



Psychology and counselling

Psychology and counselling are increasingly popular areas of study. Psychology provides the essential knowledge base for a number of related professions; counselling is developing as a separate profession (but, confusingly, some practising psychologists specialise in counselling). Training for the two professional groups in the United Kingdom (UK) follows distinctly different pathways.

Checklist: why study psychology and counselling in the United Kingdom?

- UK qualifications and training are respected all over the world.
- The courses are intellectually rigorous and professionally relevant.
- Different study routes are available, including part-time and distance learning, and courses are offered by many universities and colleges.
- Improving your English language skills during the course will enhance your job prospects in English-speaking countries.

1 What can I study?

Before you apply for a place to study as a psychologist or counsellor you should have a clear understanding of the differences between the two roles. Psychology has many applications in commerce, industry, social work and health but counselling is a single discipline (although psychotherapy may be considered a specialised form of counselling) which is practised in a range of work environments: education, health, social services, voluntary organisations and private practice.

How can I decide which course of study is right for me?

You are most likely thinking about training as a chartered psychologist if you:

- intend to treat and offer support to people
- are prepared to undergo a long and structured programme of education and practical training, starting with an honours degree in psychology, followed by three to five years practical experience and then either a Master's degree (minimum one year) or a three-year doctorate (see 'How can I register as a professional?').

Note: for most careers in psychology in the UK, success in a recognised undergraduate degree course is the first essential step. Similar standards are likely to be expected elsewhere also.

You may think of becoming a counsellor if you:

- want to encourage people (clients) to explore their own lifestyle, feelings and problems to gain understanding and confidence – but without making judgements or giving advice
- want to use your own warm, accepting and non-judgemental instincts to build a trusting relationship with clients without letting your personal beliefs, feelings and attitudes intrude
- are prepared to undergo counselling yourself (see 'How can I register as a professional?').

Checklist: choosing the right course

- Be sure you are clear which profession you wish to join.
- Confirm that your chosen course will give you the graduate basis for registration (GBR) for psychologists or a registrable qualification for counsellors in whichever country you intend to practice.
- If your course is modular in nature (where you are allowed to choose options within the programme), you may need to select specific areas of study to qualify for an accredited degree that satisfies the requirements for UK chartered psychologist status, so take advice if that is what you want to achieve.
- Check the quality of teaching and research in your chosen training institution by going to www.qaa.ac.uk/revreps/reviewreports.htm (teaching) and www.hero.ac.uk/rae/index/htm (research). For further information refer to *Quality issues* in this series.

Psychology	
Level of study	Examples of study options
A-level and Highers	Psychology
Undergraduate degrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied psychology • Applied social psychology • Behavioural science • Business psychology • Clinical psychology • Cognitive science • Community psychology • Developmental psychology • Educational psychology • European social psychology • Experimental psychology • Forensic psychology • Health psychology • Human psychology • Occupational psychology • Psychology or communications • Social psychology • Sport psychology
Postgraduate degrees and diplomas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied psychology • Clinical psychology • Psychology research programme • Social psychology
Continuing professional development and short courses	<p>Details of short courses can be found on the Education UK website www.educationuk.org.</p> <p>The British Psychological Society website (www.bps.org.uk) has details of courses for continuing professional education.</p>



Counselling	
Level	Examples of study options
NVQ/SVQ	Counselling (level 3)
National Certificate/Advanced Certificate	Counselling skills
Higher National Diplomas	Counselling Counselling and health and social care studies Counselling for people in organisations
Undergraduate degrees	Applied counselling Applied counselling for people in organisations Child studies and advice, guidance and counselling Counselling and psychology in community settings Counselling studies and society Counselling skills combined with subjects including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • art • business • communication studies • community studies • computer science • drama • health studies • physical education • social sciences • theology.
Postgraduate degrees and diplomas	Counselling Counselling and psychotherapy as a means to health Counselling psychology
Continuing professional development and short courses	There is a variety of courses on the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) website (www.bacp.co.uk).

Can I do part of my study outside of the UK?

