possible.
- Include month and year of graduation or projected graduation, not exact date.
- Bold or italicise your degree or institution depending upon what is most important. If you attended a highly rated institution, you may want to bold the institution. Otherwise bold the degree.
- Include honours if 2.1 or above.
- You may or may not want to include schools, A-level and GCSE results depending upon employer requirements, whether or not your school would be recognised and the level of your results. If you choose to include them, be sure to summarise rather than list the complete details.
- If you financed your education you may want to say so. For example: 'Achieved top level marks while working 20 hours per week to pay top up fees.'

Experience

You can showcase your experience using one of two CV formats, chronological or combination. There are pros and cons for each.

Chronological

The chronological format lists experience in reverse chronological order (see page 140 for an example).

From your perspective, a chronological CV is the easiest kind to develop. You simply list your experience in reverse chronological order and then describe your skills and accomplishments in each role. Students are sometimes concerned about using this format because relevant experience can be interspersed with less relevant experience which can diminish the impact of the CV. However, this can be overcome by using a reordered chronological format which divides experience into two sections: relevant experience and other experience. In this way relevant experience can be listed first while other experience can be listed later (see page 150 for example).

Another benefit of chronological CVs is that employers tend to prefer them since they have been used traditionally, are more common and are easier to understand than combination CVs.

'…sending the same CV to apply for all positions is not effective. Target your CV by updating it to highlight skills, qualifications and experiences to match each job you apply for.'

Combination

The combination format lists experience under skill headings and includes skills developed from a variety of experiences through paid or volunteer work, your course or other activities. It then lists employers and dates of employment at the bottom of the CV without listing experience gained under each post (see page 148 for an example.)

From your perspective, a combination CV may be more difficult to develop because it involves deciding upon skill headings and then strategically collating your experience from different areas under these headings. However, the extra effort can be worthwhile if you create an effective CV. Combination CVs can be particularly effective if you are changing careers as skill headings can help to emphasise transferrable skills rather than where you have worked.

Employers are sometimes suspicious of combination CVs because they are less familiar with them and because they know that people who use them often do so to de-emphasise frequent job changes, periods of unemployment or spotty job histories. However, they are gradually gaining acceptance and popularity and provide an excellent way to showcase skills.

Whether you choose to use a chronological or combination format, to develop your experience section, consider the following suggestions.

- Include your most relevant experience from full and part-time jobs, paid and unpaid work experiences and volunteer work if related to your desired job. Be selective: you don't have to include everything.

- Do not include whether the jobs were full or part-time.

- Put past experience in past tense and present experience in present or past tense.

- Include month and year of employment, not exact dates.

- Include city and county of employer not complete address or telephone numbers.

- If you use bulleted phrases be consistent with the use of full stops, either use them or don't.

- Accentuate skills that relate to the job you are seeking – listing the most important skills and accomplishments first.

- Use action verbs and focus descriptions on what you accomplished and how you made yourself valuable to employers rather than your responsibilities. Include numbers to quantify experience where meaningful; for example, number of employees supervised, size of budget managed, number of focus groups conducted, etc.

For example. Instead of:

> 'Responsibilities included the development of a sales campaign for a local small business.'

Consider:

> 'Increased average sales of a local business by 30% by analysing customer base and developing customer loyalty through the free gold pound campaign.'

Optional sections

There is a variety of additional information that you can include on your CV. To decide what to include, consider what content will make you a better candidate. For example, if you have served as the treasurer of a sports club, you may want to include this particularly if you are applying for a position that makes use of financial management skills. Likewise, if you have limited experience and need more content for your CV or want to give your CV more personality, consider adding some of the following sections or including the relevant information somewhere on your CV: computer or language skills, honours, modules, projects, activities, interests, availability of portfolio and references.

CV format

What your CV looks like (format) can be as important as what is in your CV (content). As wrong as this may seem, if an employer does not like the look of your CV or has difficulty reading it because it is too wordy, the font is too small, or there are dense blocks of text, your CV may be overlooked. To help ensure that your CV is considered take care to present it in an attractive and easy to read format keeping in mind the following:

- Although it is tempting to use CV templates such as those available in MS Word, think twice before you do this. Many people use templates and employers get tired of seeing the same ones. Also they imply a lack of originality and expertise using word processing software. Instead, consider creating your own format or look through sample formats in books.

- Use bullets, bold type, and italics strategically to make your CV more readable or make certain parts stand out. However, beware of over using any of these formatting features as they can make your CV cluttered and difficult to read or, in the case of bullets, polka-dotted. Also minimise your use of underlines which makes text difficult to read for those who suffer from dyslexia.

- Fonts used on CVs should be easy to read. Standard fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial and Tahoma are good choices. Verdana was specifically designed to be easy to read in small sizes and is a particularly good choice if your CV might be reduced and photocopied.

- Consider using the following techniques to improve the format of your CV: change the height of blank lines to group sections together or save space, expand text to more evenly distribute titles or balance headings, add or subtract spaces between bullets to improve appearance and save space, use alternative (but readable) fonts to give your CV more character.

- Print your CV on white, cream or light grey paper in a somewhat heavier weight than standard printer paper. This can help your CV to stand out and look more professional. Avoid using brightly coloured or heavily patterned paper that can make your CV look unprofessional or make it difficult to read.

Final CV tips

Show your CV to others for proofreading, networking and to seek advice. For instance, getting an opinion on your CV from previous work experience supervisors is a good way to get feedback and to keep in touch with them. However, unless you are talking to someone who has experience with CVs (typically careers advisers or other career professional) be careful about taking advice. Advice from lay people is often based on personal preference rather than knowledge and experience. While you can always learn by asking for others' points of view, carefully consider suggestions or you may find yourself changing your CV after talking with one person, only to change it back after talking to another. One of your lecturers may advise you to put your psychology degree, all your modules and dissertation details front and centre on your CV because he thinks it is most important. While in some instances it might be, in others it won't because employers are often more interested in your skill set rather than your course details. Likewise, Uncle Clive who has worked for the NHS for 20 years may not have a clear picture of what today's CVs look like, unless he works in human resources.

Target your CV

Getting your CV in order is an important step. However, sending the same CV to apply for all positions is not likely to be effective. Target your CV by updating it to highlight skills, qualifications and experiences to match each job you apply for. Often this is simply a matter of rewriting your summary, but it can also involve adding or subtracting bits of your experience to better address job adverts. Some people think that you can simply target your cover letter to the job advert. However, this is not enough as some employers focus their attention on the CV.

To target your CV, review the job advert or position specification and change your CV as follows:

1. Specify position for which you are applying.

2. Highlight skills and experience in your summary that apply to the advert.

3. Use language that is used in the job advert to describe your experience.

4. Consider whether you need to reorder or add or subtract information from your experience section to better match the requirements of the advert.

The above guidelines outline a lot of general rules that will apply to most new graduate CVs. However, keep in mind that most rules can be broken with a compelling reason. For instance, one graduate put his address in small text at the bottom of his CV to de-emphasise the fact that he lived in northern Scotland but was applying for jobs in London. Another used a nine-point font and an unusual layout to exhibit her design skills in her CV. While the above rules generally apply, use judgement in applying them to your situation and be sure take advantage of the help provided by your careers service office.

Mature student CV questions

Will employers discriminate against me based on age? If so, what I can do about it?

The UK government provides legal protection against age discrimination in order to ensure that people are not denied jobs because of age. While this protection is helpful, unfortunately age discrimination still exists. It may be difficult to take advantage of the protection available if you are screened out of the hiring process before you are even interviewed. While there is no easy answer, you may wish to remove content from your CV that reveals your age such as older experience and dates of A levels. Note that you do not have to include your age or date of birth on a CV. While some employers no longer ask about age, others do, but legally you don't have to provide this information. See *www.direct.gov.uk* for more information.

Should I use a combination or chronological CV format?

Often, a combination format which puts the focus on skills regardless of where they were obtained is a good choice for mature students (see example on page 148). However, reordered chronological might also be a consideration as this format allows you to list your most relevant experience first (see example on page 150).

I don't have any paid work experience. What should I put on my CV?

Unpaid work experience is valid experience and can be listed and treated on a CV just like paid work experience. This includes community and volunteer work, work placements and work you have done in completing your course such as managing your dissertation research.

I am changing careers and my work experience doesn't apply. What can I put on my CV?

Although your work experience may not be directly related to your new job goal, in any job you will develop skills that can transfer to other jobs. For example, if you led team meetings in your old career area, you are then experienced in leading teams which is a skill that you can transfer to your new career area. Identify and highlight the transferrable skills that relate to positions for which you are applying.

I have had a variety of short term jobs. Should I include them all?

Try not to leave chronological gaps on your CV but do leave off less recent jobs if they do not support your job goal or add to your experience.

International student CV questions

The following addresses concerns relevant to international students.

Should I put my nationality on my CV?

If you are an international student it is a good idea to put your nationality on your CV. However, if you have permission to work in the UK, you should also note it as employers may be concerned about visa issues. Nationality and work permission can be placed close to the top as part of a header or written as part of your profile. See CV example on page 154.

How should I describe my education from my home country?

