

The Ultimate Guide to Studying Psychology





WHAT'S INSIDE

Psychology is a subject that touches on countless aspects of our everyday life, from why we feel emotions to how we learn language. This makes it a personally rewarding subject that equips you with the skills to challenge not only your own thoughts and actions, but also the inner workings of the society in which we live. It's no wonder then, that Psychology consistently ranks as the second most popular subject to study at university in the UK.

Over the past decade, we've been running [residential Psychology & Neuroscience summer schools in Oxford](#), as well as [online courses](#) and [internships](#) for 15-18 year olds.

While we know there isn't a magic formula for securing a place on a Psychology course at a top university, we can help you to understand each step of the application process and give you some tips to maximise your chances of success. We'll do this by walking you through these six vital steps to successful Psychology university applications:

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By the end of this guide, we hope you'll feel more confident about securing a place on your desired undergraduate course.





About the Authors

There are lots of guides to Psychology university applications out there, so why should you trust ours? Put simply, because the people who wrote it are exactly where you're aiming to be in a few years' time.

We've worked with a Psychology student currently studying at the University of Oxford, and a Psychology graduate from the University of Gloucester, to bring you the tips they wish they'd known before they applied.

Allow us to introduce you to...

Kylie

2nd year Psychology Student at Queen's College, Oxford

Kylie is a second year Experimental Psychology student at Queen's College, Oxford. She's currently most interested in developmental and cognitive psychology, and how these can be applied to the education system. Beyond her degree, she's also fascinated by computing and enjoys playing the piano.



Jonathan

BSc Psychology (BPS) graduate, University of Gloucester

Jonathan studied Criminology and Psychology at the University of Gloucester, with areas of interest ranging from the psychology of loneliness and social media usage amongst Gen Z, to the relationship between psychopathy and white collar crime.





Choosing Your Degree and University

Narrowing down your university choices and the type of Psychology degree you'd like to pursue can seem like a major undertaking. In reality though, the university experience – from application to graduation – should be one that you enjoy and learn from. That's why we've broken down everything you need to know to help you get the most out of the process.



Psychology Degree

Different Psychology Degree Options

Like most high schoolers looking to study Psychology at university, you might think that means "pure Psychology". The subject can seem like a course with a single pathway to your dream career.

There's a definite tendency to discuss Psychology as a single unified subject with only a limited range of course options, but that ignores the huge variety of choices on offer to you when you choose to study Psychology at university.

What Course Options Do I Have?

It's true that some universities will offer only pure BA or BSc Psychology courses, with perhaps one or two variations. This is often the case at universities geared more towards traditional courses, but there is a huge range of Psychology-related degree options to consider at other institutions.

As you spend more time exploring the options on offer, you'll find that Psychology – as a subject that touches on countless aspects of life – is a course that lends itself perfectly to combining subjects and varying course structures.

In the UK, you'll have the option of taking a joint honours course, which will allow you to mix-and-match subjects that interest you, along with taught, research, or applied approaches to the Psychology elements of your degree.



Single or Joint Honours?

Single honours degrees will see you study pure Psychology for three or four years, with options to specialise within the subject as you progress. Joint honours courses, on the other hand, offer you the chance to combine two or more subjects, and can be a great way to balance less Psychology-focused interests.

A major/minor honours course in the UK, also known as a "with" degree, is very similar to the system that most US colleges use, except you have to nominate your course options when you first apply to university. You'll pick one subject to study extensively, and then take occasional modules from a second (and possibly even a third) subject. This is a great option if you know you want to pursue a career in a specific psychological field, or you'd like to gain additional experience in another subject. Often, the second subject will be closely related to Psychology, but that's not a requirement. You might like the sound of BSc Psychology with Finance (70:30 split), for example, as it could open doors in the business world and would be an amazing foundation for a career in occupational psychology.

Dual honours courses, or "and" degrees, combine core modules from both of your chosen subjects, along with a selection of optional modules from both faculties, resulting in a relatively even split between the two. This is perfect if you're looking to specialise in one field in particular, or if you want a balance between two complementary subjects. A Psychology and Neuroscience dual honours course is a common example of this.



Psychology Degree

Taught, Research, or Applied Psychology Courses

Taught courses are the standard in Psychology at undergraduate level. They are a typical combination of lectures on key topics, and seminars exploring more practical or niche areas. Depending on whether you chose to combine your Psychology course with another subject or not, you could also have lab sessions on your timetable. The best way to get a feel for the taught courses you're considering is by checking out the information provided on the course websites of the universities you're considering.

Research and applied Psychology courses are less common at undergraduate level, and would see you spending a lot more time in lab or field settings, respectively. In this course structure, you'll likely be expected to produce a piece of research or a portfolio as your main evaluation each semester. You'll still have lectures, but they'll complement your practical learning rather than being the main event of your week.

You can get more of an inside look at the day-to-day and term-to-term aspects of studying Psychology at university by checking out "day-in-the-life" style content online. If you can find people studying at the universities you're interested in, that would be the most helpful.



BPS Accreditation

BPS accreditation – a term you'll become very familiar with if you choose to study Psychology in the UK – means the British Psychological Society has ensured 'that quality standards in education and training are met' by the degree.

