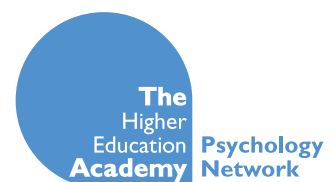# The Future of Undergraduate Psychology in the United Kingdom

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The
British
Psychological
Society

AHΨD
ASSOCIATION OF HEADS OF
PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENTS

The
Higher
Education Psychology
Academy Network

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Preface
The Future of Undergraduate Psychology in the United Kingdom

A joint project between the British Psychological Society, the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, and the Association of Heads of Psychology Departments

The Psychology Network, the British Psychological Society and the Association of Heads of Psychology Departments held a retreat at the Royal Society's Chicheley Hall late in 2010 to explore whether changes in undergraduate psychology education will be needed to ensure that it is fit for purpose in five years time.

The retreat was motivated, in part, by Halpern[1] (2009). This publication was the key output of a week long retreat in the US to consider critical questions relating to psychology undergraduate education. The book chapters acknowledge a changing environment and explore the extent to which there is a need to rethink how the US educates students in psychology, the quality of teaching in psychology, the content of psychology courses, the nature of the student body in undergraduate psychology and the desired outcomes of undergraduate education in psychology for the 21st century. Particular stress is placed upon providing students with a learning experience that will enable them to apply their psychological literacy across their lives. The concept of 'psychological literacy' has been further debated in an international volume by Cranney and Dunn[2] (in press).

The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, the British Psychological Society and the Association of Heads of Psychology Departments joined together in organising an event late in 2010 to consider in part the questions raised in Halpern (2009) within the context of the UK but also to broaden the discussion to include more specific UK issues such as accreditation, curriculum issues and the employability of psychology graduates. The retreat at Chicheley Hall provided an opportunity to consider how UK undergraduate psychology education may need or wish to adapt in light of the changing environment. Prior to the retreat a national consultation on the future of UK undergraduate psychology education attracted over 450 responses and these responses were fed into the discussions and debates during the retreat.

The invited participants brought a wealth of experience relating to psychology education albeit from differing perspectives and at different stages of career development. This report is the main outcome from the retreat. We hope that those with an interest in psychology education will find the report useful and that it can serve to foster further debate and inform change. Our special thanks to Professor Jacquelyn Cranney from the University of New South Wales who facilitated and drove forward the retreat with such tireless energy, Dr Richard Latto for his thoughtful insights, introduction and identification of emerging themes, Professor Ron Barnett for his inspiring keynote, and our hard-working notetakers, Lisa, Kelly, Lizzie and Tom.

Annie Trapp
On behalf of the Organising Committee:
Peter Banister, Judi Ellis, Ben Fletcher, Dorothy Miell, Annie Trapp and Dominic Upton

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[1] Halpern, D.F. (Ed.). (2009). *Undergraduate education in psychology: A blueprint for the future of the discipline.* Washington: American Psychological Association.

[2] Cranney, J., & Dunn, D. (Eds.) (in press). *The Psychologically Literate Citizen: Foundations and Global Perspectives.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Participants at the retreat on the future of undergraduate psychology education

Chicheley Hall, 30 November – 1 December 2010

Dr Jacqui Akhurst, York St John University

Dr Chris Atherton, University of Central Lancashire

Ms Kelly Auty, British Psychological Society

Dr Peter Banister, Manchester Metropolitan University

Dr Nicky Brace, Open University

Dr Diane Bray, Roehampton University

Professor Jan Burns, Canterbury Christchurch University

Professor Jacqui Cranney, University of New South Wales, Australia (Facilitator)

Professor Hazel Dewart, University of Westminster

Professor Judi Ellis, Reading University

Professor Norah Frederickson, University College, London

Ms Lizzie Freeman, York St John University

Professor Elizabeth Gilchrist, Glasgow Caledonian University

Dr Dave Harper, University of East London

Dr Peter Hegarty, University of Surrey

Dr Nigel Holt, Bath Spa University

Dr Julie Hulme, Staffordshire University

Dr Jesse Martin, Bangor University

Professor Dorothy Miell, University of Edinburgh

Dr Lynne Millward, University of Surrey

Dr Lisa Morrison-Coulthard, British Psychological Society

Dr Pete Reddy, Aston University

Dr Ian Robertson, University of Bedfordshire

Dr Maggie Robson, Keele University

Ms Shivani Sharma, University of Hertfordshire

Professor Kevin Silber, University of Derby

Dr Tom Simpson, Higher Education Academy Psychology Network

Dr Katie Slocombe, University of York

Ms Annie Trapp, Higher Education Academy Psychology Network

Professor Graham Turpin, University of Sheffield

Professor Dominic Upton, University of Worcester

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for participants at the Chicheley Hall retreat

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Psychology has two great strengths as an undergraduate subject. First, and pedagogically most important, it is an extraordinarily heterogeneous discipline, covering a very wide range of approaches and methodologies, but with a single clear and intrinsically fascinating focus, the understanding of human behaviour. Students graduating with a psychology degree therefore have a much broader range of skills than most graduates.

Second, it can lead to a range of psychology-based professions with a variety of different characteristics and appeal, so there is the potential for the degree to lead into a career in psychology but the opportunity during the degree to refine and change the choice of career within the discipline or, as most of our students do, look outside the formal discipline for a career path. Taken together these strengths account for the continuing and still growing demand for places on undergraduate degree courses in psychology.

A third strength of the discipline, arising probably from its heterogeneity, is that it is very self critical. Although the effect of this is not always positive, it does create the motivation and the capacity to evolve and develop to meet changing demands. This report and the meeting at Chicheley Hall which generated it are part of that process. It offers a review of those changing demands and some suggestions for responding to them. And there could not be a more appropriate time for doing this. The foundations on which higher education institutions and the degrees they offer are built are shifting dramatically and rapidly, in part at least in the attempt to produce a market in higher education. The main levers of change are: the shift in England of the entire cost of funding the teaching of Band C and D disciplines (all the arts and the social sciences, including psychology) from the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) to high levels of fees paid through student loans; the encouragement of the entry of private suppliers into the higher education market; the substantially increased emphasis by both government and students on employability; and the extensive expansion of the information about our degrees that we shall have to publish in the new Knowledge Information Sets (KIS), including the way we teach and assess, our student's views of their programme and how well our graduates perform in the job market. In the case of psychology there are two additional important factors. The first is the rapidly changing nature of the discipline, perhaps most significantly the growth of its applications to real world problems, and the professions built on this, and the increasing significance of the neurosciences in developing our understanding of human behaviour. The second factor affecting psychology specifically is the change in the basis of the accreditation of undergraduate degrees by the British Psychological Society (BPS). The transfer of the regulation of professional psychologists to the Health Professions Council (HPC) means that

BPS accreditation is no longer a formal gateway for entry to the applied psychology professions. It has become something that is closer to a kitemark guaranteeing a certain level of quality to students, employers and postgraduate admissions tutors. All this creates an urgent need to review our undergraduate provision and also of course provides an opportunity to improve it. This was the focus of the discussions among the thirty-one delegates who attended the Chicheley Hall retreat, the conclusions of which are reported here.

Each chapter of the report addresses a different area of review and presents a narrative argument followed by a set of recommendations, sometimes as suggestions for consideration, sometimes as firmer proposals for actions which will be necessary if we are to maintain the strength of our discipline. Chapter 2 looks in detail at the changes occurring in higher education in general as the result of the change of government in May 2010 and the way these will, in particular, impinge on psychology education. Chapter 3 considers the implications of the rapidly changing research environment for the design of our undergraduate degrees. It also introduces what turned out to be a recurring theme in the discussions and the report, the influence of accreditation procedures on the ability to change. Chapter 4 looks at the way changes in the characteristics of both our students and the society from which they are drawn impact on the design and delivery of our courses. Chapter 5 reviews the changing employment environment which our graduates will be entering and what we should do to prepare them for it. Chapter 6 looks in more detail at the ways in which the curriculum of a psychology degree and the media by which it is delivered might change. The Appendix contains a summary analysis of the on-line survey run by the Higher Education Academy's Psychology Network to collect the views of those delivering or receiving undergraduate psychology degrees and which informed much of the discussion at Chicheley Hall. Individual comments were particularly illuminating and many of these are cited throughout this report.

Not surprisingly, given the interconnectedness of all things, although the starting point of each chapter is distinct, there is considerable overlap in the recommendations they produce. Chapter 7 therefore looks at the overall picture created by these recommendations and identifies the most important themes emerging.

The participants at Chicheley Hall were deliberately chosen to be as heterogeneous as the discipline itself, representing as fully as possible the range of both the expertise of staff and the kinds of institutions delivering undergraduate psychology in the United Kingdom. Given this, the degree of consensus in the recommendations in this report is remarkable. It makes them particularly valuable, and it makes the report as a whole an authoritative, and we hope helpful, guide to the issues and opportunities facing all those individuals and institutions, including the three commissioning bodies, who have a role in delivering undergraduate degrees in psychology as we move forward into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Chapter 2
Contextual factors in undergraduate psychology teaching

This chapter lays out some of the context of the key national and international factors affecting the development of UK undergraduate psychology teaching over the next five years and points out a way for various organisations to work together to address these. From the specially commissioned survey conducted to inform this report, the vast majority of respondents partly or strongly agreed with the statement 'Psychology undergraduate education needs to adapt to the changing context of UK education during the next five years' and although there were a range of views on *how* institutions might adapt to this changing context, there was considerable agreement on what the key drivers are. The current chapter discusses some of the key drivers that are emerging in the external context of higher education in general. These are then taken up in the discussions and recommendations of later chapters dealing with more specific aspects of the future of undergraduate psychology education in the UK.

Following the global economic downturn in 2009 there has been a worsening funding context for UK Higher Education (HE), in particular following the Browne review of HE funding and student finance in England (October 2010)[3] and the Westminster government's Comprehensive Spending Review (also in October 2010) which announced much reduced funding for HE teaching and a flat cash settlement for research funding. This general economic context means there are particular challenges (especially in England) for UK institutions at a time when most other OECD countries are investing more in HE in order to contribute to their economic recovery. Many of the issues facing psychology as an undergraduate subject which are discussed below are related to these severe financial challenges to HE more generally. These challenges will be particularly felt by non-STEM[4] subjects since English government funding for the teaching of humanities and social sciences is set to be severely reduced or indeed removed. Partly but not entirely as a result of this uneven reduction in funding, psychology's status (i.e., whether it should be seen as a natural science or a social science) is the subject of an increasingly pointed debate. In terms of research activity, the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014) now groups psychology with neuroscience and psychiatry in the cyclical exercise to assess the quality of research in the UK, which acknowledges the dominance of natural science based work in UK psychology, although several areas of research in psychology are increasingly likely to be submitted to other REF panels (e.g., Sociology, Education) which some see as a threat to the coherence of the discipline. Whilst all agree that psychology is an empirically and scientifically grounded subject, there would seem to be

[3] http://hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview/report/
[4] STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

value in broadening our definition of 'science' (and particularly the definition which is used by the public and policy makers) to beyond that of the traditional natural sciences, and of stressing the added value of psychology as a subject for study that offers "STEM plus" skills for students and graduates (e.g. as including numeracy, empirical research skills, ethical awareness, literacy, historical awareness and inter-disciplinary team-work). The fact that we do not live in a period/culture where the definition of science is agreed upon, known or widely understood can perhaps be seen as an opportunity rather than a problem – many agree that psychology should be much bolder in publicising what it does as a discipline, a subject of study and as a profession, as well as the importance of having psychologically literate citizens.

