

Programme Specification

MSc in Applied Forensic Psychology

Entry Requirements:

Applicants for this course must have a good Honours degree (2:1 or better) in Psychology that confers Graduate Basis for Registration of the British Psychological Society.

Students for whom English is not their first language and who have not lived in a country where the first language is English for at least three years must demonstrate an IELTS of 6.5 or a TOEFL score of 575 with a score of 4.0 in the Test of Written English.

Aims and Objectives:

We aim to equip students with a sound knowledge and understanding of a broad range of topics in forensic and legal psychology. This knowledge includes not only an appreciation of theory and fact, but also an awareness of the strengths and limitations of research evidence, as well as its applications. A particular aim of the courses is to make learning available to those who are unable or unwilling to pursue more conventional, campus-based courses in higher education. We aim to develop in our students, knowledge and skills relevant to working as a psychologist in a forensic setting.

Our objectives are that by the end of the Course, successful students who complete the course should be able to:

- Demonstrate a sound knowledge of how psychology and criminology can help explain criminal behaviour.
- Demonstrate a detailed understanding of the application of psychological work carried out with offenders, suspects and victims of crime.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the application of psychology through the various stages of the criminal justice system, from investigation to incarceration and treatment.
- Demonstrate critical evaluation of materials relevant to the core areas of forensic psychology
- Demonstrate application of psychological theory and research to relevant real world case studies
- Demonstrate an understanding of qualitative and quantitative research methods and demonstrate an ability to conduct such analyses.
- Demonstrate an appreciation of the importance of ethics in research and be able to produce an ethical research proposal.
- Demonstrate the ability to design and conduct an empirical investigation on a forensic topic.

Course Content and Structure:

Students are required to complete six modules, which are detailed below. Each module is designed to be a self-study guide and is accompanied by a number of attached readings and directions to relevant on-line free text articles. In addition, students are provided with several complementary books some of which are specifically tailored to helping the students with statistics and research methods whereas others are more introductory forensic psychology textbooks. A study support guide is provided to each student, which details tips on researching and essay writing amongst many other topics. A course handbook containing administrative

information such as submission dates, marking guidelines, is provided to each student. Finally when students are beginning their dissertation they are sent a dissertation handbook that includes amongst other things, guidelines on how to conduct a study and what information each section of the report should contain. Whilst each module is independent we have designed the course to enable the student to build on their knowledge. For example, theoretical knowledge is first developed in modules 1 and 2 following which the application of such theories in practice is then covered in modules 3-5. Similarly the assessment for the Research Methods module is divided into two halves. The skills that are developed in the first part coincide with the skills that are required at that stage of the dissertation process.

Module 1: Psychology, the Legal System and Criminology

- Unit 1: Psychology and the legal process
- Unit 2: Introduction to criminology
- Unit 3: What is crime and how much of it is there?
- Unit 4: Who commits crime?
- Unit 5: Victims of Crime
- Unit 6: Explaining Crime
- Unit 7: Punishment

Module 2: Psychology of Criminal Behaviour

- Unit 1: Criminal behaviour and learning theory
- Unit 2: Cognition and crime
- Unit 3: Social factors
- Unit 4: Personality and crime
- Unit 5: Morality and offending
- Unit 6: Brain damage or injury and offending
- Unit 7: Psychodynamic models
- Unit 8: Violent offending
- Unit 9: Terrorism and terrorists

Module 3: Psychology and Investigation

- Unit 1: Offender profiling and crime scene analysis
- Unit 2: Memory and interviewing
- Unit 3: Evaluating evidence
- Unit 4: The psychology of false confessions
- Unit 5: State of mind – background issues
- Unit 6: Assessment of mental state
- Unit 7: The police

Module 4: The Psychology of the Courtroom

- Unit 1: Reasoning and decision making
- Unit 2: Eyewitness memory
- Unit 3: The child witness in court
- Unit 4: Jury behaviour
- Unit 5: Expert psychological testimony
- Unit 6: Making legal decisions about children

Module 5: Management and Treatment of Offenders

- Unit 1: The treatment of young offenders
- Unit 2: Mentally disordered offenders
- Unit 3: Violent offenders
- Unit 4: Sexual offending

<i>Module 6:</i>	<i>Research Methods in Forensic Psychology</i>
Unit 1:	Research – the art of answering questions
Unit 2:	Applied issues in forensic research
Unit 3:	Evaluating treatments
Unit 4:	Survey methods
Unit 5:	The literature review
Unit 6:	The experimental method
Unit 7:	Statistics
Unit 8:	Qualitative research methods in psychology

Empirical Dissertation

Students must submit a satisfactory empirical dissertation of not more than 15,000 words on an approved topic. Research proposals are scrutinised by an Ethics Committee and must be approved before a student can commence their study. The study is completed under the guidance of a dissertation supervisor from the academic staff. The measures and consent form a student plans to use must be submitted and approved by their supervisor along with a draft method prior to data collection.

