

**The British  
Psychological Society**  
Promoting excellence in psychology

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

*October 2016*



**The British  
Psychological Society**  
Partnership & Accreditation

[www.bps.org.uk/partnership](http://www.bps.org.uk/partnership)

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# Introduction

The British Psychological Society ('the Society') is the learned and professional body, incorporated by Royal Charter, for psychologists in the United Kingdom. The Society has a total membership and subscribership of approximately 60,000, and is a registered charity. Under its Royal Charter, 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 Society has been involved in the accreditation of programmes of education and training in psychology since the early 1970's. The Society currently accredits programmes at both undergraduate (and equivalent) and postgraduate levels. Undergraduate, conversion, and integrated Masters programmes are accredited against the requirements for the Society's Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC), the curriculum requirements for which are derived from the *Quality Assurance Agency's Subject Benchmark Statement for Psychology (2016)*. Postgraduate programmes are accredited against the knowledge, practice and research requirements for Chartered Psychologist (CPsychol) status in a range of domains of practice. A number of the postgraduate programmes that are accredited by the Society are also approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), the statutory regulator of practitioner psychologists in the UK.

## **Benefits of Society membership**

Our standards include an expectation that education providers offering accredited programmes provide their students and trainees with information on Society membership and its benefits. In view of our partnership approach, we are working to provide a toolkit for education providers and as part of this we encourage you to reproduce the following pages within your Student Handbooks or share them on your virtual learning environment.

# Your professional body

The British Psychological Society is the representative body for psychology and psychologists in the United Kingdom. We promote excellence and ethical practice in the science, education and practical applications of psychology.

As a student on an accredited undergraduate programme, Student membership of The British Psychological Society will broaden your appreciation and understanding of psychology, and open up a network of like-minded students, academics and professionals, not to mention future opportunities. Upon completing this course, you are eligible for the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership of the Society (GBC). This means you can apply for Graduate membership and offer potential employers and providers of postgraduate programmes a clear indication of the breadth and depth of your knowledge of psychology, and a valuable set of subject-specific and transferable skills.

[www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)



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Download the flyer from our website [www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads](http://www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads).

Our membership has a powerful voice in raising the profile of psychology, developing standards and advancing the discipline. We champion the work of our members and the contribution psychology can make to society. We support our members by providing guidance, career development and networking opportunities.

Our members matter to us and Student membership includes a range of benefits that will enrich your experience in higher education:

- *The Psychologist* our monthly flagship publication, providing a forum for communications, discussion and debate among all members of the Society
- *Psych-Talk* is our magazine written by students, for students, giving you an opportunity to get your own articles, letters and book reviews published.
- Our Member Networks further the development of psychology in specialist areas through the exchange of information and ideas, research and practice. Joining these groups provides a rich web of personal and professional contacts and enables you to stay informed with your areas of interest.
- We aim to inspire and guide you throughout your studies and career by providing a range of professional development opportunities. Many of our conferences and events feature eminent psychologists sharing their latest research and practice, all at discounted rates for students.
- PsychSource provides a single access point to our 11 journals and 32 other titles published by Wiley. This facility also includes full-text journal articles, journal abstracts, BPS Blackwell books and multimedia content. PsychSource is fully searchable and personalisable according to Member interests.
- Student members are entitled to discounted books and publications plus high street deals once signed in to our website.

To hear what benefits of belonging to the Society our members enjoy most, watch our videos on [www.bps.org.uk/careers](http://www.bps.org.uk/careers). Find out more, or join as a Student Member online, at [www.bps.org.uk/student](http://www.bps.org.uk/student). Our membership team is available at [membership@bps.org.uk](mailto:membership@bps.org.uk) or +44 (0)116 252 9911.

[www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)



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## Individual membership

Joining the Society as a Student member couldn't be simpler via our online application system ([www.bps.org.uk/student](http://www.bps.org.uk/student)) and costs just £25 for a year's membership; alongside this we also offer a reduced rate option to join for the duration of study – a three or four year membership being available.

## Multi-membership Scheme

Our multi-membership scheme offers the opportunity for a provider to purchase individual membership for each of its students studying on a Society-accredited undergraduate, conversion or integrated Masters programme. The scheme offers a discounted rate of membership when purchased as a package. We feel it offers a perfect platform to engage with the Society and for your students to benefit from the resources and support we offer.

