

## COURSE SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Science, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate in Forensic Psychology**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2020**.

### Aims of this course

- To provide students with advanced knowledge and understanding of the principles in research and practice of forensic psychology in accordance with the knowledge base components required by the Division of Forensic Psychology of the British Psychological Society
- To train students in the informed and systematic application of the scientist/research-practitioner model involving problem analysis and formulation, intervention, assessment and evaluation
- To expose students to the major theoretical formulations and models in the area of forensic psychology in order to provide a conceptual underpinning to inform their approach to research and practice
- To develop employability, interpersonal, technical and creative skills required for the effective transition to the world of work by opportunities to take personal control of their own development, promoting individual and team working, enhancing decision making skills and facilitating a range of placement opportunities in forensic settings
- To prepare students to conduct research by giving them the appropriate technical and critical thinking skills in design and analytical procedures
- To facilitate self-reflection in support of personal and professional development via constructive feedback
- To model a professional and ethical approach to colleagues and potential clients mindful of equality issues and acknowledging human rights of those with whom they come into contact
- To enable students to communicate the results of research to a variety of audiences
- To develop further the students' written and oral communication skills, required for further research and many senior professional positions
- To hone a range of other transferable skills, e.g. how to organise complex information, critical analysis, deal with complex issues systematically and creatively, solve problems in a self-directed and original fashion, plan and implement tasks autonomously, work to deadlines.

The course is delivered in a single stage, equating to one year of full-time study (52 weeks), or up to five years of part-time study (260 weeks).

The course consists of 7 modules. They are designed to give students in-depth insights into topical issues and the latest research in forensic psychology, in line with the British Psychological Society curriculum requirements. Modules are taught with an emphasis on group discussions and the development of independent thought and analysis, appropriate to such an advanced level of study. The research project offers students the opportunity to carry out an independent piece of research of high quality, in an area of interest to them.

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This document provides a summary of the main features of the course and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, modules and the availability of individual modules are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific course. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

## **Learning outcomes**

Teaching and learning in the course are closely informed by the active research of staff and the British Psychological Society Standards for Masters Courses in Forensic Psychology. In general terms, the course provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes, all at a level appropriate for MSc:

### *Knowledge and understanding*

- An advanced knowledge of theory and evidence base of practice in forensic psychology
- Skills relevant to the breadth of forensic psychological practice (as well as personal development objectives)
- A critical awareness of the range of techniques and research methods applicable to forensic psychological enquiry
- An ability to apply relevant ethical, legal and professional practice frameworks to research and practice in forensic psychology
- An awareness of a developing professional identity as a trainee forensic psychologist
- Skills in formulation of complex psychological information
- An insight into advanced statistics for psychology.

### *Skills and other attributes*

Students following the course will gain the ability to:

- critically evaluate the quality of applied psychological research;
- carry out original research projects independently, including conception, literature review, study design data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and dissemination (applicable to MSc only);
- communicate clearly and professionally in both written and oral form;\*
- work collaboratively within a group;\*
- work to deadlines;\*
- apply their advanced numerical skills to a range of issues;\*
- approach problems logically and systematically.\*

\* transferable skills

## **Teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching and learning are mainly by means of sessions lasting between two and three hours; a combination of lectures, seminars and practical sessions. The assessment pattern has been developed to capture a broad range of skills development relevant to forensic psychological theory and practice and is clearly aligned with learning

objectives. The assessment pattern promotes advanced critical evaluation through engagement with theory explicitly (e.g. essays, research methods evaluation, research report, , critical review, examination, dissertation) and implicitly (e.g. case report, reflective report, peer assessment, small group presentations). Transferable skills are developed through: engagement with the reflective process (e.g. linking reflection with observations of criminal cases, reflecting on the relationship between research and practice in forensic psychology); psychological report writing and formulation (e.g. case report, formative assessments through workshops); oral presentations (group and individual across formative and summative assessments); professional practice skills (through workshops, formative assessment and professional writing skills in summative assessments such as case reports). The assessment pattern addresses the learning objectives (theory, knowledge and skills) of the British Psychological Society Standards for Masters Courses in Forensic Psychology.

### Details of the course structure(s)

The brief outline of the course is shown below; however students can obtain further details from the Course Handbook. **Credits are indicated in brackets, and indicate proportional weighting towards the Master of Science, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate classification grade.**

#### Full-time students

*In the Autumn term, students take:*

- PS5204 Advanced Techniques in Social and Behavioural Research (20 credits)(non-condonable)
- PS5302 Statistics for Research (20 credits)(non-condonable)
- CR5101 The Legal and Criminal Justice Context for Forensic Psychology (20 credits)(non-condonable)
- CR5102 Research-Based Practice in Forensic Psychology (20 credits)(non-condonable)

*In the Spring term, students take:*

- PS5303 Cognitive, Social and Neuroscience Approaches to Forensic Investigations)(20 credits)(non-condonable)
- CR5103 Young People in the Criminal Justice System (20 credits)(non-condonable)
- (remaining teaching sessions for PS5302 Advanced Statistics for Psychology are delivered in the first 5 weeks of term)

*Throughout the course students will work on a piece of empirical research to produce a dissertation:*

- CR5100 Dissertation (60 credits)(non-condonable)

#### Part-time students

The course can be taken part-time over two to five years beginning in September of year one. Part-time students studying over two years normally take modules as listed in the paragraph below on Part Time Mode. Students who take courses over more than two years should discuss with the School the order in which to take core and optional modules. The dissertation is normally taken in the final year of study.