Employers may be unfamiliar with qualifications obtained outside the UK. Therefore it is important to help them understand your qualifications by providing a rough equivalency and including information about what you studied. See CV example on page 154.
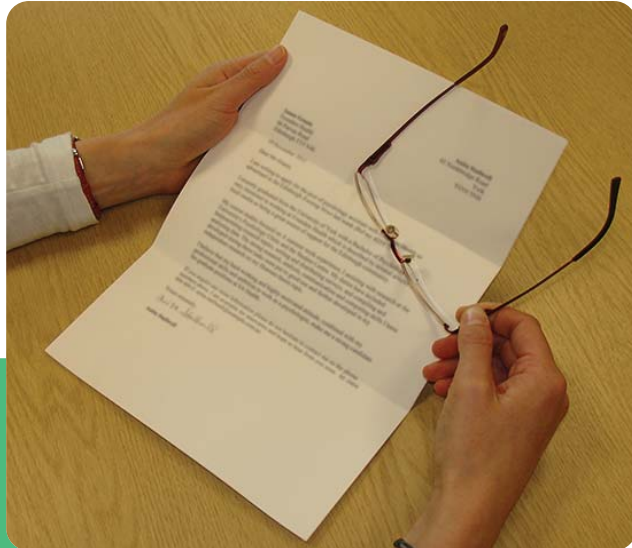
10. Covering Letters

When applying for jobs, a covering letter is as important as your CV. While some employers may pay more attention to CVs, others will read your covering letter carefully looking to ensure that your background matches their key qualifications before moving on to your CV. A covering letter personalises your application by showing your enthusiasm for the role and the company and explaining why you are a suitable candidate for the job. A compelling and well-written letter can make you stand out from other applicants who think a good CV is all that is needed and so spend little effort on covering letters. The following provides key suggestions in creating strong covering letters. Samples are provided in Appendix J (page 156).

- Include three to four reasonably short paragraphs on a single A4 sheet.
- Use a standard business layout.
- Use the same font and the same paper for your covering letter and your CV.
- Insert a job reference number if you have one.
- Write to a named person. If you don't have a name, find one if possible by phoning the company. Make sure you take their details (name, title and job title) down correctly.
- Write in plain English in concise sentences, using lively language and active verbs to convey your enthusiasm.

'Explain how studying Psychology has prepared you for the job…'

- Use professional, formal language avoiding stereotyped phrases and over-generalisations. Don't be one of the thousands of students who say they want to work in a multi-national organisation with good training opportunities. It is cliché and focuses on your needs when you should be focusing on what you have to offer employers.

- Tailor your covering letter to each company and role so that the employer will know the application is personal to them and you that are genuinely interested in working for them. Students who personalise their covering letters (and CVs) are more likely to receive a response and to be interviewed.

- In your introductory paragraph, explain your reason for writing – whether it's a speculative approach or response to an advertised vacancy. If it is an advertised post, give the job title and indicate where you saw it advertised.

- Highlight what you can offer the employer referring to specific points in the advertisement or person specification. Refer to a variety of relevant work experience, course modules, projects, grades, etc., but instead of simply repeating points from your CV expand on them by making a match between your specific skills and the job requirements.

- Explain how studying Psychology has prepared you for the job, focusing on the things that are relevant to the post. While many employers are open to applications from all disciplines they may not know what the study of psychology entails. Even if they do, they will still expect you to articulate how your degree has enabled you to develop the skills required.

- Explain why you want to work for the organisation showing that you understand what they do and that you share the same motivations. Briefly indicate how you've researched the organisation, e.g. through personal contacts, at careers fairs or from the business press.

- In your final paragraph try to avoid standard phrases such as 'I look forward to hearing from you'. If it is a speculative or direct application (i.e., you are sending a letter and CV in the absence of a particular job opening), suggest that you will phone to follow up – and do so within two weeks. You could also include practical details; for example, availability for interview or for work experience.

- Finally, close the letter with 'Yours sincerely' if it has been addressed to a named individual and 'Yours faithfully' when it has been addressed to 'Hiring Manager'.

- Finally, be sure to run a spell check, proofread the letter yourself and have another proofread it as well.

- Visit your careers services office for additional guidance.

'By contacting employers directly in the absence of job adverts you may happen upon job openings that have yet to be advertised.'

11. Job Search

There are two pieces of job search advice that are most important to note. First, avoid the shotgun approach. That is, don't waste your time sending out hundreds of generic CVs and covering letters to a myriad of jobs and employers hoping to get some response. Employers see right away that such applicants have no particular interest in their company and are unlikely to consider the person as a serious candidate. Instead, take a targeted approach by identifying particular job(s) that interest you as well as particular employers that might hire you. In this way, you can narrow down the field of possibilities and customise your applications.

Second, avoid spending all of your time searching through adverts. While job adverts do provide one source of job leads, they are one of many ways to find a job. As noted previously, only about 20% of available jobs are advertised (Careers Scotland, 2008; Dickler, 2009; Hansen, n.d.). Lees (2004) suggests that applying to adverts is not even the way by which most people find jobs as Table 2 illustrates. To make your job search faster and easier, use multiple search strategies. The following section outlines various strategies and describes how to make best use of them. For additional help, What Color is Your Parachute? 2011 A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changes (Bolles, 2011) provides excellent job search advice. Also, consult your careers service.

Method of finding position	Percentage Reporting
Help from someone working there	28.3%
Applied to an advertisement	27.9%
Direct application to the organisation	14.9%
Through an agency or job centre	9.85%
Other	10.5%

Table 2: Adapted from Lees, 2004

Networking

As discussed, networking is a prime method of obtaining career information, finding work placements and jobs. If you have worked towards building a network during your studies, then you will have many people that can help you in your job search. Networking with your established contacts (informal networking) simply involves telling everyone that you know what kind of job you are looking for and asking if they know of any openings, or if they know anyone you should talk to who might know of any. You can then act on possibilities that seem appropriate.

Formal networking to find a job involves setting up meetings with people that you don't know to get information about job prospects and job search advice. When networking for a job, try to choose people to network with who have the power to hire you, who work for organisations that interest you and might be able to give you useful advice. While people who work in jobs that are similar to what you are looking for might be helpful, they might also see you as competition and therefore not want to help. Alternatively they may simply not have influence over recruiting.

When networking with people that you don't know as part of your job search do not ask for a job but for information and advice. Formal networking during your job search allows employers to get to know you after which they may want to offer you a job; but don't go in with that expectation.

If you have not already done so, review Section 8 which describes how to use formal networking for your job search. Additionally, Appendix F (page 140) provides questions to ask during networking meetings, Appendix G (page 142) includes a sample request for a meeting by email and Appendix H (page 143) includes a sample request for a meeting by phone.

Direct applications

Directly applying to an organisation that is not currently advertising a position can be effective. By contacting employers directly in the absence of job adverts you may happen upon job openings that have yet to be advertised. As well, if your CV arrives when an organisation is not recruiting it may have more chance of being reviewed than if it arrives in the company of a few hundred other CVs.

As noted above, do not send out generic applications. Target your CV and covering letter to the individual employer. To do this, learn a bit about what the organisation does and the departments that support operations. Then adjust your CV to suit the organisation and highlight skills that you think are relevant based on your research. Use language that the company uses to describe what they do. Be sure to address your letter to someone in the organisation that you think might have the power to hire you. See Sections 9 and 10 for additional advice on customising CVs and covering letters.

'To make your job search faster and easier, use multiple search strategies.'

Employment agencies

Recruitment agencies or job centres might be helpful in your job search. Typically employers use recruitment agencies by paying them a fee to locate and screen candidates for them. Agencies such as these could figure in your job search, however, they are often most effective when you find those that specialise in the type of job you seek. Be wary of any agency that wants to charge you for their services. Services are typically paid for by employers. As well, some agencies are paid extra when they are able to get individuals hired into jobs. Therefore, beware they may try to pressurise you to accept jobs that are not right for you.

Graduate recruitment schemes

A number of organisations, especially large organisations, are frequently looking for new graduates and run schemes to recruit and train them. Depending on your area of interest a graduate recruitment scheme might be worth considering. They often involve comprehensive training programmes that thoroughly prepare graduates for work within their particular companies. For example, Centrica, owners of British Gas, run a training scheme that aims to give graduates a taste of the different jobs within their company by moving them around to different roles every six months. At the end of the two-year programme graduates then become eligible to apply for jobs within the company and have a clear idea about what opportunities are available. One psychology graduate who went through Centrica's graduate recruitment programme commented:

I have the opportunity to make a difference because of my managerial role in the company. Also, the business sector offers more financial stability than the public sector (where the majority of psychology jobs are located). My psychology knowledge and skills are becoming more and more useful. For example, I have a particular interest in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), something that is based on cognitive theories and companies are starting to become interested in using this…do some research on different companies, available graduate schemes and jobs to check for suitability. Contact a few companies and explore what skills they require of their employees and what different jobs entail – this is the only way to find the company and job or graduate scheme that suits you… (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).

- Nick Williams, Graduate Trainee Manager, Centrica, BSc Psychology, University of York.

The UK government also offers graduate recruitment schemes. For example, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office takes part in the Fast Stream programme which provides graduates in the programme with a series of job placements designed to prepare them for senior managerial positions. One psychology graduate from the University of Portsmouth noted:

In the Foreign and Commonwealth Office there are many opportunities to work in completely different areas from the press office to consular work in UK embassies abroad. The ability to travel and live abroad are reasons why people join. The Foreign Office takes new entrants from a wide range of backgrounds, but obviously a strong interest in foreign affairs, language skills (particularly priority languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, etc.) and overseas experience are an advantage. (Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, 2010).

- Rosie Dyas, Desk Officer, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Recruitment schemes can be good for graduates with clear career ideas but are also appropriate for those who are unsure of their career goals since they often allow graduates to try out different roles to see where they might fit.

Graduate recruitment schemes may or may not be for you, but they are worth considering as a possible means to enter a variety of interesting jobs. However, keep in mind that schemes that begin training in September typically close in January or February. If you are interested, apply early.

