

# APPLYING TO CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY COURSES IN THE UK:

## TOP TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE CLEARING HOUSE FORM

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## Applying to Clinical Psychology Courses in the UK

To qualify as a clinical psychologist in the UK students are required to complete a professional doctorate course that consists of a combination of teaching blocks, specialist placements & doctoral level research projects.

To apply to clinical psychology doctoral courses in the UK, students must submit an application through the Clearing House website, listed below. Courses are offered at various universities across the UK, as detailed on the Clearing House website. Applicants are advised to consult with the website & / or each course centre to determine minimum entry requirements & for an overview of each course programme.

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***Applications are made through Clearing House between September - November each year:***

<https://www.clearing-house.org.uk>

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Applicants should be aware that clinical psychology is a popular career choice & that the demand for places sadly outnumbers the number of training places available. A small percentage of those that apply each year will be offered an interview and an even smaller percentage will be successful at obtaining a training place. It is important to remember that this is not a reflection on you or your ability- it is simply a supply & demand issue.

## How to Use this Guide: An Overview

This document has been compiled by clinical psychologists with experience of reviewing clinical psychology Clearing House application forms. The aim of the document is to help applicants to maximise the effectiveness of their application to doctoral courses in the UK to increase their chances of obtaining an interview. The top tips listed in this form are some of the frequent feedback comments provided to applicants as they prepare their forms for submission.

DISCLAIMER: This is by no means a full-proof guide to obtaining an interview, it is simply a top tips guide to aid with maximising the efficient use of the sections in the Clearing House application form. This guide does not advise of the content that should be included in the forms - that is for the applicant to decide.



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## STARTING POINTS:

- Familiarise yourself with each section of the form
  - Pre-prepare what content you wish to include for each section of the form
  - Consider where best (which section) to showcase each point you wish to emphasise e.g. use the relevant work experience section for showcasing specific duties & responsibilities (e.g. undertaking psychological assessment, delivering CBT group work, undertaking service evaluations etc), leaving space in the personal statement section for *reflections* on performing these duties
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## TOP TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE FORM:

- Use each section well & wisely
    - Don't over-estimate the 1st course question & under-estimate the other sections
    - Use each section to tell a story - the CV section to showcase your experience & the personal statements to reflect on that experience & showcase why you want to train to be a psychologist
  - Speak to all of the duties & responsibilities of the clinical psychologist, don't just focus on the clinical / therapy aspects of the role
  - Think about transferable & general skills - don't hone in too much on one particular clinical area or presentation. Remember you are applying to a training course that has placements across a range of clinical specialisms so think in general terms regarding skills & qualities that are necessary for the role of trainee clinical psychologist who will undertake a variety of placements.
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## **COURSE CENTRES:**

- Familiarise yourself with each course - it's ethos, core models taught, additional qualifications or accreditation gained etc
  - Liaise with others on the course if possible e.g. through social media or those you know through work connections
  - Read the Clinical Psychology Handbook to understand more about the courses and trainees experiences of the courses
  - If possible, apply to courses that reflect your values, ethos & preferred ways of working
  - If location is important to you then aim to speak to the ethos of the courses you are applying to where possible
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## **REFERENCES:**

- Ideally the referee should be someone who knows & understands the role of the clinical psychologist & can speak to your ability to perform the breadth of duties the clinical psychologist performs
  - In an ideal world the referee should be a clinical psychologist, but this is not always possible. If it is not possible ensure the referee understands the role of the clinical psychologist & can speak to that in the reference
  - Choose someone who knows you well & can speak to your abilities in-depth
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## RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:

