

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION – MSc Psychology 2011/12

1.	Awarding institution/body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching institution	University of Worcester
3.	Programme accredited by	British Psychological Society
4.	Final award	MSc
5.	Programme title	MSc Psychology (GBC)
6.	Pathways available	N/A
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Taught
8.	Mode of attendance	Full-time (minimum 1 year, maximum 3 years) and part-time (minimum two years, maximum 6 years) years) to commence 2011/12. The taught components of the programme are delivered using a mixture of lectures across the 12 weeks of the semester and in blocks, with each block, typically, run over two days (normally 930am – 430pm on a Friday and a Saturday).
9.	UCAS Code	N/A
10.	Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement	QAA Master's degree characteristics (2010); The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2008); The BPS Quality Assurance Policies and Practice for First Qualifications in Psychology (2009).
11.	Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision	October 2011

12. Educational aims of the programme

The programme aims to provide:

- a conversion programme that is a preparation for the next stage in a career in Psychology by enabling students to achieve Graduate Basis for Chartership (GBC) with the BPS (on completion of the full masters programme only);
- a flexible, student-centered forum for the advanced study of core subject areas in psychology;
- opportunities for the systematic development of the skills of objective analysis, evaluation, and presentation to enable students to further develop confidence in effectively appraising or researching core subject areas in psychology;
- a stimulating academic environment which is based on the values of academic openness and critical appraisal;
- a critical understanding of the historical context of psychology, a critical understanding and application of different research methods, and the ability to design and conduct an independent original project in psychology (on completion of the full masters programme only).

These aims reflect the *programme characteristics, purposes, and graduate characteristics of Specialised/advanced study master's degrees* described in the QAA Master's degree characteristics (2010). In summary these include: dealing with complex issues and communicating to specialists/non specialists; self-directed and autonomous learning required for continuing professional development; and advancing knowledge, understanding, decision-

making and analytical skills to a high level. On completion of the full masters programme only students are eligible to apply to the BPS for GBC membership of the Society; students must themselves complete this process after graduation.

13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

Subject specific

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a systematic and critical understanding of the core subject areas in Psychology, and a critical awareness of their cutting edge issues;
2. Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of appropriate theory, empirical research and scholarly techniques in Psychology; and their application to the critical analysis of the disciplines core subject areas, methods of inquiry and new insights in the discipline;
3. Apply systematically and with originality, advanced knowledge and understanding of the core subject areas and research methodologies in Psychology, and deal with complex issues;
4. Communicate to specialist and non-specialist audiences a systematic understanding and a critical analysis of issues and new insights in Psychology;
5. Independently design and conduct an original research project using theory and empirical research from Psychology through a process of advanced scholarship;

The subject specific intended learning outcomes 1. – 5. are achievable across the programme. The course handbook shows how these map onto the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2008), and the BPS Quality Assurance Policies and Practice for First Qualifications in Psychology (2009). Students achieving all awards will be able to achieve 1. – 4. (see course handbook). Only students completing the Dissertation MPSY4000 will be able to achieve fully 5. Partial achievement of 5. in some modules is indicated in the course handbook.

The subject specific learning outcomes have also been developed in accordance with the most currently available University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2011), and the UoW Principles for Course Design: Guide to writing learning outcomes and developing assessment criteria, the UoW Curriculum Design Policy (2007).

Generic

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Consolidate cognitive and transferable skills, and develop independence, self-initiative and flexibility in learning and when making decisions;
2. Work collaboratively, ethically and professionally to achieve their personal learning and career goals;

The generic learning outcomes 1. – 2. are achievable by all students on the programme. As these outcomes are fundamental to any master's level work, these are both achievable in any module.

Students experience a wide range of learning and teaching methods on the programme. For example, lectures, seminars, practical classes, computer workshops, CD ROM and Internet, tutorials, visiting speakers, and directed study (see 14 Assessment Strategy for assessment methods used).

