



**UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH**  
Faculty of Health

School of Psychology

# **Programme Specification**

MSc Clinical Psychology  
PgDip Clinical Psychology  
PgCert Clinical Psychology

**Academic Year 2022/23**

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Date of approval:</b>       | 15 August 2018 |
| <b>Date of implementation:</b> | September 2019 |
| <b>Year of first award:</b>    | 2020           |

| Internal Programme Code | Award Title                | Site | Mode of Study |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|------|---------------|
| 6481                    | MSc Clinical Psychology    | Ply  | FT            |
| 6482                    | MSc Clinical Psychology    | Ply  | PT            |
| 6483                    | PgDip Clinical Psychology  | Ply  | PT            |
| 6484                    | PgCert Clinical Psychology | Ply  | PT            |

| Reviewed | Amended following review (Y/N) | Sections amended |
|----------|--------------------------------|------------------|
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**1. Final award titles:**

MSc Clinical Psychology  
PgDip Clinical Psychology  
PgCert Clinical Psychology

**Level 7 Intermediate award title(s)**

PgDip Clinical Psychology  
PgCert Clinical Psychology

**JACS code: C8 Psychology**

**HECoS codes:**

100494 Clinical Psychology

**2. Awarding Institution:** University of Plymouth  
Teaching institution(s): University of Plymouth

**3. Accrediting body(ies)** NA

## 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 advanced research methods students on all programmes will gain a secure understanding of the theory, application and limitations of quantitative statistical methods for experimental and observational data. 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. Specialist techniques (e.g. Bayesian inference, approaches to causal analysis in non-experimental data) will be offered as options, to ensure students can extend this conceptual understanding with practical experience applying specific techniques required in particular research domains.

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

Through the “current issues” and “foundations of clinical psychology” modules students will develop awareness and understanding of new research questions, debates and findings in their chosen field. Elective modules will enable students to extend this knowledge, tailoring their learning according to their specific interests. These modules are cross-cutting in nature, designed to integrate multiple research perspectives and prove relevant in different combinations for a variety of students. For example, modules such as *The Brain and its Disorders* enable students to explore in detail current knowledge of specific conditions, providing a secure grounding in the neuroscience of clinical approaches to schizophrenia, Parkinson’s disease and dementia.

*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 entirely 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 trainees, 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 and humans sciences, 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* We have worked with timetabling to ensure that the current MPsych and Stage 5 and MSc PRM can be delivered within a 2-day timetabling footprint, and have been mindful to ensure this is also possible with these new awards. 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.

## 5. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Group(s)

There is currently no relevant QAA benchmark group for psychology at masters level, see <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/masters-degree-subjects>

## 6. Programme Structure

All programmes are offered as 1-year, level 7 degrees. MSc and PGDip will also be available via a formal part time (2 year) routes. Students enrolled on the MSc CP have the PgCert CP and PgDip CP as named exit awards available if applicable.

Each column presents the core and elective credits required of students within each programme. A blank indicates the module is not available within the programme. The letter E indicates the module is an elective, and may be chosen to contribute the required number of elective credits (specified in the last row). A star represents a required but non-credit bearing module. The † symbol represents a module that is only taken by students completing the PT route.

| Code    | Credits | Title   | MSc | PgDip | PgCert |
|---------|---------|---|-----|-------|--------|
| PSYC750 | 0       | Personal and professional development                 | *   | *     | *      |
| PSYC794 | 0       | Professional psychological practice                   | †   | †     | †      |
| PSYC751 | 10      | Asking psychological questions                        | 10  |       |        |
| PSYC752 | 10      | Advanced research design for psychology               | 10  |       |        |
| PSYC753 | 20      | Data fluency  | 20  | 20    |        |
| PSYC754 | 20      | Advanced techniques for psychological research        | 20  |       |        |
| PSYC755 | 10      | Advanced Interpretative methods                       | 10  | 10    |        |
| PSYC756 | 10      | Communicating psychological research                  | 10  |       |        |
| PSYC757 | 10      | Success in science                                    | 10  |       |        |
| PSYC774 | 10      | Supporting behavior change                            | 10  | 10    | 10     |
| PSYC791 | 10      | Foundations of clinical psychology                    | 10  | 10    | 10     |
| PSYC792 | 10      | Understanding clinical interventions                  | 10  | 10    | 10     |
| PSYC793 | 20      | Core Competencies for Clinical Practice in Psychology | 20  | 20    | 20     |
| PSYC783 | 40      | Applied clinical research                             | 40  | 40    |        |
|         |         | <i>Elective credits to select</i>                     | 0   | 0     | 10     |

† Note that PSYC794 would only be taken by PT students.