Online strategies

While the internet can play a valuable role in looking for a job it is important to use it strategically as it is easy to: be overwhelmed by the range of possibilities; rely on it as the sole source of identifying openings; spend too much time on the wrong sites doing the wrong things!

Some students think that the larger and more well-known the job search site, the better. However, some research shows that organisations are using large job boards less to advertise vacancies. For instance, the use of national newspaper sites dropped from 55% in 2005 to 45% in 2006. At the same time the use of specialist sites such as journals and trade press increased from 59% in 2005 to 66% in 2006 (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2006). This is just some of the evidence that suggests that your time might be better spent searching for jobs on sites that are specific to your area of interest or specific to graduates rather than large job boards.

Generally speaking if you are a recent or soon to be graduate, websites geared towards helping graduates find jobs, for example, Prospects (www.prospects.ac.uk), are useful. Also, be sure to check your careers service site. Other sites to use depend upon you. If your job search is restricted geographically you might consider using your local newspaper's site or those of local companies that interest you. If you have a particular career area in mind, consider using the websites of relevant publications. For example, if you are interested in working in higher education, the *Times Higher* might generate more possibilities than the *Guardian*. The key is to identify sites that have the biggest possible pay off in terms of job opportunities and smaller specialist sites might be much more useful than monster job boards.

What you do on the internet to look for jobs is almost as important as the sites that you use. The following provides some suggestions.

- **Sign up for automated searches.** While it can be easier to look at job adverts online rather than in hard copy, speed this process up even more by signing up for emailed jobs, saved searches, etc.

- **Post your CV.** If you decide to post your CV (and we are not recommending that you do or don't) consider carefully both which sites to put it on and how much personal information to include. Consider also exactly how many employers are using the site to find employees – sometimes there are not many. And whatever you do, don't just sit back and wait for employers to contact you - they might not.

- **Network.** Many sites provide online networking opportunities such as message boards, wikis and email lists. However, online networking is perhaps most useful when using it in conjunction with sites related to your area of interest.

- **Research.** The internet has been and continues to be an excellent source of information regarding employers, industries, news and so on. There is also a variety of excellent career advice and information available.

Temporary employment

Temporary agencies employ people to work on short term contracts and a recent survey found that 77% of employers use temporary workers (Matthews, 2007). For graduates who need to bide their time whilst looking for jobs in their area of interest, temping can generate income while still leaving time to look for jobs.

For graduates who are uncertain of their career plans undertaking temporary work can provide opportunities to explore career possibilities by providing work in a variety of settings and learning about different jobs. As well, temping can lead to permanent offers of employment and some consider it to be a career path in its own right.

If you are a temp who is prepared to constantly upskill and even create a brand identity for yourself in a particular market where skills are in short supply, you will find that your currency is very high among employers...For highly motivated temps who are able to bring exceptional PowerPoint, Excel or general IT skills to a firm that has an urgent presentation to prepare, or a new website to grapple with...the pay will be higher than permanent rates and the projects may be far more stimulating. - Richard Grace, Joint Managing Editor, Gordon Yates (Matthews, 2007)

The job search process can be quick and easy, long and arduous or somewhere in between. It largely depends on how well you have prepared, what strategies you use and the limits imposed on you by personal responsibilities, geographic constraints and the job market. Research suggests that those who use multiple methods and seek support, by participating in a job search group for example, have the highest rates of success (Bolles, 2011; Hannan, 1999). Entire books have been written on the job search process. The above section addresses only the highlights. Consider consulting other sources including your careers service office for more detailed information.

Disabled students' job search

If you have a disability you may have questions about looking for a job or work placement.

> When I began applying for jobs, I was not confident in what I could apply for because of my multiple sclerosis. I assumed that you had to start at the bottom, running around making photocopies and coffee which are things I can't do. I found out later, this wasn't true. Both of my employers have been very accommodating. This has really helped me to gain confidence and made me realise that there are more jobs I should have been applying for all along.
>
> Naomi Craig, BSC and MSc Psychology, University of Wales, Bangor.

The Disability Discrimination Action (DDA) and more recently the Equality Act (EA) of 2010 make it unlawful for employers to ask questions related to health or disability (except in certain circumstances) until applicants are offered employment (Government Equalities Office, 2011, April). In addition, the EA created 'positive action' provisions related to recruitment. Employers who volunteer to identify themselves as 'positive action' employers advertise their willingness to, for example, guarantee to interview any disabled person who is suitably qualified for a job. If two job candidates (one disabled and one not disabled) are found to be equally qualified, an employer could choose to take 'positive action' by offering the job to the disabled person (Government Equalities Office, 2011, January). Positive action covers individuals with a variety of protected characteristics such as disability, age, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, etc. (Government Equalities Office, 2011, January). To take advantage of 'positive action' legislation, look for employers who use the term 'positive action' in their recruitment campaigns. Another strategy is to find out which employers belong to the Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD) (www.efd.org.uk). Forum membership demonstrates a commitment to hiring those with disabilities. According to the EFD website, nearly 400 employers accounting for employing approximately 20% of the UK workforce are members of the EFD.

Disclosure has been and continues to be a common concern for disabled students. Employers who advertise themselves as embracing 'positive action' may help you to decide whether or not to disclose. When applying for jobs with non-positive action employers, despite current legislation, discrimination is still unfortunately a possibility. The decision regarding if and when to disclose to such employers is highly personal and no one piece of advice applies to everyone. However, the following may provide some starting points for thinking through disclosure decisions.

Should you disclose? If your disability is not evident to others you may be able to conceal it. If you think your disability will not impact your ability to work then you may feel there is no need to mention it. But consider this carefully as not disclosing may place extra stress on you. Equally, if you do eventually need to disclose there may be health and safety issues or other factors that will need to be addressed by your employer.

When to disclose? If you decide to disclose the next question is when. Some people choose to disclose on their application form by either noting their disability on their application or mentioning it in their covering letter. Disclosing early, during the application process, provides the opportunity for unscrupulous employers to screen you out of the interview process before they have even met you. You may view this as positive 'I wouldn't want' or negative 'I think I would really like that job and know I can prove myself perfectly able'. Disclosing early however provides disability friendly employers, who may have not even advertised 'positive action', with an opportunity to screen you in to the interview process.

Some people choose to disclose during the interview process. If you go to an interview without having disclosed and your disability is evident it may distract the interviewer from your qualifications, therefore consider addressing it directly. The employer may be concerned about your ability to do the job, future sick leave or accommodation requirements. In addressing these concerns it is important to emphasise the positive. For instance, if you will require adjustments for doing the job you might mention that the Access to Work scheme (www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG_4000347) offers financial support to cover such extra costs as specialist equipment for disabled workers.

How to disclose? Disclosing should always be done by emphasising the positive by, for example, noting how living with a health problem or disability has enhanced your skills. Here are some examples:

- 'People tell me that even though I am deaf I am a much better listener than most hearing people they know. Maybe because I can't hear as well I pay more attention.'

- 'Ending up in a wheel chair after my accident was difficult at first, but I was determined to carry on with my course and future plans. Although it took a while to get back on track, I think I am a stronger person because of what happened.'

- 'Finding out that I had dyslexia explained a lot in terms of the struggles I had with my course. Once I knew what the problem was I just developed coping strategies like using a diary religiously and allowing for extra time on certain things I had to do.'

If you have a disability, being informed about existing support as well as your rights in the job search can go a long way to making the process easier. In addition to the resources mentioned above, consider reviewing the following websites for more information:

- Inclusive practice within psychology higher education (www.pnarchive.org/s.php?p=307) includes a section which provides additional psychology specific employability advice.

- Usemyability.com is a new web based resource for both students and employers which provides guidance related to the development of generic employability skills through the study of psychology. It also outlines positive characteristics associated with various disabilities and describes how each can be effectively accommodated by employers.

International students' job search

The number of international students studying in the UK has increased substantially in recent years. Although historically many chose courses related to business, engineering and computer technology, increasing numbers are now found in psychology. As an international student looking for a UK job, there can be challenges. One international psychology graduate noted:

I found the main challenges seeking work in the UK were the language differences and explaining what my education from Italy meant. Also, the job market for my area, marketing psychology, is different here. UK companies expect a greater degree of responsibility from their employees. - Elisa Gabotti, Psychology Graduate, University of the West of England

To get into her area of work, Elisa is presently volunteering to gain relevant experience in market research. She found this opportunity by sending her CV to a range of places asking for opportunities to carry out research.

If you are an international student, and particularly if you are from outside the European Union, you may need to be a little more creative and thorough in your job search if you plan to remain in the UK. The following will give you some starting points:

- Emphasise the positive in your application form, CV and at interviews. For instance, you might highlight the value of your experience living in different countries and language skills, especially if the job you are applying for requires overseas travel or working with international clients.

- Have your CV proofread for grammatical and spelling errors by a native English speaker. Some institutions offer proofreading services.

- Translate your overseas qualifications for employers so they understand how your qualifications relate to those in the UK. See the sample CV on page 154. Also consider consulting the following organisations which provide advice and information in translating qualifications:
  - European recognition and qualifications advice (www.enic-naric.net).
  - National Recognition Information Centre for the UK (www.naric.org.uk).

- Be prepared to explain to employers what (if anything) needs to be done in order for you to secure a work permit.

- Target jobs with employers that have international links, require international skills or experience (especially from your country of origin) or those that have said they will hire international students.