14. Assessment Strategy

The assessment strategies adopted in the MSc Psychology reflect the aims of the course and the QAA descriptors of Master's degree characteristics (2010) and make a significant contribution to learning. The assessment strategies are designed to develop skills and knowledge and provide evidence of the students' progress and achievement throughout the course and prepare the students for lifelong learning. Both formal (summative) and informal

developmental(formative) approaches will be used. In order to develop the skills of advanced study identified within the course aims, students will experience a variety of assessment strategies. These include essays, seminar papers and presentations, critical review, reports and independent learning contracts. The opportunity for students to demonstrate independence in a sustained piece of work is provided in the completion of the Dissertation MPSY4000. The MSc Psychology uses the M-level assessment criteria (see course handbook). These are derived from the UoW M-level grade descriptors and are used across taught masters programmes in Psychological Sciences.

The course handbook shows the assessments (summative) used in the programme modules, and how these map onto the programme learning outcomes. These programme subject specific outcomes are modified in the module guides provided to reflect module specific interpretations of these outcomes.

15. Programme structures and requirements

The award maps for the programme are shown below. Students register for the *MSc Psychology (with eligibility for Graduate Basis for Chartership with the BPS)*. The interim awards of *Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology (non-conversion)* or *Postgraduate Certificate in Psychology (non-conversion)* are only available as exit awards to students who are unable to complete the full MSc.

Title: MSc Psychology (with eligibility for Graduate Basis for Chartership with the BPS)

Year: 2011 **Last Updated:** May 2011

LEVEL 7		Credits (Number)	
MPSY4000	Dissertation	60	M
MPSY4002	Advanced research methods	20	M
MPSY4150	Social psychology	20	M
MPSY4151	Developmental psychology	20	M
MPSY4152	BioPsychology	20	M
MPSY4153	Cognitive psychology	20	M
MPSY4152	Individual differences	20	M

On completion of all the modules listed including the compulsory 60 credits Dissertation (MPSY4000) (total of 180 credits), the exit award is *MSc in Psychology with eligibility for Graduate Basis for Chartership (GBC) with the British Psychological Society*. Please note that only students completing the full MSc programme (180 credits) will be eligible for GBC with the BPS.

Title: Postgraduate Diploma Psychology

Year: 2011 **Last Updated:** May 2011

LEVEL 7		Credits (Number)	
MPSY4002	Advanced research methods	20	M
MPSY4150	Social psychology	20	M
MPSY4151	Developmental psychology	20	M
MPSY4152	BioPsychology	20	M
MPSY4153	Cognitive psychology	20	M
MPSY4154	Individual differences	20	M

On completion of these modules (total of 120 credits), the exit/interim award is *Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology*.

Title: Postgraduate Certificate Psychology

Year: 2011

Last Updated:

May 2011

LEVEL 7		Credits (Number)	
MPSY4002	Advanced research methods	20	M
Plus any two of the following			
MPSY4150	Social psychology	20	O
MPSY4151	Developmental psychology	20	O
MPSY4152	BioPsychology	20	O
MPSY4153	Cognitive psychology	20	O
MPSY4154	Individual differences	20	O

On completion of the compulsory module MPSY4002 and any other two modules listed (total of 60 credits), the exit/interim award is *Postgraduate Certificate in Psychology*

The awards of PG Cert, PG Dip or Masters may be made with Merit or Distinction.

Students can complete the MSc Psychology on either a full-time (typically one year) or part-time (typically two years) basis,

All modules except MPSY4000 and MPSY4002 are delivered in sessions across 12 weeks of the semester. MPSY4000 Dissertation is delivered using tutorial sessions arranged between the student and their supervisor. MPSY4002 Advanced research methods is delivered in two taught blocks (blocks 1 and 2) in semester one. Each block, typically, runs over two days (normally 930am – 430pm on a Friday and a Saturday). Block 1 is delivered towards the start of semester 1 and block 2 towards the end of semester 1 (see course handbook).

Compulsory attendance is expected at specified mandatory sessions within certain modules. These sessions are indicated within specific module documents that are published on the VLE for that module and confirmed during the first session in modules.

16. QAA Academic Infrastructure

The MSc Psychology is modular and part of the University's Postgraduate Regulatory Framework (PRF). This programme has been developed to reflect the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2008) and reflects the QAA Masters Level Characteristics.