*In the first year:*

- PS5204 Advanced Techniques in Social and Behavioural Research (20 credits) (non-condonable)
- CR5101 The Legal and Criminal Justice Context for Forensic Psychology (20 credits) (non-condonable)
- CR5303 Forensic Investigations: Cognitive and Social Approaches to Forensic Investigations (20 credits) (non-condonable)
- CR5103 Young People in the Criminal Justice System (20 credits) (non-condonable)

*In the second year:*

- PS5302 Advanced Statistics for Psychology (20 credits) (non-condonable)
- CR5102 Research-Based Practice in Forensic Psychology (20 credits) (non-condonable)
- CR5100 Dissertation (60 credits)(non-condonable)

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### Progression and award requirements

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through summative and formative assessments.

Please note that if you hold a Tier 4 (General) Student Visa and you choose to leave (or are required to leave because of non-progression) or complete early (before the course end date stated on your CAS), then this will be reported to UKVI.

To pass the **Masters** course a student must achieve an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%.

The Masters degree with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00%.

The Masters degree with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above.

The **Postgraduate Diploma** may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any taught course which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50% *and* has either chosen not to proceed to the dissertation, or has failed the dissertation on either the first or second attempt. Failure marks in the region 40-49% are not usually condoned for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma, but if they are, such condoned fails would be in courses which do not constitute more than 40 credits.

The Postgraduate Diploma with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above.

The Postgraduate Diploma with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above.

The Postgraduate Certificate may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any taught course which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. Failure marks in the region 40-49% are not condoned for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate.

The Postgraduate Certificate with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above, with no mark in any course which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The Postgraduate Certificate with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any course which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

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### Student support and guidance

- The Course Director can advise on academic, pastoral and welfare issues (and refer to student services, as appropriate). The Course Director is available for consultation within office hours. Students may also consult their Personal Advisor.
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, CEDAS, Health Centre and the Dyslexia and Disabilities office for students with special needs.
- All staff teaching on the course are available via their e-mail and addresses are published in the course handbook.
- Detailed student handbook and course resources.

- The School's postgraduate induction sessions for incoming students in the first week of the Autumn term, aligned with the College's induction procedures.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources in College libraries and the Student Services Centre.
- College Careers Service and advice specific to forensic psychology from the Course Director.
- A staff/student committee is held in each department in each term in which undergraduate and postgraduate student representatives are invited to attend.

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### **Admission requirements**

For details of admissions requirements please refer to the [Course Finder](#).

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### **Further learning and career opportunities**

The course will equip students with knowledge about cutting edge developments and issues in forensic psychology, as well as an array of analytical, methodological, and statistical research skills. These skills will be useful for pursuing further academic research such as a PhD or a research assistantship and it is anticipated that some of the course participants will pursue this career path. Subject to accreditation by the British Psychological Society, this course will comprise the first Stage of professional training towards qualification as a Forensic Psychologist and it is anticipated that many students will want to pursue this career path. However, many skills that the course will equip the students with are transferable and will also add value in settings of non-academic employment (e.g. numeracy, how to organise complex information, critical analysis, work to deadlines).

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### **Indicators of quality and standards**

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The scoring system for the REF 2014 measures research quality in four categories, with the top score of 4\* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour and 3\* indicating research that is internationally excellent. 81% of the College's research profile was deemed to be within the 4\* or 3\* categories, an increase of over 20% since 2008. This results for the quality of our research outputs placed Royal Holloway 15<sup>th</sup> in the UK based on an overall Grade Point Average (GPA) score and 20<sup>th</sup> in the UK for 4\* and 3\* research. The School of Law has an excellent reputation for high quality research and teaching and for its engagement in policy and practice through active involvement with government bodies and voluntary and statutory agencies. In a recent Periodic Departmental Review, the School of Law was commended for the support offered to postgraduate students. The Department of Psychology supports a thriving research culture and was ranked sixth among UK Psychology Departments in the REF 2014.

The course is accredited by the British Psychological Society. Successful completion of this course fulfils stage one of the requirements towards Chartered Membership of the British Psychological Society and full membership of the Division of Forensic Psychology.

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## **List of courses with details of teaching arrangements, awards and accreditation**

The course is taught by staff at Royal Holloway or by contracted external NET staff, and the MSc leads to an award of the University of London. The Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate lead to awards of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College. The course is subject to accreditation by the British Psychological Society. The Banner course code is given in parentheses.

### **Master of Science Course in Forensic Psychology**

MSc Forensic Psychology (2852)

### **Postgraduate Diploma in Forensic Psychology**

PG Diploma in Forensic Psychology (2966)

### **Postgraduate Certificate in Forensic Psychology**

PG Certificate in Forensic Psychology (2967)

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