What is Psychology

Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes. It is a broad field that includes brain-behaviour relationships, the processes of perceiving, learning, memory and thinking, the assessment of abilities and attitudes, the origins of personality and emotional states, and the nature and effects of social interactions with other people.

Psychology at UNSW

The School of Psychology at UNSW is located in the Faculty of Science and has approximately 30 academic staff, 1600 undergraduate students and 180 postgraduate students. Members of our School study a diverse range of topics such as children’s development of language and knowledge, how mood affects our social behaviour, teamwork in organisations, bias in eyewitness testimony, the brain mechanisms underlying drug addiction, fear and anxiety, the effect of ageing and brain damage on memory, how the visual system perceives a three-dimensional world, and the causes and treatment of psychological disorders ranging from psychopathy and schizophrenia to depression and post-traumatic stress.

We offer a broad range of undergraduate courses in the major areas of psychology that not only communicate contemporary knowledge but also train general skills in research design, critical thinking, statistical analysis and written and oral communication. Our postgraduate degrees in clinical, organisational and forensic psychology provide intensive professional training, and our PhD degree offers the opportunity for advanced study and research training in a wide range of specialised research fields.

Why study Psychology?

Whatever career you pursue, a background in psychology will enhance your employability. Studying psychology can...

... help you understand yourself and other people by learning about aspects of human behaviour that will help you in daily life, including your interactions with others, your learning and memory performance, your ability to cope with pressure and your understanding of the causes of psychological disorders.

... complement other learning by combining Psychology with other courses. Many courses in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science, as well as those in the Australian School of Business, benefit from an understanding of human behaviour, be it social interaction, language and communication, human motivation and emotion, or the process of decision-making. Knowledge about brain function and behaviour is of considerable benefit to students studying other science degrees.

... develop sound analytical skills through the application of scientific method. Psychology is a science. The defining feature of any science is the objective approach that is used to advance our knowledge. In psychology we use this scientific approach to learn about behaviour and mental life. Psychology provides an excellent training in analytic thinking and scientific research methods that are applicable to a broad range of careers.

... prepare you for a career as a professional Psychologist. Psychologists work in a wide variety of different contexts, including clinical, legal, organisational, educational and research settings in both the private and public sector. The initial training required to work as a psychologist is an accredited undergraduate degree in psychology. Specialist training in different professional areas is then provided in postgraduate degrees.

... provide excellent job prospects in a wide range of careers. Job Outlook, the careers and labour market research information site of the Australian Government (http://joboutlook.gov.au) makes the following points about Psychologists: Psychologists are employed across several industries including:

- Health Care and Social Assistance;
- Public Administration and Safety;
- Education and Training; and
- Administrative and Support Services.

This mix of industries is highly favourable for employment growth prospects. In fact, employment growth over the next ten years is predicted to exceed 140%, with growth in the top 10% of all careers over the next 2-10 years. For Psychologists working full-time, average weekly hours are 37.8 (compared to 41.3 for all occupations) and earnings are above average – in the top 20% of all careers. Unemployment for Psychologists is low.
Why study psychology at UNSW?

You come to University to learn from the experts – researchers who are at the cutting edge in their fields, striving to create new knowledge. The School of Psychology at UNSW is quite simply the best in Australia. Psychology at UNSW achieved the maximum 5 rating in the 2010 Australian Research Council’s Excellence for Research in Australia (ERA) initiative. We earn more competitive research funding and publish more top-ranked journal articles per academic than any other School of Psychology in Australia and many of our staff have also won teaching awards.

Most of our staff have international reputations and all have active research programs, often carried out in collaboration with researchers throughout the rest of Australia and at prestigious Universities across the world.

Psychology teaching facilities include several computer laboratories running specialist software which allows students to design and implement their own psychological research, and analyse and interpret the data they collect. At Honours level our students can access some of our superb specialist laboratory facilities, affording cutting edge techniques for the analysis of cognition and brain function, including electroencephalography (EEG), transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) and eye-tracking.

With such expertise on hand combined with our state of the art research and teaching facilities, the School of Psychology provides students with an exciting, engaging environment in which to study.

