

Career Options

- Career Counselor
- Corporate Trainer
- Executive Coach
- Human Resources Manager
- Industrial/Organizational Psychologist
- Labor Relations Specialist
- Management Consultant
- Organizational Development Manager
- Professor

What is Industrial & Organizational Psychology?

Industrial and organizational psychology (I/O Psychology) majors study psychology as it applies to the workplace—attitudes of employees and employers, organizational behavior, workplace environment and its effects, and much, much more. You will probably study such things as personality, cognition, perception, and human development, as well as learn about the biological side of behavior and might be given the chance to take relevant business courses such as management, since you will focus on organizational settings.

As an undergraduate you can expect to get well acquainted with the basics of psychology in addition to the more specific field of industrial and organizational psychology. I/O Psychology majors will be doing a lot of research, experimentation, and documentation, as you would in other psychology subfields, learning and using statistics and other methods for data analysis. You will learn about seminal psychological research of the past and present, with a focus on how you might see, adapt, contradict, or support these findings with your own ideas.

Occupational Opportunities

Individuals in the field of I/O Psychology work in a variety of settings including business, consulting, education or government. They might study the procedures on an assembly line and suggest changes to reduce the monotony and increase the responsibility of workers. They might advise management on how to develop programs to hire the best employees, identify staff with management potential, or administer a counseling service for employees on career development or preparation for retirement.

Skills & Abilities

In addition to addressing the central question of human behavior, the study of psychology also develops skills in critical analysis, accurate problem definition, the relation of theory to evidence, and the interpretation of data and scientific writing. The skills developed while studying psychology may be applied to job responsibilities in a variety of occupational groups. A sampling of representative skills and abilities follows:

- Gathers information
- Active learning and listening
- Speaks and thinks critically
- Problem identification
- Identification of key causes
- Oral expression and comprehension
- Writing comprehension

- Teaches others, provide consultation, and advice to others
- Communicates with others and with persons outside organization
- Written expression
- Mathematical reasoning
- Originality and inductive reasoning

Career Snapshot: Human Resources Manager

Two Years

Responsibilities in the field of human resources are significant in these first two years, as are the hours. New hires are expected to learn the company's protocols and procedures while carrying out their assigned duties. Most human resources managers establish mentor relationships with more senior human resources practitioners and learn effective techniques for managing people. Satisfaction is average; the hours are long.

Five Years

Five-year veterans of small companies have become important staff members, and many of them have discrete areas of control. Individuals who work for large companies have begun to specialize in health benefits, pension plans, 401(k) plans, corporate recruiting, or another area of human resources. Many of them feel that working long hours will earn them a position as vice president or director of human resources. Salaries increase, but many people who want larger salaries move to bigger corporations. Satisfaction is high for career-track professionals.

Ten Years

Many human resources professionals assume managerial duties, with the goal of heading up a large human resources department or directing a benefits, recruiting, or personnel department. A significant number of human resources professionals return to graduate school to acquire more credentials that will distinguish them from other candidates. The hours can increase for individuals looking to get ahead.

Additional Resources

U.S. Government's Occupational Outlook Handbook
<http://bls.gov/oco>

Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychology
www.siop.org

American Psychological Association
www.apa.org

Society for Human Resource Management
www.shrm.org

Make the Difference
www.makingthedifference.org/federalcareers

American Society for Training and Development
www.astd.org

Association of Labor Relations Agencies
www.alra.org

World at Work
www.worldatwork.org