

Personal statement: MSc Psychology (Conversion)

I am currently in the third year of a degree in English language and linguistics. In the first year, for my free choice module, I selected psychology and realised that this is where my interest really lies. As well as a basic overview of different psychological approaches, I gained an insight into developmental psychology and language acquisition from this module.

I continued this interest in my second year by taking a module in cognitive development. I was particularly fascinated by a study that compared the relative merits of the various theories used to try to explain Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Now in my third year, I have decided on a practical-based dissertation that allows me to combine my interests in English language, linguistics and psychology. I have researched various methods to teach reading and have devised an experiment to evaluate these by testing how primary children improve their reading skills over a six-month period. This will involve statistical analysis of the recordings that I will make of the children reading aloud. I also hope to include some children with autism and some with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, to see if I can come to any conclusions about reading methods that may be effective for children with additional needs. Liaising with the school to set this up has helped me to develop my negotiation skills, while interacting with the pupils has helped me to develop confidence in communicating at an appropriate level with children.

Prior to my degree, I studied three A-levels. Maths developed my skills in logical thinking, and I have found that I have an aptitude for statistical analysis. I also studied biology and although I am more interested in human interaction, I enjoy the scientific approach to devising and conducting experiments, collecting data, recording and analysing results and coming to a logical conclusion.

Before starting my degree I took a gap year. I worked as a temporary teaching assistant in a primary school assisting in a Year 5 class. I developed my confidence in managing small groups of pupils and in finding creative ways to engage them. I followed this with a role as a learning mentor in a secondary school. I worked one-to-one with a Year 8 student with autism. I learnt a great deal about the challenges that schools face in integrating pupils with special educational needs and also about my own ability to be patient and supportive.

Recently, I shadowed an educational psychologist for a day to confirm that I had a realistic understanding of how psychology is used in a real job role. This included sitting in on an assessment of a child with behavioural difficulties with his parents present. I was able to see how a range of different assessments were utilised and experience how the educational psychologist diplomatically handled the parents' reactions and emotions. I was then able to

arrange a further day of shadowing after the educational psychologist had completed her report and sat in on an action planning meeting where the child's personal tutor and the school learning support tutor were also present. After getting an inside view of the pros and cons of the job, I came away more convinced that this is the career I want to pursue.

I decided to choose [XX University] because of the large number of tutors with research interests in developmental psychology. I was interested to read some of the research conducted by the developmental psychology research group into school bullying and bi-lingual learners. At the psychology department open day I was impressed by the video observation laboratory and perception lab. I like the emphasis on learning practical research methods, such as designing experiments and questionnaires. Although I know that most of the modules are compulsory as required by the British Psychological Society (BPS), I am interested in the electives you offer - particularly educational psychology and developmental dyslexia.

I regularly read Psychology Review and was particularly interested in a recent article on the social and emotional needs of pupils with dyslexia, and how conclusions from recent research have been fed back to schools through the educational psychology service.

I am a keen rower and, since I represent the university, this is a huge commitment. It has taught me a great deal about teamwork, which I feel will be very beneficial to working in a collaborative role. I have also had to learn to manage my time effectively.

My future plan is to gain some experience of teaching English abroad, before applying for a Doctorate in educational psychology. I am enthusiastic about taking the first step to a professional career in psychology.