**Table 1. Proposed programme structures**

| Module  | Semester1 | Semester2 |
|---------|-----------|-----------|
| PSYC750 | X         | X         |
| PSYC751 | X         | X         |
| PSYC752 | X         |           |
| PSYC753 | X         | X         |
| PSYC754 | X         | X         |
| PSYC755 | X         | X         |
| PSYC756 |           | X         |
| PSYC757 | X         | X         |
| PSYC774 |           | X         |
| PSYC783 | X         | X         |
| PSYC791 | X         |           |
| PSYC792 | X         | X         |
| PSYC793 | X         | X         |
| PSYC794 | X         | X         |

Typical programme schedule, by semester.

### Arrangements for part time study

Students on the current MSc PRM have an option to study part time which we propose to preserve within these new awards. In contrast with current arrangements, we would strongly suggest that students take the options specified in the table below in each year of study (although alterations could be made with the agreement of the academic lead).

| Award  | Year 1       | Year 2       |
|--------|--------------|--------------|
| MSc CP | PSYC750 (0)  | PSYC757 (10) |
|        | PSYC751 (10) | PSYC774 (10) |
|        | PSYC752 (10) | PSYC753 (20) |
|        | PSYC754 (20) | PSYC793 (20) |
|        | PSYC755 (10) | PSYC783 (40) |
|        | PSYC791 (10) | PSYC794 (0)  |
|        | PSYC792 (10) |              |
|        | PSYC756 (10) |              |
| PgDip  | PSYC750 (0)  | PSYC753 (20) |
|        | PSYC755 (10) | PSYC793 (20) |
|        | PSYC774 (10) | PSYC783 (30) |
|        | PSYC791 (10) | PSYC794 (0)  |
|        | PSYC792 (10) |              |

## 7. Programme Aims

These new programmes are 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 (related programmes are also shown for purposes of comparison):

|  | PgDip<br>CP | PgCert<br>CP |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| Develop a deep understanding and knowledge of specific specialist research areas, and research-informed areas of professional practice in psychology.  |             |              |
| To equip students with the advanced intellectual, personal and technical skills necessary for their future gainful employment or advancement within their chosen research domain.                                    | X           | X            |
| To develop students' professional ethos and identity within psychology, encouraging the consistent application of evidence-based thinking to novel contexts and problems.  | X           | X            |
| To provide a sophisticated understanding of the cultural, social, and regulatory context in which clinical psychology is practiced.  | X           |              |
| 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. | X           | X            |

## 8. Programme Learning Outcomes

On successful completion, graduates of the MSc CP 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          |  | MSc | PgDip | PgCert |
|--------------|--|-----|-------|--------|
| Cognitive 1  | Ability to apply specialist methodological knowledge to the design of supervised research.   | X   | X     |        |
| Cognitive 2  | Capacity to process and critically evaluate a research complex literature—which may include contradictory or incomplete findings.  | X   | X     | X      |
| Cognitive 3  | The ability to synthesise ideas and techniques from multiple perspectives, demonstrating insight, understanding, and creativity in their work.   | X   | X     | X      |
| 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                                   | X   | X     | X      |
| Employment 2 | Reflect upon their strengths and weaknesses, and take responsibility for personal and professional development.  | X   | X     | X      |
| Employment 3 | Demonstrate expertise in problem solving with technology for different purposes  | X   |       |        |
| 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. | X   | X     | X      |
| 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.   | X   |       |        |
| Knowledge 2  | Understanding and expertise in the application of qualitative and interpretative methods central to much clinical research.  | X   | X     |        |
| Knowledge 3  | Broad knowledge and understanding of psychological theories related to current clinical practice and technique.  | X   | X     | X      |
| Knowledge 4  | Understanding the principles of psychological formulation including the influence of social inequalities.  | X   | X     | X      |
| Practical 1  | Fluency and precision in written English.  | X   | X     | X      |
| Practical 2  | Clarity and confidence in oral presentation  | X   | X     | X      |
| Practical 3  | Sophistication in manipulating, visualising, analysing and communicating insights from quantitative data.  | X   |       |        |
| 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.  | X   | X     | X      |
| Transfer 1   | Explain complex ideas to non-experts, in plain English.  | X   | X     | X      |
| Transfer 2   | Experience of group and team-working, and of developing and maintaining effective working relationships with supervisors and peers.  | X   | X     | X      |