There is agreement that the psychology community (e.g. the British Psychological Society (BPS)), Association of Heads of Psychology Departments (AHPD) and Experimental Psychology Society (EPS) should promote the value of study and practice in the subject more vigorously and publicly. However, the increasing breadth of the discipline and the variety of employment routes following a degree make it complicated and difficult to (a) adequately represent the range to potential students and employers, (b) fully agree on a set of required skills and content for undergraduate degrees or (c) specify a required curricula for pre-tertiary study. What are and should we be selling as the key benefits of a psychology degree? Are these clearly identifiable and agreed by academic staff, potential students, funders and employers? Also, what should be the balance in undergraduate degree design between the need to provide a basis for professional psychology training and the needs of the majority of graduates who do not continue in professional psychology after graduation? There is increasing emphasis on the value of a placement year not only to the students, but also to employers and indeed to the discipline (in terms of potential for public outreach and relationships with external agencies). This is especially true in terms of psychology being seen as relevant to 'real life' by students, when there are claims that so little of their academic degree seems to address such application or broader skills development explicitly, and a placement year/semester may be a valuable and effective way to do this. However, the extent to which an undergraduate degree *should* be dominated by the attempt to address such wider issues is open to debate. In our survey, some lecturers argued against such an approach, "they are not here to understand the 'real world' (whatever that is) but to pursue an education", whilst others argued the opposite, "I certainly do think this should be a requirement". Whatever the scope of an undergraduate degree should be, it is clear that collecting further data (notably on student motivations for choosing to study psychology, employer expectations and perceived skills of psychology graduates, and destinations of psychology graduates, especially in terms of the professional psychology *versus* more general careers that graduates take up) would support a more informed debate on the most appropriate balance of curriculum and skills training in undergraduate psychology. As a lecturer commented in the commissioned survey, "I suspect that (unfortunately) changes will be driven by what students are or are not prepared to pay for" and, unless we are prepared to be purely reactive to such demand in this new consumer model of higher education, we need to develop clearer and more coherent arguments underpinning the future of the undergraduate psychology degree.

The current diversification of UK Higher Education provision (including private providers, franchised operations, on-line provision and overseas campuses and/or provision via partners) poses many challenges to psychology undergraduate providers. The role of accreditation or kitemarking becomes very crucial when there are many traditional providers and offerings to choose from, especially when provision is being sold internationally. There has been considerable debate about the historic role of the BPS in accrediting undergraduate degrees (with a

particular critique of the prescriptiveness of the content to be covered, although generally a welcome for the stress on the importance of research methods teaching and empirical work, as well as on the required resourcing for teaching). This debate is continuing, despite recent changes since the Health Professions Council took on the role of regulating entry to professional practice. The critics suggest that the accreditation process does not allow sufficient flexibility for an institution to create and offer a distinctive and attractive degree programme that plays to the distinctive strengths of the staff and institution, or to the needs of the students and employers associated with that institution. There are strong pressures on individual institutions to have distinctive offerings, and these pressures are set to increase as competition for students (with the funding they carry with them) increases. A postgraduate respondent to our survey commented "Departments will become more specialized at undergraduate level, simply as a means of playing to their strengths, which would be good in terms of pulling in more funding, but may restrict the 'broad underpinnings' necessary on which to build at higher level". How will HE institutions respond to these pressures in terms of how they influence curriculum design and pedagogy and how will these pressures interact with discipline- specific debates about the extent of specialism *vs* common content across the UK? Furthermore, there are concerns that increased competition between providers will result in pressure against collaboration between institutions or against attempts by professional bodies to work across institutional boundaries in setting curricula, agreeing common provision or indeed even sharing data (for example on destinations of graduates).

Defenders of the existing BPS approach stress the need to have an undergraduate degree which is common enough across institutions for those designing postgraduate training courses to assume a common set of skills and content knowledge of the discipline. Many postgraduate courses which provide access into the psychology professions want assurance that some core skill sets and knowledge are always covered (e.g. research methods, ethics and (increasingly) 'psychological literacy'), but then they also want to see evidence within the first degree of specialization since that helps graduates access Masters level study. This does not necessarily have to be delivered by the current BPS approach. This approach is also seen as providing a clearer sense of the nature of psychology as a discipline which graduates can 'take out' into the wide range of careers they will enter and also playing a part in improving knowledge of the nature of psychology amongst the public.

Later sections of this report deal in more detail with the discussion about what an agreed 'core' might be for undergraduate psychology education, and the role of employers, academics, professional bodies and students in determining this, but two core areas are almost unanimously agreed to be of value in the undergraduate degree: research methods (including ethics) and the history of the discipline. With these securely taught then perhaps the detail of the rest of the content is less important to specify and could be nuanced by the particular strengths of the department. As well as these content/skills that many agree should be required, there is clearly a need to ensure that other scholarly skills, and what has been called 'psychological literacy' (see Chapters 5 & 6 for more detail) form an important part of the UK undergraduate psychology degree. However, this approach may perhaps be a risky one. If such a broad brief is laid out and indeed perhaps no institution's offering would be refused accreditation on the grounds of content, is the process of any value? The debate continues, but it is clear that the BPS's recent shift in the accreditation process to a 'partnership model', working more with HE institutions rather than policing their provision, has been welcomed and academics look forward to working through the BPS to focus more effort in future on promoting the discipline.

There are a number of other pressures on the design of the undergraduate curriculum regardless of subject area which institutions teaching psychology need to take account of. For example, there is some concern that the EU-wide Bologna process is raising questions about the length and intensity of study for various levels of qualifications, many of which seem to clash with UK (England, Wales and Northern Ireland at least) models of 3 year undergraduate degrees. Perhaps more critically for existing UK HE provision is the move by some (mainly private) providers to fill the demand for 2-year degrees from students anxious about the mounting costs of higher education. Competition from private providers offering shorter degrees is likely to be most intense in subject areas where there are clear career benefits and routes to professions (currently most of such provision is within accountancy and law) but offerings in psychology are already being developed for the UK. Other pressures are emerging from the demand for more flexible and portable credit for learning, with students able to complete modules at different universities and 'build their own degrees'. Whilst limited credit transfer systems already exist in most UK universities, any large scale increase in the demand for such ways of studying would stretch the capability of the current system. The majority of UK HE students could be said to be studying part-time given the proportion of officially full time students doing at least part-time paid work during their undergraduate years, but the demand for official part-time study is set to expand since the Westminster government has extended the opportunity for financial support to part-time students studying at least a quarter of full time. Whilst wholly part-time providers such as The Open University and Birkbeck have well established reputations in delivering high quality higher education, the growth of part-time (and distance learning) study will place increasing demands on institutions to broaden the range of provision offered.

A further issue identified through our survey and discussions is the impact of the increasing diversity of students (both studying in the UK and in terms of international delivery of UK based teaching) and hence the need for the teaching of the discipline to be more able to deal in sophisticated and meaningful ways with the diversity of human experience and motivation. This raises the issue of how poor the discipline itself might be seen to be in terms of having developed enough of a non-Western focus in research, or indeed effective useful cross-cultural analyses, which could inform more nuanced content for high quality teaching.

A particular issue has been identified in terms of employment in healthcare/therapeutic work. This is the responsibility to maximize opportunities for psychology graduates in the healthcare professions. Do psychology graduates have the right skills and experience to have the competitive edge over students from other disciplines in applications to roles such as Psychological Welfare Practitioners or High Intensity Therapy Workers? Might we propose different 'step off' points for psychology postgraduate qualifications that link with different points in related careers (whether in healthcare, forensic or occupational areas)?

There have been many concerns expressed about the public conception of psychology and, particularly, the lack of appreciation of the scientific and rigorous approach that it entails. The BPS and AHPD need to do more to present psychology nationally (and internationally) to the public, policy makers/politicians and business leaders and to explain the nature and value of the discipline, and a wide range of practicing psychologists (both academics and clinicians) need to contribute to this endeavour by being more willing to engage with press and public (e.g., via talking heads on the BPS YouTube channel, taking part in media discussions and documentaries, being willing to be quoted in the press). The growing presence of psychology related materials, displays and presenters at science fairs and festivals around the UK should be welcomed, and the

BPS are doing more to help provide resources and support to members and institutions participating in such events, but these activities can certainly be further developed. As one lecturer in our survey commented, "The key will be the promotion of understanding of psychology at a national level and that means….more TV. So far much psychology on TV has been presented by non-psychologists (e.g. Robert Winston). We should get our own 'Brian Cox'!" The importance of such public engagement cannot be underestimated. It is also the case that such activities may need to be more effectively reflected in the promotion and reward criteria as a way of demonstrating the value of such activities in the modern academic role.

There is far from agreement about the best preparation for a psychology degree (and given the diversity of providers this is unlikely to be easily resolved), and the diversity at pre-tertiary level (not only between different exam boards but also across the different qualifications of A-level, International Baccalaureate and Scottish Highers/Advanced Highers) means HEIs cannot simply 'read off' a certain level or range of skills or content from a candidate having these qualifications. This results in them often preferring to ignore rather than build on students' pre-tertiary skills and knowledge. As a lecturer responding to the commissioned survey commented, "A-level Psychology needs to change to provide a better basic grounding in scientific method to better prepare students for degree level work. Understanding the principles of scientific method is much more valuable than having some familiarity with the subject area" and perhaps such an approach chimes with the proposal elsewhere in this section to focus the undergraduate 'core' of teaching on research methods work (including ethics) and on the history of psychology, leaving different providers to then put varying levels of emphasis on teaching the detailed content that most effectively represents the expertise of staff at their institution. As another lecturer in the survey commented, "One sensible solution is to look at the distinction between A-level and undergraduate courses in comparable science subjects and engage with learned societies in these areas to establish how they address the problem. The key issue is the variability".   In attempting to resolve some of the identified problems in the articulation between pre-tertiary and tertiary psychology education, what is needed is a genuine and concerted dialogue between staff at HEIs and pre-tertiary exam boards and teachers to understand each other's perspectives more effectively (there are many assumptions and prejudices on both sides) and clarify not only the difficulties schools, colleges and universities face but also the ways forward that are most likely to be fruitful to explore. Many see the key first development as the more widespread acknowledgement of psychology as a science subject when taught at pre-tertiary level, providing effective preparation for students to conduct scientific investigations, and having HEIs recognizing psychology pre-tertiary qualifications as science qualifications.

One final point to consider is that we might be well advised to do more within the higher education community to promote the insights from psychology that inform pedagogical development and HE course design across subject areas, given our expertise in understanding and enhancing learning. Given recent (e.g. Browne review of HE) calls for more widespread training and support for staff teaching in higher education, there will be increased demand for theoretical and empirical underpinnings to this work and for developing training materials. As later sections below suggest, academic psychologists could be using evidence on learning theories and pedagogical processes more effectively in designing better psychology courses, but the demand for such knowledge and expertise is likely to go beyond the subject area and would be an excellent way of working with other academics in our own and other institutions.

Recommendations

1.   The psychology community, including both individuals and organizations, must continue to promote vigorously the value of study and practice in the discipline to the public, policy makers and business leaders, emphasizing particularly the scientific and rigorous approach that it entails.

2.   Departments should consider responding to:
   a. The increasing recognition of the value of a placement as part of the undergraduate programme.
   b. The demand for more flexible and portable ways of obtaining credits for learning.
   c. The potential competition from private providers offering shorter degrees.

3.   Departments should consider developing ways of maximizing the opportunities for psychology graduates to enter the healthcare and other applied professions at a variety of different levels.

