

39 Training in Forensic Psychology and Professional Issues

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS CHAPTER, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

1. Describe the process for training as a forensic psychologist.
2. Describe the four core roles of forensic psychology training.
3. Apply ethical principles to the work of a forensic psychologist in training.
4. Describe and evaluate different methods and models of reflective practice.

KEY TERMS

Exemplar • Forensic Psychologist in Training • Mental Health Review Tribunal • Practice Diary • Qualification in Forensic Psychology • Reflective Practice • Training Needs Analysis

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ROUTE MAP OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter discusses the training processes for becoming a forensic psychologist. It introduces you to the different training routes, before focusing on the core areas of work completed by forensic psychologists. This will be illustrated by exploring each of the four areas in detail, by considering examples of the types of work that forensic psychologists in training complete. This will provide you with an overview of the training process and an insight into the depth of experience required for the role. The chapter will progress by considering professional training issues (e.g., ethics for trainees) and the role of reflection in the training process. Finally, the chapter will set out a series of hints and tips for individuals interested in progressing in this career.

39.1 INTRODUCTION

The current chapter will aim to give a broad overview of the process of training towards being awarded Forensic Psychologist status, a title now protected by law and regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as the regulatory body of practitioner psychologists (<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/>). Specifically, the chapter will review the key stages in the training process as a forensic psychologist. In doing so, it will aim to provide an overview of the four areas of the applied training route known as 'core roles', concluding with an overview

forensic psychologist in training the term used to refer to individuals undertaking an accredited training route in forensic psychology.

of ethical issues in working as a **forensic psychologist in training**. Following an overview of the training route, we will consider the role of the 'trainee' in the route, considering the importance

of being able to reflect on one's own work.

In recent years, the number of individuals embarking on a career in forensic psychology has increased, with there currently being approximately 1000 registered forensic psychologists and 400 forensic psychologists in training. The media may have played some part in this through the dramatisation of 'forensic psychology' in television programmes such as *Cracker* (Granada Television for ITV) in the 1990s, which portrayed a 'psychologist' who would 'get into the head of offenders' to solve crimes. The reality is that the role of a forensic psychologist is somewhat different to stereotypical media portrayals of forensic psychology. While the previous chapters have provided insight into the role of the forensic psychologist, the current chapter aims to provide readers with an overview as to the process of training in forensic psychology.

To work as a forensic psychologist in the UK, individuals have to complete an approved course of study. However, prior to embarking on a course of study towards becoming a forensic psychologist, it is often helpful to get some work experience. While this is frequently competitive, opportunities do exist, and it is worth making contact with services that may include secure hospitals, youth justice boards, victim support, and probation services. Often the most up to date advice about

entry-level paid and voluntary opportunities can be found on blogs such as <https://psychassistblog.wordpress.com/>.

There are different routes to becoming a registered forensic psychologist. First, individuals can undertake a course of study that is approved by the HCPC and recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS: www.bps.org.uk) as the professional body for practitioner psychologists. Here, individuals may complete the **Qualification in Forensic Psychology** (known hereafter as the 'QFP'), which is overseen by the BPS or a BPS accredited Practitioner Doctorate in Forensic Psychology. Alternatively, individuals can complete a training course that is approved by the HCPC (but not BPS accredited).

qualification in forensic psychology is the BPS Qualification designed to support trainees to demonstrate their competency in forensic psychology.

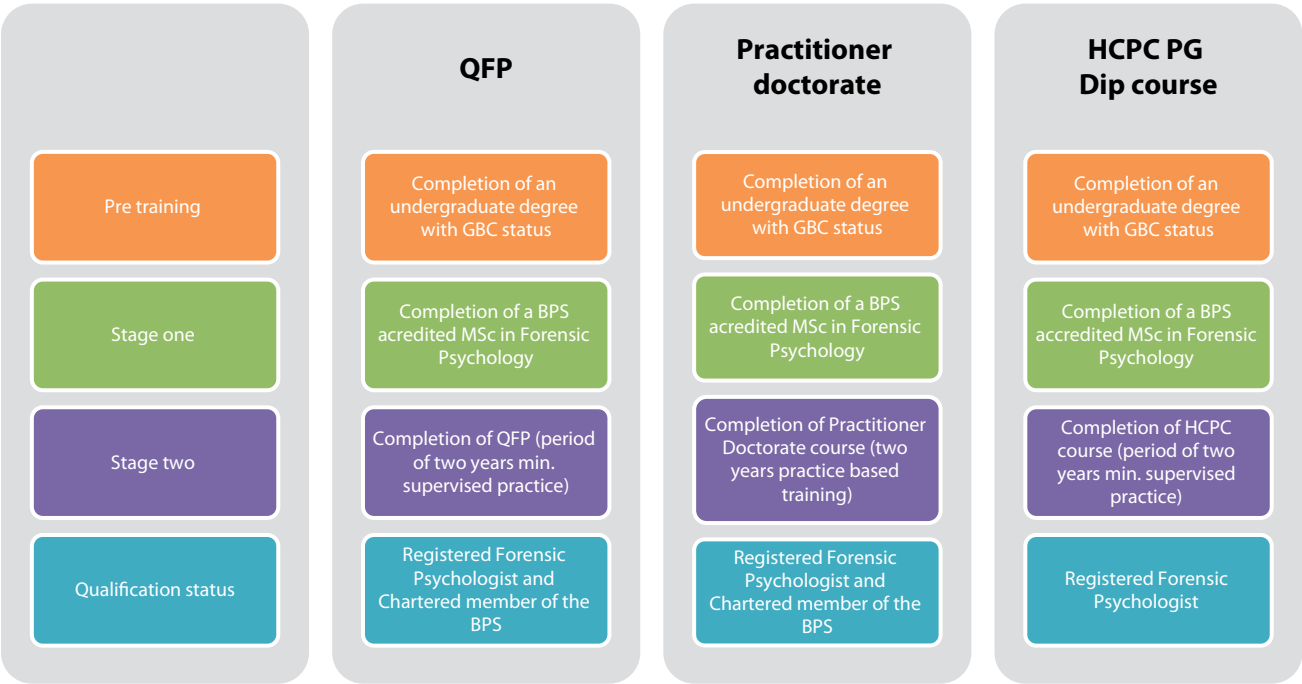
Table 39.1 provides an overview of the different routes. Details of all approved HCPC courses can be found via the HCPC website (<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/approved-programmes/>).

It is perhaps worthwhile briefly noting here that a practitioner doctorate differs to a traditional PhD. The former is a taught programme that focuses on developing skills and knowledge to become an applied psychologist. Taught doctorates are commonplace across various disciplines in psychology including clinical, educational, and counselling psychology. Completion of a taught doctorate confers eligibility to be registered in the specific field with the HCPC and in turn practice as a psychologist. Conversely, a traditional PhD is a research qualification. Whilst a person holding a PhD has the title of 'Dr', they are not an applied or registered psychologist and cannot legally provide psychological services. Many forensic psychologists may have completed the QFP and also studied for a PhD.

