

## COURSE SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Doctorate in Clinical Psychology**. This specification is valid for new entrants and current students from **September 2025**. 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 University prospectus, the University Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, courses 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.

### Course Aims and Learning Outcomes

The Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy) aims to deliver a high quality course of academic study, research and clinical placement experience that meets the requirements of the regulatory body, The Health and Care Professions Council, and the main professional body, The British Psychological Society. We work in partnership with local NHS Trusts and other healthcare providers.

The DClinPsy has been carefully developed with input from the NHS, people with lived experience, and other key stakeholders, in line with HCPC and BPS standards. The perspectives and contributions of individuals with lived experience are embedded across all elements of the course. The course supports trainees in developing the knowledge, skills, values, and reflective practice needed across academic, clinical, and professional domains. These competencies are developed and supported through the course's aims and intended learning outcomes across the following domains:

#### 1. Effective Evidence-Based Practitioners

- Promote clinical psychology practice that is grounded in contemporary theory, with a strong focus on cognitive-behavioural and systemic models.
- Develop trainees' core competencies in psychological assessment, formulation, intervention, and outcome evaluation, tailored to individuals, families, and wider systems.
- Nurture a scientist-practitioner ethos, enabling trainees to apply formulation-led, empirically grounded interventions with confidence, flexibility, and coherence across diverse contexts.

#### 2. Critical, Reflective and Responsible Thinkers

- Cultivate trainees' ability to reflect critically on their clinical practice, personal biases, and professional experiences.
- Support trainees in developing autonomy, self-directed learning skills, a sense of ethical responsibility and effective self-management strategies essential for maintaining personal health and well-being.
- Develop trainees' capacities to critically evaluate and integrate research evidence into clinical practice.

#### 3. Culturally and Contextually Responsive NHS Professionals

- Support trainees in developing a solid foundation in NHS values, national policies, legal frameworks, and professional and ethical standards (e.g., HCPC, BPS) that guide clinical psychology practices.
- Equip trainees to understand and engage with the organisational, societal, and cultural forces shaping healthcare, including digital innovation, preventative approaches, and the input of patient and public involvement.
- Foster culturally informed, inclusive approaches that are responsive to diversity and sensitive to the effects of inequality, while encouraging trainees to critically reflect on their values and engage thoughtfully in social action.

#### 4. Dynamic Collaborators, Adaptive Team Players and Influential Leaders

- Cultivate trainees' abilities to critically reflect on their professional roles, personal biases, and the broader impact of their clinical decisions and interpersonal and system dynamics.
- Support trainees in developing autonomy, professional resilience, and self-directed lifelong learning.

- Foster leadership, supervision and consultative skills enabling trainees to positively influence service delivery, policy development, and professional practice through interprofessional working.

### **5. Skilled and Impactful Researchers**

- Provide comprehensive research training that enables trainees to critically consume, conduct, and disseminate clinically meaningful research and service evaluations.
- Strengthen research literacy and applied skills that contribute directly to clinical practice, service development, and broader societal needs,
- Equip trainees to independently design and deliver high-quality, inclusive research that advances the field, incorporates lived experience and public involvement, and aligns with the needs of the populations they serve.

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### **Teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching methods used to enable achievement of knowledge and skills include:

- Lectures
- Trainee-led clinical and research presentations
- Tutor led professional-practice and reflective seminars
- Supervised clinical experience
- Supervised completion of clinical research thesis

Assessment methods to assess development of competencies include

- Service research reports
- Clinical reports
- Written unseen examinations
- Viva voce examination of research thesis
- Observation of performance and feedback from tutors and clinical supervisors
- Placement evaluation assessments
- Clinical Competence and Experience Records

Full details of the assessments can be obtained from the [Department](#).