Subject and Professional Skills

Intended Outcomes	Teaching Methods	How Demonstrated
Knowledge and Concepts Advanced knowledge of psychological theories/research and how they can contribute to our understanding of crime and criminals. How these concepts can be applied in a practical sense in a forensic setting.	Independent research, course modules, attached and supplementary readings, text books.	Formal written assessments and empirical dissertation
Techniques Understanding of all and practical experience of some of the following: researching, data analysis by quantitative or qualitative methods, research ethics and familiarity with IT systems.	Independent research, course modules, attached and supplementary readings, text books.	Formal written assessments and empirical dissertation
Critical Analysis Ability to independently evaluate concepts and techniques, to critique material read and hence construct an informed opinion.	Independent research, course modules, attached and supplementary readings, text books.	Formal written assessments and empirical dissertation
Presentation Ability to organise research findings to construct an argument, to write assignments to a high standard, to write empirical reports in the format expected of publishers and to a high standard, to present statistical findings in the correct manner.	Independent research, course modules, attached and supplementary readings, text books.	Formal written assessments and empirical dissertation

Transferable Skills

Intended Outcomes	Teaching Methods	How Demonstrated
Managing Learning Ability to self-motivate and self-direct learning demonstrated through the production of quality work to meet deadlines.	A variety of teaching and support is provided through contact (email/telephone) with staff and teaching materials. These materials include a Study Support Guide and specific texts on dissertation study skills as well as residential workshops.	Formal written assessments and empirical dissertation (in particular)
Research Skills Ability to conduct literature review, to identify from this relevant material for inclusion, ability to write a research proposal considering ethics and other methodological issues, ability to devise research tools or to use correctly those already designed	Independent research, course modules, in particular, module 6, attached and supplementary readings, specific text books.	Formal written assessments (in particular module 6) and empirical dissertation
Working Relationships Drawing on the expertise and guidance from academic or support staff, informal interaction with fellow students at conference or via email/list server, formal contact and negotiation with dissertation supervisor.	Email/list server interactions with students, formal interactions with staff and in particular dissertation supervisor, informal interactions with staff and students at conference	Some group work in the form of seminars at conferences although not formally assessed.
Data Presentation Ability to present statistical findings correctly and to present other research findings clearly with the correct interpretation.	Independent research, course modules, in particular, module 6, attached and supplementary readings, text books.	Formal written assessments and empirical dissertation
Communication Skills Good written communication skills developed in the context of formal written assignments.	Independent research and written course modules, attached and supplementary readings, text books, listserver interactions.	Formal written assessments and empirical dissertation

Special Features

Emphasis on self-directed independent learning and the design and implementation of an empirical project. Use of a student progression sheet that is provided to students half way through the course. This feedback on their written assignments submitted so far enables the student to reflect on the progress they are making and in this way identify areas of writing style on which they can focus to achieve further improvement.

Module Specification

Module 1: Psychology, the Legal System and Criminology

Credits 20

Contact: Tim Grant

Assessment Arrangements: 1 assignment (3000-4000 words)

Lectures 0

Private Study 14 hours per week

Total Hours 14 hours per week

Subject Knowledge

Aims: This module aims to demonstrate to the student how psychology and the law and legal processes can interact. It introduces the student to criminology to give them a more complete picture of where psychology fits into the understanding of crime and criminals. It outlines to students how crime can be measured and the limitations of these methods. Victims of crime are discussed and the different types of victimization that can occur during the legal process. Theories of punishment are discussed and the rehabilitation debate considered.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Explain the differences between the disciplines of law and psychology
2. Use criminological theory to arrive at explanations for the occurrence of crime.
3. Comment on our understanding of the extent and nature of victimization in light of criminological theory.
4. Identify the flaws associated with each of the different methods of measuring crime.