39.2 TRAINING IN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

A brief overview of the route to qualification will be presented here. As most trainees complete the QFP, this will be the focus of this chapter. Importantly, training to

TABLE 39.1 Structure of the training process in forensic psychology.



become a forensic psychologist is gaining a qualification into a profession, not a job per se. As such, there is a high standard of work expected while individuals complete their qualification. The profession, although enormously rewarding, is not one to be taken lightly. A *forensic psychologist in training* is expected to produce work of a high standard and to work longer hours to gain the qualification, going beyond what might be expected from a general ‘9 to 5’ job. Training is separated into two distinct components. This involves an academic component (Stage I) and the application of psychological theory in a forensic setting (Stage II). Both components of the training will be reviewed in this chapter.

39.2.1 The Academic Component of Forensic Psychology Training

As with other routes of applied psychology, training begins with the completion of an undergraduate degree that confers Graduate Basis for Chartership (GBC) with the BPS. Such BPS-recognised degrees provide students with the skills and knowledge to continue specialised postgraduate courses of study. Undergraduate study in psychology equips individuals with core scientific skills to examine, measure, and test the social world. It is argued that it is these scientific skills that set psychologists apart from other professionals and that ‘the special emphasis placed in undergraduate education on the experimental method is the second strongest card in the forensic

psychologists hand’ (Gudjonsson & Haward, 1998, p.70). Undergraduate and MSc study offers the opportunity to develop the ‘scientist’ component of the scientist practitioner.

After the completion of an undergraduate degree, the next step is to complete postgraduate-level study in the specialised field of forensic psychology, which usually takes one year full time or two years part time to complete. This is referred to as Stage I and is the start of the formal training programme in forensic psychology.

39.2.2 MSc in Forensic Psychology

The aim of Stage I is to ensure that individuals develop core skills in critical examination and the theoretical grounding necessary for safe and effective applied forensic practice. MScs offer the opportunity to build on the understanding of core psychological theory from the undergraduate degree and to critically reflect on the application of this research and theory to forensic psychology. Of course, the MSc can be used to progress onto many varied careers: applied forensic psychology is just one future pathway. Indeed, an MSc can open doors to many forensic careers outside of psychology such as within law enforcement and could also lead to progression to another discipline in psychology.

The number of academic establishments offering students the opportunity to complete an MSc in the field of forensic psychology has risen. This has matched the



FOCUS POINT 39.1 SELECTING AN MSc IN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

The following are reflections on selecting an MSc course by a past student.

If you are thinking about completing an accredited MSc in forensic psychology, it is important to realise that different courses focus upon different areas in forensic psychology. Therefore, it may be useful to think about your own interests. For example, some courses might focus on the investigative element, whilst others focus on clinical issues and the mental health needs of those in the criminal justice

system. Most courses will have input from visiting speakers from different areas of forensic psychology, be this the prison service or mental health hospitals. It can be useful to find out the size of the cohort too as courses range from 20 students to 150. Finally, it is important to find out about the mix of the core staff of the course. Some will be predominantly made up of applied researchers, whilst others might have more practitioners on the core team. The right course for you will depend on whether you are keen to pursue an applied training route or a research path.

trend in the number of people training in the field of forensic psychology. Institutions offering these courses are listed on the BPS website (<https://portal.bps.org.uk/Accredited-Courses>).

The content of the MSc courses varies depending on the individual institutions. As noted in Focus Point 39.1, the content of the courses, while following an agreed curriculum set by the BPS, has the potential to be influenced by the interests of the academic and applied staff involved in the course. However, for illustration purposes, the content of an MSc course may generally include units such as those offered by the University of Manchester (2022/23):

1. Introduction to Forensic Psychology and Professional Practice
2. Psychology Applied to Investigative and Legal Processes
3. Research methods I: Design and principles
4. Clinical Risk Assessment, Formulation and Management
5. Personality disorder: Assessment and intervention
6. Offending Behaviour Interventions
7. Research Methods II: Advanced analysis
8. Forensic Psychology Project (dissertation)
9. Reflective skills portfolio (Optional)

39.2.3 The Apprenticeship Model of Forensic Psychology Training

All routes to qualification involve the completion of psychological work under the supervision of a forensic psychologist. For those undertaking the QFP, this

supervisor will also be a Chartered member of the BPS. This approach follows traditional apprenticeship models of training, as used in a variety of professions, although it is not a recognised apprenticeship. The principles underpinning such professional training are that candidates gain direct experience and understanding of the profession through the support and guidance of more experienced practitioners. This process supports the ability of candidates to gradually develop skills and integrate theory into practice.

Through the supervised practice component, trainees are always required to critically examine and apply their knowledge of psychological theory to working within forensic services. For example, they will be expected to apply their knowledge of theories of offending to the assessments they complete with offenders. As scientist-practitioners, forensic psychologists are concerned with the application of psychological theory and knowledge to practice. For many years, professionals in a range of disciplines have worked with forensic clients and within forensic services. However, the factor distinguishing forensic psychologists from some other professions is the scientific evidence-based approach to practice.

It is not the intention of this chapter to provide a précis of the QFP handbook, but rather to provide a summary of the types of work in which forensic psychologists in training may engage through Stage II. Here, there will be an emphasis on the application of psychological theory to four distinct areas of practice, known as core roles. Stage II requires a *minimum* of 460 days spent equally across the four core roles:

1. **Core Role 1:** Conducting Psychological Applications and Interventions
2. **Core Role 2:** Research

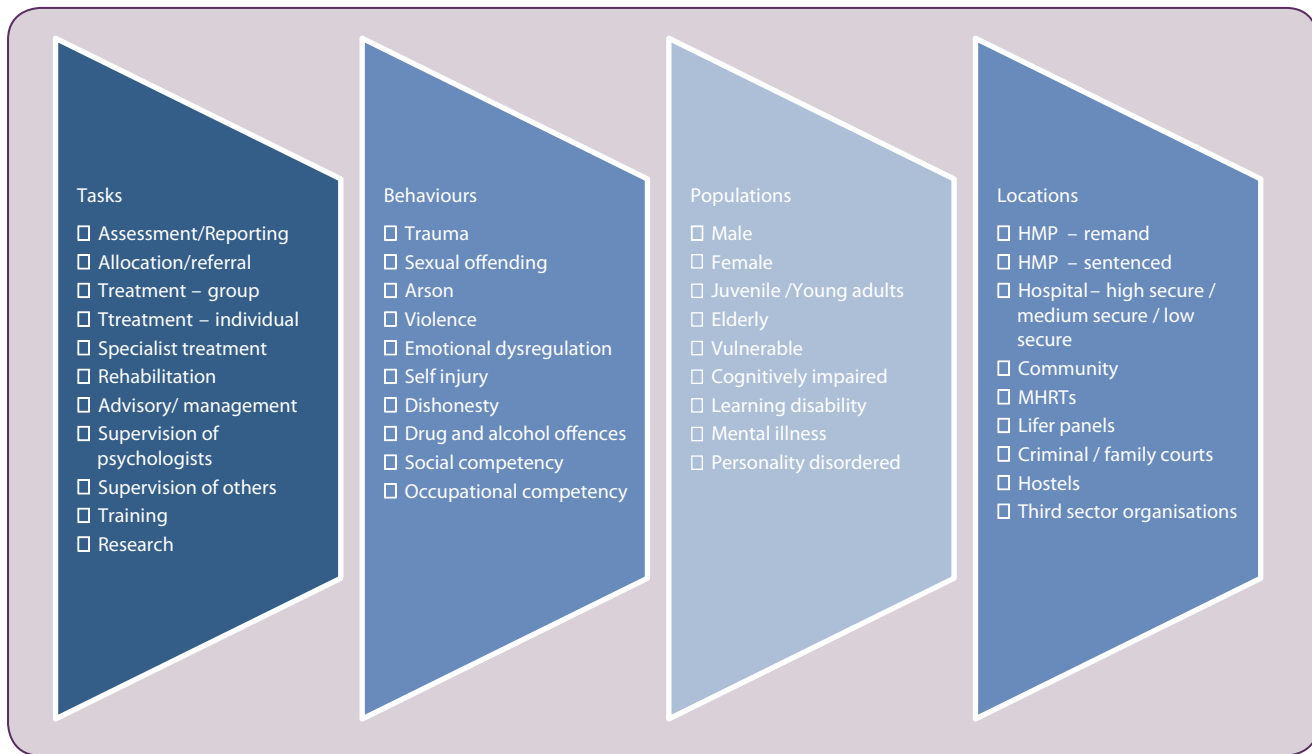


FIGURE 39.1 Combinations of offender populations and psychological tasks.

