

Civil Service
Occupational Psychology

Professional Skills & Standards



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As a profession, we have a commitment to embedding modern, innovative and evidence-based occupational psychology insights and solutions to support the future of the Civil Service. In the roles we undertake, it is essential we uphold, role model and champion our professional skills and standards. We do this by applying our knowledge base across the five areas of occupational psychology:

1. Psychological assessment at Work
2. Learning, training and development
3. Leadership, engagement and motivation
4. Wellbeing and work
5. Work design, organisational change and development

Our work is about developing and delivering people solutions, and making a difference across the whole employee lifecycle and for the citizens of the UK.

Our impact is felt right across the Civil Service in the work we do to ensure safe, skilled and productive environments.

Through the Occupational Psychology Profession Board, we set and review our professional practice standards and uphold the professional interests of those within our profession. It is only right, therefore, we outline our expectations and minimum requirements for recruitment and promotion into each of our designated professional levels.

My wish is for all members of the profession to use these standards regularly, alongside the British Psychological Society (BPS) and Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) standards and to support personal learning, development and growth. I'm incredibly proud of the work we do and the high standards we set.

Sonia Pawson

Civil Service Head of Profession for Occupational Psychology



The Civil Service

Occupational Psychology Profession

Occupational psychology is concerned with the performance of people at work and with how individuals, small groups and organisations behave and function.

By applying the science of psychology to work, Occupational Psychologists aim to increase the effectiveness of the organisation, improve the job satisfaction of individuals and deliver for Ministers, citizens of the UK and the wellbeing of our people.

The Civil Service Occupational Psychology Profession comprises over 250 members across all the major government departments and many agencies and arms-length bodies. There are significant numbers of our profession in the Department for Work & Pensions, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defence (including Defence Science & Technology Laboratory), and College of Policing. Across all our roles, we give decision-makers occupational psychology evidence-based advice and services to improve organisational effectiveness, employment experiences, public policy and the quality of public services people across the United Kingdom.

We include in our profession anyone who holds a Psychology undergraduate degree (BSc) and intends to complete, is currently undertaking, or who has completed a postgraduate (MSc) qualification in occupational psychology (or similarly titled course).



Welcome to
Caxton House



**Department
for Work &
Pensions**

Visitors Entrance

**There are significant numbers
of our community in the
Department for Work &
Pensions and College for
Policing**

Our members work in both designated occupational psychology posts and posts designated in other professions (e.g. Human Resources, Analysis, Research, Government Science & Engineering). We recognise members of our profession might hold dual professional identities and memberships with another Civil Service profession. We embrace the diversity this brings to our community and our professional practice.

Protected Titles

Our profession is the **occupational psychology profession**. However, not all members of our profession can be called Occupational Psychologists. This is because the title Occupational Psychologist is a legally protected title that can only be used by people who are registered with the **Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC)**. Members of the public can check the HCPC's online register to see if someone using a protected title is legally entitled to use it.

Incorrect use of an HCPC protected title can be prosecuted by the HCPC for knowingly deceiving the public. To avoid calling our members Occupational Psychologists when not all members might be able to use the protected title, we generally talk about members of our profession or professional community.

We recognise the status of legally protected psychology titles can be confusing for people outside the profession. All members of the Civil Service Occupational Psychology profession are expected to only use professional titles to which they are entitled. We encourage civil servants to ask people describing themselves as a psychologist to explore which domain of psychology they work within and the qualifications they hold. Members of the occupational psychology profession will gladly answer these questions.