It opens the door to nearly every Psychology postgraduate degree, and it'll determine which careers you can (and cannot) pursue when you graduate.

This might sound scary, but most Psychology courses at top universities in the UK are BPS accredited as standard, and there are plenty of ways to convert your course at any point during or beyond your degree. Still, it's something worth understanding when reviewing course guides as a prospective student, especially if you're planning to study a joint honours Psychology degree.

Whether BPS accreditation is essential for you is largely dependent on **which career path you choose to pursue**. At this stage of your academic career, you might not have any idea of the jobs you'd like to pursue after you graduate, and that's completely okay! You might prefer to find a BPS accredited course to keep all of your options open, or follow your heart to a university that you love, and convert later if necessary.



Perfect University



Once you've got a better idea of the type of degree you'd like to study, it's time to figure out which universities you might like to consider. While this will be determined to some extent by which universities offer your specific course, you'll have plenty of options to choose from in order to craft your perfect university experience.

If you're applying to universities in the UK, you'll have to narrow these down to just five for your UCAS application. So, where do you even start?

Choosing Your Perfect University

There are 165 higher education institutions in the UK, and 144 of them offer some kind of Psychology degree. The sheer number of options makes sifting through stacks of prospectuses and lists of course pages quite a feat.

The first place many people start when trying to make a dent in this stack is looking at university rankings. While this can be a good place to start, focusing too much on league tables might cause you to overlook some places that aren't in the top twenty, but could be perfect for you in many ways.

Perhaps a better place to start is to knock out any universities that you definitely don't want to study at – you'll be surprised by how many universities this tactic can rule out. Have a think about the following things as you do this:

Location

Maybe you hate the cold and can't imagine yourself living in Scotland, or you need to live near the sea because that's what'll stop you from feeling homesick. Whatever it is that's important to you, make sure you choose a university location that will feel like home.

City vs. Campus

This one can be difficult to gauge without visiting a few universities in person. City universities tend to have buildings scattered around an area of the city, such as King's College London, whereas campus universities like York are self-contained and may be slightly further from the city centre.

Employment Rate

Many league tables will rank universities on this metric, and while a high employment rate after graduation won't guarantee that you'll walk into your dream job, it could be something to consider. Bear in mind that the percentage measurement will include anyone who is in employment or has gone on to further study, so it's by no means the number of people working as psychologists.



Perfect University

Staff to Student Ratio

Another metric that you'll find on university league tables, the staff to student ratio, can really shape your academic experience. The staff to student ratio within your subject will give you a broad idea of your class sizes, and how easy it'll be to connect with staff during office hours.

Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction can tell you a lot about what student life is really like at a university, rather than what the press team want you to think it's like. Poor scores could suggest there's not much community feeling within the university, or there might not be accessible support if you're struggling academically or with your mental health. It's subjective, of course, but it's an important consideration nonetheless.

Activity Options

Maybe you can't wait to get to university for the nightlife, or you love hiking and need access to some picturesque scenery on the weekends, or you enjoy the theatre and need access to more than one playhouse to keep you happy. These are all important things to consider when choosing your university, and you can find out which will suit you by exploring the cities online or in-person.

Make the Most of University Open Days

Now that you've narrowed down your choice of universities and have a clearer idea of the type of Psychology degree you want to study, it's time for you to decide which five you'll be putting down on your UCAS application.

Open days are your best chance to see what life studying Psychology at any given university could be like, giving you the opportunity to really dig deep into what makes each university and degree different, and find out any last bits of information you need to make your decision.

As you're planning your open days, make sure you know what your schedule for each day will look like, and which parts of university life you want to explore, learn more about, or otherwise experience in each place.



Explore Beyond the Schedule

Of course, activities organised by the Psychology department will take up the bulk of your time on an open day, and they'll give you lots of valuable insights, but you won't spend all your time on campus during your degree. This means it's important to explore other things during the open day, too.

The options are endless, from exploring local cafes and parks, to trialling a local gym. It's up to you to make the free time you have on open days your own.

Socialise Like Crazy

You should also do your best to socialise with other applicants on the day (we know it's hard and you might not always feel up to it, but you'll be glad you tried), as well as the current students and staff who are on hand to answer your questions. Not only will this give you a leg up when you move in, as you'll already recognise some people from the open days, but it will also make your experience at these open days more enjoyable and more informative, as everyone will have different experiences, questions and knowledge to share.

Choosing a university for your Psychology degree is a difficult decision, and the journey from school pupil to undergraduate can be a stressful one. University open days are a wonderful opportunity to make new friends, engage with activities planned by the university, and explore a new city. It's a step into student and adult life that you should enjoy as much as possible!





Gaining Work Experience

Gaining Psychology experience before applying to university not only enhances your application, but it can also help you get some insight into Psychology before you choose to dedicate three or more years to studying it.



Types of Work Experience

Due to the nature of Psychology, it can be tricky to gain direct experience before university, as roles are often protected until you have the right qualifications, but there are still a number of ways to get relevant experience and build your skills. Some possibilities for direct Psychology experience include...



Shadowing

This involves observing a professional in order to gain a better understanding of their role. This is a more passive form of experience, but it can be a great first step to gaining some Psychology-specific experience, and give you an insight into what a particular career is really like.

