

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

MA Criminology

Programme Specification

Faculty of Education, Law and Social Sciences
March 2011

Programme Specification: MA Criminology

NOTE: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detail on the specific learning outcomes, indicative content and the teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found (1) at <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/elss>, (2) in the Module Specifications and (3) in the Student Handbook.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked within independent review processes undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency.

Awarding Institution / Body:	Birmingham City University
Teaching Institution:	Birmingham City University
Interim Awards and Final Award:	Postgraduate Certificate in Criminology Postgraduate Diploma in Criminology MA in Criminology
Programme Title:	Criminology
Main fields of Study:	Criminology, Criminal Justice, Research Methods, Penology, and Psychology
Modes of Study:	Full time and part time
Language of Study:	English
UCAS Code:	N/a
JACS Code:	

Relevant subject benchmark statements and other external reference points used to inform programme outcomes:

The QAA subject benchmark statement for Criminology 2007 relates specifically to levels four to six and the bachelor's degree with honours. Nevertheless, this benchmark has been borne in mind in the design of this Master's programme.

The QAA Criminology benchmark recognises that criminology is a constantly developing academic discipline. This degree programme, therefore, reflects the QAA's recognition of Criminology's broad base by introducing students to a range of perspectives and the debates to which they give rise. It also provides students with an appreciation of the ways in which different theoretical perspectives within criminology have interacted with criminal justice practice. On completion of the programme learners will not only be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of key concepts and debates in the areas of criminology and the official and unofficial responses to these issues, but they will also be able to evaluate this knowledge and apply it in a variety of settings often including their

own practice based experience.

Importantly, the most recent reviews of this programme have also sought to reflect the QAA framework* indicating the characteristics of Master's degree programmes and, in particular, the description of a specialised/advanced study Master's in Appendix 1 of the framework and the descriptor at Appendix 2a of the same publication. As such, this Master's programme aims to provide the student with an in-depth knowledge of the subject area of criminology, a strong conceptual capacity and an ability to critically appreciate the methods of research used by others while also being able to thoughtfully and effectively utilise these methods themselves. Similarly, the programme seeks to enhance a range of more general attributes in its graduates including: imaginative problem solving abilities, the capacity to take initiative and responsibility in a self-motivated and self-directed manner, an ability to communicate effectively to many audiences and, an evident capacity to continue learning and developing professionally in the future. The programme aims and learning outcomes, in the next section, reflect these level 7 attributes of Master's education.

* QAA (2010) Master's Degrees Characteristics, March 2010

Programme philosophy and aims

The MA in Criminology provides an opportunity for the advanced study of criminology and the criminal justice system. While covering the main aspects of criminology and the criminal justice system through structured taught sessions, it seeks to retain considerable flexibility and choice both in terms of the delivery used and subject matter studied. In terms of delivery, it seeks to accommodate the needs of both full-time students and, part-time and professionally employed students. In terms of the subjects coverage, it aims to embrace both the interests of students who have strong theoretical interests and those who have more practice and workplace based concerns.

The programme aims are:

- To provide you with an opportunity to study both theoretical and applied criminology at an advanced level and to use the knowledge, skills and understanding gained to engage critically, innovatively and independently with contemporary issues surrounding criminal justice.
- To equip you with advanced skills of written and oral communications, research techniques, independent learning and personal development, thereby facilitating both enhanced employability and potential further academic advancement.

Intended learning outcomes and the means by which they are achieved and demonstrated:

Learning Outcomes

By the time you finish the Course we will expect you to be able to:

- Demonstrate a mastery of an advanced and systematic body of knowledge in criminology, showing an awareness of current issues in this area.
- Critically evaluate underpinning research, scholarship, theory and practice in contemporary criminology.
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of advanced techniques of obtaining and analysing information.
- Make well-founded judgements in situations of complexity and uncertainty, while being able to defend your decisions.
- Assess and confront complex ethical issues.
- Communicate complex and abstract ideas in a coherent structured fashion in writing and in speech.
- Evidence the skills of initiative, self-direction, personal development and originality to a high level, especially through the production of a sustained scholarly output which may be based primarily upon academic enquiry or reflective practice.