| PLO        |  | MSc | PgDip | PgCert |
|------------|--|-----|-------|--------|
| Transfer 3 | Fluency and confidence in visualising and communicating insights from quantitative data.                 | X   |       |        |
| Transfer 4 | Understanding of the principles of safeguarding and risk management when working with vulnerable people. | X   | X     | X      |

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

For all awards (MSc, PgDip, and PgCert CP), students should have an honours degree or equivalent in psychology, or a related field, but BPS graduate membership is not specifically required. During the admissions process it will be made clear to students that these awards do not confer BPS graduate basis for registration, and that they may need to pursue this separately if they wish to progress to related doctoral training (e.g. the DClinPsy).

Wherever possible, established relationships or equivalencies to other international qualifications will be used, with reference to current University guidance on these matters. However, the admissions policy is based upon the principle that students will be admitted if we believe that they can benefit from the experience, and this principle will be used to make decisions where equivalencies are not available.

University guidelines for accreditation of prior learning (APCL) and assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL) will be followed. The Director of Postgraduate Programmes has responsibility for approving exemption under these guidelines. Her decision will be made after consulting with the relevant Programme/Module Leaders.

Students applying for this course will also need to demonstrate that they adhere to the values and ethical conduct that is compatible with U.K regulatory bodies (e.g. Health and Care Professions Council, the NHS). Adherence to values and ethical conduct will be assessed via a structured personal statement, to be submitted alongside the usual university PG application form. Personal statements will be assessed by the programme team as part of the admissions process.

*Statement of professional values* Applicants will also need to demonstrate that they adhere to the values and ethical conduct that is compatible with U.K regulatory bodies (e.g. Health and Care Professions Council, the NHS). Adherence to values and ethical conduct will be assessed via a structured personal statement, to be evaluated by the programme team.

*Health and Enhanced Disclosures* Offers are subject to occupational health clearance and enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosure. Failure to meet DBS disclosure will result in the offer being withdrawn.

If following an unsatisfactory occupational health assessment or the student reveals a change in health circumstance through the annual declaration, the Programme Lead will need to consult with the Associate Head of School (Teaching and Learning), the student, and the Head of School in order to determine continuation of the programme.

In addition to references, occupational health screening, and DBS checks, students are required to complete a self-declaration form annually regarding any change in their circumstances, on enrolment.

If, in the process of the DBS check or students' annual declaration, there is any disclosure of a positive criminal conviction then further advice will be sought from the Head of School, Faculty Professional Issues Committee, and the Associate Head of School (Teaching and Learning).

### **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/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.

Please contact us for further details.

### **International applications**

Overseas students for whom English is not the first language will be expected to demonstrate proficiency in English with a minimum IELTS score of 6.5. Successful completion of the University's English pre-sessional Programme will be accepted as equivalent.

## **10. Progression criteria for Final and Intermediate Awards**

Students on the MSc PgDip and PgCert awards must pass 180, 120 and 60 credits respectively, in accordance with the standard university procedures for PG awards.

Awards will be classified in line with university procedures for PG awards, based on the student's aggregate percentage.

To achieve MSc awards at distinction, merit and pass students must achieve an aggregate mark of 70%, 60% and 50% respectively, and a dissertation mark equal to or greater than that percentage.

