



**UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH**
Faculty of Health

Faculty of Health

School of Psychology

Programme Specification

Master of Science (MSc)

in

Psychology

Updated following Minor Change for implementation 2020-21 and 8/3/21

Date of first intake: September 2019

Date of first award: November 2020



The British
Psychological Society
Accredited Conversion Award

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1. MSc Psychology

Final award title MSc Psychology

Level 7 Intermediate award title(s) Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert)

Level 7 Intermediate award title(s) Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)

UCAS code N/A

JACS code C800

2. Awarding Institution: University of Plymouth

Teaching institution(s): University of Plymouth

3. Accrediting body

This programme is accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS), which confers eligibility for the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC). Full details of the requirements for BPS accreditation are available here:

http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/PaCT/Undergraduate%20Accreditation%202016_WEB.pdf

4. Distinctive Features of the Programme and the Student Experience

The MSc Psychology is a one-year full-time conversion programme that includes taught material covering core areas of psychology as well as an independent 60-credit MSc research project (180 credits total). The MSc Psychology is the only BPS-accredited conversion programme offered by a Psychology department in the South West of England. Plymouth's location at the border of Devon and Cornwall situates it as one of the primary centres of higher education in the South West.

In drawing on Plymouth's existing BPS-accredited programmes, students enrolling on the MSc will gain access to the curriculum cited by the BPS as essential for

obtaining GBC, a critical step in the process of becoming a chartered psychologist. The programme builds upon BPS-accredited modules by including a number of opportunities for advanced scholarship. These include extended reading lists, supplemental web-based resources, small group seminars and high-level assessments. A unique feature of the MSc Psychology is its incorporation of student-directed seminar groups, which will employ various learning approaches. Seminars employing a problem-based learning approach will involve students taking part in small group discussions in which they will explore and critically analyse the literature relevant to a current issue of practical significance. Students will develop and synthesize their findings into a seminar presentation. These groups will provide an exceptional opportunity for students to take part in scholarly debate and discussion of issues raised in their readings and lectures. Other learning approaches may require students to debate current controversies in psychology or to carry out field research to explore issues introduced through lectures and readings. Such opportunities comprise an important component of the post-graduate experience. Students on the MSc will carry out a research project, under the supervision of a member of the academic staff. The MSc research project is designed to allow students to develop their own research idea, direct their own reading into the literature, and produce a significant piece of independent research of potentially publishable quality. Through the research project, students will have the opportunity to exercise the skills that they have gathered through the other components of the programme. Throughout the programme, students will have regular contact with both the Programme Leader and their Project Supervisor. Through regular interaction with members of staff and with their fellow students, as well as through their independent reading and research, MSc students will be regularly challenged to investigate classic and contemporary issues in the field of psychology at an intensive and analytic level.

Marketing Highlights

- The only BPS-accredited conversion programme offered by a Psychology department in the South West of England.

5. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Group(s)

The intended learning outcomes are consistent with the QAA (2008) Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland Level 7 descriptors.

6. Programme Structure

Full-time students enrolled in the MSc in Psychology study the core modules shown in Table 1 below. Thus, a full-time student will enrol for 2 semesters (1 calendar year).

Table 1. MSc Psychology Modules – F/T Route

Module title	Module code	Credits	Status	Semester
Research Skills in Practice 1	PSYC719	20	Core	1
Research Skills in Practice 2	PSYC720	20	Core	2
Cognitive & Biological Psychology	PSYC703	20	Core	2
Individual Differences, Social & Developmental Psychology	PSYC704	20	Core	1
Health and Wellbeing	PSYC705	20	Core	1
Current Topics in Psychology	PSYC706	20	Core	2
MSc Research Project	PSYC707	60	Core	All year

There is also the option to study on a part-time basis and the structure is shown in Table 2 below. Typically, part-time completion takes two years, with 80 taught credits in the first year and the remaining 40 taught credits plus the 60 credit MSc project in the second year. However, it should be noted that it will not be possible to restrict the scheduling of lectures and seminars – these may be scheduled at any time during the regular week (between 9am and 6pm on Mondays through Fridays).

