



**UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH**
Faculty of Health

School of Psychology

Programme Specification

MSc Clinical Psychology

2025/26 Academic Year

Date of approval:	March 2023
Date of implementation:	September 2023
Year of first award:	2024

Internal Programme Code	Award Title	Site	Mode of Study
7670	MSc Clinical Psychology	Ply	Full-Time
7671	MSc Clinical Psychology	Ply	Part-Time
6483	PgDip Clinical Psychology	Ply	PT
6484	PgCert Clinical Psychology	Ply	PT

Reviewed	Amended following review (Y/N)	Sections amended
2024-25	Y for 2025-26	PSYC721 – assessment change to C1 30% P1 70% PSYC762 – Change in assessment to C1 100% PSYC765 – Change in assessment to C1 100% PSYC766 – Change in assessment to P1 100% PSYC723 – Being replaced with PSYC707
2024-25	Y for 2025-26	Removal of the DBS information

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1. Final award titles:

MSc Clinical Psychology

Level 7 Intermediate award title(s)

PgDip Clinical Psychology
PgCert Clinical Psychology

HECoS codes:

100494 Clinical Psychology
100497 Psychology

2. Awarding Institution: University of Plymouth

Teaching institution(s): University of Plymouth

3. Accrediting body(ies) NA

This course is not accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS) because it does not cover in sufficient detail all topics required for BPS accreditation, and which would be covered in an accredited undergraduate degree. Students who have undertaken a non-accredited undergraduate degree in psychology may seek BPS accreditation directly from the BPS.

4. Distinctive Features of the Programme and the Student Experience

The MSc Clinical Psychology (CP) forms part of four, interlinked programmes at level 7, which offer advanced training in the methods and application of psychological science, linked to advanced treatment of the psychological theories and methods in their chosen area of specialisation. Students on the MSc CP will gain training in foundational methods for psychological research, forming the basis for a professional career as a clinical psychologist in their role as scientist practitioner. Students will also practice core clinical skills and develop competencies that will prepare them for demanding clinical careers, and a highly competitive job market. Further distinctive features of these programmes are described below:

A thorough, experientially-based training in psychological research methods.

Through core modules in research methods students on this programme will gain a secure understanding of the theory, application and limitations of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Enhanced emphasis will be placed on fluency in data manipulation and visualisation, and in developing insight and understanding for the ways in which assumptions and theory form the basis on which statistics can be used for scientific inference. Students can tailor their needs through selection of appropriate research methods and analytic approaches in keeping with their subject speciality and research project.

Advanced, training in theoretical and empirical advances in clinical psychology.

Through the “PSYC766: Becoming a Practitioner Psychologist” module students will develop awareness and understanding of new research questions, debates and findings in their chosen field. Other clinical modules including PSYC762: Models of Intervention in Psychology and PSYC721: Core competencies for Clinical Practice in Psychology are cross-cutting in nature, designed to integrate multiple research and clinical perspectives. For example, modules such as PSYC765: Neuropsychology and Neuroscience: From Lab to community enables students to explore in detail current knowledge of specific conditions, providing a secure grounding in the neuroscience of clinical approaches to brain injury, dementia and Parkinson’s.

Deep and thorough conceptual understanding of chosen areas of study.

All aspects of these programmes aim towards deepening conceptual understanding of the theoretical, empirical, and methodological advances in their field. Students’ achievements on each module will be assessed largely through coursework, which will provide a stimulus and opportunity for them to critically evaluate the material covered, to apply it to new problems, and to develop new ideas for future research.

Professionalism and professional identity.

For all programmes, we shall organise the academic year such that students are encouraged to think of psychological research and practice as an iterative, cyclical process involving: *enquiry, design, technique, communication, practice, and reflection*. Students will be encouraged to reflect on their learning regularly throughout the year, and tutorial activities will ensure this is integrated within their own research practice. The work undertaken in all modules aims to develop students’ critical understanding of research methodology and apply it to the design of their own research projects.

We will use innovative and engaging techniques to provide practical training in key clinical skills and competencies. In addition to gaining foundational knowledge of the relevant clinical guidelines and regulations, students will learn within an environment which fosters the development of key attributes of clinicians. Students will be expected to demonstrate the principles of values-based practice and to be governed by professional and regulatory codes of conduct and ethics. Reflective practice will be fostered through opportunities to engage in personal and professional development.

Students will work in an environment alongside other clinicians and clinical trainers and be exposed to a wide range of clinical professionals, along with the DClinPsy trainees, who will

provide a model for the attributes and qualities required of learners. Through the school's position in the Faculty of Health, students on the CP awards will also be encouraged to access a wide range of events which extend their learning, including research seminars in the health professions, Schwartz rounds, and other CPD-type events as appropriate to the students' stage and interests. Through tutorials and reflective practice students will be encouraged to engage with personal and professional development so as to develop an identity as a professional clinical worker. This intensive approach to developing, reflecting on and documenting clinical competencies provides many advantages: students can engage with important clinical skills in a safe environment, with structured and intensive feedback on their performance, and without the complexities and limitations of trying to develop these clinical skills in the workplace, alongside the inevitable competing administrative and financial considerations. Our structured PT routes provide students wishing to gain clinical experience (e.g., to support a future DClinPsy application) at the same time as they study — providing flexibility and choice to students.

