

The twin goals of psychology training

Andrew Manley and Jason Codner outline postgraduate training issues you should consider when choosing between applied practice and academia

The links and barriers between applied and academic psychology are a constant theme on these pages. Here we identify routes to becoming an applied or academic psychologist and highlight the differences and common interests of the two career paths.

Applied psychology: Training, funding and practice

Whether you're navigating your way through your chosen area of psychological study, have already been accepted on a postgraduate degree programme, or are considering studying at postgraduate level, it's important to think about one basic question: Where will it all lead?

The term 'applied psychologist' is used in a variety of contexts. Our use

draws on the eight Society practice areas and this paragraph from the 'BPS Generic Professional Practice Guidelines' (see www.bps.org.uk/prof/):

The professional practice of applied psychologists is underpinned by four key ethical values – Respect, Competence, Responsibility and Integrity – and five core competencies: Assessment; Formulation; Intervention or implementation; Evaluation and research; Communication.

To practise as a chartered applied psychologist usually requires one year's relevant work experience in your area of choice, as well as an MSc or a Society-approved postgraduate qualification and at least two years, often more, of supervised practice. In addition, except for neuropsychology (where you need to establish professional competence in a related field of applied psychology first) and occupational psychology (which requires an approved MSc and two years' supervised experience), the other areas/domains require either a doctorate or a BPS Stage 2 qualification.

The BPS-approved postgraduate qualifications for applied psychologists are called Stage 1 and Stage 2. Stage 1 is equivalent to an MSc in terms of the theory in your chosen field and, like the MSc, may require a mix of coursework and exams as well as a research project. Stage 2 is usually the supervised practice part and is equivalent to a doctoral level

qualification, involving coursework, examinations, a thesis, a viva and, increasingly, an article of sufficient standard for peer-reviewed publication. Stage 2 requires meeting the competencies mentioned earlier.

While both stages are usually self-funded, it is sometimes possible to secure a sponsorship or a studentship to cover the fees for Stage 2. A few research councils also offer this at Stage 1.

Clinical, educational and counselling psychology are, at present, the only areas that offer specific accredited doctoral qualifications that lead to chartership. This route offers the BPS Stage 1 and 2 in one doctoral package complete with salary, rather than through self-funding, sponsorship or studentship. Competition for places and even interviews on these courses is extremely high.

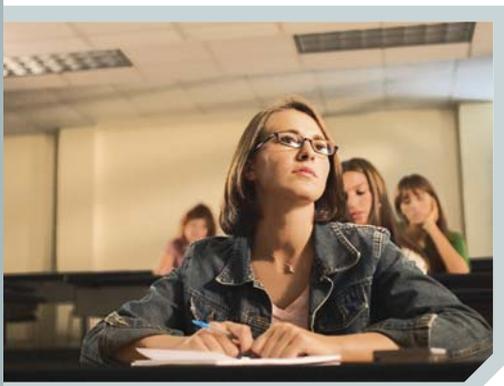
An applied psychologist's work will encompass a combination of consultancy, teaching, research, direct client work and supervision. The location and client may differ but applied psychologists use common psychology theories and principles.

Clients and other professionals can hold misconceptions about psychologists: that we are mind-readers, psychics or magicians! Thus, one of the big challenges for future applied psychologists is being more proactive in letting others know what psychology can and can't achieve.

Applied psychologists contribute to the public good, can have a flexible career, and contribute to projects with the potential for excellent personal and professional recognition.

Academic psychology

In contrast to applied practitioners, academic psychologists often have very different professional priorities. The title



jobs online

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University of Queensland, Brisbane – Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in Applied Psychology
Sellafield Ltd – Human Factors Specialist
Priory Hospital – Clinical Team Leader

Advertisers can reach this prime online audience for just £150 (NHS and academic) or £250 (commercial), and at no extra cost when placing a job ad in The Psychologist.

Print ads are available from just £315+VAT. The next deadline for job advertising is 14 January (for the February issue).

For more information, see p.70. To book, e-mail Kirsty Wright on psychapp@bps.org.uk or call +44 116 252 9550.

encompasses a number of different roles, ranging from lecturer or teaching assistant, to postdoctorate researcher.

Academics will often be required to fulfil a mixture of teaching and research, with the ratio depending on the strategies of the institution that employs them.

A main consideration for a higher education psychologist is to successfully manage the balance between creating an effective learning environment for his or her students, whilst also meeting the institution's requirements for publishing quality research and securing funding via research grants. Given the current climate in UK higher education, writing successful research grant proposals is rapidly becoming a prerequisite for many academic posts.

