PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Faculty of Health and Human Sciences
School of Psychology

Master of Science (MSc)
Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip)
in
Psychology

Revised September 2015

Date of first intake: September 2007
Date of first award: November 2008
Effective from: September 2015
Programme title: MSc/PgDip Psychology

Brief description of programme 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 PgDip Psychology is a nine-month full-time conversion programme that includes the same taught material and a smaller scale research project. Both programmes are designed to confer Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC) with the British Psychological Society. Both programmes may be completed on a part-time basis by arrangement with the programme coordinator. Typically, part-time completion takes two years, with 60 taught credits in the first year and the remaining credits (including the MSc project) in the second year.

Distinctive features: The MSc and PgDip in Psychology are the only BPS-accredited conversion programmes 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/PgDip programme 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/PgDip in 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 both the MSc and PgDip routes 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.

Students enrolling on the MSc/PgDip in Psychology will take advantage of the BPS-accredited content offered through the School’s other programmes. Some of this content will be offered in the context of large lectures. These lectures, however, make
up a relative minority of students' learning activities. MSc/PgDip students will take part in small group discussions and seminars, and will have regular contact with both the Programme Co-ordinator 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/PgDip students will be regularly challenged to investigate classic and contemporary issues in the field of psychology at an intensive and analytic level.

**Entry requirements:** The Programme Co-ordinator (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/PgDip programme are expected to have an Honours degree in a numerate discipline, to include at least 60 credits of Psychology at honours level or the equivalent (e.g., from non-credit rated or overseas degree programmes).

Due to the requirements of the BPS, 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 carried out. 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 welcomes applications from people with disabilities who will be considered on the same academic grounds as other potential students. Considerations about individual needs arising from disability will be made separately, and the University will strive to meet an individual disabled student's needs wherever possible.

**Entry requirements (in summary):**

1. An honours degree (second class or better) in a numerate discipline OR overseas equivalent.
2. A minimum of 60 credits of Psychology at honours level OR non-credit rated equivalent OR overseas equivalent.
3. 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.

**Programme Aims:**

The PgDip is intended to:
1) Meet the requirements of the British Psychological Society for Graduate Basis for Registration

2) Develop knowledge of the major theoretical approaches in all of the principal areas of Psychology (biological, cognitive, social, developmental, individual differences) including the processes involved in human behaviour and the influences on human functioning within each of these domains, and the ability to conceptually integrate theories and research stemming from divergent approaches or perspectives

3) Develop knowledge of a wide variety of research paradigms, including research methods and measurement techniques

4) Develop critical thinking skills

5) Promote the ability to analyse, interpret, and integrate research findings reported in the literature

6) Promote the ability to design and conduct original research

7) Promote the ability to analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative data

8) Promote the ability to communicate about psychological research both orally and in written work, both individually and in groups

9) Develop an awareness of issues involved in research with human participants (including research design, issues of validity and reliability, and ethical considerations)

10) Encourage students to use reflection to explore knowledge, skills and attitudes which inform and facilitate research and practice in psychology.

Additionally, the MSc is intended to:

1) Develop independence in analysing, interpreting, and integrating research findings reported in the literature

2) Establish independence in designing and conducting original research

3) Develop independence in analysing and interpret quantitative and/or qualitative data

