

## Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

### Basic Course Information

1.	Awarding Institution:	Nottingham Trent University.
2.	School/Campus:	School of Social Sciences/City
3.	Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study:	MSc/PgDip Psychology FT, PT
4.	Normal Duration:	FT 1 year, PT 2 years
5.	UCAS Code:	Not applicable

### 6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

The MSc Psychology and PgDip Psychology are two awards offered within our British Psychological Society (BPS) approved conversion course. This course is designed for graduates whose first (i.e. undergraduate) degree is in another discipline or is not recognized by the BPS. The MSc Psychology provides the full 180 credits required for BPS accreditation and is therefore open to students with no previous experience or study of psychology. The PgDip is a shorter (9-month), 120-credit version of the full MSc course that requires students to have an existing 60 credits from previous study of psychology. Successful completion of either qualification confers the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC) with the BPS.

The MSc/PgDip Psychology is designed to reflect contemporary learning, research and practice in psychology, as required by the BPS Standards Framework for accredited conversion courses. Both the MSc and PGDip Psychology are required to cover the GBC curriculum which comprises 8 core subject domains. The 120-credits of the PgDip focus on satisfying this basic requirement. The MSc covers these same core modules but uses an additional 60 credits to provide an opportunity for you to explore specialist areas of psychology of your own choosing and therefore tailor your learning with a view to future employment possibilities. Students on the MSc and PgDip are taught together for all core modules and provided students satisfy entry criteria for both awards, it is possible to transfer from one award to the other during the first term.

Unlike many conversion courses which are based around undergraduate modules, ours is postgraduate in level. While this is more of a challenge, it means that you will leave with a qualification showing that they can cope with postgraduate study and have built on previous undergraduate qualification. It also means that, with the exception of some options on the MSc, all classes consist of postgraduate students only, which allows staff to focus more closely on postgraduate needs and allows the development of a strong course identity.

The course aims to produce graduates who:

1. Are enthused about the academic study of psychology

2. Have a comprehensive understanding of psychology and a critical awareness of current problems, debates, and insights in the discipline.
3. Have the knowledge, skills, and understanding of the principles, methods, theories, and ethical requirements of psychology to progress to and benefit from other post-graduate courses or professional training in the discipline.
4. Have the knowledge and skills to conduct ethically sensitive research and to understand, design and apply appropriate research methodologies and techniques.
5. Adopt an independent and reflective approach to their learning.

7. **Course outcomes**

Course outcomes describe what you should know and be able to do by the end of your course if you take advantage of the opportunities for learning that we provide.

The course outcomes are strongly influenced by the need to fulfil requirements for BPS accreditation. The BPS requirements are drawn from the Subject Benchmark Statement for Psychology (2007). This course was reaccredited by the BPS in February 2016.

**Knowledge and understanding**

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge and critical appreciation and understanding of the theories, methods and principles in psychology.
2. Formulate psychological questions and contrast alternative approaches to answering them.
3. Display the ability to appraise primary research papers and to critically evaluate psychological evidence
4. Compare and critically evaluate different levels of explanation in psychology
5. Construct, apply and evaluate a range of relevant and rigorous psychological approaches to the understanding of everyday life.
6. Demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge, understanding and critical awareness of current issues and key debates in psychology when considering a range of applied contexts. (\*MSc only)
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the role psychology plays in engaging with organisations and wider society. (\*MSc only)

\*NB All learning outcomes apply to both PgDip and MSc, apart from outcomes 6 & 7 which reflect the additional content of the MSc Psychology

**Skills, qualities and attributes**

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Gather and synthesise information from a variety of relevant sources including current research literature.
2. Critically evaluate theories and arguments in psychology.
3. Generate and investigate advanced research questions and hypotheses
4. Design and carry out empirical studies involving a range of methods of data collection.
5. Apply a range of statistical tests and research methods appropriately.
6. Present research findings.
7. Design and manage independent research.
8. Be able to communicate, verbally and in writing, complex ideas and findings.
9. Demonstrate a range of transferable skills including oral and written communication, effective planning and organisation, teamwork and independence, use of ICT and numeracy.

#### **8. Teaching and Learning Methods**

A variety of teaching and learning approaches are used to support you in your development of subject-specific knowledge and understanding, and transferable skills.

We place an emphasis on providing you with rigorous training in the theory and practice of scientific methodology. Research Methods classes both teach research skills and provide an opportunity for you to work in small teams on a series of practical studies. The final independent research project builds on these research methods classes and provides an opportunity for you to plan, conduct and report a large empirical study under the individual supervision of a research active member of staff with relevant expertise.