4.   There needs to be a continuing dialogue between HEI and exam boards and teachers in the the pre-tertiary sector to improve the articulation between school and university.

5.   The psychology community should do more within higher education to promote the insights from psychology that should inform all subject areas.

Chapter 3
Incorporating research and the influence of accreditation

Research in psychology has always embraced a wide range of domains and employed a variety of methodological approaches. This breadth has continued apace with the expansion in university student numbers over the past twenty years, a strong and sustained interest in studying for a psychology degree and a concomitant increase in academic and research staff. In particular, there has been an increase in the number of professional practice specialisms in the field (e.g., forensic, sport, coaching) that has been matched and supported by changes in research breadth and depth. What are these changes and how can they be introduced, incorporated and reflected in the undergraduate curriculum?

One notable trend that has occurred in recent years is an increase in intra- and inter-disciplinary research, often conducted in teams that include academic and practitioner researchers, working closely to address important theoretical and applied questions. Psychologists and psychological research has made key contributions across a wide range of important societal and economic concerns including road safety, cockpit design, and reading development. Research on understanding memory changes that occur in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, for example, has benefitted from the combined contribution of clinical psychology, experimental psychopathology and cognitive neuroscience. Psychologists are also found in and often lead interdisciplinary teams that are making a major contribution to our understanding of, for example, childhood obesity, the impact of diet on health, the causes and impact of adversity in childhood, and the identification of effective interventions for effecting and supporting change in health-related and other socially important behaviours.

Methodological advances, in psychology and/or cognate disciplines, are making an important contribution to the development of the discipline. One of these is access to and expertise in neuroimaging techniques such as fMRI, PET, ERP/EEG and TMS. These have increased our understanding of many aspects of social cognition, cognition, child development and psychopathology, particularly when this research is grounded in theories and findings from experimental psychology, neuropsychology and neuropsychiatry. The burgeoning field of developmental neuroscience, championed by leading researchers in developmental psychology, is an excellent example not only of the impact of neuroimaging techniques on theoretical advances but also of the contribution of behavioural genetics to our understanding of the area. Qualitative methods also have made strong contributions to improving our understanding of a number of key issues in health and counselling psychology.

Many of the above examples illustrate the important role that psychology plays as a 'hub discipline' (Cacioppo, 2007), a discipline that is capable of drawing together, in a synergistic fashion, techniques, theories, findings and professional practice from several areas of intra- and extra-disciplinary expertise to address complex and socially and economically important questions about human behaviour that require a cohesive interdisciplinary approach. It is questionable, however, whether they are appropriately reflected in many current degree curricula. One widely advanced opinion is that attempts to incorporate trends in research towards intra- and interdisciplinary enquiry, using a range of methodological tools, are handicapped or impeded by the criteria for our learned society accreditation – the BPS Graduate Basis for Chartering (GBC).

GBC, research developments and the curriculum:

The criteria for GBC rest on the QAA Benchmark statement for academic standards in a Psychology degree. To a large extent these appear to provide the scope for incorporating new developments into the student experience. For example, in the section on Knowledge Domains, in addition to the identification of core knowledge domains there is an explicit statement that '*students should also be exposed to novel developments in the discipline, including those that at present do not command acceptance*' and identify the importance of '*an understanding of the relations between psychology and cognate disciplines (such as biology, sociology and psychiatry)*' in addition to '*the assimilation of themes, theories, methods and findings from areas external to the discipline*'. At face value, therefore, the criteria appear to offer the opportunity to reflect recent or emergent developments in psychological research. Yet, the overriding experience/opinion of many academics (at the workshop and beyond) is that they are constrained by these criteria. Why might this be the case?

Specification of core content

One possibility may lie in the content of the 'core knowledge domains'. In the benchmark document these are research methods, biological psychology, cognitive psychology, personality and individual differences, developmental psychology and social psychology. Although these may appear relatively narrow, the examples provided indicate some breadth. 'Biological psychology,' for example, includes behavioural genetics, neuropsychology and socio-biology. In principle, therefore, provision of this core content could be provided through the inclusion of neuropsychology in a cognition module, behavioural genetics in a developmental module, etc. (It is interesting that neuroscience is not mentioned, suggesting perhaps that the examples provided may need to be updated more frequently.) Another possibility is that many aspects of social and developmental psychology, for example, could be delivered through a 'topic' module such as 'The Social Child'. In a similar vein, the core topic area of 'personality and individual differences' could be re-described as 'Difference', thereby enabling or encouraging the development of a broad 'topic' module (e.g., Psychology & the Legal System) that could encompass for example, cross-cultural issues, psychometrics, gender, sexual difference etc.

The widespread concern about an overly rigid curriculum could be a consequence of the delineation of specific core knowledge domains which in turn leads to an assumption (on the part of academic staff) and/or an expectation (from an accreditation team) that the course *must* include a specific module on, for example, biological psychology. If this is the case then clearly it can be remedied in the new 'accreditation by

partnership' process which should emphasise the possibility of providing core content, from any one sub-area, across more than one module. Integrated and research-led courses could help to broaden the nature of a degree programme, allowing greater diversity in the delivery of content that can be tailored to departmental strengths. This would enable students to gain a greater experience and appreciation of the multidisciplinary nature and applications of psychology and its ability to address important societal questions. It could serve to identify the extent to which current guidelines and practice are underpinned by excellent research and explore means through which this might be improved. An explicit encouragement to develop such innovative courses would be welcomed by many academic staff.

An arguably more drastic change would be to remove the need for any core content, thereby allowing the development of potentially radically different psychology degree content across the HE sector. One advantage of such a change would be the emergence of relatively specialised degree content, providing a larger element of choice for potential students. Another is that this would enhance the ability of relatively small departments to teach to their strengths, to the benefit of the student experience and potentially that of staff through the recruitment and retention of a 'critical mass' of researchers in a smaller number of research areas (although the latter would presumably benefit larger departments in the current research funding climate). There is considerable merit in this proposal. However, it could present some difficulties for the provision of postgraduate practitioner training, given its reliance on a 'core' body of knowledge at an undergraduate level. It would require also a radical re-examination of the nature and purpose of accreditation. Indeed, it could also lead to the removal of accreditation *per se*, by a learned society, something that would be in conflict with the increasing tendency in other disciplines for this form of 'approval' as a 'kitemark' of quality provision (see, for example, http://www.ibms.org/go/education-development:ibms-courses:accreditation). It could be argued that the importance of such a 'kitemark' is likely to increase rather than decrease in the current climate of increased student funding of university education through higher fees.

Assessment: nature and methods

Another area of concern among the academic community is that GBC accreditation restricts the development of different modes of assessment and their delivery. More specifically there is a belief that traditional methods of assessment (examination, essays, multiple choice tests, practical reports etc) carry more validity than arguably more innovative methods, e.g. peer assessment or web-site design. As with course content, this concern could be an (unintended) consequence of the types of examples provided in the benchmark statement, which could influence the expectations of both academic staff and accreditation teams. If so, it could be remedied in the new 'accreditation by partnership' process which could encourage both flexibility and the inclusion of interesting and challenging forms of assessment that meet the learning objectives of one or more courses. Furthermore, just as there is no inherent logical need for a component of core content (if retained) to be delivered in a single module there is no reason why it should be assessed separately from other core or optional content. This is an important point if 'core' material is delivered across a number of different integrated or thematic modules.

A further, different impediment to course development is the requirement that for a course to contribute to the award of GBC its assessment must contribute to the final degree. In many universities assessment of the first year of the degree (first 2 in Scotland) is made on a pass/fail basis and only Years 2 and 3 (3 and 4 in Scotland)

contribute to the final degree awarded. This places a great deal of pressure, on staff and students in Year 2, as this is inevitably the key year in which core content is delivered in order to allow for module choice and some degree of specialisation in Year 3. This situation restricts scope for innovation in course design and delivery. Moreover, it does not allow for variation in the design, delivery and assessment of course content across these two years that reflects the expertise of a particular department. Furthermore, it appears at odds with the stated request for progressive skill and knowledge development over the course of a 3 (or 4) year degree (QAA Benchmark statement). Logically, there is no reason why a pass mark at Year 1 cannot provide an appropriate assessment at that stage of the degree and thus the content of that year be included in the accreditation process.

HEA and BPS support for innovative teaching and assessment

The breadth of research domains and methodology, particularly the growth of intra- and inter-disciplinary research, can pose difficulties with respect to the delivery of this diversity, perhaps most obviously in the opportunity for direct experience of different methodologies but also in the development of innovative assessment. The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network has developed an excellent pool of resources and provided the opportunity for discussion and development – both remote and on site. There is an increasing need for further developments to support the delivery of new emerging fields and methods that are likely to pose problems in many if not most departments. Access to neuroimaging techniques, for example, is expensive and not available in all universities. Moreover, it is not practical to provide such access to more than a small number of students even when it is available, due to high training requirements. The development of virtual online training that is tailored for an undergraduate student in Year 2 or 3 would be welcomed and highly beneficial. Similarly, extensive research expertise in a variety of qualitative methods is not present in all departments and could be supplemented by freely available teaching tools and appropriate methods of assessment. Unfortunately, changes to the HEA make the provision of these and other useful resources that would benefit the student experience less certain in the near future. It is important therefore for the community to find a means of both maintaining and developing the invaluable resources and support that has been developed, nurtured and fostered by the The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network.

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Recommendations

1. Accreditation should include content and skills delivered and assessed in Year 1 (Years 1 & 2 in Scotland).

2. Accreditation documentation and processes should embrace flexibility and innovation in the delivery and assessment of core content.

3. Careful thought should be given to the unintended impact of removing 'core/desirable content' from the accreditation process.

4. The discipline needs to find a means of preserving and adding to the support and resources that it has benefitted from through the work of staff at the The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network.

Chapter 4
Psychology students in the 21st century

The number of students studying psychology has steadily increased in recent times. Currently the number of students on undergraduate programmes across the UK is only surpassed by students on business and law degrees. Overall, there are currently over 77,000 students (see Table 1) which has more than doubled in the past decade.

Table 1: Number of psychology students in the UK

Year	Total psychology students	Full-time PG	Full-time UG	Part-time PG	Part-time UG
2008/9	77530	7985	44945	7185	17420
2007/8	72570	7150	44625	6580	14215
2006/7	72475	6415	43725	8045	14290
2005/6	71185	5800	43200	8005	14180
2004/5	68265	5470	41175	7500	14125
2003/4	64480	5120	38580	7290	13495
2002/3	50780	4635	35795	6615	3735
2001/2	44085	4335	28690	6265	4790
2000/1	41730	4150	27260	6030	4290
1999/2000	39080	3660	26690	5530	3210
1998/9	37584	3348	25847	5144	3245

Source: www.hesa.ac.uk

However, although it is agreed that the number of people studying psychology is increasing, little is known about the nature of these students. There is some indication that the proportion of males to females is altering, with more female students entering psychology programmes compared to previous years. There is other demographic information that can be gleaned from routinely collected HESA statistics. For example, some 30% are studying psychology part-time, over 80% are female, 8% are non-UK and 3.5% are non-EU (HESA statistics). But this is now, what type of students will be entering psychology courses in the future?

Over the preceding decades the nature of psychology students, indeed students in general, has changed. The Widening Access and Participation agenda has welcomed many more students into HE than in previous generations offering valuable experiences, improved education and employment prospects to many more young people. Similarly, the drive of many institutions to increase their numbers of international students (not necessarily for altruistic reasons) has led to the nature of the student cohort changing and evolving. Whilst some have argued that these changes have reduced standards, others have argued that they have promoted diversity and enhanced student learning (Lantz, 2010). What is clear, however, is that this diversity has challenged lecturers to modify and develop their practice to take account of these cohort changes.

