Standards for the accreditation of undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes in psychology

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Contact us

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Introduction

The British Psychological Society (‘the Society’) is the learned and professional body, incorporated by Royal Charter, for psychology in the United Kingdom. The key objective of the Society is ‘to promote the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of psychology pure and applied and especially to promote the efficiency and usefulness of members by setting up a high standard of professional education and knowledge’. The purpose of the Society’s accreditation process is to further that objective.

What is accreditation?

Accreditation through Partnership is the process by which the British Psychological Society works with education providers to ensure quality standards in education and training are met by all programmes on an ongoing basis. Our approach to accreditation is based on partnership rather than policing, and we emphasise working collaboratively with programme providers through open, constructive dialogue that allows for exploration, development and quality enhancement.

Benefits of accreditation

Delivering a programme that meets the standards required for accreditation is a significant commitment, and there are many reasons why Society accreditation is worth your investment of time and money:

• It is a highly regarded marker of quality that prospective students and employers value.
• It enhances the marketability of your programmes.
• It gives your graduates a route to Society membership, an integral part of students’ development as psychologists, or as part of the wider psychological workforce.
• It is a high quality benchmarking process aimed at getting the best out of programmes.
• It provides an opportunity for you and your students to influence the society and its support for education providers and students.
• Together we have a powerful voice in raising the profile of psychology and psychological practice in the UK and internationally.

Our standards

In 2017, the Society’s Partnership and Accreditation Committee (PAC) and its constituent Education and Training Committees reviewed the overarching programme standards, with the aim of providing greater clarity and more effective signposting to other relevant guidance in a way that is helpful to programmes when they articulate their work.

Our standards are intended to be interpreted and applied flexibly, in a way that enables programmes to develop distinctive identities that make the most of particular strengths shared by their staff team, or those that are reflected in the strategic priorities of their department or university. During partnership visits, the questions that visiting teams will ask will be designed specifically to give education providers every opportunity to confirm their achievement of the standards.

Our standards are organised around eight overarching standards, as follows:

The standards have been derived following extensive consultation between the Society and
education providers, and must be achieved by all accredited programmes. Each overarching standard is followed by a rationale for its inclusion, together with guidance and signposting of other relevant resources.

**This document**

This document sets out the accreditation standards for the accreditation of programmes in undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes in psychology. The standards came into operation on 1 October 2017.

If you are submitting a new programme for accreditation, or are preparing for an accreditation visit or review, you should read these standards in conjunction with the relevant process handbook. All handbooks can be downloaded from [www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads](http://www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads).

Accredited undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes meet the requirements for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC). Completion will provide a basis for progression to postgraduate training in psychology, and therefore eligibility for Chartered membership of the Society (CPsychol) in due course.
Programme standard 1: Programme design

The design of the programme must ensure that successful achievement of the required learning outcomes is marked by the conferment of an award at the appropriate academic level.

1.1 Credits and level of award:

1.1.1 Undergraduate programmes seeking accreditation against the requirements for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC) must comprise a minimum of 360 credits, at least 50 per cent of which must comprise psychology content. This will comprise a minimum of 180 credits of the accredited award (240 credits in Scotland), and must result in the award of at least a level 6 qualification (level 10 in Scotland).

1.1.2 Conversion programmes seeking accreditation against the requirements for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC) must comprise 180 credits in total, and must result in the award of a level 6 or level 7 qualification (level 10 or 11 in Scotland).

1.1.3 Providers may also wish to put forward integrated Masters programmes:

- Integrated Masters programmes seeking accreditation against the requirements for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC) must incorporate 120 level 7 credits, and must result in the award of a level 7 qualification (level 11 in Scotland); e.g. MPsyCh.

- Integrated Masters programmes that seek to combine the requirements for the GBC and those for a stage one postgraduate training in forensic, health, occupational or sport and exercise psychology must incorporate 180 level 7 credits, and must result in the award of a level 7 qualification (level 11 in Scotland). Such programmes will be evaluated against the two separate sets of standards they are seeking to meet (i.e. the standards contained in this handbook, and those applying to Masters programmes in the relevant modality).

1.2 Duration and location of studies:

1.2.1 There is no minimum period of study for undergraduate, conversion or integrated Master’s programmes. Full-time undergraduate programmes are normally delivered over three years (one year for conversion programmes). However, education providers wishing to develop and submit shorter accelerated and longer integrated programmes of study for accreditation are encouraged to do so.

1.2.2 The Society does not stipulate a maximum study period within which an accredited programme must be completed.

1.2.3 Up to one third of the total credits of an accredited UK programme may be undertaken outside of the UK. Where a greater proportion is undertaken abroad, we consider this to be a separate programme requiring separate accreditation.

1.3 Award nomenclature: The education provider must ensure that the title of any award accurately reflects the level of students’ achievements, represents appropriately the nature and field(s) of study undertaken and is not misleading, either to potential employers or to the general public.
1.4 Assessment requirements:

1.4.1 Programmes must have in place an assessment strategy that maps clearly on to programme and module learning outcomes, incorporates a wide range of formative and summative assessments, and which reflects students’ development of knowledge and skills as they progress through their studies. Each of the core content areas specified in Programme Standard 2, below, must be assessed at the appropriate level, but need not be assessed separately (with the exception of the empirical project).

1.4.2 Education providers must include a statement in their programme handbook(s) advising students that, in order to be eligible for the GBC, they must pass the empirical psychology project, and gain at least a Lower Second Class Honours degree, or its equivalent (i.e. an overall pass mark of at least 50 per cent for conversion programmes).