4) Establish an ability to communicate about psychological research to a professional and potentially publishable standard.
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<th>Programme Learning Outcomes / Graduate Attributes and Skills Profile</th>
<th>Teaching and Learning Methods</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Knowledge and Understanding:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1) <strong>Knowledge base:</strong> a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of Psychology</td>
<td>Lectures, Self-directed reading, Peer-mediated discussion groups</td>
<td>Examination, Coursework</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) <strong>Ethical issues:</strong> an awareness of ethical issues and implications for psychological research; ability to conduct psychological research in an ethically sound manner</td>
<td>Lectures, Practical exercises, Project supervision</td>
<td>Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) <strong>Disciplinary methodologies:</strong> a comprehensive understanding of a range of experimental and qualitative psychological research methods, and the ability to apply these methods to their own work (theory or research-based)</td>
<td>Lectures, Practical exercises</td>
<td>Examination, Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>B. Cognitive/Intellectual Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1) <strong>Analysis:</strong> ability to undertake analysis of complex, incomplete, or contradictory findings or theories in Psychology, and to effectively communicate the outcome of such analyses</td>
<td>Lectures, Self-directed reading, Peer-mediated discussion groups</td>
<td>Examination, Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) <strong>Synthesis:</strong> ability to synthesize theory and research in Psychology in a manner that may be innovative, utilising knowledge or processes from the forefront of Psychology</td>
<td>Lectures, Self-directed reading, Peer-mediated discussion groups</td>
<td>Examination, Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) <strong>Evaluation:</strong> ability to critically evaluate others’ and own research from a methodological and theoretical perspective</td>
<td>Lectures, Self-directed reading, Peer-mediated discussion groups</td>
<td>Examination, Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) <strong>Application:</strong> ability to apply psychological theory and research methods to solve problems, including the ability to generate novel hypotheses based on previous research and theory.</td>
<td>Lectures, Self-directed reading, Peer-mediated discussion groups, Practical exercises</td>
<td>Coursework, Examination, Research Project(s)</td>
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### C. Key/Transferable Skills

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<tr>
<th>Key/Transferable Skills</th>
<th>Practical Exercises</th>
<th>Coursework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1)</strong> Group working: ability to work effectively with a group as leader or member</td>
<td>Practical exercises, Peer-mediated discussion groups, Seminar presentations</td>
<td>Coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2)</strong> Learning resources: ability to use full range of learning resources, including internet and library resources</td>
<td>Independent reading and research</td>
<td>Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>3)</strong> Self evaluation: ability to reflect on progress and identify areas for improvement</td>
<td>Reflective journal</td>
<td>Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>4)</strong> Management of information: ability to competently undertake research tasks with minimum guidance</td>
<td>Peer-mediated discussion groups,</td>
<td>Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5)</strong> Autonomy: ability to be an independent and self-critical learner, managing own requirements for continuing professional development</td>
<td>Reflective journal</td>
<td>Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6)</strong> Communications: ability to engage confidently in academic and professional communication with others (to both specialist and non-specialist audiences)</td>
<td>Peer-mediated discussion groups, Seminar presentations Coursework, Project(s)</td>
<td>Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7)</strong> Problem-solving: ability to identify problems and develop strategies for solving them, using the range of available resources</td>
<td>Throughout programme</td>
<td>Coursework, Research Project(s)</td>
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### Practical Skills

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<tr>
<th>Practical Skills</th>
<th>Throughout programme</th>
<th>Research Project(s)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1) Application of skills</strong>: ability to operate in complex and unpredictable and/or specialised contexts</td>
<td>Throughout programme</td>
<td>Research Project(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2) Autonomy in skill use</strong>: ability to exercise initiative and personal responsibility in professional practice</td>
<td>Throughout programme</td>
<td>Research Project(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3) Technical expertise</strong>: ability performs smoothly with precision and effectiveness; the learner can adapt skills and design or develop new skills and/or procedures for new situations</td>
<td>Throughout programme</td>
<td>Research Project(s)</td>
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Link to Subject Benchmarks

The modules on which this programme is based have been informed by QAA and BPS Psychology benchmarks; thus, whilst this is a postgraduate-level programme, it is congruent with those subject benchmarks.

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Strategies

See Table of Intended Programme Learning Outcomes.

MSc/PgDip students will complete 120 credits of taught modules. These modules will be primarily lecture-based. In addition, there will be workshops, tutorials, practicals, student-led discussion groups, and a research component. Discussion groups will require students to work in small groups to design a seminar presentation. The discussion groups may recruit a number of teaching and learning methods such as debates, field studies, and problem-based learning. The research component will consist of supervised work on a research project that may be the prelude to the Msc dissertation project. Taught modules will be assessed by a combination of coursework, seminar presentations, and examinations.

MSC students will complete a more substantial and independent research project (60 credits) to culminate in a written dissertation.