This particular type of experience is rarely advertised, but being proactive and approaching individuals or organisations you're interested in can help you secure a hidden opportunity. For advice on how to do this, check out [this Prospects article](#).



Voluntary Work

Volunteering can be a great way to gain a bit of Psychology experience over a longer period of time. It's important, however, to consider the time commitments for volunteering opportunities, as some may be difficult to juggle with your academic studies.

You could consider volunteering for some mental health charities, such as Mind, Rethink, or the Samaritans. Some NHS foundation trusts also run volunteering programmes such as [this one](#) with NHS South London & Maudsley. These opportunities may be age-restricted due to the confidential nature of the work, so you could also try volunteering in the shops run by these charities, or fundraising for them directly.



Virtual Experiences and Events

There has been a great global shift towards virtual experiences and events since the pandemic, which has actually made gaining Psychology experience a bit more accessible.

Some examples of online experience can include:

- Online webinars such as those offered by the [Royal College of Psychiatrists](#), or those live-streamed by the [Experimental Psychology Department](#) at the University of Oxford
- Filmed Psychology talks such as those offered by the [Royal Institution](#)
- [Oxford Scholastica's Online Psychology Internships](#) offer the opportunity to co-author a research paper with an academic researcher



Extra-curricular Activities

You may be able to get some Psychology experience via extracurriculars, such as by being a mentor to younger students, or even completing training to be an in-house anti-bullying ambassador (see the [anti-bullying training by the Diana Award](#)), which will allow you to apply your psychological understanding to help others within your existing communities.



Types of Work Experience



Independent Qualifications

Another way to gain Psychology experience and increase your psychological understanding is to take part in super-curricular courses. For example, Oxford Scholastica Academy offers [Online Psychology and Neuroscience Courses](#) which offer a Certificate and Letter of Recommendation upon completion. This can be incredibly helpful when applying for jobs, courses and internships etc. in the future.

[FutureLearn](#) also offers a variety of Psychology courses, many of which provide certificates upon completion. These courses are particularly helpful if you have an idea of a field you want to specialise in or learn more about.

If you're looking for more advanced qualifications, you can also check out part-time courses run by local colleges or online accreditors. For example, the [Online Learning College](#) runs a number of courses in Psychology and counselling that contribute to formal qualifications.



Internships

An internship is a period of work experience that lasts for a fixed term. You can gain direct Psychology experience by interning with an organisation involved in psychological research.

For example, the [Department of Experimental Psychology at UCL](#) runs some hands-on research internships for year 12 students, including the [In2scienceUK programme](#) and the [Nuffield Research Placement](#).

The [Online Academic Internships organised by Oxford Scholastica](#) also offer great research opportunities from the comfort of your own home.



Part-time Paid Work

This is probably one of the most difficult ways of getting Psychology experience before applying for university, mostly because many paid jobs will need bigger time commitments, and lots of psychological work is protected. However, any part-time work can be useful for developing relevant skills and will give you more insight into the working world, which is never a bad thing!

Suffice to say, whichever route you take to gain Psychology experience, you'll need to work on your time management skills and maintain a work-life balance alongside your academic responsibilities. All of these will ultimately help you to stand out when applying for Psychology at university.



Why a List Isn't Enough



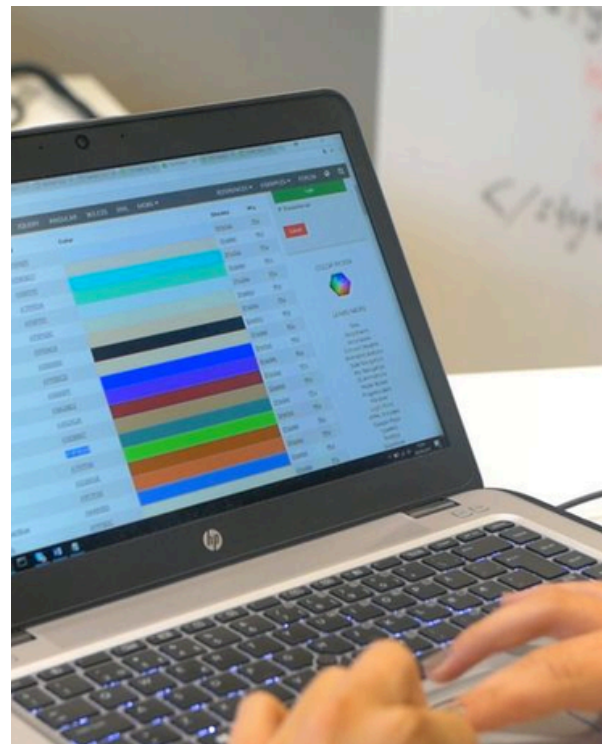
Gaining Psychology experience to boost your application is less about getting as many placements as you can, and more about proving you have taken steps to familiarise yourself with practical and theoretical aspects of Psychology. The admissions team want to make sure you're studying Psychology for good reasons, and that you understand the realities of the field.

Work experience is also instrumental in helping you figure out which field you would like to specialise in. If you attend one work experience placement that you absolutely hate, that doesn't necessarily mean Psychology isn't for you – it could just be that the department or role your experience was in isn't your cup of tea.

