



University
of Essex

Online



MSC PSYCHOLOGY

Course Brochure

ABOUT THE MSc PSYCHOLOGY

The Details

Indicative duration: 2 years

Qualification: MSc

Entry Requirements

Applicants must hold an undergraduate degree from an approved institution, equivalent to a UK Honours degree, or a relevant professional qualification. For the work experience entry route, applicants must have at least three years' relevant work experience.

Explore a range of theoretical ideas and practical applications of psychology with our online, part-time MSc Psychology. Designed for those without a background in the sector, this course encourages you to explore a variety of topics, while focusing on employability for a variety of careers within psychology and related fields.

You'll delve into a range of topics such as the history and philosophy of psychological inquiry; critical milestones in human development; and fundamental research principles in psychobiology and neuropsychology. You'll also develop key skills in qualitative and quantitative research methods used for data collection and analysis.

Towards the end of the course, you'll complete an independent research project into a psychological issue of interest to you, showcasing the knowledge and skills you've gained throughout your degree.

You could also choose to study the shorter, 16-month PG Dip Psychology (120 credits) or eight-month PG Cert Psychology (60 credits).

Teaching and Assessment

Teaching methods and style

Unlike a traditional university environment, our online degrees utilise a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), providing you with immediate access to learning materials, wherever you are.

Student support

You'll be supported throughout your studies by a dedicated Student Adviser and regularly interact with fellow students and your tutor.

Methods of assessment

Instead of exams, we adopt an assignment-based approach to assessment, which are based on real-life work experience and carried out by tutors on an ongoing basis.

SYLLABUS

The MSc Psychology is made up of the following modules and equal to a total of 180 credits.

Level 7 modules

MODULE	MSc	PGDip	PGCert
Core Principles of Psychological Enquiry (10 credits)	*	*	*
Human Development over the Lifespan (20 credits)	▲	▲	▲
Research Methods (10 credits)	*	*	*
Critical Social Psychology (20 credits)	▲	▲	▲
Advanced Research Methods (20 credits)	▲	▲	
Psychobiology and Neuroscience (20 credits)	▲	▲	
Psychology Skills and Employability (20 credits)	▲	▲	
MSc Psychology Dissertation (60 credits)	▲		

* Compulsory module

▲ Core module (must be passed in order to achieve the award)

LEVEL 7

MODULES

CORE PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

Module code: CPPE_PPSY7E	NQF level: 7
Credit value: 10	Study duration: 6 weeks

About the module

This introductory module explores the history and philosophy of psychological enquiry, and the major paradigms of research and ethics. You'll develop the required skills for reading literature and conducting academic writing at a high level while reflecting on your own development, practice and skills necessary for a career in psychology.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module, you'll be able to:

- demonstrate a systematic and critical understanding of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms
- develop a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of research ethics (that adhere to the principles of the British Psychological Society's codes) and apply this to identify ethical considerations in research design
- develop a comprehensive understanding of the application of psychological knowledge and skills in a professional setting
- deeply and critically reflect on personal development, practice and skills in order to continue personal development, to advance knowledge and develop new skills to a high level

Syllabus

- Brief history of psychological inquiry
- Epistemology and social science: major paradigms
- What is research? Qualitative methodology vs. quantitative methodology and forming research questions and testable hypotheses
- Ethics in psychological research
- Intersectionality, diversity, culture and biases
- The application of psychology in a professional setting
- Reflective learning: models and practice

Learning and teaching methods

The learning and teaching methods for the module follow the intended online delivery strategy for the programme as a whole. Teaching will be delivered through specified reading materials on the VLE and supported by lecturecasts, interactive Q&A sessions, tutorials, workshops and regular live seminars. Tutor support will also be available via phone, email, and Zoom/Skype.

