

MSc Child Forensic Studies: Psychology and Law

Programme Specification

Primary Purpose:

Course management, monitoring and quality assurance.

Secondary Purpose:

Detailed information for students, staff and employers. Current students should refer to the related Course Handbook for further detail.

Disclaimer:

The University of Portsmouth has checked the information given in this Programme Specification and believes it to be correct. We will endeavour to deliver the course in keeping with this Programme Specification but reserve the right to change the content, timetabling and administration of the course whilst maintaining equivalent academic standards and quality.

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Programme Specification

1. Named Awards

MSc Child Forensic Studies: Psychology and Law
Postgraduate Diploma in Child Forensic Studies: Psychology and Law
Postgraduate Certificate in Child Forensic Studies: Psychology and Law.

2. Course Code (and UCAS Code if applicable)

C2442F/P

3. Awarding Body

University of Portsmouth

4. Teaching Institution

University of Portsmouth

5. Accrediting Body

None

6. QAA Benchmark Groups

N/A

7. Document Control Information

June 2016

8. Effective Session

2016-2017

9. Author

Dr Julie Cherryman

10. Faculty

Science

11. Department

Psychology

12. Educational Aims

- To enable those who work with children who may have witnessed wrongdoing to do so more effectively.
- To develop students' in-depth appreciation of child development matters as they relate to children's roles (i) as (alleged) witnesses, victims and suspects, and (ii) in judicial proceedings.
- To develop students' understanding of the legal issues surrounding the roles of children as witnesses and suspects.
- To enhance student awareness of issues relating to children with particular needs.

- To increase students' effectiveness in conducting and/ or evaluating investigative interviews with children.
- To develop students' abilities to understand and discuss issues relating to child abuse, including suggestibility and the assessment of credibility.
- To develop students' awareness of the impacts on children of involvement in investigations and judicial proceedings.
- To develop students' research abilities.

13. Reference Points

- University of Portsmouth curricula framework (e.g. Postgraduate, distance learning)
- The scholarship and research expertise of academic members of staff
- QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education (distance learning)

14. Learning Outcomes

- Understand key topics concerning children caught up in the legal system.
- Apply appropriate analytic techniques.
- Communicate in a written manner appropriate to the specific topics and the intended audience.
- Take responsibility for their own learning.
- Discuss the limits of current knowledge in the literature, and be aware of current laws, concerning children caught up in the legal system.
- Conduct and report upon an independent, empirical investigation on a topic related to children in the legal system.

A. Knowledge and Understanding of:

1. The nature and application of theory and findings in research and practice in child forensic studies.
2. Information in relating to the contexts, concerns and operation of the investigative and judicial systems involving children.
3. Principles and techniques in research and practice.
4. The topics researched in the empirical research project/portfolio.

Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

Students are provided with a comprehensive set of distance learning materials that have been written by experts in the area and cover the key topics including research methods. In addition to these materials, students are provided with an essential and additional reading list for each of the units of study. This enables students to have access to current research literature. Further, the use of Moodle Discussion Board enables students to discuss applying theory to practice. An optional study day enables students to meet the staff and other students. Thus, students are provided with material to enable them to gain knowledge and develop an understanding of A1-A4.

Assessment

Knowledge and understanding of key concepts relating to child forensic studies, including law and procedures, and how these relate to practice (A1, A2) are assessed via essays, portfolios of work and research project. The preparation of research scaffolds students' preparation of a research proposal for their final project (A3, A4). Additionally, formative assessment provides students with the opportunity to develop some of the necessary skills and knowledge.

B. Cognitive (Intellectual or Thinking) Skills, able to:

1. Apply multiple perspectives to child forensic issues.
2. Gather and synthesise information.

3. Think analytically and critically.
4. Select appropriate themes and methodologies to research the topics related to children in a forensic situation.
5. Evaluate evidence from psychological and legal sources.
6. Develop and sustain reasoned argument.
7. Use evidence-based reasoning.
8. Analyse complex issues.

Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

The distance learning materials provide up-to-date relevant literature complete with tasks to undertake. These tasks (a formative element of the course) encourage students to think about the issues raised and evaluate these in terms of different perspectives. Throughout the course students are encouraged via the use of Moodle discussions and essay feedback, to develop and sustain a reasoned argument, supported by referring to the extant literature. They are also required to jointly develop wikis as formative assessments to prepare them for summative assessments. The final project involves analyses of complex issues. Thus students are provided with materials to help them develop cognitive skills B1-B8, and are able to demonstrate these in a number of units.