A considered approach to PT study.

PT study is particularly relevant for students interested in clinical careers, and our structured PT routes will enable those returning from clinical roles (e.g. Assistant Psychologist), with the aim of progressing to the DClinPsy, to maintain a balance between study and practice/clinical experience. For students on the CP awards, PT study will allow some students to combine PT research assistant or similar work with study, again enhancing their skills and experience and increasing the chance of successfully accessing PhD funding or graduate-level employment on graduation.

Applied Clinical Research Project

As appropriate to master's-level study, students on the programme will be expected to develop their own research ideas and hypotheses, based on a thorough review and understanding of the relevant literature, and to develop methods and analyses with increasing autonomy, with the support and guidance of a project supervisor. The absolute proportion of students' contributions will necessarily vary depending on the complexity and familiarity of the methods used, but this contribution should be substantially greater than for an undergraduate project. Before conducting the study, students will develop and submit a formal ethics application via the online ethics system currently in place in the School of Psychology. The application will be assessed by an expert panel of academic staff members like all other undergraduate and postgraduate ethics applications

Student Experience

A student's ability to negotiate the academic demands of a programme of study is essential to their retention and success. Our teaching and administration teams are experienced in supporting students with any issues that arise and students will have access to all the University's student support services (<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services>) and a personal tutor.

5. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Group(s)

There is currently no relevant QAA benchmark group for psychology at masters level, see <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

6. Programme Structure

The programme is available as both 1-year full time, and 2-year part time structures.

Students on these courses will not undertake placements alongside their teaching sessions. Learning is classroom-based through synchronous teaching sessions that include simulations of real-world clinical skills. This includes five modules that are clinically focused with opportunities to practice clinical skills in class. The final PSYC721 module provides a range of practical classroom triads to practice clinical skills in a safe environment.

Code	Credits	Title	Semester 1	Semester 2	MSc PT Stage 1	MSc PT Stage 2
PSYC766	20	Becoming a practitioner Psychologist	x		x	
PSYC763	20	Advanced Skills & Techniques for Psychological research Part 1	x			x
PSYC764	20	Advanced Skills & Techniques for Psychological research Part 2		x		x
PSYC765	20	Neuroscience & Neuropsychology		x	x	
PSYC762	20	Models of intervention in Psychology	x		x	
PSYC721	20	Core Competencies for Clinical Practice in Psychology		x	x	
PSYC707	60	MSc Research Project	x	x		x

7. Programme Aims

This programme is designed to meet the descriptors of the QAA's (2008) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for level 7 Master's degree. The aims specific to the programme are presented in the table below:

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1. Develop a deep understanding and knowledge of specific specialist research areas, and research-informed areas of professional practice in psychology.
 2. To equip students with the advanced intellectual, personal and technical skills necessary for their future gainful employment or advancement within their chosen research domain.
 3. To develop students' professional ethos and identity within psychology, encouraging the consistent application of evidence-based thinking to novel contexts and problems.
 4. To provide a sophisticated understanding of the cultural, social, and regulatory context in which clinical psychology is practiced.
 5. To provide students with concrete clinical competencies and experiences --- linked to those defined by relevant regulators --- that will distinguish them as they apply for clinical jobs and professional training.
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8. Programme Learning Outcomes

On successful completion, graduates of the MSc Clinical Psychology should have developed knowledge, understanding, and skills in the following areas: Knowledge and understanding; Cognitive and intellectual skills; Employment related skills; Practical skills; and Transferable skills.

PLO	
Cognitive 1	Ability to apply specialist methodological knowledge to the design of supervised research.
Cognitive 2	Capacity to process and critically evaluate a research complex literature—which may include contradictory or incomplete findings.
Cognitive 3	The ability to synthesise ideas and techniques from multiple perspectives, demonstrating insight, understanding, and creativity in their work.
Employment 1	Insight and understanding of the value of psychology in the workplace, and the range of career opportunities available to graduates, especially those outside of traditional professional psychological training
Employment 2	Reflect upon their strengths and weaknesses, and take responsibility for personal and professional development.
Employment 3	Demonstrate expertise in problem solving with technology for different purposes
Employment 4	Understanding of the roles of psychological professionals in the mental health services. Awareness (and use) of relevant guidelines and standards regarding ethics, boundaries, and interacting with other professionals in an appropriate manner.
Knowledge 1	Thorough knowledge and understanding of the core techniques for quantitative enquiry in psychology, and theoretical and practical limitations of current approaches and understanding.
Knowledge 2	Understanding and expertise in the application of qualitative and interpretative methods central to much clinical research.
Knowledge 3	Broad knowledge and understanding of psychological theories related to current clinical practice and technique.
Knowledge 4	Understanding the principles of psychological formulation including the influence of social inequalities.
Practical 1	Fluency and precision in written English.
Practical 2	Clarity and confidence in oral presentation
Practical 3	Sophistication in manipulating, visualising, analysing and communicating insights from quantitative data.
Practical 4	Professional behaviour, with evidence that the trainee conducts themselves in a manner consistent with the role of clinical psychologist, including ethical and values based reflective practice.
Transfer 1	Explain complex ideas to non-experts, in plain English.