Description of unit assessment	Duration	Submission date	Weighting
Collaborative learning question	1,200 words total	Unit 3	50%
Two journal entries	2,000 words total	Units 5 and 6	50%

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OVER THE LIFESPAN

Module code: HDL_PPSY7E	NQF level: 7
Credit value: 20	Study duration: 12 weeks

About the module

Develop your understanding of the psychological processes that underpin social, emotional and cognitive development throughout the lifespan. This module focuses on research methods and ethics while examining critical milestones in human development. You'll explore topics such as attachment, social relations, cognitive and language development, and the impact of cultural contexts.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module, you'll be able to:

- critically understand individuals' social, emotional and cognitive development through major milestones in human development
- utilise analytical skills to critically evaluate contemporary research in developmental psychology in terms of findings, conceptual underpinnings, research methodology and/or ethics
- demonstrate an advanced understanding of the types of developmental psychopathology and their causes
- identify ethical considerations to be made for the particular cohorts and group(s) studied

Syllabus

- Research methods used to study developmental processes during critical periods within appropriate ethical guidelines
- Infancy: attachment, and social and emotional development
- Infancy: cognitive development and language
- Childhood: social and emotional development
- Childhood: cognitive development, intelligence, typical and atypical development
- How to write a research proposal report
- Adolescence: social, emotional and cognitive development
- Adolescence and adulthood: a focus on mental health
- Adulthood: social, emotional and cognitive development
- Late adulthood and ageing
- Typical and atypical development, and the developmental psychopathology framework
- How developmental psychology can be applied in professional settings, including educational, health and clinical professional practice, with reference to case studies

Learning and teaching methods

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Description of unit assessment	Duration	Submission date	Weighting
Collaborative learning question	1,200 words total	Units 2-3	20%
Research proposal report	3,000 words total	Unit 8	50%
Presentation of the research proposal	15-minute presentation 5-minute Q&A	Unit 12	30%

RESEARCH METHODS

Module code: RM_PPSY7E	NQF level: 7
Credit value: 10	Study duration: 6 weeks

About the module

In this module, you'll be introduced to basic statistics and develop a working knowledge of the statistics package SPSS in preparation for the Applied Research Methods module. By the end of the module, you'll recognise the importance and application of research ethics – adhering to the principles of the British Psychological Society's Codes – and have developed the skills to report on quantitative and qualitative research findings.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module, you'll be able to:

- formulate an original, testable research hypothesis
- develop a comprehensive understanding of how to use a chosen data analysis software to analyse data and apply this to produce descriptive and inferential statistics
- demonstrate a practical understanding of thematic analysis and use this to analyse qualitative data
- interpret and write up results using the current format relevant to chosen methods(s) of analysis to answer a given research question

Syllabus

- Introducing quantitative methods, experiments and questionnaires
- SPSS for data and descriptive statistics
- SPSS and inferential statistics
- Introducing qualitative methods: interviewing and focus groups
- Introduction to qualitative analysis: thematic analysis
- Using thematic analysis to develop themes

Learning and teaching methods

The learning and teaching methods for the module follow the intended online delivery strategy for the programme as a whole. Teaching will be delivered through specified reading materials on the VLE and supported by lecturecasts, interactive Q&A sessions, tutorials, workshops and regular live seminars. Tutor support will also be available via phone, email, and Zoom/Skype.

Description of unit assessment	Duration	Submission date	Weighting
SPSS statistics portfolio	1,000 words	Unit 3	50%
Thematic analysis write up	1,500 words	Unit 6	50%

CRITICAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Module code: CP_PPSY7E	NQF level: 7
Credit value: 20	Study duration: 6 weeks

About the module

In this module, you'll discover how taking psychological research and studies at face value could lead to false assumptions and flawed understanding. You'll develop the ability to apply critical ideas and deconstructions to a range of contemporary psychological and socio-political issues concepts.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module, you'll be able to:

- deconstruct mainstream social psychological ideas and dominant societal discourses using critical theory
- apply critical theory to a range of contemporary issues, considering how these can be used to enable socio-political change
- understand how personal use of language can be impactful as a construction of reality and be able to reflect on what this means as a psychologist
- describe some of the controversies and ethical issues that emerge when considering critical and mainstream social psychology alongside one another
- critically analyse a range of dominant discourse related to common marginalised or misunderstood groups as well as across a variety of cultures

Syllabus

- Historical and contextual foundations of critical psychology
- Critical perspectives applied to basic mainstream social psychology concepts
- Critical psychology approaches as applied to the following
 - Mental health and psychiatric treatment
 - Race
 - Gender
 - Disability
 - Sexualities
 - Power in society
- The themes of power, inequality and marginalised/privileged/dominant discourses
- Theoretical application of positive critical psychology ideas in different settings
- Ethical issues that emerge when considering critical and mainstream social psychology

Learning and teaching methods

The learning and teaching methods for the module follow the intended online delivery strategy for the programme as a whole. Teaching will be delivered through specified reading materials on the VLE and supported by lecturecasts, interactive Q&A sessions, tutorials, workshops and regular live seminars. Tutor support will also be available via phone, email, and Zoom/Skype.