A long list of placements tells the admissions team you have the connections or resources to gain access to lots of opportunities. Explaining what you learned from the most helpful placements, as well as what you didn't enjoy about them, is far more valuable and informative.

Some things to remember when doing work experience:

- Take notes at the end of every work experience session you take part in. List what you did, anything you learned, and how you felt about each aspect of the experience. These notes will be a really valuable resource when you come to write your personal statement and prepare for interview.
- It's okay not to enjoy something. Finding one aspect of the field tough, tedious, or unpleasant, doesn't mean you're not cut out to study Psychology! Be honest with yourself, and try to find experience in another area.
- It's also okay to change your mind. If you try a range of placements in different aspects of Psychology, and you didn't like any of them, it's okay to decide it isn't the field for you. Look into research roles, or consider different careers entirely.
- Factor in rest! If you spend your whole summer gaining experience, you'll be too tired to concentrate when you restart classes. Remember to take breaks, do things you enjoy, and look after yourself while on your quest for work experience.





UCAS Application Process

The UCAS application is the centralised application process for all UK universities. This means that you only need to fill in one application on the UCAS website, and they'll send it off to each of your selected universities. It's a wonderfully simple system!

The first thing you'll want to check is the deadlines for your UCAS application. As a Psychology student, the deadline is usually late January (unless you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge, and/or also applying for Medical or Veterinary degrees at any university, in which case the deadline is usually mid-October).

Regardless of your deadline, you might want to complete your UCAS application as soon as possible, so that you can get it out of the way and focus on your studies. Submitting your application earlier may also mean you get offers sooner!

So that you know what to expect when you come to completing your UCAS application, below is a step-by-step guide of the process.



Your Personal Statement

Register With UCAS and Complete Your Details

To start a UCAS application, you need to first register with UCAS. This is just setting up an online account, so will involve entering your name, your email, and setting up a password, as well as answering some security questions.

Once you've registered with UCAS, you can start completing the application. The first section is a form with your details, including residency status, parental education, and how you plan to fund your studies.

Adding Your Education and Employment History

The next section of the UCAS application involves adding all your qualifications from secondary school onwards. Make sure to include all your qualifications, and check that these tally with any specific requirements listed on university websites. For example, although most universities do not require prospective Psychology students to have studied the subject before, some may require you to have studied a science at secondary school. If you've completed any relevant extracurricular qualifications, include these too!

As for your employment history, this is just for paid positions you might have held. Don't worry, though – you're not expected to have lots of paid experience at this point, and any unpaid work experience can be mentioned in your personal statement.

Select Your Course Choices

This is where you enter your university course choices. As a Psychology student, this will probably just be up to five Psychology courses at different universities, potentially with some different course structures (joint honours, research, etc). You can search for Psychology courses on the [UCAS course finder](#), as well as by looking at university websites. If you've read this far, you may already have a good idea of what courses you are looking for.



Your Personal Statement



With an absolute limit of 4000 characters and 47 lines, your UCAS personal statement can simultaneously feel like a mammoth undertaking, and like you have no room to expand on your points. That said, thousands of students successfully write one every year – and we've compiled some top tips to help you do the same.

Firstly, the problem that plagues most students is knowing how and where to start. Your personal statement is essentially trying to answer the question 'why should we pick you?', which leaves you with a lot of scope. It's not abnormal to be flooded with conflicting ideas about what you should and shouldn't include. This can make it difficult to actually put pen to paper (or text to screen, in this case).

Naturally, you'll want to include every single relevant project and interesting article you've read. However, more important than the number of things you mention is the quality of them, and how you can show they make you the perfect candidate for a Psychology degree.

It could be useful to just start writing down all the relevant academic work, work experience, further reading etc. that you've completed, and make links between them and an aspect of Psychology or a relevant skill. Once you have all your thoughts on the page, it's a lot easier to organise them. Choose what to include and expand upon, what to scrap or only reference in passing, and how you will order your points. Remember, you can edit your UCAS personal statement as many times as you need, so getting something down on the page is the most important thing to start with!

With those key points out of the way, we have three more pieces of advice for writing your UCAS personal statement...



Your Personal Statement



It's Not Just About Psychology...

You're applying for a Psychology degree, so it's only natural for your UCAS personal statement to primarily refer to Psychology, but that's not to say every aspect needs to link to how you have gained psychological understanding and knowledge. It's also important to write about the relevant skills you've gained that will be useful for a degree more broadly. Examples of this could be academic writing experience, leadership or teamwork skills, research projects you've completed, interpersonal skills, or time management and goal-setting skills.

Choosing the most relevant of these will give you a really strong basis for your personal statement.

Edit as Much as Possible!

Once you've got a first draft, put it to one side for a day or two, then read through it and edit it. Sometimes things that seemed really relevant while you were writing it will stick out like a sore thumb when you come to review it.

Next, send it to any friends, teachers, family members or mentors who are willing to help. Their feedback will be extremely helpful, and you'll be able to conduct several more rounds of edits.

Finally, give it yet another read through – are you happy? Which bits are your favourite and why? Are there any sentences that don't really add anything? Make any final adjustments, proofread it one more time, and you'll be ready to upload it to UCAS.

