



Where to Start? Psychology-relevant experience for Students

You don't need to have your future career all figured out—but if you're curious about where psychology could lead, getting even a little experience can go a long way. It's a great way to explore what interests you, build your confidence and learn more about how the world of work connects with your studies.

Start by thinking about what excites you—whether that's people, behaviour, wellbeing, education or something completely different.

This booklet will help you to:

- Connect your interests to psychology-related roles
- Spot the kinds of opportunities to look out for
- Discover small, practical ways to start building experience now

You probably won't get work experience or a placement directly with a Psychologist and that's absolutely fine. What matters is taking small steps to understand your strengths, explore your options and figure out what you do (and don't!) enjoy.

Every experience counts.



How to Use The Booklet

This isn't a “read it cover to cover” kind of booklet—it's more like a menu of ideas you can dip in and out of when you need inspiration.

Each section highlights an area of interest in psychology – for example, workplace mental health, sport, education, research or digital behaviour. You'll see three things in every section:

- **Future roles** related to that area of psychology
- **Suggested experiences** you can look out for now (paid, voluntary or informal)
- A **Top Tip** to help you make the most of opportunities



Notice what jumps out at you – maybe you're curious about more than one area, or maybe you're not sure yet. That's normal—the idea is to spark options you might not have considered.



Think about your own experiences – part-time jobs, volunteering, caring responsibilities or student societies all build psychology-relevant skills (even if they don't look psychology-related at first glance).



Use the reflection prompts at the back – jot down what you've done, what you learned, and how you'd explain it to an employer. A few notes after each experience soon add up to a really strong record.



Top tip: Don't worry about having a perfect plan. This booklet is here to help you explore—every experience counts, and every area of interest you try gives you clues about what could come next.

Let's Start With You

Before you dive into all the possible areas of psychology, take a moment to think about your own experiences so far. This could be home or school responsibilities, part-time jobs, volunteering, societies or even projects you've done for fun.

Use the table below to map the experiences and knowledge you've already gained. You'll start to see how much counts as psychology-relevant experience—even things you might not expect!

My Experience	Key tasks you carried out	Skills I used



Try to fill in at least 3–4 rows now—it'll help you get more out of the rest of the booklet.



Remember: it doesn't need to have 'Psychology' in the title to count. What matters is what you learned about people, behaviour or yourself.



Human resources / Staff Development / Careers / Talent Acquisition

Future roles: Occupational Psychologist, Human Resources, Careers Adviser, Learning & Development, Inclusion, Occupational Health

Look out for: Roles where you support others in their work, job search or development, such as:

- HR or admin support roles in any organisation
- Assisting with staff induction, training, or wellbeing initiatives
- Volunteering with charities that help people prepare for or return to work

Top Tip: Every organisation has HR needs—part-time office or admin jobs can still give you relevant experience.



Offenders / Victims / Crime Prevention / Legal Systems/ Advocacy work

Future roles: Forensic Psychologist, Police, Solicitor, Youth Justice Worker, Victim Support Worker, Restorative Justice Worker

Look out for: Roles supporting at-risk groups or those affected by crime, such as:

- Homelessness, addiction, or youth charities
- Mentoring vulnerable young people
- Volunteering with victim support or restorative justice services

Top Tip: You may not access roles in the criminal justice sector yet, but working with vulnerable people helps you understand the roots and impact of crime.





Sport / Coaching / Nutrition / Performance / Health & Fitness

Future roles: Sports Psychologist, Coach, Personal Trainer

Look out for: Roles that support performance, motivation, or wellbeing through sport, such as:

- Coaching assistant in schools or clubs
- Helping with sports sessions at youth groups or holiday camps
- PE support in classroom assistant roles



Top Tip: You can combine education and sport—ask if you can help with school sports as part of other roles.



Health / Rehabilitation / Health promotion/ Behaviour Change / Long-Term Conditions

Future roles: Health Psychologist, Public Health Practitioner, Health Promotion Officer, Pain Management Support Worker

Look out for: Work supporting people with health challenges, disabilities or recovery goals, such as:

- Support work in the community or residential settings
- Volunteering with adults with learning disabilities or long-term health conditions
- Roles in day centres or rehab units



Top Tip: Roles often involve helping people live independently—cooking, communication, mobility or routines.



