

## What Is Psychology?

Psychology is the study of behaviour, including the biological, cognitive, emotional, social and cultural determinants of behaviour. That is, how we think, feel and behave in our social and physical environments. It is impossible to consider productivity, innovation and societal development without placing human behaviour in all its complexity at the centre of the discussion.

Psychology is both a science and the application of that science.

The science of Psychology has been studying human behaviour and functioning for more than 125 years. It now spans three broad areas, as represented by the three research councils of Canada. It includes the biological determinants of behaviour such as the study of basic brain processes, memory, thought, perception, etc. (NSERC), the contribution of human behaviour across the continuum of health and health care (CIHR), and factors related to the workplace and society (SSHRC). Psychology is one of the few disciplines with such a broad scope of scientific interests, which allows it to act as a meeting ground and synthesizing agent for research from all three councils and from many disciplines.

The application of knowledge from the science of psychology to human problems has been developing for more than 100 years. The professional application of psychology includes the scientific evaluation and refinement of psychological treatments and methods. This integration of science and practice, into empirically-based practice, is a defining characteristic and notable strength of professional psychology. Psychologists each specialize in applying psychology in particular areas, such as clinical, counselling, forensic, health, industrial/organizational, neuropsychological or school psychology.

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## What is a Psychologist?

A psychologist studies how we think, feel and behave from a scientific viewpoint and applies this knowledge to help people understand, explain and change their behaviour.

A psychologist must meet the requirements set by the provincial psychological regulatory authority in order to use the title “psychologist”.

## Where Do Psychologists Work?

Psychologists work in clinics, correction facilities, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, schools, universities and in private practice. They use tests and other assessment methods to clarify problems, diagnose and provide therapy for psychological and emotional disorders, help clients manage physical illnesses and disorders, consult with other professionals, plan and implement research and apply theory relating to behaviour and mental processes. Many psychologists are active in both research and practice.

## The Role of Psychologists

Trained as scientists and practitioners, psychologists have made important and unique contributions to the understanding of mental health and mental illness as well to the treatments and systems best suited to help people live well in health and with illness.

- Canadian Psychological Association

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**“Psychologists are the largest group of regulated health professionals in the fields of mental health, mental illness and addictions in Canada.”**

- Canadian Psychological Association

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## Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia (APNS)

A voluntary professional organization established in 1965 to represent psychology in Nova Scotia, APNS is the only provincial association devoted to representing the needs of psychologists, professors of psychology and psychology students in the province. APNS promotes psychology as a profession, as a science, and as a means of promoting human welfare.

- APNS educates by organizing and facilitating training workshops and conferences.
- APNS builds psychological collegiality by fostering a sense of community among all who identify with psychology.
- APNS advocates for the public through representations to government and employers on matters affecting public mental health and wellness.
- APNS advocates for psychology through representations to government, employers and the public at large.

APNS monitors contemporary social issues and speaks out in the interest of the public good. Briefs and position statements have addressed on-going matters such as the administration and interpretation of psychological tests, access to psychological services, child care, and human rights.

APNS was pivotal in promoting passage of The Psychologists' Act in 1982 that created the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology (NSBEP), which administers the Act and has participated in changes to the Act. APNS coordinates nominations and appointments of NSBEP members.

APNS is affiliated with the Council of Provincial Associations of Psychology, the Canadian Register of Health Service Psychologists and the American Psychological Association, and is in regular liaison with the Canadian Psychological Association.

## Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology (NSBEP)

Psychologists are required by law to deliver competent, ethical and professional services. They are accountable to the public, through the NSBEP.

Psychologists meet rigorous professional requirements and adhere to prescribed standards, guidelines and ethical principles. Psychologists must adhere to the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists and Standards for Service and Conduct, established by the NSBEP. The NSBEP investigates and addresses complaints against psychologists.

Only those individuals who meet specific requirements for education, examinations, and supervision are entitled to use the term, "Psychologist", or to provide "psychological services," by virtue of The Psychologists Act of Nova Scotia. Psychologists must have at least these qualifications:

- A Doctoral or Masters degree in Psychology
- Two years of supervised experience, in the case of a Doctoral degree, or four years, in the case of a Masters degree, and
- Have passed a standardized, written examination and an ethics oral examination.

Psychologists (Candidate Register) have the same educational qualifications and are in the process of completing their supervised experience.

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**"As of December 31, 2013 there were 547 registered and candidate register psychologists in Nova Scotia."**

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## Psychology Education in Nova Scotia

To be registered as a psychologist in NS one must have a graduate degree in psychology from a program that requires an undergraduate degree in psychology (or equivalent courses in psychology) as part of the entrance requirement.

- Dalhousie University: 5-year PhD Clinical Psychology, and Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology
- Saint Mary's University: 2-year Masters, Industrial/Organizational Psychology
- Mount St. Vincent University: 2 year Masters, School Psychology
- Acadia University: 2-year Masters, Clinical Psychology

In Nova Scotia, there have been approximately 5 graduates per year from Dalhousie University in recent years. According to officials at Dalhousie, there are typically 90 interested applicants to the graduate program each year.

## Psychologists & Psychiatrists

Many clinical psychologists have a Doctoral level degree in Psychology, after having obtained a Bachelors degree & Master's degree in Psychology. This is up to 10 years of university education and training. Psychiatrists have a general medical degree, then advanced training in psychiatry (4 years residency after the M.D. degree).

Both clinical psychologists and psychiatrists provide mental health therapy and other services. Often psychologists focus on learning and environmental factors, and psychiatrists focus on biological factors.

Psychologists and psychiatrists provide some different types of service. Psychologists do psychological testing with well-researched tests; psychiatrists typically do not. Psychiatrists can prescribe medication, Psychologists cannot.