The fee is based on the annual Direct Debit fee for a current Student member of £21 (the standard fee for an individual to join is £25). A stepped discount is applied the more students there are, and is as follows:

**0–100** students attracts a discount of 5% = **£19.95** per student

**101–200** students attracts a discount of 7.5% = **£19.43** per student

**201–300** students attracts a discount of 10% = **£18.90** per student

**301–500** students attracts a discount of 25% = **£15.75** per student

**Over 500** students attracts a discount of 50% = **£10.50** per student

Sign your students up from the start of the academic year, and their membership will run to the end of the following calendar year, giving fifteen months membership instead of the usual twelve.

In recognition of a provider's commitment to the scheme we will arrange for a colleague from the Society to visit to give a talk or hold a Q&A session with students to outline the benefits of membership, provide advice on training routes, etc. These sessions are flexible and can be tailored to suit.

If you are interested in discussing promotion of individual student membership or the multi-membership scheme please contact Andrew Christer in the Society's Membership Team; **t:** 0116 252 9591, or **e:** [andrew.christer@bps.org.uk](mailto:andrew.christer@bps.org.uk).



# What is accreditation?

# What is accreditation?

Accreditation through Partnership is the process by which the British Psychological Society works with education providers to ensure that quality standards in psychology 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 space for exploration, development and quality enhancement. This document sets out our accreditation standards for undergraduate, conversion, and integrated Masters programmes in psychology. 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).

## Benefits of accreditation

Delivering a programme that meets the high quality standards required for accreditation is a significant commitment, and there are lots of 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 understand and value.
- It enhances the marketability of your programmes in a competitive market place.
- It gives your graduates a route to Society membership. Belonging to the Society is an integral part of students' development as psychologists, as it recognises their qualifications and reflects their aspiration to achieve the highest possible professional standards.
- It is a high quality benchmarking process that is defined by psychologists, and delivered and developed in partnership with psychologists.
- It is aimed at getting the best out of programmes, through promoting psychology as a science, facilitating quality enhancement and providing solution-focused support.
- It provides a direct opportunity for you and your students to influence the Society, its support for education providers and students, and its policies for the future.
- Together we have a powerful voice in raising the profile of psychology in the UK and internationally, developing standards and advancing the discipline.



# Our standards: An introduction

# Our standards: An introduction

The Society publishes standards for the accreditation of undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes in psychology, and for postgraduate programmes of professional training.

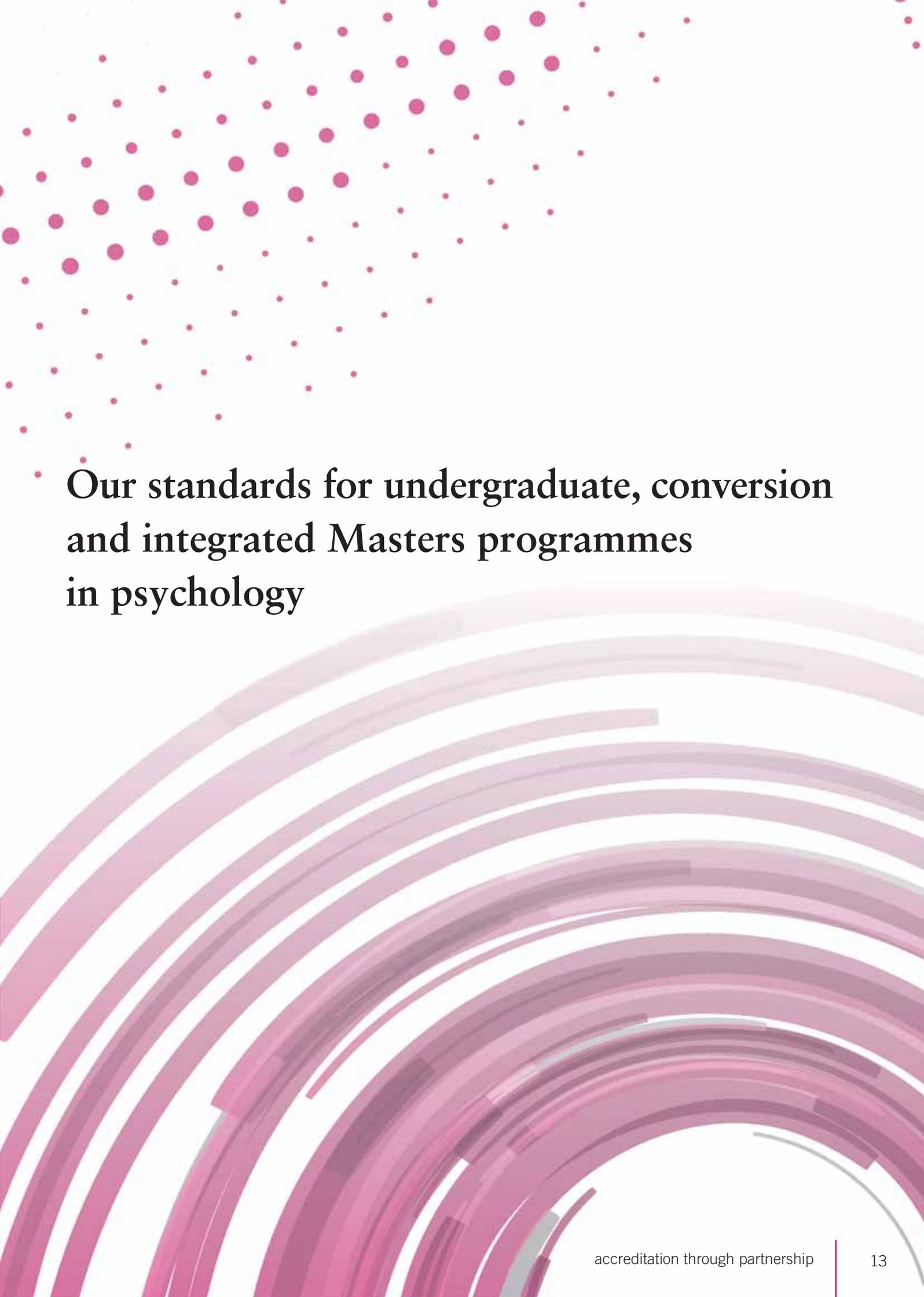
Our standards for undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes represent the requirements for Graduate Membership of the Society and the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC).

