



SAYBROOK UNIVERSITY



OUR PROBLEMS ARE HUMAN, SO ARE THE SOLUTIONS

WHAT CAN I DO WITH A DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY?

As the study of human beings and behavior, psychology is a gateway into almost any field – there are even studies touting the benefits of psychology to entrepreneurship.

Generally speaking, however, there are three areas that psychologists tend to work in:

CLINICAL SETTINGS (INCLUDING PRIVATE PRACTICE)

BUSINESS OR NON-PROFIT SETTINGS

GOVERNMENT SETTINGS

While there's a great deal of overlap in the qualifications for each one (it's sometimes easy to transition from one to the other), there can also be significant differences, and it's important to know in advance what you're aiming for. It's worth looking at each area carefully.

PLANNING YOUR DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY

Psychologists enjoy strong employment prospects: the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) states that the need for psychologists is expected to grow by almost 25% between now and 2020 – far faster than the average for most occupations.

But the BLS also notes that it is advanced degree holders, with clear areas of specialization, [who will gain most of the benefits of the 21st century job market](#). This means you don't just want a psychology degree: you want an advanced degree, and a plan.

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE HAVE MADE SUCCESSFUL CAREER CHANGES THAT HAVE PUT THEM IN A BETTER, HAPPIER, MORE MEANINGFUL JOB.

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Generally most associated with psychologists in private practice or in hospital settings, Clinical psychology refers to those set of positions which require both an advanced degree and licensure from the appropriate state agency. This means that before even considering a career in Clinical Psychology, it is important to know which state or states you're interested in practicing in. All 50 states have different licensing requirements, and a program that qualifies someone for licensure in one state may not meet the criteria of another.

There are websites that can help sort this out, and any university program worth its salt should have an officer on hand who can help you make sure that the degree you're considering will prepare you for the licensure you want. That's a great way to start – but it's only a start. Once you've worked out a plan of action to get a degree from an accredited university, be sure to speak directly with the licensing board of the states you want to work in. There's no substitute for establishing that relationship early on, and keeping on top of the requirements yourself. A university licensing officer needs to follow the regulations in 50 states: you just need to focus on the ones you care about.

A clinical psychology degree averages 2-3 years for a Masters, and 4-6 years for a PhD or PsyD. *Careers available include:*

Marriage and Family Therapist
(at the MA level)

Psychologist (at the PhD or PsyD level)

Counselor, Diagnostician, or Intake specialist for a hospital or institutional setting (both levels)



While the most critical thing is to make sure your degree can lead to licensure in the state you want to work, there are additional ways you can tailor your studies (if your university will allow) to better focus your career and increase your employment prospects.

Some of the fastest growing areas in clinical psychology focus on specific populations such as the elderly, or children in crucial developmental stages. Knowing in advance if you want to work with children, or clients from different cultures, or people with PTSD, for example, can help you tailor your degree and become a specialist immediately upon graduation.

Similarly, knowing in advance if you want to work in private practice or an institutional setting can help you get the skills and experience you'll need while you study – and significantly boost your chances of landing the job you want upon licensure.



PSYCHOLOGY IN BUSINESS AND NON-PROFIT SETTINGS

While there is always a demand for clinicians, perhaps surprisingly the biggest demand for new psychologists is in the private sector, helping companies to improve their hiring practices and workplace culture. “Of late,” the *New York Times* noted in 2013 “growing numbers of academics and entrepreneurs are applying Big Data to human resources and the search for talent.” A number of cutting edge firms are looking for new ways to bring out the best in their employees, and psychology is often at the forefront of such efforts.

That’s just one area in which businesses and non-profits look to psychologists for expertise. Their needs cut across a wide swath of psychological research, covering both clinical and research degrees. Market research firms and public relations companies also value advanced psychology credentials, as do training companies, business consultants, and social service providers. They’re not looking for licensure – they’re looking for research and critical thinking skills, and a strong base of knowledge in the some of the many ways people tick.

Here are just some of the jobs actively soliciting psychologists now:

- Lab Researcher
- Lab Manager
- Market Researcher
- Career or Vocational Trainer
- Self-Reliance Specialist
- Developmental Specialist
- Substance Abuse Specialist
- Human Resources Manager or Analyst
- Rehabilitation Counselor
- Behavioral Counselor
- Health Project Coordinator
- Child Care Supervisor
- Advertising Agent
- Employee Trainer or Training Consultant
- Public Relations
- Project Manager
- Environmental Psychology Consultants

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PSYCHOLOGY IN BUSINESS AND NON-PROFIT SETTINGS

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And of course, teaching or conducting research in an academic institution is one of the most well known options for psychologists with PhDs.

With this many options, the need to focus your degree and specialize is critical. What kind of work do you want to do? What kind of environment do you want to do it in? Where is your passion?