Table 2. MSc Psychology Modules – P/T Route

Module title	Module code	Credits	Status	Year	Semester
Research Skills in Practice 1	PSYC719	20	Core	1	1
Research Skills in Practice 2	PSYC720	20	Core	1	2
Cognitive & Biological Psychology	PSYC703	20	Core	1	2
Individual Differences, Social & Developmental Psychology	PSYC704	20	Core	1	1
Health and Wellbeing	PSYC705	20	Core	2	1
Current Topics in Psychology	PSYC706	20	Core	2	2
MSc Research Project	PSYC707	60	Core	2	All year

For both full and part time study, early exit is possible after completion of 60 credits, after which a Postgraduate Certificate may be awarded.

6.1 Choice:

The MSc programme does not allow for choice among the taught modules shown in the above table as all are necessary components of a BPS-accredited degree programme. However, choice is built in to the programme in a number of ways. First, students will complete group presentations for PSYC703, for which they will be offered a selection of presentation topics. In addition, students will have a choice of advanced level study topic in PSYC706. Finally, students will, subject to availability of an appropriate supervisor, be able to choose a topic for their independent research project, with which they will prepare for and complete in PSYC707.

6.2 Routes leading to different qualifications:

For students failing to attain the 180 credits required for MSc, two alternative exit awards are available:

- **Postgraduate Certificate:** successful completion of 60 credits under university regulations
- **Postgraduate Diploma:** successful completion of 120 credits under university regulations.

Only the MSc will automatically confer Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC) with the British Psychological Society.

7. Programme Aims

The MSc Psychology is intended to:

- Meet the requirements of the British Psychological Society for Graduate Basis for Chartered membership
- To prepare students for the next stage in their careers, whether that is further academic or professional study, or entering employment

To achieve these overall aims, the MSc Psychology will:

- 1) Develop knowledge of the major theoretical approaches in the principal areas of Psychology (biological, cognitive, social, developmental, individual differences and clinical) and the ability to independently analyse, interpret, and integrate research findings reported in the literature.
- 2) Develop the ability to independently design and conduct original research in a range of quantitative and qualitative paradigms, including research methods and data analysis techniques.
- 3) Promote advanced critical thinking and reflective skills
- 4) Develop the ability to communicate professionally about psychological research, both in oral presentations and in writing to a potentially publishable standard.
- 5) Develop understanding of key issues involved in research with human participants (including research design, issues of validity and reliability, and ethical considerations), identify problems in these areas and offer solutions.

8. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

8.1. Knowledge and understanding

On successful completion graduates will be able to demonstrate:

1. a systematic and critical understanding of biological, cognitive, social, developmental, individual differences and clinical approaches in Psychology and the ability to integrate and critically evaluate these approaches.
2. a comprehensive and critical understanding of a range of quantitative and qualitative psychological research methods and data analysis techniques and the ability to apply appropriate methods in their own research.
3. understanding of ethical implications inherent in research with human participants, the ability to identify ethical challenges and conduct research in an ethically sound manner.

8.2. Cognitive and intellectual skills

On successful completion graduates should be able to:

1. Synthesise and critically evaluate information from a range of sources to draw appropriate conclusions and support advanced scholarship
2. Construct sophisticated, and explicitly reasoned and evidenced arguments applying psychological evidence to complex real-life or theoretical questions and scenarios.
3. Deal with complex issues systematically and creatively, show originality in the application of knowledge and solve problems in creative and innovative ways

8.3. Key and transferable skills

On successful completion graduates should be able to:

1. Communicate psychological concepts effectively and professionally both in writing and orally to a range of audiences, both specialist and non-specialist.
2. Interact effectively with others to set goals, integrate information, achieve sound decisions and complete a task, as a group member or leader.
3. Independently identify and use a wide range of information resources, including internet and library resources

8.4. Employment related skills

On successful completion graduates should be able to:

1. Independently reflect upon their own strengths and weaknesses and take responsibility for personal development

2. Exercise initiative and personal responsibility in managing day to day tasks and establishing effective working relationships with others
3. Demonstrate familiarity with a range of technology for different purposes.