Our postgraduate standards span eight domains of practice, seven of which relate to pre-qualification training leading to Chartered membership of the Society, and full membership of one or more of the Society's Divisions (the Division of Clinical Psychology, the Division of Counselling Psychology, the Division of Educational and Child Psychology or the Scottish Division of Educational Psychology, the Division of Forensic Psychology, the Division of Health Psychology, the Division of Occupational Psychology and the Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology). These correspond to the seven protected titles regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council. We also accredit specialist post-qualification training programmes in Clinical Neuropsychology.

In addition, we also publish standards for the accreditation of Psychological Well-being Practitioner training programmes. These programmes are typically offered at level 6 and / or level 7.

The Society is keen to 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.

This document sets out our accreditation standards for undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes in psychology. The standards were approved by the Society's Membership and Standards Board in October 2016, and came into operation on 1 November 2016.

The background features a white space with a cluster of pink dots of varying sizes in the upper left corner. The lower half of the page is filled with several overlapping, curved, brushstroke-like bands in various shades of pink and purple, creating a sense of movement and depth.

# **Our standards for undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes in psychology**

## Our standards for undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes in psychology

Our standards are organised around nine overarching areas, and have been derived following extensive consultation between the Society and education providers; these comprise our programme standards, and must be achieved by all accredited programmes. Each overarching standard is followed by a rationale for its inclusion, together with an outline of the factors that education providers should consider in confirming their achievement of each standard.