1.4.3 Assessment rules, regulations and other criteria should be published in a full and accessible form and made freely available to students, staff and external examiners.

1.4.4 Assessment practices should be fair, valid, reliable and appropriate to the level of the award being offered. Assessment should be undertaken only by appropriately qualified staff, who have been adequately trained and briefed, and given regular opportunities to enhance their expertise as assessors.

1.4.5 Education providers should have in place policies and procedures to deal thoroughly, fairly and expeditiously with problems which arise in the assessment of students. These should include the grounds for student appeals against assessment outcomes, and the process that students should follow if they wish to pursue an appeal.

1.4.6 Education providers should ensure that detailed and up to date records on student progress and achievement are kept. Throughout a programme of study, students should receive prompt and helpful feedback about their performance in relation to assessment criteria so that they can appropriately direct their subsequent learning activities.

1.5 Inclusive assessment:

1.5.1 Education providers should have inclusive assessment strategies in place that anticipate the diverse needs and abilities of students.

1.5.2 Where reasonable adjustments need to be made for disabled students, these should apply to the process of assessment, and not to the learning outcomes being assessed.
Rationale for inclusion

The Society has clear expectations about teaching, learning and assessment on accredited programmes, and the provisions that should be built into the design of those programmes to ensure quality. The standards outlined above will ensure that those seeking entry to specific grades of Society membership on the basis of having completed an accredited programme have met the stipulations set out in the Society’s Royal Charter, Statutes and Rules.

Guidance and signposting

- Part A of the UK Quality Code addresses Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, and signposts relevant qualifications and credit frameworks, as well as guidance on the characteristics of different qualifications. Providers may also find it helpful to refer to a further five chapters from Part B of the Quality Code (www.qaa.ac.uk):
  - Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval
  - Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching
  - Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning
  - Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints
  - Chapter B11: Research Degrees
- The Equality Challenge Unit has produced guidance on Managing Reasonable Adjustments in Higher Education, which providers may find helpful (www.ecu.ac.uk).
- The Society's accreditation standards make provision for students to undertake some study or placement time abroad as part of their programme (up to one third of the total credits of the accredited programme). Study abroad opportunities may not be available for all students, and arrangements will vary across different providers. Where study abroad opportunities are available, the UK provider must ensure that the study abroad being undertaken allows students to cover all of the required curriculum appropriately by the time they have completed their programme (though not necessarily in the same way as others on their cohort), and that this learning will effectively support their progression. More detailed information is available in our guide to studying abroad on an accredited programme, which can be downloaded from www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation.
- Where more than one third of the total credits for the programme are undertaken outside of the UK, the Society considers this to be a separate programme requiring separate accreditation. Information regarding the Society’s international accreditation process can be found at www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation.
- The Society does not specify a maximum study period for an accredited programme. It is expected that individual education providers will have in place regulations governing the maximum permissible period of time that may elapse from initial enrolment to completion, regardless of individual circumstances, to ensure the currency of their knowledge, their competence, and the award conferred upon them.
Programme standard 2: Programme content (learning, research and practice)

The programme must reflect contemporary learning, research and practice in psychology.

2.1 Programme content requirements

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) publishes a Subject Benchmark Statement for Psychology that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. The current Subject Benchmark Statement was published in 2016, and outlines the following principles that guide a degree programme in psychology. Degrees in psychology:

- aim to produce a scientific understanding of the mind, brain, behaviour and experience, and how they interact with the complex environments in which they exist;
- include knowledge and the acquisition of a range of research skills and methods for investigating experience and behaviour, culminating in an ability to conduct research independently;
- develop an understanding of the role of empirical evidence in the creation and constraint of theory, and also in how theory guides the collection and interpretation of empirical data;
- present multiple perspectives in a way that fosters critical evaluation and reflection;
- develop knowledge, leading to an appreciation of theory and research findings, including relevant ethical and socio-cultural issues; and
- lead to an understanding of real life applications of theory to the full range of experience and behaviour and the application of psychological understanding to real world questions.

The combination of knowledge and skills outlined above is sometimes referred to as psychological literacy.

Programmes that are designed to meet the requirements for the GBC should equip Psychology graduates with the knowledge and skills that are outlined in Section 6 of the Subject Benchmark Statement:

Subject knowledge and understanding

Graduates are able to:

i. understand the scientific underpinnings of Psychology as a discipline, its historical origins, development and limitations;

ii. recognise the inherent variability and diversity of psychological functioning and its significance;

iii. demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of a range of influences on psychological functioning, how they are conceptualised across the core areas as outlined in paragraph 2.1.4 below, and how they interrelate;

iv. demonstrate detailed knowledge of several specialised areas and / or applications, some of which are at the cutting edge of research in the discipline; and

v. demonstrate a systematic knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, including statistics and probability, and be aware of their limitations.
Subject-specific skills

Graduates are able to:

i. reason scientifically, understand the role of evidence and make critical judgements about arguments in Psychology;

ii. adopt multiple perspectives and systematically analyse the relationships between them;

iii. detect meaningful patterns in behaviour and evaluate their significance;

iv. recognise the subjective and variable nature of individual experience;

v. pose, operationalise and critique research questions;

vi. demonstrate substantial competence in research skills through practical activities;

vii. reason analytically and demonstrate competence in a range of quantitative and qualitative methods;

viii. competently initiate, design, conduct and report on an empirically-based research project under appropriate supervision, and recognise its theoretical, practical and methodological implications and limitations; and

ix. be aware of ethical principles and approval procedures and demonstrate these in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project, and be aware of the ethical context of Psychology as a discipline.

