

What is a Clinical Psychologist?

A clinical psychologist is a psychologist who has undertaken specialised training to become an expert in mental health. Psychologists study human behaviour, and the science behind why people think, feel, and act the way they do.

Psychologists use their expertise in fields as diverse as traffic control, marketing, sports performance, education and learning, organisational and corporate functioning, management, public health, justice, and many other areas.

The foundation for practise in all areas of psychology is an undergraduate education in the science of psychology.

Psychologists may also undertake further education and training to develop their knowledge and skills to apply to specific areas of practice.

Clinical psychologists undertake 4 years of advanced specialised education and training in the psychological treatment and management of mental health problems. This is twice the amount of training in mental health of other psychologists, who may have specialised education and training in other areas, but lack the focus on mental health that defines clinical psychologists.

*“Clinical psychologists use their knowledge of psychology and mental health for the assessment, diagnosis, formulation, treatment, and prevention of psychological problems and mental illness across the lifespan. They research psychological problems, and use their psychological knowledge to develop scientifically based approaches to improve mental health and well-being.”**

Clinical psychology is an internationally recognised area of psychological practice. In a staged care model of mental health service delivery, the training of clinical psychologists prepares them to work with those presenting with moderate to severe mental health problems that are more complex, high risk, and/or accompanied by other comorbidities. These problems require expert psychology services provided by clinical psychologists.

The specialised skills of clinical psychologist are also utilised internationally in:

Clinical supervision for other mental health professionals, as other health professionals do not specialise in the psychological treatment of mental health disorders.

Consultation: “Clinical psychologists also consult broadly with the community on mental health programs, policies, and practices related to children, adolescents, adults and older adults.”*

*Psychology Board of Australia Guidelines on Areas of Practice Endorsements