Possibly, but you need to make detailed arrangements with your chosen university. Credits for previous terms of study outside the UK are not yet well established in the UK. It is up to individual universities to decide whether to accept you and credit your previous study.

Can I go on to qualify in the UK if I have an overseas degree?

Possibly - you would have to submit details of your degree to the relevant professional body.



Checklist: choosing the right course

- Be sure you are clear which occupation you intend to follow.
- Make sure that your course will qualify you for registration (as a counsellor) or give you the graduate basis for registration (as a psychologist).
- Compare the institutions' teaching and research assessment scores by going to www.qaa.ac.uk/revreps/reviewreports.htm (teaching) or www.hero.ac.uk/rae/index.htm (research). For further information refer to *Quality issues* in this series.
- Make sure that the course you choose will help the career you hope to pursue in your country.

2 Entrance

What are the course entry requirements?

Entry to psychology degree courses can be very competitive. You will be expected to have high grades in A-level/Scottish Highers or equivalent alternative qualifications; arts and science subjects are equally acceptable. The following are thought to be particularly useful: biology, economics, English, history, mathematics, psychology and social sciences. Typical grades at A-level are ABB and BBC. You will need good English language skills.

Similar qualifications are required for entry to counselling courses at degree level, including competence in English, but acceptable grades may be less demanding and there is generally less severe competition for places. Some counselling courses are at sub-degree level (see below).

3 How can I register as a professional?

In the UK most psychologists are registered with a professional body that accredits their qualifications and competence to practice. The same is increasingly true for counsellors. A major review of registration procedures is currently under way with the professional bodies becoming affiliated to the Health Professions Council, a statutory regulatory agency concerned with public safety and the delivery of effective services which is responsible for State Registration (essential for employment in the National Health Service). In this way psychologists and counsellors will be brought in line with other health professional groups.

Registration arrangements vary from country to country but where registration or licensing is needed as evidence of fitness to practice, similar combinations of education and direct experience is likely to be required. You must check on the registration requirements of the particular country in which you wish to work. In general, a qualification obtained in the UK is accepted as fulfilling at least part of what is needed.

In the UK model, registration as a chartered psychologist with the British Psychological Society (BPS) is open to those who have:

- obtained a BPS-accredited honours degree in psychology conferring GBR (three or four 4 years)
- completed a BPS-accredited post-graduate training programme (usually three years minimum) prescribed programmes vary across the different specialisms.

Further in-service training is organised as continuing professional development (CPD) to ensure that knowledge and skills are updated, as 'lifelong learning' becomes the norm in these rapidly advancing and highly regulated professions.

UK-based chartered psychologists work in the following disciplines:

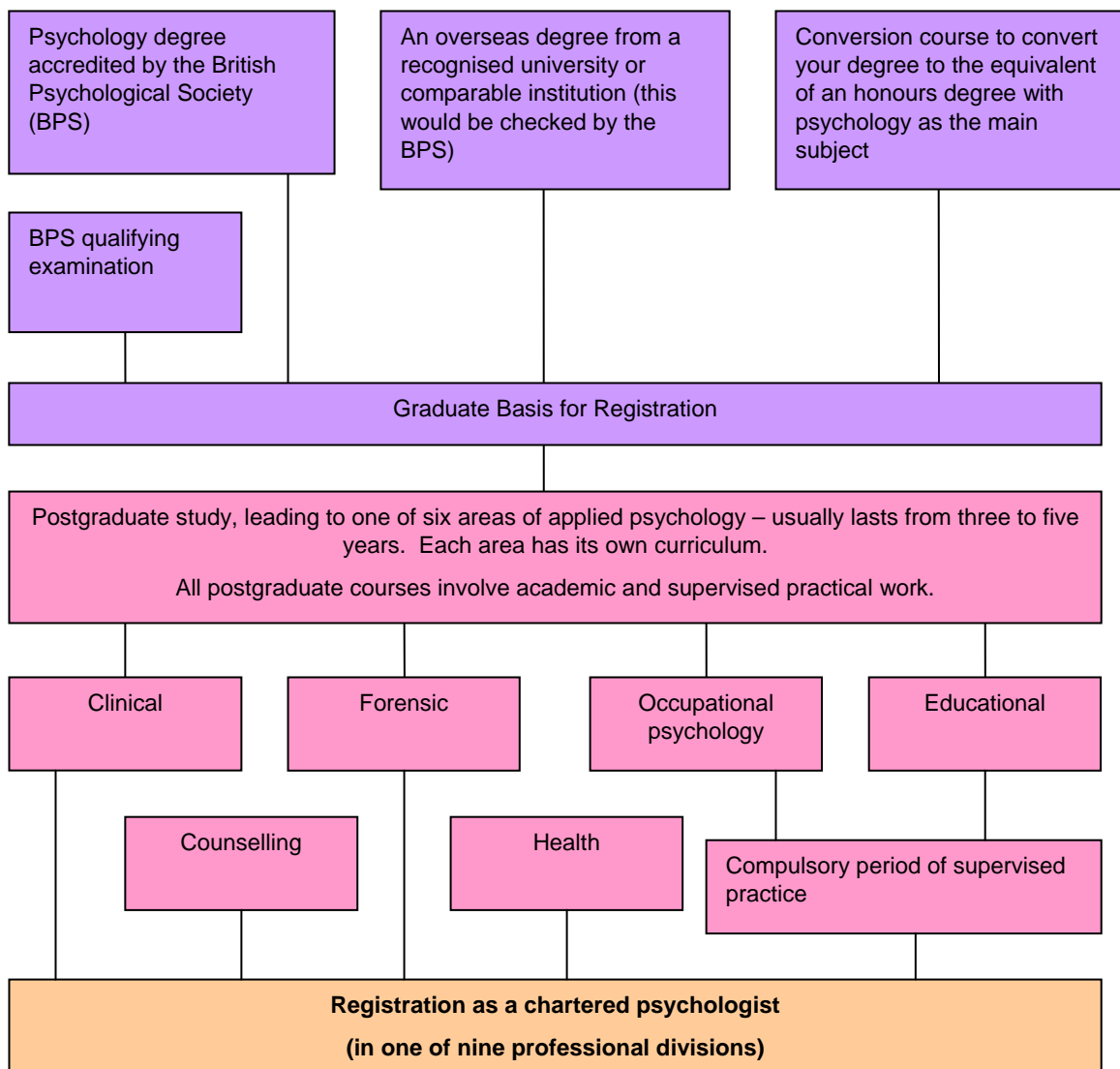
- clinical psychology
- counselling psychology
- educational psychology
- forensic psychology
- health psychology

- neuropsychology (open to qualified educational and clinical psychologists)
- occupational psychology
- sport and exercise psychology.

In addition, they may be involved in teaching and research in psychology.

A degree in psychology provides a good educational basis for a variety of other careers. Not all psychology graduates go on to become chartered psychologists; instead they may apply their education and training in advertising, careers guidance, market research, nursing, personnel management, school teaching, social work and other fields.

Qualifying as a chartered psychologist





Counselling

The United Kingdom Register of Counsellors/Psychotherapists (UKRCP) is administered within the British Association for Counsellors (BACP).

The Register is open to those counselling/psychotherapy practitioners who have been accredited by BACP. BACP makes no distinction between counsellors and psychotherapists for the purposes of accreditation. Members of BACP may apply to become accredited if they can demonstrate that they meet the published criteria. The criteria comprise both eligibility requirements (quantitative levels of training, practice and supervision) and reflective practice criteria which form the qualitative element of the scheme (for details see the BACP website www.bacp.co.uk). As yet there is no common core curriculum for the formal education component, although BACP does have a list of courses which they accredit.

BACP is a professional body with approximately 30,000 members. There are other professional bodies within the UK whose standards may be different from BACP.