Designated Occupational Psychology

Post/ Role Titles

The entry level designated occupational psychology role is titled "Psychologist" (or sometimes Assistant Psychologist). Above entry level, designated occupational psychology posts are titled with a grading/ level indicator plus the word Psychologist. The designated post titles and their equivalence to Civil Service grades as follows:

Designated Occupational Psychology Post/ Role Title	Civil Service Grade
[Assistant] Psychologist	EO
Higher Psychologist	HEO
Senior Psychologist	SEO
Principal Psychologist	G7
Chief Psychologist	G6
Senior Principal Psychologist (typically used in Dstl)	

We avoid inserting the word 'Occupational' before Psychologist so as not to assign a post title to someone who might not be legally entitled to use that title. If a post is titled Occupational Psychologist specifically, it must be undertaken by someone who fulfils all the current requirements to use that legally protected title – these requirements are set by the HCPC, not by the Civil Service.

We tend not to use the role/ post title of Trainee Psychologist anymore, because this confuses the term with students undertaking the external Qualification in Occupational Psychology who are called trainees by the British Psychological Society. We expect members of our profession to be clear with colleagues when and why they are using the term 'trainee'. In our community communications we are clear if we are referring to trainees on the qualification.

The larger occupational psychology teams have posts across the grade range, but not all teams have the full range. In some cases, there are singleton occupational psychology posts. This is most usually at SEO or G7. By that grade, in line with the standards set out in this document, the incumbent will be fully qualified as a Chartered Psychologist with the BPS and a registered Occupational Psychologist with the HCPC.

Post/ Role Titles (contd.)



If a singleton post is at HEO or below it is imperative the line manager secures independent professional oversight of the individual's occupational psychology work and professional practice. To do this, they must seek the guidance of a senior member of the profession in their department or the Civil Service Head of Profession for Occupational Psychology.

Members of our profession working in non-designated posts have a range of post/ role titles depending on where they work, e.g. Leadership Consultant, Organisation Development Practitioner, Research Analyst, Scientist. We would welcome a conversation with any line manager who is seeking to understand if their non-designated psychology post should become a designated post due to the qualification requirements, purpose, and remit of the role.



Members of our community working in non-designated posts have a range of post/ role titles depending on where they work, e.g. Leadership Consultant, Organisation Development Practitioner, Research Analyst, Scientist



Professional standards are the demonstration of specific professional skills, knowledge or qualifications required to operate competently within that profession at a specific level. In line with **Civil Service Success Profiles**, there are five elements:

1. Behaviours

The actions and activities that people do which results in effective performance in a job.

2. Strengths

The things we do regularly, do well and that motivate us.

3. Ability

The aptitude or potential to perform to the required standard.

4. Experience

The knowledge or mastery of an activity or subject gained through involvement in, or exposure to it.

5. Technical

The demonstration of specific professional skills, knowledge or qualifications.

The Occupational Psychology Professional Skills & Standards have been developed by the Civil Service Occupational Psychology Board, chaired by the Civil Service Head of Profession. These standards reflect the

unique blend of knowledge, skills and attributes that underpin the professional contribution of the occupational psychology profession to the Civil Service policy, processes, and public service delivery.

Development & Application (contd.)



These standards primarily apply to designated occupational psychology posts where meeting the standards is an essential requirement of the job. Colleagues in non-designated posts who strongly identify with the profession (e.g. they hold high levels of qualifications and are active members in our community) might find it valuable to seek support from their line management to use these standards, particularly in recruitment and development.

Individual job descriptions describe the tasks and responsibilities of each occupational psychology role. Where the content of a job description covers some of the content of the occupational psychology professional standards (e.g. in qualifications, behaviours, professional skills, ethics, and conduct), it should align with all content. The Civil Service Head of Profession may discuss with recruiting line managers and departmental Human Resource Directors if a role appears to deliver occupational psychology services and should fit within these professional standards, but is not fully aligned.

The standards can be applied across all stages of the employee lifecycle (see diagram) with a core role in recruitment, promotion, learning, development, and career planning. Each member of the Civil Service Occupational Psychology Board is responsible for championing and supporting this document across employee lifecycle.