Furthermore, it is recognised that the nature of psychology students, indeed all students, may change over the coming years. The introduction of fees brought with it a marginal change but the proposed threefold increase in these fees along with the difficult economic climate in the UK suggests that the type and nature of students may significantly alter. Not only will this change but so will the expectations of the students change, as will their aspirations, needs and requirements.

A number of potential student types and their expectations and teaching requirements are presented below. Obviously this contains many generalisations which risks stereotyping large number of potential students (Kennedy, 2008) and engendering educational panic through reforming zeal based on assumptions rather than on evidence (Bennett et al, 2008). Whilst many of these characteristics are assumptions, an excellent chapter by Lantz (2010) provides more details based on solid research evidence which could supplement the material presented here.

Stereotype 1: Typical student

The typical A-Level student still forms the majority of undergraduates studying psychology. By "typical" we mean an 18 year old student that has just completed two years of A-Level study and has achieved a solid performance in these. Given the current state of the economy, many will be working part-time (i.e., less than 16 hours per week). These students are likely to be digital natives having experienced learning through the on-line and digital medium during their pre-university study. The nature of current A-levels may mean that such students come with certain expectations: more guidance than is often available at university, and a wish to retake modules/courses/assignments to improve grades. The lecturer may have to work with this group with the transition to independent learning, but this will be achievable and little change by the lecturer will be required.

Stereotype 2: Students requiring additional support

Given the growth of the higher education sector in recent years there has been a welcome expansion in the number of students studying for psychology degrees. With this increase has come a growing expectation for the 18 year old to be entering undergraduate study rather than entering work or apprenticeships. Indeed the number entering university in 1996 was some 300,000 which a little over a decade later had increased to 500,000 (UCAS, 2010). It is clear that the reach of higher education has demonstrably increased. This has necessarily resulted in the entrance into higher education of students with lower grades who are less able academically. Such students may require additional support and guidance in order to achieve their successfully complete their programme.

Stereotype 3: The mature female returning student

Psychology attracts a considerable number of mature students, many of whom are female. It is likely therefore that some, if not many, may be mothers who will be working as a primary carer. They will have nurtured and cared for their children. Once their children have reached a certain level of independence, the mother may feel ready to return to the job market, and may wish to study in preparation for future careers. Many students describe their aspirations as wishing to understand their own or their children's behaviour better, and see psychology as a subject that will allow this. Such students require flexible learning packages, advanced information and good planning support.

Stereotype 4: Retirees

The increased life expectancy has led to swathes of the population retiring in relatively good health with some unmet educational aspirations. This group may be relatively well off and have a wish to undertake a degree that they can complete for themselves and is not required for their own career development. Many are drawn to the intrinsically interesting subject of psychology. Such students may require more traditional education and an enhanced transaction into digital learning as they may be digitally illiterate and not have experienced education for a number of years.

Stereotype 5: Distance and part-time learners

Distance and part-time learners are an increasing proportion of students and are likely to be an ever increasing part. Whilst not identical, part-time students and distance learners may share the same aspirations: completing a degree flexibly whilst they deal with other issues in their lives - whether this be their caring responsibilities, their work life or their own disability. Obviously the distance learner requires excellent material that is appropriately supported and developed specifically for distance learners. Attempting to present material that is designed for traditional face to face teaching through distance learning media is unlikely to be pedagogically appropriate. Importantly, distance learners and part-time learners may also require support at so called unsocial or anti-social hours. The development of the 24/7 campus will be a result of such an increase in student numbers. But how can this be best managed? Or, perhaps more sensibly, how can this unrealistic expectation be best managed?

Stereotype 6: Uninterested - psychology as a default

With increasing competition for employment there may be students that feel the need to complete a degree in order to progress although are not really motivated to do so. Some students are attracted to a degree that appears the most interesting of a poor choice of subjects - selecting psychology as a default subject over the others that they may have studied previously but are not interested in. As such they may be less motivated to experience the true wonder of psychology but are functional learners - learning in order to pass exams in order to get a degree rather than be intrinsically interested in their subject. Whilst this may be an anathema to many academic psychologists the functional learner presents an interesting dilemma - they may work hard to shallow learn and are not interested or motivated in deep or active learning. They will learn what is required to pass, and do well at assessments, but little more.

Stereotype 7: Enforced career changes

Given the economic crises there are more and more individuals who are having to make enforced career changes - being made redundant from one career and needing to retrain in another. In previous economic down-turns the evidence has suggested that the number of university students increases for this very reason. Obviously it is uncertain whether the same will occur again in the current economic climate given not only the downturn but also the introduction of higher tuition fees. Such students will want to see the career opportunities associated with psychology: the transferability of skills and the employability statistics. There will also be the need for the applied nature of psychology to be explored and expanded on. Courses will have to change and develop to the growing needs of such students.

Stereotype 8: Supposedly full-time students

Given the current economic climate along with the need to pay higher tuition fees many students are working to support their education. Whilst this has long been a feature of higher education, the fundamental difference is that many full-time students are now employed full-time in order to support themselves compared to the stereotypical part-time bar or retail job often associated with full-time students of old. Consequently academic support may need to focus on developing flexible learning, attempting to support students' learning, and dealing with academic isolation that occurs when one does not have the time to "hang around" campus. Furthermore, students may also be forced to live at home rather than in university accommodation, given the costs associated with the latter. Thus, there will be one large group of students who live in university accommodation and have built up good working and social relationships with their peers, and another large group of students who have not built up so many supportive relationships since they live at their parental homes (i.e., "residential vs. Day Care" student difference). There may be a need to facilitate the relationship build up in this latter group, not only for harmonious cohort work but also to enable student support throughout their university career which can be fundamental in reducing attrition.

Stereotype 9: Overseas students

By overseas students we mean those non-EU based students with different cultures and whose first language is often not English. However, what must be noted from the outset is that these international students are not a homogeneous group. There will be a difference between those that are drawn from China and those originating in India, for example. However, it is likely that expectations of teaching may differ from home-based students, and a period of acclimatization to the UK-centric curriculum and teaching approaches will be required. Such students will require assistance with integration/relationship-building with their cohort/peers, as loneliness and isolation can often be major issues. Assistance with language, especially humour and colloquialisms, will be required as will the expectations of teaching and assessment activities which may be radically different from their previous home-based experiences.

Stereotype 10: Home-based international students

A growing number of home-based students with overseas heritages are a feature of psychology cohorts. In the past many Asian students for example, would have studied traditionally vocational subjects such as pharmacy, medicine and accountancy: culturally this was seen as the purpose of university study. However, there is a growing realisation that psychology is also a vocational subject and worthy of study. Although some cultures are becoming more accepting of studying psychology, in the main, the undergraduate curriculum does not prepare students for understanding the types of stereotypes these students may be up against. So whilst students come into University, many of them may still need to justify their choices to family members and we must support this group if we want to continue to widen participation. Similarly, there is a growing appreciation of the value of higher education subjects outside the "vocational subjects".

Stereotype 11: Psychology as a component of the degree

There are many students studying psychology that are not aspiring psychologists. For example, medical, nursing, engineering, computing students all have elements of psychology included in their undergraduate curriculum. Lecturers will increasingly be employed to take on such student groups and deal with the number of issues that such cohorts can bring with them. For example, the pre-conceptions of psychology, the difficulty in engaging with the subject and ensuring the relevance of psychology to their degree choice is highlighted. A chapter by Upton (2010) outlines in more detail the needs, expectations and challenges associated with teaching such students.

Conclusions

Students of the 21st century will also have a range of personal characteristics that may require additional forms of support. For example, the digital native students (Prensky, 2001) will have grown up with computers, video games, mobile phones. They will access social networking sites, emails, texting, Twitter and so on with ease and as a preference for information gathering. Furthermore, the digital native prefers multi-tasking, active learning, random switches of attention and the speeding up of information presentation. From a negative, digitally illiterate perspective, this may be translated as a limited attention span with an inability to deal with the concentration required for traditional work and assessments. However, for others there is an ability to multi-task, to deal with increasing and heightened media presentations.

The lecturer will need to digitally present the information, but also teach evaluative skills to deal with the masses of information available - to filter the relevant from the irrelevant. Similarly, the tutor will need to design out or identify plagiarism in assessments, which can be a negative consequence of the increase in on-line information.

The motivation of the student to complete a university undergraduate degree also varies, and may include the development and maintenance of social relationships, career development, and the intrinsic need to acquire knowledge (Lieb, 1991). However, there may have been a change recently which will continue to evolve over the coming years: moving from intrinsic academic stimulation to personal and vocational advancement. With all of these stereotypes, there is a need for the full and flexible support of students from a wide range of backgrounds. This means supporting students from pre-joining through to completion of their programme: developing appropriate models of support, information and guidance to raise realistic aspirations with realistic expectations which are subsequently met (HEFCE, 2001; Zinkiewicz & Trapp, 2004). Such support may involve:

- Reduction in isolation and increasing cohort cohesion (Allen, 2000)

- Flexibility in timetabling approach (Lantz, 2010)

- Outlining expectations (Grover, 2006)

- Improving academic confidence (Zinkiewicz & Trapp, 2004)

- Enhancing employability of successful graduates

- Dealing with the internationalisation of the cohort and the curriculum.

There is one key issue that pervades: students are fee-payers and will expect to receive an appropriate service that is of value to them and the fee they have paid. When fees were initially introduced, many in HE considered that the offering could be likened to joining a gym. Students have access to a complete array of exercise facilities, as well as to the help, advice, and supervision of fitness experts, and the company and support of other members with similar goals. Everything they need to succeed is available 24/7, and though the least fit among them may need initially more help, the results they achieve will depend almost entirely on whether, how, and how diligently each person takes advantage of what the gym has to offer. However, the landscape may be changing as indicated by one respondent in a report by Lomas (2007): "I pay my council tax for certain services but all I have to do is put my dustbin bags out once a week. Higher education is a partnership between lecturers and students. Students are not buying a product or a service; they are investing time in a joint venture" (p.40). This view may now be changing and evolving - with the Browne report and the increase in fees to potentially £9k per annum the expectations and demands of students need to be carefully considered, managed and some even acceded to. This may mark a fundamental shift in perspective for higher education. Furthermore, the introduction of the National Student Survey and its growing acceptance and awareness by future students (and their sponsors) has had a significant impact on the behaviour of potential students and university staff. Often seen as a potential marketing tool the focus has shifted, subtly for some, more dramatically for others, from a focus on the "needs" of students to a focus on their "likes" and "wants". We, the university academic, may be seeing students as customers rather than as partners in their academic journey.

Finally, the concept of "being a student" (Barnett, 2006) suggests that the 'will to learn' is a key aspect of the student experience that needs to be encouraged and nurtured. According to this view it is not the subject of study or the acquisition of skills that educators need to focus on but rather personal aspects such as authenticity, dispositions, inspiration, passion and spirit. Barnett's call to educators in higher education to consider how they can develop curricula and pedagogies that provide students with the qualities to persist, adapt and thrive in this environment is relevant to the development of 'the will to learn'. We must all remember that it is not only the students that are changing, but so also is the wider environment: we must develop the individual student, whatever their characteristics or backgrounds, to cope with this changing environment - to thrive no matter what we face.