PLO	
Transfer 2	Experience of group and team-working, and of developing and maintaining effective working relationships with supervisors and peers.
Transfer 3	Fluency and confidence in visualising and communicating insights from quantitative data.
Transfer 4	Understanding of the principles of safeguarding and risk management when working with vulnerable people.

9. Admissions Criteria, including APCL, APEL and DS arrangements

Applicants with an undergraduate honours science degree of normally a minimum of a 2.2 (or equivalent) may be accepted. International applicants need to also meet the English language requirements as outlined by the University and UKVI: The IELTS requirement is 6.5 overall, including a minimum of 5.5 in all four components (listening, reading, speaking and writing). BPS graduate membership is not required for entry.

Those with lower qualifications but relevant industrial experience will also be considered for entry, subject to interview by the programme lead. Candidates with existing achievements may be considered for exemption from specific modules under the University guidelines for accreditation of prior learning (APCL) and assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL). The Director of Postgraduate Programmes has responsibility for approving exemption under these guidelines. Their decision will be made after consulting with the Programme/Module Leaders.

Applicants with Disabilities

The University is committed to promoting and providing a positive study environment for all students and has a dedicated department to help students with disabilities, the Disability Services team <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/disability-and-dyslexia>.

Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability of an individual to carry out normal day-to-day activities and can mean different things to different people.

The University has a duty to make anticipatory 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure students with disabilities are not discriminated against. Where a person with a disability is at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a person without a disability, the University has a duty to take reasonable steps to remove that disadvantage by: changing provisions, criteria or practices, altering, removing or providing a reasonable alternative means of avoiding physical features and providing auxiliary aids.

Please contact us for further details.

International applications

Overseas students for whom English is not their first language will be expected to demonstrate proficiency in English with a IELTS requirement of 6.5 overall, including a minimum of 5.5 in all four components (listening, reading, speaking and writing).

10. Progression criteria for Final and Intermediate Awards

On the successful completion of all elements of the programme, students will graduate with the award title of MSc Clinical Psychology.

In circumstances where the student is unable to complete the programme, they will receive, in accordance with University regulations:

- PgCert Clinical Psychology – in order to exit with this award, students will need to achieve 60 credits, to include modules PSYC766: Becoming a Practitioner Psychologist (20 credits), PSYC762: Models of interventions in psychology (20 credits) and PSYC721: Core Competencies for Clinical Practice in Psychology (20 credits).
- PgDip Clinical Psychology – in order to exit with this award, students will need to achieve 120 credits, to include modules PSYC766: Becoming a Practitioner Psychologist (20 credits), PSYC762: Models of interventions in psychology (20 credits) and PSYC721: Core Competencies for Clinical Practice in Psychology (20 credits), plus 60 further credits.

For those who don't achieve all core modules required for the above exit awards, but achieve 60 or 120 credits of modules across the programme, they will receive generic unnamed awards of Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits) or Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits).

11. Non-Standard Regulations

Not applicable

12. Transitional Arrangements (At point of approval)

Transitional arrangements will be required for the small number of PT students on the MSc Clinical Psychology starting in 2022. We will recommend that these students take PSYC750 [0], 751 [10], 752 [10], 753 [20], 755 [10], 756 [10], 791 [10], 792 [10] in Stage 1 [totalling 80 credits], and then PSYC723 [60], PSYC721 [20], and PSYC765 [20] in stage 2 [totalling 100 credits].

Module arrangements for students in a repeat situation of stage 5 in 2023-24 will be considered on a case-by-case scenario.

Appendix 1: Programme Specification Mapping (PGT): MSc, PgDip, PgCert Clinical Psychology

Module	Credits	C core E elective	Award Learning Outcomes contributed to (for more information see Section 8)																				Compensation Y/N	Assessment element(s) and weightings [use KIS definition] E1 - exam E2 - clinical exam T1 - test C1 - coursework A1 - generic assessment P1 - practical
			Cognitive & intellectual skills				Employment related skills				Knowledge & understanding				Practical skills				Key & transferable skills					
			1	2	3		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4		
PSYC762	20	C		X	X					X		X	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	Yes	C1 (100%)
PSYC707	60	C	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X		No	C1 (100%)
PSYC766	20	C			X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	Yes	P1 (100%)
PSYC765	20	C		X	X		X			X			X		X	X			X	X			Yes	C1 (100%)
PSYC721	20	C					X	X	X	X			X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	Yes	C1 (30%) P1 (70%)
PSYC763	20	C	x									x			x								Yes	C1 (100%)
PSYC764	20	C	x									x			x								Yes	C1 (100%)
Learning Outcomes 180 credits			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Confirmed Award LOs			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		