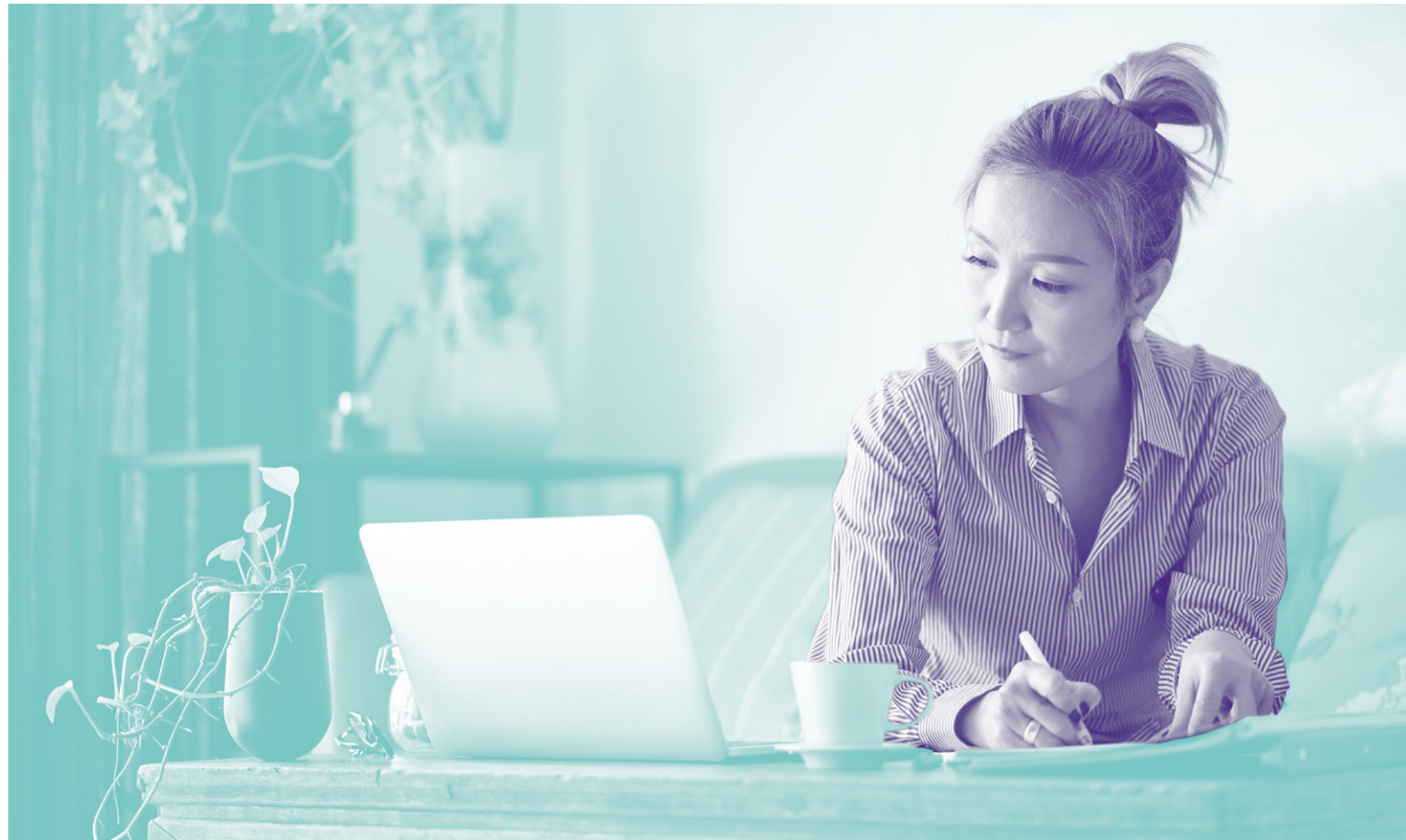


Development & Application (contd.)



Members of the profession should use these standards themselves and in conjunction with their line manager, to assess where they are now, where they want to be, and how they might get there. This might be the acquisition of the skills and competences necessary to enable you to excel in your current role, developing a particular competence in greater depth by means of job-enrichment, or developing the skills necessary to move into an entirely new role or gain promotion.