17. Support for students

In common with other University courses all students have a personal tutor who will offer support when requested by the student. In addition, all students are contacted by their personal tutor each semester offering dedicated tutorial support. In addition, there is considerable support available for students. A Student Handbook is provided to all students and is updated annually. There are further subject leaflets and guides, most of which are also available on the web. A one week induction programme is provided for all new entrants and library induction and information skills packages are available throughout the course. Study skills are provided by the programme team and additional support can be provided for students on an individual basis. Students are also allocated a personal tutor when they start the course and a named Dissertation supervisor is allocated to students at the start of their programme during induction if full-time, and at the start of year two for those studying on a part-time basis. Students progress on the Dissertation is also assessed formally (the interim review) and this can take the form of presentations, posters, reports or ejournal submissions (to the Psychology in-house ejournal *eJournal of Issues in Applied Psychology*).

The virtual learning environment (VLE) including Pebble Pad and student university email accounts form important support resources on the programme. The VLE is used to store all course documents, lecture presentations, and in some instances, for the submission of coursework.

MSc Psychology students are also supported by a programme of specific seminars. These are designed to provide a student-centred forum for their learning experiences and needs, to foster a specific identity amongst the programmes students and to enable the course leader to monitor regularly the learning experiences of students.

The University has an Equal Opportunities Policy, together with equality schemes and action plans promoting equality in relation to race, disability, gender, age and sexual orientation. Progress in implementation is monitored by the Equality and Diversity Committee. The Disability and Dyslexia Service within Student Services provides specialist academic and other support on a one to one basis, makes recommendations for reasonable adjustments to teaching and assessment based on individual need and works with disabled students to allow them to manage their own learning development. Full details can be found on the UoW website.

18. Admissions Policy

The MSc Psychology aims to *convert* graduates from other disciplines and those with unrecognised psychology degrees into GBC recognised Psychology graduates. It hopes to recruit from those students who wish to obtain a GBC recognised qualification, which will enable them to progress into a career in psychology. Hence it hopes to attract those who wish to further their interest in psychology along with those that wish to change their career path to a specific area in psychology. The course allows graduates to apply for a large range of professional training in psychology for example, clinical, occupational, educational, forensic, and counselling psychology.

Entry requirements

Admission to the MSc Psychology is either in Semester 1 or Semester 2 of the academic year, and all eligible applicants are interviewed by the course leader as part of the admissions process. Admissions are considered from applicants that can demonstrate the ability to successfully study at an advanced level (M level 7) and, consistent with British Psychological Society Quality Assurance Policies and Practice for First Qualifications in Psychology (October 2009) requirements for admission to conversion programmes, students must have one of the following:

An honours degree normally 2.2 or above, which has not been accredited by the British Psychological Society; *and* studied the equivalent of at least 60 credits of Psychology at level 4 or above (as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, 2008, or equivalent frameworks)

or:

where students do not have prior Psychology experience but have a first degree with honours in another subject, they must complete the Foundation course (60 credits, with 30 being at Level 4 and 30 at Level 5) to ensure they meet the above requirements prior to entry to the conversion programme (see below FOUNDATION COURSE in **Admissions/selection criteria**).

Accreditation of Prior Learning

Students with relevant previous study at postgraduate level or with extensive experience may be considered eligible for accreditation of prior learning. Please contact the Registry Admissions Office for further information or guidance on 01905 855111.

Admissions procedures

All candidates who meet the entry requirements will be interviewed by the Course Leader and their qualifications verified. At interview, and subsequently, each candidate's qualifications will be considered in accordance with UoW APL procedures. The interview is essentially diagnostic in its purpose – to identify the student's eligibility to be admitted to the MSc Psychology programme directly or whether they are required to complete the FOUNDATION COURSE.

