

AI Acknowledgement

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Becoming a Clinical Psychologist

To become a Clinical Psychologist there are many challenges that you need to overcome and many skills that you need to develop. In this job you take on the responsibility of supporting individual's well-being, supporting them through certain issues they may face in life from personal issues such as depression, anxiety or addiction to situational challenges such as in their interpersonal relationships and careers and providing them with the tools they need to cope with these challenges.

Taking on this responsibility everyday means that you need more than just the qualifications you have written on paper but also a wide range of skillsets to adhere to a person's situation in a professional manner. Nevertheless, to gain the title of a 'Clinical Psychologist' while rewarding, is a challenge in itself, a process which takes hard work both in receiving the qualifications, work experience and skillset to prepare someone to be trusted in handling an individual's issues with care. The steps taken to achieve this need to be rigorous or otherwise it could lead to a whole range of ethical dilemmas. This essay aims to explain all of this by covering the training and qualification requirements. This paper will also highlight a case study in Clinical Psychology to show how professionalism is succeeded in Psychology

As previously stated, there are many steps it takes to become a clinical psychologist in the UK. To begin with you will need to gain a Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership. This can be either a society accredited course or a conversion course. This shows the BPS that you have the basic knowledge and understanding to be able to further your knowledge in Psychology. You will then need to progress onto your doctorate; most society accredited courses prefer that you attain an upper second-class honour (2:1) or above which is over 60%. However, each university in the UK has its own set standards so this can vary depending on where you plan to take your doctorate. For most of these programs you will apply through the 'Clearing House for Postgraduate Training Courses in Clinical Psychology'. Once you have attained both qualifications you now have the knowledge needed for this role. Whilst knowledge is essential in this role, practical experience is equally as important, therefore work experience is an essential part of this occupation. There are many ways to gain this. The most popular tends to be in line with Psychology itself, for example working as

an Assistant Psychologist or Research Assistant but there are many paths that you can take outside of Psychology also. This could be working within hospital settings as a nursing assistant or carer. This job really helps a person to develop skills in communication, responsibility, empathy and critical thinking all of which is needed in a job like this. A very important last step in this occupation is being granted the title itself by registering with the Health and Care Professions Council, otherwise known as the HCPC

It is important to note that the training and experience will only come so far without the professional and personal skills. Analysing a case study of a university student, Sylvia helps us to understand this. An essential part of this role is to have good listening and identification skills. For example, in this case study, the clinical psychologist can understand when Sylvia discusses feeling constant pressure to perform well from a demanding course, which has impacted her social life and caused issues such as panic attacks, the professional is able to listen well to what the patient is saying in order to extract the three main issues that Sylvia is facing, in this situation it is academic stress, social withdrawal and the physical symptoms. In this case we see why good evaluative and analysis skills are important so that the patient gets the tailored help she needs. The Psychologist has decided that best course of treatment in this case is to set up clinical interviews with the patient as well as using the anxiety scale. The psychologist evaluates that they need to understand more about the patient, why these issues may be occurring and if there any other factors that may be affecting it. The clinical interview allows them to look at this from a holistic approach. They also understand from that the primary cause of her issues appears to be anxiety and stress. To understand this further, the professional uses an objective and quantitative measure (the anxiety scale). To formulate a plan after this the psychologist needs objective and critical thinking. You need to know what needs to be addressed and what course of treatment meets those needs. For example, the Psychologist puts Sylvia onto CBT because this will help her understand and develop her cognitive processes as well as exposure therapy which helps her to improve in her social life. As well as this, the clinical psychologist provides her with training and the tools needed to cope with her anxiety and academic stresses.

The application of these skills is vital when working with a patient. Without them they could lead to a whole range of ethical issues and misconduct which puts the patient at risk of a whole range of things. This is why the BPS (British Psychological Society) outline the four main pillars in the code of ethics and conduct in which all Clinical Psychologists must respect and maintain within their field of work. These four main

areas include respect, integrity, responsibility and competence. By looking at the case study, we understand why this is so important to uphold as a Clinical Psychologist.

With respect comes integrity. Being honest with Sylvia about what her care plan entails, about the rules of confidentiality (integrity) all help to build respect with the patient on her rights, individuality and beliefs. Without this you could deceive the patient and the information provided could not paint the whole picture and mislead them. The Psychologist shows integrity by paying close attention to what Sylvia is saying and evaluating her needs, this shows the patient that her thoughts and feelings are valued. Moreover, in this job you take both the responsibility of yourself and others to protect those from harm. This includes ensuring that the biases, prejudices and beliefs you hold do not interfere with how you show up for your patients. If the clinical psychologist did not formulate a plan for Sylvia's care based off what the research shows, and instead by what she believes, this could lead to detrimental issues in how Sylvia is cared for. She might not get the help tailored to her and make her feel depleted in her situation. This is why objective thinking is critical in this role and by being able to separate the personal from the professional you show that you have the competencies to do your job as expected.

If I were to become a clinical psychologist, I now understand that it is my responsibility to take my role seriously and with precaution. I am aware that I am somebody who is a great listener and well-developed in effective communication which would help me with this role so that my colleagues and others are understood and will be responded to with clarity. I am also good at understanding others objectively and when boundaries should be put in place to maintain a professional relationship. However as of right now there are a lot of areas which I would need to work on. As an individual I am a very strong minded and opinionated person. This could easily become an issue in this role because it is vital I remain neutral, cautious as to when and where my opinion should be given and ensuring the information provided is not based on my internal beliefs but based off external and non-biased information. Furthermore, I can struggle with my workload which can cause my stress levels to build. If I were to take this professional pathway it is important that I can develop my organisational skills and managing stress so that my emotions do not come to the forefront in this role. In terms of working on my professional self, it is important that I gain work experience both in a mental well-being role myself and shadowing those who are more experienced than me so that I can gain an understanding of the responsibilities at hand and develop my professional skillset. In reflecting on this I understand that there are things I can do now to work on these areas. I can work on my personal self by journaling so I can reflect upon my weaknesses and figure out what I can do moving forward. In my professional life I can

take part in volunteer roles which deal with issues that I will face as a Clinical Psychologist such as a support worker. I can also personally work on my skillset with organisation by planning my weeks more effectively, dedicating set days and times for work whilst also finding time for myself to work on my well-being.

In summary, the steps it takes to become a clinical psychologist is not easy. You are dealing with those of whom are in a very vulnerable position. Any underlying issues or malpractice can be at danger to your clientele. This could not only prevent them from working on these issues but could add exacerbate them. As humans it's easy to get emotionally involved and cross boundaries which is why it's so important that the professional pathway is so rigorous and that you respect and uphold yourself to the highest standards in this role.

References

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