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### **Details of the course structure(s)**

The course is studied full-time over three years and is structured to provide a balanced integration of clinical experience, academic learning, research, and self-directed study. Approximately 50% of the time (minimum 2 days a week) is dedicated to supervised clinical placements within NHS and other healthcare settings, offering a diverse range of experiences across six placements. Around 20% of the time is allocated to University-based taught content (6 hours per day teaching), including research-focused lectures, seminars, and reflective practice groups. The course begins with an induction period designed to prepare trainees for their initial NHS placement. A proportion of this taught component may be delivered via remote or digital methods. A further 20% is dedicated to the design and implementation of a major research project, in the form of self-directed study, research supervision and independent research. The remaining 10% comprises study time, including clinically related placement study (typically 1 day every 10 days while on placement) and academic study during term time to support examination preparation and broader professional development. Trainees also receive a minimum of 27 days of annual leave each year.

Two optional professional accreditation pathways will be offered to students during the course. Fulfilment of these is not a requirement of the DClinPsy award:

### **1. British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapists (BABCP) - Level 2 Award (CBT Pathway)**

The course is accredited with the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) for a CBT-focused stream, or pathway, within the course. Trainees completing this pathway will, at the end of the course, meet the requirements for practitioner accreditation with BABCP. The pathway has particular requirements, including some additional elements.

All students will be offered the opportunity to complete the taught requirements for this professional accreditation through the DClinPsy teaching (200 hours). Additional clinical and academic submissions are associated with this pathway. The clinical requirements are lengthy and information about these is set out in the pathway handbook.

Assessments (must be passed to meet the requirements for the Level 2 award):

- Reports of Clinical Activity (RCA): pass two extended reports of clinical work demonstrating CBT competencies;
- CBT short case reports: pass two short reports of clinical work demonstrating CBT competencies;
- Complete portfolio of Clinical Practice with evidence of BABCP required teaching, clinical practice and supervision.

### **2. Association of Family Therapy (AFT) - Systemic Foundation Level Award (Systemic Pathway)** *Please note this pathway is pending accreditation by the Association of Family Therapy.*

All first-year trainees will be offered the opportunity to complete the Foundation Level Systemic Pathway and DClinPsy teaching offered will fulfil all the taught requirements for this professional accreditation (60 hours). Detailed information about this systemic pathway is provided separately in the Systemic Pathway Handbook.

This pathway enables trainees to fulfil the requirements of foundation systemic training, introducing the underlying theory and principles of systemic practice with individuals, families and couples.

Assessments (must be passed to meet the requirements for the award):

- Theoretical Presentation (Group Work): Successfully deliver a group presentation on a topic within systemic practice;
- Reflective Learning Portfolio: Pass a reflective summary of systemic learning evidencing required systemic teaching and independent study;
- Practice Based Assignment: Pass a written assignment that demonstrates use of systemic principles and approaches in their clinical work;

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### **Progression and award requirements**

Full assessment details are provided in the Trainee Handbooks. Assessments are graded using pass/fail and each piece of work must be passed to be eligible for the final award.

#### *Award*

The award is graded pass/fail. To qualify for the Degree award, trainees must complete and pass all module requirements detailed below. Failure at a first attempt will lead to a re-submission that must be passed for the trainee to continue on the course.

- **Clinical Competence** - Pass on six evaluations of clinical competence on placement and complete a clinical interview as a formative exercise. Opportunities for retaking placements and achieving the required clinical competence evaluations is detailed in the Course placement Handbook.

- **Reports of Clinical Activity (RCA)** - Pass three reports of clinical work.
- **Service-Related Research Project (SRRP)** - Pass one report of a piece of service-related research undertaken on a placement in the first two years of the course.
- **Examinations** - Pass a written paper at the end of the first year of training.
- **Research Methods** - Complete a Research Critical Review as a formative exercise and pass a Statistics Assessment completed during the first two years.
- **Research Thesis** – contains 3 sections which constitute the thesis: a systematic literature review, an empirical paper and a section on impact and reflection. Assessed by oral examination – must be passed.