Source: Adapted from British Psychological Society (2021).

3. **Core Role 3:** Communicating Psychological Knowledge and Advice to Other Professionals
4. **Core Role 4:** Training Other Professionals in Psychological Skills and Knowledge

Forensic psychologists in training are required to submit work across these four areas that demonstrate that they are competent in the skills required of a forensic psychologist. Examples of the types of work are presented later in this chapter.

As a forensic psychologist in training, it is expected that practice is generally conducted across the four core roles and with different client groups. Figure 39.1 provides an overview of the types of offender groups and settings in which trainees may work. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to detail each aspect of the work and interested readers may wish to access other texts which provide overviews and case studies presented by specialists working in the field (see, e.g., Gredecki & Turner, 2021). It may also be of value to follow ‘The Forensic Psychology Podcast’ produced by Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). The podcast offers insights into the real-life work of registered forensic psychologists working across a range of forensic services.

For trainees to achieve the breadth of knowledge to support them in their independent practice as a

forensic psychologist, they may complete work in alternative areas including victim work and work within organisations.

Each of the core roles of forensic psychology will be explored further with regard to the training requirements. Specifically, this will focus on the application of psychological theory to these work areas, with examples of the types of work in which a forensic psychologist in training may engage. Figure 39.2 provides an example of a typical week of a forensic psychologist in training.

39.2.3.1 Core Role 1: Conducting psychological applications and interventions: applying psychological theory to interventions

As noted in previous chapters, the role of the forensic psychologist (and trainee) is varied in terms of the types of intervention work conducted. Figure 39.1 provides some indication as to some of the forensic client groups with whom a trainee may work. Within Stage II, trainees are expected to establish skills in working with a range of client groups who present with a range of needs. This may include, for example, the delivery of group and/or individual interventions to work with a range of behaviours such as sexual violence, substance misuse, violence, intimate partner violence, cognitive

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
08:00	Check through emails	Preparation for individual coping session with a client convicted of fire-setting (core role 1)	Meet with group therapists to plan the sessions for this week (core role 1)	Preparation for the delivery of awareness training to staff related to working with men convicted of sexual offences (core role 4)	Final preparation for awareness training session (core role 4)
09:00	Supervision with co-ordinating supervisor	Delivery of coping session (core role 1)			Delivery of awareness training to staff (core role 4)
10:00		Write report for coping intervention (core role 3)	Group supervision for violence treatment therapy		
11:00	Prepare materials for research (core role 2)				
12:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
13:00	Preparation for risk assessment session with client convicted for a sexual offence (core role 3)	Visit prison to collect data for research project (core role 2)	Final preparation for session and review group member notes	Final preparation for session and review group member notes	Final preparation for session and review group member notes
14:00	Individual session with client (core roles 1 and 3)		Delivery of Violence Treatment group therapy (core role 1)	Delivery of Violence Treatment group therapy (core role 1)	Delivery of Violence Treatment group therapy (core role 1)
15:00	Complete post session notes and put into report format (core role 3)				
16:00	Complete practice diary		Complete post session logs and practice diary	Complete post session logs and practice diary	Complete post session logs and practice diary

FIGURE 39.2 A week in the life of a forensic psychologist in training.

skills deficits, and fire-setting to name but a few. The focus is always on the delivery of evidence-based and theory-led practice, adhering to the principles of the scientist-practitioner role.

When a referral arrives on the desk of a trainee, one question comes to mind: 'Am I competent to complete this referral?' Ethical practice and decision-making are fundamental to effective psychological practice and should be considered by trainees at each stage of the assessment and/or intervention work. Quite often, organisations have pressures to engage therapeutically with clients and targets to meet. These pressures can filter down to the trainee. However, a competent, safe, and ethical practitioner is the person who recognises their own limitations and has the ability to understand, and respond to, the referral being made.

Ethical professional practice is defined as being that which is morally acceptable. Codes of practice are available for psychologists to assist them in evaluating whether possible courses of action are acceptable. Such codes include HCPC and BPS codes of ethics and conduct. These codes exist to support ethically valid decisions; they 'provide shared understandings of appropriate practice and professional standards' (Cooper & Fisher, 2010: 52).

Yet Allan (2017) emphasises that codes merely indicate the minimum level of professional conduct. We ought to be aiming higher in our clinical practice. Indeed, those working in forensic and mental health practice arguably need to uphold even higher moral and ethical standards than others (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 2016; Bush *et al.*, 2020). To do so requires a commitment to ongoing reflection. Bush *et al.* (2020) explain that professional codes, and the minimum standards they outline, can be labelled the remedial perspective. Their purpose is to prevent harm rather than to promote well-being and best practice. They argue for an alternative approach of 'positive ethics', which seeks instead to proactively pursue ideals towards best practice. Activity Box 39.1 affords you an opportunity to begin to reflect on ethical practice.

To plan a successful assessment or intervention, it is also important to ensure that it is theoretically grounded. It is not acceptable to do things 'because it feels right' as this does not stand up to scrutiny. As such, Stages I and II ensure that trainees are equipped with the skills to critically reflect on, and apply, the range of theories underpinning the area of intervention. The learning gained during Stage I of the training route is vital; the focus in Stage II is in the application of this knowledge.



ETHICAL PRACTICE FOR THE FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST IN TRAINING

ACTIVITY BOX 39.1

Ethical practice is crucial in forensic psychology. We invite you to take a moment to reflect on these three fictional ethical dilemmas that could be encountered by a trainee.

Using the BPS and HCPC ethical standards outlined below, consider the scenarios outlined that trainees may find themselves in and think about the ethical issues in the scenario linked to the trainee's decision-making processes.

The BPS code of ethics and conduct focuses on four ethical principles; these are:

1. respect
2. competence
3. responsibility
4. integrity

See the BPS website for more detail about the principles <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-code-ethics-and-conduct>

The HCPC outlines that registrants' must:

1. promote and protect the interests of service users and carers;
2. communicate appropriately and effectively;
3. work within the limits of their knowledge and skills;
4. delegate appropriately;
5. respect confidentiality;
6. manage risk;
7. report concerns about safety;
8. be open when things go wrong;
9. be honest and trustworthy; and
10. keep records of their work

See the HCPC website for more detail about the standards <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics/>

Scenario 1

You have recently completed your MSc Forensic Psychology and have been trained in a Treatment Programme to work with men convicted of sexual offences and have delivered 11 sessions. Your line manager has come to you and indicated that a report needs to be completed on a life-sentenced prisoner who raped and murdered his wife. You are told that the report is overdue and needs completing as a matter of urgency to comply with the Parole Board's request as the prisoner is being considered for transfer to open conditions. You are told that there is no one in the department who has the availability to complete the report. You have the capacity to complete the assessment.

