

# Joining as a new PC

The main ways you can join as a new police constable (PC) whether you have a degree already or not.

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Written by College of Policing

## Entry routes for police constables

There are currently three main routes into the service if you wish to join as a new PC. Some forces also still offer the traditional entry route.

Which one you do will depend on whether you already have a degree or not and what your chosen force offers.

Forces may offer the different routes at different times of the year, so you should check with your chosen force as to which entry routes they have available. Forces will also have details of specific eligibility requirements. In general you need to:

- be over 18 (you can apply at 17 and start work when you turn 18) and there is no upper age limit
- be a British citizen, an EC/EEA national or a Commonwealth citizen or foreign national with no restrictions on your stay in the United Kingdom
- be in good health, including fitness and eyesight
- have no criminal record, although some offences may be considered by individual forces when you apply

[Download detailed information on the eligibility criteria](#)

## If you don't have a degree

### The police constable degree apprenticeship (PCDA) – a degree while you work

A mixture of dynamic practical training underpinned by key knowledge and learning.

This route into policing enables you to receive practical on-the-job learning alongside academic

theory and knowledge while earning a wage. You will be a police officer from your first day on the job. It normally takes three years and you are likely to need a level 3 qualification to join (which is 2 A-levels or equivalent).

You will be awarded a degree in professional policing practice on successful completion of your apprenticeship.

The PCDA typically takes three years to complete. Assessment of academic and operational competence takes place throughout the programme. The assessment is carried out in a collaborative partnership between a force and one or more learning providers such as a local university.

This is a professional degree founded on effective professional performance with academic achievement. The programme covers a breadth, depth and range of professional education for the police constable not present in any previous constable training programme.

The PCDA covers areas that are critical to effective policing in the 21st century, such as evidence-based policing, supporting vulnerable people, dealing with cybercrime and crime prevention. An equivalent apprenticeship framework has been developed for Wales.

## How do I apply?

Apply directly through your chosen force.

## Hear from PCDA officers

Three police constable degree apprenticeship officers at Nottinghamshire Police – one of the first forces to run this entry route – tell us how the PCDA helped them to further their education while working in force and gaining a range of experience.

- [How getting a degree while you work as a PC is a 'perfect opportunity'](#)
- [How the police constable degree apprenticeship equips you for the future](#)
- [Being a police officer from your first day on the job with the PCDA](#)

## Pre-join degree in professional policing – before you start

## working

The pre-join degree is a professional academic knowledge-based degree, based on the national curriculum for the police constable role. You need to complete the degree before applying to join the police.

It is an academic knowledge-based degree, based upon the national curriculum for the police constable role. It will provide you with an entry route into policing if you wish to study before you apply to join a police force.

The application of education received during the degree is put into practice and assessed during probation. If you wish to use a pre-join degree as your entry route to the police service, you must apply to join a police force within five years of your graduation.

Some universities are working with local forces to offer complementary special constable opportunities, enabling students to gain practical experience alongside their degree. This makes it much more likely that they will also gain a probationary police constable place at the end of the degree.

The pre-join degree may also be of interest or benefit to those considering a career in other roles within policing, for those seeking to understand how society is policed, for those who have an interest in law enforcement or for those who want to enter the wider justice sector.

Successful achievement of the pre-join degree does not guarantee recruitment as a probationary police constable. Each police force sets out its own entry requirements, recruitment process and selection policy.

Once you have successfully joined a force as a probationer, you will need to:

- undertake further practice-based learning and assessment in your force
- demonstrate competence in the police constable role
- complete the two-year probationary period, in line with police regulations

## How do I apply?

Once you have graduated with a pre-join degree, you will need to apply to join your chosen police force as a probationary police constable. To do this, you must:

- apply within 5 years of your graduation date
- meet all of the recruitment criteria for the particular force

## Universities offering this degree

The new pre-join degree can only be offered by universities that are licensed and validated by the College of Policing. We maintain a list of universities that can offer the pre-join degree.

- [See a list of universities that offer a professional policing degree](#)

## Universities who want to offer this degree

If you are a university or higher education provider that wants to become licensed to offer the pre-join degree you can find out more from our [guidance for universities that want to offer a pre-join degree](#).