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Recommendations

1. Students' increasingly wide variety of personal characteristics, technical skills and motivations will require increasingly full and flexible support, both pastoral and academic. How this will be done will vary from department to department, depending on the nature of their student intake, but examples of the kinds of steps that will need to be taken are:

   a. Reducing isolation and increasing cohort cohesion
   b. Increasing flexibility in timetabling approach
   c. Outlining expectations clearly
   d. Improving academic confidence
   e. Enhancing employability of successful graduates
   f. Dealing with the internationalisation of the cohort and the curriculum
   g. Introducing ways of developing students' "will to learn" in addition to the more traditional acquisition of skills and knowledge.

2. The introduction of higher fees, on top of the greater awareness of the National Student Survey and the increasingly specific information that departments will have to publish about the way their programmes are delivered will mean that we shall have increasingly to treat our students as customers rather than as academic partners.

Chapter 5
Graduate employment

Introduction

This chapter makes five major recommendations. We realise that the structure and length of degrees vary throughout the United Kingdom, but nevertheless the points made here are apposite for all degrees involving psychology, even those that have only a single introductory module to the discipline.

We also realise that there are considerable differences in the aims of different higher education institutions, and that the notion of "one size fits all" is inappropriate. Some institutions see their prime focus to be developing the research skills of their undergraduates with the aim of placing them at the forefront of cutting edge research in the future, whilst others are concentrating more on producing general graduates for a wide employment market. Nonetheless the points raised in this chapter need to be considered in all psychology higher education departments.

Inevitably the areas touched upon in this chapter go beyond the immediate goal of ensuring that psychology graduates achieve employment on graduation and include much wider questions such as what the purposes of tertiary education are and whether they should be modified. It is important to emphasise from the outset that a degree is but an initial step for developing people, society and the future. Thus degree programmes should be concerned not only with the immediate current demands of the workplace but also with wider visions of the future. That is, a course should not just concentrate on knowledge and the contemporary. This chapter emphasises the areas of skills development and awareness both of our students and their potential employers for now and the future, the need for some form of placement experience as part of a degree programme, and the importance of "psychological literacy".

Skills development and awareness

It is widely remarked (e.g. QAA, 2010) that 80% of psychology graduates do not directly become professional, academic or experimental psychologists (although there is a dearth of more long-term follow-up studies in this area, especially as notions of careers change and people develop throughout their lives). Despite this, there is an emphasis on the need for a common core to ensure that an undergraduate education in psychology is a useful starting point for those who wish to go on to become professional psychologists.

This core, as well as emphasising substantive knowledge areas of the discipline, also highlights the need for skills development throughout a degree. These skills are valued by a whole variety of outside bodies, and all are important to cover in a psychology degree.

Attention is drawn in particular to the Benchmark Statements made by the Quality Assurance Agency regarding psychology, but it also worth noting that professional bodies also emphasise the need for skills proficiency, and that some awareness of these requirements would be useful to all graduates of psychology.

The Quality Assurance Agency Benchmark Statement for Psychology (QAA 2010)

In its general preamble the QAA psychology benchmark stresses that "due to the wide range of generic skills, and the rigour with which they are taught, training in psychology is widely accepted as providing an excellent preparation for many careers. In addition to subject skills and knowledge, graduates also develop skills in communication, numeracy, teamwork, critical thinking, computing, independent learning and many others, all of which are highly valued by employers" (p.2). It goes on to emphasise that "psychology is distinctive in the rich and diverse range of attributes it develops – skills which are associated with the humanities (e.g. critical thinking and essay writing) and the sciences (hypotheses-testing and numeracy)" (p.5).

The QAA benchmark lists a series of general principles, subject specific skills and generic skills. The latter are summarised as follows - "on graduating with an honours degree in psychology, students should be able to:

- communicate effectively. Effective communication involves developing a cogent argument supported by relevant evidence and being sensitive to the needs and expectations of an audience. This is accomplished through specific demands to write both essays and scientific-style reports, and through experience in making oral presentations to groups. The standard of written language should be at an acceptable standard with respect to grammar, punctuation and spelling

- comprehend and use data effectively. This is accomplished through the significant core of research training in a psychology degree that acquaints graduates with understanding, analysing, and presenting complex data sets

- be computer literate. Psychology students are introduced to, and become familiar with, computers early in their training and will display, at the very least, skill in the use of word processing, databases and statistical software packages

- retrieve and organise information effectively. Psychology graduates will be familiar with collecting and organising stored information found in library book and journal collections, and in computer and internet sources

- handle primary source material critically

- engage in effective teamwork

- problem solve and reason scientifically. The research process, which is at the centre of studying psychology enables graduates to identify and pose research questions, to consider alternative approaches to their solutions and to evaluate outcomes

- make critical judgements and evaluations. The need to take different perspectives on issues and problems, to evaluate them in a critical and sceptical manner to arrive at supported conclusions, is emphasised and taught throughout a psychology degree. The importance of looking for similarities and general principles to increase the power of the analysis is also stressed

- be sensitive to contextual and interpersonal factors. The complexity of the factors that shape behaviour and social interaction will be familiar to psychology graduates and will make them more aware of the basis of problems and interpersonal conflict. They should also be more sensitive to the importance of enhancing co-operation to maximise the effectiveness of individual skills as shown in group work and team building

- use effectively personal learning and project management skills, becoming more independent and pragmatic as learners. Taking responsibility for one's own learning and skill development is increasingly expected throughout a psychology degree, where an emphasis on learning to learn is stressed. In particular, psychology degrees normally culminate in the completion of an independent, empirical inquiry where a pragmatic approach to a time-limited project is required" (p.7). This project should also demonstrate awareness of ethical issues and current codes of ethics and conduct.

Although many of these are not exclusively the provenance of psychology, the full set can be seen as being a unique combination of degree skills. Although most of them are covered to some extent in all psychology degrees, it is not always obvious to the graduating student what it is that they have achieved in the way of skill development. What makes a psychology student unique is thus not necessarily evident to them, or clearly articulated to potential employers (in this connection see Maltby et al (2009) for a study concerning students' awareness of the skills of a psychologist).

Of particular note is the emphasis on Personal Development Planning (PDP), which may be called something different in some institutions, but involves the student actively reflecting on their ongoing development and as a result of this reflection perhaps changing. Some institutions concentrate just on the development of study skills here; although this is worthy in its own right, PDP can mean a lot more and help to develop more generic skills which will be of ongoing use throughout a graduate's subsequent life. Professional psychology and many other professions emphasise the need for this to be carried out on a regular basis, and it is a requirement of registrants of the Health Professions Council that this be done. PDP can be metacognitive, thinking about thinking, in order to maximise learning, following a cycle of setting goals and action plans, carrying them out, evaluating the outcomes, reflecting on the process, and then starting the cycle again. This helps the individual to become more aware of their skills, to identify those that need to be worked upon, etc.. This process should be useful in helping the student to become more independent and self confident and to develop.
In addition attention could be drawn to:

The British Psychological Society (BPS) Core Competencies

These vary slightly depending on which specialist area is being looked at, and are subject to revision over time.

They are intended for postgraduate courses, but awareness of the requirements would also be useful to undergraduates. An example might be clinical psychology (BPS 2006), where the core competencies listed are transferable skills, psychological assessment, psychological formulation, psychological intervention, evaluation, research, personal and professional skills, communication and teaching and service delivery.

Health Professions Council (2010) Standards of Proficiency: Practitioner Psychologists

Although intended for professional practitioner psychologists, the Health Professions Council (HPC) lists standards of proficiency. Although the details and the issues involved here will not be of immediate relevance to every undergraduate psychology student, the skills identified are relevant to a variety of occupations so some knowledge of them will help employability. They include understanding the importance of and being able to maintain confidentiality, recognising the need for effective self-management of workload and resources, and being able to monitor and review the on-going effectiveness of planned activity and to modify it accordingly.

Thus this section is arguing that explicit skills coverage is essential in undergraduate psychology programmes.

Wider awareness of the skills of the psychology graduates

Following on from the argument raised above, as well as making students more aware of the skills that they have developed during their undergraduate career, there is a need to try to make sure that employers are made aware of the unique constellation of skills that psychology graduates possess.

Halpern (2010) cites a number of studies from the USA which are useful to consider, especially as they highlight problems which are potentially remediable and which could be addressed during a degree where specific attention was given to the development of requisite skills (particularly via the possibility of placements, as further discussed below).

Landrum and Harrold (2003, in Halpern, 2010) reported research on what employers of psychology graduates are looking for in terms of skills and abilities. In descending rank order they are:

- Listening skills

- Ability to work with others as part of a team

- Getting along with others

- Desire and willingness to learn

- Willingness to learn new and important skills

- Focus on customers or clients

- Interpersonal relationship skills

- Adaptability to changing situations

- Ability to suggest solutions to problems

- Problem solving skills (successfully implementing solutions to problems)

Gardner in a more general survey (2007 in Halpern 2010) found that new hires are fired because of (in descending rank order):

- lack of work ethic or commitment

- unethical behaviour

- failure to follow instructions

- missing assignments or deadlines

- inappropriate use of technology

- being late for work

A USA Employer Survey of graduates (AAC&U 2008 in Halpern 2010) found:

- 33% did not possess the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in entry level positions

- 46% were not well prepared in global knowledge

- 42% lacked self direction

- 37% had poor writing skills

- 31% lacked critical thinking skills

- 30% lacked adaptability

- 26% lacked self knowledge

All the above clearly indicate employers' views as to where tertiary education can be improved.

A particular emphasis is that psychology is increasingly being viewed as a STEM subject (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) at a time when there are fewer graduates with such skills (or even as a STEM+ subject, with added skills such as communication). Bray (2010), in the American context, particularly emphasises this, pointing out that "Psychological knowledge is essential to scientific and technological innovation. Technology requires the use of human operators, and understanding human capacities and limits is essential for implementing technological advances. STEM initiatives in education and training enhance human capital by providing:

- scientists and engineers who continue the research and development that is central to the economic growth of our country

- technologically proficient workers who are able to keep pace with rapidly developing scientific and engineering innovations

- scientifically literate voters and citizens who make intelligent decisions about public policy and who understand the world around them" (p.2).

Bray goes on to furnish many examples where psychological research has had a major impact on technological design to reduce accidents and other problems. Wider promulgation of information such as this to potential employers might help them to realise the potential contribution of the discipline. He also cites examples where ignoring human factors in seeking technological solutions to ongoing problems have had disastrous consequences. All these points could usefully be made to employers, as part of a wider exercise in attempting to increase the general public's knowledge about the contribution of the discipline to society.

Encouraging Placements

There is clear evidence that the inclusion of some form of placement as part of a psychology degree is to the benefit of the student in terms of employability and personal development; see for instance Reddy and Moores (2006). Such practice would also help to fulfil the previous aim by making employers more aware of the potential of psychology students.

There are many different ways in which this can be incorporated into a psychology degree, and there is no intention to be prescriptive here, but to draw colleagues' attention to various possibilities. Practice varies from the provision of a complete sandwich year where a student spends a year away from the university (which could be in another country) to making use of pre-existing relatively brief employment, such as working in a campus bar. It can be a whole module or a discrete component of a practical psychology course. Similarly some institutions provide a great deal of support for their students, including extensive preparation and debriefing, whilst others expect the whole process to be entirely student-directed (alumni networks where they exist can be useful here) and provide very little in the way of supervision. For some it is an assessable and important part of the degree, whilst others see it as being formative or contributing to some form of PDP. It can be mandatory or voluntary, and can involve some form of voluntary or charitable work.