Generic skills

Graduates are able to:

i. communicate ideas and research findings by written, oral and visual means;

ii. interpret and use numerical, textual and other forms of data;

iii. be computer literate, for the purposes of furthering their own learning and in the analysis and presentation of ideas and research findings;

iv. solve problems by clarifying questions, considering alternative solutions and evaluating outcomes;

v. be sensitive to, and take account of, contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams;

vi. undertake self-directed study and project management, in order to meet desired objectives; and

vii. take charge of their own learning, and reflect and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning.

2.1.1 In order to support students’ development of the above knowledge and skills, accredited programmes must deliver the curriculum below. The core domains and suggested topic areas within those are predominantly taken from section 3 (subject knowledge and understanding) of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Psychology (2016). Where the curriculum information below does not refer directly to the corresponding section of the Subject Benchmark Statement, additional guidance on the Society’s expectations has been provided as appropriate.

2.1.2 The full GBC curriculum may be delivered (taught and assessed) at Level 4, Level 5 or Level 6, as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (this is equivalent to levels 8, 9 and 10 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework), with the exception of the empirical project, which
must be delivered at Level 6, and research methods, which must be delivered at Level 5 or 6. Where core areas are delivered at Level 4, this must be supported by additional coverage (teaching and assessment) at Level 5 or Level 6 that progresses students’ knowledge and understanding in relation to those core areas. This approach will enable providers to achieve breadth of coverage at Level 4, and encourages providers adopting this model to pursue depth of coverage at Level 5 or Level 6, in a way that reflects the particular strengths of the Department in which the provision is based. This is designed to allow greater flexibility and support and encourage integration across the curriculum where education providers wish to do so. Specific expectations in relation to these aspects of the curriculum are outlined in the relevant sections below.

2.1.3 Education providers offering conversion programmes will need to demonstrate how their students attain both breadth and depth in the GBC curriculum areas and are assessed at the appropriate level (level 6 or 7; level 10 or 11 of the SCQF).

2.1.4 The GBC curriculum is as follows:

- **Biological psychology**
  e.g. biological bases of human and non-human animal behaviour, hormones and behaviour, behavioural genetics, neuroscience, typical and atypical neuropsychology, comparative and evolutionary psychology [Section 3.3 Subject Benchmark Statement].

- **Cognitive psychology**
  e.g. attention, perception, learning, memory, thinking, problem solving, decision making, metacognition, language, consciousness and cognitive neuropsychology [Section 3.3 Subject Benchmark Statement].

- **Developmental psychology**
  e.g. typical and atypical development across the lifespan including childhood, adolescence and ageing, attachment, social relations, cognitive and language development and cultural development [Section 3.3 Subject Benchmark Statement].

- **Individual differences**
  e.g. personality, psychometrics, intelligence, cognitive style, emotion, motivation, mood, positive psychology, physical and mental health (including social, biological and cognitive processes), and diversity [Section 3.3 Subject Benchmark Statement].

- **Social psychology**
  e.g. social cognition, attribution, attitudes, group processes and intergroup relations, culture, close relationships, social constructionism, self and identity, and leadership [Section 3.3 Subject Benchmark Statement].

- **Conceptual and historical issues in psychology**
  e.g. the study of psychology as a science; the social and cultural construction of psychology; conceptual and historical paradigms and models – comparisons and critiques; political and ethical issues in psychology; integration across multiple perspectives [see also Sections 3.1 and 3.3 of the Subject Benchmark Statement; this emphasises the inclusion of ethical,
conceptual, cultural and historical aspects across the core curriculum areas, together with an understanding of the use of psychological theory to answer real world questions].

g. Research methods

Research methods must be delivered at Level 5 or Level 6. Research methods are integral to Psychology and students obtain a sound knowledge of, and a proven ability to use, a range of methods appropriately. Knowledge and understanding of how to obtain and analyse evidence is best acquired and demonstrated through extensive and progressive empirical work in laboratory and naturalistic settings through all stages of a degree. [section 3.4 Subject Benchmark Statement]

Psychology students learn the basic principles of sound data collection. Given the broad theoretical scope of Psychology, rigorous specialist training is required to engender a critical understanding of the role of experimental design, the choice of research methods employed, and the analytic approach taken, for testing psychological theories. [section 3.5 Subject Benchmark Statement]

Programmes’ coverage of research methods should support students’ engagement with the sub-areas listed above, and should be directed towards supporting students’ attainment of the subject-specific skills highlighted in section 4.4 of the Subject Benchmark Statement. As they progress through the programme, students should be able to:

- apply multiple perspectives to psychological issues, recognising that psychology involves a range of research methods, theories, evidence and applications;
- integrate ideas and findings across the multiple perspectives in psychology and recognise distinctive psychological approaches to relevant issues;
- identify and evaluate patterns in behaviour, psychological functioning and experience;
- generate and explore hypotheses and research questions drawing on relevant theory and research;
- carry out empirical studies involving a variety of methods of data collection, including experiments, observation, questionnaires, interviews and focus groups;
- analyse, present and evaluate quantitative and qualitative data and evaluate research findings;
- employ evidence-based reasoning and examine practical, theoretical and ethical issues associated with the range of methodologies;
- use a variety of psychological tools, including specialist software, laboratory equipment and psychometric instruments;
- apply psychological knowledge ethically and safely to real world problems; and
- critically evaluate psychological theory and research.
h. **Empirical Project**

A graduate of psychology will have successfully completed a series of practical reports throughout their programme, culminating in an empirical project reporting on a substantial piece of research (or a piece of work which delivers the same learning outcomes of equal quality). The project typically involves the collection of original empirical data from participants, or equivalent alternatives such as computational modelling of empirical data or secondary data analysis, such as a meta-analysis [section 5.8 Subject Benchmark Statement]. The empirical practical component will normally involve the completion of a psychology project at Level 6 or above. The project **must be passed** and cannot be condoned or compensated.