## If you have a degree

### Degree-holder entry programme

If you already have an undergraduate degree in any subject, you can join and follow a work-based programme, supported by off-the-job learning. This route normally takes two years, and the learning you have undergone is recognised in a graduate diploma in professional policing practice when you complete your probation.

The length of time on probation is reduced on this programme because you do not need to complete another degree.

### How do I apply?

You can apply directly through your local force.

## With or without a degree

### Traditional entry – the initial police learning and

## development programme (IPLDP)

This is the original route into the service which is gradually being replaced with the three new entry routes but is still offered by some forces. You join a force and undertake a two-year programme after which if you successfully complete probation, you become a confirmed police constable ready for duties.

### How do I apply?

Apply directly with your chosen force.

## Joining the police – online assessment

After you have applied to join a force, you will undertake an assessment about the competencies and values that are important for police constables. This meets the current standards for assessing new recruits.

The assessment was originally done face to face and called SEARCH or Day One. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are currently being done online. The online assessment process will continue until at least June 2021 and we will review this as the situation changes.

## Online assessment process

The online assessment process consists of a three-stage approach.

### Stage 1 – situational judgement test (SJT)

This test measures your ability to choose the appropriate action in situations similar to those you are likely to face as a police constable. This test will measure your judgement and ability to make effective decisions against the [competency and values framework](#) for policing. If your hiring force is already using a sift, this stage may not be mandatory.

### Stage 2 – competency-based interview

You will be asked a series of questions about how you have dealt with specific situations in the past. This is your opportunity to provide some examples of the key competencies and values that are important for police constables. You can use examples from both your work and your personal life. If you have completed stage 1, you will be required to take stage 2 immediately upon

completion.

## **Stage 3 – written assessment and briefing exercise**

### **Stage 3a – written assessment**

In this exercise, you will assume the role of a police constable and will have to complete an urgent written task for your line manager. You will receive four items of information to help you with this task.

### **Stage 3b – briefing exercise**

In this exercise, you will assume the role of a police constable and will have responsibility for dealing with some issues presented to you. You will be tasked with providing a response to a number of questions in relation to this issue. You will be provided with preparation materials to consider your answer.

In both parts of the stage 3 assessment, only use the information provided and do not add any additional information. Please note that you will be able to take stages 3a and 3b separately.

## **Reasonable adjustments and accommodations**

Some people taking online assessments need extra help or more time.

If you have any condition that might cause you to be disadvantaged during the online assessment process, temporary or otherwise (eg, pregnancy, injury, disability including dyslexia) you may be entitled to accommodation or reasonable adjustment.

Any accommodation or reasonable adjustment provided for the online assessment process will be based on the supporting information provided to us in a relevant report, produced by an appropriately qualified professional. Reasonable adjustments may include additional time in the exercises or other adjustments as recommended by a specialist.

If you believe you may have a condition that could disadvantage you, contact the force you are applying to directly. They will be able to assist you with your application for accommodation or reasonable adjustment.

## [See the policy accommodations and reasonable adjustments](#)

Read the guidance on the online assessment process and what to do if extra time is agreed.

- [Online assessment process candidate guide \(pdf\) 589.4 KB](#)
- [Online assessment process candidate guide – reasonable adjustment of 15% extra time \(v2.4\) \(pdf\) 595.04 KB](#)
- [Online assessment process candidate guide – reasonable adjustment of 25% extra time \(v2.4\) \(pdf\) 595.56 KB](#)
- [Online assessment process candidate guide – reasonable adjustment of 30% extra time \(v2.4\) \(pdf\) 595.52 KB](#)
- [Online assessment process candidate guide – reasonable adjustment of 33% extra time \(v2.4\) \(pdf\) 595.13 KB](#)
- [Online assessment process candidate guide – reasonable adjustment of 40% extra time \(v2.4\) \(pdf\) 595.69 KB](#)
- [Online assessment process candidate guide – reasonable adjustment of 50% extra time \(v2.4\) \(pdf\) 595.87 KB](#)
- [Online assessment process – candidate FAQs \(pdf\) 352.71 KB](#)

## Useful information

College of Policing and external resources on the different routes to join as a PC.

## For the PCDA, pre-join degree and degree-holder entry

[Police education qualifications framework \(PEQF\)](#)

## External resources

- [Joining the police website](#)
- [See which forces are recruiting](#)

## Tags

Police recruitment