Scenario 2

You have been working with a prisoner on a violence intervention. During the last session, the prisoner told you that he committed an armed robbery offence for which he has not been convicted. He has asked you not to tell anyone about this as he is sorry for his behaviour and has already made attempts to address his offending behaviour. He tells you that he trusts you.

Scenario 3

You work in a department with another trainee. You have concerns that in the completion of their core role 2 research they have falsified some data and have had other colleagues completing questionnaires.

For example, if you were asked to work with a person convicted of a sexual offence to assess their treatment needs, it would be paramount to ensure that models pertaining to sexual offending behaviour are addressed. In the very least, it would be necessary to be familiar with the core sexual offending theories. It is often at this stage in their career that trainees respect and value the theory presented in their undergraduate degree and Stage I as it is brought to life in their work with clients. Without the knowledge of the appropriate theories and models, trainees leave themselves open to unsafe practice, criticism, and run the risk of facilitating ineffective therapy.

Having a theoretically sound intervention does not, however, mean that it is guaranteed to be successful. That is, the intervention is a two-way process that relies totally on the involvement and commitment of the forensic client. Consider a client who denies her violent offending. Regardless of the quality of the intervention, if she is not motivated to engage in the intervention, it is unlikely that it will ever get off the ground. As such, theories and models of motivation are vital to consider. This involves not only the use of motivational techniques, but also the client feeling that they are part of the intervention process and having a sense of choice and autonomy. Initially, this will involve the trainee



PHOTO 39.1 Forensic psychologists in training may engage clients in one-to-one interventions.

Source: Mediaphotos/Adobe Stock.

spending time familiarising themselves with the necessary literature and theories associated with motivation. This knowledge further assists in the delivery of the intervention, assuming that practical considerations have been attended to, such as ensuring the availability of the therapy room.

After a forensic psychologist has engaged a client in therapy (see Photo 39.1), they are required to demonstrate a further set of skills in the evaluation of the intervention. This may involve the completion of a therapy/assessment report and objective measures of change, which may include, for example, the completion of psychometric measures. However, it is important to use a range of methods, not forgetting the knowledge of other professionals. For example, staff members can be an invaluable source in assessing the extent to which clients apply learning in their daily interactions.

39.2.3.2 Core Role 2: Applied forensic psychology research

For some trainees and supervisors, research can be the most daunting of the core roles. Having sat in statistics lectures at undergraduate and postgraduate level, eventually coming to terms with a range of statistical

measures, many trainees have historically avoided the completion of research (core role 2) for as long as they can. For many trainees this is an area of work that is left until the end of the training process, when they are in a position where they must complete it to pass their qualification. One difficulty is that research is often considered the role of 'academics', whilst the role of practitioners is seen to be one of engaging with clients. However, as noted in earlier chapters, forensic psychology is about far more than working face to face with clients, and one of the core roles is research. We should be proud of our identity as scientist-practitioners and should embrace all opportunities to conduct research to better our understanding and wider field. As such, the training route requires trainees to engage in psychological research, and this encourages well-rounded psychologists who are able to work across a broad range of areas. The current version of the QFP (2021) now requires research to commence at the start of the training process.

Forensic psychology relies on research that directs the way in which practitioners can engage with their clients. Engaging in research has the potential for psychologists to shape the research base and to ensure that research is being conducted in areas relevant to their practice. For example, they may engage in research to design a measure relating to the motivations for aggressive behaviour or self-harm; likewise, they may look to develop a model to understand how officers and prisoners interact with each other. Quite often, practitioners are also in the best position to complete research as they are working with clients in the criminal justice system so have the most up to date appreciation of the current issues and dilemmas facing the field.

One myth about forensic research, however, is that it focuses solely on offenders. While a large body of research is conducted with offender populations, research is also required with groups such as victims, staff (e.g., prison officers and nursing staff), organisations, and the general public. As such, the types of research conducted can be varied and led by the trainee's own research interests.

Forensic research follows several stages as all graduates of undergraduate psychology programmes will be familiar with. By way of a recap, it is first important to develop a research idea that is underpinned by theory and literature and current needs/issues in the field. If this stage is considered in detail, the later research will effectively take care of itself. Ethics is the next stage and is a key consideration within research and the scientist-practitioner role. Stage II is about demonstrating clear ethical consideration, and how this has been applied to the research proposal. All applied research will likely need to go before a national or local ethical review committee where the aims and design must be clearly



PHOTO 39.2 Many forensic psychologists work in prisons where they work with prisoners and members of the organisation completing tasks such as research and consultancy.

Source: Mike Abrahams/Alamy Images.

justified as in the best interests of the participants and wider public. The next stage, data analysis planning, while often evoking anxiety and uncertainty, requires an awareness of different analyses and an awareness of when they should be used. This may include both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, but the focus at this point is considering how the data analysis will address the research aims and test the hypotheses. Collecting the data and analysis is the next stage. Dissemination is the final stage and the QFP requires trainees to write up the research in line with standards for publication.

Again, it is important to remember that core role 2 is not solely concerned with offender-based research. In addition, there is no preference for quantitative methods over qualitative methods. The focus is on using methods that answer the research questions and demonstrate competency in relation to the research process.

39.2.3.3 Core Role 3: Communicating psychological knowledge and advice to other professionals

The role of the forensic psychologist as a consultant is often misunderstood (see Turner & Freel, 2021). Throughout the qualification, trainees are encouraged to develop skills across various competencies associated with consultancy and the communication of psychological knowledge to other professionals. Specifically, this core role provides an opportunity for trainees to enhance their skills in the provision of information, advice, and guidance in order to aid in problem-solving and decision-making. This can include giving information to individuals, groups of people, and organisations/agencies. It is not solely about having sound communication skills; it is about the process of effectively communicating

psychological information to influence the work and practice of others. The aim is to ensure that psychology reaches and benefits as many as possible. The trainee is tasked with identifying opportunities when sharing psychological knowledge may benefit more than the client they might assess, instead thinking about how they can shape and enhance the environment for all (see Photo 39.2).

The types of work associated with core role 3 can vary tremendously amongst trainees. In essence, it is about them developing skills in promoting psychology and the application of psychology, in addition to using psychology as a means of assisting decision-making and driving policy formulation. This can be based on both formal and informal requests for information. Examples of the types of work in which a trainee may become involved may include the provision of advice to organisations on the development of service delivery. For example, this may include providing advice to a service where staff are regularly taking sick leave and attendance is poor. Alternatively, it may involve the trainee giving advice to a prison governor in terms of managing self-harm and suicide in the prison establishment. Further to the above, the trainee may be involved in providing formal evidence to quasi-courts regarding the risk and management of forensic clients. The list is endless. However, an example of the trainee communicating psychological knowledge is given here.

Imagine that you have been asked to write a risk assessment on a forensic client. He has been convicted for several sexual offences and is detained within forensic psychiatric services. You were asked to complete this report for the professionals involved in the client's care. However, in the interest of public protection, you are asked to attend a **Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT)**. This is a forum where decisions are made about whether an individual continues to be detained. At an MHRT, you would be required to defend your psychological judgement and provide further assistance as to how your report can help in the tribunal's decision-making (see Photo 39.3). This can be a daunting task and role for more senior psychologists, let alone a trainee. As such, this shows the importance of trainees engaging in work that they are competent at completing. The process that the trainee may follow is considered here.

mental health review tribunal a forum where decisions are made about whether an individual continues to be detained.