8.5. Practical skills

On successful completion graduates should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how psychology informs practice, and knowledge of the theory which underpins that practice.
2. Develop assessment instruments or investigative studies to effectively answer a research question
3. Use statistical and other software packages.

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

The Programme Leader (who is also responsible for admissions) will use the criteria below as guides in making their admissions decisions. Wherever possible, established relationships or equivalencies to other international qualifications will be used in making decisions.

Students admitted to the MSc Psychology programme are normally expected to have an Honours degree in a numerate discipline. In order to ensure graduating students, fulfil the requirements of BPS accreditation, candidates with existing achievements may not be considered for exemption from specific modules. Thus, accreditation of prior learning (APCL) and assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL) will not be applicable. Students having completed modules covering equivalent content will be required to complete all of the modules included in this programme in order to obtain GBC.

In compliance with the University's equal opportunities policy: All appropriately qualified applicants will be given equal consideration during the selection process and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, colour, disability, religion, nationality, age, occupation, marital status, sexual orientation or any other irrelevant distinction.

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/learning-gateway/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.

Entry requirements (in summary):

1. An honours degree (second class or better) OR overseas equivalent.
2. A minimum grade C in English Language at GCSE level OR a minimum score of 6.5 in IELTS OR 575 in TOEFL written, 232 in TOEFL Computer Based or 90 in TOEFL internet based OR equivalent.

10. Progression criteria for Final and Intermediate Awards

The overall pass mark for an MSc module is 50%. Where module assessment involves a coursework and examination element, a student is also required to achieve a minimum of 40% overall in each of these elements. For a module, the coursework element comprises the aggregate of all the individual pieces of coursework and an

examination element is the aggregate of all the individual examinations. The marks for individual pieces of coursework and for examinations are aggregated together in the proportions specified in the module outline or handbook in order to arrive at a mark for each element and for the module overall. Some modules have a pass/fail requirement in addition to coursework. Where a pass/fail requirement is part of a module's assessment package, then the student needs to pass this requirement in addition to any coursework or examination components.

11. Non Standard Regulations

Not applicable.

12. Appendices

Programme Specification Mapping (UG) – core/elective modules

Programme Specification Mapping (PGT)

Operational Specification: mapping of Award Learning Outcome

Programme Specification Mapping (PGT): module contribution to the meeting of Award Learning Outcomes

Module	Credits	Core E lective	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
			Knowledge & understanding			Cognitive & intellectual skills			Key & transferable skills			Employment related skills			Practical skills				
			1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3		
PSYC719	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	Y	C1 100%
PSYC720	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	Y	C1 100%
PSYC703	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	Y	E1 70% C1 30%
PSYC704	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Y	E1 70% C1 30%
PSYC705	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Y	C1 100%
PSYC706	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				X			Y	E1 50% C1 50%
PSYC707	60	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	N	C1 100%
Learning Outcomes 180 credits																			
Confirmed Award LOs																			

Operational Specification: mapping of Award Learning Outcomes, Stages 1-4.

Module Code	Level	Credits	E - elective C - core	Award Learning Outcomes (for more information see Section 8 of the Programme Specification) Please map where a module does one or more of the following: I – ALO is introduced P – ALO is practised (e.g. formative assessment and feedback; basis of tutorial or workshop) A – ALO is assessed														
				8.1 Knowledge & understanding			8.2 Cognitive & intellectual skills			8.3 Key & transferable skills			8.4 Employment related skills			8.5 Practical skills		
				1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
PSYC719	7	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
PSYC720	7	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
PSYC703	7	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X
PSYC704	7	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X
PCYC705	7	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
PSYC706	7	20	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				X		
PSYC707	7	60	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X