These conversations can be held by line managers who are psychologists or non-psychologists. If the line manager is a non-psychologist, they are encouraged to seek professional input from a senior member of the profession in their department.





Our professional skills & standards, first of all, consist of qualifications and experience requirements depending on the grade of the designated post. The qualifications give the underpinning knowledge required both at undergraduate and post graduate level. We support the qualifications approved by the BPS and do not repeat their qualification standards or content here.

Building on underpinning knowledge, our standards have behaviours and professional skills, which are built on a foundation of ethics and conduct. The behaviours are drawn from the Civil Service Success Profiles except for Ambassador, which is more fully described further on. The ethics and conduct requirements are drawn from the HCPC and BPS documents. These hold equal status and also apply to all colleagues in designated posts whether they are members of the HCPC or BPS or not. Colleagues in non-designated posts are strongly encouraged to operate in accordance with the ethics and conduct requirements of the BPS and HCPC whether or not they are members of those organisations.

Professional supervision is an important component of a commitment to life-long learning and professional development. As described in our qualification requirements, it is expected that Higher Psychologists (HEO) will be enrolled on a Stage 2 Qualification in Occupational Psychology and will therefore have a professional supervisor. Senior Psychologists are expected to supervise psychologists who are enrolled on a Stage 2 Qualification in Occupational Psychology. Principal and Chief Psychologists are expected to maintain their ability to supervise psychologists on a Stage 2 Qualification and be actively supervising as resources permit and require.

If there is a singleton Higher Psychologist post in a team (i.e. not line managed by a psychologist) and the person is not Chartered, the line manager must secure professional oversight of the individual's work and professional practice. This might be aligned with the supervisor of the Stage 2 Qualification, if available, but does not need to be. The line manager, must seek the guidance of a senior member of the profession in their department or the Civil Service Head of Profession.

Grade Requirements



Designated Grade Title

[Assistant] Psychologist
(Typically, EO.)

Qualification Requirements

BSc Psychology (or equivalent) that confers Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership with the BPS.

DWP only: MSc Occupational Psychology (or equivalent titled course) approved as Stage 1 by the BPS. EO grades are fast-tracked to HEO grade after 6 months upon successful completion of a structured development process, which is aligned to the Civil Service probation period

Experience

No work experience required.

Higher Psychologist
(Typically, HEO.)

As above.

MSc Occupational Psychology (or equivalent titled course) approved as Stage 1 by the BPS.

Enrolled/eligible to enrol on the Stage 2 Qualification in Occupational Psychology with the BPS. Or completed MRes part (years 1 and 2) of a professional doctorate in Occupational Psychology conferring HCPC registration and enrolled on final doctorate component (years 3 & 4) to give eligibility of C.Psychol title with BPS.

Desirable: A minimum of 2 years relevant postgraduate experience.

Grade Requirements (contd.)



Designated Grade Title

Qualification Requirements

Experience

Senior Psychologist
(Typically, SEO.)

As above.

Have completed Stage 2 Qualification in Occupational Psychology with the BPS conferring eligibility to become a Chartered Psychologist with BPS and registered with the HCPC.

Or completed professional doctorate in Occupational Psychology giving eligibility for Chartered Psychologist with BPS.

Desirable (for some role essential): Member of the Register of Applied Psychology Practice Supervisors to be able to supervise psychologists undertaking a Stage 2 Qualification in Occupational Psychology.

Minimum of 4 years relevant post MSc experience.

Principal Psychologist
(Typically, G7.)

As above.

Minimum of 6 years relevant post MSc experience.

Chief Psychologist
Senior Principal Psychologist
(typically only used in Dstl)
(Typically, G6.)

As above.

6+ years relevant post MSc experience.

