

# “Psychology Works” Resources: Training to Become a Clinical Neuropsychologist in Canada

## What is Clinical Neuropsychology?

Clinical neuropsychology is a speciality within clinical psychology that focuses on understanding the relationship between brain and behaviour through research and clinical services.

## Who is a clinical neuropsychologist?

A clinical neuropsychologist is a regulated health professional who uses evidence-based practice in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of a variety of neurological, medical, and psychiatric disorders that affect cognition. Clinical neuropsychologists may also provide services to optimize cognitive functioning in healthy individuals. Subspecialties in neuropsychology include geriatric, pediatric, and forensic. There is a range of career opportunities including within hospitals, private practice, and academia; within these settings, a neuropsychologist’s work may include any combination of clinical, research, teaching, supervision, and consultation activities.

## How do I become a clinical neuropsychologist?

Clinical neuropsychologists must obtain a PhD or PsyD degree to be licensed to practice clinical psychology in Canada (licensure requirements vary across provinces) and declare competency to practice within the speciality area of clinical neuropsychology.

## What is the typical education path?

Typically, a bachelor’s degree in a psychology or health related field is obtained prior to completing graduate school at the doctoral level at an accredited institution that offers specialized training in clinical neuropsychology. Many universities require completion of a master’s degree prior to doctoral training.

## What does graduate school in clinical neuropsychology entail?

Graduate training includes three major components: course work, research, and clinical experience.

### ***Course work:***

Course work requirements depend on the program, but topics covered generally include: human neuropsychology, neuroanatomy, neuropsychological assessment, and neurorehabilitation. Completion of these courses is in addition to the required core clinical courses of the program such as foundational courses in clinical psychology, psychodiagnostics, psychotherapeutic intervention, and statistics. Students may also take courses to specialize in an age group (e.g., child and youth or adult and older adult) or select courses across the lifespan.

### ***Research:***

Trainees must undertake major research projects (e.g., Master’s thesis, dissertation) in a topic area broadly related to brain and behaviour. As trainees are accepted into graduate programs under the

supervision of a faculty member, topics are dependent on the supervisor's research focus and can range from understanding the brain at the structural level via brain imaging to investigating the impact of a cognitive intervention in the community.

### ***Clinical experience:***

Trainees are offered a wide range of clinical experiences in clinical neuropsychological assessment and intervention across the lifespan or depending on a population of interest. Trainees are first exposed to clinical training through theory and practice in class. Under the supervision of practicing clinicians, trainees then complete clinical practica in a variety of approved settings (e.g., the clinical neuropsychology department of a hospital). Lastly, trainees complete a one-year, full-time residency in clinical neuropsychology or clinical psychology with a neuropsychology component (i.e., a major neuropsychology rotation) at an approved site (for a list of sites see <https://natmatch.com/psychint/directory/participating-programs.html>).

## **What happens after graduate school?**

Graduates must complete registration examinations, and sometimes one year of supervised practice (requirement varies across provinces), in order to register with the College of Psychologists. There is also the opportunity for post-doctoral positions to gain additional training and to build research experience. Although more common in the United States, board certification for the specialization of clinical neuropsychology is available through the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology, which is a division of the American Board of Professional Psychology.

If you would like to learn more about the experience of a current trainee in clinical neuropsychology, you can reach out to the Student Representative of the CPA Clinical Neuropsychology section (for contact information see <https://cpa.ca/sections/clinicalneuropsychology/executive/>).

*This resource has been prepared for the Canadian Psychological Association by Iris Yusupov, York University and the CPA's Clinical Neuropsychology Executive Committee.*

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Your opinion matters! Please contact us with any questions or comments about any of the *Psychology Works* Resources: [factsheets@cpa.ca](mailto:factsheets@cpa.ca)

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