- Consult the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) (www.ukcosa.org.uk/) to find a variety of information for international students related to studying and looking for jobs in the UK. Currently, Tier 1 (Post-study work) is a scheme which enables non-EEA (European Economic Area) nationals to work for one year after completing their studies without having employer sponsorship. The government has announced that this scheme will close in April 2012 (http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/working_after.php).

- While it is important for all students to get work experience, securing work experience with organisations that might employ you later is especially important for you in order to build a network of UK contacts. Networking in general will be more important for you since your network will most likely be more established in your country of origin.

- Take full advantage of the offerings of your careers services office especially mock interviews and CV and covering letter advice.

- Consult with the international student support staff at your institution to ensure that you understand your particular situation relating to your eligibility to work in the UK.

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Matthews, V. (2007). Permanently temporary. *The Guardian*. Retrieved on 15 May 2011 from: http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2007/dec/03/officehours7.

Websites

Access to Work: www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG_4000347

Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD): www.efd.org.uk

European recognition and qualifications advice: www.enic-naric.net

Inclusive practice within psychology higher education: www.pnarchive.org/s.php?p=307

National Recognition Information Centre for the UK: www.naric.org.uk

Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk

UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA): www.ukcisa.org.uk

UK Council for International Student Affairs. Working in the UK after your studies. www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/working_after.php

Usemyability.com

12. Long-term Employability

This guide is designed to help you, as a psychology student, to assess yourself, consider options, make career choices and take steps to pursue a career. It also provides suggestions for finding a job, perhaps your very first. While you may choose a job or career field and stay in it, it is more likely that you will have several jobs over the course of your life and that you may even change career fields. This is normal in today's job market where the pace of change leads to the creation of new kinds of jobs.

Developing and managing your career is an ongoing process. It includes considering your current work situation; deciding on changes to make, or new goals to set; and developing plans accordingly. You can use the concepts outlined in this guide (self-assessment, personal development planning, goal setting and action planning) to manage your career. Actively managing your career is vital for your well-being as well as to ensure that you continue to have skills and abilities that employers look for. While new jobs are continually created, old jobs are eliminated just as quickly; therefore, it is in your best interest to stay up-to-date and make changes as and when necessary.

The following offers suggestions for effective management of your career in the long-term.

- Take advantage of training and development opportunities offered by your university and employer. While your psychology degree provides a good basis, you will always need to look for opportunities to further develop your knowledge and skills.

- Keep abreast of what's happening outside of your immediate job by talking to colleagues and others who work in similar jobs outside of your organisation. One excellent way to do this is to be involved in associations related to your job. Psychologists for example, typically have membership in the British Psychological Society. Reading related publications can also help you to keep up with what is happening in your field.

- Maintain a written record of your work which can help you update your CV.

- Strive to be flexible and adaptable. The changes that take place in today's work place often require employees who can tolerate and adapt to changes that might include changes to organisational structure, location, duties, work colleagues, computer technology and working conditions.

- Network constantly to build contacts, share experiences and ideas, and broaden the group of people that you know. Your network can be invaluable in developing new experiences, staying up-to-date and finding new jobs.

- Actively manage your career. Your employer may provide you with a structure of reviews and appraisal interviews to discuss career progression, developing new skills and experience, training needs and areas for development. If so, take advantage of it. If not, take responsibility for doing this yourself on a regular basis.

Careers are as individual as the people in them. You might find satisfaction working part-time in a flexible and undemanding job that allows plenty of time for family, or you might prefer the stability of working for a large organisation that offers slow but more sure career progression and a more predictable future. You might want work that is exciting and changeable where it is easy to grow and find new challenges with different employers, or you might want a job that involves travel and living abroad where you can experience new cultures. You may not yet have a clear idea of what you want from your career, and even if you do, it is likely to change as you change. This is why it is so important to keep tabs on where you are now, where you would like to go next and what you need to do to get there. Best of luck!

Appendix A

Action plan

Term: _____ Date: _____

At the start of each term (more frequently if necessary) it is good to set goals and create action plans for yourself. Goals can relate to features of your academic work (reading journal articles more effectively), developing competencies or skills (learning how to lead people or use Excel), can be exploratory (find out what behavioural support workers do) or can be specific career goals (find a job in human resources). It can be helpful to reflect on your recent experiences to see where goals might be most appropriate. You can do this by using the course reflection (Appendix C) and work experience log and reflection (Appendix D) and by reviewing your assessments in Section 2. Take the following steps in developing each action plan.

1. Write your goal in the space provided on the next page along with a date by which to achieve your goal.

2. Write steps that you need to take to achieve your goal arranging them in chronological order. For example action plans, see Section 1.

3. As you list the steps, in the space to the right, write the date by which you plan to achieve each step.

4. Review your action plan regularly (once a day, week or month) depending upon your time scale. As you complete each step, tick it off in the box on the left in each row. If you find you are not achieving your steps on time, consider why and what you should do on your own or with a tutor or careers adviser.

5. When you achieve your goal, use the comments section to reflect upon it. Consider consulting with a tutor or careers adviser who may help you to clarify your thoughts and further actions.

Action plan

Steps to achieve goal	complete by
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Reflection: Did you achieve your goal? Why or why not? What did you learn from the experience? How does what you learned impact future goals?

Appendix B

Career case study activity

To identify careers that might interest you, it can help to review career paths taken by other graduates. This guide references a variety of case studies of psychology graduates which can be found on the Psychology Network website *(www.pnarchive.org)*.

Skim through the guide and read the quotes from graduates. Identify five or six case studies that look interesting to you. Read the full case studies online. As you review each, complete the following table according to the activities that each job involves, what sounds appealing to you and tips for pursuing similar career paths.

Job	Activities	What's appealing?	Tips for pursuing
Desk Officer, Foreign & Commonwealth Office	**Maintain contact with overseas embassies and charities. Assist in developing UK policy**	**Travel and living abroad, security of large government organisation**	**Demonstrate knowledge/interest in foreign affairs & languages. Gain overseas experience. Research Fast Stream gateway. Very competitive and long process, apply well in advance**

Circle the careers that you are interested in learning more about. To explore them further, consider using Section 4 for finding out what jobs are out there, Section 6 for making decisions, and Section 1 for goal setting and action planning.

The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network

Appendix C

Course reflection

Term: _____   Date: _____

Reflecting on your course can help to improve your learning and clarify future plans. At the end of each term (or more frequently), look back over your assignments, comments from tutors and lecturers and your own notes. Answer each of the following questions as fully and honestly as you can. Consider discussing your answers with a tutor or careers adviser to help you to reflect and clarify your thoughts and future goals.

1. Which aspects of your psychology course did you feel most confident in over the last term and why? Were there particular modules, subjects or assignments you liked or excelled in?

2. Which aspects of your psychology course have you found most challenging this term and why? Were there particular modules, subjects or assignments you disliked or didn't do well in?

3. Has your course prompted ideas for dissertation topics, careers, gaining work experience or other things that are of interest to you?

4. Have your course experiences this term improved any specific academic or key skills or provided examples of evidence to add to your CV?

5. Are there areas in which you may need to develop as a result of your course experience this term? If so, what are they?

6. What goals and action plans will you set for yourself related to your course for the coming term? See Section 1 for how to develop action plans and Appendix A for action plan.

Appendix D

Work experience log and reflection

Organisation: _____   Role: _____

Contact Person: _____   Phone: _____

Email: _____   Dates of experience: _____

When undertaking a work experience, you will no doubt be asked to undertake tasks outlined in a job description. In addition, consider what skills or knowledge you would like to develop as part of the work experience and list them below. Revisit these objectives throughout your work experience to ensure that you are achieving them.

1.   _____

2.   _____

3.   _____

4.   _____

5.   _____

6.   _____

During the work experience – use the space below to note things that stood out for you. Make notes on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

Towards the end of your work experience, reflect on what you have learned by answering the following questions.

1.   Describe the project or duties that you were given as well as necessary tasks.

2.   Describe how you undertook the project to include the plan you outlined, how you collected information and/or resources, difficulties you encountered, etc.

3.   How did you meet your personal objectives?

4.   What was good about your work experience?

5.   What aspect of your work experience could have been improved?

6.   How did you feel about your performance? Could you have improved it in any way?

7.   How did your supervisor evaluate your performance? Do you feel that his/her assessment was fair?

8.   Describe your achievements, i.e. what has been the impact of your work on the organisation?

9.   What did you learn from the experience?

10.   How has this experience changed or developed your ideas about your future career?

Appendix E

Personal Profile: Lilly Wells

What my Holland code means to me (page 40)

Social: Enthusiastic, friendly, capable, understanding – work with others in a helping capacity.
Artistic: Broad interests, creative, imaginative – work involves a variety of activities that make me learn.
Investigative: Broad interests, curious, intellectual – work focuses on possibilities and solving problems.

Skills (page 32)

Key
Team working
Listening
Learning
Interpersonal skills
Oral & written communication
Initiating

Developmental
Leadership
Motivating
Questioning

Auxiliary
Attending to detail

To use communication and interpersonal skills to help others using creative problem solving and to enable me to learn new things & work independently.

