



Forensic Psychology (ed 6/2023)

<https://sciences.ucf.edu/psychology/careers/psychology-careers-with-grad-degree/>

Forensic psychology is an intriguing field that applies psychological principles to the legal system. If you are interested in pursuing a career in forensic psychology, here are some important points to consider:

What is Forensic Psychology? Forensic psychology involves utilizing psychological expertise in the judicial system. It applies principles of clinical psychology, counseling psychology, neuropsychology, and school psychology to various aspects of criminal investigation and the law. Forensic psychologists evaluate individuals in the court system, provide therapy to crime victims, assess competency, and offer expert testimony in civil and criminal trials.

Career Opportunities: Forensic psychologists work in both criminal and civil matters, with diverse responsibilities including:

- Custody disputes
- Insurance claim evaluations
- Testifying in civil lawsuits
- Providing therapy in family courts
- Conducting child custody evaluations
- Investigating child abuse reports
- Performing visitation risk assessments
- Assessing competency
- Providing psychotherapy to crime victims
- Assessing juvenile and adult offenders

Benefits	Downsides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity to help others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a substantial time commitment (5-7 years of graduate study)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse career paths (i.e. criminal courts, consulting, government, education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay is usually low in relation to the amount of education and work required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a challenging and rewarding career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration, stress, and burnout can occur

Education Requirements: To pursue a career in forensic psychology, follow an educational path focused on psychology, criminology, and forensics:

- Earn a bachelor's degree in psychology with a focus on criminology or criminal justice. Alternatively, pursue a degree in criminal justice or criminology with a focus on psychology.
- After undergraduate studies, obtain a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) or Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) degree in Clinical or Counseling Psychology.
- Admission to competitive PsyD or PhD programs typically requires:
 - At least 1 year of research experience as an undergraduate
 - Competitive GPA and GRE scores
 - Two letters of recommendation from faculty
 - Relevant experience in mental health, the legal system, or criminal justice
- Seek opportunities to meet with faculty and professionals in the field to gain insights, build experience, and find a mentor who can guide you in this competitive field.

Other relevant career opportunities:

While a bachelor's degree in psychology provides a strong foundation, it typically does not qualify individuals for direct employment as forensic psychologists. However, there are several related career paths in which you can apply your knowledge and skills:

- **Victim Advocate:** Work with victims of crime, providing support, resources, and guidance throughout the legal process.
- **Case Worker:** Assist law enforcement agencies, courts, or social service organizations by conducting assessments, gathering information, and managing cases involving individuals in the criminal justice system.
- **Probation Officer:** Monitor and supervise individuals who have been placed on probation, ensuring compliance with court-ordered conditions and facilitating rehabilitation.
- **Correctional Officer:** Work in correctional facilities, overseeing the custody, safety, and rehabilitation of inmates.
- **Paralegal:** Support attorneys in legal settings by conducting research, preparing documents, and assisting with case management.
- **Law Enforcement Officer:** Join the police force, where your knowledge of forensic psychology can aid in investigations, crisis intervention, and community relations.
- **Research Assistant:** Assist researchers in academic or forensic settings, contributing to studies and projects related to crime, psychology, and the legal system.
- **Crime Scene Technician:** Assist in processing crime scenes, collecting and analyzing evidence, and collaborating with law enforcement agencies.

Remember that while these positions may not require advanced degrees, additional certifications, training, or experience may be necessary to enhance your qualifications and advance in your chosen career path. It's also essential to check specific requirements and job opportunities in your desired location.

What you can do as an undergraduate student pursuing this field:

- Earn the highest GPA possible as doctoral programs and even masters' graduate programs in Psychology are very competitive.
- Gain at least one year if not more of research experience with a professor or graduate student as a research assistant.
- Volunteer in relevant organizations like law enforcement agencies, forensic laboratories, or victim advocacy organizations.
- While not necessary, look into adding the [Behavioral Forensics Certificate](#). Or you may be interested in the Crime, Law, & Deviance Minor, or the Criminal Profiling Certificate offered at UCF. Review program requirements in the catalog here:
<https://www.ucf.edu/catalog/undergraduate/#/home>
 - Declare the program on myUCF under Change Major Request. Instructions here:
http://assets.sdes.ucf.edu/public/ro-assets/change_of_major_instructions.pdf