



What is AHPD?

The Association of the Heads of Psychology Departments (AHPD) is an organisation set up to support and promote the interests of the academic heads of UK and Eire university psychology departments. Note that here 'departments' refers to an academic unit (school, faculty, division, etc) delivering psychology degrees and producing academic research.

AHPD was set up in the 1970s and has held meetings three times a year since that time, including in virtual form during the COVID pandemic. It was set up because a group of heads recognised a need to support those charged with the leadership of academic departments in the UK as the role involves both a management function and one of promoting and steering the discipline of psychology itself. The support we offer takes a variety of forms, including lobbying on behalf of the interests of university psychology departments, providing networking opportunities for heads, and offering training in the skills needed to be a successful head (see below for further examples of AHPD activities).

Although the focus of AHPD is on supporting individual heads of psychology departments it is the department/school itself that is the member of the Association. Thus, when a head's term of office comes to an end their successor will take over attending the meetings and taking part in the Association's activities. If a head is unable to attend a meeting, they are free to send a representative. Currently departmental/school membership costs £750 per annum, which covers the costs of meetings, most training events and administrative support.

Currently, 104 psychology departments are members of the AHPD. Most of our members offer BPS accredited UG degrees, as well as PGT and PGR programmes. Some also offer professional doctorate degrees in clinical psychology and/or counselling psychology.

Who is responsible for AHPD?

The AHPD is led by a committee of volunteers and has the support of a paid administrator who maintains membership lists, organises meeting venues, and coordinates speakers among other things. All committee members have been or are currently heads of departments. The committee meets three times a year before meeting with the wider community to discuss and agree matters of governance, current and future priorities, and ongoing operations.

AHPD is an independent association but will often liaise with other bodies to promote issues of common interest, including organisations such as the British Psychology Society (BPS),

fundors such as the ESRC or BBSRC, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and other key governmental, higher education, and third sector organisations.

What does membership offer?

You will be invited to meetings three times a year. These include updates and reports on various matters of current interest, usually followed by a workshop to support your professional development or to provide you with direct contact with key regulators and controllers of funding sources.

Recent examples of support workshops have included one on the use of ChatGPT in teaching, one on how to hold difficult conversations, and one for new heads on what to expect in the role. Some workshops are an opportunity to hear from those who control the destiny of psychology departments nationally. Our meetings are regularly attended by BPS representatives, and in recent meetings we have had feedback from the Chair of the UoA4 Research Excellence Framework Panel on how the Panel had viewed the most recent REF exercise, and from representatives of the QAA Psychology subject panel on the creation of the latest Subject Benchmark Statement. These events offer heads the opportunity to question those whom they might otherwise have difficulty engaging with.

Membership also offers the chance to input to national level consultations that will have an impact on academic psychology departments. We always respond to consultations about the form of the REF, and to similar exercises such as the content of the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Psychology. Indeed, in addition to responding to consultations, we actively support nominations for Panels such as those involved in the REF. Where we have concerns about a national-level activity we engage with the relevant bodies to present psychology's case. As an example, we recently invited HESA representatives to our meeting to discuss our concerns about how they were capturing statistical information about graduate outcomes for psychologists.

AHPD also operates an email list, which means that members can distribute information to, or seek input from, other heads of departments. Heads can, for example, post job or postgraduate study opportunities across the network; and the list can be a useful resource when searching for external examiners. The email list is also used by heads to request information from other heads that might be of use to them in arguing for resources in their institution, or in benchmarking their own activities against other departments. For example, heads have recently used the list to request information on how departments adjust staff workloads when large research grants are won.

Many of the heads that attend AHPD meetings report that there is something unique about meeting with people who are in the same position. New heads often feel that they are alone in dealing with the problems in their jobs, being able to chat with people in the same position or those who are more senior and have been through the system can be immensely useful and reassuring. AHPD facilitates mentoring between heads and offers a valuable opportunity for heads to share best practice and seek support and solutions for the ongoing activities and challenges that they must manage.