The empirical psychology project will include carrying out an extensive piece of empirical research that requires them individually to demonstrate a range of research skills including planning, considering and resolving ethical issues, analysis and dissemination of findings [section 4.4 of the Subject Benchmark Statement].

Students may undertake their empirical projects as part of a project or laboratory group, provided they are still required to demonstrate the above skills individually.

2.2 **Teaching and learning:**

2.2.1 A clear programme specification must be in place that provides a concise description of the intended learning outcomes of the programme, and which helps students to understand the teaching and learning methods that enable the learning outcomes to be achieved, and the assessment methods that enable achievement to be demonstrated with adequate breadth and depth. The programme specification (and any module specifications) must include learning outcomes that reflect the specific programme content requirements outlined above.

2.2.2 Education providers must be able to document the intended programme and module learning outcomes, and the ways in which these are mapped on to the programme content requirements outlined above.

2.2.3 Education providers must have in place a teaching and learning strategy that ensures adequate breadth and depth of coverage of GBC curriculum areas. Programmes may provide broad coverage of core areas at Level 4. Where this is the case, progression and depth of knowledge must be provided at Level 5 or Level 6. Adequacy of coverage will be evaluated against the range of example topics given in this handbook. Reviewers will explore the rationale for coverage of individual GBC curriculum areas only where an area is represented very narrowly, or where a major topic (as listed above) is missing.

2.2.4 Students are entitled to expect a learning experience which meets their needs, and which is underpinned by competent, research-informed teaching, and a supportive and enabling learning environment.

2.3 **Research:**

2.3.1 Education providers must be able to demonstrate how they have taken account of the Society’s Supplementary guidelines for research and research methods in designing, developing and delivering their research methods and project provision.
### 2.3.2

The QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Psychology outlines the importance of practical based learning and associated assessment to the development of students’ understanding of psychology and the opportunities available to them to demonstrate the subject-specific skills outlined in this handbook, including completion of an empirical psychology project. The curriculum requirements above outline the need for practical work to cover a wide variety of methodologies, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. Students should be exposed to a wide range of topics reflecting the academic content of psychology through providing opportunities to engage in practical work. Accredited programmes will be expected to demonstrate the ways in which they accommodate these expectations.

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<th>Rationale for inclusion</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Society’s standards for accredited programmes reflect contemporary theory, research and practice, enabling accredited programmes to develop psychologists who will be fit for purpose for the future. As such, these reflect the optimal academic and professional standards, promoted by the Society through the award of Graduate Membership (MBPsS) and the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC), and Chartered Membership (CPsychol) respectively. The Society is keen that these standards create flexibility for programmes to develop distinctive identities, by making the most of particular strengths around research and practice shared by their staff team, or those that are reflected in the strategic priorities of their department or university.</td>
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<td>• Education providers are free to map topics in any academically coherent combination, which could range from delivering core content areas within dedicated modules, or embedding coverage across a number of modules. The Society encourages programmes to deliver core content across modules within an integrated curriculum that offers a pedagogical development of students’ knowledge, understanding, and skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Providers may find it helpful to refer to Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code, which addresses Learning and Teaching (<a href="http://www.qaa.ac.uk">www.qaa.ac.uk</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Society has produced <em>Supplementary guidelines for research and research methods on Society accredited undergraduate and conversion programmes</em>, which was published in April 2017.</td>
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Programme standard 3: Working ethically and legally

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<th>The programme must evaluate students’ understanding of working ethically and legally.</th>
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<td><strong>3.1</strong> All accredited programmes must include teaching on the Society’s <em>Code of Ethics and Conduct</em> and relevant supplementary ethical guidelines.</td>
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<td><strong>3.2</strong> Accredited programmes must have mechanisms in place to ensure that all research undertaken by students that involves human participants is conducted in line with the Society’s <em>Code of Human Research Ethics</em>.</td>
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<td><strong>3.3</strong> Programmes must ensure that students are taught and assessed on ethics beyond the submission of ethics applications for research projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3.4</strong> Programmes should familiarise students with the distinct role of the Society as the professional body for psychology, and the Health and Care Professions Council as the statutory regulator for practitioner psychologists in the UK.</td>
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**Rationale for inclusion**

The inclusion of this standard reflects the particular importance of ethics and ethical practice to psychologists, and to the Society as the professional body for psychology and psychological practitioners. Students and trainees on accredited programmes need to be able to: identify the presence of an ethical issue (ethical sensitivity); formulate the morally ideal course of action by identifying the relevant ethical issues and using these principles to consider appropriate actions (ethical reasoning); decide what they wish and intend to do (ethical motivation); and execute and implement what they intend to do (ethical implementation). They also need to develop commitment to the ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility, and integrity – as appropriate to their level of study. In addition, all prospective psychologists and psychological practitioners need to understand the legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to psychological practice in the UK. This standard therefore differentiates between working ethically and working legally to reflect the above considerations.

