



University  
of Otago  
ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA

# Psychology Whakamātau Hinengaro

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Kathryn Bees  
Bachelor of Science and Postgraduate  
Diploma in Science (Psychology)  
Audiologist MNZAS

The science of behaviour, brain and cognition

Psychology is the science of behaviour, brain and cognition, exploring the complex way humans and other animals interact with the world and each other.

Psychology examines the behavioural, perceptual, mental and emotional processes taking place in our brains. Psychologists also address applied topics as diverse as transport safety, eye-witness testimony, industrial relations, intellectual disabilities, hyperactivity in children, and other clinical issues.

0800 80 80 98 | [otago.ac.nz](http://otago.ac.nz) | [university@otago.ac.nz](mailto:university@otago.ac.nz)



## Why study Psychology?

- Learn about human behaviour.
- Start a challenging career.
- Develop research skills in the social and behavioural sciences.
- Improve career flexibility with Psychology in your degree.

You will learn

- How the brain stores memories and processes information.
- How our abilities change from childhood to old age.
- How emotions affect our reasoning.
- How prejudice and stereotypes arise.
- How parents' behaviour influences their children's development.
- What underlies disorders such as schizophrenia and dementia.
- Why drugs, head injuries and hormones influence behaviour.

## Background required

Any University of Otago student can take first-year papers in Psychology. Secondary school English, biology and statistics are useful but not essential.

## Career opportunities

In addition to specialising in Psychology, a degree in Psychology is useful for a wide range of other disciplines as well. Students take Psychology as part of degrees in Law, Commerce, Physical Education, Applied Science, Education, or Health Sciences.

Graduates from the Department of Psychology have gone on to jobs in universities, health and social

services, business and industry, safety, communications and planning, and various government agencies. Clinical Psychology graduates have gone on to work in the public health sector, Department of Corrections, or in private practice.

Graduates with appropriate postgraduate qualifications work in research sections of the government, such as the Department of Health, Education, Justice, Social Development, Transport and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Many of our graduates spend time working overseas, particularly in Australia, the United Kingdom or USA.

## What does first-year Psychology involve?

There are two first-year papers, PSYC 111 Brain and Behaviour (semester 1) and PSYC 112 Human Thought and Behaviour (semester 2).

These papers have lecture and laboratory components and cover a wide range of topics such as:

Biopsychology – how do sleep, hormone levels, and drugs affect our behaviour?

Perception – what do our senses tell our brains?

Neuropsychology – how do our brains work?

Learning – how do our experiences influence our behaviour?

Development – why do our abilities and behaviours change with age?

Social psychology – how do people affect one another?

Abnormal psychology – when do we decide that behaviour is “abnormal”, and what causes such problems?

Cognition – how do we remember things, solve problems, and use language?

## If I major in Psychology, what other subjects might I consider?

That depends on your interests and strengths. Here are a few examples, but there are many other possibilities.

- Student A takes Biology, Chemistry and Anatomy because they are interested in neuroscience.
- Student B takes Marketing, Management and/or Human Resource Management because they want to work in business or industry.
- Student C takes Mathematics and Computer Science because they are fascinated by artificial intelligence.
- Student D is interested in issues of social change, so they add Politics, Philosophy and Economics to their degree.

For questions about  
Psychology  
[otago.ac.nz/psychology](https://otago.ac.nz/psychology)



## PROFILE

**Kathryn Bees** Bachelor of Science and Postgraduate Diploma in Science (Psychology)  
Audiologist MNZAS

“I grew up in Wellington but had always heard good things about Otago, so I decided to move down. Living in a residential college in my first year was a great way to get to know people and form lifelong friendships. There was a lot to explore in Dunedin, and between uni and a part-time job, I made so many good memories.

“I’d seen ads promoting the Psychology department, so I took a paper in my first year just for interest. All of the lecturers and lab staff were so supportive and always happy to help if I had questions. I enjoyed the paper so much, I made Psychology my major.

“After graduating, I was unsure what I wanted to do next. I looked into a few jobs, but the Psychology postgrad papers that were offered sounded really interesting, so I decided to take that route instead and enrolled in a postgraduate diploma.

“A highlight of my time at Otago was working in the rat lab, studying their behaviour and cognitive abilities. It was great fun training the rats through multiple cognitive tasks and mazes. I learnt a lot about how smart and

trainable they can be. We had a running joke that I loved the rats so much that one day someone would turn up and find them all wearing knitted jumpers!

“After finishing my diploma, I stayed on in the Psychology department, working as a research assistant and a lab demonstrator. I then moved to Auckland to complete a two-year master’s degree in audiology before returning to Dunedin and starting my career as an audiologist. I started with provisional membership, which involves working and training for a year before sitting an exam to become a full member of the New Zealand Audiological Society. I then became a clinic manager and am now a cluster manager, which involves looking over multiple clinics in the Otago area.

“My job involves testing people’s hearing and assessing their listening needs. I discuss the different hearing aids (styles, brands, technology levels) and work with my clients to come up with appropriate solutions. It is a specialised job, and I love being able to help people improve their quality of life.



“Throughout my studies and time working in the Psychology department, I developed many skills, including time management, interactions with people and people management. I also learned how to understand and empathise with clients.

“While helping people with their hearing, I often discover that they have other health or personal concerns. My psychology training really helps with this. I have an understanding of all aspects of people – from specific neural systems and plasticity to behaviour. Psychology truly is a subject that covers the whole human system.”