

Royal Holloway, University of London
MSc Criminology: Research Methods and Applications (3728)

Section 1 – Introduction to your course

This course specification is a formal document, which provides a summary of the main features of your course and the learning outcomes that you might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if you take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. Further information is contained in the University prospectus, and in various handbooks, all of which you will be able to access online. Alternatively, further information on the University's academic regulations and policies can be found [here](#). Further information on the University's Admissions Policy can be found [here](#).

Your degree course in MSc Criminology: Research Methods and Applications offers an in-depth exploration of contemporary criminological issues, with a specific focus on organised crime. This degree course is designed to introduce you to the latest empirical insights and theoretical debates on key topics within criminology, including justice and punishment, deviance, and societal responses to crime. By attending this course, you will develop strong research skills and advanced quantitative analysis capabilities, which are essential for critically assessing and conducting empirical research. The course's rigorous framework ensures that you are well-equipped to understand and analyse the phenomenon of organised crime, one of the most significant challenges affecting modern societies globally.

The MSc in Criminology: Research Methods and Applications aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of contemporary theoretical debates and empirical data in criminology, focusing on crime, social order, and deviance within their broader social contexts. Using an interdisciplinary approach, students will explore the socio-psychological and sociological factors influencing crime, drug trafficking, violence, and social aggression, gaining a deep understanding of criminal behaviour and societal responses to crime. The course is designed to equip students with specialist knowledge about organised crime, criminal governance, and the theoretical perspectives shaping societal responses to organised criminal groups across societies. By integrating advanced quantitative research skills and theoretical knowledge, the course enables students to critically engage with empirical data and conduct independent research on a variety of topics relevant to criminology. The MSc will prepare students for careers in academia, security companies, and the public sector. To support employability, students will work on case studies designed to enhance their understanding of real-world challenges and prepare them for careers in relevant sectors. Additionally, the programme will feature presentations from key stakeholders, including industry specialists, public sector professionals, and security experts. These engagements will provide students with valuable insights into practical applications of their learning and the expectations of potential employers. To enable students to pursue successful academic and non-academic careers, the course employs a range of assessment techniques, including essays, exams, presentations, and teamwork. This approach ensures that graduates are well-prepared to address the challenges associated with criminological research and practice, contributing effectively to policy-making, law enforcement, and research areas.

The MSc course comprises modules totalling 120 credits and a dissertation worth 60 credits, delivered in one year (52 weeks) of full-time study, or up to five years (260 weeks) of part time studies.

While Royal Holloway keeps all the information made available under review, courses and the availability of individual modules, especially optional modules are necessarily subject to change at any time, and you are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect your decision to follow a specific course. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform you as soon as is practicable of any significant changes which might affect your studies.

The following is a brief description for some of the most important terminology for understanding the content of this document:

Degree course – Also referred to as ‘programme’, this term refers to the qualification you will be awarded upon successful completion of your studies. ‘Courses’ were formerly known as ‘programmes’ at Royal Holloway.

Module – This refers to the credits you will study each year to complete your degree course. Postgraduate taught degrees at Royal Holloway comprise 180 credits. On some degree courses a certain number of optional modules must be passed for a particular degree title. ‘Modules’ were formerly known as ‘course units’ at Royal Holloway.

Section 2 – Course details			
Date of specification update	September 2025	Location of study	Egham
Course award and title	MSc Criminology: Research Methods and Applications	Level of study	Postgraduate
Course code	3728	Year of entry	2026/27
Awarding body	Royal Holloway, University of London		
Department/School	Law & Criminology/Law & Social Sciences	Other departments or schools involved in teaching the course	NA
Mode(s) of attendance	Full time and part time	Duration of the course	One year (52 weeks) full-time Two to five years (104 - 260 weeks) part-time
Accrediting Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirement(s)	NA		
Link to Coursefinder for further information:	https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/	For queries on admissions:	https://royalholloway.ac.uk/applicationquery