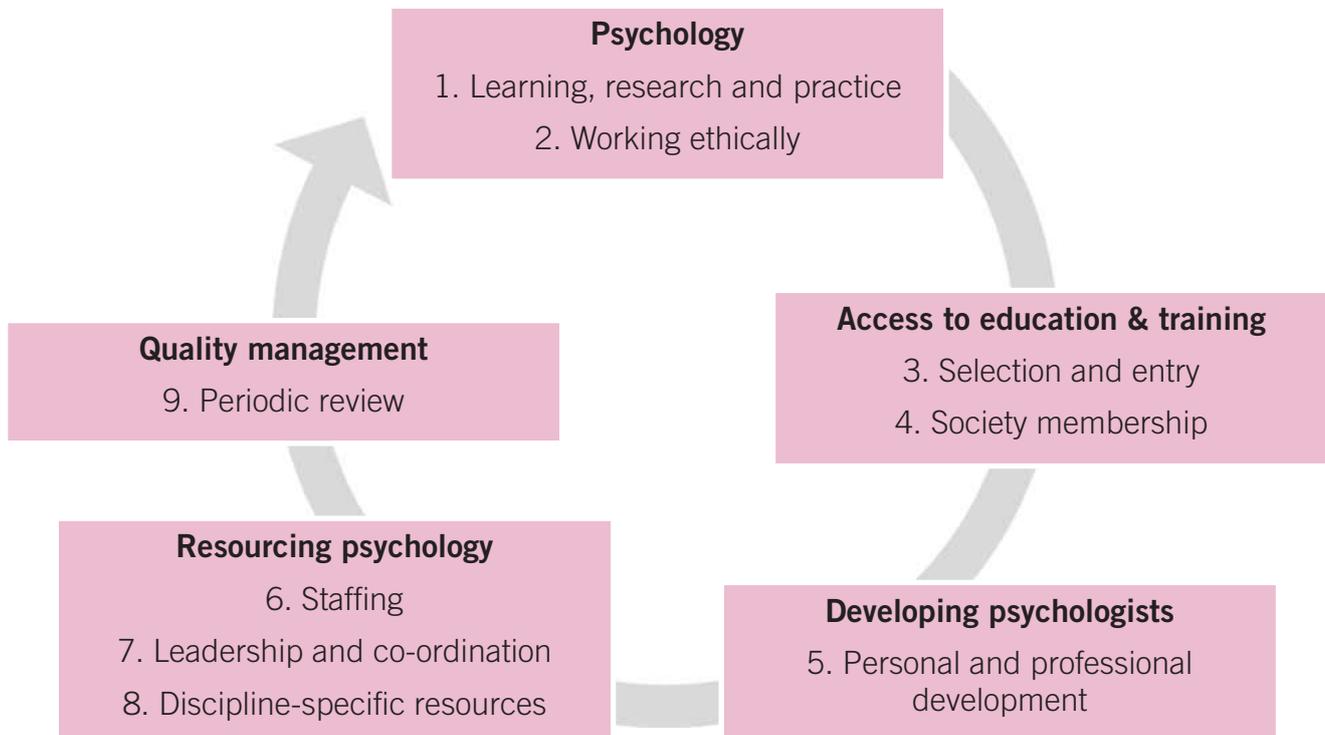
The information provided is not intended to prescribe a particular approach to meeting our standards; rather it is intended to reflect the likely areas of interest for visiting teams or reviewers when exploring achievement of the standards with education providers, students / trainees, employers, and other stakeholders. 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.

Some of our nine overarching standards are complemented by a series of further standards that are of specific relevance to undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes in psychology. These represent the benchmark level of quality that the Society expects all accredited programmes of this kind to attain. The standards were revised in 2012 in partnership with education providers to take account of the recommendations made in the *Future of Undergraduate Psychology in the UK* report.

Overall, our standards are designed to support education providers offering programmes that are designed to meet the requirements for the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC). Completion of an accredited undergraduate, conversion, or integrated Masters programme in psychology will provide a basis for progression to postgraduate training in psychology, and therefore eligibility for Chartered membership of the Society (CPsychol) in due course.

Providers may also wish to put forward integrated Masters programmes that seek to combine the requirements for the GBC and for stage one postgraduate training in psychology. Where this is the case, 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 domain of psychology). To that end, such integrated Masters programmes should incorporate no less than 180 level 7 credits, and will need to include both an empirical project in psychology at level 6, and an empirical study in their chosen field of postgraduate study at level 7.

Our standards framework is organised as follows:



## Programme standard 1: Learning, research and practice

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

- The programme must be able to document its intended learning outcomes, the ways in which these reflect the relevant domain-specific requirements, the learning and teaching strategies that will be used to support students' achievement of the learning outcomes, and the assessment strategies that will enable students to demonstrate those achievements.
- Students' successful fulfilment of the programme's requirements must be marked by the conferment of a named HE award at the appropriate level.
- Education providers will normally demonstrate their achievement of this standard through production of a programme specification.

### A Curriculum for the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership of the Society (GBC)

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 paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 [of the Subject Benchmark Statement, reproduced 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.

In order to support students' development of the above knowledge and skills, accredited undergraduate and conversion 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.

Education providers are free to map topics in any academically coherent combination, which could range from delivering core domains 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 and understanding. The overall programme design will be outlined within the programme specification; provision of a clear programme specification and associated documentation offers an opportunity for the Society to identify innovative and creative practice in relation to teaching, learning and assessment.

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.

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).

For accredited undergraduate programmes, at least **50 per cent** of the total programme must comprise psychology content. This will comprise a minimum of 180 credits of the accredited award (240 credits in Scotland). Full-time undergraduate programmes are normally delivered over three years (one year for conversion programmes). However, there are no requirements that set out a minimum period of study and education providers wishing to develop and submit shorter accelerated and longer integrated programmes of study for accreditation are encouraged to do so.