Mental Health and Wellbeing / Trauma informed practice / Therapeutic intervention

Future roles: Clinical or Counselling Psychologist, Mental Health Nurse, Art / Music / Play Therapist, Social worker

Look out for: Roles where you support someone's mental health or emotional wellbeing, such as

- Support worker or wellbeing assistant
- Volunteer befriender or crisis line listener
(some training usually provided)
- Residential care work



Top Tip: This helps you find out if you enjoy emotionally demanding work and learn how to support people in crisis.



Education / Teaching / Learning or behaviour support / Early years development

Future roles: Teacher, Educational Psychologist, Youth Worker, Social Worker

Look out for: Roles that help children or young people learn, grow or feel supported, such as:

- Classroom assistant in a local school
- Youth group or summer scheme helper
- Playworker or homework club volunteer



Top Tip: These roles help you understand the barriers children face in school and how adults can support learning and wellbeing.



Consumer Psychology / Marketing / Advertising / PR / Communications

Future roles: Communications Officer, Public Affairs, Market Researcher, Social Media Manager

Look out for: Roles in social media, digital marketing, content creation, or campaigns, such as:

- Social media or comms volunteer for a local charity
- Content creation (Instagram/TikTok) for a student group or club
- Market research or admin roles in small businesses



Top Tip: You don't need to be an expert—offering to help someone improve their outreach or survey feedback is a good introduction.



Brain Injury / Cognition / Neurodevelopment

Future roles: Assistant Psychologist, Dementia or Brain Injury Support Worker, Neuropsychology Researcher

Look out for: Roles supporting people with stroke, brain injury, dementia, autism or learning disabilities—especially in care or rehab settings, such as:

- Volunteering with dementia or brain injury charities
- Supporting people with autism, ADHD or neurodiverse needs in residential settings
- Assisting with cognition or behaviour research



Top Tip: Any role where you support vulnerable people can build your neuro skills—look for chances to practice clear communication, empathy and observation



Online Behaviour / Digital Wellbeing / Human-Tech Interaction / Gaming

Future roles: Digital Wellbeing Specialist, UX Researcher, Cyberpsychology Researcher, Online Safety Advisor

Look out for: Roles exploring how people interact with technology—especially around social media, online safety, or digital wellbeing, such as:

- Volunteering with internet safety or cyberbullying organisations
- Supporting digital mental health platforms
- Working in digital marketing, content moderation, or tech-based youth work



Top Tip: Use your psych lens—what drives online behaviour? You could even run your own mini study on digital habits!



Zoology / Animal Psychology / Animal-Assisted Therapy / Conservation

Future roles: Animal Behaviourist, Vet, Conservation Psychologist

Look out for: Roles that involve working with animals and understanding their needs, such as:

- Volunteering at shelters, farms, rescue centres, wildlife groups
- Setting up your own dog-walking or pet-sitting service
- Supporting local conservation projects



Top Tip: Experience doesn't need to be formal—anything that involves animal care counts.



Research / Impact & Evaluation / Policy development

Future roles: Psychology Researcher, Data Analyst

Look out for: Roles where you gather, analyse or present information to help people make decisions, such as:

- Helping with surveys, interviews or focus groups
- Volunteering with organisations doing impact / needs assessment
- Creating your own small project to explore an issue in your part-time job or volunteering



Top Tip: Look out for opportunities to carry out your own small-scale research. For example, if volunteering ask a supervisor: “Would it be possible for me to run a short survey or do an observation on something we’ve discussed?”



Behaviour Change / Sustainability / Place & Wellbeing

Future roles: Climate Psychologist, Behaviour Change Specialist, Sustainability Engagement Officer, Eco-Therapist

Look out for: Roles exploring how people interact with spaces or nature, and how behaviour change can support sustainability and wellbeing, such as:

- Volunteering with climate or environmental groups
- Supporting eco-campaigns on recycling, transport or wellbeing
- Working in community gardens, conservation or nature education



Top Tip: Even small roles can build experience—suggest behaviour-change ideas like nudges, signage or habit tracking!



