Faculty of Health & Human Sciences
School of Psychology

Programme Specification for Psychology Undergraduate Programmes

BSc (Hons) Psychology
BSc (Hons) Psychology major with approved minor subjects

Each award may be accompanied by the Certificate of Industrial/Professional Experience

September, 2015

[updated December 2010, November 2011 and October, 2014]
Brief Description of the Programmes

The Psychology degree programmes are designed to enable graduates to become competent and dynamic employees in a range of relevant professions. Equally important, students are encouraged to develop a critical understanding of psychology and its application to issues and problems in society. Both the single honours and the major programmes are recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS) as conferring Graduate Basis for Chartered status (GBC). The programmes provide a recognised foundation for graduates to go on to further training in the psychological professions and provide a solid basis in knowledge and skills for employment in a range of cognate professional areas.

The staff in the School of Psychology are committed to the delivery of programmes which are student centred. There are a range of learning opportunities throughout all stages of the programmes which are designed to facilitate students’ independent learning skills culminating in the final year project in which the student takes the main responsibility for designing and researching an identified problem area. Another theme which runs through the programmes is an emphasis on ethical matters in the conduct of psychological research and practice.

The programmes consist of a three year programme or a four year sandwich degree programme either as single honours psychology or as a psychology major with a minor in another subject. All these programmes are modular based with modules worth 20 credits each. Students normally have to achieve 120 credits at the end of each stage.

Distinctive features

This programme is distinctive principally in that it develops a broad and critical understanding of psychological theory, research and practice. Other distinctive features of the programmes arise from variations from the structure of the single honours programme.

A major distinctive feature arises from the opportunity to take a placement year between the second and final year of the degree programme. Students taking this route enrol on the four year sandwich degree programme. Students are required to spend between 36 and 48 weeks working in a setting relevant to professional psychology (e.g. clinical psychology department, personnel department, academic research group). The placement is supervised by a suitably qualified member of staff at the placement organisation and a member of academic staff in the School of Psychology. On successful completion of the placement, the student is awarded the Certificate of Industrial/Professional Experience in addition to their honours degree.

A second distinctive feature is the opportunity to take psychology as a major programme with one of three minor subjects. These subjects are: criminal justice studies, human biology, and sociology. Enrolling on one of these programmes requires students to take 80 credits in psychology and 40 credits in their minor subject at each stage. The 80 core credits in psychology cover the major topic areas and research methods and analysis including the final year project.
The programme provides opportunities to practice skills needed for applying psychology in the workplace throughout the programme; there is a Skills and Visits module at Stage 2 and throughout the programme there are non-assessed opportunities to work with staff on their own research programme through the Research Apprentice scheme.

Study abroad is another opportunity supported by the School. Students can apply to take the equivalent of Stage 2 of the programmes at a recognised university abroad. Most students who take this option study in the USA, Canada or Australia. After completion of their year abroad, students return to the final year of their programme.

Both the single honours and the major programmes are recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS) as conferring Graduate Basis for Chartered status (GBC). Students need the GBC in order to enrol on a recognised postgraduate course leading to a professional qualification in psychology. From September 2006, the BPS has stipulated that those enrolled on programmes recognised for GBC will have to obtain a Lower Second Class Honour Degree or above to be eligible.

Students who take these programmes are qualified for advancement in a range of careers. In addition to the recognised professional psychology route, there are a number of related professions in which the School’s graduates are well qualified to develop a career. These professions include teaching, in particular special needs teaching, social work, human factors research, personnel and human resources, market research, postgraduate research and lecturing in higher education institutions.

At stage 1 there is the opportunity to take a Plymouth Plus module. We encourage our students to take our own bespoke P+ module which focuses on communicating effectively and developing skills which will allow the student to flourish both academically and in the workplace. Otherwise, these modules are university wide modules and provide the opportunity for students to broaden their skills and knowledge either in an area which supplements their main discipline or in a closely related area.

Entry requirements

300 UCAS tariff points, equivalent to grades B, B and B at A-level. In addition applicants are required to have GCSE English and Maths at grade C or above.

Programme aims

The programmes are intended:

1. To encourage students to acquire knowledge and understanding of a range of topics in psychology, relevant research methods and their associated techniques of analysis.

2. To foster an understanding of how psychological theory and expertise may be applied to selected problems and issues arising in contemporary society, as well as an awareness of the limitations of psychological knowledge.

3. To meet the requirements of the British Psychological Society for the award of the Graduate Basis for Chartered status.
4. To provide learning experiences and appropriate support which enable students to become rational, independent, effective and adaptable learners.