Description of unit assessment	Duration	Submission date	Weighting
Mid module essay	1,000 words	Unit 4	50%
Patchwork text assignment	3,000 words	Unit 12	50%

ADVANCED RESEARCH METHODS

Module code: ARM_PPSY7E	NQF level: 7
Credit value: 20	Study duration: 12 weeks

About the module

In this module, you'll develop advanced knowledge around conducting research, with a focus on critical thinking, as you'll be encouraged to think about the different approaches to research design. You'll also delve into the theoretical and practical knowledge and skills necessary to conduct effective and ethical research in psychology.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module, you'll be able to:

- identify, synthesise and critically appraise research evidence
- understand the importance and application of research ethics, as well as quantitative and qualitative research designs
- use SPSS to generate descriptive statistics and parametric tests for correlation, statistical difference, factor analysis, regression and the use of non-parametric alternatives
- use qualitative data collection/interview techniques and apply different approaches to analysis and interpretation
- gain the skills to report quantitative and qualitative research findings, in appropriate formats

Syllabus

- Qualitative research design and analysis: developing aims and research questions – what can we know and find out from research questions?
- Interviews: ethical considerations, developing questions and how to conduct an effective interview
- Transcribing
- Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA)
- Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA)
- Presenting analysis through tables and diagrams, and how to structure and write a qualitative research report
- Quantitative research design and analysis, developing research questions, aims and testable hypotheses – what can we know and find out from quantitative research?
- Questionnaire design
- Factor analysis
- T-tests
- ANOVA
- Non-parametric tests

Learning and teaching methods

The learning and teaching methods for the module follow the intended online delivery strategy for the programme as a whole. Teaching will be delivered through specified reading materials on the VLE and supported by lecturecasts, interactive Q&A sessions, tutorials, workshops and regular live seminars. Tutor support will also be available via phone, email, and Zoom/Skype.

Description of unit assessment	Duration	Submission date	Weighting
Interview preparation and ethical documentation	Four documents	Unit 2	15%
Qualitative research report	2,500 words	Unit 6	35%
Collaborative activity	1,100 words	Unit 8	30%
Quantitative research report	2,500 words	Unit 12	35%

PSYCHOBIOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE

Module code: PN_PPSY7E	NQF level: 7
Credit value: 20	Study duration: 12 weeks

About the module

Discover the meaning of psychobiology and neuropsychology in this insightful module. You'll be introduced to the fundamental elements of both principles and be able to apply this knowledge to a chosen topic – either sex differences, personality, intelligence, addiction, depressions, cognitive control or learning. You'll also develop an understanding of best practices in ethical research in psychobiology and neuropsychology.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module, you'll be able to:

- demonstrate an advanced knowledge of psychobiological research principles in genetics, functional neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, psychopharmacology and cognitive neuroscience
- display a strong understanding of neuropsychological research principles
- critically consider the ethical issues associated with psychobiology and neuropsychology
- create a research proposal and poster that addresses an application of psychobiology or neuropsychology to attention, cognitive control or learning

Syllabus

- Fundamentals in genetics, functional neuroanatomy and neurophysiology
- Fundamentals in cognitive neuroscience
- Fundamentals in psychopharmacology
- Research ethics in psychobiology and neuropsychology
- Advanced neuropsychological research principles
- Traumatic brain injury and its neuropsychological assessment
- Intellectual disabilities and their neuropsychological assessment
- Psychobiological basis of sex differences
- Psychobiological basis of personality and intelligence differences
- Psychobiological basis of addiction
- Psychobiological basis of depression and anxiety
- Neuropsychology of attention, cognitive control and learning

Learning and teaching methods

The learning and teaching methods for the module follow the intended online delivery strategy for the programme as a whole. Teaching will be delivered through specified reading materials on the VLE and supported by lecturecasts, interactive Q&A sessions, tutorials, workshops and regular live seminars. Tutor support will also be available via phone, email, and Zoom/Skype.