Learning teaching, and assessment methods used

Birmingham City University (BCU) is committed to the provision of an: ‘...educational experience of the highest quality with a strong commitment to employability and to flexible and practice-based learning’. To this end the University has mechanisms in place, which encourage student and staff development. The University Learning and Teaching Strategy embodies the following key goals:

1. To facilitate a smooth transition to and through BCU for all students.
2. To gain a high level of student engagement with the learning process.
3. To offer flexible approaches to learning.
4. To meet the needs of a diverse student group.
5. To develop highly employable students who are aware of their responsibilities to their profession and to society.
6. To develop and support staff to achieve high academic and professional standards in learning and teaching and recognise excellence.
7. To provide the most appropriate and effective learning environment.

The University ensures that all new staff, who do not have a qualification in teaching, enrol on the Postgraduate Certificate (Education): Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Staff are actively encouraged to enhance their subject knowledge and obtain qualifications up to PhD level; to share good practice in teaching through peer observation; to apply for University and National Teaching Fellowships.

The Faculty responds to the University strategy by formulating a strategic plan of how it will

achieve the above goals at a local level, ensuring that this strategy involves a dynamic process that enhances the student experience. At the programme level we are focused on ensuring that we meet these broad goals in a number of ways and the following illustrates how the programme team engages with the University Learning and Teaching Strategy:

- The implementation of a sustained period of induction, that develops both a sound understanding and appropriate expectations of learning at university level and eases the individual's transition to this level of study, is seen as a key objective of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. On the MA Criminology, apart from the initial induction session which will provide a general orientation to the programme, modules in the first term will aim to ensure that all students have the communication and information acquisition skills required for successful postgraduate study. However, the programme team is conscious of the wide range of backgrounds from which students are drawn, for example there are: home students; international students; full time students; and part time students in employment and who, perhaps, have not had recent experience of education. Given this diversity within the student cohort, individuals with specific needs or shortcomings will be dealt with on a singular or small group basis and will be referred to the learning support and student support services of the University as necessary (Goals 1, 2 and 4).
- In order to provide an engaging and flexible educational experience to diverse range of students, the course utilises a wide range of learning and teaching methods and technologies. Given the small size of each group of students recruited, the postgraduate status of the programme and the experience which many of its recruits have had of the criminal justice system, the course is highly participative and while sessions will provide periods of structured teaching they will also provide a forum within which students will take responsibility for their own learning and share their knowledge and views with other students and the staff. The precise nature of sessions and delivery will vary with the year, the cohort of students and the general and specific experience possessed by individual students. The program team also makes increasing use of the University's Virtual Learning Environments, Moodle and the Mahara e-portfolio system. The teaching staff provide a range of material on Moodle, from lecture notes, web links, video programmes and extracts from academic sources. Moodle is also used for general announcements and communication with a group of students, many of whom are unlikely to be on campus every day. Mahara, in particular will be used to for recording and reflecting upon work experience and the construction of a portfolio of evidence, for the Reflective Practice module. Obviously, email and telephone are also used as means of contact with individual students (Goals 2, 3, 4 and 7).
- Therefore, through both the timing and organisation of our conventional delivery and our use of electronic means of communication, we offer a flexible approach to learning that makes our provision available to full time and part time students from diverse backgrounds. For example, apart from the use of VLE systems, modules taken by part timers in their second year will be delivered in the early evening (Goals 3, 4 and 7).
- The development of the employability and the professional responsibility of the students on the programme are achieved in a number of ways. Throughout the delivery of much of the programme, the goal is to attach theory to contemporary practice and experience particularly within the criminal justice system of England and Wales. Ethics is considered primarily as an issue of research practice but it is also addressed as an issue within professional practice. The programme also utilises a number of guest speakers, from the criminal justice

system and media, to deliver the current knowledge and perspectives of immediate practitioners. The presence of existing practitioners on the programme also provides opportunities for students to develop contacts and networks. Students will be given the opportunity to develop work-related skills. For example, for the assessment of the Criminological Thought and Criminological Issues modules, students will be required to develop and evidence their spoken communications and presentational skills through oral presentations. Significantly, students will be strongly encouraged to gain and reflect upon work experience through volunteering or employment through the Reflective Practice module. Likewise, students have considerable freedom over what sort of subject and research they choose for their proposal and Extended Project research and they are encouraged where possible to do work relating to their current or future vocation and for current professionals to study an issue or concern also of interest and of value to their current employer (Goal 5).