The initial stage is to identify the actual and potential contribution that applied psychology can have in this situation, namely the opportunity to use psychology to inform decision-making and to contribute to accurate and informed assessments of risk to help in decision-making processes. The completion of the risk assessment has many parallels to the completion of core role

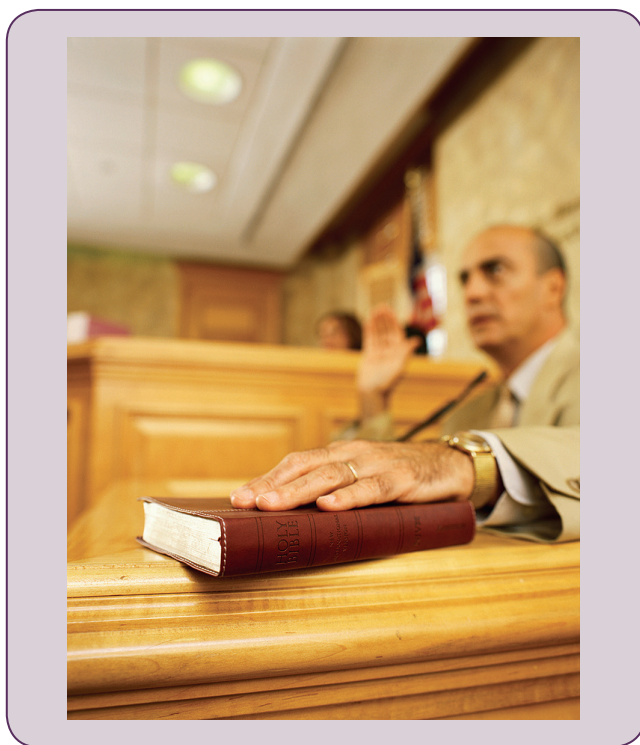


PHOTO 39.3 Consultancy is a core task for forensic psychologists and this may involve giving evidence in a formal setting.

Source: Stockbyte/Getty Images.

1. However, the difference for the trainee here is on the communication of the information to other professionals. For example, the trainee may complete an in-depth risk assessment with a focus on how the different factors relating to the client fit together, identifying issues relevant to risk management and protective factors for the client (i.e., a core role 1 task). Once the assessment is completed and written up, the ability to provide feedback to the professionals involved in the client's care and future management is paramount: this is the core role 3 focus. It is important that the trainee shares the outcomes of the assessment in a manner suitable for a variety of people, starting with the client in the first instance through to their clinical team, the client's legal representatives, and the MHRT panel. This will require communication to be tailored to the recipients whilst always being transparent and open to challenge from others. Indeed, one of the core role 3 competencies is the ability to present and defend psychological opinion in a formal setting where the trainee is subject to challenge from other professionals.

In short, this core role provides an excellent opportunity for consultancy work, and for trainees to apply psychological knowledge and seek opportunities to disseminate psychological knowledge to help guide the development of forensic services. However, in doing this, trainees must only work within their own competency and ensure that accurate information is provided.

Should this not happen, opportunities for promoting psychology are undermined. Consultancy is about ensuring that the trainee has the skills and knowledge to conduct the role professionally and safely, working within their own area of competency. That is not to say that they will never be involved in larger-scale projects, but it is about doing this at a safe time in their career. This can require the trainee to be confident in communicating their limitations. After all, it is about keeping everyone safe including other staff, clients, and the trainee.

39.2.3.4 Core Role 4: Training other professionals in psychological skills and knowledge

The final core role of the QFP relates to the training of other professional groups. However, the process does not merely get trainees to deliver training, but focuses on the process of developing, delivering, and evaluating training. The training process will be considered here in relation to the development of motivational interviewing training. Motivational interviewing is a range of techniques that are used to assist individuals in moving towards and committing to change. This may involve, for example, helping a person convicted of a sexual offence to acknowledge their offences and subsequently access treatment.

The first stage of the training process is establishing the requirement of the training through the completion of a **training needs analysis**, which involves thinking about the specific needs of the training. It also helps to ensure that the training objectives are aligned with organisational goals (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). As such, an organisational analysis and a person analysis may be conducted. The organisational analysis would provide information about where and when training is required within an organisation (McGehee & Thayer, 1961), and the person analysis would seek to identify what skills those attending the training may require. Strategies for gathering this information may be, for example, through interviews and questionnaires. The focus here is on the trainee developing training that is needed, as opposed to what they think is interesting or an area they know something about.

training needs analysis an analysis involving thinking about the specific needs of the training.

The analysis will then provide the trainee with the broad aims of the training, following which they will begin the task of designing the content. Here, it is important for the trainee to consider a range of training strategies based on psychological theories of learning, in addition to designing the training content (Roper, 2021). Throughout this chapter, it is recognised that the work of a psychologist should always be underpinned by theory. Again, the design of the training, and the content, should

be grounded in the associated literature. Examples linked to training design include considering the learning styles literature (e.g., Honey & Mumford, 1986), where consideration would be given to how the trainees best engage. Whilst there is a debate in the literature around the stability of learning styles, it remains key to design training to be responsive and engaging for those attending. Examples of literature relevant to the design of the content may include theories such as motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 1991), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), the barriers to change framework (Burrowes & Needs, 2009), and goal-setting theory (Locke, 1996), to name but a few. Once the training is written, it is then ready to be run (perhaps as a pilot in the first instance).

As the training is being developed, the trainee should be mindful of establishing assessment procedures. This may include a range of different assessment tools and strategies, based on a model of training evaluation (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 1959, 1976). Such evaluation strategies should include an assessment of the immediate

subjective opinions of participants in a course, what they liked/disliked about the course, and the extent to which participants achieved the learning objectives. Following the training event, the trainee should consider how the participants transfer their learning to their day-to-day job. Finally, the trainee should consider the extent to which the training has an impact on the organisation in terms of performance and/or profitability. As noted here, core role 4 is not just about delivering training; it is also concerned with accurate evaluation and ensuring that the needs of the organisation and employees are met.

39.2.3.5 Summary

Forensic trainees often refer to the qualification routes being challenging, while also acknowledging that the training process supports them to be well-rounded psychologists. However, training in forensic psychology is not for the faint-hearted and requires a large degree of commitment from trainees to meet the requirements. Focus Point 39.2 provides a reflection



FOCUS POINT 39.2 TRAINING AS A FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST: REFLECTING ON THE TRAINING ROUTE

As a forensic psychologist in training, I have worked with a range of clients across a range of settings. This has included the Probation Service, prisons, and mental health settings. The QFP encourages you to work with a range of clients in different settings: and I have certainly done this! Originally, I trained as a therapist delivering group therapy with men convicted of sexual offences. Initially this was a daunting task. People would ask me why I wanted to do this work and how could I talk to the people who had offended against vulnerable people. Originally, my focus was on the idea of reducing reoffending and reducing the number of potential victims in the future. However, I soon developed my thinking to concentrate on the importance of also focusing on the client and encouraging them to have a more fulfilling life that did not involve offending. After all, this would seek to support the client and motivate them to engage in change behaviour. For me, this demonstrated my ability to use psychological theory around human motivation and apply this to my own practice.