5. To provide a relevant, contemporary and appropriately designed curriculum which is supported by the research and scholarly activity of the School’s staff.

6. To develop the intellectual, personal and technical skills necessary for students’ future gainful employment and/or relevant further study.

**Intended programme learning outcomes**

On completion of the programme the student will be able to:

**Attributes of knowledge and understanding (subject specific)**

1. Outline and explain the main features of the scientific approach to and philosophical foundations of psychology.

2. Describe and evaluate relevant theories and concepts in major topic areas of psychology, including ways in which theories and approaches can complement one another.

3. Outline and explain the conceptual bases for research designs and analyses.

4. Identify and evaluate the contribution of psychological theory and research to practical situations.

5. Describe and explain the role of areas of professional psychology and their contribution to policy and practice.

**Cognitive and intellectual skills/attributes (generic)**

1. Organise and synthesise information from a range of different sources.

2. Identify tautologies and illogical arguments in written and spoken texts and use this information as a basis for critique.

3. Assess the soundness of research questions and translate these into practical strategies of investigation.

4. Evaluate and analyse quantitative and qualitative data sets and draw sound conclusions from them.

5. Assess the contribution of abstract knowledge to practical problem areas.

**Key or transferable skills/attributes (suitable for employment)**

1. Analyse quantitative and qualitative data sets including the appropriate use of statistical procedures.

2. Access and manage systematically information from a variety of learning and information technology resources.
3. Interact effectively with others to set goals, integrate information and achieve sound decisions

4. Present information and data, and express ideas both written and verbally, to a range of audiences.

5. Critically appraise the contribution of psychology to the work of a public or commercial organisation.

6. Produce a tailored CV, and demonstrate insight into their personal skills and competencies.

7. Plan and research the steps needed to develop a meaningful career.

**Practical skills/attributes (subject-specific)**

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how psychology informs practice in a specific area, and knowledge of the theory which underpins that practice.

2. Be able to develop basic assessment instruments (e.g. for measurement of attitudes or psychological attributes/traits) and understand the criteria for the use of these.

3. Input data to and use statistical procedures in SPSS.

**Employment-related skills**

1. Incorporate a consideration of ethical issues into the conduct of research and practical problem solving

2. Reflect upon the learning process and plan work in a way which maximises effectiveness as a learner.

3. Demonstrate an understanding of the organisation and career structure of areas of professional psychology.

**Link to subject benchmarks**

The Intended Programme Learning Outcomes’ are consistent with all the QAA threshold and modal subject benchmarks for psychology (see Programme Learning Outcomes Map for specific mapping of learning outcomes at each stage with the Subject Threshold Benchmarks).

Other reference points for the Intended Programme Learning Outcomes are: British Psychological Society guidance for Accreditation through Partnership, QAA Guidelines for preparing programme specifications, University of Plymouth Policy on Graduate Attributes and Skills Development, University of Plymouth Programme Attributes and Skills Policy, University of Plymouth Educational Development (nd) Designing your Programmes and Modules: Guidance Notes.
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies

All the degree programmes have a core set of psychology modules at each stage of study comprising 80 credits (4 x 20 credits). For the single honours programmes 40 credits (2 x 20 credits) are non-core, specialised areas of study. Students on the major programmes take modules worth 40 credits in their minor subject. The core modules at Stage 1 introduce a basic level of coverage in psychology. At this level students are introduced to the major topic areas in psychology and to research methods and their associated techniques of analysis. The skills necessary for developing a self-directed learning sensibility are supported by specially designed courses and by small group tutorials. At this stage, students are also introduced to the School's arrangements for Personal Development Planning and resources available for its support throughout the period of the degree programmes. One of the non-core modules that all students take at this stage is a Plymouth Plus Module which allows students to broaden the scope of their skills and understanding in applying psychology to developing their vocational self-concept.

Stage 2 takes this basic introduction to a more advanced level of understanding and depth as well as developing the students’ ability to become an independent learner. The major topic areas of psychology are again covered as are more advanced research methods and techniques of analysis. There are also learning opportunities for those on the Single Honours programmes for specialist courses in the development of skills relevant to different areas of professional psychology and on the application of psychology to real-life problems.

Stage 3 is an optional placement year which if taken, provides students with the opportunity to obtain supervised work experience in a professional domain linked to psychology.

Stage 4 extends the students’ knowledge of the major topic areas and develops a critical understanding of these areas. It also requires the conduct of an independent research project under the supervision of a qualified member of staff. There are learning opportunities for Single Honours students to focus their studies on specialist areas of psychology by choosing from non-core modules which focus on the research or other specialist interests of individual members or cognate groups of staff.