**Guidance and signposting**

- The Society’s *Code of Ethics and Conduct, Code of Human Research Ethics*, and supplementary ethical guidelines provide clear ethical principles, values and standards to guide and support psychologists’ decisions in the difficult and challenging situations they may face. Further information can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/ethics](http://www.bps.org.uk/ethics).
- The Society’s Ethics Committee has produced *Guidance on teaching and assessment of ethical competence in psychology education* (2015), available at [www.bps.org.uk/ethics](http://www.bps.org.uk/ethics), which outlines ethical competencies, and how these may be taught and assessed at different levels of study. Programmes are encouraged to make use of the guidance as appropriate to their provision.
- The Health and Care Professions Council has produced a learning resource that is designed to support the understanding of ethical issues that individuals may encounter. Whilst it is primarily intended to contextualise the HCPC’s *Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students*, it presents a useful resource for students and trainees at all levels of study ([www hcpc uk org education learningresource](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/learningresource)).
• All accredited programmes are expected to include formal teaching on ethics, and should be able to demonstrate how working ethically is integral to all aspects of their provision, including research (as outlined below), and placement activities (where applicable). The assessment strategy for the programme should consider understanding of ethical principles as appropriate to the level of study.

• Students need to understand the ethical frameworks that apply to their research, and how to engage with these, as well as understanding the ethical implications of the research that they encounter. They also need to understand ethics as applied to working with people more generally.

• Providers should have in place mechanisms for identifying and dealing with academic and (where applicable) professional misconduct. The programme should consider the ways in which these mechanisms are publicised.
The programme must apply appropriate selection and entry criteria that are consistent with promoting equality of opportunity and access to psychology to as diverse a range of applicants as possible.

4.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion: The programme must implement and monitor equality, diversity and inclusion policies in relation to applicants.

4.2 Selection and entry requirements:

4.2.1 For undergraduate and integrated Master’s programmes, entry requirements should be established by the education provider.

4.2.2 Conversion programmes: Conversion programmes offer an opportunity for students to ‘convert’ their existing qualifications and learning to an award that meets the requirements for the GBC. Education providers typically offer conversion awards that comprise either 120 or 180 credits, and the standards outlined above set 180 credits’ study of psychology as a minimum requirement for the GBC.

- All applicants to conversion programmes must hold a degree-level qualification (level 6, or level 10 in Scotland, or higher). This may include a degree in a subject other than psychology, or a degree in psychology that has not been accredited by the Society. The latter may also include applicants who have undertaken an accredited degree, but who have failed to either pass the empirical psychology project, or achieve at least a Lower Second Class Honours degree.

- In addition to holding a degree, applicants to conversion programmes that comprise 120 credits must also have studied the equivalent of at least 60 credits of psychology at Level 4 or above prior to entry to the programme.

4.3 Recognition of prior learning:

4.3.1 Where the education provider offers applicants the opportunity to seek exemption from undertaking a proportion of the programme, effective processes should be in place for assessing and recognising their prior learning and experience.

4.3.2 Education providers wishing to admit students to an accredited programme with advanced standing may operate procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) against the learning outcomes of the accredited award. Students may transfer from one programme to another at any time. However, procedures for the recognition of prior learning must ensure that all graduates from accredited programmes have covered all of the GBC Curriculum areas by the time they complete their studies.

4.3.3 The following exclusions apply to the recognition of prior learning:

- For conversion programmes, recognition of prior learning is limited to a maximum of 60 credits. Students will require a minimum of 180 credits in psychology in order to meet the requirements for the GBC.

- Recognition of prior experiential (or informal) learning is not permitted for conversion programmes, but is permitted for other accredited programmes.

- Students on all programmes accredited against the requirements for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership must complete an empirical psychology project; no exemption may be granted against this piece of work.
### Rationale for inclusion

The Society is interested in the ways in which education providers implement their equality, diversity and inclusion policies. It is particularly important that those progressing to undertake professional training in psychology, and therefore those moving into employment as psychologists, reflect the demographics of the populations with whom they will be working. Similarly, the Society is keen to promote diversity in psychology students progressing towards careers as academics or researchers. Overall, it is important that psychological knowledge and expertise is reflected across a diverse range of people, and that this diversity is ultimately reflected throughout the Society's membership. Widening access to professional training, including by providing greater flexibility in relation to the order of studies that students undertake, is key to enhancing the diversity of the workforce in the longer term.

### Guidance and signposting

- Chapter B2 of the UK Quality Code addresses Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education. Chapter B6 also considers Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning. Finally, Part C of the Quality Code outlines expectations around the provision of fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy information regarding the learning opportunities offered for the benefit of a range of audiences, including applicants and the general public. Providers may find it helpful to review their provision against these resources ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).

- The Office for Fair Access (OfFa) is the independent regulator of fair access to higher education in England. Like OfFA, the Society believes that everyone with the potential and ambition to succeed in higher education should have equal opportunity to do so, whatever their income or background ([www.offa.org.uk](http://www.offa.org.uk)). Whilst its remit covers England only, OfFa provides a series of resources on widening access that all providers will find useful.

- The Society declares its commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and to challenge prejudice and discrimination, and actively promotes a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion within our discipline. In demonstrating achievement of this standard, education providers are encouraged to hold or be in the process of seeking an Athena SWAN award, along with other relevant equality charter marks. Providers of accredited programmes should take steps to identify under-represented groups (e.g. men, black and minority ethnic students) and encourage their participation in psychology education and training and in the wider psychological workforce. Individuals’ identities are shaped by a range of factors that intersect in different ways, and providers should consider the steps they are able to take to promote and improve the participation of other underrepresented groups and to encourage greater representation ([www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)).
Programme standard 5: Student development and professional membership

The programme must be able to articulate a strategy for supporting students’ personal and professional development.