Assessment

Including Moodle discussion as a formative assessment for several units encourages students to think about the relationship between theory and practice and to examine the issues from multiple perspectives (B1, B2, B3). A critical review of a journal article early on in the course provides students with the opportunity to critically evaluate academic work, and thus encourages them to think critically in their subsequent reading (B3, B5, B6, B7). The project design and research enables students to demonstrate competence in selecting appropriate themes and methodologies (B4, B8).

C. Practical (Professional or Subject) Skills, able to:

1. Plan work and manage time effectively in the face of competing and complex demands.
2. Utilise style and formats for written communications that are appropriate to the task.
3. Analyse and interpret data in a systematic, informed and critical manner.
4. Select, implement and evaluate research methodology.

Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

Students on this course may be busy professionals who really do have competing demands. In order to try to help students we provide a 'Useful information mat' that includes a summary of the course, including all assessment deadlines for that year. The assessment dates are spread out across the academic year. For part time students, the research project is supported by a research methods unit studied in the previous year. Studying this unit over a full year enables the practical research skills to develop, resulting in students being in a position to conduct their research the following year. Full time students are expected to be recent graduates who already possess some research skills and these therefore complete the research methods component at the beginning of their studies before progressing on to the research project.

Assessment

The varied assessments are designed not only to assess the learning outcomes, but to reflect some of the skills that might be useful in the workplace. For example, the design and data collection of the final year project enables students to demonstrate time management, analytical and interpretive skills as well as research method design (C1, C3, C4). Another assessment includes providing an information leaflet. This encourages students to examine a topic and identify salient issues relevant to a particular audience (C2).

D. Transferable (Graduate and Employability) Skills, able to:

1. Communicate in writing.

2. Manage a research project / portfolio.
3. Analyse data.
4. Take charge of own learning.

Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

Students are provided with the distance learning materials, reading, and discussion forum. They have the opportunity to demonstrate communication skills throughout the whole of the course, and they also have the opportunity to examine their understanding of a complex communication scenario (an investigative interview with a child). They are encouraged to take control of their own learning. When completing the final project, for example, students provide an agenda for each meeting and the supervisor plays a role in supporting and guiding the student through their analyses of data.

Assessment

Assessment is varied and includes formative as well as summative assessment. Since some students have not studied for many years, we include formative assessments of a wiki to develop a critical review of a journal article together with their fellow students; a wiki to prepare an evaluation of an appeals case, as well as essay plans for which we provide much feedback for students to take into consideration when writing their essay (D1). Successful completion of the research project enables students to demonstrate having taken charge of their own learning (D4), project management (D2), data analyses (D3) and, of course Communication in writing (D1).

15. Course Structure, Progression and Award Requirements

See [Unit Web Search](#)¹ for full details on the course structure and units.

Standard University Rules Apply.

This programme requires successful completion of 180 Level M credits. These 180 credits consist of six core units. All units are 30 Level 7 credits and are delivered over one year for full time students and over two years for part time students (usually with 90 Level M credits being delivered in each of these two years). Students who successfully complete 60 level M credits can exit with the award of Postgraduate Certificate in Child Forensic Studies: Psychology and Law; students who successfully complete 120 level M credits can exit with the award of Postgraduate Diploma in Child Forensic Studies: Psychology and Law; students who successfully complete 180 level M credits can exit with the award of MSc Child Forensic Studies: Psychology and Law.

16. Employability Statement

The vast majority of our students are already working in professional roles related to the course subject and are completing this course as continued professional development. Students in existing related professions undertaking this course have reported significant progression in their careers. Increasingly, however, graduates are joining this course straight from their undergraduate degrees. Due to the range of professional and transferable skills that can be developed via this course, as well as the topic knowledge, this course is relevant to a wide spectrum of different future careers including the police service, education, or caring professions.

17. Support for Student Learning

- The Course is managed by a Course Leader.
- Induction programme (online) and induction day on campus introduces the student to the University and the course.
- Each student has a personal tutor, responsible for pastoral support and guidance.
- University support services include careers, financial advice, housing, counselling etc.