Professional Skills and Standards Overview



Behaviours

People

- Working Together*
- Leadership*
- Developing Self and Others*

Information

- Communicating and Influencing*
- Seeing the Big Picture*
- Making Effective Decisions*
- Ambassador

Results

- Managing a Quality Service*
- Delivering at Pace*
- Changing and Improving*

Professional Skills

Knowledge Base

1. Psychological assessment at work
2. Learning, training and development
3. Leadership, engagement and motivation
4. Wellbeing and work
5. Work design, organisational change and development

Consultancy

1. Contracting
2. Information gathering and analysis of issues
3. Using an evidence-based approach to formulate plans and actions
4. Implementing and reviewing solutions
5. Evaluating outcomes
6. Reporting and reflecting on outcomes

Research and Evaluation

- Methodology
- Analysis
- Interpretation and evaluation
- Dissemination

Ethics and Conduct

Health and Care Professions Council Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics

British Psychological Society BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct



Behaviours

There are 10 behaviours specified – 9 of these are from the Civil Service Success Profiles – Behaviours and 1 (Ambassador) has been developed for the occupational psychology profession. The details of the Ambassador behaviour are below.

Ambassador

Outcome: The practitioner's behaviour contributes to occupational psychology being seen by clients, stakeholders and customers as a trusted and valued partner part of a cohesive wider Civil Service profession. (summative over levels)

Effective Indicators (summative over levels)

Higher Psychologist

- Understands the role of occupational psychology in department.
- Recognises the multiple and often competing interests of the profession within the Civil Service.
- Speaks positively about the profession in a local/ directorate context.
- Collaborates with other psychologists and specialists as required to deliver services.

Senior Psychologist

- Understands the role of occupational psychology across government.
- Responds appropriately to the multiple and often competing interests of the profession within the Civil Service.
- Speaks positively about the profession in a departmental/ organisational context.
- Maintains a wide network across the profession and with other specialists.

Principal

- Promotes the use of occupational psychology within policy and strategy.
- Champions, defends and upholds occupational psychology professional standards and ethical practice.
- Ensures the availability of a professionally assured, ethical and policy directed Occupational Psychology function.
- Promotes interrelationships between other professional groups and stakeholders and encourages multidisciplinary teams.

Chief Psychologist

- Sets strategic direction for use and promotion of occupational psychology services within their department and across the Civil Service.
- Takes a leading role in advancing the profession across the Civil Service.
- Contributes to the wider academic and professional community for occupational psychology including the BPS and HCPC to support the sustained growth of our profession.

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Higher Psychologist

- Explains to all audiences how occupational psychologists inform strategic, policy and delivery decision making by providing high quality impartial advice.

Senior Psychologist

- Promotes the profession and identifies new ways to add value to departmental priorities.
- Develops opportunities to collaborate with other professional groups and stakeholders.

Principal

- Determines the most appropriate use of occupational psychology across the system.
- Sets strategic direction for the use of occupational psychology services.
- Seeks new opportunities for the role of occupational psychology.
- Makes a corporate contribution to the Civil Service occupational psychology community.
- Monitors the quality of service of internal and externally contracted Occupational Psychology practitioners to ensure they meet clients' needs and are in line with current professional standards.
- Facilitates the effective use of professional networks to enhance the provision of Occupational Psychology services.

Chief Psychologist

- Ensures compliance with legal, ethical and professional practices for self and others within boundaries of the profession.
- Represents the profession in their department and, when required by the Civil Service Head of Profession, across government.



Outcome: The practitioner has the required knowledge to deliver evidence-based services that effect positive change/impact on and for clients/ stakeholders/ service users across the five areas of occupational psychology:

1. Psychological assessment at Work
2. Learning, training and development

Effective Indicators (summative over levels)

Higher Psychologist

- Acquires underpinning knowledge of the science and practice of occupational psychology and understand how these apply in the workplace.
- Uses an evidence-based approach to identify research and theory across core sources of evidence that can be applied to the situation you are addressing.