### **Student support and guidance**

- Four-week induction programme for orientation and introducing study and basic practice skills.
- Trainee Handbooks and Syllabus with detailed reading materials and teaching session handouts.
- Staff-trainee ratios of 1:10.
- Extensive in-person and digital library and learning resources.
- Clinical Psychology test equipment and resources: trainee computer rooms.
- Clinical education supported by clinical supervisors in placement provider units.
- Close collaboration between the University and regional clinical sites.
- Academic staff holding regular, planned visits to the clinical placements to support and collaborate with Trainees and the clinical supervisors.
- All Trainees are allocated personal tutors whose role is to assist with personal-professional development and pastoral issues.
- Annual Personal Development Reviews with Personal Tutors to set and review goals for learning and professional development.
- Independent Personal Advisor Schemes for independent consultations.
- Staff and Trainee led support groups and reflective groups.
- Trainee representation on Course Management Committee, the Service User and Carer Advisory Group, the Diversity Working Group and other committees.
- Moodle and email support from academic and professional services staff.
- Access to Occupational Health services and counsellors on campus and through employing NHS Trust.

### **Mechanisms for review and evaluation of teaching, learning, assessment, the curriculum and outcome standards:**

- University led-  
Teaching session reviews (feedback questionnaires and staff report).  
Termly Staff-Student Action Committees.  
Academic submissions and marking reviewed by External Examiners.  
External and Internal Examiner Viva Voce examination (with reports) of Major Thesis.  
Lead External Examiner reports on Course delivery as a whole.
- Annual course review and report prepared by Course Director and considered by University's Doctoral School Committee and Academic Board, Periodic review and revalidation by the University and Purchasers, involving external NHS stakeholder and University panel members.
- Annual staff appraisals.
- Annual Curriculum Review Group.
- Peer observation of teaching.

#### **External led -**

- Contract Performance Monitoring by Health Education England (commissioners);  
Course accreditation by British Psychological Society.  
Course approval by the Health and Care Professions Council.  
Optional BABCP Level 2 Course accreditation by the British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy.  
Optional AFT Introductory Course accreditation by the Association of Family Therapy (pending).

*Mechanisms for gaining Trainee feedback on the quality of teaching and their learning experience:*

- Termly Staff-Student Action Committees.
- Trainee representation at the Course Management Committee.
- Written feedback on each teaching session.

*Committees with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating quality and standards:*

- Course Executive (fortnightly).
- Course Management Committee (annually; includes representatives of each training cohort, academic staff, NHS staff).
- Doctoral School Committee.
- Board of Examiners to consider marks, progression and awards.
- Academic Board.

*Staff development priorities include:*

- Staff expected to continue clinically relevant practice or research.
- Staff appraisal scheme and institutional staff development courses.
- Regular course team meetings
- Staff attendance at relevant professional and research conferences.

*Role of External Examiners:*

External Examiners from the academic clinical community of Clinical Psychology are appointed by the Assessment and Academic Regulations Sub Committee. At least one External Examiner will be registered as a Practitioner Psychologist with the Health and Care Professions Council and entitled to practise using the title of “Clinical Psychologist”. A lead examiner has responsibility for overseeing and reporting annually on the quality of the Course as a whole, with support from individual examiners who review and/or examine individual academic and research submissions. The roles of examiners are specified in the Specialist Doctorate Regulations.

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### **Admission requirements**

The course is only available to graduates with a recognised degree in Psychology – meeting the requirements of the graduate basis for chartered membership of the British Psychological Society. Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. For further details please refer to the Clearing House for Clinical Psychology web page (<https://www.clearing-house.org.uk/>).

*Additional requirements:*

Right to work in the UK (for NHS funded places)

Relevant clinical experience.

All Trainees will be required to successfully complete NHS pre-employment checks.

Declaration of disclosure of any criminal convictions including those outstanding.

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

Graduates of this course are eligible to apply for registration with the Health and Care Professions Council and following successful registration are able to practise using the title “Clinical Psychologist” in the NHS or other sectors, and attain chartered clinical psychologist status under the regulations of the British Psychological Society. For further details on see [www.hpc-uk.org](http://www.hpc-uk.org) and [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk). Note, that HPC does also require character and health references in addition to successful completion of the programme.

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## **Indicators of quality and standards**

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.

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## **List of courses**

The course is taught by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London in partnership with NHS partners in the London region and leads to an award of the University of London. The course is approved by the Health and Care Professions Council and accredited by the British Psychological Society. The Banner course code is given in parentheses.

### **Doctorate Course in Clinical Psychology**

Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (1057)

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