

# Health Psychology

Postgraduate Handbook



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**AUCKLAND**  
NEW ZEALAND

**MEDICAL AND  
HEALTH SCIENCES**  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

# Welcome to our Health Psychology research and teaching programme

Health Psychology is one of the fastest growing areas of psychology, and the University of Auckland is at the forefront of this exciting new field. Hosted in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, we seek to advance the application of psychology to the understanding of health and illness, combining biomedical and psychological knowledge.

Our staff are highly regarded internationally and have well-established research programmes. We have a group of approximately 60 postgraduate students per year, including masters, PhD and postgraduate diploma students.

Launched in 2001, our postgraduate diploma is one of the first health psychology practitioner training programmes in the world, applying psychological knowledge to the care of medical patients. We invite you to consider joining our team in the study and application of health psychology.



## Our Staff

Associate Professor Roger Booth, Professor Elizabeth Broadbent, Professor Nathan Consedine, Professor Keith Petrie, Dr Lisa Reynolds, Dr Anna Serlachius, Dr Geraldine Tennant, and Eva Morunga.

# Why choose Health Psychology?

Health Psychology is concerned with human behaviour in the context of health and illness, for example:

- how individuals cope with illness and chronic disease
- understanding and promoting healthy behaviours
- psychological influences on the development of disease states
- placebo and nocebo effects
- patient-practitioner communication
- adherence to treatment
- interactions between brain and behaviour
- understanding how individuals make sense of and react to health screening, symptoms and illness

Health professionals are increasingly dealing with chronic illness, psychosomatic illness, ageing and the problems of living with disability. All these areas have major health psychology components.

There is now an increased recognition that health services need to pay more attention to, and understand, the psychological aspects of medical problems in order to improve health care interactions.

## Strengths of our programmes:

- Our highly acclaimed, research-based postgraduate programmes are designed to give our students a strong background in the theoretical, methodological and practical applications of Health Psychology.
- Our students have ready access to clinical populations of special interest to Health Psychology, such as oncology services, cardiac services, neurology, obstetrics and gynaecology, specialist pain services and other tertiary and speciality centres.
- Students with a Master of Health Psychology, together with the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Psychology, are eligible to apply for registration with the New Zealand Psychologists Board.
- Graduates of our Postgraduate Diploma in Health Psychology are currently working in hospital-based respiratory and diabetes services, rehabilitation services, pain clinics, primary care, intensive care units and oncology services.
- Our PhD programme conducts cutting edge research on how psychological factors affect health.
- Our students have access to health and exercise-related resources including the School of Population Health, Occupational Medicine, Centre for Health Services Research and Policy, Department of Exercise Science, Adidas Sports Medicine, Audiology, and Speech Language Therapy.



## Our postgraduate programmes

We offer the following programmes:

- Master of Health Psychology
- Postgraduate Diploma in Health Psychology
- PhD in Health Psychology

By undertaking our Master of Health Psychology you'll gain a deep understanding in areas such as:

- Cognitive models of illness
- The psychology of physical symptoms
- How stress can affect immune function
- Links between our emotions, cognitive processes, behaviour and health
- Common psychological disorders
- Clinical interviewing skills
- Research designs and assessment
- Theories behind common psychological interventions
- The role of technology in the delivery of psychological therapies

Our graduates have a sound knowledge of the social and psychological aspects of health problems and the application of suitable psychological interventions in health settings. After completing the masters degree, students who complete the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Psychology are taught the clinical skills necessary to function as registered psychologists working directly with patients. The PhD programme prepares students for a research or academic career. PhD candidates aim to make an independent and original contribution to knowledge in the field.

## Choose your career

Our postgraduate programmes offer graduates a variety of rewarding and interesting roles.

Our PGDipHealthPsych graduates work in hospital-based respiratory and diabetes services, rehabilitation services and pain clinics. Some are working in primary care for private health providers; others in private practice.

Postgraduate study in Health Psychology can also lead to research and health promotion careers within university, government, business or hospital environments. A number of our graduates are currently working in research positions in New Zealand and overseas.