Admissions/selection criteria

Offers are made to candidates based on whether they meet the programmes entry requirements. Candidates who do not have prior Psychology experience but have a first degree with honours in another subject, will be offered a place on the Foundation course which they must complete in full and pass before starting the MSc Psychology programme. Candidates who are graduates of the University of Worcester who have completed some PSYC modules will be considered on an individual basis for any exemptions they are eligible for. In such instances an individual CPD package will be offered to enable them to take advantage of any accreditation for prior learning they are eligible for.

FOUNDATION COURSE

Due to the course structure of the MSc Psychology students required to complete and pass the Foundation course are usually required to start the Foundation course in semester 1 to ensure they make a timely and efficient transition to the MSc Psychology which always starts in semester 1.

Students who are required to complete and pass the Foundation course before they commence the MSc Psychology full-time, must usually take this 4 module course in Semester 1 of the academic year before they start the MSc Psychology.

All modules in the Foundation course are worth 15 credits each and are taken from the existing BSc Psychology undergraduate programme. Given that students complete the Foundation course as preparation for entry to the MSc Psychology, students *must pass all* modules on the Foundation course. The Foundation course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop the necessary foundation research skills required at M-level (PSYC2503). It is also designed to ensure students engage with the discipline at both Level 4 and at Level 5 *before* commencing the MSc Psychology.

19. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

There are a number of methods used by the course team in order to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality and standards of teaching and learning:

- Annual evaluation (AER) of the quality of the students learning experience;
- External Examiners reports;
- Mid and end of module evaluations by students;
- Subject staff/student committee considers student and staff feedback on modules;
- Peer assessment of teaching;
- A teacher accredited course (PGCert in Learning and Teaching for Higher Education) for new staff, and the Higher Education Academy Membership;
- Regular staff meetings;
- The Course leaders Forum provide opportunities to share good practice across the institution.

20. Regulation of assessment

Requirements to pass modules

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in the module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is 50% for each module.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Some modules have attendance requirements
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items

- Students who submit course work late but within 5 days of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at 50% unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 5 days but within 14 days of the due date will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- Students who fail to submit an item of assessment lose their right to reassessment in that module, and will be required to retake the module, which will incur payment of the module fee.
- For full details of submission regulations see Postgraduate Regulatory Framework.

Retrieval of failure

- Students are entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade, unless the failure was due to non-attendance or non-submission.
- Reassessment takes place during the following semester or during the summer reassessment period at the end of the academic year.
- If following reassessment the module has been passed, the module grade will be capped at 50%.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they will have one further and final reassessment opportunity.
- A student who fails 40 credits or more after exhausting all reassessment opportunities may be required to withdraw from the University.

Requirements for Awards

Award	Requirement
PG Cert	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at level 7
PG Dip	Passed a minimum of 120 credits at level 7
MSc	Passed a minimum of 180 credits at level 7 including a minimum of 40 credits from the Dissertation

The awards of PG Cert, PG Dip or Masters may be made with Merit or Distinction.

21. Indicators of quality and standards

In 2011 the British Psychological Society accredited Psychology programmes in the University of Worcester for five years.

The University underwent a QAA Institutional Audit in March 2011. The audit confirmed that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of the learning opportunities available to students. The audit team highlighted several aspects of good practice, including the student academic representative (StARs) initiative, the proactive

approach which supports the student experience for disabled students, the comprehensiveness of the student online environment (SOLE), the wide range of opportunities afforded to students to enhance their employability, the institution's commitment to enhancement, and the inclusive approach to working with its collaborative partners.

22. Employability and graduate destinations

Students are encouraged to consider their potential career pathways at the earliest opportunity in their programme. Psychological Sciences liaises with the University's Careers service to keep it informed of changes within professional areas of the discipline, and to communicate to potential employers the knowledge and skills acquired by students taking psychology. The Careers Service runs a series of workshops especially for Psychology Students. The programme prepares students for careers in the following areas: postgraduate psychology training required to become a professional (Chartered) psychologist (e.g. clinical, educational, and occupational); research. Typically, the destination of students who complete conversion courses are postgraduate professional courses (e.g. clinical doctorates in counselling psychology) or posts that will help support their future application to professional training courses in psychology (e.g. research assistant and assistant psychologist).

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module outlines and Section 3 of the course handbook. The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.