Juggling teaching and research might sound like a struggle. But academic life can provide the kind of variety, job satisfaction, and personal and professional development opportunities that fits many aspirations. Most positions in academia (whether lectureships, research posts, or an amalgam of both) require the candidate to have completed (or be nearing completion of) a PhD. In addition, experience of teaching within higher education is expected, although many institutions offer nationally recognised teaching diplomas that can be achieved in parallel to completing a postgraduate degree or fulfilling an active teaching role.

The links

Despite the differences between working in academia and applied settings, psychology professionals in both areas have much to offer one another.

Academic psychologists supplement teaching and research with applied work. This enables them to apply theory to practice, and it is also a way of generating additional funding. Consultancy opportunities give academic psychologists the chance to conduct research within real-world settings in order to test specific hypotheses. The findings from such research inform the work of applied practitioners.

Applied work equally benefits research and teaching. There's nothing new about links between academics and consultants. Applied practitioners are frequently invited by academic institutions to act as visiting lecturers. Some universities offer sandwich courses, where students complete a period of work experience within the applied setting, thus providing them with an effective mix of traditional teaching and experiential learning.

FEATURED JOB

Job Title: Principal Consultant and Senior Consultant

Employer: ASK Europe

ASK is a behavioural change consultancy, providing customised management and leadership development solutions for middle and senior managers in large organisations around the world. They are hiring both a Principal Consultant and a Senior Consultant to join their Bedfordshire-based practice.

Elaine Wilson (also a Principal Consultant) says: 'We work with our clients to design customised solutions that meet the current and future needs of your organisation. Our approach and philosophy has developed and evolved over the last 13 years, informed by our practical work with clients and inspired by our thirst for new knowledge from the academic world.'

ASK have synthesised their learning and experience into a methodology they call Stage-based Behavioural Transformation, which facilitates change through an emotional engagement and awareness of the impact of ineffective behaviours. 'All our full-time consultants develop client relationships and eventually act as Project Directors for projects that we deliver,' Wilson says. 'As a result, they have a proven record in establishing and building effective client relationships with a range of people from main board directors to first line managers, technical specialists, HR and learning and development specialists.'

ASK consultants come from a wide range of backgrounds and have a mixture of academic qualifications and practical management experience. Some are attached to universities and hold doctorates, while others gained board-level experience before working as consultants. Most hold master's degrees and professional qualifications from relevant bodies, such as the British Psychological Society or the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

'We're looking for people who are comfortable working with ambiguity; energetic, responsive and enthusiastic; skilful in handling relationships; pragmatic and innovative; willing to share personal views, feelings and experiences; and commercially focused, balancing business needs and people needs.'

"We work with our clients to design customised solutions"

You can find this job on p.78, and with many others on www.psychapp.co.uk.

Ostensibly, the priorities, training requirements, time constraints and available resources of academic psychologists and applied practitioners will often differ greatly from one another. However, psychologists in both areas increasingly acknowledge and embrace the complementary nature of each other's work. Reciprocity between academia and applied practice can only enhance the contribution each makes to the advancement of psychological thought and application.

Searching and applying for jobs

While it may be necessary to limit your search given the high level of competition for some positions, you should be flexible when looking for employment; for example by searching further afield in terms of both the geographical location

and the explicit focus of the job, you are likely to vastly enhance your chances.

If you are looking beyond the usual psychology graduate routes, keep in mind your transferable skills. These include experience in critical analysis, synthesis, and problem solving, as well as:

- ! **Communication** – both oral and written (e.g. presentations, reports), exhibiting good listening skills;
- ! **Numeracy** – statistical and data handling, interpretation;
- ! **Organisational** – managing time effectively, working independently and as part of a team, using initiative;
- ! **Interpersonal** – motivating others, being flexible and adaptable;
- ! **Research** – design, implementation and evaluation as investigator, experience as participant;
- ! **IT** – familiarity and use of a range of technologies and software.

When applying for a job tailor your CV, application form, and interview responses to the elements outlined in the job specification and describe how your ability and experiences fit within this framework. The successful interview candidate is invariably someone who exhibits such skills. Hopefully, by using some of the above tips and resources, that candidate will be you!

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correction

The authors of December's 'The hitchhiker's guide to the thesis' were Gillian Smith (gillian.w.smith@gmail.com), Agnieszka Lech, Paul De Cock and Glenda Pennington. Apologies to all for not reflecting that in the presentation.