A range of teaching and learning methods are used to achieve the learning outcomes for the programme. For each stage, assessment is by a mixture of coursework and formal examination.

Attributes of knowledge and understanding (subject specific)

The development of knowledge and understanding of psychology, both in theory and practice, is a core theme running through all stages of the degree programme. Modules through all three stages, except the project modules in stage 4, have a lecture component. This method of teaching enables students to acquire an overview of the topic area as well as specific knowledge of important aspects of the topic. Other core modules which require an understanding of the application of psychological knowledge to a problem domain, research methods, assessment techniques, ethics and statistical procedures also support learning by the use of workshops, practical sessions, surgeries and tutorials. These methods enable students to engage with a particular issue in detail.
and to reflect upon and discuss a range of relevant problems. In particular these methods allow for a critical analysis of a problem domain. In Stage 4, students have the opportunity to choose specialist areas in psychology, or in a minor subject, provided by members of academic staff and which are closely linked to those staffs’ research or scholarly interests. In addition to guided-study, these options use lectures and seminars to facilitate a rich understanding of the topic and its real-life implications.

Practical and project work is used throughout stages 1 and 2. This work develops the students’ understanding of research methods, ethics and techniques of quantitative and qualitative analysis. This understanding is brought to bear on specific topic of inquiry in stage 4 in the form of a major project. This enables the student through guided supervision to apply this understanding to a specific problem domain in psychology.

These learning methods are supported by the appropriate use of the library, both text and on-line resources, and the university’s digital learning environment (MOODLE). These resources enable a variety of support material to be developed which then has the flexibility for use by students with special needs. In addition, the School has made provision for a Psychology Information room which is staffed in term-time working hours for five days per week. This room provides a source of bespoke learning material to support modules’ curricula. Support is also provided via the Student Handbooks which detail information on how to access different learning resources.

Assessment methods are designed to consolidate and test knowledge and understanding using a range of techniques. At every stage the range of assessments incorporate coursework, including essay writing, practical report writing, case study analysis, and presentations. Assessment criteria for these forms of coursework are matched to the academic expectations associated with each stage of the programme. In those modules which cover core topic areas of psychology (as defined by the British Psychological Society), examinations are used. The form that this assessment takes imposes greater demands upon the students as they progress through each stage of the programme. In stage 1, multiple choice and short answer questions are used. In stages 2 and 4 essay questions of increasing difficulty are set. There is provision for inclusive assessment where a student is assessed as having a recognised disability which has been assessed as requiring specialised provision.

Cognitive and Intellectual Skills (generic)

Cognitive and intellectual skills are facilitated in all the teaching and assessment methods. The ability to organise and synthesise information is encouraged in lectures where students assemble notes from different sources and engage in guided reading. The information deriving from these sources needs to be integrated and the students have an opportunity to display their understanding and integration of the material in coursework essays and in examination answers. Seminars, tutorials, other small group work and guided study enables students to appraise critically arguments in extant published work and in their own and their peer’s work. The opportunity to display this skill is again provided in essay and examination answer questions. The modules relating to research methods and the final year project modules develop students’ abilities to formulate research questions, translate these into investigatory strategies, evaluate and draw conclusions from the data. These skills are pursued through practical sessions, case study analyses, and individual supervision of the project. These skills are utilised in the assessments associated with these activities which are principally based on report
writing. A dominant theme in the programmes is a focus on how abstract knowledge gained from artificial or simulated settings can be usefully applied to real life problems. The intellectual skill in generalising this sort of knowledge is facilitated through opportunities for work experience, practical workshops, tutorial discussions and case study analyses. The assessments deriving from these activities allow students to display the extent to which they can critically appraise the relevance of theories and concepts to practical situations.

A number of these skills come together in the conduct and reporting of the final year project.

**Key or transferable skills/attributes (suitable for employment)**

These skills are regarded by staff as central to the development of independent, effective learners and are consequently strongly endorsed in both teaching and assessment methods. Students are introduced to key skills in tutorials and research methods workshops at Stage 1. Subsequent stages build upon these skills by requiring students to use these skills more independently and in group work contexts. Students have the opportunity to display their mastery of these skills in the assessments associated with these teaching methods. Again a number of these skills come together in the final year project.

All students at stage 1 are introduced to Personal Development Planning in the tutorial sessions and are subsequently encouraged to continue with PDP through their personal tutors at subsequent stages of the programme.