¹ www.port.ac.uk/unitwebsearch

- The Academic Skills Unit (ASK).
- The Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre (ASDAC).
- Excellent library facilities.
- The University of Portsmouth has consistently been awarded an excellent rating for student support and guidance in a number of Quality Assurance Agency inspections.
- Student course and unit handbooks provide information about the course structure and University regulations etc.
- Feedback is provided for all assessments.

18. Admissions Criteria

A. Academic Admissions Criteria

- Bachelor's degree in a relevant subject and/or
- Professional qualification and relevant experience.

B. Disability

The University makes no distinction in its admissions policy with regard to disability and will endeavour to make all reasonable adjustments in order to make it possible for students to study at Portsmouth on a course of their choice.

19. Evaluation and Enhancement of Standards and Quality in Learning and Teaching

A. Mechanisms for Review and Evaluation

- Course Leader's Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review.
- Head of Department's Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review.
- Unit and Course Level student feedback considered at Board of Studies.
- Unit Assessment Board consideration of student performance for each programme.
- Annual Standards and Quality Reports to Board of Studies, including consideration of Subject and Award External Examiner Reports.
- Periodic Programme Review.
- Student Representatives
- Staff Performance and Development Review.
- Peer Review and Development Framework.
- Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee.

B. Responsibilities for Monitoring and Evaluation

- Unit Co-ordinators for unit content and delivery.
- Course Leader for day-to-day running of course.
- Board of Studies with overall responsibilities for operation and content of course.
- Head of Department.
- Associate Dean (Academic).
- Associate Dean (Students).
- Quality Assurance Committee.
- Unit, Award and Progression Board of Examiners.

C. Mechanisms for Gaining Student Feedback

- Student Representation on Board of Studies.
- Unit and Course level student feedback questionnaires.

- University participates in external student surveys, eg Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

D. Staff Development Priorities

- Academic staff undertake activities related to research, scholarship, teaching and learning and student support and guidance.
- Annual staff performance and development reviews match development to needs.
- Managers undertake a variety of management development programmes.
- New academic staff required to undertake appropriate University of Portsmouth learning and teaching programmes.
- All academic staff encouraged to seek Higher Education Academy membership.
- Academic staff new to teaching required to undertake Initial Professional Development Programme (iPROF).

20. Assessment Strategy

As well as enabling students to demonstrate meeting programme and unit learning outcomes, the assessments are designed to enable students to demonstrate and practice skills necessary for the workplace. Several of the units are assessed with portfolios of work to build on writing skills as well as expertise regarding analytical skills. Early in the programme students are given formative and summative assessments on a critical review of a journal article. This aims to enable students to practise the skill of critique and practise it further throughout the whole of their study. Formative assessments encourage students to get to know each other by the use of wikis, where they need to work together to develop a single final wiki on the topic in question. Additionally, assessment includes the opportunity to critique, and assess as if in the workplace, an investigative interview with a child, a skill that can be transferred to the workplace. Together the assessments aim to prepare students for the research component at the final level.

21. Assessment Regulations

Standard university rules apply (see [Assessment and Regulations](#)).

22. Role of Externals

Subject External Examiners who will:

- oversee unit assessment and usually attend Unit Assessment Boards;
- approve unit assessment strategy;
- sample assessment artefacts;
- present report to Unit Assessment Boards.

Award External Examiners (usually also a Subject External Examiner) who will:

- oversee and attend Award/Progression Boards;
- scrutinise and endorse the outcomes of assessment;
- ensure that the standard of the award is maintained at a level comparable with that of similar awards elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

23. Indicators of Standards and Quality

A. Professional Accreditation/Recognition

Not applicable.

B. Periodic Programme Review (or equivalent)

The Department underwent periodic review of its structures and degree programmes by the University in May 2009. Positive feedback was received.

C. Quality Assurance Agency

QAA Higher Education Review, March 2015, judgements about standards and quality meet UK expectations (for full report see [Higher Education Review of the University of Portsmouth, March 2015²](#)).

D. Others

None.

24. Other Sources of Information

Other sources of information may be found in

- Course Approval Document.
- Student Handbook.
- University of Portsmouth Curricula Framework.
- Assessment Regulations.
- University of Portsmouth (<http://www.port.ac.uk/>) and Department (<http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/academic/psychology/>) websites.

² www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/University%20of%20Portsmouth/University-of-Portsmouth-HER-15.pdf