PsyPAG's tips and tricks

David Moore with some advice on postgraduate life

The Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group's position within the BPS is unique. We are not actually a section of the Society but rather a closely affiliated body running in parallel. PsyPAG represents the views of, and provides services to, all students registered for a postgraduate UK psychology qualification, from academic master's candidates to practitioners in training. We have no formal membership and our only entry requirement is to be a registered psychology postgraduate.

PsyPAG represents individuals at a particular level of training rather than those working in a specific field so we have a rather different role to other committees. We:

- I produce and distribute a quarterly publication (*PsyPAG Quarterly*) free to all psychology departments;
- I organise an annual conference to allow postgraduates a friendly environment to exchange ideas about their research;
- I run postgraduate workshops on a

- broad selection of topics;
- I offer bursaries up to £100 for conferences in the UK and £300 for international conferences to help postgraduates disseminate their research;
- I represent the views of postgraduates on each of the BPS's committees.

The nature of research funding is never far from our minds and has been a particularly important issue in the past 12 months. We have recommended, among other things, that greater flexibility and transferable skills are built into funded master's training so that psychologists can ensure the most appropriate preparation for their doctorate-level qualifications.

PsyPAG has sought to improve the structure of doctoral training. Members are increasingly encouraged during training to develop transferable skills, publish research, teach, etc. Given this increased range of activities, we've asked

He's a jolly good Fellow

Ian Florance talks to **Ceri Bowen**, an International Fellow at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability, Putney

According to Ceri Bowen, 'it's been an interesting transition, from working as a clinical psychologist in the NHS to moving into a job where self-motivation and organisation are so important, and where research and publishing are as important as applied work'. So how did Ceri reach his role in a charity that specialises in profound cases of disability, and what are the challenges and rewards of that area of work?

Founded in 1854 as the Hospital for Incurables, the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability (RHN) offers assessment, treatment and ongoing care to adults who have profound disability as a result of neurological damage or disease. Ceri's Fellowship sits within the

Institute of Neuropalliative Rehabilitation ([see www.rhn.org.uk/institute](http://www.rhn.org.uk/institute)). 'It's a virtual, international network which attempts to bring together the best of international thinking. Since complex neurological disabilities are rare as a diagnostic group or as a stage in disease processes, a lot of good thinking and practice goes unnoticed and unexploited. The Institute seeks to apply research to practice and spread the word about good treatment ideas. It has a number of strands, from development of clinical practice to research, academic education and policy development. You could say the Institute drives evidence-based practice in the RHN and in

many other institutions internationally. The other international Fellowships reflect the incredible diverse nature of the area: they include Fellows in music therapy, recreation and leisure and nursing as well as specific clinical and research positions. A key skill for each Fellow is networking.'

Ceri's own role mirrors the Institute's range of activities. He spends a day a week supervising and overseeing research projects for the RHN and national bodies; another writing; he teaches, trains and is developing the TBIFAMILIES special interest group; and, of course, there is clinical work. His research looks at family processes using systemic therapy ideas in cases of advanced multiple sclerosis (MS). Other current highlights of the working week include

developing a new book series for Karnac on brain injury.

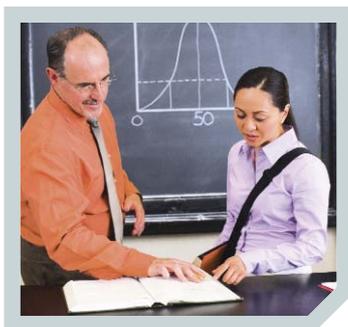
Ceri marries a wide range of activities to a focused clinical area, and it's illuminating to map the training route that got him where he is today. 'I studied psychology at Newcastle University then, in time-honoured fashion, took assistant psychologist posts in both child and family work and clinical health psychology. I was able to research in neuropsychology, paediatric oncology and cardiac care at St James's Hospital in Leeds. Assistant psychology roles give you deeper insights into different areas of practice and enable you to get to know inspiring practitioners. They're a real opportunity for anyone seeking to train in clinical psychology.'

Ceri did his own clinical training at Leeds University. His

whether three years is long enough for doctoral training. As a result we have lobbied to extend this deadline and reflect that extension in funding.

