

PSYCHOLOGY

AUT

A FUTURE IN
PSYCHOLOGY





WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGY?

Psychology is the study of human and animal behaviour. Psychologists try to describe, explain and, if necessary, modify behaviour. They ask questions such as, 'Why is it that some children thrive under challenging and difficult conditions, while others struggle to cope under conditions that we would see as ideal?' and 'Why is it that groups of people behave in ways that are completely inconsistent with how each individual would behave on their own?'

Psychology is a hugely diverse discipline that ranges from studying everyday ways of thinking and behaviour, to understanding and developing interventions for psychological difficulties that are outside 'normal' experience. The focus of research and practice is very broad – from the biological influences on behaviour through to environmental and social influences.

Psychology relies on evidence-based practice, focusing on research, critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. It has strong links to biology and neuroscience, politics, sociology and economics, linguistics, artificial intelligence, medicine and health.

Numerical skills – an important component of psychology – are used to measure constructs that are inherently difficult to measure (eg personality, intelligence or mental health). Psychology students spend a lot of time honing their research and analytical skills, which are applicable to a wide range of occupations.

Career outcomes are broad for psychology graduates who can study psychology through a major in health sciences or an arts degree.

Are you interested in human behaviour and understanding how and why the brain does what it does? Do you like helping people? Are you interested in using research to examine and develop theories that explain 'the mind'? Do you consider the ethical outcomes of your actions? Do you think about how the environment influences behaviour? Do you ask questions and have an inquiring mind? If so, psychology could open up a diverse range of career options for you.

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

Integration into healthcare – Awareness of psychology is becoming increasingly important across many roles and within multi-disciplinary teams in healthcare. This is due to a growing recognition of the importance of evidence-based interventions in mental health and chronic disease and the need for skilled professionals who can encourage and support positive changes in behaviour.

Online human behaviour – There is a growing need to understand the impact of internet use on people's health and wellbeing. Researchers are trying to understand the impact of social media on wellbeing, online relationships, online marketing, human-computer interactions and problematic online behaviour. There is also research into the potential for the Internet as a self-help or service delivery mechanism.

Psychology in business – Business is about relationships, so understanding how other people's minds work is an extremely useful skill in business, whether you're relating to clients, colleagues or managers. Therefore, graduates become very employable in business if they have a conjoint degree in business and psychology, or have included business courses within their degree, such as management, analytics and human resources.

Need for diversity in the workplace – There is a shortage of professional role models in the workplace, including psychology-related roles, for different populations in New Zealand, including Māori, Pacific and recent immigrants.

Long-term shortage of registered psychologists – There is a shortage of registered psychologists in New Zealand, as indicated by advertised vacancies and Immigration NZ's skill shortages list.

WORK SETTINGS

PSYCHOLOGY RELATED

The breadth of work opportunities for psychology graduates is extensive – practising psychology is just one option.

Graduates enter psychology-related roles in the public service as policy analysts or work for private and public organisations in marketing and research, recruitment, and human resources roles.

Many gain employment in social service organisations, such as mental health organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Ministry of Social Development.

PSYCHOLOGIST SPECIFIC

Psychologists are highly trained health professionals who work in a variety of contexts in the private and public sectors, including clinical, health, legal, organisational, business, social services, defence, educational and research settings. Clinical settings include Te Whatu Ora, rehabilitation clinics and community health centres, disability services, and mental health services.

It takes six years of study and training to become a registered psychologist (three years undergraduate plus three years postgraduate, including internships). Once qualified, psychologists may work in educational, clinical, behavioural, counselling, health or rehabilitation settings.

AUT currently offers postgraduate programmes leading to registration as a counselling psychologist. AUT does not offer clinical or educational psychology.

There are also academic and research options for psychologists with advanced postgraduate qualifications in psychology.

CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES

Counselling psychologist – Specialist in psychological assessment and therapy for individuals, couples, families, and groups trying to cope with everyday stresses and the resulting emotional and social problems. Provides a range of psychological services for psychological problems and mental health issues, including assessment, therapeutic intervention, consultation and psychoeducation. Must have postgraduate qualifications and meet registration requirements.

Generic psychologist roles, eg behavioural or rehabilitation – Diagnoses, treats and helps prevent a wide range of psychological and general health problems affecting adults, children and families/whānau. Supports ways to manage and change behaviour. Can work in private practice as well as in public health settings. Must have postgraduate qualifications and meet registration requirements.



Human resource management – Responsible for recruitment, selection, performance management, payroll, remuneration, and policy and strategy development within an organisation. Graduates normally start in an advisor role and progress to an HR manager role (3–4 years). Useful to have a business major or minor in HR or a conjoint business and psychology qualification. Industrial and organisation psychologists also often work in human resource management, helping people to function effectively in their work environment.

Market researcher – Use skills in research design, data collection and analysis by gathering and analysing data on consumers and competitors through surveys and research. Uses skills in understanding human behaviour and knowledge of statistics to provide insights into what products people want and what groups of people will buy certain products.

Policy analyst – Researches and analyses information to help advise, plan, develop, and create policy. Includes interpreting and reviewing current policy, evaluating options, making recommendations, and writing reports.