- In addition to the support the programme team provide, the University provides student support via the Academic Skills Centre and Student Services including a dedicated member of staff supporting personal development planning (PDP). The University Central Moodle has modules providing additional materials and resources to support PDF (Goals 2, 4 and 5).

Similarly, the assessment strategy is designed to ensure that the teaching team offers students stimulating and challenging experiences. The programme team are keen to continue to provide a varied diet of assessment to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and the achievement of intellectual, practical and transferable skills, whilst also being mindful of the need to minimise opportunities for plagiarism.

The assessment strategy we employ is also intended to address the broad goals within the University Learning and Teaching Strategy outlined above.

Listed below are examples of the type of assessment methods utilised in the programme:

- Extended Essays.
- Closed-book, seen examination.
- Patchwork Texts.
- Exercises in quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- Computer based work using specialist statistical programs.
- Computer based work using forums within a VLE.
- An e-portfolio recording and reflecting upon work-based experience.
- Presentations with the use of presentational software.
- A research proposal.
- A report based on problem based learning/problem solving.
- Extended project work (which may use a range of primary and secondary source materials and related methods and which may draw upon professional experience).

By providing a variety of assessment tools we are able to give students an experience of a range of assessment strategies that engage learners, as well as challenge them to excel in the areas where they can develop and improve. Such assessment strategies meet the needs of diverse students and assess a range of learning outcomes. Where possible, we

follow anonymous marking procedures to ensure that we are treating everyone fairly when it comes to assessing work.

A number of the assessments aim to have students apply theory to practice and, if possible, their own current or future practice. Similarly students are encouraged to reflect upon their own practice and personal development as professionals. As such, PDP themes such as, reflection, self-awareness and action planning are addressed through the delivery and assessment of the programme.

Programme structure and requirements, levels, modules, credits and awards

The MA Criminology will normally be studied on a one-year full-time basis and a two-year part-time basis with the taught elements of the programme being delivered over a teaching period of approximately 30 weeks from September to May/June. The programme is divided into study units called modules, each of 15 credits (excluding the Extended Project which amounts to 60 credits). Each 15 credit module represents 150 hours of student learning and assessment. All modules on the programme are core with exception of the Reflective Practice and Criminological Issues modules, which are alternatives.

Students complete 120 credits at the Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma Stage of the programme and 60 credits at the Master's stage. While it is expected that most applicants will wish to obtain a masters degree, potential students may choose to apply for, or exit with, any of the following awards:

- Postgraduate Certificate in Criminology.
- Postgraduate Diploma in Criminology.
- Masters in Criminology.

The nature of these qualifications and stages of study is described immediately below.

The Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma

The Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma together comprise the taught stage of the programme which is principally classroom based. Full-time students will complete this part of the programme in one year between September and May/June while part-time students will take two modules from this stage in the second year of study.

The Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma stage is made up of the following modules:

- Penal Theory and Practice.
- Criminological Thought.
- Crime Prevention.
- Restorative Justice.
- Criminal Psychology.
- Advanced Research Methods.
- Research Proposal.
- Reflective Practice or Criminological Issues.

To qualify for a Postgraduate Diploma in Criminology, a student must successfully complete all required assessments and obtain 120 credits. The pass-mark in all modules is 50%.

The award of Postgraduate Diploma with Commendation is made to students who achieve an average mark of 60 to 69% across the 120 credits of which the diploma comprises. The award of Postgraduate Diploma with Distinction is similarly made to students who achieve an average mark of 70% or above.