Preferences (page 38)

Charity or educational work
Flexible schedule
North Yorkshire
Team environment
Ability to use initiative
Social and friendly
Interesting work
£20K or >

Values (page 34)

Honesty
Integrity
Fairness
Achievement
Knowledge
Creativity
Personal Balance
Independence

Attributes (page 37)

Broad-minded
Conscientious
Independent
Enthusiastic
Dependable
Helpful
Imaginative
Resourceful

Appendix F

Questions for networking for career information

- How did you get started in this field?
- What is your role in this organisation?
- What do you find most rewarding about your career?
- Are psychology graduates hired in this company?
- What skills are most important for advancement?
- What experience is required?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- What are your work hours like?
- What are the sources of satisfaction in your job? What are the challenges?
- What do you predict for people in this kind of job over the coming few years?
- Can you suggest any professional or volunteer experience that would help me get into this field?
- What are the salary norms for this kind of work?
- How does one advance?
- What have been the major changes in this field over the last several years?
- What are the best ways to find out about jobs and work placements in this field?
- Where are these kinds of jobs located? Are they concentrated in specific geographic areas?
- What kind of people would you say are successful in this type of job?
- Are there any additional skills or credentials beyond a Bachelor's in Psychology that you think I would need to be recruited into this kind of post?
- Are you optimistic about the company's future and your future with the company?
- What made you decide to work for this company?
- How would you describe the organisation's culture?
- How would you describe the people you work with?
- Is the work environment stressful, laid-back, in between?
- What advice would you give me if I wanted to get into this kind of work?
- Are there other people you can refer me to that might be willing to give me their perspectives on this career?

Questions for networking for jobs

- How did you get started in this field?

- What is your role in this organisation?

- What are the degree backgrounds of the people who work here? Similar organisations?

- What skills and experiences do you think are most important for new hires?

- Based on what I have told you thus far, do I have the requisite qualifications for jobs in this field? If not, what am I missing? What should I be doing? If so, how can I put myself in a better position to find a job in this field?

- What do you predict for this career field in the coming years?

- Can you suggest any professional or volunteer experience that would help me get into this field?

- I have been using several websites to look for jobs in this field including x, y, and z. Are there others that you would suggest or other ways I should be going about my job search?

- Are there any additional skills or credentials beyond a Bachelor's in Psychology that you think I would need to be recruited into this kind of post?

- What advice would you give me as someone trying to get started in this profession?

- Do you know anyone who is hiring right now that I might contact?

- Would you mind giving me your advice on my CV? I am not sure it sells my skills very well. What do you think?

- Are there other people you can refer me to that might be willing to give me their perspectives on this career?

- Could you keep me in mind if something comes up that might be appropriate for me?

- Would you mind I got in touch with you if I think of any additional questions?

Appendix G

Sample email for networking for career exploration

Dear Mr Beam,

My name is Chloe Hill and I am a second year student at the University of Poppleton. I am considering what type of job I would like to pursue after graduation. I recently learned about benefits administration. I reviewed your company website and found your name in the directory. I would really like to talk to someone in your position to get a better understanding of what the job entails, see if it is something I would like to pursue, and get advice on how I might best develop skills over the final two years of my degree. Would it be possible to meet with you for about 20 minutes to informally ask you a few questions about your experience and to hear your advice? I am available most weekdays between 3 and 5pm and could easily come by your office. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,
Chloe Hill

Sample email for networking for job search

Dear Ms Wicks,

I just graduated from the University of Poppleton with a degree in Psychology and am looking for a job in the area of social care. I completed a work placement last summer at my local general practioner's office. During the placement I sat in during intakes with clients who were referred for short term counselling. I also assisted in writing up intake notes, maintaining files and researching appropriate referrals for clients requiring outside assistance.

I read about your organisation online and am very interested in the work that you do. Would it be possible to meet with you? I would like to learn more about your organisation, the qualifications needed to work there and the kinds of job prospects that are available in this field in general. As well, I would like to get your advice about looking for a job as a new graduate. I am typically available on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and would be happy to come to your office if that is convenient for you?

Thank you very much for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,
Angela Jones

Sample career exploration networking phone call

Chloe:	Hello, can I speak to Victor Beam please? This is Chloe Hill and I am a student at the University of Poppleton.
Assistant:	This is Mr Beam's assistant, Tim. Perhaps I can help you?
Chloe:	Thank you, Tim. I am doing research about jobs in benefits administration and I would like to get some personal advice from Mr. Beam.
Assistant:	Okay, just a minute.
Mr Beam:	Hello, this is Victor Beam.
Chloe:	Hello, Mr Beam. This is Chloe Hill and I am a second year student at the University of Poppleton. I am thinking about what job I might pursue in future. I recently learned about benefits administration while doing some research online and would like to talk with someone in this type of position to get a better understanding of what the job entails. Am I right in thinking that this is what you do?
Mr Beam:	Yes, I have been a benefits administrator for about two years though only with this company for six months.
Chloe:	Perfect, you are just the kind of person I was hoping to talk with. Would it be possible to meet with you for about 20 minutes to ask a few questions and to get your advice on my course?
Mr Beam:	Sure Chloe, I graduated not too long ago and had a bit of a struggle finding my first job, so I know it is important to be prepared. I am usually free on Mondays. How does that work for you?

Sample job search networking phone call

Angela:	Hello, can I speak to Sandra Wicks please? This is Angela Jones and I am a graduate from the University of Poppleton.
Assistant:	I am the office administrator. Is there something I can help you with?
Angela:	Well, I recently finished a Bachelor's degree and am looking for a job in social care. I wanted to get Sandra's advice really about job prospects.
Assistant:	Well, we don't have any openings right now so maybe you should just forward your CV.
Angela:	I am happy to send a CV, but I really would like to talk to Sandra about the field in general and how I might be able to get a foot in the door somewhere. It seems to be a tight job market just now.
Angela:	Okay, just a minute.
Sandra:	Hello, this is Sandra.
Angela:	Thank you for taking my call. My name is Angela Jones. I recently finished a psychology degree and have started looking for jobs. Your organisation is just the type of place I would like to work for. I wondered if I might come in and talk with you briefly about job prospects in the field and get your advice on my job search.
Ms Wicks:	Well, we don't have any openings right now but we typically post openings on our website. You could also forward your CV in case something comes up.
Angela:	Yes, I saw that you don't have any job openings just now. I was really hoping to meet with you to get your advice on my job search and your opinion on my background and experience. It wouldn't take too long, maybe 20 minutes?
Ms Wicks:	Okay, but I am really busy. Can we talk now? I have about 20 minutes before my next meeting.
Angela:	Yes, I would really appreciate that. I will start by telling you a little about myself.

Example Before CV 1

This CV header is ok but not attractive and does not emphasise anything. Beth should bold her name for emphasis and consider ways to make the CV in general more attractive

Her first statement is too generic and self focused. Also she lists a lot of cliches such as 'good team player' with no evidence

Beth Halverson
1942 Westminster Dr.
Hunts, Leeds LS3 3SL
Home: 0113 3110 1103, Mobile: 07747 370 007
beth@poppleton.ac.uk
Clean Driving record
Date of Birth Aug 3, 1988

Driving record and date of birth are not necessary unless asked for. Also more appropriate for the bottom of the CV since they are not top selling points

SKILLS
I am looking for a challenging position that offers room for growth. I am adaptable, flexible, energetic, organised and a good team player. I have good computer skills and am very artistic and creative. I am good working with people.

EDUCATION

7 GCSE, C and above Myersbridge School

GNVQ Advanced Health & Social Care (Merit), Sheffield City College, 1995 - 1997

1999-present Leeds Metropolitan University, BA (Hons) Psychology,
Introduction to Psychology
Social Psychology
Development Psychology
Abnormal Psychology
Qualitative Methods
Introduction to Counselling
Statistics
Research Methods
Dissertation – Child Development related

Listing modules this way is a waste of space

Beth used bold for everything on these lines which emphasises nothing. She should use bold only for the parts she wants to emphasise. Also there is no need for the final comma. Typos like these show lack of attention to detail

EXPERIENCE

1995 – 1999 Childminder, Minded children for the Goss family.

1997 to 1999 Learning Support Assistant, Myersbridge Primary School, Leeds,
I helped to teach students various subjects.

1999-2001 Waitress/Bar Staff, Harvester Restaurant, Leeds,
I served customers as a waitress and bar server during holidays.

2001-present Customer Service Adviser, Green Flag, Leeds
Data entry and phone work.

1999-present Sunday School Leader, Hunslet Methodist Church, Leeds,

Starting off with dates emphasises dates. Her job titles are more important to emphasise.

The experience and education sections should be in reverse chronological order

Her description of her work does not describe the skills developed. Elaboration would help here

Her use of bold and formatting with the start of each job is inconsistent. For example '1995 - 1999' and '1997 to 1999'. Also, section headings are inconsistently formatted. Missing details like these diminish the impact of this CV

Childminding and activity organisation.

INTERESTS

I enjoy biking and travelling and have visited Europe extensively. I use my practical and creative skills to make soft furnishings for friends and family and am a keen artist. I enjoy reading, horse riding and socialising in addition to being an active member of my local church.

References

John Jones
Senior Lecturer
Poppleton Uni,
Coldharbour Road,
Bristol, BS16 1QY
Tel: 0117 960 0000

Sandra Graham
Head of School
Redlands School
Redland Green
Bristol, BS7 9DL
Tel: 0117 944 1111

This orphaned line should appear with her job, not alone on the following page

Interests are good but fewer would be better. Focus on a few that are more interesting, relevant or show accomplishment

References are not needed on a CV. If requested, provide them on a separate document

Example After CV 1 (Chronological)

Section headings add interest and make the CV easier to read

Beth's heading emphasises her name and helps to make her CV more balanced and attractive

Goal clearly states what job she is seeking

ELIZABETH HALVERSON
1942 Westminster Drive, Hunts, Leeds, LS3 3SL
Home: 0113 3110 1103, Mobile: 07747 370 007   beth@comail.com

GOAL_____
Position providing support for disadvantaged youth.