How can I study Psychology at UNSW?

There are several different ways to study psychology at UNSW. You can specialise solely in psychology and study to become a professional psychologist through our Bachelor of Psychology and Bachelor of Psychological Science degrees; the degree in Psychological Science also allows the option to take a major in another discipline as part of the degree, or you can undertake a 4-year dual degree. You can also take a major in Psychology through our Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Advanced Science degrees. Finally, you can study just a little psychology as part of many other degrees.

What other disciplines combine well with psychology?

The Bachelor of Psychological Science degree permits an accredited degree plan in Psychology to be combined with a wide variety of compatible majors. Examples include majors in marketing, management or human resource management from the Australian School of Business, providing an excellent background for careers in the business world. Alternatively, one could take a major in philosophy, criminology, or linguistics from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, in preparation for a variety of social science careers. Students with a specific interest in physiological and neuroscientific aspects of psychology can combine Psychology with the study of vision science or neuroscience from the Faculty of Science to prepare them for a career in a healthcare or biomedical research setting.

These combinations are all possible within the Bachelor of Psychological Science degree.

If you are interested in a more general science training you might take a Psychology major as part of a BSc degree simply because your Psychology studies will enhance your analytical, statistical, management and communication skills.

A number of dual degrees allow students to obtain full qualifications in both Psychology and another discipline. Many students are studying Psychology to satisfy the science component of the dual BSc/Commerce and BSc/Law degrees as they recognise the value of qualifications in Psychology in their chosen career in commerce or law. Each of these degrees allows students to complete a fourth year in Psychology by adding an extra year of study.
Becoming a professional Psychologist

In order to become a member of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), and to qualify for national registration as a Psychologist, you will first need a university bachelor degree which includes four years of approved training in Psychology. The Bachelor of Psychology is our dedicated 4-year degree, but you can also enter into honours through the Bachelor of Psychological Science, Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Science (Advanced Science) degrees.

Your bachelor degree must be followed by further professional training. This normally takes the form of either an accredited 5th and 6th year Masters degree, or the combined professional/research degrees offered by UNSW.

How can I get four years of bachelor degree training at UNSW?

There are several ways to obtain four-year training in psychology at UNSW.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>UNSW Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Psychology</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>3432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Psychological Science</td>
<td>3 years *</td>
<td>3435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Science (Advanced Science)</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>3972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>3 years *</td>
<td>3970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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* you will need to apply for fourth year honours to make this degree four years.

- The Bachelor of Science degree can be combined with another degree such as Arts, Commerce, Law and Social Science.
- In addition, it is possible to obtain four-year training through the Bachelor of Arts degree. Please contact the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences for details.

What is the ATAR Cut-Off?

The ATAR cut-offs vary between degrees and may change from year to year. All students are strongly advised to list more than one preference if they want to study Psychology at UNSW. For example, given the relatively high entry requirement for the Bachelor of Psychology degree, students wishing to study for a four year Psychology degree should also list the Bachelor of Psychological Science, Bachelor of Science and/or Bachelor of Advanced Science degrees in their application.

What subjects should I study in the HSC?

For students wishing to apply for Psychology courses, it is advisable to include Mathematics and Science – Biology or Chemistry or Earth and Environmental Science or Physics in your HSC studies. A high level study of English is also desirable since communication and writing skills are important for the study of Psychology.

Bachelor of Psychological Science

- Study for a degree in Psychology over three years
- At the same time have the option to take a major in a complementary subject based on professional or academic aspirations, for example:
  - from the Australian School of Business major in marketing, management or human resource management
  - from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences major in philosophy, criminology, or linguistics
  - from the Faculty of Science major in vision science or neuroscience
- Have the option to take the honours (fourth) year in Psychology, and gain access to courses providing the professional qualifications required to become a registered professional psychologist.
Postgraduate degrees in Psychology

We also offer several postgraduate degrees which build on initial undergraduate training to provide specialist training in professional practice and research.

