

Securing Your University Offer for Psychology

Essay Competition Award Ceremony
11 April 2023

Agenda

- Welcome
- Studying Psychology at University: an Overview
- Submitting a Competitive Application
- NU London Insights
- Q&A

Studying Psychology at University: An Overview



What is the study of Psychology?



- Psychology looks at the ways people think, act, react, and interact. It is the study of human (and animal) behaviour, and the thoughts and emotions that influence behaviour
- Courses can focus on scientific research and/or applied Psychology
- Many degree courses are accredited and follow the professional body guidelines, set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS)

Where and how can you study psychology?



- Single Honours BA Psychology, qualifications ranging from BSc (Hons) and BA (Hons) degrees
- Many joint and combined honours options, e.g.: Psychology and Criminology, Psychology and Biology, Psychology with Sociology (*note that the study balance is likely to be other than 50/50 if it's Psychology *with* rather than Philosophy *and*)
- Different degree spans (standard English 3 years, standard Scottish 4 years, fast-track 2 years etc)
- Degree apprenticeships take a more practical approach (potentially useful to fast track toward particular careers)
- Full-time/part-time; online/in-person; as well as some courses with a placement (sandwich courses)
- Foundation Certificates

How is Psychology taught?

- **Reading:** Set readings are vital for Psychology, as you will be looking in detail at the content of several important sources
- **Lectures:** Lecturers can discuss the set reading and analyse various texts, primary sources, and key events, as well as further contextualise key topics
- **Seminars:** Seminars allow for a more in-depth discussion of a topic and a chance to ask any questions to your lecturer/seminar supervisor. It's probably even more important that you are well prepared for the seminar as you will need to participate
- **Essays:** Formative and summative, to test your analysis of a subject
- **Presentations:** Occasionally presentations are used to assess how well you understand a topic - these may be individual or group presentations

What skills do you develop?



- Essay writing
- Critical thinking
- Research
- Planning
- Analysis
- Creative writing
- Time management
- Referencing skills

The skills you will acquire as a Psychology graduate will allow you to pivot flexibly into a variety of industries, when you enter the working world.

What can you do after your degree?

As an Psychology graduate your transferable skills can take you into ANY industry. Some of the top graduate destinations are:

- Human health and social work
- Education
- Retail/administrative and support
- Legal, social, and welfare professions
- Business, HR, and finance
- Marketing, PR, and sales

Note: If you are interested in becoming a psychiatrist, you need to qualify as a doctor, then go on to train in Psychiatry.

Submitting a Competitive Application for Psychology

What are the entry requirements?

UCAS

Information provided by ucas.com

- **A levels:** Usually need minimum two A levels, with three A levels and A-B grades required for the most popular courses
- Entry requirements range from CCC to AAB
- Psychology A level is desirable, but not usually required
- Literature, Maths and Statistics can be helpful
- **International Baccalaureate Diploma:** From 30-39 points overall in the IB Diploma
- **Scottish Highers:** From BBBB to AAAAB (most frequently required AABBB)
- **UCAS Tariff:** 120-112
- **Access to HE Diploma:** 60-30 overall credits
- **Cambridge Pre-U:** often not accepted



What are admissions tutors looking for?

- Enthusiasm and motivation to study Psychology
- Credible evidence that supports your subject passion
- Proactive subject exploration and engagement - e.g.: wider reading
- Relevant extra-curricular/super-curricular activities
- Interests outside of school, relating to Psychology
- Relevant and transferable work experience
- Aims and goals; career plans if known
- Understanding of the demands of studying at university, and how this is different from school

What super-curricular activities would support my application?

Super-curricular activities take the subjects you study further, beyond what you have learnt at school or college. Some examples for Psychology may include:

- Wider reading beyond the set texts
- Reading specialist magazines and journals
- Attending university taster lectures or taster days
- Listening to podcasts, TED talks or online lectures
- Attending a Psychology Summer School
- Taking an online (MOOC) Psychology course
- Taking part in university essay competitions!



Why is the personal statement so important?

- Often your only chance to 'sell yourself' to the university and impress the admissions tutor
- Helps to differentiate between equally excellent candidates with similar or identical grade profiles, especially for competitive courses
- Helps if you are a borderline candidate
- Demonstrates your reasons for applying for a course
- May form basis of an interview - tutors may ask questions arising from the statement
- May help if on results day you don't quite make your grades

How can I write a compelling personal statement?

- Invest plenty of time in the brainstorming/thinking stage, before starting to write your statement
- Structure your personal statement
- Use positive and enthusiastic language
- Make every sentence count - word count is tight!
- Ensure it reflects your 'voice', and your 'journey'
- Use evidence to support claims/statements
- Be prepared to draft and redraft
- Be honest - don't exaggerate and don't plagiarise
- Double check grammar and spelling for errors
- Ask for support, especially with proofreading and checking - it's easy for mistakes to slip through!





What might an admissions interview look like?

- Unique opportunity to discuss a subject you are passionate about with an academic tutor
- Opportunity for tutor to get to know you and your motivation for applying - you can also ask questions!
- May take the form of a 'taster' tutorial
- Unlikely to be a test of knowledge - tutor will be more interested in how you think, rather than what you know
- Discussion-based; questions will probe your subject interest, enthusiasm and aptitude
- Questions may build on your personal statement
- Questions will be challenging - don't panic if you don't immediately have an answer; take your time to think
- Some interviews may include a task, or pre-reading

How can I prepare for my admissions interview?



- Carefully reread your personal statement, and be prepared to expand upon any of the points you have included
- Re-read or re-familiarise yourself with any texts you referenced, so these are fresh in your mind
- Undertake any reading or pre-interview tasks in good time
- Practice talking about the points in your statement
- Research who will be interviewing you
- Make sure you are clear regarding interview logistics
- If you will be undertaking a virtual interview, make sure you have somewhere suitable for this task, with good wifi
- Prepare questions you would like to ask in the interview

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Faculty insights

- The skills that Psychology students acquire can be applied to a range of careers, from Neuromarketing, to Creative Writing, to any setting which calls for interpersonal skills and an understanding of human behaviour
- Psychology graduates are highly sought after in the jobs market to fill a multitude of roles, including some surprising ones, like HR or Sales
- When writing your personal statement, don't be afraid to make it personal - we'd much rather read something about you and your interests than a 'deep' quotation
- Check out the seminars, lectures, events and podcasts available online - think about what really motivates you to study Psychology at university
- The most valuable trait of a Psychology student is curiosity

Student tips and hints

- There are a lot of great online resources that can help you explore your subject interest in Psychology! Look for recorded lectures and case studies
- Use the 'Show' not 'Tell' approach - show what you have learned, and why it's made you want to study Psychology at university
- In your personal statement, write about subjects you are genuinely interested in and want to talk about. Let your enthusiasm shine through!



Suggestions for wider reading

- Nicky Hayes (2011), *Psychology Made Simple: Flash*
- James Kalat (2011), *Introduction to Psychology*
- Ellen Pastorino and Susann Doyle-Portillo (2010), *What is Psychology? Essentials*

Q&A

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