- Reflect on & prepare your prior experiences, role by role
  - Be clear in your mind about each role you have undertaken, the key duties / responsibilities of each role & your reflections on the skills, attributes & qualities that you have required / acquired / started to develop in these roles
  - Use this space to showcase the *breadth & depth* of the duties & responsibilities you have performed in each role you have held
  - Detail all of the clinical & research duties you have performed in each position
  - Speak to the duties & experiences on the trainee clinical psychologist job description / person specification, and try to align with this where possible
  - Use psychological language where possible, appropriate & relevant
  - *It's ok to bullet point here*
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**OTHER EXPERIENCE:**

- Use this space to talk about any non-psychology roles & experiences you have acquired
  - Think about & reflect on the transferable & generalisable skills you have developed from these roles that would help you when undertaking training
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## **PUBLICATIONS:**

- Share examples of research publications
  - Share any examples of any other work you have created e.g. self-help resources, handouts, booklets, service materials, presentations
  - Share any examples of presentations or other ways you have shared or disseminated of your work e.g. talks or presentations to colleagues or in team meetings, presentations at university, teaching and training workshops you have delivered
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## COURSE QUESTIONS:

COURSE QUESTION 1: In what way have your work and/or research experiences made you a better candidate for training in clinical psychology? 3,000 character limit for this question.

- The question is asking HOW have your experiences made you ready for training. Be mindful not to list your experience or the duties you have performed- these should be clearly documented in the CV section.
  - Use the CV section to demonstrate the *breadth & depth* of your experience
  - Use the personal statements to show what you have *learned* from this experience
  - Reflect on the skills, abilities, attributes & qualities required to successfully undertake & developed through your roles
  - Reflect on the competencies you are developing
  - Reflect on your key learning points
- Think about the wider duties & responsibilities of the clinical psychologist beyond clinical / therapy skills & reflect on how you are starting to develop the skills to perform each of these duties
- Think about what skills you are developing, what qualities you bring to the role & how these have enabled you to perform duties well
- Contextualise- locate the role within the NHS & wider systemic context
- Own your position & reflect on the social GRACES

COURSE QUESTION 2: What would you hope to gain from training? 750 character limit for this question.

- Think about what you want to get out of training on a professional & personal level
- Think about your personal clinical and research interests and passions
- Show an awareness that you understand what you are applying for - think about & speak to developing skills that reflect the role of the clinical psychologist
- Contextualise - think about the role of the trainee psychologist in the context of the NHS & what skills you would hope to develop to enable you to perform this role effectively



*COURSE QUESTION 3: Other information about yourself eg activities/interests apart from psychology. (750 character limit for this question)*

- Talk about you, your interests
  - Help the reviewer to see who you are
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## TOP TIPS FOR MANAGING THE CHARACTER COUNT:

- Condense, condense, condense! Make sentences as succinct as possible. Practice condensing your key point into a clear, succinct, concise message (this also helps with readability- helping the reviewer to clearly access the key points).
- Remove unnecessary words, sentences, examples, descriptions & elaborations. Concisely name key skills / points / reflections without too much elaboration.
- Don't repeat information from other sections e.g. listing experience that should be in the CV section. Briefly allude to the duty/role you are referring to then share your reflections and key learning points, including the skills & qualities required to successfully perform that duty.

### EXAMPLES:

I set up a group for young people to help with confidence-building. This helped me to develop XYZ skills....'	>	Through co-facilitating group interventions I developed... XYZ skills...
I was part of a service evaluation project that explored older adults experiences of older adult services. This project involved undertaking interviews with older adults, analysing the data using thematic analysis & presenting the findings to the wider team to inform service changes. This project emphasised the importance of....'	>	Undertaking a service evaluation project developed my skills in data collection, analysis and service development. This project emphasised....
In my role as an assistant psychologist I undertook various duties including undertaking assessment and intervention, delivering group work and attending clinical supervision	>	Undertaking psychological assessment and intervention under supervision emphasised the importance of ... XYZ skills/qualities etc...



**Compiled by Third Wave Psychologist**

[www.thirdwavepsychologist.co.uk/mentorship-programme](http://www.thirdwavepsychologist.co.uk/mentorship-programme)