Other Useful Experience

You don't need a psychology-specific job to start developing psychology-relevant skills. Many everyday roles and responsibilities can help you build confidence, insight and transferable skills that matter in any future career.

Here are some great examples of overlooked or “everyday” experiences that still count:



Retail, Hospitality & Customer Service

Examples: Shop assistant, café server, barista, hotel work, call centre

What it builds:

- Communication with a wide range of people
- Conflict resolution and handling complaints
- Emotional intelligence and patience under pressure
- Understanding behaviour in a fast-paced environment



Caring Responsibilities

Examples: Looking after a family member with a disability or illness, helping with transport, meals or emotional support

What it builds:

- Empathy and emotional resilience
- Responsibility and time management
- Advocacy and communication with services or professionals



Student Leadership, Mentoring & Societies

Examples: Peer mentor, course rep, student ambassador, society committee member, event organiser, campaign leader, student content creator

What it builds:

- Leadership, organisation and teamwork
- Communication, empathy and supporting wellbeing
- Understanding motivation, behaviour and group dynamics



Creative or Informal Projects

Examples: Blogging about mental health, creating TikToks on study techniques, setting up a book club, managing a pet-sitting business

What it builds:

- Initiative and self-direction
- Content creation and outreach skills
- Insight into motivation, audience needs and online behaviour



Psychology in Action: Recognise, Relate, Record

You don't need a psychology job title to use psychology. If you look closely, you'll see it everywhere—in how people behave, how they interact and how situations unfold. The more you practise noticing and reflecting, the more you'll start to **think like a psychologist**.



Recognise

Start noticing the psychology all around you. Ask yourself:

- Who am I supporting and what do they really need?
- How are people behaving—and what might explain that?
- What role do emotions, communication or the environment play?



Relate

Think about how your experience links to psychology.

- Which skills am I using—critical thinking, listening, observing, problem-solving?
- What theories or ideas from my course help me make sense of this?
- How might this connect to future roles I'm interested in?



Record

Reflection is what turns everyday experiences into learning and powerful evidence for CVs, applications and interviews. Try keeping a simple log or journal. After each shift, project or volunteering session, jot down:

- What did I do?
- What did I learn about myself or others?
- What skills did I develop?
- What would I do differently next time—and why?

Use the Skilful Reflections document

To make this even easier, download our Skills Reflection Document from the PsychologyAtWork Hub. It gives you a ready-made space to track your experiences, connect them to psychology skills and build strong examples for the future.



Top Tip: With every experience, put on your psychology lens! Real-world opportunities are a chance to spot patterns, understand people and try out what works in practice.



Where to Look

Volunteering Opportunities:

- **SU Volunteering:** Offers a wide range of local opportunities to get involved.
- **QUB Volunteering Fair:** A great chance to meet organisations actively looking for student volunteers.

Paid Work:

- **MyFuture:** QUB's own platform for student jobs, internships and work experience.
- **LinkedIn:** Useful for exploring career paths and seeing where psychology grads go.
- **CommunityNI:** Lists paid roles in the voluntary and community sector
- **HSCNI Jobs:** Band 2/3 roles are ideal.
- **Education Authority (EA):** Contact local schools or check the EA website for General or SEN classroom assistant roles.
- **Indeed/Jobs NI:** Online job boards where you can search and apply for a wide range of roles across different sectors and locations.
- **HIGHERiN/ Handshake:** Explore opportunities, connect with employers, and apply for jobs, placements and events to build your future.

'I think the PsychologyAtWork events have allowed me to enjoy the journey a bit more, and to be more open to other opportunities. I approach my work now with more of a mindset to learn and develop my skillset, and am less focused on the milestones I need to hit.'

Final Thought:



Any role that helps people, involves communication, problem solving or behaviour is Psychology relevant. It's about what you learn, not the job title.

For more details please contact:

Elaine Lavery
Placement and Employability Officer
e.lavery@qub.ac.uk

Patricia Murphy
Insight Placement Co-ordinator
patricia.murphy@qub.ac.uk