Other possible roles – In addition, students with a major in psychology develop a range of transferable skills that they find helpful within other roles, particularly when working with people in areas such as social work, probation, community support work, mental health etc.

Sources: Careers NZ, NZ Psychology Society.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

The skills and knowledge base of psychology graduates are sought after by employers looking for staff with inquiring minds who can critically analyse and have a strong understanding of people's behaviours and motivations. Psychology graduates have:

- Knowledge of developmental, personality, clinical and social approaches, including abnormal psychology, experimental and applied behavioural analysis, psychological assessment, social psychology etc
- Excellent communication skills, written and verbal
- Strengths in research and analysis
- Critical thinking and analytical skills
- Well-developed active listening skills
- A good understanding of relationships and wellbeing

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Self-aware, empathetic, patient, adaptable and observant
- Strong interpersonal skills that relate well to a range of people
- Non-judgemental
- Analytical and organised
- Adheres to confidentiality and ethical requirements

SALARY GUIDE

Psychology graduates can enter many fields and pathways. As a result, salaries will vary significantly depending on the chosen field.

| | Salary (per year) |
|---|-------------------|
| Psychology bachelor's degree graduates | \$55,000–\$75,000 |
| Trainee psychologists (postgraduate qualifications) | \$64,000–\$70,000 |
| After 3–5 years+ | \$100,000+ |

This information was accurate at the time of publication (mid-2024), and should only be used as a guideline.

Keep up to date with salary data using websites such as:

Prosple Graduate Salary Guide

nz.prosple.com/on-the-job

SEEK

seek.co.nz

Careers NZ

careers.govt.nz/jobs-database

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

To gain registration with the NZ Psychologists Board, graduates must have completed undergraduate and postgraduate tertiary qualifications. They are also required to have a practising certificate that is renewed annually for their specific area of psychology practice.

THE AUT APPROACH

AUT offers a Psychology major through two undergraduate degrees: a Bachelor of Health Science and a Bachelor of Arts. The psychology components are the same across the two majors, so it is a personal choice between a health science or social science focus. Students are encouraged to take a minor or another major alongside psychology or combine their degree with a Bachelor of Business. To become a registered psychologist, students must complete postgraduate study.

FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Psychology bachelor's degree graduates from health science and arts can apply for psychology postgraduate study if they meet entry requirements, complete the mandatory level 7 Research Methods course, and have at least a B+ across all third-year psychology courses. Qualifying as a counselling psychologist requires a master's in psychology, followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling Psychology. AUT does not offer a clinical psychology option. Research areas include cognitive neuroscience, psychological treatments, addictions and family issues.



JANE GABITES

Jane Gabites Psychology – Registered Psychologist

BHSc(Hons) in Psychology, MHSc(Hons) in Psychology,
Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling Psychology

“My first role after graduating was at Safe Network, where I initially did a year-long internship while doing my postgraduate studies. That turned into a full-time job in the early intervention service of the youth service and the adult service at Safe, working with individual clients and running groups. I found it really energising when a person, who came to us feeling broken, confused and in denial about their offending, changed into someone who not only owned what they’d done and are sorry for it, but also put strategies in place to be able to live a good, safe and healthy life.

Seven years ago, I moved into my own private practice as a counselling psychologist because I was very interested in working as an ACC therapist supporting people with sexual abuse trauma. It is a very interesting and constantly developing therapeutic field. I find my counselling psychology training and my previous work history at Safe have set me up very well for this work.

I really enjoy supporting survivors of abuse to process their trauma in healthy and life-affirming ways. It has been inspiring to see clients living much more fulfilling lives.

The ACC work can be very complex at times, so I am now slowly transitioning my private practice to mainly support people going through life changes such as ageing, changing jobs, the loss of a parent or loved one, or children growing up and leaving home. I also really enjoy working with clients who present with anxiety, depression and sleep problems.

Alongside this, I have become a teacher on the InsightTimer app, a worldwide lifestyle, meditation, and relaxation app, where I have recorded evidence-based meditations and courses on sleep and anxiety. It is fulfilling to know that people from all over the world listen to them.

Another area I am also focusing on is the support of women as they go through the stages of peri-menopause, menopause and post-menopause. This is an exciting and growing area, with new research happening almost daily. There are so many lifestyle changes women can make to support this process and really healthy ways to reduce the risks of many physical and mental health issues in later life.

I was attracted to psychology because I am super fascinated by how the human mind works and why people think and act the way they do. I also like the idea of helping people make positive changes in their lives.”

USEFUL WEBSITES

NZ Psychology Society

psychology.org.nz/study-careers

Immigration NZ Skill Shortage List

skillshortages.immigration.govt.nz

Psychology, Yesterday and Today

psychologytoday.com/blog/psychology-yesterday

Careers NZ

careers.govt.nz

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the study of psychology and the Bachelor of Health Science or Bachelor of Arts, visit:

www.aut.ac.nz/psychology-health

www.aut.ac.nz/psychology-socsci

For other Future Career Sheets visit:

aut.ac.nz/careersheets

EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS

For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through elab.aut.ac.nz

 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: aut.ac.nz/enquire

futurestudents@aut.ac.nz

 @FutureStudentsofAUT

CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

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