Skills

Aims: This module aims to develop the following; research skills, data presentation, communications skills, problem solving, and managing and reflecting on one's learning.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate and use secondary data and research findings to construct an answer relevant to the essay question being asked.
2. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline.
3. Present the essay answer in an appropriate format following guidelines given.
4. Communicate ideas through written word effectively.

Methods

Private study, and tutorial support directly or via list server.

Additional Resources

Library facilities, DLU.

Module Specification

Module 2: Psychology of Criminal Behaviour

Credits 20

Contact: Tim Grant

Assessment Arrangements: 1 assignment (3000-4000 words)

Lectures 0

Private Study 14 hours per week

Total Hours 14 hours per week

Subject Knowledge

Aims: This module is designed to offer an account of psychological factors that are related to or help to explain crime such as personality or brain damage. It in particular considers the problems of separating the effect of one factor from another and the issue of establishing cause and effect relationships. It highlights in particular that no one theory can adequately account for all crime. As an example Unit 8, Violent Offending, demonstrates how each of the psychological theories outlined would account for this type of offending.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the different psychological theoretical perspectives and models of crime.
2. Show an appreciation that no one theory will sufficiently account for all crime and in fact that a combination approach may be better.
3. Recognise the flaws associated with some of the research conducted particularly with regard to establishing a cause and effect relationship.

Skills

Aims: This module aims to develop the following; research skills, data presentation, communications skills, problem solving, and managing and reflecting on one's learning.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Apply the knowledge of the various psychological theories of crime to explain the offending behaviour of an individual as outlined in a mock case history.
2. Support reasoning with reference to research and theory that has been critically evaluated.
3. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline.
4. Present the essay answer in an appropriate format following guidelines given.
5. Communicate ideas through written word effectively.

Methods

Private study, and tutorial support directly or via list server.

Additional Resources

Library facilities, DLU.

Module Specification

Module 3: Psychology and Investigation

Credits 20

Contact: Tim Grant

Assessment Arrangements: 1 assignment (3000-4000 words)

Lectures 0

Private Study 14 hours per week

Total Hours 14 hours per week

Subject Knowledge

Aims: This module aims to illustrate to the student the variety of different ways in which psychology can contribute to the investigative stages of the criminal justice process. In particular it aims to assess the effectiveness of some of these approaches and their “real” use to investigators whilst recognising that some approaches are still in their relative infancy. It aims to dispel some popular misconceptions about the psychologist’s contribution to this stage of the criminal justice process.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the different ways in which psychologists can contribute to the investigative process e.g. assessment, evaluation of testimony, training the police.
2. Show an appreciation of the importance of demonstrating the effectiveness of these approaches and the obstacles for such types of assessment.
3. Critically consider the evidence for the effectiveness of these approaches.

Skills

Aims: This module aims to develop the following; research skills, data presentation, communications skills, problem solving, and managing and reflecting on one's learning.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate and use secondary data and research findings to construct an answer relevant to the essay question being asked.
2. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline.
3. Present the essay answer in an appropriate format following guidelines given.
4. Communicate ideas through written word effectively.

Methods

Private study, and tutorial support directly or via list server.

Additional Resources

Library facilities, DLU.

Module Specification

Module 4: *The Psychology of the Courtroom*

Credits	20
Contact:	Tim Grant
Assessment Arrangements:	1 assignment (3000-4000 words)
Lectures	0
Private Study	14 hours per week
Total Hours	14 hours per week

Subject Knowledge

Aims: This module aims to increase student knowledge of how psychology has and can contribute to the understanding of the processes that occur in the Courtroom such as the different participants' decision-making processes. It also aims to give students the knowledge required to critically evaluate the accuracy of eyewitness testimony and highlight why some participants in the Court process may require special provisions e.g. children.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Understand the different ways in which psychologists can contribute to the court processes and what psychology has to say with regards to issues such as eyewitness testimony and biases in decision-making.
2. Critically consider the manner in which some studies, e.g. eyewitness testimony, have been conducted and the inherent problems of generalising from laboratory to real life.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the admissibility of psychological evidence in Court proceedings and its limitations.

