

# **MSc Forensic Psychology**

## **Programme Specification**

**Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences  
May 2015**

# Programme Specification

## MSc Forensic Psychology

**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 are provided in the individual Module Specifications and in the Course Handbook. Individual Module Specifications are made available when the teaching for each module commences while the Course Handbook is accessible at the beginning of each academic year.

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

<b>Awarding Institution / Body:</b>	<b>Birmingham City University</b>
<b>Teaching Institution:</b>	<b>Birmingham City University</b>
<b>Interim Awards and Final Award:</b>	<b>Postgraduate Certificate/Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Forensic Psychology</b>
<b>Programme Title:</b>	<b>MSc Forensic Psychology</b>
<b>Main fields of Study:</b>	<b>Forensic Psychology</b>
<b>Modes of Study:</b>	<b>Full and part time</b>
<b>Language of Study:</b>	<b>English</b>
<b>UCAS Code:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>JACS Code:</b>	<b>C810</b>

### Professional Status of the programme:

This programme is accredited by the British Psychological Society. BPS accredited Masters level courses in Forensic Psychology are a Stage One Qualification and enables access to the BPS Stage Two Qualification in Forensic Psychology. This can then lead to membership of the BPS as a Chartered Psychologist, Full Membership of the BPS Division of Forensic Psychology and registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as a Forensic Psychologist.

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

The QAA's award descriptors for Postgraduate level qualifications

The University's award descriptors for Postgraduate level qualifications

The British Psychological Society's Standards for Masters in Forensic Psychology

**Programme philosophy and aims**

The core aim of the course is to prepare students to work with clients and professionals in a range of forensic and forensic-related settings. Equipped with a sound knowledge of key theoretical and applied issues in forensic psychology, students will gain not only a critical appreciation of theoretical and factual concepts, but an awareness of the strengths and limitations of research evidence. The course integrates psychological theory with the development of practical skills and an understanding of professional practice.

**The aims of the programme are to:**

- Equip students with a detailed critical understanding of the key theoretical and applied issues in forensic psychology, including the development of offending behaviour, re-offending, the effects of offending on victims, and the assessment and treatment of offenders;
- Provide training in forensic methods primarily from a psychological standpoint, but also to familiarise students with the perspectives of a range of professions involved in the assessment and treatment of offenders;
- Enable students to acquire an advanced ability to design research, conduct statistical analysis, evaluate and scientifically report research in forensic psychology;
- Enhance students' skills in communication, group work, professionalism and ICT so that they can perform at a high level of competence in these respects;
- Satisfy the academic requirements for Masters level knowledge set out by the Division for Forensic Psychology, British Psychological Society.

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

**Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the MSc Forensic Psychology, students will have:

- Demonstrated an advanced knowledge and critical understanding of key theoretical and applied issues in forensic psychology.
- Displayed knowledge and insight of the application of forensic skills in the assessment, management, and treatment of offenders and victims of crime.
- Designed, analysed and scientifically reported research in forensic psychology, demonstrating a critical awareness of existing research literature and a solid practical appreciation of ethical research principles.
- Applied a range of academic, intellectual and professional skills relevant to postgraduate study in forensic psychology, including critical awareness, effective communication skills, critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis.

**Learning teaching, and assessment methods used**

**Learning and teaching**

The range and depth of skills required from successful postgraduates in forensic psychology requires that a range of learning, teaching, and assessment strategies are employed on this programme. Learning takes place in the University, through the University's virtual learning environment, and in criminal justice settings. Graduates of this course are expected to have developed strong academic, intellectual and professional skills, with the ability to work autonomously and in groups.

Learning and teaching on the course takes the varied forms of lectures; workshops; tutorials; independent study; electronic learning; reflective thinking; court visits; prison visits; case studies; discussion groups.

**Assessment**

In order to allow students to fully demonstrate the acquisition of learning and skills throughout the course, a range of assessment strategies are used, both formative and summative. These include:

Essay and report writing; data analysis reports; individual and group presentations; reflective practice reports and examinations.

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

After successful completion of this programme, students will be awarded the MSc Forensic Psychology. Normal course duration is one year full-time or two years part-time and the award is made after 180 credits have been successfully gained:

- Stage 1 of the BPS Qualification in Forensic Psychology
- MSc with *Pass* if an overall grade between 50-59% is achieved.
- MSc with *Commendation* if an overall grade between 60-69% is achieved.
- MSc with *Distinction* if an overall grade of at least 70% is achieved.

However, exit awards may also be awarded as follows: (these do not equate to Stage 1 of the BPS Qualification in Forensic Psychology)

*Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education* – awarded once 60 credits have been accrued.

*Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education* – awarded once 120 credits have been accrued.

### Core Modules

The MSc Forensic Psychology programme is based on a 15 credited modular structure. Modules on this programme are mapped against the QAA's award descriptors for Postgraduate level qualifications and the University's award descriptors for Postgraduate level qualifications. Students are required to study eight 15 credit core modules, plus the 60 credit core Dissertation Project.

