DECAP - Shortlisting of 2026 Applications

All the applications were very much appreciated. We fully understand your disappointment if you were not shortlisted. Competition for a place on the DECAP course is extremely high. Scoring for shortlisting involves grading each of three dimensions separately (Academic Ability, Personal Statement and Self-Reflection, and Readiness for Training). In order to provide useful information to non-shortlisted applicants we drew on an analysis of the highest scoring applications and those which didn't meet the criteria for interview. It is hoped that this information will be useful to those who may wish to re-apply in the future.

The process was as follows:

1. There was a total of 130 applications. 124 applications met the shortlisting criteria. These were read, discussed and marked individually by all of the shortlisting team on each of the three dimensions.
2. Applicants were selected for interview based on their order on the combined list of marks.
3. 41 applicants were offered interviews.

Applicants who reached the criteria for interview

Academic Ability

All successfully shortlisted applicants seem to have read and drawn on the advice available in the Guide for Applicants. In general:

- The quality of presentation of the highest scoring applicants was very high;
- Qualifications were laid out in an orderly and systematic way with module marks/grades and evidence of distinction absolutely clear (as stated in the application guidance, candidates who did not provide a transcript of their degree marks placed themselves at a disadvantage);
- Applicants possessed a 1st class, 2.1 degree in Psychology or clear evidence of high academic ability through marks and grades gained in postgraduate study.

Readiness for Training

This category mainly refers to previous relevant experience but also involves other aspects of the application form such as the personal statement. Here the shortlisting panel considered the interplay between length, breadth and suitability of experience, along with the degree of responsibility held. Previous experience was clearly laid out and any gaps in employment were accounted for. Total hours worked were correctly calculated.

Some, but not all, successfully shortlisted applicants:

- Had experience with children and young people. Most had experience with individuals with SEN. Applicants usually provided a very brief indication of what was involved in each experience.
- Had a range of relevant work experience including assistant EP roles, teaching experience, research work, classroom assistant work, various types of health/social service work and voluntary work. Postgraduate research experience and qualifications were provided as well as specialist courses.
- Accessed quality supervision for at least some of their work experience.
- Demonstrated they had successfully managed a degree of responsibility in the posts they had held.
- Were able to discuss their experience in the context of relevant psychological theories and evidence and were able to demonstrate the application of theories into practice.
- Demonstrated that they had kept up to date with current research on child and adolescent psychology.

In general, successfully shortlisted applicants spent some time showing not only how they had benefited from their experience but also how they had used their knowledge of psychology to inform their practice. They were able to relate their experience, skills and competences to educational psychology training. It was not just experience which impressed but what they had gained and what they had made of their experiences.

Personal statement and self-reflection

The highest scoring applicants demonstrated:

- A mature reflection on where they were in terms of their life, experience, motivation and learning and why they were interested in the role.
- A value system compatible with educational psychology.
- The capacity to express a broad and balanced perspective.
- Thoughtfulness and criticality in how their qualifications, motivations, experiences and personal qualities related to each other and were relevant to their application.
- Self-awareness and knowledge as a result of their experiences - they showed how they had encountered and dealt with challenges before.
- Use of relevant psychological knowledge and understanding, often weaving it through their statement.
- Motivation for EP training and preparation for such training.
- Keeping within word count (750 words).

Applicants who did not meet the criteria for interview

Academic Ability

Applicants tended to have lower scores in their undergraduate or qualifying examinations.

Readiness for Training

Applicants had a more limited experience (in terms of length, breadth and quality) of working with children and young people. Usually their positions involved lesser degrees of responsibility, were less relevant, and had less supervision. Their experience consisted of a series of short positions in a shadowing role, rather than meaningful pieces of work. They often did not clearly indicate what they had learned from their experiences. As in previous years, applicants who had only recently graduated were generally found not to have sufficient experience.

Personal statement and self-reflection

Applications displayed, to varying degrees, the following:

- A lack of mature reflection;
- Some repetition of relevant experience;
- A lack of personal insight and criticality;
- Overly descriptive account lacking reflection;
- Did not explicitly refer to psychological knowledge and understanding.