## **1. 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].

## **2. 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].

### **3. 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].

### **4. 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].

### **5. 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].

### **6. 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].

### **7. 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.

## 8. 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**. 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, or using secondary data, provided they are still required to demonstrate the above skills individually.

## B Teaching and learning

1. Programmes must have a clear programme specification 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. The programme specification must include learning outcomes that reflect the GBC curriculum requirements outlined in this handbook.
2. Education providers must be able to document the intended programme and module learning outcomes, the ways in which these reflect the core domains and suggested topic areas, the learning and teaching strategies that will be used to support students' achievement of the learning outcomes, and the assessment strategies that will enable students to demonstrate those achievements.
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.

4. 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.
5. 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. 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.

## C Assessment

1. Programmes must have in place an assessment strategy that maps clearly on to programme and module learning outcomes, and which reflects students' development of knowledge and skills as they progress through their studies. Each of the core domains must be assessed at the appropriate level, but need not be assessed separately (with the exception of the empirical project).
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).
3. Assessment rules, regulations and criteria should be published in a full and accessible form and made freely available to students, staff and external examiners.
4. Assessment practices should be fair, valid, reliable and appropriate to the level of award being offered. Assessment should be undertaken only by appropriately qualified staff, who have been adequately trained and briefed, and given regular opportunities to update and enhance their expertise as assessors.
5. Education providers should have in place policies and procedures to deal thoroughly, fairly and expeditiously with problems which arise in the programme of assessment of students. These should define the actions to be taken in the event of academic misconduct, and the grounds for student appeals against assessment outcomes.

## Programme standard 2: Working ethically

The programme must include teaching on the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, and evaluation of students' understanding of working ethically, as appropriate to the level of study.

- The inclusion of this standard reflects the particular importance of ethics and ethical practice to psychologists.
  - The Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* 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.
  - In addition to providing teaching on the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* and relevant supplementary ethical guidelines, Masters and Doctoral programmes are also expected to make students aware of the Health and Care Professions Council's *Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students*.
  - 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).
  - 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 and working with people more generally.
  - Programmes should also seek to foster appropriate understanding of and competencies in ethical decision-making and practice, both at the general level and specific to the sorts of situations and contexts that applied psychologists face in their work, at the appropriate level.
  - In evaluating students' understanding of working ethically, education providers should have in place mechanisms for identifying and dealing with academic and professional misconduct, as appropriate to the programme(s) offered. The programme should consider the ways in which these mechanisms are publicised to students.
1. Programmes must ensure that students are taught and assessed on ethics beyond the submission of ethics applications for research projects. Providers should refer to the Society's *Guidance on teaching and assessment of ethical competence in psychology education* (2015).

## Programme standard 3: Selection and entry

**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.**

- Education providers have certain obligations in relation to equality of opportunity and access in relation to UK legislation and the requirements of the Office for Fair Access ([www.offa.org.uk](http://www.offa.org.uk)), or equivalent.
- The Society is interested in the ways in which education providers implement their equality and diversity policies for the benefit of prospective and current psychology students / trainees.
- This standard is included because 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.

### Undergraduate programmes

1. Entry requirements for undergraduate programmes should be established by the education provider.

### 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.

2. All applicants to conversion programmes must hold a degree. 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.
3. 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.

Please also refer to our additional guidance on the admission of international students to conversion programmes (page 34).

### Recognition of prior learning

4. 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.

- 5.** 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 total 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.

## Programme standard 4: Society membership

**The programme must provide students with information on gaining membership of the Society at the appropriate level.**

- This standard is included because it is important that education providers communicate the benefits of completing an accredited programme to their students.
- Programmes should familiarise students with the distinct role of the Society as the professional body and the Health and Care Professions Council as the statutory regulator for practitioner psychologists in the 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. 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 and ethical standards. Programmes are encouraged to share the benefits of belonging to the Society with their students and trainees, for example by including the information provided on page 6 of this document in student handbooks.
- 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)**.

## Programme standard 5: Personal and professional development

The programme must be able to articulate a strategy for supporting students' development as psychologists, in a way that is appropriate to their level of study.