Programme Structure and Pathways

Programme Structure Table

Full-time students enrolled in the MSc/PgDip in Psychology study the core modules below. There is no formal arrangement for completing the programme on a part-time basis, but students may enrol on a part-time basis by individual arrangement with the Programme Co-ordinator. 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Title</th>
<th>Module Code</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Module Status</th>
<th>Semes</th>
<th>Weekly Contact Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social and Individual Influences on Behaviour</td>
<td>PSYC502</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology of Normal and Atypical Development</td>
<td>PSYC503</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Psychology</td>
<td>PSYC504</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychobiology</td>
<td>PSYC505</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods &amp; Practice of in Psychology</td>
<td>PSYC506</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>4-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSc Project</td>
<td>PSYC572</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Programme Pathways
The primary pathway for this programme culminates in the MSc Psychology degree.

**MSc**  
A student will be awarded a Masters degree provided that s/he has achieved the required number of credits (180) within the University Regulations, to 60 credits from an independent MSc research project and dissertation.

**PgDip**  
A student will be awarded a Postgraduate diploma provided that s/he has achieved the required number of credits (120) within the University Regulations.

In compliance with both university policy and BPS regulations, in order to pass a module students must achieve a minimum of 50% on the module and complete the required coursework and/or presentations. Students who fail the coursework or presentation component will be required to submit referred coursework.

The MSc programme is offered as a full-time programme. The programme lasts for 12 months and leads at the end of this time to the degree of Master of Science in Psychology.

The MSc in Psychology award is categorised into grades:

**MSc with Distinction:**  
This award is achieved by a student gaining an overall average mark on the programme of study of 70% and above, and the mark for the dissertation/major project module is not less than 70%

**MSc with Merit:**  
This award is achieved by a student gaining an overall average mark on the programme of study of 60% and above, and the mark for the dissertation/major project module is not less than 60%.

**MSc:**  
This award is normally achieved by a student gaining an overall average mark between 50% and 59.99%.

**Choice:** The MSc/PgDip programme does not allow for choice among the taught modules (PSYC502-PSYC506), as all of the required modules 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 four of the core modules (PSYC502-PSYC505), for which they will be offered a selection of presentation topics. In addition, students will be able to choose a topic for an independent research project, with which they will prepare for during the Research Practice module (PSYC506) and, complete in the Project (PSYC572) components of the programme.

**Routes leading to different qualifications:**
- Upon successful completion of 60 UoP credits from taught courses over 2 semesters, the Postgraduate Certificate will be awarded
- Upon successful completion of 120 UoP credits from taught courses over 2 semesters, the Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology will be awarded.
Upon successful completion of 120 credits from taught courses AND successful completion of the 60 credit research project (including dissertation) – 180 credits in total – the degree of Master of Science in Psychology will be awarded.

Thus, a full-time student will enrol for 2 semesters (1 calendar year) for the MSc or 9 months for the PgDip. Early exit is possible after completion of 60 credits, after which a Postgraduate Certificate may be awarded. However, only the PgDip and MSc will confer Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC) with the British Psychological Society.

Induction

Students will join in the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences Postgraduate Induction Day at the beginning of the academic year. During the Induction Day, students will be introduced to the university and its facilities, will be given details of their programme, and will be assisted with registration for their modules.

Panel and Board Structure

An Interim Psychology Panel and Exam Board will be held in June, during which time students’ progression towards the dissertation will be confirmed. Students who have successfully completed 120 credits (i.e., the taught) will be approved to continue to the dissertation stage or to be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip). Students who have not completed 120 credits, but who have completed a minimum of 60 credits, will be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) but will not be permitted to continue to the dissertation stage.

Following the late August deadline for MSc projects and referred coursework, these assessments will be approved by the Psychology Subject Examiner by correspondence and forwarded for consideration to the final Award Assessment Board of the Science Masters’ Scheme which meets in October. This Board will confirm award of the MSc degrees and also PgDip’s deferred in light of any referred assessments.

External Examiner

Professor Aiden Feeney of the Department of Psychology at Queen’s University Belfast has been nominated as the external examiner for this programme and will attend the Psychology Subject Panel. Professor Fraser Milton at Exeter University, who is also external examiner for the MSc in Psychological Research Methods, will act as award external examiner.

Exemptions/Special Academic Regulations

N/A

Intermediate Award title(s)

Postgraduate Certificate
Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology
Awarding Institution: University of Plymouth
Teaching Institution: University of Plymouth
Accreditation Body: British Psychological Society
JACS code: C800
Date of Production: October 2006
Date of Approval: 28/11/06