Skills

Aims: This module aims to develop the following; research skills, data presentation, communications skills, problem solving, and managing and reflecting on one's learning.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Apply the knowledge of the contribution of psychology to the assessment of defendants through the writing of a mock expert witness report, which includes recommendations based on the case history of a mock defendant.
2. Apply knowledge of eyewitness memory research by commenting on the validity of a mock witness' evidence in the mock expert witness report.
3. Formulate opinions and argument based on the critical evaluation of secondary data and research findings.
4. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline.
5. Present the answer in an appropriate format following guidelines given.
6. Communicate ideas through written word effectively.
7. The generic skills are all expected to have improved as a result of the individual essay feedback received in the first year of the course and the student progression form.

Methods

Private study, and tutorial support directly or via list server.

Additional Resources

Library facilities, DLU.

Module Specification

Module 5: Management and Treatment of Offenders

Credits 20

Contact:	Tim Grant
Assessment Arrangements:	1 assignment (3000-4000 words)
Lectures	0
Private Study	14 hours per week
Total Hours	14 hours per week

Subject Knowledge

Aims: This module aims to provide students with a description and evaluation of psychological approaches to treating or managing offending. In particular it focuses on young offenders, offenders with mental disorders, violent offenders and those who offend sexually. It also aims to furnish students with a background to the treatment versus punishment debate and the stance of the prison service and those who work within custodial institutions.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a good understanding of the various theoretical perspectives underpinning the treatment approaches.
2. Show a sound knowledge of how treatment programmes are applied in practice.
3. Understand how treatments are assessed for efficacy and appreciate the problems associated with some of the measures of success that are used.

Skills

Aims: This module aims to develop the following; research skills, data presentation, communications skills, problem solving, and managing and reflecting on one's learning.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate and use secondary data and research findings to construct an answer relevant to the essay question being asked.
2. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline.
3. Present the essay answer in an appropriate format following guidelines given.
4. Communicate ideas through written word effectively.
5. The generic skills are all expected to have improved as a result of the individual essay feedback received in the first year of the course and the student progression form.

Methods

Private study, and tutorial support directly or via list server.

Additional Resources

Library facilities, DLU.

Module Specification

Research Methods in Forensic Psychology Module

Credits 20

Contact: Tim Grant

Assessment Arrangements: 1 assignment (subdivided into numerous assessments)

Lectures 0

Private Study 7 hours per week (over 2 years)

Total Hours 7 hours per week (over 2 years)

Subject Knowledge

Aims: This module aims to introduce students to a variety of research methods, techniques and statistics that can be used when conducting psychological research and to their underlying principles. It aims to draw to their attention issues such as validity and reliability, how these issues can be assessed and the inherent trade-offs between some types of validity. It aims to introduce students to ethics in forensic research and the special populations they may encounter.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of research techniques.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the assumptions and principles that underlie certain techniques/methods.
3. Develop a good understanding of research ethics and special considerations for vulnerable forensic populations.
4. Develop familiarity with common statistical packages and the output they produce.

Skills

Aims: This module aims to develop the following; research skills, data analysis and presentation, communications skills, problem solving, critical evaluation, and managing and reflecting on one's learning.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Conduct a literature review using on-line resources
2. Critique a research study on the grounds of research methodology
3. Construct a hypothetical research proposal
4. Demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions about what techniques are appropriate in what situations.
5. Conduct a qualitative analysis of specified data.
6. Interpret statistical output generated by common statistical package.

Methods

Private study, and tutorial support directly or via list server, potential consultation with DLU.

Additional Resources

Library facilities, DLU.

Quality Indicators

There are a number of quality indicators for the MSc in Applied Forensic Psychology:

- External accreditation – the courses underwent an accreditation by the British Psychological Society in 2001 which scrutinised the teaching material, methods and assessment for the course. Comments provided by the BPS were positive and all recommendations have been met.
- University of Leicester Academic Review – the School of Psychology recently underwent an academic review. The Forensic Section provided their teaching materials and learning outcomes for scrutiny in January 2004. The formal response of the Academic Review Committee has yet to be received.
- University Learning and Teaching Strategy – this has been consulted in developing the Form C's and Programme Specification as described above.
- External Examiners' Reports – External Examiners provide annual reports. Their feedback is considered by the Course Team and at the Taught Postgraduate Board of Studies. All recent reports have been extremely positive and minor issues raised have been dealt with.