- The programme must have in place mechanisms for the support of students' personal and / or professional development, as appropriate.
- 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.
- Psychology graduates should explicitly understand how their training equips them with transferrable skills and psychological literacy, and the ways in which these are of value to them in their careers.
- Opportunities for interdisciplinary working can enrich the learning experience, however, and where these exist education providers should clearly outline their availability for the benefit of students. The Society does not advocate a particular approach to programme delivery, and interdisciplinary or inter-professional learning may be more or less appropriate depending upon the organisational context within which the programme is operating. However, the Society is keen to collate clearer information on the range of approaches that are taken to learning and teaching through exploration and enquiry with education providers at partnership visits.

1. Section 4.5 of the *Subject Benchmark Statement for Psychology* outlines the importance of 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;
  - **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. approach to a time-limited project is required.

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.

- 2.** The programme must have in place a personal tutor system, and students must have access to advice on their continuing professional development. Specific consideration should be given to supporting students in being able to articulate the skills they are developing as they progress in their studies.
- 3.** 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.
- 4.** Education providers should ensure that detailed and up to date records on student progress are kept. Throughout a programme of study, students should receive prompt and helpful feedback about their performance and progress in relation to assessment criteria so that they can appropriately direct their subsequent learning activities.

## Programme standard 6: Staffing

The education provider must have appropriate human resources in place to support the effective delivery of the programme. Specifically, undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes should operate a maximum staff student ratio of 1:20.

- This standard is included as contact with and support from sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified staff will contribute significantly to the quality of the overall experience of psychology students.
- 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.
- Education providers should provide a calculation of their current staff student ratio in the evidence they submit in support of an application for accreditation, or in advance of a paper-based review or partnership visit.
- 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: management; 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Given the minimum staffing requirement of 3 FTE (see below), and the range of tasks that programme staff must undertake in order to deliver a quality student experience, programmes with small cohort sizes are likely to require an enhanced staff student ratio in order to be able to fulfil the key roles and functions required above.
- Programmes must have access to sufficient administrative, technical or other learning support staff to support their effective delivery<sup>1</sup>.

### Academic staff

1. Accredited programmes must operate a maximum staff student ratio of 1:20 based on FTEs. Guidance on calculating the staff student ratio is provided within the relevant self-evaluation questionnaire.
2. 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

<sup>1</sup> Programme providers are encouraged to consult the Society's *Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of psychology technical staff* (October 2014). The Society is in the process of developing *Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of administrative and professional services staff*. Publication is anticipated during 2016.

competent, research-informed teaching. The staff team as a whole needs to be able to deliver (i.e. teach and assess) across the GBC curriculum at the appropriate level, and supervise students' empirical psychology projects. It is therefore expected that 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.

3. In the interests of promoting a holistic learning experience for students, the Society would normally expect staff to be located predominantly in one department or on one site.
4. Education providers are expected to have in place the following staffing resources as a minimum to support the delivery of the programme:
  - 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 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.
5. 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. All core members of programme teams are expected to undertake continuing professional development that is necessary to their role within the programme. 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.

### **Support staff**

7. Programme delivery should be supported by the following:
  - at least 2 FTE administrative and secretarial staff, at least 1 FTE of which should be dedicated to psychology.; and
  - 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. Providers should refer to the Society's *Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of psychology technical staff* (October 2014).

For larger provisions (greater than around 400 FTE students), additional resources are expected<sup>4</sup>.

8. 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.

<sup>4</sup> The Society is in the process of developing *Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of administrative and professional services staff*. Publication is anticipated during 2016.

## Programme standard 7: Leadership and co-ordination

**The education provider must appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced director or co-ordinator for the programme.**

- The leadership and co-ordination of the programme is central to shaping students' experience of psychology and their development as psychologists.
- 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).
- 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.
- The Programme Director must be of an appropriately senior academic status within the education provider, such that the Society may be confident that they can take overall responsibility for, or make a significant contribution to, the programme's day-to-day management and strategic direction.
- The skills required will differ according to the nature of the accredited programme. Programmes offering underpinning knowledge and/or research (stage one of the requirements for Chartered psychologist status) must normally be managed by an individual with clear academic and / or research expertise; the management of programmes providing full training from GBC to eligibility for registration as a Chartered psychologist (stage two and integrated Doctoral programmes), or other training with a substantial focus on professional practice (educational psychology programmes in Scotland) will also require appropriate professional practice skills and experience.
- Where appropriate, Programme Directors may also 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.

1. Education providers must be able to outline a clear strategy in relation to the leadership and co-ordination of the programme. The programme standard above expands upon approaches to programme co-ordination that may facilitate education providers' thinking around this important role.