Section 3 – Degree course structure				
3.1 Mandatory module information				
The following table summarises the mandatory modules which students must take in each year of study				
Module code	Module title	Credits	FHEQ level	Module status (Mandatory Condonable MC or Mandatory Non-Condonable MNC)
CR5201	Theoretical Foundations: Crime and Society	30	7	MC
CR5202	Perspectives on Justice and Punishment	15	7	MC
CR5203	Research Methods and Qualitative Data Analysis	15	7	MC
CR5204	Advanced Data Analysis Skills	30	7	MNC
CR5205	Organised Crime, Power, and Politics	15	7	MC
CR5206	Critical Perspectives on Organised Crime and Cyber Security	15	7	MC
CR5200	Dissertation	60	7	MNC
<p>This table sets out the most important information for the mandatory modules on your degree course. These modules are central to achieving your learning outcomes, so they are compulsory, and all students on your degree course will be required to take them. You will be automatically registered for these modules each year. Mandatory modules fall into two categories: 'condonable' or 'non-condonable'.</p> <p>In the case of mandatory 'non-condonable' (MNC) modules, you must pass the module before you can proceed to the next year of your course, or to successfully graduate with a particular degree title. In the case of mandatory 'condonable' (MC) modules, these must be taken but you can still progress or graduate even if you do not pass them. Please note that although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, changes to your degree course may be made where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events. For example, where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of external advisors, to enhance academic provision.</p>				

3.2 Optional modules

In addition to mandatory modules, there may be a number of optional modules available during the course of your degree. Although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, new options may be offered, or existing ones may be withdrawn. For example, where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events, where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of External Advisors, to enhance academic provision. There may be additional requirements around option selection; please contact the Department for further information.

There are no optional modules on this degree course.

Section 4 - Progressing through each year of your degree course

For further information on the progression and award requirements for your degree, please refer to Royal Holloway's [Academic Regulations](#).

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in summative or formative coursework assignments. Please note that if you hold a 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.

All postgraduate taught students are required to take and pass the non-credit bearing Moodle-based Academic Integrity module SS1001 to be awarded. The pass mark for the module assessment is stated in the on-line Academic Integrity Moodle module. Students may attempt the assessment as often as they wish with no penalties or capping. Students who otherwise meet the requirements for award as stipulated in the [Academic Taught Regulations](#) but fail to pass the Moodle-based Academic Integrity module will not be awarded.

The course is offered full-time and part-time. For part-time students the course can last 2 years, or longer up to a maximum of 5 years. For the first year it is expected that 'Research Methods and Qualitative Data Analysis' (15 credits) and 'Advanced Data Analysis Skills' (30 credits) will be taken, with the dissertation taken in the summer of Year 2 for 'two year' students or in Year 3 for 'three year' students.

-

Section 5 – Educational aims of the course

- 1) Deliver a comprehensive understanding of contemporary theoretical debates in criminology, focusing on crime, social order, and deviance within broader social contexts.
- 2) Adopt an interdisciplinary approach to examine socio-psychological and sociological factors influencing crime, drug trafficking, violence, and social aggression.
- 3) Equip students with specialist knowledge of organised crime, criminal governance, and the theoretical perspectives shaping societal responses to organised criminal groups.
- 4) Develop advanced quantitative research skills, enabling students to critically engage with empirical data and conduct independent research on criminological topics.
- 5) Provide real-world insights through case studies and presentations from industry specialists, public sector professionals, and security experts.
- 6) Prepare graduates for careers in academia, security companies, and the public sector by offering a deep understanding of practical applications and employer expectations.
- 7) Use varied assessment methods - including essays, exams, presentations, and teamwork - to ensure graduates can effectively address challenges in criminological research and practice.

