

Annual Student Writer Competition

Are you passionate about psychology?
Fancy shouting about it to 42,000
readers, and winning a great prize?

Winners will have their articles published in *The Psychologist*, and will also get an expenses-paid trip to the Society's London or Edinburgh Lectures or Annual Conference (UK travel, hotel and registration fee).

There are two categories – **undergraduate** and **postgraduate**. We are looking for writing which **engages** and **informs**: maximum of 1500 words.

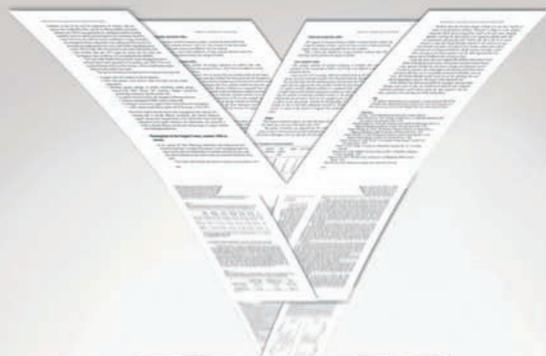


The
British
Psychological
Society



1. Send three copies of your article to: The Psychologist Annual Student Writer Competition, The British Psychological Society, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, to arrive no later than **TUESDAY 31 JANUARY 2006**.
2. **Do not** put your name on the article itself – the judges will work blind.
3. On a separate sheet please list **all** of the following: name, address, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail, departmental address, name of head of department/supervisor, word count, and which category you are entering.

See the August issue of *The Psychologist* for this year's winners and the judges' report. Also visit www.thepsychologist.org.uk and click on 'Write for The Psychologist' for more information.



The
British
Psychological
Society

Give your students the best possible chance

Get them to sign up for the British Psychological Society's free, fortnightly e-mail packed with the latest research and links to their syllabus.

www.researchdigest.org.uk



Associate Editor: Nicola Hills

Short articles (around 600 words), news, tips, quotes, cartoons and other contributions of particular relevance to students are most welcome. Send to: Nicola Hills, c/o the Society's Leicester office. E-mail: Nicola_Hills@hotmail.com

Violence in the workplace

VIOLENCE in our society appears to be on the increase. This is particularly apparent in areas where psychology graduates often encounter their first contact with client groups. The NHS reported 84,000 violent incidents towards staff in the year 2000, and 3 per cent of all workers in mental health and learning disabilities are the victim of violence each year (see www.nhs.uk/zerotolerance). This trend is mirrored in related professions, such as social work and teaching, where, according to the *Times Educational Supplement*, the Health & Safety Executive found a 30 per cent increase in violent attacks on staff in the past year alone, and a doubling in the national rate of hospital admissions as a result of violence against teachers over the same period.

The three years of client work I did before starting postgraduate study were rewarding, enjoyable and educational. However, one of the few downsides was witnessing violence towards staff. Although I worked in forensic settings, I know that friends working in other areas had similar experiences. Psychology graduates often work as part of multi-agency and multipractitioner teams in roles with significant client contact. The major difference between psychology graduates and other professionals is in the absence of practitioner training. This is especially notable in managing aggression and violence in the workplace.

Many incidents can be avoided through skilled management, and sometimes violence has resulted from a member of staff forgetting to be aware or act skilfully. It is worth checking the NHS website referred to above, and considering the following hints and tips, before working with client groups.

- Get inoculations. If you work with at-risk groups, your occupational health

BY ADRIAN WHITE

- service or GP should provide these free for diseases such as hepatitis.
- Encourage patient communication. Often violence is triggered by an inability to express emotions.
- Know your workplace. Especially panic buttons, exits and blind spots (radios and personal attack alarms should be considered). In interview rooms try to keep yourself between the client and a door.
- Watch your body language. An open and receptive stance can calm a situation. Also watch for relative height (e.g. don't position yourself above a patient).
- Get trained. Most employers will offer training in managing aggression. It is also worth considering physical intervention skills. These include breakaway training so you can free yourself from holds, etc.
- Read case notes first. It is surprising how often staff are unaware of particular issues when called to an incident with a patient.
- Keep in touch. Tell your colleagues where you are going if meeting a client. Arrange a callback if you are seeing a client who you consider to be a risk. Don't be embarrassed to ask for someone to accompany you if you don't feel safe.
- Plan ahead. It sounds like common sense but make sure you have transport, a phone and money before going into a community setting.
- Always be aware. Incidents occur when staff stop paying attention or forget the risks.

■ *Adrian White is a postgraduate researcher at the University of Leicester*

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF BEING A POSTGRAD

EMBARKING on a postgraduate programme can be daunting. Research questions are difficult to pin down. Supervisors may not be as dedicated as they first seem. Funding may be difficult to find, and obtaining ethical approval to start to collect data can be a bureaucratic nightmare. Awareness of these difficulties led a dozen psychology postgraduates to get together 20 years ago to create the Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group (PsyPAG).

PsyPAG is affiliated to the BPS but remains independent from it in many ways. It is run by postgrads for the unique benefit of other psychology postgraduates. With the Student Members Group (SMG), which represents psychology undergraduates, we stand for all psychology students across the country.

Our main objectives are to be a forum for psychology postgraduates and to promote activities and events that are relevant to them. Communication is fostered by the regular updating of our website (www.psyPag.co.uk) and the use of the psychology postgraduate mailing list. The mailing list reaches more than 300 postgraduates and has been widely used as a means to cultivate research collaboration, or simply to find the test or the article that you cannot put your hands on.

We also defend UK psychology student interests within the profession. PsyPAG sends officers and representatives to the majority of the BPS boards, as well as in most Section, Branch and Division committees. PsyPAG is also active at the political level by representing psychology students on the National Postgraduate Committee, where issues related to research funding are dealt with. At the international level PsyPAG fosters links with the European Federation of Psychology Students' Associations (EFPSA) and is also in contact with its American opposite number, APAGS.

PsyPAG publishes *PsyPAG Quarterly*, a newsletter that goes to all UK psychology departments with a postgraduate presence and as far away as Hong Kong. If you would like to help the editorial board, or simply have something you'd like to publish, don't hesitate to e-mail us (quarterly@psypag.co.uk).

We also fund workshops with attractive fees for all psychology postgraduates. This scheme has been recently supplemented by a promotional fund, which aims to provide financial support to all BPS subsystems that wish to organise activities for postgraduates.

PsyPAG also helps students to attend conferences with its travel bursary scheme. Our committee awards 10 bursaries for international conferences and 15 for national ones. Deadlines for applications are twice a year, generally 10 March and 10 October, but check *PsyPAG Quarterly* to make sure that you don't miss the deadlines.

The PsyPAG Committee