The School is also committed to the development of students as competent and dynamic graduates who are able to contribute effectively to their chosen career. To this end, teaching methods in stages 1 and 2 include group work where students are required to work with a small number of their fellow students to define and research a problem area and then to integrate and present their findings. There are also opportunities for students to undertake work experience, either through the placement scheme or through a module for single honours students in stage 2. These opportunities provide students with experiences where they work with other professionals and service users and consequently utilise a range of generic work relevant skills. Through linked seminars or, as part of the placement, a close supervisory relationship, students can reflect upon their contribution to the organisation and what learning has occurred. The assessment criteria for these activities also reflect these objectives, students are required to write a report which includes an assessment of their own contribution and learning. The School liaises closely with the University’s careers services in providing additional opportunities in the form of an annual psychology careers ‘fair’ for all students. Through a stage 2 module, single honours students are also required to consider their career development and this is facilitated through timetabled tutorials and meetings with their personal tutor to discuss placement opportunities.

The criteria for assessments in essay writing (coursework and examination), practical report writing, project report, and presentations assess mastery of a range of these skills. A number of these skills are also relevant to the conduct of the final year project and the final report associated with it.
Practical skills/attributes (Subject-specific)

The subject specific practical skills are regarded as essential counterparts to the development of knowledge and understanding of psychology. In stage 1 students are introduced to these skills through a range of teaching methods. Lectures provide models for the deployment of these skills, and then the students are able to utilise them in tutorial and practical workshops. The assessments associated with these teaching methods also provide the opportunity for students to display their mastery of these skills. For example, practical and workshop sessions give the students the opportunity to analyse data using the appropriate statistical software packages. Subsequent stages of the programme develop mastery of these skills further through practical workshops, case study analyses and opportunities for practical experience.

At stage 1, surgery sessions are offered to students so that those who are finding mastery of these skills difficult or wish to develop them further, are able to gain appropriate support and expertise. Stage 2 modules in research methods focus on the techniques and principles for developing simple assessment instruments through practical workshops and small group exercises.

As with the other skill/attribute areas, many of these skills come together in the final year project and its associated assessment.
Programme Structure

**BSc (Hons) Psychology, BSc (Hons) Psychology Major, Psychology Minor Pathways**

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**Course Structure Diagram**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>PSYC101: Psychology an Introduction</th>
<th>PSYC102: Learning, clinical, social and developmental psychology</th>
<th>PSYC103: Cognitive and biological psychology</th>
<th>PSYC104: Contemporary topics in social and developmental psychology</th>
<th>PSYC105: Psychology of everyday experience</th>
<th>Plymouth Plus (PSYC107: Communicating Effectively plus availability of other modules tbc.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>PSYC201: Conducting psychological research A</td>
<td>PSYC206: Conducting psychological research B</td>
<td>PSYC202: Individual differences, clinical, social and developmental psychology</td>
<td>PSYC203: Biological &amp; cognitive psychology</td>
<td>PSYC204: Applied topics in health and cognition</td>
<td>PSYC205: Workplace learning &amp; skills development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Optional Placement Year</td>
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Note: Each block represents a 20 credit semester-based module with the exception of PSYC388 and the placement year which is non-credit rated.

Students taking Psychology as their minor subject take PSYC104, PSYC105 at stage 1, PSYC204 and PSYC202 or PSYC203 at stage 2; PSYC4039 and PSYC404 at Stage 4.
Exemptions/special academic regulations

None

Final Award Title

Final Awards are at Honours level.

BSc (Hons) Psychology
BSc (Hons) Psychology with Certificate of Industrial/Professional Experience

BSc (Hons) Psychology with Criminal Justice Studies
BSc (Hons) Psychology with Human Biology
BSc (Hons) Psychology with Sociology

BSc (Hons) Psychology with Criminal Justice Studies with Certificate of Industrial/Professional Experience
BSc (Hons) Psychology with Human Biology with Certificate of Industrial/Professional Experience
BSc (Hons) Psychology with Sociology with Certificate of Industrial/Professional Experience

Intermediate Award Titles

Certificate Level: Certificate of Higher Education (on achieving 120 credits at level 1)

Intermediate level: There are two awards available at intermediate level. Diploma in Higher Education (on achieving 120 credits at level 2). Non-honours degree (on achieving 80 credits in non-project modules at level 3).

Awarding institution

University of Plymouth

Teaching institution

University of Plymouth

Accreditation body

British Psychological Society

UCAS code/JACS code

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<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
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<tr>
<td>BSc (Hons) Psychology</td>
<td>C800</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSc (Hons) Psychology with Criminal Justice Studies</td>
<td>C8M9</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSc (Hons) Psychology with Human Biology</td>
<td>C8C1</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSc (Hons) Psychology with Sociology</td>
<td>C8L3</td>
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