Another substantial professional body is the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP). It is an umbrella body for 80 organisations whose members are all properly trained (to postgraduate level), qualified and accountable professional psychotherapists. Registration with UKCP provides recognition and accreditation and should facilitate State Registration with the Health Professions Council when this becomes obligatory. Registered psychotherapists are considered to be equivalent to clinical psychologists and can apply for similar mental health professional jobs in the National Health Service.

4 Next steps

Checklist: your next steps

- Before applying for a UK course, do some thorough research at home (or in the country in which you intend to work) about the best qualification for your chosen career.
- Always ask for a copy of the course prospectus from the educational institution.
- If you want to qualify as a chartered psychologist, choose a course that is accredited by the British Psychological Association.
- If you want to become a registered counsellor/psychotherapist, make sure your course is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy or the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy.

5 What else do I need to know?

The regulations for entry into the UK are constantly changing and it is vital that you check the Home Office Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) website (www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk) on a regular basis and check locally with your British Mission so you are aware of how UK immigration procedures will affect you.

With the introduction of the new Australian-style points-based-system you will need to keep even more up to date with the new immigration system changes when applying for a visa or work permit. For information on the points-based-system go to www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/managingborders/pbsdocs.

For advice on working in the UK: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk.

For advice about visas: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk.

For practical advice on living in the UK download *Studying and living in the UK* from: www.educationuk.org/bc_img/body/articles/pdfs/stud_live_uk.pdf.

6 Where can I find more information?

The British Council has produced the Education UK portfolio to provide international students with a wide range of information and guidance that will help them find out more about studying a UK course and other important issues, such as applying to study, entry clearance and living in the UK. The portfolio includes:

- The Education UK website and a number of country websites containing locally relevant information – www.educationuk.org
- *The essential guides to education in the UK: Undergraduate and pre-university; Postgraduate and MBA**
- *Universities, Colleges and Schools Handbook**
- *Club UK magazine**, also available online at www.educationuk.org/clubuk
- *Postgraduate UK magazine**

* The publications are available at a selected number of British Council offices for students to use.

The Education UK websites are a valuable source of information, with a database of over 450,000 courses and profiles of institutions which contain details of entry requirements, course fees and some offer a virtual tour of their campus.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

PO Box 28
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ

Telephone +44 (0)87 0112 221
Fax +44 (0)12 4254 4961
E-mail enquiries@ucas.ac.uk
www.ucas.com

United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)

2nd Floor
Edward House
2 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7LT

Telephone +44 (0)20 7014 9955
Fax +44 (0)20 7014 9977
E-mail info@psychotherapy.org.uk
www.psychotherapy.org.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

BACP House
Unit 15 St John's Business Park
Lutterworth
Leicestershire LE17 4HB

Telephone +44 (0)87 0443 5252
Fax +44 (0)87 0443 5161
E-mail bacp@bacp.co.uk
www.bacp.co.uk

Relate

E-mail enquiries@relate.org.uk
www.relate.org.uk

Other useful resources

British Qualifications: A Complete Guide to Professional, Vocational and Academic Qualifications in the UK (REV) by Created by Kogan Page ISBN-13: 9780749450755 Pub. Date: February 2008

Job file VT Lifeskills: Thirsk 2007 ISBN:13 9781906028466)-in depth guide of career choices of all types from unskilled to professional work, also list prospects and qualification for each occupation.

CRAC DCG2: Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics 2006/2007 Trotman 2006, ISBN: 184455 0661 this allows applicants and their advisers, *Degree Course Guides* are unique because each degree presents a wide range of information on a specific degree discipline, laid out in tabular format enabling at-a-glance course comparisons.



Training in Counselling and Psychotherapy Directory 2007 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, ISBN: 9781905114207 – contains over 340 pages, with course listings for over 350 university, further education college and specialist training providers. Courses are listed by county and region for ease of use with a national section also included for larger training organisations. Ordering details are on the BACP website (see ‘Where can I find more information?’).

The booklets *Studying Psychology* – a guide for international students – and *Careers in Psychology* are both available to download from the BPS website www.bps.org.uk.

Note: Please note these books may not be available at your local British Council office.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness.

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