## Programme standard 8: Discipline-specific resources

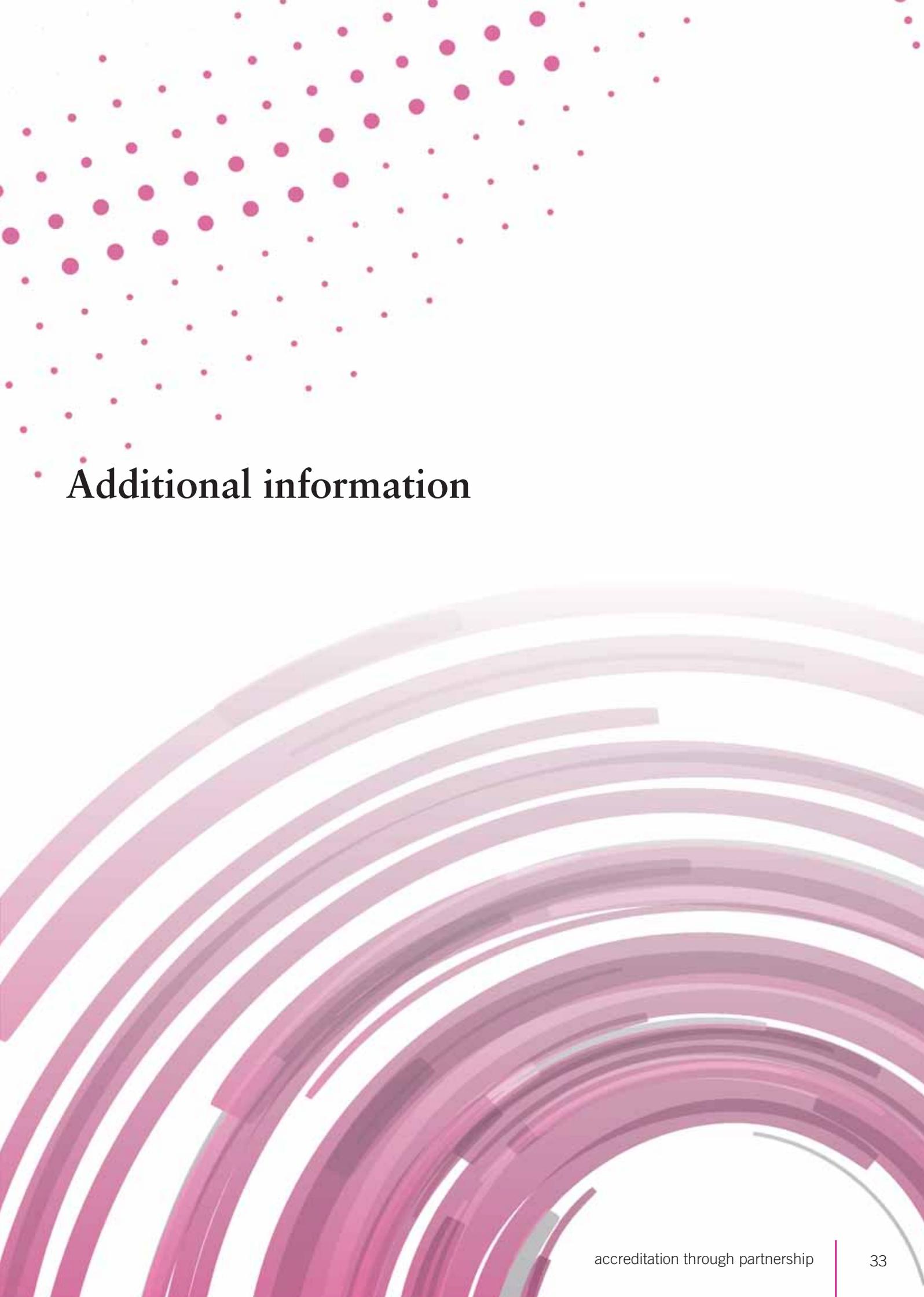
**The education provider must have the appropriate discipline-specific resources in place to support the effective delivery of the psychology programme.**

- This standard is included because the student experience must be underpinned by access to physical 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.
  - Resources will 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 facilities.
  - Education providers should consider how students are advised of the discipline-specific and general learning resources to which they have access.
1. To ensure the quality of provision, education providers 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.
  2. Education providers must offer students access to learning resources that are appropriate to the range of theoretical and practical work in which students are engaged. The Society would normally expect this 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.

## Programme standard 9: Quality management

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.