It can take the form of providing mentoring for other students who are at an earlier stage in their university career, or providing support for a student who has some specific educational need. It can take place during term time or during vacations. Placements could also involve assisting with ongoing research work in the department, both for staff and possibly for postgraduates. Arguably any form of such experience is potentially of relevance to the study of psychology; the focus need not necessarily be specifically psychological. It can be in the form of providing a variety of skills, such as producing leaflets or posters for a charity, or carrying out a survey for them (which could be linked in with an independent research project, for instance).

Psychological Literacy

This important concept goes back to the major theme of this chapter; namely that a psychology degree should not solely be about the employability of the graduate. This opens up wider questions as to what the purpose of tertiary education should be, and the notion that a degree is about life-long learning and the contribution that the individual graduate will be making to society, and how this can be enhanced through the study of psychology. It is recognised that there may be dangers in generating fresh jargon, but it is felt that the wider debate about this term and the extent to which a psychology degree is intended to develop beyond just current employability skills makes it worth considering, and will help to ensure a paradigm shift in thinking about the purposes of a degree.

From the outset it is important to stress that this is very much a developing concept, and that different conceptualisations exist as to what precisely it is that the concept refers to; nonetheless it is hoped that this section of this chapter will help to alert the reader to this interesting concept.

McGovern et al (2010) use the term "psychological literate citizens" to refer to those students who develop as a result of their psychology degree into "critical scientific thinkers and ethical and socially responsible participants in their communities" (p.10). This is expanded and illustrated by case studies providing examples as to how such literacy can permeate into everyday life.

The notion of psychological literacy is expanded to cover:

- "having a well defined vocabulary and basic knowledge of the critical subject matter of psychology

- valuing the intellectual challenges required to use scientific thinking and the disciplined analysis of information to evaluate alternative courses of action

- taking a creative and amiable sceptic approach to problem solving

- applying psychological principles to personal, social and organisational issues in work, relationships and the broader community

- acting ethically

- being competent in using and evaluating information and technology

- communicating effectively in different modes and with many different audiences

- recognising, understanding and fostering respect for diversity

- being insightful and reflective about one's own and others' behaviour and mental processes" (p.11).

It thus includes knowledge, and also skills, critical thinking, ethics, professional values, communication and most importantly the application of these to international, national, community, organisational, social and personal issues (including the self, immediate set of family and friends, community, national, global). Thus a psychology degree is seen as being relevant throughout life, and not just for employment, with an emphasis on ethical and socially responsible problem solving as part of the wider community. Education develops various forms of literacy, and psychological literacy is seen as being especially broad with the potential to contribute to many different aspects of life. Therefore, the inclusion of psychology into education at any level will help to produce better informed citizens, who though their exposure to psychology end up knowing more and being better at evaluating the world around themselves more critically, and with an ethical lens.

What is needed is more promulgation of this notion, with exemplars, so students, staff, employers and the wider society are all made more aware of what a psychology graduate can potentially contribute at many levels to the society that they are part of. Just as students, and their potential employers, are not always aware of what skills they have developed as result of successfully completing their degree, they are unlikely to be aware of the perspective that a psychology degree can contribute to the social world in general. We need to promote

the evidence that psychology graduates have experience in varying areas such as ergonomics, coaching, information processing, conflict management, attitude change, decision making and group work, and skills in carrying out observations, interviews, surveys and experiments. In addition, psychological knowledge can bring unique insights into human thinking, emotion, motivation and behaviour. Psychology graduates understand individual differences, diversity and ethics. Psychological literacy means being able to apply this knowledge and skills to real life contexts. This might be developed during a degree by for instance setting students problems to solve within a context of local business or community, so that both students and employers will become aware of the real life applicability of psychological skills and knowledge.

By engaging in this way with the community (public and employer) and the media, we and our students can challenge common misperceptions about psychology, and communicate the distinctiveness of real psychological literacy. This is very much an ongoing debate, and a book by Cranney & Dunn (2011) explores this area in more detail.

New skills

It is essential to realise that a skills focus is inevitably dated, and that a degree is just helping to start individuals into life-long learning. Just as psychology degrees have moved from teaching BASIC programming to utilising complex statistical packages, so the skills developed need to be reappraised in terms of fitness for purpose. Similarly the activities and the skills of reflecting developed in Personal Development Planning need to be continued with and to be engaged in throughout life.

There may also, for instance, be an increasing need for the development of entrepreneurship as part of an undergraduate psychology degree programme, and for the teaching of the development of basic business plans and costings, with more on people management.

Society is changing and becoming more diverse, and we need to produce graduates who can react and respond appropriately to such changes. Our curriculum is to a large extent western focused, and there may be a need to examine the development and use (and misuse) of psychology in other cultural contexts. There is now much more emphasis on the global cultural context, on sustainability and interconnectedness throughout the world, which our degrees may need to reflect. Community psychology may be another direction to take, with an emphasis on transformational change. Knowledge exchange and transfer is also worth considering, interacting with industry and the commercial sector, and applying research to real world business projects.

As has been emphasised earlier there is a need for a balance in terms of producing basic skills for professional postgraduate training, research, other careers and life, but there is also a need to see all these to some extent as being interconnected.

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Recommendations

1. Make the skills gained by psychology students more explicit to students:

   a. Encourage students to communicate these skills rather than presuming that such skills are obvious, widely known, or commonplace.
   b. Good teaching practice should require students to understand and regularly reflect on the skills they have gained.
   c. Require the use of diverse assessment practices to ensure that all the skills in the QAA benchmark are assessed.
   d. Initiate reflection or PDP (or similar) from Year 1, and continue it as part of the curriculum in all years, acting on the outcomes of such action.
   e. The BPS could help market non-psychology professions to psychology graduates.

2. Make the skills gained by psychology students more explicit to employers:

   a. The BPS could market psychology to non-psychology professions.
   b. DVDs of employers making statements about the valuable attributes of psychology graduates.
   c. Show employers that psychology graduates have skills, training and capabilities related to innovation, enterprise and creative development.
   d. Emphasise psychology as a STEM+ subject which includes added value, including abilities to communicate and to understand others.
   e. Make the achievements of psychology more public, including the example of the achievements of psychology alumni.

3. Encourage placements:

   a. Every student should consider it, even if every student does not do it.
   b. There are a whole variety of possibilities here.
   c. Placements can be anywhere, not necessarily psychology-related professions.
   d. Work experience would help employer engagement.
   e. Have students arrange their own placements.
   f. Case studies would be useful.

4. Psychology literacy (or psychological understanding):

   a. Understanding and appreciating diversity, mental health issues, global challenges, etc.
   b. Taking a leadership role in addressing psychological illiteracy.
   c. Broader ethical training, using their psychological understanding for good, rather than (just) to find things out or to fix harm.

5. New skills:

   a. Attempt to equip students not just for what is (foreseeably) needed now, but for whatever will happen in the next 40 years (or more).
   b. Compassionate awareness and cultural competence.
   c. Global citizenship.

Actions and actors needed to achieve these recommendations:

1 and 2. BPS and HEA: publications, promotions, promulgation – for departments, students and employers. Also, BPS accreditation through partnership process to encourage (and highlight or commend good instances of) the implementation of QAA benchmark requirements for integrated skills development.

3. HEA: produce a pack on placements including case studies from departments.
Then use this to sell placements to HoDs via AHPD.

4. BPS and HEA: find and collate relevant resources to raise awareness – articles in The Psychologist, sessions at BPS conference, etc. Harder to do, and longer to implement.

5. A longer term monitoring project to continue to examine how a psychology education has served and is serving the needs of psychology graduates and the wider society.

Chapter 6
Teaching and curriculum issues

Previous chapters in this report have made recommendations based on the changing context of UK higher education, psychology as a diverging discipline, the diversity of students, and the employability of psychology graduates. In this chapter recommendations are made relating to teaching and curriculum issues. In particular, attention is drawn to the importance of students' understanding the relevance and application of psychological knowledge to real world issues, the constraints on the integration of knowledge within psychology undergraduate programmes, the importance of professional development for teaching staff, a broader perspective around the teaching of ethics, and high quality resources for teaching.

Improving the student learning experience

Two strong views emerge from the consultation and subsequent discussions. The first is how best to provide psychology graduates with the appropriate psychological literacy (Cranney & Dunn, 2011) to maximise their contribution and performance in the workplace and beyond, regardless of their future employment trajectory. Clearly, courses must provide learning tasks that serve to challenge students' preconceptions and develop their critical thinking skills. Psychological literacy can be further developed through improving students' scientific literacy through research methods courses, the final year research project and research led teaching, as well as activities that debate the value of the scientific approach and different epistemiological approaches within psychology. Providing opportunities for students to reflect on and practise applying their knowledge of psychology within the real world is another powerful tool. One student's comment reflects the difficulty students may have in applying theoretical knowledge to the real world: "focus on theories that are more related to our everyday life and not on colour vision and depth vision for example." Whilst this lecturer's comment presents a different view: "I want them to know about psychological theories and methods. They should be then able to do the application themselves".

The second view is that students need to become more practised in integrating different aspects of psychological knowledge gained on undergraduate programmes. Currently, as discussed in Chapter 3, there are a number of perceived and actual constraints on designing courses for integration of content knowledge namely, modularisation, benchmark statements, BPS accreditation standards and available staff resource. These factors, taken together, often result in teaching discrete units representing core areas of psychology, for example, cognitive, developmental, social modules. As one lecturer commented in the online consultation, "I

think we need to think seriously about the constraints that we have put on psychology UG education - particularly the focus on the arbitrary categories (social, cognitive etc). I think the BPS has provided an unecessary straight jacket on UG psychology. I think UG psychology programmes are often boring as a consequence, and do not enthuse students about psychology. I think that creativity has been stifled at UG level. I think the focus on traditional categories does not answer the questions that students (and people in general) have about themselves and others, and this needs to be addressed".

Teaching discrete areas of psychology makes it more difficult for students to integrate their knowledge although for some students, but certainly not all, there may be some integration within their final year project. In some departments, integration of knowledge can be achieved from courses specifically designed for this purpose, sometimes known as capstone courses. However, this approach whilst better than nothing may come too late in the degree programme to be effective.

The QAA benchmarks state that they are 'not intended to be overly prescriptive in defining the subject knowledge acquired by students' but require 'significant coverage of certain core areas'. However there is some confusion between the QAA benchmarks and BPS accreditation guidelines as well as a misperception that one or both define a curriculum resulting in comments similar to this one: "Psychology is stagnating - much of the curriculum bears a striking similarity to what was being taught in the 1980s - we must start to find ways to allow diverse and radical thinking to emerge in psychology instead of rehashing tired and philosophically bankrupt material from the past…Degree programmes in psychology need to be diverse and characterful, not standardized…Perhaps we could evaluate psychology programmes on the ways in which they contribute to and enhance social, community and culturally grounded activities, their links with local practioners and community projects etc.?".

The QAA benchmarks do suggest 'students should be exposed to novel developments in the discipline, including those that at present do not command consensus' and sections 3.7 and 4.2 both refer to integration and interpretation within *and between* core areas and the ability to 'extrapolate and comprehend' the applications of psychological knowledge. More consideration of these aspects of the QAA benchmarks could be helpful to students. Examples might include courses that highlight the conceptual tensions and challenges within psychology early on in the degree programme, examples of exposing students to respectful and measured academic debate and more cross-paradigmatic teaching and learning. Many examples of good practice exist and it is important that departments have opportunities to share and learn from each other. BPS accreditation visits could have a role in identifying good practice around the integration and application of knowledge. Removing the BPS requirement for all core areas to be assessed would make it easier for core material to be taught across the three (or four) year degree, and allow for better integration of material within modules thereby reducing the compartmentalisation of psychological knowledge by students.