Section 6 - Course learning outcomes

In general terms, the courses provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes. (*Categories – Knowledge and understanding (K), Skills and other attributes (S), and Transferable skills (*)*)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a knowledge of the major theoretical perspectives in criminology (K) 2. Learn about social control of crime and deviance, and understand the mechanisms and strategies used to regulate behaviour in society (K) 3. Acquire the ability to critically analyse theoretical and empirical research in criminology (S) 4. Acquire advanced quantitative skills using statistical software like R for analysing data (S*) 5. Conduct independent research on a topic of their choosing in criminology or organised crime studies (S) 6. Develop the ability to communicate research to lay audiences (S/*) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Understand historical and contemporary organised crime threats, and their relationship with politics (K) 8. Learn key strategies and policies to combat organised crime (K) 9. Present research and arguments in written and oral form (S*) 10. Understand the important contributions various academic disciplines offer in developing our understanding of organised crime (K) 11. Analyse the relationship between organised crime and other forms of crime (K) 12. Develop the ability to formulate and present policy recommendations aimed at combating various forms of crime (S*) |
|---|---|

Section 7 - Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning on your course is closely informed by the active research of staff, particularly in the areas of violence and aggression, deviant behaviour, life-course and developmental criminology, micro- and macro-level determinants of crime, social justice, criminal governance, the psychology of radicalisation, and human trafficking. In general terms, the course provides an opportunity for you to develop and demonstrate the learning outcomes detailed herein.

Teaching and learning is mostly by means of lectures; seminars, study groups, essay consultations, oral presentations and guided independent study. Assessment of knowledge and understanding is typically by formal examinations, coursework, examined essays, translation exercises, online tests and exercises, oral presentations and the dissertation or long essay. In addition, students may be involved in workshops and may produce various forms of creative or editorial work.

Contact hours come in various forms and may take the form of time spent with a member of staff in a lecture or seminar with other students. Contact hours may also be laboratory or, studio-based sessions, project supervision with a member of staff, or discussion through a virtual learning environment (VLE). These contact hours may be with a lecturer or teaching assistant, but they may also be with a technician, or specialist support staff.

The way in which each module on your degree course is assessed will also vary, however, for the assessments listed as 'summative', you will receive a mark for it which will count towards your overall mark for the module, and potentially your degree classification, depending on your year of study. On successful completion of the module you will gain the credits listed. 'Coursework' might typically include a written assignment, like an essay. Coursework might also include a report, dissertation or portfolio. 'Practical assessments' might include an oral assessment or presentation, or a demonstration of practical skills required for the particular module.

More detailed information on modules, including teaching and learning methods, and methods of assessment, can be found via the online [Royal Holloway Curriculum Catalogue](#). The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed regularly by the university, and may also be checked routinely by external agencies, such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

Section 8 – Additional costs

There are no single associated costs greater than £50 per item on this course.

These estimated costs relate to studying this particular degree course at Royal Holloway. General costs such as accommodation, food, books and other learning materials and printing etc., have not been included, but further information is available on our website.

Section 9 – Indicators of quality and standards	
QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level	7
Your course is designed in accordance with the FHEQ to ensure your qualification is awarded on the basis of nationally established standards of achievement, for both outcomes and attainment. The qualification descriptors within the FHEQ set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications. The qualification descriptors contained in the FHEQ exemplify the outcomes and attributes expected of learning that results in the award of higher education qualifications. These outcomes represent the integration of various learning experiences resulting from designated and coherent courses of study.	
QAA Subject benchmark statement(s)	http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements
Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of courses in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.	

Section 10– Intermediate exit awards (where available)		
You may be eligible for an intermediate exit award if you complete part of the course as detailed in this document. Any additional criteria (e.g. mandatory modules, credit requirements) for intermediate awards is outlined in the sections below.		
Award	Criteria	Awarding body
PG Diploma	Passes in at least 120 credits, with fails of between 40% to 49% for up to 30 credits condonable (with the exception of any course specific requirements).	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
PG Certificate	Passes in at least 60 credits with no condonable fails	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College