Avoid Overused Stereotypes

Personal statements should be written in your own voice and style – it's personal, after all! – but there are some stylistic things to bear in mind. You should avoid using clichés or stereotypes – these will mostly relate to the 'why Psychology?' portion of your statement, and could include wanting to study Psychology because of an interest in true crime documentaries, for example.

While this can be a strong argument, you'll need to make sure you're as specific as possible about why your link to this subject is different from other applicants.

Personal Statement Key Facts

- ✓ No more than 4,000 characters (including spaces!)
- ✓ It can be no more than 47 lines (including blank line breaks)
- ✓ You can only write one – not different ones for each course you apply to
- ✓ It's not just about Psychology! Make sure your personality also shines through



Completing the Process

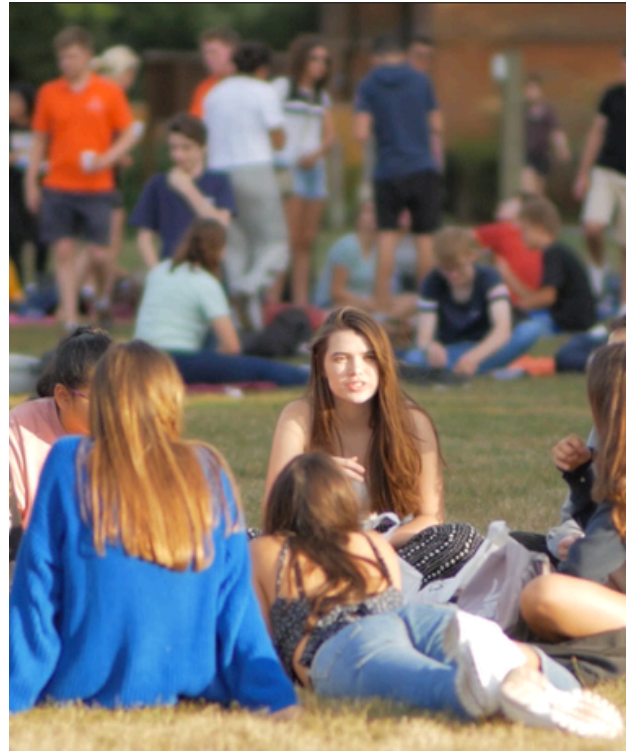
Once you've finished your personal statement, there are three more steps to complete your UCAS application...

Review

When you've completed your UCAS application, you'll be presented with a review page, showing your answers in each section of the application. Check each section carefully, making sure your responses are accurate, and don't forget to have one final check for any typos or spelling errors in your personal statement!

Get a Reference

The very last part of the UCAS application is the reference, which is usually added into your application directly by your chosen teacher at school.



Pay the Application Fee

Once you've paid the application fee (which may differ depending on the number of courses you are applying to, but is usually around £25), your referee will be able to add the reference, and then your application will be sent off to the respective universities.

Once you have completed and submitted your UCAS application, you can keep track of your application via UCAS Track. You'll get email notifications if there are any updates, so once the application is submitted you can turn your attention to your exam and/or interview preparation.



Entrance Exams

You'll be glad to learn that most UK universities do not require you to sit a Psychology entrance exam as part of your application. Oxford and Cambridge are exceptions to this rule, and do ask applicants to sit exams before sending out offers.

We've covered the different exam formats used by each university, and also given you some top tips to help you prepare for success.

Make sure that you double check the entry requirements of your chosen universities, as some departments might have other informal elements to their application process.



The TSA



Oxford University

All Psychology students at the University of Oxford, regardless of their specific course and college, are required to sit a Psychology entrance exam before being shortlisted for an interview.

This means performance on the exam will influence shortlisting decisions – but remember that the admissions officers will also have your personal statement, predicted grades, and teacher's reference, so you still have plenty of opportunities to impress if the exam doesn't go to plan.

The entrance exam for Psychology Oxford, which is called the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA), is usually sat at the start of November. Applicants need to register by mid-October, but these dates vary each year, so make sure to check the exact dates for your year before applying.

Structure

The TSA has two main sections: the first is a multiple choice section where you'll check boxes to answer 50 questions on problem-solving critical thinking, and the second section is an essay task where you'll be given four questions to choose from, and you'll answer one of them.

We've put together a quick overview of the different sections and timings below:

Section Name	Number of questions	Time to Answer Section	Types of Question
Section 1	50	90 minutes	Multiple-choice questions assessing problem-solving and critical thinking
Section 2	1	30 minutes	Written task where candidates choose one from four questions to write on

The TSA is not a Psychology-specific entrance exam – it's required for other courses too, so the test doesn't assess subject-specific knowledge, but rather it explores your ability to solve problems, think critically, and organise and communicate your ideas.



The PBSAA



Cambridge

At Cambridge, requirements for Psychology entrance exams vary based on the college you're applying to, with the following colleges being required to sit entrance exams at the time of writing:

- Gonville & Caius
- Homerton
- Hughes Hall
- Murray Edwards
- Newnham
- Selwyn
- Wolfson

Remember that you'll only need to sit an exam at Cambridge if you're shortlisted for an interview. This means you'll also have the interview to impress the admissions officers.