5.1 The programme must have in place mechanisms for the support of students’ personal development, including the provision of a personal tutor system.

5.2 Students should have access to discipline-specific professional development. Psychologists should be involved in supporting student development, and specific resources should be allocated to this aspect of the provision.

5.3 Providers must ensure that their graduates are able to articulate how their learning equips them with transferable and subject-specific skills that are of value to employers. Specific consideration should be given to supporting students in being able to articulate the skills they are developing as they progress in their studies.

Section 4.5 of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Psychology outlines the importance of generic, transferable skills, and on graduating with an honours degree in psychology, students should be able to do the following:

- **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.

- **Demonstrate numerical reasoning skills.**

- **Be computer literate,** displaying at the very least skill in the use of word processing, databases and analytic software packages.

- **Retrieve and organise information effectively.** Psychology graduates are familiar with collecting and organising stored information found in library book and journal collections, and online, critically evaluating primary and secondary sources.

- **Recognise what is required for effective teamwork** and articulate their own strengths and weaknesses in this regard. 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 successful and problematic interpersonal relationships.

- **Take responsibility for their own learning and skill development.** This will include effective personal planning, self-reflection and project management skills, so they become more independent and pragmatic as learners.

These skills represent a coherent set of knowledge, skills and values that underpin students’ psychological literacy and which enable them to apply psychology to real life contexts. These scientific, critical thinking and ethical skills encapsulate the contributions a psychology graduate can make to the workplace and to society more generally.

5.4 Systems for student support should empower learners to take personal control of their own development, by providing opportunities for the exercise of choice, decision-making, and responsibility within a supportive environment, in order to promote the development of autonomous learning.
5.5 The programme must provide students with information on the benefits of completing an accredited programme, and gaining membership of the Society at the appropriate level. Providers should emphasise the benefits of Society membership for students’ and graduates’ professional development.

**Rationale for inclusion**
This standard is included because close attention to students’ personal and professional development is key to their employability. Education providers may link with local and / or national employers in a variety of ways, and the Society is keen to develop its understanding of these approaches through partnership visits. Additionally, the Society believes it is important that education providers communicate the benefits of completing an accredited programme to their students. Belonging to the Society is an integral part of being a psychologist. It recognises graduates’ qualifications and reflects their aspiration to represent the highest possible professional standards.

**Guidance and signposting**
- Chapter B4 of the UK Quality Code addresses Enabling Student Development and Achievement. Chapter B3 also considers Learning and Teaching, and specifically emphasises the need to enable every student to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff. Finally Part C of the UK Quality Code addresses the information that should be provided to students about their programme of study and their achievements. Providers may find it helpful to review their provision against these resources ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).
- The Society’s role is to develop and support the discipline of psychology, and to disseminate psychological knowledge to the public and policy makers. Joining the Society enables students to contribute to the Society’s work and benefit from the resources the Society provides as they develop professionally.
- Completion of an accredited programme offers graduates a clear route to Society membership at the appropriate level, and therefore access to the full range of membership benefits, including a variety of services, publications, conferences, training and networking opportunities. Society membership also presents graduates with opportunities for developing and influencing the profession as leaders in their field in the future. For more information on the benefits of Society membership, see [www.bps.org.uk/membership](http://www.bps.org.uk/membership).
- In demonstrating their achievement of this standard, education providers should consider the interface between any careers advice and support that might be provided by their central or School / Faculty-based employability unit, and the guidance that can be provided by practitioner psychologists and other qualified practitioners over the course of the programme.
6.1 Staffing strategy:

6.1.1 Education providers must be able to outline a clear strategy in relation to the leadership and co-ordination of the programme. The Programme Director must operate with a level of autonomy that enables them to effectively oversee the programme’s governance and delivery.

6.1.2 Providers need to demonstrate that their overall staffing strategy supports the long-term sustainability of the provision, and the capacity to continue to meet the Society’s accreditation standards on an ongoing basis. In the interests of promoting a holistic learning experience for students, the Society would normally expect the core programme delivery team to be located predominantly in one department or on one site.

6.1.3 Programmes must have in place sufficient appropriately qualified staff in order to be able to provide a learning experience that meets students’ needs, and which is underpinned by competent, research-informed teaching. The staff team as a whole needs to be able to deliver (i.e. teach and assess) across the required programme content (see Programme Standard 2) at the appropriate level, and supervise students’ empirical psychology projects.

6.1.4 Education providers must be able to outline the steps they are taking structurally and culturally to advance equality, and to improve the career prospects of underrepresented groups within the discipline and profession.

6.2 Qualifications of Programme Director and staff:

6.2.1 Programme Directorship: The Programme Director holds overall professional and academic responsibility for ensuring that the programme meets the Society’s standards, and for maintaining the accreditation of the programme. The Programme Director must have the programme as his/her major commitment, and be free to devote sufficient time to ensure its effective and efficient running.

6.2.2 For undergraduate and conversion programmes, the Programme Director should be either a Chartered Psychologist, or eligible for Chartered Psychologist status. Information on the requirements for becoming a Chartered Member of the Society can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/cpsychol](http://www.bps.org.uk/cpsychol).

6.2.3 The Programme Director must have knowledge and experience of the delivery of accredited undergraduate psychology and/or conversion programmes, with appropriate academic and management skills, and must make a significant contribution to the programme.