KEY SKILL AREAS_____

Interpersonal	Experience working with people from a variety of backgrounds in teaching and helping capacities. Developed enhanced listening skills through the study of counselling.
Communication	Recognised by supervisors for ability to communicate well with customers over the phone and in person and to provide good customer service.
Organisation	Well developed IT and administrative skills. Experience of time and project management. Successfully prioritise workloads, meet deadlines and balance demands of employment and study.
Creative	Enjoy using creative and artistic skills in support environments. Developed sense of shape, colour and design as well as practical skills through extensive work with young people.

Beth notes others have recognised her abilities

Key skill areas highlight her strengths which come from diverse experience

Beth offers evidence to show she can prioritise

EDUCATION_____

BA (Hons) Psychology, Leeds Metropolitan University, 1999-present
Studying psychology, human development, interpersonal skills and group dynamics.
Final year dissertation: early intervention strategies for pre-school children and their families.
GNVQ Advanced Health & Social Care (Merit), Sheffield City College, 1995-1997

7 GCSE, Myersbridge School

Her degree is now clearly emphasised

EXPERIENCE_____

Customer Service Adviser, Green Flag, Leeds, 2001-present
Handle membership enquiries over the telephone and resolve problems for customers. Enter new client membership details on to an Access database. Produce monthly client reports using Excel.

Sunday School Leader, Hunslet Methodist Church, Leeds, 1999-present
Organise activities on a weekly basis for groups of three to eight children ranging in age from two to 12. Activities involve drama, arts, crafts and reading.

Waitress/Bar Staff, Harvester Restaurant, Leeds, 1999-2001
Provided friendly and efficient service to customers working part-time and full-time over holidays. Developed skills in cash handling, teamwork and customer service.

Learning Support Assistant, Myersbridge Primary School, Leeds, 1997-1999
Supported pupils with moderate learning difficulties through key stage 1. Worked closely with teachers, school education psychologist and parents. Helped pupils improve reading, writing and numeracy by adapting classroom activities and focusing on learning through play and creativity.

Her experience and education sections are now in reverse chronological order

Her experience now describes the skills she developed

INTERESTS_____
Drawing, painting, arts and crafts. Church activities.

OTHER_____
Clean driving record
References available upon request

It is fine to list aspects such as religious, ethnic and political activities. However, be aware that these may influence employer opinions for better or worse based on their own biases and beliefs

Example Before CV 2

This CV is hard to read because the text is centred and all in capital letters

Highlighting his dissertation in this way may not be useful depending upon the job he is seeking. It might be better to emphasise the skills he developed through doing a dissertation

The objective says nothing about Robert or what job he is looking for. It wastes space

What was he doing between 2000 when he finished A-levels and 2004 when he started his degree? Eliminating dates can eliminate questions

If his grades are B's and above, why not note the higher grades

Robert's job titles are lost with everything underlined

Large blocks of text are hard to read. So are all capital letters. Robert could use bullets to break these up and used mixed upper and lower case

Better to leave off filler words like responsible for

Robert's job descriptions seem to repeat a lot. A combination CV focused on skills might help

Mentioning the result of his new filing system would be more meaningful than just saying he created it

What does 'temporary employees' mean

It might be worth mentioning what he did for Habitat and Rowntree if it supports his job goal

There may be something about his running that he can elaborate on to show accomplishment

Noting reference availability is fine but not necessary if there is little room

ROBERT PARKSON
345 CITY STREET WEST RIDING, LONDON HG3 156
09890 998 779
RPARKS@VISTA.CO.UK

OBJECTIVE
A CHALLENGING POSITION THAT WILL MAKE USE OF MY SKILLS AND ABILITIES.

UNIVERSITY OF POPPLETON, BSC PSYCHOLOGY, 2004 TO PRESENT
EATING HABITS OF CHILDREN OF DIVORCE VERSUS THE NORMAL POPULATION –
DISSERTATION

HARROGATE GRAMMAR, HARROGATE A LEVELS, 1999 – 2000,
ENGLISH, MATHS, BIOLOGY – B'S AND ABOVE

EMPLOYMENT
MCGARVEY AND SONS LAW OFFICES, MANCHESTER, ASSISTANT, SEPTEMBER 2007 –
PRESENT
RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT IN BUSY LAW OFF
COORDINATING MULTIPLE PRIORITIES. HANDLING INCOMING CALLS WHIL
DEMONSTRATING COMPOSURE AND EFFICIENCY IN DEALING WITH PROSPECTIVE
EXISTING CLIENTS. ANSWERING QUESTIONS AND DIRECTING CALLS AS APPROP
PRODUCING AND MAILING OUT APPOINTMENT CONFIRMATION LETTERS. CONDUC
INTAKE INTERVIEWS WITH CLIENTS TO GATHER INFORMATION. TEMPORARY E

ST. ANNE'S HOSPITAL, MANCHESTER, RECEPTIONIST, JANUARY 2006 – SEPTEMBER
2007
RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT IN BUSY HOSPITAL
COORDINATING MULTIPLE PRIORITIES. DIRECTING INCOMING PATIENTS.
ANSWERING QUESTIONS AND DIRECTING CALLS AS APPROPRIATE. PRODUCING
MAILING OUT APPOINTMENT CONFIRMATION LETTERS.

ASSISTANT, JB SPORTSWEAR, MANCHESTER, SEPTEMBER 2004 – JANUARY 2
RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT IN BUSY SPORTSWEAR
STORE COORDINATING MULTIPLE PRIORITIES. ANSWERING INCOMING CALLS.
HANDLEING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS. TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES. SET UP FILING
SYSTEM.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY AND THE ROUNDTREE CHILDREN'S HOME. RUNNER.

REFERENCES
AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Example After CV 2 (Combination)

Robert's CV heading is now balanced. Overall his CV looks more attractive and inviting to read.

ROBERT PARKSON

345 City Street ◆ West Riding ◆ London ◆ HG3 156 ◆ 09890 998 779 ◆ Rparks@vista.co.uk

SUMMARY
BSc candidate with well-developed administrative skills seeking position of executive assistant. Experienced with a variety of presentation, word processing, database and spreadsheet software. Recognised for strong organisational, problem-solving and communication abilities.

Robert's summary is clear, concise, and tells employers what job he is looking for and what to look for in his CV

EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

ADMINISTRATIVE
- Provided administrative support in busy hospital, law office and retail environment coordinating multiple priorities.
- Entered a variety of information into databases for later export and analysis.
- Handled monthly billing, tracked expenses, handled correspondence and maintained accurate filing systems.

CUSTOMER RELATIONS
- Directed incoming clients while demonstrating confidentiality and efficiency in dealing with sensitive situations.
- Fielded calls on phones with up to six lines. Scheduled appointments, answered questions and directed calls as appropriate.
- Conducted intake interviews with clients to gather necessary information for registration and prioritisation.
- Developed enhanced understanding of customer and internal office relations through study of organisational psychology.

Robert's combination format puts the focus on skills and eliminates redundancy

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT
- Developed more efficient filing system for sportswear store reducing the time it took to retrieve customer orders by 30%.
- Delegated and supervised work of temporary employees on an as needed basis for two employers.
- Managed independent research project for dissertation.
  - Designed study in consultation with adviser.
  - Developed participant recruitment strategy and secured 25 individuals to take part.
  - Conducted interviews with participants to gather data.
  - Entered data into database and conducted analysis using SPSS.
  - Currently writing 12,000-word dissertation including tables and graphs.

Robert now shows the impressive result of his new filing system

Robert now explains he oversees temporary workers

Robert puts skills gained through his dissertation here. He leaves out the title, which doesn't relate to his job goal

Bullets make his job descriptions easier to read

EMPLOYMENT
Assistant, McGarvey and Sons Law Offices, Manchester, September 2007 – present
Receptionist, St. Anne's Hospital, Manchester, January 2006 – September 2007
Assistant, JB Sportswear, Manchester, September 2004 – January 2006

Job titles are now clear and easy to find

Focusing on skills is good but employers will still want to know where he has worked so he includes employment history

EDUCATION
BSc Psychology, University of Poppleton, Expected 2009

A Levels, English - A, Maths - B, Biology – B, Harrogate Grammar, Harrogate

Fewer dates under education eliminate gaps which are better discussed in interviews

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
Volunteer for administrative tasks such as coordinating fundraising mailings for Habitat for Humanity and the Roundtree Children's Home. Avid runner – completed the Great North Run Year every year for the past three years.

His community work now clearly supports his job goal and his running is shown now as not just a hobby but an accomplishment

Robert now shows his good grades

Example Before CV 3

CV Page 1: Harriet Rivers

There is no need to write 'CV' on a CV. It is obvious this is a CV

This CV lacks fomatting that would make the employer want to read it. Using an italic font makes it hard to read. There is a lot of wasted space. This CV could probably be one page

Goal:
I am getting ready to graduate and I am looking for a job where I can develop my skills in teamwork, communication and problem solving. I really like marketing and think I can be successful in this area.

Harriet's goal statement uses personal pronouns like 'I' and 'me' which are unnecessary and take up space. Also she focuses on what she wants rather than what she can do for employers

Address: 4444 Highland Road

North Allerton, Manchester, H32 TLC

Email: Hot Rivers@ztown.com

This email address is not professional

Phones: Mobile: 07747 335 447, Home: 09989 878 899

Contact details take up too much space

Date of Birth: 03/05/1989

Nationality: British

Nationality is not necessary unless a work permit is in question

Education
2006 – present, University of Poppleton, Poppleton BSc (Hons) Psychology 2.1

Dissertation on buying green.
Received university's dissertation award.