Recent structural changes in the administration of health services in New Zealand have created a greater need for researchers well-versed in the health field to evaluate the benefits and liabilities of particular health service programmes and outcomes. At present there is a lack of skilled researchers to conduct these evaluations.

The continued push for cost containment and justification will also draw health providers into developing more effective and carefully assessed treatment programmes from primary through to tertiary services.

Jobs related to Health Psychology:

- Health Psychologist
- Building patient support programmes in business settings
- Health Improvement Practitioners



# Programme outlines

## Master of Health Psychology (MHealthPsych)

This is a two-year degree that requires a total of 240 points. The first year consists of taught papers (120 points), of which 60 points are from compulsory courses (listed below).

### Compulsory courses

HLTHPSYC 714	Health Psychology	Tu	1–3pm	G	Semester One
HLTHPSYC 715	Research Methods in Health Psychology	W	8–10am	G	Semester One
HLTHPSYC 719	Health Psychology Assessment	Th	9–11am	G	Semester Two
HLTHPSYC 720	Health Psychology Interventions	W	10am–12pm	G	Semester Two

### Elective courses

A further 60 points are taken from elective courses. We recommend taking the elective courses offered in health psychology listed in the table below, however it may be possible to take elective courses offered within FMHS with approval from the Director of the Health Psychology Masters programme as well as the course coordinator.

HLTHPSYC 716	Psychoneuroimmunology	Tu	9–11am	G	Semester One
HLTHPSYC 717	Emotions, Emotion Regulation, and Health	Tu	1–3pm	G	Semester Two
HLTHPSYC 743	Psychopathology and Clinical Interviewing	W	10am–12pm	G	Semester One
HLTHPSYC 744	Research Topic in Health Psychology	TBC	TBC	G	Semester One/Two
HLTHPSYC 755	Special Study	TBC	TBC	G	Semester One/Two
HLTHPSYC 758	Technology and Health	M	10am–12pm	G	Semester Two

*NOTE: Timetable subject to change. Please see Student Services Online for up-to-date information.*

**G** = Grafton Campus, **TBC** = To be coordinated.

*A student must obtain an average grade of at least a B in the first 120 points from the coursework component before enrolling in the final 120 point thesis component: HLTHPSYC 796.*

The second year of the masters degree consists HLTHPSYC 796A/B Thesis in Health Psychology. This one year research thesis is supervised by our staff members.

### Health Psychology Seminar Series

On Tuesdays from 12–1pm during semesters 1 and 2 we showcase new research from invited local and international speakers. It is compulsory for students to attend.

**Explore the postgraduate courses listed in this table in further detail visit:**

[www.auckland.ac.nz/pg/health-psychology](http://www.auckland.ac.nz/pg/health-psychology)

**Learn more about our Master of Health Psychology by visiting:**

[www.auckland.ac.nz/mhealthpsych](http://www.auckland.ac.nz/mhealthpsych)

# Postgraduate Diploma in Health Psychology (PGDipHealthPsych)

Our PGDipHealthPsych gives specific training in how to work clinically as a health psychologist. You'll learn the skills and gain sound knowledge that are necessary to function as a health psychologist working with patient populations and the public in healthcare settings.

The PGDipHealthPsych trains students in the skills necessary to function as health psychologists working with patient populations in healthcare settings.

The PGDipHealthPsych provides a route to registration as a psychologist with the New Zealand Psychologists Board.

The programme provides psychologists with the skills necessary to select, utilise and interpret assessment tools in health psychology, be able to produce testable formulations of the problems with which they are confronted and assist patients clinically with appropriate interventions.

The diploma programme also gives students an awareness of the responsibilities of psychology practitioners to demonstrate responsiveness to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the need to be sensitive to the importance of different cultural, religious, spiritual and other beliefs. Graduates of the course will be aware of, and conversant with, the need to work within clear ethical frameworks.

**A  
goal of the  
PGDipHealthPsych  
is to provide a route  
to registration with  
the New Zealand  
Psychologists  
Board.**

## Eligibility

Students normally apply for the PGDipHealthPsych towards the end of the first year of their Master of Health Psychology.