Description of unit assessment	Duration	Submission date	Weighting
Research proposal report	2,000 words	Unit 7	40%
Research poster	A3 sheet	Unit 10	30%
Virtual poster conference	1,200 words	Units 10 to 12	30%

PSYCHOLOGY SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY

Module code: PSE_PPSY7E	NQF level: 7
Credit value: 20	Study duration: 12 weeks

About the module

Consider your previous experience in life, study and work – and identify personal areas of growth and opportunity – in this reflective module. You'll also develop practical skills such as how to search for jobs, CV writing and building a professional network. By the end of the module, you'll have a solid understanding of the psychology specific and transferable skills that are important to employers and how to present yourself when job searching.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module, you'll be able to:

- critically discuss how reflection, motivation and responsibility analysis contribute to ethical practice at work
- compare how the characteristics and experience required for a job role fit with your personal values, interests and skills
- deeply reflect on your personal development, practice and skills in order to continue personal development
- acquire a comprehensive understanding of how transferable skills developed throughout the course can increase employability within the field of psychology and other employment opportunities

Syllabus

- Realities of work in psychology: a day in the life
- Discovering lifeline, personal and community resources, and flow
- Person-job fit, work/vocational values/occupational interests
- Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and self-development theory
- Ethics and values reflection
- Transferable and role-specific, future of work skills
- Resilience and adaptability
- Evaluating career plans and prospects, personal development plan, skill development and articulating strengths
- CV writing and writing a cover letter
- Personal development plan, skills development and articulating strengths
- The job market, investigating career options, searching for jobs and building a network
- Work experience log and reflection

Learning and teaching methods

The learning and teaching methods for the module follow the intended online delivery strategy for the programme as a whole. Teaching will be delivered through specified reading materials on the VLE and supported by lecturecasts, interactive Q&A sessions, tutorials, workshops and regular live seminars. Tutor support will also be available via phone, email, and Zoom/Skype.

Description of unit assessment	Duration	Submission date	Weighting
Collaborative learning question	1,200 words	Units 2 to 3	30%
Mid-module essay	2,000 words	Unit 6	30%
Personal development plan portfolio	2,000 words	Unit 12	40%

MSC PSYCHOLOGY DISSERTATION

Module code: PDISS_PPSY7E	NQF level: 7
Credit value: 60	Study duration: 30 weeks

About the module

In this defining module, you'll have the opportunity to showcase the psychological skills you've gained throughout the course. By conducting an independent research study on a relevant topic of interest to you, you'll also further develop your transferable skills. Under the guidance of your supervisor, you'll submit an ethics application and research proposal to the Ethics committee, followed by a dissertation of 10,000 words.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this module, you'll be able to:

- generate and explore original and novel research questions and hypotheses drawing on relevant theory and up to date research
- design a coherent piece of research with an appropriate research design for investigating identified research questions
- plan, gain ethical approval and conduct research which demonstrates consideration for the protection of research participants and adheres to the principles of the British psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics
- apply appropriate data analysis and written presentation skills to disseminate the outcome of the identified research questions
- write a research proposal, ethics application with associated documentation and final report using the appropriate formats and materials

Syllabus

- Undertaking a successful dissertation, time management and working effectively with your supervisor
- Choosing a topic area, searching for information with databases and building a list of references
- Conducting a thorough literature review and critical evaluation of research and theory
- Developing a coherent research design
- Methods of data collection
- Data analysis:
 - Analysing, interpreting and presenting findings using appropriate qualitative and quantitative techniques
 - Use of appropriate software
 - Drawing conclusions from the evidence
- Ethical considerations within the research design, and writing an ethics proposal with supporting documents
- Recap on data collection:
 - Selecting, preparing and using research materials
 - Participant recruitment
 - Following ethical procedures including anonymising and storing data
- Reflective practice
- How to structure the dissertation
- Report writing:
 - Writing structured reports
 - Using APA referencing

Learning and teaching methods

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Description of unit assessment	Duration	Submission date	Weighting
Research proposal	2,500 words	Unit 15	20%
Large scale qualitative or quantitative dissertation	10,000 words	End of Unit 30	80%

READY TO APPLY?

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