2004- 2006 Ashville College, Harrogate
A levels:
Biology B
English Literature D
Business D

Depending on Harriet's job goal, she may want to highlight her dissertation. Also she may be able to quantify her award

GCSEs:
Maths B
English C
French D
Physics C
Biology B
Chemistry C

A-level grades like these detract from Harriet's recent work and can be left off unless asked for. The same goes for GCSEs

CV Page 2 Harriet Rivers

Sections should not be broken in the middle

Drama C
Business D
Religious Studies D

Employment
2006 – present, Holiday work
Clerk, Barnham Medical Associates, Leeds
Duties included: General office responsibilities.
Supervisor: Sharon Stone, 09879 399 008

Although this job seems not directly related to her job goal, Harriet should consider describing the transferrable skills she developed

Employer contact information clutters up the CV and won't help get Harriet hired. This information can go on a reference list

2004 to 2006, Babysitter for local families.
Jean Discoll, 09709 980 999
Pam Wells 09709 463 578
Brenda Monroe 09709 880 228
June Hill 09079 245 335

This work is quite old, possibly not relevant and could be left off

Other
Oxbrand, Surrey, Summer 2008, Marketing Assistant
Completed work placement helping with survey development.
Oliver Brand, 35698 900 089

This placement seems related to her job goal, yet it is hidden near the end of her CV and not well described

Interests
I enjoy many activities such as reading, cycling, walking, exercise, arts, crafts, sport, singing, dancing, and music. I also volunteered at the university for a year to learn about marketing and communications.

It is good to have interests but this is too many. Better to focus on a few novel ones to give the CV personality or those where there might be an accomplishment

This volunteer work sounds related and should be moved up on the CV and elaborated on

Example After CV 3 (Chronological)

Her new CV is more balanced and attactive. Harriet's name stands out

Section headings are emphasised clearly deliniating sections

A more professional email address is a plus

Harriet Rivers

4444 Highland Road   North Allerton, Manchester, H32 TLC   Hrivers22@ztown.com
Mobile: 07747 335 447   Home: 09989 878 899

Profile

Harriet's profile focuses on her interest area as well as what experience she offers

Recent graduate seeking position related to market research. Experience through placement and coursework of survey design, development and implementation as well as running focus groups, collecting and analysing data and presenting results.

Education

Degree is emphasised as is dissertation topic which is highly relevant to her job goal

BSc (Hons) Psychology 2.1, University of Poppleton, Poppleton   June 2009

Psychological aspects of consumer buying behaviour: What makes customers buy green? 12,000 word final dissertation.

Unimpressive grades and GCSEs are left off

University of Poppleton Dissertation of the Year Award: Selected out of 450 students.

Harriet gives her award impact by noting that she was selected from among 450

Ashville College, Harrogate   June 2006
A-levels: Biology, English Literature, Business

Related Experience

Experience is separated into 'related' and 'other' (reordered chronological) so that more important experience can be listed first

Marketing Assistant, Harrton, Surrey   Summer 2008
Completed a 12-week work placement with a charitable organisation. Conducted a project to explore how to improve buyer experiences.

- Attended team meetings and recorded notes about issues reported by online buyers and developed survey questions based on team input.
- Presented draft survey, recorded and handled necessary revisions.
- Worked with technical staff to set up a pilot questionnaire online using HTML and Java.
- Piloted survey with customers and made necessary amendments to survey based on customer feedback. Finalised questionnaire and launched it to customers.
- Analysed survey data using SPSS and produced final report and presentation leading to significant changes to the organisation's online sales process.

Harriet details the great experience she got during her work placement and volunteer work starting each phrase off with action verbs

Communications Assistant, University of Poppleton   September 2008 - June 2009
Volunteered four hours per week in the university's communications department during final year to gain a better understanding of marketing and communication.

- Wrote press releases for local newspapers.
- Assisted with mailings to potential students.
- Designed and created flyers and marketing brochures using InDesign.

Harriet describes transferrable skills and demonstrate that she is a reliable long-term employee

Other Experience

Clerk, Barnham Medical Associates, Leeds   Holidays 2006 - present

- Worked during holidays providing office assistance in a busy medical office.
- Entered patient data into Access database, answered six line phone, scheduled appointments, filed and retrieved patient records, and helped with office correspondence.

Interests

Avid mystery reader and cyclist. Have ridden across England, Scotland and France.

Interests show Harriet is well rounded, makes her CV more memorable. Cross country rides illustrate her motivation

Example Before CV 4

This CV has a polka dotted appearance because too many bullets have been used. Bullets are useful strategically to improve appearance and readability. Also, this CV is too long and has a lot of wasted space. Two pages is maximum for a new graduate

If Fatima will be graduating soon, she should use a personal email address since her university address will no longer be valid

The objective specifies career area but has many cliches with no evidence or experience noted

This section seems redundant with some information in career objective. Also too much detail

Fatima sometimes uses full stops and sometimes doesn't. It doesn't matter which way she does it, but she needs to be consistent

Complete addresses are a waste of valuable space

There are no evident gaps in her CV so she does not need to mention this. She can explain it at the interview if necessary

Fatima Karzaim

Contact Details:

- 5473 Clydesdale Way
- Edinburgh, LMZ 9PQ
- 08909 827 000
- FK@poppleton.ac.uk

Career Objective:

- I am looking for a challenging writing career that I can learn from and test out my creativity, writing ability and networking skills.
- I am very self-motivated, flexible, communicate well with others and am skilled in the use of online research facilities. I am hardworking, adaptable and a team player.
- My high level of motivation and determination has led me to accomplish a lot in a short amount of time

Skills and Qualities:

- Creative, fluent in Spanish with basic reading and writing skills.
- Fast learner and typist (60 wpm)
- Very knowledgable and experienced with Acess, Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, Explorer, Java, html and SPSS.
- Good organisational skills and follow through on projects at work and with projects related to my university experience

Education:

- University of Poppleton, 4689 University Road, Poppleton, Y022 NP8, September 2004 – present
- Bsc Psychology,
- I am in my third year of my degree programme and am predicted to get a 1st.
- I deferred study from 2005 – 2006 due to personal issues

Example Before CV 4 (continued)

UK employers may not understand her US education. Fatima could explain how it equates to make it more meaningful

- High School Diploma, Archbishop High School, Severna Park, Maryland, USA
I moved to England with my parents after my last year in high school. I studied a lot of subjects such as
  - Algebra I, II, III,
  - Geometry, Trigonometry
  - US History, European History
  - Literature, Short Stories
  - English I, II, III, IV
  - Government, Politics
  - Chemistry, Physics, Biology
  - Psychology, Sociology
  - English I, II, III, IV,
  - Physical Education, Art History, etc.
  - My overall GPA was 3.95.

These phrases are fillers and are unneeded

Work Experience:

- Poppleton University Radio (PUR)
- Poppleton University, 4596 North Street, Poppleton Y022 NP8 December 2007 - present
- Main responsibilities in the position of news assistant included:
  - Gathering news for bulletins
  - Helped with editing
  - Assisted with production process
  - I regularly talked to people to get stories.
  - Read the news.

Inconsistent past and present tenses and full stops are a problem here. Also, skills are not well described

- CD Landing
- 99 Runner Road, Borough Bridge, South Yorkshire HG3 IP9, September 2006 – present
- I took this job as a way to earn extra money during my degree. I worked on an assembly line packaging CDs. It was very boring work but I did earn the extra money that I needed.

It is never a good idea to be negative about any job. There is always something to be gained

- Psychology Department
- University of Poppleton, Department of Psychology, Building Five, 4599 North Street, Y022 NP8, 2007 - present
- Main responsibilities in the position of year representative included:
  - I have to adverstise meetings in print and on the web on a regular basis to make students aware.

- Running meetings and hearing student complaints.
- Write reports on student concerns for departments
- Attending departmental meetings to discuss student interests and concerns

- Higher Education Academy Psychology Network
- Department of Psychology, First Floor Information Centre, Market Square, University of York, York, YO10 5NH, June 2007 – August 2007
- Main responsibilities in this work placement included:
  - Researching and writing short articles for the newsletter
  - Assist with newsletter format
  - Attend production meetings
  - Interviewing individuals.
  - Getting people to send in articles.
  - Proofreading
  - Designing and distributing flyers to advertise events.

Publications are important for writing careers. These should be highlighted earlier in the CV

Publications:

- I have published an number of articles in a variety of national magazines and online publications. I will gladly supply a portfolio for you to review on request.

Other:

- I am an active member of the Journalism and Spanish societies and help to administer both societies. I regularly read The Times, Guardian, Independent, Psychologist, non-fiction and fiction books and a variety of magazines in order to better understand different styles of writing. I am eligible to work in the UK having gained citizenship through my parents. I have done a lot of travel in Spain in order to practise my Spanish.

With Fatima's international background, discussion of work eligibility is appropriate. However, it could be mentioned sooner to allay employer concerns

Hobbies:

- Regular blood doner – 24 litres so far.

It is wonderful to donate blood but a more tactful description could help

Example After CV 4

An attractive and concise format makes Fatima's new CV inviting to read

Fatima's highlights hit on all of the important information right away and guide employers into what is to come in the rest of her CV

5473 Clydesdale Way
Edinburgh, LMZ 9PQ
FK@poppleton.ac.uk
08909 827 000

Fatima Karzaim

Highlights

- Motivated final year undergraduate with skills and experience in writing and editing.
- Recognised for ability to communicate and network to develop stories.
- Published articles in national publications and gained experience working on news radio and writing flyers, press releases, news bulletins and newsletters.
- Verbally fluent in Spanish. International experience. Highly skilled with all basic office and Internet software in addition to HTML and Java.
- Eligible for employment without work permit.

