

Psychologist



Health
South Western Sydney
Local Health District

What is a Psychologist?

A Psychologist is a mental health professional trained in the prevention, assessment, diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of problems encountered by infants, children, adolescents and adults. Psychologists use evidence based practice, conduct research and evaluate the effectiveness of their treatment interventions.

Roles of a Psychologist

Roles include clinical assessment, administration of psychometric tests, assessment of personality, assessment of intellectual functioning, cognitive-behavioural assessment, forensic assessment, mental status examinations, neuropsychological assessment, educational assessment, scoring and analysis of test results, report writing, interviewing clients, development of treatment plans for client, implementation of treatment plan, individual treatment, group treatment, couples therapy, family therapy, design of treatment protocols, research and evaluation, teaching and lecturing, supervising, liaison and consultation, and management of departments.

Psychologists may work in hospitals or community health settings, and in the public or private sector. For example, Psychologists may work in alcohol and drug clinics, specialised treatment units (e.g. anxiety disorders units, eating disorder units, depression clinics, child and family counselling units), hospital departments (e.g. aged care, brain injury units, cardiology, oncology, chronic pain units), psychiatric inpatients units, and community mental health care.

Qualifications Required

Psychology can be studied as a major in an arts, social science or science degree. To become a Psychologist you have to complete a 4-year degree majoring in psychology or a four-year Bachelor of Psychology. The fourth year of bachelor degree study, which is needed to satisfy registration requirements, may be undertaken as an honours year, in the Bachelor of Psychology degree, or a Graduate Diploma of Psychology plus a Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology.

This is followed by either an accredited two-year postgraduate qualification (majoring in clinical Psychology, counselling, clinical neuropsychology, health, educational and developmental, sport, forensic, organisational or community Psychology), or two years of supervised experience with a registered Psychologist. These bachelor and postgraduate degree courses must be accredited by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (see their website for an up-to-date list).

Psychologist: A four-year degree majoring in Psychology plus supervision for 2 years for registration.

Clinical Psychologist: A four-year degree majoring in Psychology plus either a 2-year fulltime Master's degree, or 3-year Doctorate degree.

Supervision Provided

Four-year trained Psychologists are conditionally registered with the Psychology Board of Australia, and are required to be supervised by an experienced psychologist for 2 years in order to become fully registered.

Psychologists with additional postgraduate training (i.e. 2-year Masters, or 3-year Doctorate degree) require further supervision (2 years for Masters graduates, 1 year for Doctorate graduates) in order to be eligible for an area of practice endorsement.

Area of practice endorsements may be obtained in the following areas:

Clinical Neuropsychologist

A Clinical Neuropsychologist specialises in the assessment and diagnosis of brain impairment and how this affects thinking skills, emotions, behaviour and personality. They are also involved in the rehabilitation and management of the effects of brain impairment and often work with other health professionals.

Clinical Psychologist

A Clinical Psychologist is trained in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of mental illness and psychological problems. Located in hospitals, universities, general medical practices, community health centres and private practice, they often work with general medical practitioners, psychiatrists and other health professionals.

Community Psychologist

A Community Psychologist works with community members and policy makers in considering the individual, social, political and environmental factors that contributes to psychological wellbeing within communities. They occupy a variety of roles in urban and rural settings such as local government, education, and community health and non-government agencies.

Counselling Psychologist

A Counselling Psychologist provides assessment, counselling and therapy to individuals, couples, families, groups and organisations. Their clients are, in general, people trying to cope with everyday stresses and the resulting emotional and social problems.

Educational and Developmental Psychologist

An Educational and Developmental Psychologist provides assessment, intervention and counselling services related to the developmental and educational issues that occur in life. Specialisations include life span transitions, early intervention, disability, problems of learning and adjustment in schools, career and family development and ageing.

Forensic Psychologist

A Forensic Psychologist applies psychological knowledge, theory and skills to matters related to the legal and criminal justice system. They provide expert opinion to the courts in such matters as criminal behaviour, child abuse and family court cases.

Health Psychologist

A Health Psychologist is concerned with illness prevention and health promotion. They have knowledge of, and assess and treat the biological, psychological and social factors that determine health and illness in order to promote positive change and wellbeing.

Organisational Psychologist

An Organisational Psychologist seeks to understand the complex interrelationships that occur within the workplace in order to improve organisational effectiveness and individual wellbeing. They apply psychological principles and methods to understand and influence work behaviour, worker attitudes, organisational structures and organisational systems.

Sports Psychologist

A Sports Psychologist helps sportspeople to achieve their optimum mental health and wellbeing to improve their sporting performance. They may support athletes, who are recovering from injuries, have not met their performance expectations, or who are struggling with the pressure of training and competition.

Career Opportunities

For 4-year trained Psychologists, the classification is from year 1 to year 9 and thereafter, with a salary increment each year. If the Psychologist is able to show after year 9 to have developed a high degree of experience in assessment, treatment, supervision and administrative tasks, then they can apply for regrading to Senior Psychologist. For this category, 3 levels of salary increments exist (year 1-3).

For 6-year trained psychologists (Clinical Psychologists), 5 yearly salary increments exist (from year 1-5). Subject to fulfilling a number of criteria (expertise in treatment, research, training etc), the Clinical Psychologist can apply for regrading to Senior Clinical Psychologist. For this classification, 3 yearly salary increments exist.

The Health Department may also appoint a Principal Psychologist who has shown leadership in treatment, research, teaching and other fields.

Psychologists are employed by government and privately run community welfare organisations and by hospitals, industry and the Australian Defence Force. They are also employed in private practice and in private health clinics.

What sort of person should I be?

- Empathic and caring
- Interested in human nature and behaviour
- Intelligent
- Approachable
- Emotionally balanced and able to deal with stress

- Cognitively flexible
- A researcher at heart
- Assertive
- Open to change
- Culturally aware
- Non-judgemental