Structure

Much like the TSA, the Psychological & Behavioural Sciences Admissions Assessment (PBSAA) consists of two sections, and we've summarised the timings and types of question below:

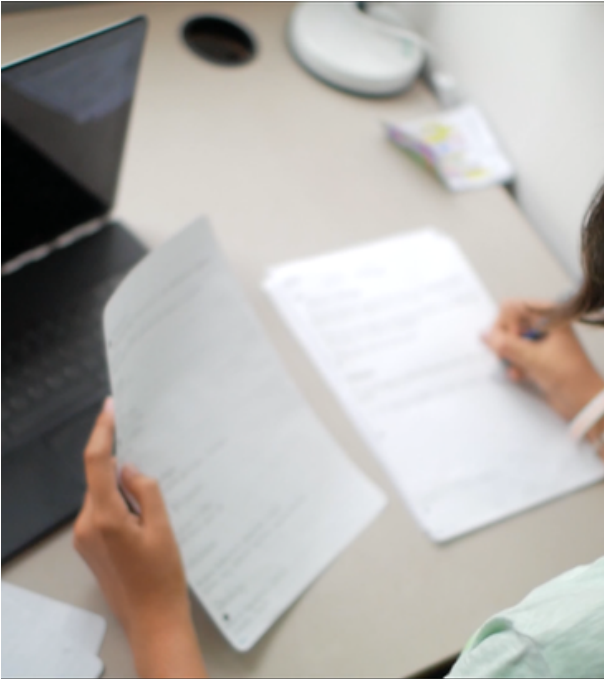
Section Name	Time to Answer Section	Types of Question
Section 1	80 minutes	Multiple choice questions
Section 2	40 minutes	Written task in which one of four essay options is chosen to write about

The structure of the first section is slightly more complex, as it's divided into three parts itself. All candidates must answer the questions in Part A, and then choose to answer questions from either Part B or Part C.

Section Name	Types of Question
Part A	Thinking skills
Part B	Mathematics and Biology
Part C	Reading comprehension



Preparing for Entrance Exams



Entrance exams can be quite stressful in prospect, as they're a bit different from the other exams you'll have sat, and you only get one shot at them each admissions cycle.

So, what are our tips for preparing? We're so glad you asked!

Past Papers

Doing past papers is arguably the best way to prepare for exams of all kinds, and entrance exams are no exception. They'll not only help you improve your problem solving and critical thinking skills, but you'll also gain familiarity with the types of question they ask, and the time constraints etc.

Practice Essay Planning

You don't need to be writing full essays every time to prepare for the essay sections! Although it would definitely be helpful to practise writing under timed conditions, this can be time consuming. Your ability to organise your thoughts is one of the elements being assessed, so planning essays is incredibly useful on its own.

Chat With Other Applicants!

Whether you've got classmates at school preparing for the same exams or you find people on student forums, discussing questions you found difficult in past papers, and asking for advice from others is an excellent way to prepare.





Interviews

Interviews might not seem like a fun prospect, particularly when it feels like you have something meaningful riding on a single day's performance. The stress of which questions you'll be asked, how to present yourself, and whether you'll accidentally say something embarrassing can feel overwhelming.

There's no need to be anxious though, as university entrance interviews really aren't that complex; they're more of an informal chat about the course you're applying for and why you want to study that subject. It's also important to remember that your interview will only be one part of the admissions officers' decision!

We've run through some of the key questions you might be asked in your Psychology interviews here, so that you can start preparing for them.



Interview Prep



Why Did You Choose to Study Psychology?

This is the one question that nearly every applicant will be asked at interview, and it gives you the opportunity to expand on your personal statement and show off your personal motivations for applying to the course.

There really is no model answer for this question as it's so personal to you. Just try to expand upon what you wrote in your personal statement, keep the conversation light and comfortable, and keep your answer concise.

You want to budget twenty to thirty minutes for the entire interview when practising your answers, and the majority of this time should be dedicated to the material and theoretical questions.

The Personal Question

Much like the last question, this is another typical interview question designed to ease you into the process and gauge how well you'll fit in at the university.

It's likely that you'll be asked about your hobbies, interests, or wider Psychology reading, but whatever question is asked, the most important thing you can do is be honest with your answer.

Offer your own personal insights into why you chose that particular hobby or resource, and make sure you relate your answer back to your desire to study Psychology in a concise and convincing way.



Interview Prep

The Seen and Unseen Material Questions

Now we get into the heart of the Psychology university interview.

Usually for material questions in Psychology university interviews, you'll be given one series of data that you've had time to look at before the interview, and one that you haven't seen before. You'll then be asked one or two questions on each. In both cases, the approach is the same, but with the seen material, you'll be expected to spend more time linking the data to your wider reading and less time interpreting it.



Answering the Material Questions

Firstly, take a minute to thoroughly look over what you've been given. The more comfortable you are with what the data shows, the more confident you'll be in your answer, especially if the interviewer challenges you on your interpretations (which they almost certainly will, even if only as a devil's advocate).

Once you're sure you know what the data shows, spend a moment thinking through the key points you'll pick out, what the reasons for these trends or anomalies could be, and how these reasons relate to your wider Psychology knowledge. Trust us, when you're asked to explain your reasoning, you'll be glad you took a moment to think through your answer before jumping straight in.