Before a doubt can arise, employers know she can work in the UK

Selected Publications

A Place in the Sun, Students make their way in Spain. May 2008. 16.
The Guardian, Czech musician awarded Oscar. 30 June, 2007. A12.
Psychologist, Challenges of qualitative research. October 2007. 24-25.

Fatima's more important publications are highlighted right at the start

Related Experience

News Assistant   December 2007 - present
Poppleton University Radio (PUR), Poppleton University
- Researched and gathered steady flow of items for news bulletins.
- Edited news items submitted by the public.
- Assisted with radio production process and read the news on air weekly.
- Interviewed people for news stories.
- Updated the PUR web site with the latest information.

Publications Assistant   June 2007 - August 2007
Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, University of York
- Researched and wrote articles for the *Psychology Network Newsletter*.
- Assisted with formatting and proofreading the newsletter using InDesign.
- Participated in production meetings to discuss content and layout.
- Contacted individuals to solicit articles and develop story ideas.
- Conducted interviews and wrote articles.
- Proofread newsletter content to ensure accuracy.
- Designed and distributed flyers to advertise a variety of events.

Year Representative
Psychology Department
University of Poppleton, Department of Psychology   September 2007 - present
- Advertised year meetings by creating and distributing flyers, writing and delivering announcements to the campus newspaper and radio station.
- Chaired year meetings to listen to concerns of students.
- Wrote reports on student concerns for the department.
- Attended departmental meetings to discuss student interests and concerns.
- Updated web pages with relevant information on an ongoing basis.

Page 1 of 2

The education section could come before the experience section, but she already mentioned her degree in the highlights and employers might be more interested in her experience

Other Experience

Packager   September 2006 - June 2007
CD Landing, South Yorkshire
- Worked part-time on an assembly line packaging CDs.
- Consistently demonstrated attention to detail in delivering quality work.

Education

Bsc Psychology, University of Poppleton, expected June 2008, predicted 1st
The study of psychology provides insight into human nature which is invaluable for better understanding teamwork and communicating with others to locate and develop stories.

High School Diploma, Archbishop Spalding High School, Severna Park, Maryland, US

Archbishop Spalding is a private preparatory school. A high school diploma involves four years of study that is roughly equivalent to GCSEs and A-Levels combined.

Overall GPA: 3.95 (equivalent to A's in most all subjects) Class rank 10 out of 218 students.

Endorsements

From supervisors and lecturers: 'always ready to help as and when needed…very positive and upbeat, always ready for the next challenge…self-motivated…a great communicator, really knows how to work with people…really follows through on the details…one of our top students…I'd hire her again.'

Activities

Journalism Society, Secretary 2007 - present
Spanish Society, Member, 2005 - present

Other

- Regular blood donor. Recently achieved '**24 Donations Certificate**' from the National Blood Service.
- Regularly read *The Times, Guardian, Independent, Psychologist*, a variety of magazines, non-fiction and fiction books to better understand different styles of writing.
- Travelled extensively in Spain and lived abroad.

Portfolio and references available upon request.

Fatima Karzaim, page 2

This job shows Fatima has tenacity and isn't afraid to get her hands dirty

Journalism employers might wonder how a degree in psychology applies. Here Fatima explains

Fatima clearly describes how her US education equates to the UK system

Quotes from supervisors help illustrate the kind of person she is

This is a more effective way to show her achievement

If a portfolio is relevant, it can be mentioned. If it is online, a link could be provided

For CVs that are more than one page, this note could help if the pages get separated

Covering letter sample Human Resources Assistant

Anita Stallwell
45 Northbridge Road
York
YO10 5NH

Anase Grants
Founders Health
66 Parvan Road
Edinburgh TT5 N46

19 April 2012

Dear Mr Grants,

I am writing to apply for the post of Human Resources Assistant with Founders Inc. as advertised in the Edinburgh Evening News last week (Ref no: 433Y7).

I recently graduated from the University of Poppleton with a Bachelor of Psychology. I am very interested in working at Founders which is described by several articles in the local media as being an important source of support for the Edinburgh community.

During my course, I became interested in human resources when I undertook an organisational development module. My interest in recruitment and selection led me to undertake a final research project analysing factors contributing to employee satisfaction. The project involved reviewing the literature around employee satisfaction, negotiating with the University's HR office to agree the parameters of the study, developing and administering an employee survey and analysing and writing up the results. My final report was used by the HR office in modifying their current policies identified as impacting employee satisfaction.

In an effort to develop practical experience in human resources, I secured a summer work experience at Tinto Camvia, a company that employs 4,000+. In this role, I assisted in all aspects of recruiting including editing job specifications, advertising in local and national media and screening CVs. Once prospective employees accepted offers, I entered their details into our employee database, processed their paperwork and created employee files. I really enjoyed working in an HR environment and gained a variety of skills that will help me to contribute effectively in my next role.

If you require any more information please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email (mobile: 07747 357666; anita.stallwell@example.co.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Anita Stallwell

Anita Stallwell

Covering letter sample Trainee Research Executive

Simone Daley
Kings House
Kymberley Road
Harrow
HA1 1PT

Ms Karen Evans
Vintage
45 Corving Street
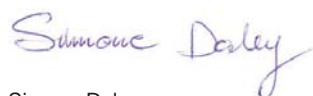London
HA3 PM5

10 December 2011

Dear Ms Evans,

I am writing to express my interest in the Trainee Research Executive position as advertised on your website. I became aware of Vintage as a result of the National Student Survey which creates a high profile campaign at my university each year and have since become interested in the career opportunities a global market research agency can offer.

The study of Psychology has led me to develop a strong interest in statistics and the analytical process which can be readily applied in a career within Market Research. Modules such as Statistics and Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods have provided me with a solid grounding in data collation and strengthened my numerical skills. I am also skilled in the use of SPSS for data manipulation and analysis. Modules exploring cognitive, biological, social and developmental Psychology have taken a multidisciplinary approach and emphasised group projects, presentations and small group discussions which have enhanced my communication, team work and planning skills. The opportunity to apply my research skills combined with my interpersonal qualities in a commercial environment that has real impact and influence on today's society is of primary interest to me. I am interested in the work of the organisation's Social Research Institute and in particular the opportunity to contribute to social policy on a wide range of issues from education to the environment.

I would bring a high level of initiative, enthusiasm and a disciplined mind to Vintage; qualities which have been demonstrated in my previous experience with an international market research company and which are outlined in my CV. My role consisted of a variety of duties, from assisting in the development of questionnaires to producing tables for members of the executive team. I was required to assist in numerous screenings and exit polls attended by clients and was also able to demonstrate my skills as a team leader by overseeing groups of coders providing assistance when necessary. At the end of my placement I was invited to continue for a further two months and, two years on, I now work on a casual basis for the company conducting exit polls for newly released films and attending screenings for up and coming titles. The opportunity to develop my career in this field and achieve industry recognised qualifications makes a position with Vintage hugely attractive and a good match for the skills I have to offer.

As requested I have enclosed my CV outlining my experiences to date and I am available at your convenience to discuss in further detail.

Yours sincerely,

Simone Daley

Covering letter sample Assistant Clinical Psychologist

Ms Monique Lewis
74 Westminster Road
East London
HG2 5LW

Dr Richard Chapman
St Anne's Brain Injury Unit
Fairview Hospital
Leeds
HG5 3NS

24 May 2011

Dear Dr Chapman,

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Clinical Psychologist at the St Anne's Brain Injury Unit which I saw advertised on the BPS website yesterday (reference no 34567).
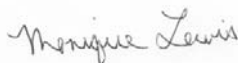
From the start of my undergraduate Psychology studies I developed a commitment to the mental health sector and have gained the theoretical perspectives and practical experience necessary to pursue my objective of becoming a Clinical Psychologist. I firmly believe that the early identification of the cause and nature of behavioural and cognitive problems as well as intensive and prolonged rehabilitation are crucial in the clinical care of patients with neurological conditions. As I near the end of my degree I believe I am ready to make a meaningful contribution to your work whilst building on the experience I have gained.

My Psychology degree has provided me with comprehensive knowledge of psychological research methodologies and statistical analysis both in the quantitative and qualitative domains which I feel will be relevant in this role. I have conducted experiments, collected data and analysed results. I was able to explore my interest in neuropsychology in my dissertation which examined cerebellum structural abnormalities in first episodes of psychosis. Independently, I designed and conducted my dissertation project which enhanced my statistical competence of SPSS. A final year module, 'Brain and Behaviour', advanced my knowledge of neurological patients with brain damage alongside therapeutic interventions. 'Cognitive Psychology' provided a theoretical understanding of brain imaging techniques such as MRI as well as an understanding of neurodysfunction.

Having opted for a sandwich degree I have undertaken two six-month placements which provided me with the invaluable opportunity to apply theoretical concepts to real life situations. This also helped develop my interpersonal skills with a range of vulnerable and challenging clients. My experience at the Early Intervention in Psychosis Service in East London provided me with an understanding of the concepts and issues surrounding therapy as applied to first episode psychosis individuals. As part of the programme we implemented relapse prevention techniques, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), assistance in social functioning and ongoing assessments.

My experience and education to date is outlined in my CV and I am available at your convenience if you would like to discuss my application in further detail.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Lewis

Monique Lewis

Psychology Student

Employability Guide

Price £12

THE UNIVERSITY *of* York

The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network

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