

## 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, research and evaluation in their work. They often develop expertise in specific areas and design treatment protocols and evaluate them.

## ROLES OF A PSYCHOLOGIST

Clinical assessment, administration of psychometric tests, assessment of personality, assessment of intellectual functioning, cognitive-behavioural assessment, forensic assessment, mental status exam, neuropsychological assessment, educational assessment, scoring and analysis of test results, report writing, interviewing clients, development of treatment plan 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, management of departments.

Psychologists may work in the following types of health care: Alcohol and drug clinics, anxiety disorders, child and family counselling units, neuropsychology departments, aged care, brain injury units, cardiology, oncology and any other hospital departments, chronic pain units, psychiatric inpatients units, community mental health care, suicide prevention programmes, intellectual disability units, grief counselling, eating disorder units, depression clinics, sleep problem clinics, personality disorders units, posttraumatic stress disorders, sexual disorders units, relationship difficulties, marital and family difficulties, delirium, dementia and other cognitive disorders.

## SPECIALISATIONS

Given the wide range of psychological issues in the public and private sectors (including private practice), psychologists can specialise in a variety of 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 sports people 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.

Psychologists work on a broad range of issues with clients, including children, adults, couples, families and organisations.

## **CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

4-year trained psychologists: classification from year 1 to year 9 and thereafter, with a salary increment each year. If the psychologist can show after year 9 to have developed a high degree of experience in assessment, treatment, supervision and administrative tasks, 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 Clinical 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.

## **QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED**

To become a psychologist you usually have to complete a degree majoring in psychology or a four-year Bachelor of Psychology. This is followed by either an accredited two-year postgraduate qualification (majoring in counselling; clinical neuropsychology; or clinical 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 Psychological Society (see their website for an up-to-date list).

Psychology can be studied as a major in an arts, social science or science degree. 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.

- Psychologist: A four-year degree majoring in psychology plus supervision for 2 years for registration.
- Clinical Psychologist: as for psychologist, plus an additional 2-year fulltime Master's degree in clinical psychology or related area (counselling, neuropsychology, forensic).
- Clinical Doctorate: as for Clinical psychologist, plus an additional 1-2 years research thesis.
- PhD: more extended research than for the Doctorate.

## SUPERVISION PROVIDED

Four-year trained are conditionally registered by the NSW Psychology Registration Board and are required to be supervised by an experienced psychologist for 2 years in order to become fully registered.

Psychologists with an additional 2 years of Masters training (clinical, counselling, forensic etc) require 2 years of supervision in order to be eligible for membership of the appropriate college of the Australian Psychological Society. NSCCAHS provides thorough ongoing supervision for psychologists.

A comprehensive orientation program is provided for all new staff members with ongoing support.

## 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-judgmental

## PERSONAL SKILLS REQUIRED OF A PSYCHOLOGIST

- Interested in people and human behaviour
- Able to solve problems and critical analysis skills

## PSYCHOLOGIST

- An inquisitive mind and research skills
- Patience and perceptiveness
- Good oral, interpersonal and written communication skills
- Good interviewing skills
- Skills in administering and interpreting psychometric tests
- Therapy skills
- Skills in teaching and supervising others
- Skills in keeping a balanced life.

**CONTACT Us:** Recruitment Services Unit

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