BPsy (Hons) Graduates’ Competencies

Studying for an honours degree in psychology provides graduates with a diversity of skills that prepares them, not only to pursue postgraduate studies in psychology (thus becoming professional or academic psychologists), but also to enter a variety of employment areas. These skills have been divided into subject and generic skills. Subject skills are those that relate closely to the subject knowledge and/or are an integral part of any psychology degree. Generic skills are transferable skills that are not so closely tied to the subject matter of psychology. However, it is important to bear in mind that this distinction is a fairly artificial one since the distinction between subject and generic skills is not clear-cut. In addition, many of the subject-specific skills, research design, methods and measurement, and statistics, have direct application in professions outside psychology, and many of the generic skills are essential in the work of a professional psychologist.

**Subject specific skills**

On graduating with an honours degree in psychology, students should be able to:

- apply multiple perspectives to psychological issues, recognising that psychology involves a range of research methods, theories, evidence and applications
- integrate ideas and findings across the multiple perspectives in psychology and recognise distinctive psychological approaches to relevant issues
- identify and evaluate general patterns in behaviour, psychological functioning and experience
- understand and investigate the role of brain function in all human behaviour and experience
- generate and explore hypotheses and research questions
- carry out empirical studies involving a variety of methods of data collection, including experiments, observation, psychometric tests, questionnaires, interviews and field studies
- analyse data using both quantitative and qualitative methods
- present and evaluate research findings

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• employ evidence-based reasoning and examine practical, theoretical and ethical issues associated with the use of different methodologies, paradigms and methods of analysis in psychology

• use a variety of psychological tools, including specialised software, laboratory equipment and psychometric instruments, in which they had received specific training during the psychology degree

• carry out an extensive piece of independent empirical research, including defining a research problem; formulating testable hypotheses/research questions; choosing appropriate methodologies; planning and carrying out a study efficiently; demonstrating awareness of ethical issues and current codes of ethics and conduct; obtaining the appropriate ethical approval for their research; demonstrating the ability to reason about the data and present the findings effectively; discussing findings in terms of previous research; evaluating methodologies and analyses employed and implications for ethics; and, where appropriate, collaborating effectively with colleagues, participants and outside agencies.

Generic skills

On graduating with an honours degree in psychology, students should be able to:

• communicate effectively. Effective communication involves developing a cogent argument supported by relevant evidence and being sensitive to the needs and expectations of an audience. This is accomplished through specific demands to write both essays and scientific-style reports, and through experience in making oral presentations to groups. The standard of written language should be at an acceptable standard with respect to grammar, punctuation and spelling

• comprehend and use data effectively. This is accomplished through the significant core of research training in a psychology degree that acquaints graduates with understanding, analysing and presenting complex data sets

• be computer literate. Psychology students are introduced to, and become familiar with, computers early in their training and will display, at the very least, skill in the use of word processing, databases and statistical software packages

• retrieve and organise information effectively. Psychology graduates will be familiar with collecting and organising stored information found in library book and journal collections, and in computer and internet sources

• handle primary source material critically

• engage in effective teamwork

• problem-solve and reason scientifically. The research process, which is at the centre of studying psychology, enables graduates to identify and pose research questions, to consider alternative approaches to their solutions and to evaluate outcomes
• make critical judgements and evaluations. The need to take different perspectives on issues and problems, and to evaluate them in a critical and sceptical manner to arrive at supported conclusions, is emphasized and taught throughout a psychology degree. The importance of looking for similarities and general principles to increase the power of the analysis is also stressed.

• be sensitive to contextual and interpersonal factors. The complexity of the factors that shape behaviour and social interaction will be familiar to psychology graduates and will make them more aware of the basis of problems and interpersonal conflict. They should also be more sensitive to the importance of enhancing cooperation to maximise the effectiveness of individual skills as shown in group work and team building.

• use effectively personal planning and project management skills, becoming more independent and pragmatic as learners. Taking responsibility for one’s own learning and skill development is increasingly expected throughout a psychology degree, where an emphasis on learning to learn is stressed. In particular, psychology degrees normally culminate in the completion of an independent, empirical inquiry where a pragmatic approach to a time-limited project is required.

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