Final Tips and Tricks for Material Questions

At this point, all that's left on the material questions is to answer any follow-up questions as best you can. These should all link back to the thought process we just discussed, but if at any point you need to look at the data again – whether to reference it or double check something you think you might have missed – just let the interviewer know.

Likewise, if the unseen material is about a topic you aren't familiar with, just let the interviewer know that it's a topic you'll need to research more before you feel comfortable with your answer, and then offer the best interpretation you can. It's a mark of maturity, not of failure, to admit when you don't know enough about a topic to hold a firm opinion, and it could open the interview up to a productive discussion that the interviewer will remember when deciding who to admit. If nothing else, it will show your willingness to learn more about Psychology, and that in itself is a key skill at university.



Interview Prep

The Theoretical Question

From being asked what your opinion is on spontaneous human combustion, to debating whether a thermostat can think, admissions tutors like to ask the most bizarre questions during Psychology interviews to gauge your ability to think on the spot. Despite their obscure nature, at their heart, there is little difference between these questions and the others that you've already answered.



Answering the Theoretical Questions

How do you actually answer these questions, though? Even if they are less complex than the original Psychology question, you still have no answer prepared. So, here is where you can let all the research you've done shine through. Take each question in turn and think about what you already know about that topic. You aren't being graded on your knowledge here, so keep things simple but connected.

Similarly, as it isn't unusual for theoretical Psychology questions to be asked towards the end of the admissions interview, this is a fantastic time to draw on all the material you've used throughout the previous questions.

There is, of course, so much more to answering these complex questions, so do make sure you take the time to explore our related blog posts on Psychology interview questions to really perfect your answers.



Interview Prep

Final Tips and Tricks

Before you leave to implement all the advice we have given you, we just wanted to give you a little more food for thought.

Practice

Ultimately, practice is king. The best way to be concise in your answers is to have experience in talking about similar things with concision. At the heart of Psychology interview questions is the tradition of the "dinner table debate", so start there, debating with your friends and family in an environment where you're free to trip over yourself, and where you can take your time to respond to challenging definitions or rebuttals to your arguments.



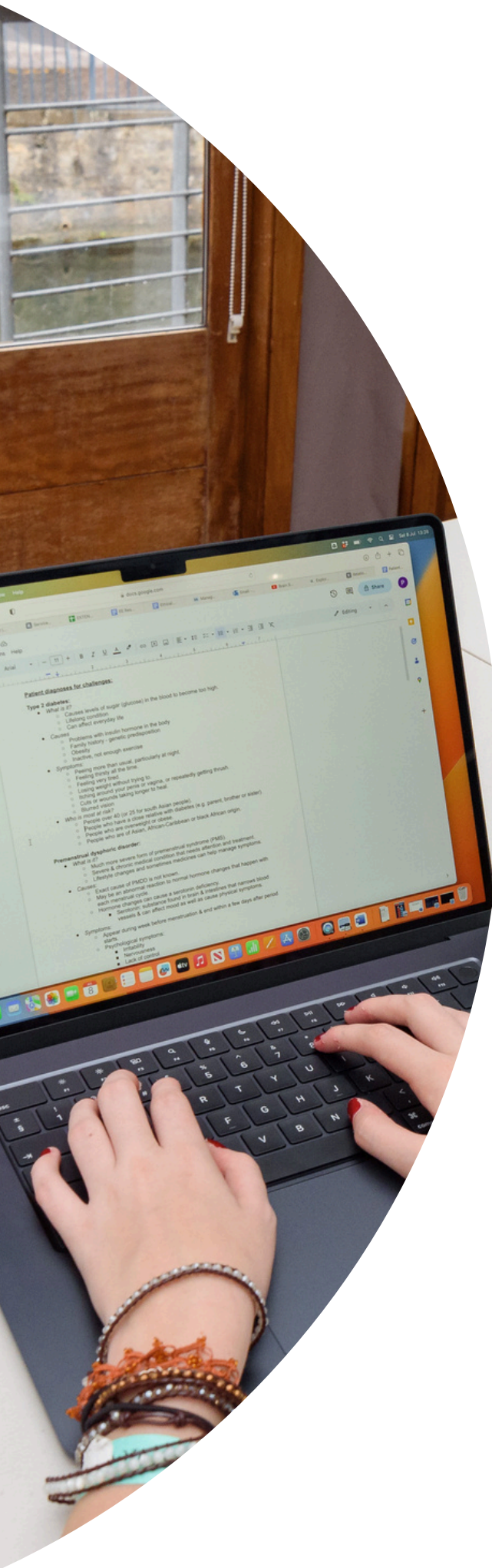
Research

While you're practising your debating skills, you may want to double down on the research you do around your areas of interest. The more material you consider, the more capable you'll feel when presented with a challenging question. You may also wish to read some of the university entrance interview content on the Oxford Scholastica blog to give yourself even more of a leg-up when your interview arrives.



Overall, Psychology university interviews, while stressful, aren't something you should fear. Their structure and environment are designed to give you the best possible chance of securing a place at the university, provided you put the work in. All you need to do is make sure you're familiar with the questions and topics you may be asked about, prepare where possible, and go into your interview ready to present the best version of yourself. That's all the admissions tutors are looking for!