Senior Psychologist

- Develops depth of knowledge and keeps up to date in those areas of occupational psychology most relevant to your role.
- Critically appraises the evidence base to understand the issue in question.
- Uses an evidence-based approach to identify research and theory across multiple sources of evidence that can be applied to the situation you are addressing

3. Leadership, engagement and motivation

4. Wellbeing and work

5. Work design, organisational change and development

This standard does not detail the content of these five knowledge areas. This is set by the BPS.

Principal

- Brings expert knowledge to bear in business area and assure the development of practitioners' skills and knowledge.
- Applies occupational psychology insights to enhance decision making, planning and policy development across the organisation and wider Civil Service.

Chief Psychologist

- Gives strategic direction to ensure the effective deployment of occupational psychology resources in the Civil Service.
- Accountable for overall service delivery.
- Actively collaborates other professional experts to deliver multi-disciplinary advice to clients.



Higher Psychologist

- Develops critical appraisal skills to evaluate research evidence.
- Draws appropriate conclusions from psychological research and relates to the context of the organisation.
- Prepares and presents psychological information in a way that meets the client's needs.
- Recognises the boundaries of own personal knowledge and skills, and seeks guidance from experienced colleagues.

Senior Psychologist

- Applies professional judgement and expertise in selecting robust, cost-effective and relevant psychological theories/ models/tools/ techniques.
- Uses new techniques and extend own boundaries of practice.
- Promotes and delivers solutions to novel problems using occupational psychology insights.
- Seeks to share and exploit psychological information with colleagues within and across teams for the good of the organisation.
- Recognises the boundaries of the profession, and takes action to meet clients' needs through referral to or consultation with other professionals when appropriate.

Principal

Chief Psychologist

- Sets the requirements for standards of professional practice and boundaries of knowledge for occupational psychology services.
- Contributes to the advancement of the knowledge base and future skills development for the profession in the Civil Service as well as via universities.



Outcome: The practitioner engages with their stakeholders to deliver a service that is based on the consultancy cycle, which leads to the best intervention possible for the situation. The stages of the consultancy cycle are:

1. Contracting
2. Information gathering and analysis of issues
3. Using an evidence-based approach to formulate plans and actions

Effective Indicators (summative over levels)

Higher Psychologist

- Understands the importance and value of the consultancy cycle in delivering occupational psychology services.
- Routinely uses stages 2, 3, 4 and 6 of the consultancy cycle most likely with support and guidance from a more senior colleague.
- Provides consideration of stages 1 and 5 of the consultancy cycle.

Senior Psychologist

- Promotes and champions the importance and value of the consultancy cycle in delivering occupational psychology services.
- Organises work and resources to facilitate the delivery of the consultancy cycle.
- Uses the full consultancy cycle and advises others on its application.
- Conducts problem analysis and determines all the client issues to be addressed.

4. Implementing and reviewing solutions

5. Evaluating outcomes

6. Reporting and reflecting on outcomes

This standard does not detail the requirements of these six stages of the consultancy cycle. Practitioners should refer to the definition in the current BPS Qualification in Occupational Psychology Handbook.

Principal

- Sets strategic work objectives and work force plans in line with ability to deliver using the consultancy cycle.
- Is innovative in addressing client needs and demonstrates wider benefits of analysis.
- Actively markets services and looks for new clients.
- Challenges assumptions and offers alternative perspectives.

Chief Psychologist

- Sets strategic direction for use of occupational psychology consultancy services.
- Accountable for overall service delivery.

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Higher Psychologist

- Use essential skills of asking questions, listening and probing to identify client needs.
- Understands clients' requirements.
- Able to work in partnership and collaboratively with clients.
- Seeks to understand the root causes of issues facing clients.
- Identifies where practice does not align with psychological theory and evidence and alerts senior colleagues.
- Promotes the benefits of applied occupational psychology to enhance business outcomes.

