

association of educational psychologists

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CAREER GUIDANCE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

To become an Educational Psychologist in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the following qualifications are necessary:

1. An honours degree in psychology (or equivalent) acceptable to the British Psychological Society as giving the Graduate Basis for Registration (GBR) as a Chartered Psychologist. (Normally 3 years)
2. 3. A minimum of one years full time experience of working with children and young people up to the age of 20.
4. Successful completion of a full-time doctoral professional training course in Educational Psychology (3 years)

What is Educational Psychology?

Educational Psychology is the application of psychological theories, research and techniques to help children and young people who may have learning difficulties or emotional problems.

What do Educational Psychologists Do?

a) Work with children and young people, mainly under 20 years old, experiencing difficulties (e.g. learning, emotional, or behaviour problems) to promote their educational and psychological development;

b) Most are employed by Local Education Authorities, but some are self-employed and work as consultants for Social Services Departments, Voluntary Bodies, Parents and others;

c) Work mainly in consultation with parents, teachers, social workers, doctors, education officers, Speech and Language Therapists and other people involved in the education and care of children and young people.

Work focused on individuals

An Educational Psychologist is most likely to be consulted about a child or young person because someone (a teacher, parent, health worker, etc.) thinks that there may be a concern with the child's educational progress or psychological well-being. Much of the Educational Psychologist's work is aimed at helping other people to gain a better understanding of the child's difficulties, and to develop more effective ways of overcoming the difficulties they have in teaching, or caring for, her/him.

Typically this involves the Educational Psychologist in investigating various aspects of the child's educational, social and emotional functioning, as well as the influence of her/his environment, using a variety of techniques.

These include structured observations of the child in different settings, interviewing the child, gathering information from others (perhaps using specialised questionnaires and consultation), and direct assessment of the child – often using standardised 'psychometric' tests and measures of her/his progress within the National Curriculum.

Such investigation and assessment usually helps to identify more precisely the nature and extent of the child's or young person's educational, social or emotional abilities and needs. It may lead to a new understanding of a problem or difficulty and suggest a different approach or solution to it. It can lead to a recommended action or simply provide reassurance. It may be that some help is necessary to assist the child, teacher or family. This could include an individualised programme to improve the child's learning, or overcome behaviour problems. The Educational Psychologist will often provide advice and guidance to others on how to construct and put into operation such a programme. In some circumstances the Educational Psychologist may also work directly with a child or young person – for example, using approaches such as counselling or cognitive behaviour therapy. Educational Psychologists are responsible for contributing psychological advice on individual children and young people with special educational needs who are being assessed in accordance with the 1996 Education Act. The Local Authority then uses this advice in order to make decisions about the kind of help the child needs. This can then result in a child having a 'Statement of Special Educational Needs'.

Work with schools and teachers

Increasingly, Educational Psychologists work with teachers to improve the school environment. This includes:

- training teachers in a variety of techniques to help those pupils and students with learning and/or behavioural difficulties;
- helping the whole school to create policies on special needs;
- helping schools to implement legislative changes

In-service training forms an important and increasing part of the work of Educational Psychologists. They are frequently asked to organise courses or workshops for teachers, teaching assistants, parents and other professionals on topics such as bullying, specific learning difficulties, stress management, thinking and learning skills, social skills or behaviour management.

Work with the Local Authority

In their role as officers of an Education Authority, Educational Psychologists are often called in to advise on, or join working groups considering, issues concerned with organisation and policy. Because of their base as scientific researchers, often they are in a unique position within the authority to plan and carry out research that will contribute to the creation of effective education policies. Their research experience can also be helpful in a range of other activities: for example, evaluation of new educational materials, or evaluation of how effective a school's policy or intervention for truancy, bullying and inclusion has been.