Getting the Grades

So you've completed your UCAS application, you've maybe done an interview or two, and you have your offers – congratulations!

Now the only thing left to do is get the grades you need to fulfil those offers. So, here are some tips to help you get the grades you need! It's important to note that there's no "one-size-fits-all", so don't feel pressured to use all or any of these suggestions, especially if you already have a method that works well for you!



Tips & Tricks

Note-Taking Strategies

Your revision can start as soon as you learn the content – effective note-taking methods ensure you understand the material, and help you efficiently build up revision resources. A popular strategy you might like to explore is [the Cornell method](#).

Flashcards

Flashcards are particularly useful for testing yourself on key terms or psychological theories etc. and can be easily used on the go. [Quizlet](#) is a really helpful tool for this – no need for physical cards, or even for making them yourself! You can search public decks to find the subjects you want to learn about.



Mind Maps

These can be really useful for drawing links between topics within a subject. For example, in Psychology, making mind maps can help you identify links between studies, which will help you organise your essays effectively.

Additional Reading

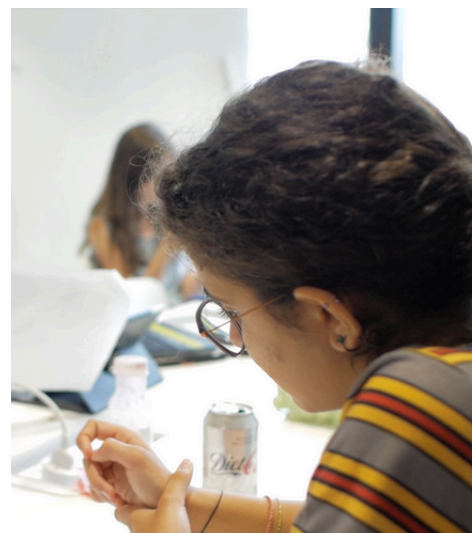
For those studying Psychology, it's important to have an appropriate grasp on the different fields involved in the subject, so do some extra reading to consolidate your understanding and to boost your answers! Check out [Oxford Scholastica's University Preparation Report](#) for tailored recommendations!

Test, Not Review!

Research into the psychology of learning has found that testing is a much more effective revision method than simple review (which is also much more time-consuming!).

Distributed Testing

Studies have shown that testing oneself on the material a particular number of times over a given time period yields better results than testing oneself again and again, consecutively!



Tips & Tricks



Positive Self-Talk

By telling yourself that you are able to achieve what you want, you're much more likely to believe it, and thus be motivated to put in the work. This is also helpful before an exam to keep your confidence high, and nerves at bay.

To-Do Lists

To-do lists are useful for keeping track of your revision, but they can also be incredibly overwhelming! Try prioritising the items on your list – put two or three tasks of the highest priority, another two or three in medium priority etc. This means you'll always know where to start! Another strategy is to also separate the tasks into high and low commitment, so that even when you are low on motivation, you have some low-commitment tasks to get you started.

Blurting

This is perhaps a lesser-known method of testing your knowledge, but one that we've found particularly useful, especially for recalling all the details of studies in Psychology. For more information on blurring and how it works, check out [this article!](#)

Answering Past Exam Questions

Past papers give you an insight into the kind of questions to expect, and how best to answer them. [Exam Mate](#) provides past paper questions for a variety of qualifications for high school students.

Positive Over Negative Motivation

Focus on rewarding yourself when you complete revision tasks, as opposed to punishing yourself when you perhaps don't get as much done as you'd hoped to etc. This ensures you are driven by the inspiration to succeed, as opposed to the fear of failure.



Unfortunately, we don't have a magic formula that will guarantee you meet your offer for your dream university. However, if you get your study technique right after submitting a successful application, personal statement and passing interview, you've put yourself in the best possible position. Put in the work and believe in your own capabilities, and we're confident that you'll do wonderfully.



BEFORE YOU GO...

We hope you've found this Ultimate Guide to Studying Psychology both interesting and useful – you're now well-prepared to take your next steps in your journey to becoming a psychologist!

Before you run off to apply the advice we've given you, however, we'd like to leave you with a checklist of things to do along the way – an action plan of sorts. This should help you to make the most of your time, ensure you don't miss anything (we're all guilty of being a little absent minded at times), and it will help you to refer back to this guide when you need it.

Best of luck with your applications – and remember our blog, Report and courses will always be ready to continue supporting you!

Jonathan, Kylie, and the Oxford Scholastica Academy team

- ☒ Oxford Scholastica Academy's Ultimate Guide
- ☐ [Take the Oxford Scholastica Career Test](#)
- ☐ Complete [Oxford Scholastica University Preparation Report](#)
- ☐ Browse the [UCAS website](#) and decide which universities and courses you're interested in
- ☐ Apply for extra curricular, voluntary, and work experience
- ☐ Prepare for and attend open days for your chosen universities
- ☐ Write and perfect your UCAS personal statement ahead of applying
- ☐ Complete your UCAS application
- ☐ Practise and attend your university interviews and exams
- ☐ Accept (or decline) your university offers when you receive them
- ☐ Study for and sit your high school exams
- ☐ Accept your place and prepare for life at university. Congratulations!





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