- This standard is included because *accreditation through partnership* relies upon education providers having in place robust quality management mechanisms that facilitate self-evaluation against the programme standards, and the domain-specific standards that apply to the programme(s) in question.
  - The Society recognises education providers' quality management mechanisms as a reliable source of evidence of continued achievement of the standards.
  - Whatever the mechanisms that are in place, they 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.
  - Students should have the opportunity to provide feedback via the quality management mechanisms that are in place. Programmes should identify ways in which any difficulties identified may be satisfactorily resolved, and changes to current systems and practices made where appropriate.
  - Programmes should also consider the ways in which employer feedback might be harnessed.
  - Programmes will appoint appropriate External Examiner(s) whose expertise will be of relevance to the breadth and depth of provision being offered.
  - 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 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.
1. 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).



## **Additional information**

# Additional information

This section outlines additional information that is intended to support you in implementing our standards. If you have any questions that are not answered here, or you require any further information, please contact [pact@bps.org.uk](mailto:pact@bps.org.uk).

## Information for students

The Society's website includes a wealth of information on education and training pathways, and careers in psychology that students may find useful. Please see [www.bps.org.uk/careers-in-psychology](http://www.bps.org.uk/careers-in-psychology) for further information.

## Admission of international students to conversion programmes

Applications from international students wishing to undertake an accredited conversion programme should be evaluated to ensure that their qualifications have been gained from a recognised institution, and to ensure that the applicant has achieved the required academic level.

We would normally expect education providers to adopt the same criteria as those used by the Society to decide whether an international qualification is comparable to a British Bachelors degree. These are as follows:

- (i) In order to assess that the degree held by the applicant is from a recognised institution, the education provider should refer to the World Higher Education Database.
- (ii) Only a qualification obtained from an institution:
  - (a) listed in the publication;
  - (b) validated by an institution listed; or
  - (c) recognised by a validation body;is considered to be a suitable basis for entry onto a conversion programme.
- (iii) In order to assess the standard of the qualification, the education provider should consult the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) for the United Kingdom, or other appropriate services.

Provided that the qualification is comparable to a British Bachelors degree and the conditions in (i) and (ii) above are fulfilled, any study of psychology undertaken by an applicant may be considered towards the total 180 credits in psychology that are required for the purposes of the GBC.

## Studying abroad as part of an accredited programme

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. Information regarding the Society's international accreditation process can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation](http://www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation).

Study abroad 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 also be downloaded from [www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation](http://www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation).

## Accreditation of programmes offered outside of the UK

The Society's accreditation process is open to all UK education providers and covers both provision that is delivered in the UK, and UK awards that are delivered primarily or entirely outside of the UK (transnational programmes). The standards we outline for accreditation, and our accreditation process, apply to all accredited programmes regardless of where they are delivered.

We will accept applications for accreditation from any UK education provider. Only those that have successfully graduated at least one cohort of UK students will be eligible to apply for accreditation of transnational programmes. The Society will only consider programmes delivered in the English language for accreditation at the present time.

More information can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation](http://www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation) and in our International Accreditation handbook, which can be downloaded from [www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads](http://www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads).

## Governance

Our accreditation process is overseen by the Society's Partnership and Accreditation Committee (PAC), on behalf of the Membership and Standards Board. PAC comprises representatives from each of the Society's Committees with an involvement in accreditation, with expertise in a range of areas of psychology education and training at graduate and postgraduate levels. This ensures that our standards for accreditation, as defined by the Membership and Standards Board, are implemented appropriately and consistently across all programmes and education providers.

PAC has oversight of the overall schedule of partnership visit and review activity, and ensures that Committees implement the accreditation process in accordance with that schedule, and in a way that is consistent with the principles of collaborative, partnership working.

Committees are established on the basis of the experience of their members in relation to specific fields of psychology education or training. They establish review teams and support them in reaching decisions in relation to initial or ongoing accreditation, including any conditions of accreditation that may need to be met by the education provider for accreditation to be maintained.

PAC will receive regular reports of the decisions taken in relation to accredited programmes, and will use this to manage the accreditation process, monitor trends and shape its own strategic priorities. This may include: providing clarification to committees on the way they are applying the standards for accreditation; identifying and considering any proposed amendments to standards; identifying general and specific training objectives for reviewers; or recognising the need for targeted communication or consultation with education providers in relation to our shared standards and partnership working.

## Complaints about accredited programmes

Whilst the Society is not able to intervene in individual disputes, we are able to take a view on the extent to which a programme's fulfilment of our standards may be compromised. The details of how we deal with complaints about an accredited programme can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads](http://www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads).

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