Senior Psychologist

- Liaises directly with clients, keeping them informed in a timely manner.
- Defines the problems to be addressed and communicates the benefits of this analysis, ensuring it is fit for purpose.
- Seeks opportunities to engage with new clients.
- Challenges assumptions. Clearly contracts services with clients to ensure that there is understanding of how psychological services will meet their needs.
- Scopes out client requirements, including evaluation plans, agree applied psychology solutions and keep them involved at all stages of work.
- Highlights problems that clients are unsighted on or unaware of and identify possible solutions.

Principal

- Provides up-to-date impartial, relevant and evidence-based advice to clients on the psychological and behavioural implications of their plans/practices.
- Identifies and explains how occupational psychology theory and applications can add value to client requirements and improve business outcomes, organisational practices and policy.
- Communicates and promotes the impact and value added by the profession at a senior level within the Civil Service.
- Proactively pursues opportunities for applying psychological theories and practices in ways that enhance organisational and operational effectiveness.

Chief Psychologist

Consultancy (contd.)



Higher Psychologist

Senior Psychologist

Principal

Chief Psychologist

- Provides theoretically founded or evidence-based advice and guidance to clients on how psychological interventions can support their outputs aligned with the context of the organisation/client.
- Constructively challenges practice that does not align with psychological theory and proposes evidence-based alternatives.
- Seeks opportunities for occupational psychology to contribute to developing strategy and policy.



Outcome: The practitioner conducts appropriate and sound scientific research to provide the evidence-base on which to make organisational decisions.

Effective Indicators (summative over levels)

Higher Psychologist

- Understands the full range of quantitative and qualitative methods available to address occupational psychology issues.
- Applies a range of quantitative and qualitative research/ evaluation methods as required by your role.
- Able to conduct data analyses at least at MSc level using available qualitative and quantitative software tools relevant to your role.
- Adheres to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics.

Senior Psychologist

- Conducts and apply research to understand organisational challenges and enrich the psychology evidence-base.
- Selects and uses the most appropriate quantitative and qualitative analytical methods and identify any inconsistencies and problems in the data.
- Oversees the design and application of psychological interventions, research and evaluation within their area of expertise.

Principal

- Brings expert knowledge to bear in business area and assure the development of practitioners' skills and knowledge.
- Oversees the design and application of psychological interventions, research and evaluation within your area of expertise.
- Ensures rigorous and accurate application of analytical skills is upheld by practitioners.
- Cross-validates interpretations and provide analysis of the integrity of the data in relation to other sources and research, context and psychological theory.

Chief Psychologist

- Identifies strategic opportunities for collaboration between stakeholders and internal or external researchers to improve the evidencebase of decision making.
- Champions the need for rigorous evaluation with stakeholders and, where required, building the business case for required resources
- Accountable for oversight any approvals required for occupational psychology research. Ensures adherence to wider departmental and civil service research and ethical standards and approvals.



Higher Psychologist

- Conducts research and development of theory, methods and practice to enrich the psychology evidence base.
- Draws appropriate conclusions from psychological research and relates to the context of the organisation.

Senior Psychologist

- Ensures conclusions are reached taking into consideration historical evidence of patterns and trends, whilst also looking to the future.
- Promotes and delivers solutions to novel problems using occupational psychology insights.
- Seeks to share and exploit psychological information with colleagues within and across teams, for the good of the organisation.

Principal

- Applies occupational psychology insights to enhance decision making, planning and policy development across the organisation and wider Civil Service.
- Evaluates the wider strategic implications of the data / outcomes / conclusions and present to senior level audiences.
- Gives strategic direction to ensure the effective deployment of occupational psychology resources in the Civil Service.

Chief Psychologist

- Demonstrates a higher level of ethical awareness for own practice and provides oversight of occupational psychology services.

For more information, please contact us via email,
or visit our gov.uk pages, by clicking the links below.

[contact us via email](#)

[visit our gov.uk pages](#)