6.2.4 Programme staff: For undergraduate, conversion and integrated Master’s programmes:

• All staff contributing to the delivery of accredited programmes will hold, as a minimum, a graduate qualification in psychology and / or a demonstrable track record in research or other scholarly activity of relevance to psychology.
The empirical project in psychology must be supervised, taught and examined by psychologists or suitably qualified graduates. The Society considers individuals suitably qualified to supervise the empirical project if they hold, as a minimum, a graduate qualification in psychology and/or a demonstrable track record of research or other scholarly activity of relevance to psychology. Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), or equivalent, may not carry sole responsibility for project supervision.

6.3 Staff student ratio:

6.3.1 Education providers should provide a calculation of their current staff student ratio (SSR) in the evidence they submit in support of an application for accreditation, or in advance of a partnership visit. Undergraduate and conversion programmes must operate a minimum staff student ratio of 1:20, based on FTEs.

6.3.2 Given minimum staffing requirements, and the range of tasks that programme staff must undertake in order to deliver a quality student experience (see 6.4 below), programmes with small cohort sizes will require an enhanced SSR.

6.4 Staffing levels:

6.4.1 There are key roles and functions that the Society considers are essential to the effective and efficient delivery of an accredited programme. Programmes must therefore have sufficient staff with enough time allocated to carry out the range of tasks that are associated with: teaching; organising, co-ordinating and monitoring placements (if appropriate); training and supporting supervisors or other assessors; research supervision; marking; providing personal support to students; supporting their professional development; and liaising with employers, visiting speakers and other external stakeholders.

6.4.2 In the interests of providing a positive and coherent student experience, education providers must ensure that programme staff are readily accessible to students, and that students have clear guidance on arrangements for liaising with staff outside of any core contact hours.

6.4.3 All programmes must pay particular attention to ensuring that staffing levels are such that students receive research supervision at a level consistent with the programme’s aims and that research supervision loads for staff are appropriate to enable them to provide adequate supervision at the required level.

6.4.4 Where staff have other duties (e.g. other teaching or practice commitments) these must be taken into account in setting staffing levels and must be such that they do not interfere with the execution of the major responsibility of programme delivery. They must also be reflected appropriately in any SSR return.

6.4.5 Providers of undergraduate, conversion and integrated Master’s programmes are expected to have in place the following staffing resources as a minimum:

- There must be at least five members of academic staff who, together, are able to carry out the range of tasks associated with programme delivery, including delivery across the GBC curriculum (see above).
- There must be at least one member of staff who is employed full-time on the programme.
• There must be a minimum of 3 FTE staff in total, although providers should be aware that programmes with small cohort sizes are likely to require an enhanced SSR (see 6.3.2 above).
• The contribution of Graduate Teaching Assistants (or equivalent) and hourly paid staff should not normally be more than 20 per cent of the total staff FTE.

6.5 Professional services support staff:

6.5.1 Programmes must have access to sufficient dedicated administrative, technical or other learning support staff to support their effective delivery. For undergraduate, conversion and integrated Master’s programmes, programme delivery should be supported by the following:
• There should be at least 2 FTE administrative and secretarial staff, at least 1 FTE of which should be dedicated to psychology.
• There should be at least 1 FTE technical/computing staff, who need to be able to support students’ experimental and practical work as well as providing any more general technical support

For larger provision (greater than around 400FTE students), additional resources are expected.

6.5.2 The education provider must be able to demonstrate that the support that is provided is sufficient to meet the needs of the provision in question. Where shared or distributed arrangements for support staff are in place, the education provider must demonstrate their equivalence to the minimum standards outlined above.

6.6 Staff professional development:

6.6.1 Staff are entitled to expect an institutional culture which values and rewards professionalism and scholarship, and which provides access to development opportunities which assist them in their support for student learning. Institutions should support initial and continuing professional development for all staff.

6.6.2 All core members of programme teams are expected to undertake continuing professional development that is necessary to their role within the programme, and, where appropriate, relevant to their professional practice. It is expected that this would include undertaking relevant research, knowledge transfer and other scholarly activity, and/or attendance at relevant conferences. Opportunities for development should be available to all staff who are engaged in, or are supporting, teaching, research and scholarship.

6.6.3 Education providers must have a training and mentoring strategy in place to support early-career staff to undertake core roles, including teaching, supervision and assessment of students’ work.
### Rationale for inclusion

This standard is included as contact with and support from sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced staff whose professional development is well supported will contribute significantly to the quality of the overall student experience. Additionally, the leadership and co-ordination of the programme is central to shaping students' experience and their development as psychologists or members of the wider psychological workforce.

### Guidance and signposting

- Where appropriate, Programme Directors may be supported in aspects of their role by colleagues with complementary skills and experience to their own. Education providers may wish to consider the roles that other programme team members may take in relation to the leadership and co-ordination of the programme as part of their staff development strategy, particularly in connection with longer-term succession planning or to support the development of leadership potential.

- In the interests of the longer-term sustainable delivery of the programme, providers should have contingency plans in place to ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced individual has been identified who could deputise for the Programme Director should the need arise (e.g. sickness absence, parental leave, sabbatical).

- The Society supports the inclusive principles set out in the Equality Challenge Unit’s Athena SWAN charter, and would encourage providers of accredited programmes to pursue gaining Athena SWAN recognition and to take steps to improve the career prospects of women psychologists. At undergraduate and postgraduate levels, psychology is a subject that attracts a high proportion of women students, and yet the gender balance among senior academics and practitioners reflects a very different picture. Individuals’ identities are shaped by a range of factors that intersect in different ways, and providers should consider the steps they are able to take to promote and improve the career prospects of other underrepresented groups and to encourage greater representation. ([www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)).