A student who successfully completes 60 credits of study drawn from any of the modules listed above, and does not complete the Postgraduate Diploma, will be awarded a

Postgraduate Certificate in Criminology. The award of Postgraduate Certificate is on a pass/fail basis and, therefore, there is no gradation of pass.

A Postgraduate Certificate in Criminology will only be awarded to students whose studies are terminated after the successful completion of between 60 credits and the 120 credits of study required for a Postgraduate Diploma.

The Master's

The Master's stage comprises the Extended Project which will be a prolonged piece of writing which may variously be; based solely upon secondary; desk based research or; may involve primary research, such as, interviewing or; finally, may draw upon professional experience. The researching and writing of the project will either occur in the same year as the certificate and diploma modules or in the succeeding year after the completion of most of the taught modules, depending upon the chosen mode of study. Whichever mode the student is upon, submission of the project occurs at the very end of the academic year, in the early autumn.

To qualify for a Master's Degree a student must successfully complete all required summative assignments and obtain 180 credits. The pass mark in all modules is 50%. The award of Master's Degree with Commendation is made to students who achieve an average mark of 60 to 69 per cent across the 180 credits of which the complete Master's comprises. The award of Master's Degree with Distinction is made to students who achieve an average mark of 70% or above.

Programme Structure and Delivery

Full-time students will complete their studies as follows:

All time students will complete their studies as follows:		
Term 1	Term 2	Summer
Advanced Research Methods	Criminal Psychology	
Penal Theory & Practice	Crime Prevention	
Criminological Thought	Restorative Justice	
Research Proposal	Extended Project	
Reflective Practice / Criminological Issues		

Part-time students will complete their studies in a second year, as follows:

All time students will complete their studies in a second year, as follows:		
Year 1		
Term 1	Term 2	Summer
Advanced Research Methods	Criminal Psychology	
Penal Theory & Practice	Crime Prevention	
Criminological Thought	Restorative Justice	
Year 2		
Research Proposal	Extended Project	

Reflective Practice or Criminological Issues	
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(The termly timing of modules may vary from year to year.)

Support for Learning including Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Students are encouraged to identify and, with guidance, to reflect on their own learning needs and are offered the following support as appropriate to meet those needs:

- An induction session at commencement of delivery of the programme, dealing with programme orientation and the dissemination of essential information.
- A prolonged programme of briefing and interactive training as part of an extended induction to postgraduate study delivered primarily in the modules in term 1.
- A short induction session at the beginning of term 2.
- A personal tutor system.
- The student handbook containing information relating to the University, the Faculty, the Department of Social Sciences, the programme and modules, assessments and regulations.
- Access to administrative staff and to academic staff, at clearly notified times.
- Access to central University resources, including a range of IT equipment.
- Access to the services of the University librarians and tutor-librarians.
- Assistance and support for learning skills from Library's dedicated Academic Support Centre and its Support Tutors.
- Access to the University's Student Services, including careers advice, financial advice, medical centre, disability service, crèche, counselling service and chaplaincy.

Criteria for admission

Candidates must satisfy the general admission requirements of the programme.

The current admission requirements can be found under the 'Entry Requirements' tab of the web page for this course.

Methods for evaluation and enhancement of quality and standards including listening and responding to views of students

Committees:

- Board of Studies.
- Examination Board.
- Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.
- Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee.
- Faculty Student Experience Committee.
- Faculty Board
- Senate.

Mechanisms for review and evaluation:

- Individual module evaluation by students, staff and, where appropriate, stakeholders.
- Annual review of modules by module leaders.
- Annual course evaluation reports and action plans.
- Annual monitoring process.
- Observation of teaching.
- Individual performance reviews.
- External examiners' comments and formal reports.
- Student representatives' feedback to Boards of Studies.
- Consideration of the action plans of Boards of Studies by Faculty Student Experience Committee.
- Approval and review and re-approval events.
- Postgraduate National Student Survey.
- Course Development Day.