The fact that the training route is flexible encourages a range of experiences. I was subsequently trained in a range of offender interventions which developed my skills and knowledge of the field. For example, I trained in a long-term violence therapy where I was able to further enhance my knowledge in working with habitual aggressors. Following this, I became involved in cognitive skills interventions. This latter work involved working with mentally ill and personality disordered clients.

Within the initial stages of my training, being a forensic psychologist was about 'working with offenders'. However, I soon realised that this was just one small piece of the jigsaw puzzle, with research and consultancy being intrinsic to my role. As a scientist-practitioner, the wealth of research data available has been invaluable to my clinical practice and as such, I felt it was important to contribute something back to the forensic world. The completion of research as part of the training meant that not only was I able to develop my own skills and knowledge, but to also give something back. It still seems a little surreal to have people quoting my own work—it is far away from my days as an undergraduate where my opinion was not that important. Being able to develop my research skills and my knowledge of forensic psychology has also meant that I have been able to develop my consultancy skills, which has also been important to my role.

My experience of the training route has been fantastic! It has provided me with many opportunities to learn and has given me the confidence to work as a forensic psychologist. That is not to say it has been an easy and smooth process. There are always difficulties with any course of study, and it always requires independent working and reading. However, if individuals are committed to the profession, then it is a joy; it is just not for the faint-hearted and those individuals expecting an easy ride!

from a forensic psychologist on the process of training in forensic psychology.

Finally, underpinning the qualification process is the ability of trainees to demonstrate reflective practice in relation to all tasks, to show learning in all areas. Reflective practice as part of the training process will be considered below. Additionally, as well as ensuring that all work is theoretically grounded, ethical practice is fundamental. Ethical practice ensures that all work is safe and effective for all individuals involved in forensic processes, from the trainee to the client, the public, and organisations.

39.3 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

39.3.1 How Does Reflective Practice Improve Learning and Practice?

reflective practice
a practice involving continually thinking about on experiences and considering beliefs and knowledge that might fit with our experience or challenge our observations.

A principle underpinning all work on the QFP, including all four core roles, is **reflective practice**. This section will review why reflective practice is such a key component in becoming a competent practitioner. Furthermore, it will review the benefits and challenges of reflective practice, concluding with suggestions of strategies for, and approaches to, reflective practice for the practitioner.

Reflective practice involves continually thinking about experiences and considering beliefs and knowledge that might fit with our experience or challenge our observations. Copeland *et al.* (1993) argues that reflection should transform understanding and ideas. We know that reflection leads to deeper meanings and new understandings—both of which are critical for competent ethical practice (Wald *et al.*, 2012; Paterson & Chapman, 2013; Marshall, 2019). In the early days of a trainee's career, this may mean a large commitment, as almost each experience will be new and will thus require considerable reflection.

The process of reflective practice is considered to play a crucial role in enhancing and improving professional practice in many professions, not only psychology (e.g., nursing and teaching). Larrivee (2000) explains that reflective practitioners move beyond simple knowledge and skills to integrating and modifying skills, based on different situations and the needs of clients. This ability to naturally integrate and modify core basic skills is perhaps the difference between what we may refer to as a 'novice' and an 'expert'. That is, reflective practice supports the 'novice' in becoming the 'expert'. This approach

fits well with the over-arching apprenticeship model of Stage II, where the 'novice' is able to hone their skills and become more adept at implementing and adapting the basic skills, all the while being guided by the more experienced clinician (the supervisor).

It is perhaps for this reason that reflective practice is central to the QFP, underpinning each of the core roles and every task completed by the forensic psychologist in training. Reflective practice encourages the individual to take a lead role in furthering their knowledge and skills, in addition to the support offered by the experienced clinician. It enables the trainee to consider how new experiences may change their practice and enhance their understanding. This is a lifelong commitment to learning, which goes beyond completion of the QFP and ensures safe and ethical practice as a registered forensic psychologist.

In order to be awarded the QFP, candidates must not only engage in reflective practice; they must also submit evidence of reflective practice. This is achieved through the **practice diary**. This is completed daily and provides a record of work activities, *in addition to* reflections on learning and development. This daily log supports the trainee in focusing on each experience and considering existing thoughts, knowledge, or practice, in order to determine if the experience has supported or contrasted with existing knowledge or skills. Focus Point 39.3 demonstrates how the practice diary can be used in day-to-day work.

practice diary is a learning journal designed to support trainees to reflect on their work and their learning and to demonstrate competencies to those assessing their work.

39.3.2 Models and Tools to Support Reflection

As anyone who has completed a practice diary will know, learning journals are time-consuming. It is important to ensure that this time-consuming task results in effective learning. Thorpe (2004) recommends that learning journals adopt a model of reflection to impose structure and sound reflection within the journal itself. One such model would be that of Gibb (1988). *Gibb's reflective cycle* is depicted in Figure 39.4.

Gibb's model of reflection is an example of Schön's (1983) 'reflection on action' and imposes a structure on reflection. Gibb's model is designed to assist in reflecting on everyday situations. The aim is to consider reactions and responses to inform future actions. The cycle promotes the consideration of what occurred (description) and recognition of how this made the individual feel. The cycle then encourages the individual to evaluate the experience before assimilating this with prior knowledge (analysis) and consideration of alternative courses of action (conclusion). The final part of the



FOCUS POINT 39.3 THE PRACTICE DIARY

There are tools that can aid in reflective practice. The tool most frequently used in psychology is the 'learning journal' (i.e., the practice diary). Written reflections are said to encourage deeper analysis of reflections and can impose structure on the experience, providing a permanent log of experience that can be revisited (Hancock, 1998). A learning journal can bridge the gap between practice and theory.

Let us consider an example to illustrate how the practice diary may be used. A trainee is co-facilitating a group therapy programme. She notices that one client appears to stand apart from the others, in that he is not participating to the same level as the other group

members. When she returns from the group therapy session, she takes time to think about the client. She takes time to think about the reasons why he is seeming to not participate as well and records this in her practice diary (see Figure 39.3).

As can be seen in Figure 39.3, the diary offers the trainee a space to take time to think about her skills and knowledge in light of the experience. This experience in itself was not a 'new' experience, but what occurred during the relatively routine task was new in terms of *applying and modifying* her existing experience and knowledge.

Date	Core role(s)	Nature of task, actions or intentions, outcomes, future actions to be taken, lessons learned
15 January 2010	CR1	Task: Group therapy session (eighth session) Completed first module of violence treatment group, five out of six group members appeared to participate fully throughout eight sessions. One group member appears not to be engaging as well appearing reluctant to take part in discussions or tasks. I think this could be due to: 1. He is not motivated to engage in the group (this could be because he does not feel he is violent, or because he feels the group will not help him or he thinks it is a personal issue and would prefer individual therapy). 2. He may have an interpersonal issue with another group member, and this may be affecting his engagement. 3. There may be an issue outside of therapy that is on his mind, e.g., a family concern. 4. He may be experiencing a deterioration in mental state. 5. The group session begins at 9 and perhaps he is simply tired. 6. He could be cognitively impaired and is struggling to keep up with group discussions. 7. He may dislike the therapists/peer group and not wish to engage with them. Based on his history of engaging well in other group therapy with current therapists I do not think option 5, 6, or 7 are likely. If option 1 is likely, we may need to meet with him individually to explore why he is not motivated and consider ways around this. If it is due to option 2 or 3 we may need to support the client in resolving/coping with the situation. In relation to option 4, we need to liaise with the ward team to find out how he is presenting generally (e.g., if there are any symptoms indicative of poor mental health). <i>Future action:</i> Discuss with co-therapists in group supervision and liaise with ward staff regarding mental state.