Postgraduate Research

UNSW offers the following research degrees:

- **Doctor of Philosophy** - 3 years full-time/6 years part-time
- **Master of Science** - 2 years full-time/4 years part-time

Postgraduate Coursework

UNSW offers the following coursework degrees, available on a 2 years full-time/4 years part-time basis, with the exception of the Master of Psychology (Organisational), which is only available full-time. These degrees provide the academic training necessary to work as a professional psychologist and become a registered psychologist:

- **Master of Psychology** (Clinical)
- **Master of Psychology** (Forensic)
- **Master of Psychology** (Organisational)

Combined Research/Coursework

In addition, UNSW offers the following combined research/coursework degrees which run for four years duration:

- **Doctor of Philosophy/Master of Psychology** (Clinical, Forensic or Organisational)

Careers in Psychology

Psychologists work in a range of organisations within both the public and private sector. These include clinical and health settings such as clinics and hospitals, a diverse collection of commercial and non-profit organisations, and forensic settings such as prisons and law courts.

Employers range from the army to schools, from the Roads and Traffic Authority to the Department of Health.

For those wishing to use a degree in Psychology as a general training for future employment, the skills acquired during training in Psychology are extremely valuable to a wide variety of careers. Psychologists assist in improving people’s functioning through the application of a wide set of skills and knowledge, in conjunction with scientifically established findings. Psychologists conduct assessment, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of problems at an individual, group, organisational and community level.

Psychologists are employed in advertising, community development and relations, copyrighting, counselling, developmental care, public, community and occupational health, management consultancy, human resources, recruitment, training and development, industrial relations, market research, journalism, marketing, business and retail management, welfare and youth work, and many other areas.

For those wishing to practice as a professional psychologist, typical areas of work include:

- **Clinical Psychology**: prevention, diagnosis and treatment of serious psychological problems.
  To practice as clinicians, Psychologists must have completed an accredited Clinical Masters degree.

- **Organisational Psychology**: work in public, commercial and industrial settings. Tasks may include job analysis, selection, career planning, training, ergonomic and task design, and organisational development.

- **Forensic Psychology**: work in settings associated with the legal system such as police, courts, prisons, guardianship and child protection.

- **Clinical Neuropsychology**: a specialisation of clinical psychology involving diagnosis and rehabilitation of people affected by brain damage.

- **Counselling Psychology**: helping adults, children and families to explore and resolve problems in everyday living.

- **Educational Psychology**: helping teachers, parents and students to maximise their learning in educational environments.

For further information:
www.psy.unsw.edu.au/careers/careershome.html
A Student’s Perspective

Bronwyn Graham
Bachelor of Science
(Advanced Science)

When I finished school I knew that I wanted to study Psychology. I commenced a BSc (Advanced) and majored in Psychology, receiving a 1st class honours. My undergraduate experience stimulated my interest in the psychobiology of behaviour, and also made me aware that often a gap exists between clinical practice and research. The dual PhD/Masters of Psychology (Clinical) degree provided a firm foundation for me to try to bridge that gap. The Masters component of my degree provided excellent training in the clinical treatment of psychological disorders; practicing as a Psychologist I have treated children, adolescents and adults with a range of disorders including anxiety and depression. My PhD research has potential clinical relevance to the treatment of anxiety disorders and following my PhD I was awarded a Fellowship by the American Australian Association to undertake research at Harvard University. This opportunity could not have been afforded without my undergraduate and postgraduate training at UNSW, which has allowed me to explore and combine the theoretical and practical aspects of Psychology.

Sarah van de Klundert
Bachelor of Commerce/
Bachelor of Science

I started out as a Commerce student, but discovered quickly that pure business was not what I wanted to do. For an additional year, I could enrol in a dual Commerce/Science degree allowing me to continue studying finance, but also adding Psychology for my own interest. Most people thought it was an odd thing to study finance and Psychology combined, but I realise now more than ever that I could not have chosen a better combination. The finance part of my degree has given me the business edge whereas Psychology has allowed me to develop my research and critical analysis skills. The combination of the two has helped me grow confident in my academic abilities and also interpersonal skills. When I leave University, I can choose to follow one of many paths. I am a convert to Science, a lover of Psychology, and extremely business minded.