### Course Structure Full Time

Term One				
The Psychology of Criminal Behaviour (15 credits)	Investigative Psychology (15 credits)	Victimology (15 credits)	Research Methods in Forensic Psychology (15 credits)	Dissertation Project Sessions
Term Two				
The Psychology of Law and Justice (15 credits)	Advanced Research Methods in Forensic Psychology (15 credits)	The Assessment and Treatment of Offenders (15 credits)	Forensic and Transferable Skills (15 credits)	
Term Three				
Dissertation Project (60 credits)				

## Course Structure Part Time

Part-time students will have a different structure. The part-time course will take at least two years to complete. Part-time students on this programme are typically expected to physically attend University one day per week. During the first year of study there are taught modules, while in the second year there are taught modules and the requirement to complete a Dissertation Project.

Year 1 Term One	
The Psychology of Criminal Behaviour (15 credits)	Research Methods in Forensic Psychology (15 credits)
Year 1 Term Two	
The Psychology of Law and Justice (15 credits)	The Assessment and Treatment of Offenders (15 credits)
Year 1 Term Three	
Reflection and Preparation for Year 2	

Year 2 Term One		
Investigative Psychology (15 credits)	Victimology (15 credits)	Dissertation Project Sessions
Year 2 Term Two		
Forensic and Transferable Skills (15 credits)	Advanced Research Methods in Forensic Psychology (15 credits)	
Year 2 Term Three		
Dissertation Project (60 credits)		

## **Terms, dates and attendance requirement**

Attendance at the University is required during the following term dates:

### Term 1

Induction Day  
Wednesday 23 September 2015

First Teaching Period  
w/c 28 September 2015 - w/c 30 November 2015

### Term 2

Second Teaching Period  
w/c 11 January 2015 - w/c 15 March 2015

### Term 3

w/c 18 April 2016 - w/c 20 June 2016

## **Criteria for admission**

Candidates must satisfy the general admissions requirements of the programme, which are as follows:

Students wishing to study this course should hold Graduate Basis for Chartership (GBC) with the British Psychological Society, have been awarded a good honours degree (typically 2:1 or above) in Psychology or a Graduate Diploma in Psychology (conversion course). Experience of working with offenders and/or victims of crime in either a paid or voluntary capacity is desirable for students applying to study the course. Part-time students will normally be expected to be working in a forensic or forensic-related setting or have experience of this.

The Course Director will consider each application and selected students will be asked to attend an interview.

Given the requirement to complete, at Masters Level, a 8,000 – 10,000 word dissertation based on an applied forensic psychology research project, during the interview demonstrable research methods experience and knowledge will be assessed.

Proficiency in the English language will need to be demonstrated where English is not the first language. Where this is the case students are expected to have an IELTS score of at least 6.0.

## Support for Learning including Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Students are encouraged, with guidance, to reflect upon their own learning needs. The following is offered to support learning and PDP:

- An induction programme at the start of the course, which continues throughout the first term, introducing students to different learning concepts and professional development.
- Access to the Course Director, Dissertation Project Supervisor, Module Coordinators, and Course Administrator.
- Access to a range of academics and practitioners as contributors to the teaching programme.
- The University's library provides books, journals, audio-visual, CD Rom and Internet access materials on a range of areas relevant to this course.
- All students are able to access Moodle, the University's e-learning system. This enables them to read and download important course documentation and module materials via the internet and to receive support online.
- Students have access to networked computer rooms, which have a range of software, Internet and email facilities. Students can also access assistance from the dedicated Psychology IT Technicians. All students receive their University email address as soon as they enrol on the course and this enables them to communicate electronically with tutors and administrative staff.
- A range of support services - including careers and study advice, counselling, health care, financial and legal advice are available to all students on the course. A child care facility in the form of a nursery is available on site, as are opportunities for consultation with a doctor.

### Equal Opportunities Policy:

The course operates within the Faculty's Equal Opportunities policy and a copy of the Equal Opportunities Statement is included in the Student Course Handbook. The admissions policy to the course is guided by SENDA legislation and candidates are encouraged to discuss any individual needs they may have. The course team, supported by appropriate university departments and other agencies, strive to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all applicants and entrants to the course.



**Methods for evaluation and enhancement of the quality and standards of the course including listening and responding to views of students.**

**Committees:**

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

**Mechanisms for review and evaluation:**

- Individual module evaluation
- Annual review of modules by module leaders
- Annual course evaluation reports and action plans
- Observation of teaching
- Individual performance reviews
- External examiners' comments and formal reports
- Representatives' feedback to Boards of Studies
- Consideration of the minutes of Boards of Studies by Student Experience Committee
- Approval and review and re-approval events
- Student Survey
- Course Development Day
- Professional accreditation events