Postgraduate study should be a life-changing period, giving people the practical skills needed to perform their job – for instance research skills, CBT and psychometrics – but also the wider social and work skills that will allow them to be truly successful. PsyPAG is actively engaged with trying to assist with this issue by running conferences and workshops to develop these skills and by giving postgraduates the opportunity to publish their work and sit on committees relevant to their work.

When you look ahead on your first day, three or more years of study can look daunting. The challenges faced early in a programme of PhD study are many and varied and can lead to severe doubts



about what you're doing and where you're going. It's important at an early stage, to take the time to look at different options and learn from your mistakes. This is the best time to make use of those around you, and I would particularly recommend

forging strong links with other postgraduates as they are best placed to provide you with both practical and emotional support. They will know what you are going through and the best ways to manage this.

Once you've begun to settle in, try to get yourself and your work out into the public domain. The sooner

you get used to presenting, publishing and defending your work the easier this will become. Of course, this can be a stressful experience, and that is why PsyPAG provides a friendly environment in which to get an early experience of these key skills: you can publish pilot studies in *PsyPAG Quarterly* and present at our annual conference. By developing experience of presenting your research and networking,

it is much easier to demonstrate your abilities when trying to get jobs at the end of your studies.

The other crucial ability you will need to have to survive a PhD is to maintain good relationships with supervisors. This can be tricky! However, if you set clear ground rules at the beginning of your studies about who is expected to do what and when, and take time to consider the best way for you to work together, this will hopefully make it easier. Keeping a research diary can also help you chart your progress, remember what is required of you and remind your supervisors of what they have promised.

Postgraduate study is an emotional rollercoaster where the highs vastly outweigh the lows and the more you get involved the more you get back from it.

For more details of what PsyPAG can do for you or what you can do for PsyPAG please go to our website (www.psyag.co.uk) or email our information officer (info@psyag.co.uk).

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doctoral research was titled 'Understanding blaming within families'. This was a sign of things to come.

'My first job as a clinical psychologist was in Bradford in the area of adult mental health, as well as in a drug-users' clinic and the hospital staff counselling service. I moved into family work within neuro-rehabilitation in Wakefield's Community Neuro-abilities Team. I was interested in the area because it seemed more interesting, complex and engaging than general mental health work. I also got interested in peace studies and took an MPhil on the topic of trauma at Bradford University. More recently, I became a systemic therapy practitioner. All these experiences prepared me for my present role.'

The issue of why people choose a particular type of approach cropped up several times in our conversation. 'I've recently read a paper on the subject and the overall finding

seems to be that it's often not an intellectual decision in which you evaluate the evidence and decide that a particular approach is right. Initially you chose something in line with your attitudes, personality and beliefs – your life view. The systemic therapy approach has always appealed to me. My father developed my interest in psychology – in fact he was a big influence on my life. He died of cancer and I suppose I'd been on the receiving end of family support at a time of a member's illness. Thinking in terms of systems is something I continue to draw on, especially now I have a family of my own.'

Ceri also mentioned Dr Keith Andrews – a former director of the Institute – as a huge influence on him and the area of neuropsychological rehabilitation. 'Complex disabilities can result from MS, cerebral palsy, Huntington's and catastrophic accidents, among other things. Many patients exist

in what were known as persistent vegetative states. Professor Andrews published a paper in 1996 on misdiagnosis of this state. As many as 43 per cent of patients had been misdiagnosed and were in fact aware. This has huge implications for rehabilitation and the role of the family in such situations. Some of the best work in the area is now being done with fMRI scanners at Cambridge Neuroscience by Martin Coleman and Adrian Owen, in collaboration with the RHN. Because of this work, we're even getting better at predicting who will 'wake up' from vegetative states'. The use of brain-computer interfaces to facilitate communication is another fascinating area.

Despite these developments, it sounds like a challenging job for any professional working with patients and families in such a condition.

'Often the issues relate to unresolved grief, which then

reverberates through the family system and social network. And yes, you must have a good professional support system around you. But the rewards are extraordinary. As in palliative care you have to avoid curative models. Generally, rehabilitation is concerned with maintaining health and giving choice and dignity to people. Imagine someone who's dreamed of going home for two years and finally gets the chance. It's also humbling to see families who visit their relation every day, even though there's no obvious communication or reaction. It seems to me that love needs no reinforcement and that here we're moving past simple behaviour models to something more profound.'

Asked about the future, Ceri comments: 'I'm younger and less experienced than the other Fellows. I'm still feeling my way in a less structured environment, in which I can make more of the running. Ask me in a year or so.'