

# What should be the aims of UG psychology education? A student perspective

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# Outline

- My Background
- My perception of the UG degree
- Problems with the UG degree
- Student employment concerns
- Ideas to improve the UG degree

# My Background

- UNSW B Psychology (Hons) Graduate - 2009
- Gap year – Cancer research – 2010
- UNSW Masters Organisational Psychology 2011
  
- Previous work experience
  - Research Assistance (Psychology – since 2006)

# My perception of the UG degree

- 1<sup>st</sup> year = interesting and fun
- 2<sup>nd</sup> year = similar content to 1<sup>st</sup> year, but more in-depth
- 3<sup>rd</sup> year = student focus is on grades to get into honours
- Honours = very difficult and rewarding experience

# Problems with the degree

- Focus of the UG degree = preparation to become an academic
  - Most students won't become academics
- Lack of practical application
  - **Basic** information so that we can apply some principles to our friends and families
- Some topics could be better linked to application
  - What can I do with the 6 weeks of learning about 'concepts and categorisation'?

# Problems with the degree

- Students are unaware of their skill level
  - Need to **explicitly** state how psyc students differ to students in other degrees → we lack confidence outside of academia
- Lack of employment options
  - Possible job roles – besides RA work, what else could we do?
  - Why would a company hire a psyc grad over a HR grad?
- Employers may misperceive student skills
  - E.g., My employer thought I had interview skills training. They then had to train me.

# Students' employment concerns

- Getting the 'right' job → resort to getting 'a' job
  - It is a difficult lifestyle without money, (+living out of home)
- The benevolent application of psychology (e.g., global citizenship) might not manifest when one is financially unstable
  - Consider Maslow's Hierarchy.....after UG, we are towards the bottom



# Ideas to improve psyc education

- Have workshops on basic employment skills
  - Leadership
  - Management
  - Communication skills (basic counselling)
  - Interviewing skills

→ If cost is an issue, can masters students be involved in administering the workshops? – pro bono (looks good on resume), or as a part of their course?

- Have teaching staff explicitly emphasise student skills
- Link coursework to practical application



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