Acceptance into the Master of Health Psychology programme does not guarantee acceptance into the PGDipHealthPsych programme. Application to the PGDipHealthPsych is a separate process, entry is limited, and applications for entry close 1 November in each year. Interviews occur towards the end of November. Students must apply online through Student Services Online. Upon acceptance into the PGDipHealthPsych programme, students are then required to successfully complete the pre-internship course (HLTHPSYCH 746A/B), usually alongside their Master of Health Psychology thesis.

The pre-internship course requires students to attend teaching sessions and workshops and spend time on placement in various health settings arranged by the Department. This means that there is a one year delay between acceptance into the programme and commencement of the full-year internship (HLTHPSYC 742 A/B and HLTHPSYC 745 A/B).

Applicants will also have completed a course in Psychopathology and Clinical Interviewing, normally HLTHPSYC 743 at the University of Auckland. Students can also apply for entry into the PGDipHealthPsych programme later, after completing their Master of Health Psychology.

**Find out more**  
[auckland.ac.nz/pgdiphealthpsych](http://auckland.ac.nz/pgdiphealthpsych)



---

*“I am a Health Psychologist in the Pain Services unit at Counties Manukau Health, serving our culturally diverse community.*

*I really enjoy my role and helping people and their families each day through difficult experiences. Psychology has been something I have always wanted to pursue.*

*The Postgraduate Diploma in Health Psychology, being a practical course, I had the opportunity to learn in an applied and safe way under the guidance of experienced supervisors.*

*Working in this area exposes you to the underserved need – especially for our Pacific and Māori communities. I would fully encourage our Pacific and Māori people to enter into this area of health!”*

**Jessee Fia’ali’i**

*Graduate: Postgraduate Diploma in Health Psychology*

*Masters in Health Psychology*

*Jessee is a Health Psychologist at Counties Manukau Health*

---

**“There are very few Pacific psychologists and I hope to encourage more of our people to take up studies in this area”**



# University admissions and enrolment

Entry into the Master of Health Psychology programme is limited and applications for entry close 1 December. The minimum requirement for entry is a Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts with a major in Psychology. If you have an undergraduate degree in a different subject, you can complete a Graduate Diploma in Science in the School of Psychology in order to gain the equivalent of a major in psychology.

A research methods course such as PSYCH 306 from the University of Auckland or an equivalent is normally expected for entry into the programme.

Students who have completed the Bachelor of Health (Health Psychology) from Victoria University are also eligible for our programme. There is an interview selection process for the Master of Health Psychology; the interviews are held in early December.

Students interested in applying for the Master of Health Psychology need to complete an online application via Student Services Online AND submit two letters of recommendation, your academic

transcript, a personal statement and current CV.

[www.auckland.ac.nz/applynow](http://www.auckland.ac.nz/applynow)

General postgraduate enrolment information is available from Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences Student Centre.

## The Student Centre

Building 503, Ground Floor  
Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences  
85 Park Road, Grafton, Auckland

Phone: +64 9 923 4888

Email: [fmhs@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:fmhs@auckland.ac.nz)

Open: 8.30am–4.30pm, Monday–Friday

## International students

If you are an international student (that is, you do not have citizenship or permanent residency in New Zealand or Australia) please contact our International Office for application information:

[international@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:international@auckland.ac.nz)

## → Contact

**Master of Health Psychology programme:**

**Professor Elizabeth Broadbent**

*Director – Master of Health Psychology*

Email: [e.broadbent@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:e.broadbent@auckland.ac.nz)

Phone: +64 9 923 6756

## PhD in Health Psychology

Please contact individual staff members if you are interested in a PhD under their supervision. Our staff profiles can be found at:

[www.auckland.ac.nz/phd/health-psychology/](http://www.auckland.ac.nz/phd/health-psychology/)

**Postgraduate Diploma in Health Psychology programme:**

**Dr Lisa Reynolds**

*Director – Postgraduate Diploma in Health Psychology*

Email: [l.reynolds@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:l.reynolds@auckland.ac.nz)

Phone: +64 9 923 4938

[fmhs.auckland.ac.nz](http://fmhs.auckland.ac.nz)