Work in multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams

Recent government policy and legislation has placed considerable emphasis on the need for greater collaboration between the various agencies providing services to vulnerable children, young people and their families. The Green Paper "*Every Child Matters*" (2004) and "*The Children Act (2004)*" set out the government's longer-term agenda for the development of integrated Children's Services in all local authorities in England and Wales. In an increasing number of local authorities Educational Psychologists are now working within (and in some cases managing) multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams, alongside other education practitioners (such as learning or behaviour support teachers) and with professionals from other disciplines, including social workers, health visitors, mental health workers etc.

Training Routes into Educational Psychology

To become an Educational Psychologist in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, you will need:

1. *To have a first degree in psychology (or equivalent) acceptable to the British Psychological Society as having the graduate basis for registration.*

2. A minimum of one years experience of working with children and young people up to the age of 20 (see examples of type of experience below).

3. Three year's full-time professional doctoral training in educational psychology.

Psychology Degree

University admission tutors tend to be flexible about which A-levels and A/S-level subjects are necessary for entry to a psychology degree, but undergraduates need to be able to handle scientific concepts, to be numerate and to develop writing skills. Psychology may be studied for both BA and BSc degrees. Most BSc courses require some science A-levels, but a wide range of subjects is acceptable for entrants to BA courses. Biology, mathematics, English, history, economics are all useful preparation for a degree course. A-level or A/S-level psychology is never required for entry to a degree course, but many students do find that study at this level gives a useful insight into the subject and helps them decide if they will be suited to study psychology at degree level.

For further information consult the Degree Course Guide: Psychology by CRAC obtainable from Biblios, Publishers' Distribution Services Ltd, Star Road, Partridge Green, West Sussex, RH13 8LD. Tel: 01403-710851
Fax: 01403-711143

Graduate Basis for Registration as a Chartered Psychologist

Entry to the professional educational psychology training courses is dependent on having the Graduate Basis for Registration (GBR), a requirement that is parallel to Graduate Membership of the BPS but is not quite the same. The concept of GBR exists to ensure that candidates have studied psychology at an appropriate breadth, as well as standard, to equip them for the postgraduate training in psychology necessary for Registration as a Chartered Psychologist. The easiest way to achieve GBR is to take a BPS-accredited honours degree in psychology. If your course is not accredited, or your degree is not in psychology, then you can gain GBR by:

- **Sitting the BPS qualifying examination**

Entry is restricted to graduates only, whether they are from non-honours level psychology degrees or from other disciplines.

- **Obtaining a BPS-accredited postgraduate qualification**

- **Taking a conversion course which effectively converts your degree to the equivalent of an honours degree with psychology as the main subject.**

These can be completed on a full or part-time basis, and are run by many universities.

Courses themselves are best placed to give advice on funding.

Most UK specialised (single honours) degree courses in psychology and many two-subject combined honours courses containing a substantial amount of psychology give GBR. It is important for you to check before starting on a course whether it provides GBR and, if it does, whether any special conditions have to be met.

One Years Experience of Working with Children and young People aged 0-20

Experience may be gained from working in a range of roles, for example:

Educational Psychology Assistant, Teacher, Portage Worker, Learning Support Assistant, Speech and Language Therapist, Assistant Clinical Psychologist working with children, Connexions Advisor, Social Worker, Family Worker, Youth Worker and Research Work **and** Learning Mentor.

Professional Training

There are 13 universities offering training in educational psychology and applications to all courses are handled centrally through the Children's Workforce Development Council (www.cwdcouncil.org.uk). Course information and applications are only available online.

Each training course will interview the candidates who have applied for a place. After interviewing candidates each course will then offer places with funding to applicants of its choice. Courses may also offer places without funding. There is keen competition for entrance to accredited professional training courses in educational psychology, and a first or upper second class degree is usually required, plus relevant experience of working with children and families). There is no upper age limit for applicants but all applicants must satisfy course entry requirements.