FIGURE 39.3 An example practice diary entry.

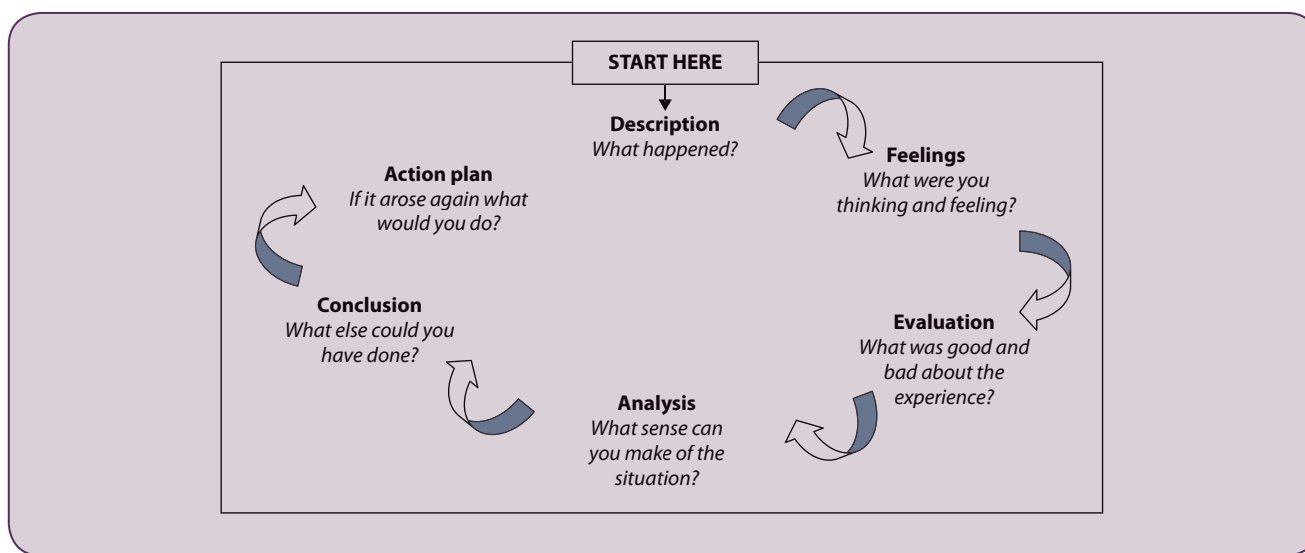


FIGURE 39.4 *Gibbs' reflective cycle.*

Source: Gibbs (1988) / Geography Discipline Network.

cycle supports the individual in considering how they might act if this experience occurs again, thereby applying new learning to future situations. This then enables the trainee to learn and develop in their professional practice. Bassot (2016) argues the cycle is useful to ensure practitioners unpick emotional responses to work. This ensures practitioners are mindful of how personal experiences can cloud interpretations. Another strength of the Gibbs cycle is the action phase. It is critical to set clear goals as to how learning can be transferred to future situations in order to translate learning into future practice.

There are other models of reflection that are equally effective. These include Johns' (2000) model for structured reflection and Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper's (2001) framework for reflective practice. Johns' (2000) model places emphasis on critical evaluation of the situation as it happened, while the Rolfe, Freshwater, and Jasper model encourages the individual to think about how the learning can inform future practice.

Another important tool for reflection can be discussion, either in peer groups or via one-to-one supervision. Both can facilitate alternative views on the reflection, offering a new way of considering the experience or observation. In fact, the QFP stipulates that reflections are discussed within supervision, as this can encourage further learning. In practical terms, the trainee may reflect on an experience in supervision and the supervisor can encourage the trainee to link the learning and reflections to other experiences. The supervisor may encourage the trainee to consider a particular theory to aid in understanding of an experience. In relation to the example in Figure 39.3, the supervisor may suggest that the trainee uses the *barriers to change framework* (Burrowes

& Needs, 2009) to consider possible reasons why the client may not appear motivated to engage.

Regardless of the method or model of reflection, for reflection to be effective, it is essential that the outcome includes some commitment to future practice and change (Atkins & Murphy, 1995; Johns, 2000; Rolfe *et al.*, 2001). Without this, the reflection remains based only on the past situation and does not have a positive impact on applied practice. Therefore, it is important to link reflection to future practice. This may take the form of goal setting to implement new learning or understanding. *Goal-setting theory* (Locke & Latham, 2002) proposes that small and achievable goals can focus attention and improve performance. Therefore, in relation to reflective practice, small goals around the application of new learning can focus attention on new learning and can increase the chances of the implementation of that learning. This forms part of the QFP process, as this encourages graded learning and exposure to new experiences through supervised practice.

39.3.3 Summary

In summary, reflective practice is central to the process of training in forensic psychology. *Learning theory* highlights the importance of recognising *what* we know and the need to contrast and update this with new or different experiences. The use of the practice diary within Stage II helps to impose structure on learning and aids deeper reflection on practice. Thorpe (2004) suggests that while the onus for *preparing* individuals for effective learning is on the educator (e.g., supervisor), the responsibility for learning rests with the individual.

39.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As noted throughout this chapter, training in forensic psychology can be rewarding and lead to the development of a range of competencies that support future forensic practice. However, it has been noted that the training process can be challenging and require the trainee to be

resilient in the face of a range of challenges. Focus Point 39.4 reviews the positive psychology and resilience literature that trainees can apply to their own practice throughout Stages I and II.

For those contemplating a career in forensic psychology, a number of hints and tips are presented in Focus Point 39.5 based on the training route discussed above. Table 39.2 contains answers to some frequently asked questions about a career in forensic psychology.



FOCUS POINT 39.4 POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND RESILIENCY: APPLICATIONS TO THE TRAINING ROUTE

As the information presented in the current chapter may suggest, Stage II is not for the faint-hearted. It involves a commitment to life-long learning and to furthering professional practice. Even for those steadfast in their aim to be a forensic psychologist, there may be times when their ambition falters. It is in such circumstances that *positive psychological approaches* can be most helpful.

There has been an increase in the application of positive psychological approaches to forensic clients (e.g. Ward, 2002; Gredecki & Turner, 2009). The premise is that we should not view offenders as fundamentally different human beings but as needing support in building skills to lead fulfilling, offence-free lives. Offender therapies are being modified to include searching for existing positive traits and characteristics rather than repairing faults (Ireland, 2009). One aspect that has received more attention is the literature on resilience. Resilience is thought of as the ability to cope effectively with challenges. Stage II can certainly be thought of as a challenge! It is, therefore, the intention here to outline some of the strategies that can assist the trainee in being resilient and coping well with the challenges presented throughout Stage II.