The value to students of work placements, work in local communities and spending time studying abroad are well-recognised. The constraints to these include the economic climate, timetabling, organizational time and student motivation. However, there are departments with excellent mechanisms in place to facilitate these activities and it is recommended that integration of these activities are, at least, considered as part of any undergraduate psychology degree course redesign.

There is general agreement that the scope and type of undergraduate psychology degree programmes will continue to expand as departments play to their strengths and align to university mission statements. While the consultation revealed little appetite for a standardised first year there was some support for developing an agreed framework to inform entry students about what is covered in first year psychology undergraduate degrees, particularly in relation to statistical knowledge, research and study skills. Such a framework may address this student's comment in relation to their expectations: "A Year 1 statistics module spent weeks learning standard deviation and averages, this is covered in GCSE Maths, students required a B to be accepted onto the course, so these basic mathematical skills should not have received hours of lessons. Also some people on my course didn't like the amount of maths and science, the degree is a BSc, if they didn't want to do that shouldn't they of chosen a BA. These need to be clearer on open days".

As discussed in Chapter 3, there was also support for the BPS to offer a kitemark of quality. It is proposed that the criteria for such a kitemark should focus less on the content of the programme and be more student-focused looking at opportunities for student development, integration of knowledge, work opportunities and teaching methods. A further step would entail BPS Divisions to support the kitemark by signaling that 'this course prepares you well for entry into this psychological profession'. Likewise other professions, for example human resources, could signify it as a relevant entry degree for that profession.

Professional development for teaching

The provision of teacher training for HE educators is now available in all HE institutions. However, there is considerable variability both in the types and depth of courses on offer and anecdotal evidence suggests that many lecturers find institutional courses to be too generic. The need for a more discipline-oriented approach to teaching is being addressed in the current Higher Education Academy review of its UK Professional Standards Framework. The revised Framework is likely to recommend the establishment of an agreed benchmark for discipline-based teaching expertise:

- HE institutions should implement a formal mentoring policy whereby academic staff undertaking an HE teaching qualification (e.g. PG Certificate in HE or equivalent) are mentored by discipline-based academic staff with acknowledged teaching expertise.

- HE institutions should implement a policy whereby all probationary academic staff are observed in their teaching on more than one occasion by discipline-based staff with acknowledged teaching expertise in the specific discipline or a related discipline/subject area.

- HE institutions should ensure that where academic staff undertake a teaching qualification (e.g. PG Certificate in Higher Education or equivalent) they are provided with a core module (or equivalent) which has a clear focus on the pedagogy of their discipline/subject area and is supported by relevant discipline/ subject specialists.

In addition, but outside the existing UK Professional Standards Framework, is the need for institutions to recognise the need for continuing discipline specific professional development, for example, keeping up to date with new research methods. This may be particularly important when teachers are not research active. After all, people tend to teach what they know about. As one student in the national consultation commented:

"I feel the research we get taught relies heavily on the research our lecturers have studied. So some new areas are left untaught."

It is recommended that the professional bodies and the Association of Heads of Psychology Departments seek opportunities to work with the Higher Education Academy in developing the benchmark for discipline-based expertise in teaching psychology. Opportunities might also exist for these groups to work with the Higher Education Academy on appropriate theoretical content relating to the psychological principles underlying teaching and learning to ensure institutional courses reflect advances in psychological research relating to learning processes (e.g., Trapp, 2010; Worrell et al., 2010 and Mayer, 2001).

Other ideas put forward for professional development in relation to teaching include the development of a buddying or coaching system focusing on teaching psychology; the development of a database of people who would be willing to discuss their own innovative teaching practice or teaching research with other departments and participation by postgraduates and new lecturers in the online course *GRAD 980: Preparing to Teach a Psychology Course* run by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at University of New Hampshire (http://www.unh.edu/teaching-excellence/GRAD980/Index.htm). The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network has funded a number of new lecturers on the GRAD 980 course in previous years.

Course design and teaching methodologies

As discussed in Chapter 4 there is considerable diversity in the student population in terms of prior knowledge and experience. Government education policy to widen participation has resulted in increased student diversity that reflects not only students' academic backgrounds, but also their "ability, disability, age, maturity, experience, commitment, motivation, study mode, class, sex, race, religion and the like" (Davis, 2003, p. 2). Indeed, the changing nature of the student body has demanded a response from higher education that goes well beyond the management of larger student numbers and increased class size. For example, in first year courses a more complex and diverse student body requires greater attention to induction processes, personal tutor systems, and student support. Academic timetabling also becomes more complex as the boundaries between full-time and part-time studies become blurred. Differences in cultural background and students' previous learning habits as well as the increase in the number of international students developing their English language skills require careful attention to course structure to ensure that lectures have a clear purpose, essential content is emphasized, turn-taking and participation in seminars is encouraged, etc.. Another important consideration is the prior knowledge of psychology. Increasingly students have prior knowledge of psychology, most often at AS or A-level but also through the International Baccalaureate, Access courses and the Scottish Higher Still. Non-standard entry is now common and requires departments to design a first year that will bring all students to the same level in preparation for second year. Some students find this repetitive, for example, one response to the consultation question relating to the extent to which current undergraduate psychology degree met student expectations: "Not enough new knowledge to 'plump up' current understanding from pre-tertiary psychology". Bath Spa University and the University of Derby are examples where particular attention has been given to address this issue in the first year through gaining a greater understanding of the students' prior learning and designing courses that introduce new challenges for students who may be revisiting material studied at pre-tertiary level.

There is no quick fix for departments struggling with diminishing resources, large numbers and an increasingly diverse student population and it is therefore important that departments work to manage student expectations. There are a number of ways in which students could be better prepared to study psychology within higher education, for example regional weekly courses run cooperatively by local university psychology departments during the summer. Similar courses in other discipline areas charge incoming students a small fee and provide taster sessions on lecture note-taking, seminar preparation, and provide an opportunity to introduce students to the kind of changes they may expect between studying at pre-tertiary level and university level. Again examples of providing pre-university courses exist within psychology and the value of these experiences can be shared more widely. Departments interested in making radical changes to their courses can apply to take part in the Higher Education Academy's funded departmental change programme.

Teaching of ethics

Included within the concept of psychological literacy is the need for students to behave "ethically and humanely at work and in other everyday contexts" (Davidson & Morrissey, 2011; in press) and includes 'knowledge of moral theory and terminology together with the ability to understand and apply models of ethical decision-making". In the UK, the teaching of ethics in undergraduate psychology degrees normally has a narrower focus: introducing students to the BPS Code of Ethics, providing opportunities for students to learn to conduct research ethically and introducing local institutional procedures for obtaining ethical approval. It is recommended that the current BPS core area of conceptual and historical issues in psychology is reviewed to give more importance to ethical decision-making. Davidson and Morrissey recommend that more attention is given within the undergraduate curriculum to 'foster awareness of moral decision making beyond the research laboratory or consulting room'. This might include classroom-based vignettes to questions about ethics in the workplace, drawing attention to ethical issues in everyday life, for example, entertainment programmes, ethical issues in students' relationships with others and in society at large. This would give students a better understanding of psychology's ethical base and health ethics more generally, developing respect for the rights and dignity of others, the ethical underpinning of social justice and responsibility including ethics of social advocacy and social and cultural tolerance; and precepts of intellectual and commercial honesty. This approach presents a number of challenges for departments, including staff commitment, role modelling and possibly training in teaching ethics.

Resources

Technology is now widely used to support learning and teaching in psychology undergraduate education. Examples include access to learning materials off campus, PowerPoint, online access to library catalogues, e-books and e-journals, the use of virtual learning environments, audio or video lecture recordings, podcasts, plagiarism detection software, virtual world environments, simulation software, electronic submission of student work, and electronic forms of assessment. The availability of these technologies does not guarantee better teaching or more successful learning. It remains the responsibility of the course designer to harness these technologies in the most appropriate and effective ways and educators need time and space to become familiar with innovative technologies and to develop and identify pre-existing course materials. Possible sources include open educational resources stored in libraries such as OpenJorum or MIT; inspirational lectures accessed from sites such as Ted.com, MIT, ITunesU, This Week in the History of Psychology, the

BPS Research Digest and The Psych Files. Many of these resources are located in the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network searchable online database. Events focusing on teaching specific areas of psychology also provide an opportunity for pooling resources.

The final recommendation relates to the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of our teaching. Psychologists have the potential to influence policy relating to teaching and learning: for example, the dangers of using performance measures as an index of learning or the design of modules and related assessments for long-term learning. As Matlin (2002) identified, there is a separation of publications focusing on psychological research on learning from publications focusing on evaluations of teaching practice. As a result research is slow to inform teaching policy and practice. A research digest that brings research on learning and teaching and research on teaching practice closer together would go some way to addressing this issue.

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Recommendations

1. Supporting psychological literacy

   a. Departments continue to offer a challenging curriculum with an emphasis on teaching psychology as a science.

   b. Departments design courses that provide opportunities for students to practise applying psychological theory to real life situations.

   c. Departments provide opportunities for students to develop and manage pluralistic viewpoints

   d. Improvements in teaching ethical understanding are made at undergraduate level.

   e. Departments facilitate placements, community work and international study for students.

2. Improving integration of content knowledge

   a. Departments give more attention to the QAA benchmark statements 3.7 and 4.2 addressing the integration and interpretation *between* core areas of psychological knowledge.

   b. The BPS relaxes the requirement that all core areas of psychology are assessed.

   c. The BPS develops a student-focused as opposed to a content-driven kitemark of quality for undergraduate psychology degrees.

3. Continuing Professional Development

   a. A discipline oriented approach to teaching is included in the UK Professional Standards Framework.

   b. AHPD seeks opportunities to work with the Higher Education Academy on the appropriate theoretical content on on psychological principles underlying teaching and learning to ensure institutional courses reflect advances in psychological research relating to learning processes.

   c. Institutions encourage continuing professional development related to new research and developments within the discipline.

4. First year and prior knowledge

   a. Departments work towards an agreed framework for first year psychology to inform pre-entry students.

   b. Regional preparatory sessions are offered to students entering psychology.

5. Resources

   a. There is a need for increased dissemination and training relating to the appropriate and evidence-based use of technology.

   b. A review is needed of the most appropriate way to share and deposit useful resources

   c. The BPS, HEA and AHPD continue to provide mechanisms for developing, sharing and accessing high quality teaching resources.

   d. The BPS should continue to build on the success of its electronic Research Digest, perhaps structuring it by topic so that it relates to the undergraduate syllabus.

Chapter 7
Emerging themes

This chapter will not attempt to summarise all the conclusions reached in the preceding chapters. These should be read in the context of the arguments leading up to them. Rather, it will identify those common, and therefore perhaps most important, themes which emerge from several different starting points.

Accreditation

The strongest of these themes is the influence of accreditation by the British Psychological Society (BPS) on the shape of the degrees we offer. Departments understandably have a love-hate relationship with accreditation. While desirable as an indicator of quality and an aid in maintaining resources, it can also be seen as a constraint on developing degrees in new and innovative ways. This ambivalence was reflected in several places in the discussions at Chicheley Hall although it is important to note that, on balance, it was clearly agreed that accreditation should be continued and encouraged.