The Open University Honours degree in psychology is recognised for converting Honours degrees into a psychology Honours degree recognised for GBR. There is a 'sliding scale' of OU psychology courses, depending on how much psychology has been included in the original Honours degree. The British Psychological Society requires an honours degree for GBR. Consequently, only graduates who already have honours degrees are eligible for conversion. Graduates with non-honours degrees will have to take an honours degree with the Open University.

Employment and Pay Prospects

At the time of writing, the employment prospects for Educational Psychologists are extremely good. The demand for Educational Psychologists has never been higher. It has been the case for the preceding few years that Local Education Authorities have been unable to fill all the posts which they have established to meet the increased demands. Most Educational Psychologists working in local government are paid on the 'Soulbury' pay scale. Salaries for qualified Educational Psychologists on this scale start at £32,163 per annum, rising automatically in increments to £40,998 without promotion but with the possibility of further increments being awarded up to a maximum of £48,664. There is a separate scale for Senior and Principal Educational Psychologists starting at £42,129. (Figures correct at August 2009).

ACCREDITED PROFESSIONAL TRAINING COURSES IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

There are 13 universities or other institutions which offer training in educational psychology. All courses are doctoral level and of three years duration. Courses are evaluated by the British Psychological Society which accredits them on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills.

Universities currently running training courses:

East London - Tavistock Clinic - Institute of Education - University College London - Birmingham - Bristol- Exeter - Manchester - Newcastle - Nottingham - Sheffield - Southampton - Cardiff

Applications should be made through the Children's Workforce Development Council (www.cwdcouncil.org.uk). Applications are available online.

The Association does all it can to advise on training, but it does not employ careers advisors. Contact your careers advisory service for more detailed advice. Below are some other addresses which may be of use.

The British Psychological Society Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education

St Andrews House 1 Redland Close
48 Princess Road East Elm Lane
Leicester Redland
LE1 7DR Tel: 0116 254 9568 Bristol Tel: 0117 923 8450

The Association of Child Psychotherapists Advisory Centre for Education

54 Gayton Road 1b Aberdeen Studios
London Highbury Grove
NW3 1TU Tel: 0207 794 8881 London Tel: 0207 354 8318

Counsellors in Education Young Minds

1 Regent Place 102-108 Clerkenwell Road
Rugby London
Warwickshire EC1M 5SA Tel: 01225 767 157
CV21 2PJ Tel: 01788 550899

CWDC Educational Psychology Administration Team Children's Workforce Development Council

3rd Floor
Friends Provident House
13-14 South Parade
Leeds LS1 5QS Tel: 0113 244 6311

The Educational Institute of Scotland Department for Education & Skills

46 Moray Place Sanctuary Building
Edinburgh Great Smith Street
EH3 6BH Tel: 0131 225 6244 London Tel: 0207 925 5000

The National Children's Bureau Association for Speech Impaired Children

8 Wakley Street 347 Central Markets
London Smithfield
EC1V 7QE Tel: 0207 843 6042/6041 London Tel: 0207 236 3632

The Royal College of Psychiatry Dyslexia Institute

17 Belgrave Square 133 Gresham Road
London Staines
SW1X 8PG Tel: 0207 235 2351 Middx Tel: 01784 436935

Teacher Training Agency Down's Syndrome Association

PO Box 3210 155 Mitcham Road
Chelmsford London
Essex SW17 9PG
CM1 3WA Tel: 01245 454454 Tel: 0208 682 4001

The UK Council for Psychotherapy Council for Disabled Children

1st Floor, 167-169 Great Portland Street 8 Wakley Street
London London
W1N 5JB Tel: 0207 436 3002 EC1V 7QE Tel: 0207 843 6000
Central Enquiry Service

The Open University National Early Years Network

PO Box 71 77 Holloway Road
Milton Keynes London
MK7 6AG Tel: 01908 653 231 N7 8JZ Tel: 0207 607 9573
AEP Head Office: 26 The Avenue, Durham, DH1 4ED
www.aep.org.uk