MSc CP students who fail to complete 180 credits may be awarded one of the specified intermediate awards (PgDip/PgCert Clinical Psychology), provided they meet the learning outcomes of these intermediate awards (see mapping documents attached to the operational specification).

## **11. Non-Standard Regulations**

Not applicable

## **12. Transitional Arrangements**

No transitional arrangements apply

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

| Module                               | Credits | C<br>core<br>E<br>elective | Award Learning Outcomes contributed to (for more information see Section 8) |   |   |  |                           |   |   |   |                           |   |   |   |                  |   |   |   |                           |   |   |   | Compensation<br>Y/N | Assessment<br>element(s) and<br>weightings<br>[use KIS definition]<br>E1 - exam<br>E2 - clinical exam<br>T1 - test<br>C1 - coursework<br>A1 - generic assessment<br>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 |                     |  |
| PSYC750                              | 0       | C                          |   |   |   |  | X                         | X |   |   |                           |   |   |   |                  | X |   | X |                           | X | X |   | Yes                 | C1, P1 (Pass/Fail, Pass/Fail)  |
| PSYC751                              | 10      | C                          | X   |   |   |  |                           |   |   |   | X                         |   |   |   | X                |   |   |   |                           |   | X |   | Yes                 | C1 (100%)  |
| PSYC752                              | 10      | C                          | X   |   |   |  |                           |   | X |   | X                         |   |   |   | X                |   |   |   |                           |   |   |   | Yes                 | C1 (100%)  |
| PSYC753                              | 20      | C                          |   |   | X |  |                           |   | X |   | X                         |   |   |   |                  |   | X |   |                           |   | X |   | Yes                 | C1 (100%)  |
| PSYC754                              | 20      | C                          |   |   |   |  |                           |   | X |   | X                         | X |   |   |                  |   |   |   |                           |   |   |   | Yes                 | C1 (100%)  |
| PSYC755                              | 10      | C                          | X   |   |   |  |                           |   |   |   |                           | X |   |   | X                |   |   |   |                           |   |   |   | Yes                 | C1 (100%)  |
| PSYC756                              | 10      | C                          |   |   |   |  |                           |   |   |   | X                         |   |   |   | X                | X |   |   | X                         |   | X |   | Yes                 | P1 (100%)  |
| PSYC757                              | 10      | C                          |   |   |   |  |                           |   |   |   |                           |   |   |   |                  |   |   |   | X                         | X | X |   | Yes                 | C1 (100%)  |
| PSYC774                              | 10      | C                          |   |   |   |  | X                         |   |   |   |                           |   | X | X | X                |   |   |   |                           | X | X |   | Yes                 | C1, A1 (100%, Pass/Fail)   |
| PSYC783                              | 40      | C                          | X   | X |   |  |                           |   | X |   | X                         | X |   |   | X                | X | X |   | X                         | X |   |   | No                  | C1, P1 (100%, Pass/Fail)   |
| PSYC791                              | 10      | C                          |   |   | X |  | X                         |   |   | X | X                         |   | X | X | X                |   | X | X | X                         |   | X | X | Yes                 | C1, A1 (100%, Pass/Fail)   |
| PSYC792                              | 10      | C                          |   | X | X |  |                           |   |   | X |                           |   | X | X | X                |   |   | X |                           |   | X | X | Yes                 | C1, A1 (100%, Pass/Fail)   |
| PSYC793                              | 20      | C                          |   |   |   |  | X                         | X | X | X |                           |   |   | X |                  |   |   | X | X                         | X | X | X | Yes                 | C1, P1, A1 (100%, Pass/Fail, Pass/Fail)  |
| <b>Learning Outcomes 180 credits</b> |         |                            | X   | X | X |  | X                         | X | X | X | X                         | X | X | X | X                | X | X | X | X                         | X | X | X |                     |  |
| <b>Confirmed Award LOs</b>           |         |                            | X   | X | X |  | X                         | X | X | X | X                         | X | X | X | X                | X | X | X | X                         | X | X | X |                     |  |