Occupational psychologist

Job description

Occupational psychology involves the study of human behaviour in the workplace. It is also referred to as industrial or organisational psychology.

Occupational psychologists are concerned with the performance of people at work and in training, and with developing an understanding of how organisations function and how individuals and groups behave at work. Their aim is to increase effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction at work.

They deal with issues and problems involving people at work by serving as advisors in a variety of organisations. They apply methods of psychology to issues of critical relevance to business, including talent management, coaching, assessment, selection, training, organisational development, performance, well-being and work-life balance.

Work activities

- Identifying abilities and developing potential through using tests and job-relevant exercises at selection and in career counselling
- Motivating people by designing payment and reward systems and advice on health and safety issues
- Assessing performance both on and off the job by designing appraisal systems, advising on stress management and in designing machines and computer systems that are easy to use Helping people and organisations adapt to change by advising on how to change attitudes and behaviours to improve customer service
- Designing effective organisations by advising on the best type of management systems, identifying effective human resources strategies and designing jobs to fit people’s skills.

Work conditions

Travel: may be required occasionally.
Working hours: mainly 9 to 5, possibly with some extra hours.
Location: mainly in towns or cities throughout the country.
Opportunities for self-employment: opportunities for private practice and for industrial or commercial consultancy are growing.

Typical employers

Large companies
Government and public services
Management training centres
Psychometric testing and assessment services
Private consultancy practice including outplacement.

Career development

Jobs are available in training, lecturing and in research.

Salaries

Salaries will vary depending on employer.

(continued overleaf)
Entry requirements and training
An honours undergraduate degree or a post-graduate conversion course accredited by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) where psychology is the major subject is required. Completion of a recognised postgraduate training programme in occupational, industrial or organisational psychology is then necessary.

Specific degree subjects required
Psychology

Postgraduate study
Completion of a recognised postgraduate training programme in occupational psychology is essential.

Specific entry requirements
An excellent academic record and appropriate personal qualities (maturity, emotional stability etc) are required. Relevant experience is an advantage.

Tips for applications
You can enhance your chances of achieving a place on a postgraduate programme by achieving a high grade at undergraduate level (minimum 2.1 grade) and obtaining experience relevant to the field of occupational psychology. This can be by way of voluntary or paid work for example in companies’ human resource departments.

Additional training in communication skills or psychometrics and research experience in a relevant area can also be beneficial.

Skills and qualities
• Excellent listening and communication skills
• Excellent motivational skills
• Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills
• great patience and the ability to empathise
• Ability to inspire trust and confidence in people from a wide range of backgrounds
• Ability to explain complex issues to people with little or no specialist knowledge
• Excellent observational skills coupled with the ability to interpret people’s body language as well as what they say
• Ability to produce clear, concise written reports.

Occupational psychologist (continued)