Research into resilience has shown that it is not a stable trait: people are not simply resilient or not resilient. We know now that it is something that can be learned or enhanced. In fact, it has been argued that a major factor in being resilient is our *attitude* towards the challenge in question and our outlook on life generally (Ong *et al.*, 2006; Neenan, 2009). This 'outlook on life' can also be referred to as our *explanatory style*. Explanatory style has three components: permanence, pervasiveness, and personalisation. Put simply, individuals with what may be referred to as an *optimistic* explanatory style perceive failure as temporary, related only to specific circumstances and due to external factors. This serves to maintain and enhance self-esteem, as this reinforces self-efficacy (Peterson, 2000). A *pessimistic*

individual would believe that failure is always likely to persist, across any and all situations, and is due to themselves. Seligman (2002) proposes that individuals can be supported to challenge pessimistic thoughts, thereby enhancing optimistic thoughts about the past, present, and future, thus providing life satisfaction and hope for the future.

Let us apply this to an example. A trainee may create an **exemplar** plan to deliver individual therapy with a client. They may invest much time and effort in developing session plans and preparing an overview document to submit for assessment.

exemplar is a piece of work submitted for assessment that seeks to demonstrate competency in a particular area of forensic psychology practice.

It may transpire that the client is moved to a new establishment and thus the therapy, in the absence of the client, is rendered obsolete. A trainee with a pessimistic explanatory style may consider this to be the end of their career, related to everything they ever try and achieve, and to be because they are at fault for not anticipating the move of the client. Understandably, this would lead to a great deal of stress and upset to think in this way, perhaps have a detrimental impact on their ability to continue with their hard work. If, however, the trainee reappraised their explanation and considered that this is, in fact, a minor setback in building their evidence to be submitted, that this was an unusual occurrence and could have happened with any client, they may perhaps feel more hopeful about their future and recommit to their aim of becoming qualified. They could also consider how else this work may be used, such as a training exercise for other trainees in how to develop a therapy plan or perhaps an opportunity to communicate this plan to another professional now involved with the client. It is always important in Stage II to reframe challenges and hurdles, seeing them instead as opportunities for learning and growth.

The evidence base tells us that positive emotions can act as buffers to stress and assist in improved cognitive and behavioural repertoires (Fredrickson, 2001; Duckworth *et al.*, 2005). As psychologists we know the role of thoughts over emotions, and thus, we ought to apply what we know to help us cope. Another important tool in being resilient is to be mindful of our personal strengths and to consider how these can help us face adversity. Padesky and Mooney (2008) propose that people demonstrate strengths in the everyday tasks they perform and often do not recognise

these. For example, a trainee who never fails to maintain her practice diary each week ought not to disregard this as an ordinary occurrence but should recognise her strengths of perseverance and commitment. These could assist her in coping with other challenges.

In summary, positive psychological approaches are being more readily applied to forensic populations. Such populations include trainees as forensic professionals. It is important to apply our knowledge of psychology (e.g., how to enhance coping and resilience) to ourselves.



FOCUS POINT 39.5 HINTS AND TIPS FOR ENGAGING IN THE QFP

STAGE I

1. Join the Division of Forensic Psychology (DFP) and learn about the division.
2. Get a copy of the QFP candidate handbook and start reading through it as soon as possible.
3. Use this opportunity to gain the core theoretical knowledge that will assist you in the future career, and take this opportunity and learn about the theories of offending and treatment, considering how you will apply this knowledge in practice. Do not fall into the trap of simply doing enough to pass Stage I.
4. For your dissertation, choose a topic that is both interesting *and* relevant to your future. For example, try to research a population you hope to work with (young people, victims, and the forensic environment). This may help when you apply for Stage II jobs.

STAGE II

1. Be creative in spotting opportunities for evidence for the core roles. No job will be tailored simply to evidencing the four core roles. You will need to think about the needs of the organisation and how you may demonstrate your competency as a qualified psychologist in this task.

2. *Never* let your practice diary lapse. This is your best source of evidence of your competency. It is primary evidence; assessors should be able to judge competency from the diary alone. You will miss learning opportunities if it is not updated regularly. Make sure you cross reference the specific descriptors you are demonstrating against entries your diary (e.g., 1.1a, 1.1b, etc.).
3. You are required to spend a minimum number of days on each core role (to ensure breadth of experience and knowledge). Keep a running log of the number of days for the four core roles.
4. Join the trainee forum with the DFP and learn from others.
5. Always remember to reflect on the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct. Refer to this in your practice diary and supervision log.
6. Start writing up your evidence for the core roles early—this will help you to see gaps that may exist and enable you to address these before it is too late!
7. Remember that qualified status is not a right and the number of days spent on supervised practice does not equate to competency—you have to work hard and demonstrate applied knowledge!
8. As with any qualification, you will need to be prepared to do some work in your own time.
9. Remember to remain positive throughout, using feedback from your supervisors and peers as learning opportunities.

TABLE 39.2 *Frequently asked questions about a career in forensic psychology.*

For illustration purposes, HMPPS has been used here.

What income can I expect while I am training?	HMPPS: £30,938–£32,424 (for year 2022)
What salary can I expect when I am fully trained	HMPPS: qualified pay ranges from £39,674–£53,880 (depending on location and experience) (for year 2022) depending on grade, promotion, opportunity, competence, and chosen career path.
What job opportunities are there?	HMPPS: see website, https://jobs.justice.gov.uk/role/forensic-psychology/
What unique skills will I learn?	You will gain unique experiences of working in a custodial setting which can be with men, women and children. You can also work in closed and open prisons as well as working alongside community services. You will develop skills in assessments and interventions, research, consultancy and training. HMPPS: see website, https://jobs.justice.gov.uk/role/forensic-psychology/
What qualifications and experience should I have prior to training?	GBC degree in Psychology, BPS accredited MSc Forensic Psychology
What further training and development can I do once I have qualified?	HMPPS: There are a range of avenues for progression, depending on your qualifications, competencies and experience. Trainee psychologists have the chance to apply for qualified posts once they are eligible to do so, while qualified psychologists can take on a number of roles, including policy, management, or direct delivery of services.
What particular qualities will employers look for?	HMPPS: see website, https://jobs.justice.gov.uk/role/forensic-psychology/
What career progression opportunities are there?	HMPPS: There are also opportunities to move into general management and policy positions, such as a reducing reoffending lead, or into more specialised posts, such as policy lead for sex offender strategy. Roles in consultancy and research are also available.
Will my training make me an attractive proposition for other careers? If so, which careers?	Yes—Civil Servant, NHS, private practice.
What are the hours of work like?	HMPPS: 37 hours a week, 25 days' leave rising to 30 days' after 10 years. 10.5 days' public holidays.
What are the working conditions like?	Challenging, engaging, inspiring. . . See website, https://jobs.justice.gov.uk/role/forensic-psychology/
Where can I go for further information?	https://jobs.justice.gov.uk/role/forensic-psychology/ http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/details/Default.aspx?Id=451

SELF-TEST QUESTIONS

- What is the core aim of Stage I?
- What might be important to consider when embarking on Stage I?
- What is the focus of Stage II?
- What are the four core roles in which a trainee needs to evidence competency?
- How might a trainee evidence competency in one of the four core roles (e.g., what activities might they engage in?)
- Describe how reflection enhances learning and professional practice.
- What tools can be helpful to reflection?
- How can positive psychological approaches assist trainees?

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Discuss the role of reflective practice in relation to Stage II training.
- Evaluate the apprenticeship model for forensic psychology training.
- Discuss the role of applied forensic research to forensic practice.
- Explore how ethical standards can be applied to the practice of core role 1.

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