

#### 4 We want you!

According to a survey conducted in the UK, geography and psychology students had a better than average chance of getting work after graduation. What is it that makes these graduates more desirable on the job market and least likely to be unemployed? Experts share their views.

Dr Alison Green is the psychology programme director at the Open University (OU)

##### 1. Psychology graduates gain an impressive range of skills that make them highly employable

A key factor behind this success story is that psychology graduates acquire diverse knowledge and an impressive range of skills that make them highly employable across an enviable range of professions that offer real prospects. Psychology programmes deliver skills employers value, such as numerical skills, the ability to understand and work with statistics, effective communication and the ability to work productively in teams - and this gives students a real edge when competing with graduates from other disciplines. Open University psychology graduates, for example, move into careers in advertising, career counselling, education, the health professions, human resources, management and social services, and of course they also have the option to progress a career in a professional area of psychology, such as forensic psychology. It's the combination of skills and the nature of the discipline itself that not only underpins the recent growth in numbers of students studying psychology at university but also assures its continuing relevance in the global marketplace.

Anne Wilson is head of careers at Student Careers & Skills, University of Warwick

##### 2. Psychology students often gain extra work experience and further study - which enhances their employability

Psychology graduates, when compared to graduates overall, fare slightly better than average in the graduate employment stakes. While graduates from this discipline have many options open to them, it's also true that these students know that if they want to apply their psychology theory in the workplace for a range of careers (clinical, education, neuropsychology, forensic, health, sport and so on) they understand a period of further study and work experience - up to 12 months - is necessary. Typically these students will have been gaining some relevant experience while at university, some through compulsory sandwich placements. Students

will continue to build on this when they leave. These experiences would certainly enhance their employability.

It is important to remember that the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) reports on graduate destinations a mere six months after graduation which is an insufficiently long enough period of time for many students to have secured a graduate-level position.

James Uffindell is MD and founder of the Bright Network, a careers network for students, graduates and young professionals

3. Geography and psychology graduates are attracted to industries with increasing numbers of vacancies

We work with high flying geography and psychology graduates who are anecdotally and statistically more interested in the areas of highest employment demand. Accountancy, banking and general management, the three areas projected to benefit from the largest increase in vacancies this year, are all favoured by geography and psychology graduates. Out of the graduates that have joined Bright Network this year, on average 28.7% are interested in a career in accounting and finance, (geographers have a 26% interest level, so about average), however just 14% of IT graduates (the most unemployed group) are interested in this sector. This is a shame as banks and finance institutions are keen to acquire their skills.

Demand is strong for graduates from leading universities and geography and psychology are far more likely to be studied at these institutions (often labelled the old universities) than the former polytechnics where media studies graduates, who seem to have higher unemployment rates, appear more prevalent.

Nick Keeley is director of the Careers Service at Newcastle University

4. Studying geography arms graduates with a mix of skills employers want to see

Geography students generally do well in terms of their relatively low unemployment rates. You could attribute this to the fact that the degree helps develop a whole range of employability skills including numeracy, teamwork through regular field trips, analytical skills in the lab and a certain technical savviness through using various specialist computing applications. Also, the subject area in itself cultivates a world view and a certain cultural sensitivity. These all potentially help a geographer to stand out in the labour market.

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