Generally (and this is an oversimplification) your options can be divided into three kinds of jobs: Working with people, working with organizations, and working with ideas.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE:

You'd be on the front lines working with people in need to help them solve their problems. Career and vocational trainers, self-reliance and developmental specialists, employee trainers, and other jobs fall under this category. While you don't necessarily need licensure (as clinical psychologists do), you will want to develop expertise in practical, hands-on, approaches to helping people in need. Ideally you could even pick up some certifications in your chosen field while studying for your psychology degree, meaning you'd hit the job market a step ahead of the competition.

WORKING WITH ORGANIZATIONS:

One of the fastest growing areas of psychology, this covers everything from HR management to organizational consulting and "industrial psychology." You'd be helping organizations, big and small, better manage their employees – making them happier and more productive. Here, too, it's ideal to gain certifications in areas you'll want to work with after your degree. It's also vital to establish industry connections through your program: can the degree programs you're considering connect you with people actively working in the field?

WORKING WITH IDEAS:

This can cover everything from working with lab subjects to developing new marketing campaigns: the understanding of human nature, and the effort to expand that knowledge, is crucial to many companies and organizations. Whether in public relations, environmental psychology, or creativity consulting, you'll be working with ideas on the cutting edge and seeing how they succeed in the real world. Having a specialized degree here is key: can you demonstrate that you've spent time immersed in your subject matter, and that you have something to contribute to the field?



HOW DO I GET MY DEGREE?

Once you know what you want, what you're passionate about, you need to identify a school that can support it. And you. What should you be looking for?

The strength of the faculty who will be teaching you is crucial to consider when getting a psychology degree. For all the many things psychologists do, each specialization is a relatively small field, and many faculty members belong to professional associations and have reputations that can help you a great deal. There's no better moment in a job search than saying "I studied with" and having a recruiter's eyes light up.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

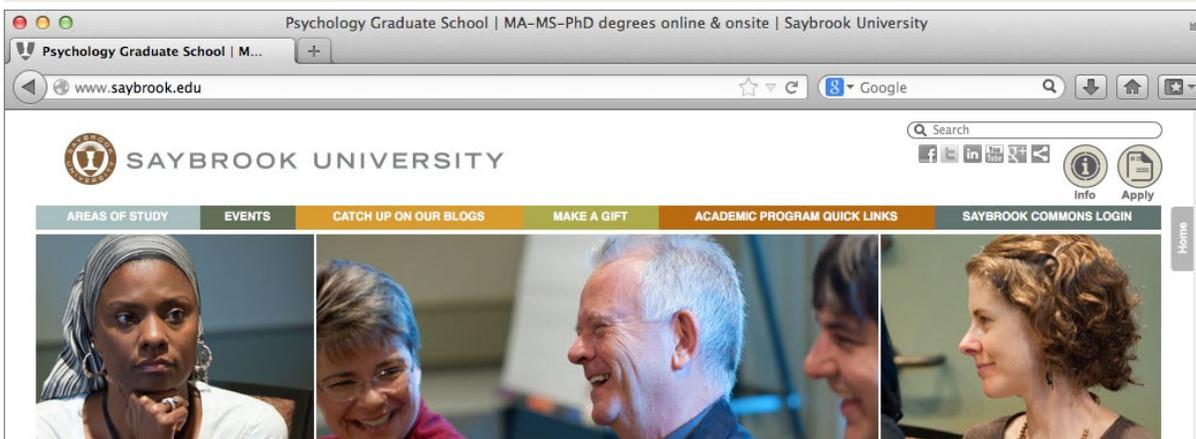
- How well published are the faculty members in the program you're looking at? Have they written articles? Books? How recently?
- Do they belong to relevant professional organizations? And not just belong, but have they assumed leadership roles? Have they received awards from their colleagues on their work?
- Do they have a record of working with and supporting their students? Do they publish joint papers with students, introduce them at conferences, or connect them to their networks?

Many schools, especially online only schools, are lacking these elements: the faculty have little standing in their field, or only know their students as email addresses and so rarely help them advance. To stand out after graduation, you'll want to do better.

If you already have a degree, try to find a program that will transfer credits from your old program into your current one. Definitely look for a program that is willing to focus your academic studies on your aspirations and goals. A "cookie cutter" degree, where all the graduates come out the same, is probably the least useful for you. Does the program want to know you as a person?

Taking these steps turns what might seem like an impossible challenge into an attainable goal. You're not alone: millions of people have made successful career changes that have put them in a better, happier, more meaningful job. Employers are increasingly used to seeing and valuing the resumes of people changing careers, and universities like Saybrook have a strong track record that helps people step forward into their next act.

GET STARTED: LEARN MORE ABOUT SAYBROOK UNIVERSITY.



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