Accreditation is also seen by departments, particularly heads, as a bureaucratic pain. This will not be discussed further here, except to say that it was recognized that the BPS is well aware of the need to minimize this and welcomes feedback on its processes to achieve as streamlined a system as possible. However, it is worth noting that for an accreditation process to have any credibility as a mark of quality it must be both thorough and also have a threshold high enough for it to carry a genuine threat of failure, or at the very least to provide evidence that some changes have been required to meet the necessary standard.

On the more fundamental issues, two strong recommendations for change are being made. First, it is argued in Chapter 3 and, particularly, Chapter 4 that accreditation, based as it is on the QAA Benchmark Statement, should be extended to the skills requirements of that Statement. The argument here is that the skills we teach our students are such an important part of the degree, perhaps the more important for the majority of our students who will not go on to careers in psychology, that they should be considered in the accreditation process.

Second, it is recommended in Chapter 3 that content and skills delivered in the first year (or first and second in Scotland) should be permitted to count towards the curriculum requirements for accreditation. The present exclusion prevents core material being covered in the first year and results in a heavily congested second (third

in Scotland) year where departments typically attempt to cram all the compulsory material in order to allow the very important element of choice in the final year. Allowing first year material to be included in accreditation would permit a valuable increase in the flexibility of curriculum design. The argument against doing this, that the marks obtained on these modules do not count towards the final degree, was not seen as convincing. The fact that they have to be passed to obtain a degree should be sufficient.

The other issue which concerned participants was the requirement to cover the core material defined in the Benchmark Statement. It was agreed that the way this requirement is operationalised by the BPS and met by departments is inhibiting innovation in curriculum design, particularly those which encourage students to integrate material across different areas. However participants were not unanimous that it should be relaxed. This is a recommendation arising from Chapter 6 (Recommendation 2b), but elsewhere the conclusions are less sure (see, for example, Chapter 3, Recommendation 3). There is therefore a degree of tension between the need for some standardisation of the material covered, so that degrees are not vulnerable to the criticism commonly leveled against A-Levels with their multiplicity of syllabuses (see Chapter 2), and the desirability of encouraging innovation and the development of distinctive characteristics in degrees from different institutions. The discussion reported in Chapter 3 suggests an effective way of resolving this tension. The BPS should retain the requirements of the Benchmark Statement Paragraph 4.7, which being indicative rather than prescriptive is actually relatively permissive, but allow, indeed encourage, departments to achieve their coverage by spreading the topics across modules. The solution currently adopted by many departments of having modules with titles corresponding at least approximately to the headings in the Benchmark Statement is perhaps the soft option and certainly makes life easier for accreditation teams, but it should be made clear to both departments and accreditation teams that this is not the only solution and is not necessarily the best one.

The value of placements

Three chapters (2, 5 and 6) present strong cases for offering students the opportunity to undertake placements, either in the UK or abroad, in order to gain experience of a work situation and of the applications of psychology to the real world. They make recommendations encouraging departments to make provision for this and offer valuable suggestions as to how it might be achieved. That it may be necessary to broaden the definition of appropriate activities beyond the traditional psychological professions in order to provide a sufficient number of suitable placements is recognized. Since there is scope in any activity to bring a psychological analysis to bear, this should be encouraged or even made a formal part of the assessment. The inclusion of a placement module in a three year degree would also be made easier if the BPS allowed core material to be covered in the first year, adding weight to the other arguments for doing this. The benefits to the student in developing knowledge and skills which will be useful in their future careers are such that a degree of flexibility in structuring and assessing placements is more than justified.

Psychological literacy

The idea that there is a coherent set of knowledge and skills which can be labeled 'psychological literacy' is a theme that occurs in almost every chapter of the report but most strongly in Chapters 5 and 6. The idea is more fully described and explained in the section on psychological literacy in Chapter 5. As this section stresses, it is a developing concept but one that participants found both appealing and useful. Rather like the

Benchmark Statement, but in a more flexible and usable way, it defines the goals which a psychology degree should be achieving. Every department should create their own version. This could be made to suit particular strengths, but would in a general way include most of the commonly understood characteristics of a psychology degree. It would be agreed and made public to staff and students to provide a framework for designing or revising a degree and for students to measure their performance against. Importantly too, awareness of the term and what it implies would provide a label for communicating the nature of a psychology degree and the achievements it requires to prospective students and the general public. It would, in the marketing speak we are supposed to be adopting, provide a brand name for communicating the potential contributions a psychology graduate can make to the workplace and to society more generally (see below).

Psychology as a science

There is very general agreement throughout the report that psychology is a science, although Chapter 2 makes the point that there is no agreed definition of what the term science means. Perhaps because of this the term can be divisive in the wider psychological community. It is important to emphasize that 'science' is neither an iconic indicator of some special form of research involving laboratories and white coats, nor a bogey word indicating extreme reductionism. It simply means that conclusions should be supported by valid evidence. There is a strong temptation when trying to influence policy to abandon the need for evidence and it is one of the strengths of psychology that it has kept its credibility by largely resisting this temptation. As the report points out in Chapter 2, this has enabled it to creep at least halfway under the STEM umbrella despite some strong resistance from the traditional sciences. It also, as several of the chapters argue, enables degree courses to be promoted as rigorous and the students they produce as skilled in evaluating evidence and making evidence-based decisions.

Improving communications

Another commonly emerging theme is the responsibility of us all, individuals and institutions alike, to improve the ways in which we communicate the nature of the undergraduate psychology degree in order to increase the level of awareness of its value to both the workplace and society more generally. To do this, we need to have a relatively coherent brand, which is where the concept of psychological literacy may be helpful. Summarizing a number of recommendations, this improvement needs to occur at a number of different levels. We need to make it clear to students and prospective students what psychology degrees are designed to achieve and to articulate for graduates what knowledge and skills they have acquired. Informed graduates should be able to communicate this to prospective employers, but we need to help this process by targeting the same information on the wider public, especially policy makers and business leaders, either directly or through the press. Finally, we need to challenge the misconceptions held and sometimes promulgated by our academic colleagues in other disciplines, particularly in the traditional sciences who sometimes have a vested interest in perpetuating negative images of psychology and whose learned societies have been known to present psychology as one of the reasons for the drop in recruitment to their own subjects.

The benefits of collaboration

It is also worth pointing out that the coherence and consensus achieved by the thirty-one participants at Chicheley Hall demonstrate another important, albeit covert, theme: the benefit of collaboration across institutions and areas of interest. It is reassuring that this occurred so effectively here, despite the government's determination to create the cut-throat competition of a market in higher education through student choice, loan funding and alternative providers. We all benefit from the strengthening of the discipline of psychology. Collaboration of the kind that produced this report can only help this process.

Finally, profound thanks must go to Annie Trapp whose idea this was and who, with the team in the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network at the University of York, made it happen so successfully. It is an excellent example of the catalyst for effective change provided by the Psychology Network and is a fitting swansong for a centre which the discipline has valued greatly. We can only hope that when the new structure at the Higher Education Academy arrives it proves as successful.

Appendix
Consultation on undergraduate psychology education

Number of respondents: 463
Online survey from 25 August 2010 to 6 November 2010

The Higher Education Academy, the British Psychological Society and Association of Heads of Psychology Departments conducted an online national consultation on the future of undergraduate psychology education from August 2010 to November 2010. It was accompanied by a background document summarising the key issues for consideration including the context of higher education, the curriculum, the student learning experience, student employability and careers, and professional training. The consultation was open to anyone with an interest in psychology education including students, lecturers, professionals and employers and attracted 463 responses from over 100 UK higher education institutions. Table 1 indicates the number of respondents categorised by a self-description of role. Over 70% of respondents strongly or partly agreed with the statement that psychology undergraduate education needed to adapt to the changing context of UK education during the next five years.

Table 1: Number of respondents

| Self description of role	
Undergraduate Students	41
Postgraduate Students	68
Undergraduate Lecturers	173
Postgraduate Lecturers	62
Pre-tertiary Psychology Teacher	14
Careers Advisor in HE sector	12
Employer of Psychology Graduates	11
Assistant and Professional psychologists	34
Psychology Graduates	11
Undergraduate and postgraduate lecturers	18
Researchers	10
Other	9

A thematic analysis of the qualitative data identified both staff and student concern relating to the transition between pre-tertiary and tertiary education. This included the need for staff to be more aware of what students bring with them (for example, their existing knowledge, skills, needs and expectations) and the challenges for the first year curriculum due to the diversity of student profiles. In response to the statement "Given that many students entering psychology higher education have prior knowledge of psychology, the relationship between pre-tertiary (eg A-Levels) and tertiary (eg BSc/BA degree) psychology education is unsatisfactory" 57% of respondents strongly or partly agreed. Interestingly this response included 86% of undergraduate lecturers but only 11% of students. 46% of respondents strongly or partly agreed with the statement that "more should be done to attract males to study psychology at undergraduate level" although 30% neither agreed nor disagreed. The responses indicated that those involved in postgraduate teaching and research were much more concerned by the gender imbalance than undergraduate lecturers.

In relation to the structure of the undergraduate psychology degree qualitative comments endorsed the importance of scientific literacy and the development of vocational competences within the undergraduate psychology degree and over 70% of respondents agreed that there was no argument to be made for undergraduate psychology education offering students research and non-research pathways. However undergraduate students were equally split as to whether they agreed or disagreed with this view. The majority of respondents (57%) strongly or partly agreed with the statement that "Psychology graduates are able to apply psychological theory to real world situations" but over three-quarters of undergraduate students, assistant and professional psychologists and 70% of researchers strongly or partly agreed with the statement that "Current undergraduate courses would benefit from greater concentration on everyday psychological issues especially those that have practical implications" compared to 46% of undergraduate lecturers.

In relation to professional training 67% of respondents strongly or partly agreed with the statement that, "The undergraduate psychology degree is a good preparation for professional psychology training". Almost half (49%) strongly or partly agreed with the statement that "There is an argument that there should be more differentiation between undergraduate psychology degrees across departments in order for students to graduate with 'a specialism'" and 43% strongly or partly agreed with the statement that "The undergraduate psychology degree should be more differentiated so that programmes can choose whether to focus on a particular set of skills of value to an area of professional psychology" with 10% and 13% respectively neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

46% of respondents strongly or partly disagreed with the statement "Psychology graduates are confident they know the skills they have to offer employers" and 76% of respondents strongly or partly agreed with the statement that "More needs to be done to help employers recognise the skill set that psychology graduates possess". The qualitative comments suggest that psychology degrees should actively assist graduates in their transition to work and further study. Given the limited number of employers who responded to this consultation a further more targeted study is under consideration by the British Psychological Society.

Another theme to emerge from the qualitative data was the need to align psychology education with societal needs. Comments pertaining to this theme came from all categories of respondent, indicating the need for psychology to become a better fit for purpose in the current economic climate, and to be mindful of the kind of 'destinations' that students are heading for. One employer commented that "we have a responsibility to make psychology relevant to the great social issues of out time and to influence social change". Others likewise emphasised the need for psychology to broaden its coverage to address serious questions about what it means to be human in current society, including questions about 'the nature of community', 'the impact of new technologies', 'how we want to live' and 'how to influence social policy'.
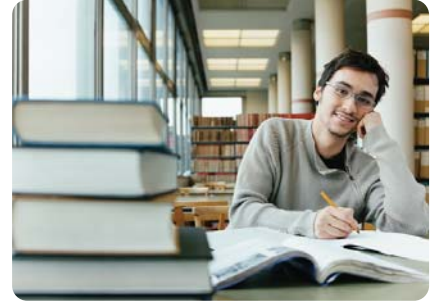
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