- Programme providers are encouraged to consult the Society’s *Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of psychology technical staff* (2014), and its *Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of administrative and professional services staff* (2017). ([www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads](http://www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads)).

- Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code addresses Learning and Teaching, and specifically emphasises the need for higher education providers to assure themselves that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed. This includes: appropriate and current practitioner knowledge and an understanding of the subject they teach and of the disciplinary scholarship appropriate to the academic level of the students they are teaching; and the necessary skills and experience to facilitate learning in the students they are interacting with, and to use approaches grounded in sound learning and teaching scholarship and practice. Providers may find it helpful to review their provision against these resources (Chapter B3 Indicator 4, [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).
Programme standard 7: Discipline-specific resources

The education provider must have appropriate discipline-specific resources in place to support the effective delivery of the programme.

7.1 The education provider must be able to outline the discipline-specific and general resources and facilities that are in place to support student learning. Education providers must offer students access to learning resources that are appropriate to the range of theoretical and practical work in which they are engaged.

7.1.1 To ensure the quality of provision, education providers of undergraduate, conversion and integrated Master’s programmes must have in place adequate and dedicated laboratory space and equipment appropriate to their mode of delivery. This will include facilities to enable students to carry out experimental and other appropriate practical work in a range of GBC curriculum areas, and must include facilities for teaching practical skills to small and large groups, in addition to supporting individual students’ empirical work.

7.1.2 The Society would normally expect the learning resources provided to include a minimum of 2000 text books, an adequate number of which have been published within the last five years; this figure may also include multiple copies of or licences for key texts. Students should also have access to a minimum of 50 current full-text electronic and/or printed subscriptions reflecting balanced coverage across the GBC curriculum. This should include both current and back-dated issues.

7.2 Education providers should ensure that students are advised of the discipline-specific and general learning resources to which they have access, and are provided with the necessary support and/or training to enable them to make appropriate use of these.

Rationale for inclusion
This standard is included because the learning experience must be underpinned by access to resources that are appropriate to the psychology programme(s) offered by the education provider. The availability of appropriate resources is key to the delivery of psychology as a science, with associated levels of practical work culminating in students’ completion of individual research at the appropriate level.

Guidance and signposting
- Resources will normally include teaching, tutorial and laboratory space, learning resources (such as texts and journals, available in hard copy and/or electronically, computing facilities), psychological testing materials, specialist equipment supporting psychological research, software supporting data collection and analysis in psychology research, and other IT and/or audiovisual facilities (e.g. to enable the recording of practice role plays and competency assessment tasks), as appropriate to the provision in question.
• Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code addresses Learning and Teaching, and specifically sets out the expectation that education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent student, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. In particular, there is an expectation that providers maintain physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use (Chapter B3 Indicator 6, [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).
The education provider’s quality management systems must make regular provision for the periodic review of the validity and relevance of the programme, such that it continues to reflect our standards, and meets the needs of the programme’s stakeholders.

8.1 Assurance and enhancement of quality:

8.1.1 The quality management mechanisms that are in place should provide for periodic review of the programme’s aims and intended learning outcomes and content, the strategies associated with programme delivery, and the assessment methods that are used to evaluate students’ achievement of the learning outcomes. Overall, they should ensure that the programme continues to reflect contemporary learning, research and practice in psychology.

8.1.2 Programmes will appoint appropriate External Examiners whose expertise will be of relevance to the breadth and depth of provision being offered. They will ensure that External Examiners are provided with adequate information to support their role, and that systems are in place to monitor action that is taken in response to any issues raised.

8.1.3 For undergraduate, conversion and integrated Master’s programmes, a minimum of two appropriately qualified External Examiners should be appointed, with expertise that covers the breadth of the programme(s) (and therefore the work that they will be expected to examine).

8.2 Stakeholder engagement:

8.2.1 Students should have the opportunity to provide feedback on the design and delivery of the programme via the quality management mechanisms that are in place. Programmes should identify ways in which any difficulties identified (whether as informal or formal complaints) may be satisfactorily resolved, and changes to current systems and practices made where appropriate.

8.2.2 Both formal and informal mechanisms of quality assurance should be in place, including regular staff-student liaison meetings. Issues raised by stakeholders, including students, should be documented and contribute to the quality management processes of the provider.
### Rationale for inclusion
This standard is included because Accreditation through Partnership relies upon education providers having in place robust quality management mechanisms that facilitate self-evaluation of module and programme learning outcomes against the Society’s accreditation standards and other indicators of academic standards. The Society recognises education providers’ quality management mechanisms as a reliable source of evidence of continued achievement of the standards.

### Guidance and signposting
- Part A of the UK Quality Code addresses Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards. Part C addresses the information that providers set out in relation to their arrangements for managing academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement, and the records they maintain of all arrangements for delivering higher education with others. Providers may also find it helpful to refer to a further five chapters from Part B of the Quality Code ([www.qaa.ac.uk](www.qaa.ac.uk)):
  - Chapter B5: Student Engagement, and in particular the role of students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.
  - Chapter B7: External Examining
  - Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review
  - Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints, and in particular ensuring that students have opportunities to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage
  - Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others, which specifically highlights that degree-awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them.

- External peer review offers a valuable perspective upon the ways in which the programme compares to others of a similar nature nationally. With this in mind, enabling the Society to have sight of internal quality review reports and External Examiners’ reports, and the programme’s response to these, allows our reviewers to gain insight into the extent to which the education provider’s quality management mechanisms function effectively for the benefit of students, and the discipline as a whole.

- All providers are encouraged to consider the ways in which employer feedback might be harnessed as part of the quality management and programme development process.