Lectures, seminars and workshops are used throughout the course to develop your subject knowledge and understanding, whilst small group tutorials are provided in order to support you in your development of both subject knowledge and a range of transferable skills.

We also make extensive use of Nottingham Trent University Online Workspace (NOW), which gives you access to course materials and provides a medium for discussion groups, access to additional resources and information and provision of feedback on learning throughout the course.

#### **9. Assessment Methods**

The Psychology Division pursues a policy of establishing a varied, fair and rigorous assessment regime based upon clearly specified criteria. The MSc/PgDip Psychology will make use of a variety of assessment practices across its modules. Assessment of work will clearly determine whether you

have satisfied the learning objectives and outcomes of individual modules and the course as a whole. Nonetheless, assessment within the Psychology Division is also designed to encourage independent and active learning and to serve a number of 'formative' purposes:

1. To inform you of your strengths and weaknesses, thus playing a part in facilitating personal development.
2. To increase motivation by allowing you to demonstrate your knowledge, understanding and skills and to benefit from the receipt of positive and constructive feedback.
3. To provide you with the opportunity to review and consolidate aspects of your learning.

The main assessment methods to be used on the MSc/PgDip Psychology are as follows:

**Assessed essays:** These enable you to demonstrate your ability to focus on a particular problem and to explore its parameters in a balanced fashion. In addition, the independent Applied Research in Psychology essay will also allow you to demonstrate your ability to generate clear, relevant and timely questions based on your understanding of current theory and practice.

**Examinations:** These may be seen or unseen. They assess your ability to marshal clear and concise arguments swiftly, showing an appreciation of the issues raised.

**Practical Reports:** The skills of reporting research can only be learnt through practice. The course team emphasises this as a vital preparation for the independent research project and for any research related career inside or outside psychology. Practical reports are submitted throughout the two teaching terms within the Research Methods module. This provides an opportunity, not only to obtain summative assessment of performance, but also to provide regular formative feedback to you.

**Research project:** An aim of the course is to provide you with the requisite professional and personal skills to undertake further postgraduate training or to pursue research related careers in psychology. The research project requires you to work independently, to synthesise material, to design, plan and carry out a piece of empirical research, to meet ethical standards, to analyse research data, and to produce a written report according to appropriate professional standards. It is thus a key assessment device both in terms of the formative feedback given during supervision and in terms of the summative assessment of the project report.

**Presentations:** These assess your ability to deliver arguments and information orally. They test ability to engage an audience (where appropriate using aids such as OHPs, handouts, presentational software, tapes, video clips, posters etc.), and to handle an appropriate range of primary and secondary source material, while presenting.

**Phase Test:** The format will be online or in written form. It will assess the breadth of your knowledge, and your ability to marshal clear arguments and show an appreciation of the key issues raised.

**Synoptic assessment:** This will assess a student's ability to apply multiple areas covered in the course to an applied issue/ scenario in order to see how students can synthesise information across the course and apply information in a comprehensive manner. This will be a key part of their Applied Research in Psychology module and forms part of the research project modules.

## 10. Course structure and curriculum

MSc and PgDip Psychology students complete core modules in biological, social, developmental, and cognitive psychology, individual differences, historical and conceptual issues, as well as research methods and statistics. You will also complete an empirical research project focused on a topic of your choosing under the supervision of a research active member of staff. These modules fulfil the curriculum requirements as specified by the BPS.

In addition, MSc Psychology students complete an extended Applied Research in Psychology essay and presentation which focuses on the application of psychology within a career based context of their choosing. The extended essay and presentation are supported by the tutorial system, with the tutor acting as supervisor. Students on the MSc Psychology also choose 20 credits of 'Contemporary Psychology', selected from a list of available option choices drawn from the final year undergraduate courses. These options are modules that reflect the research interests and experience of current staff members and therefore taught by staff who are active researchers or practitioners within different fields of psychology. MSc Psychology students often focus their option choices, essay and project in the same area of psychology with a view to future employment possibilities.

### **MSc/PgDip Psychology** (\* indicates MSc only)

#### Term 1

- Historical & Conceptual Issues (10 credits)
- Cognitive Psychology (10 credits)
- Biological Psychology (10 credits)
- Social Psychology (10 credits)

#### Term 2

- Individual Differences (10 credits)
- Developmental Psychology (10 credits)
- \* Contemporary Psychology option (20 credits)

#### Terms 1 & 2

- Research Methods (20 credits)
- Statistics (20 credits)
- Tutorial group meeting

Terms 2 & 3

- \* Applied Research in Psychology (20 credits)
- Research Project (PgDip 20 credits; MSc 40 credits)

Taught modules are completed across two 10-week terms, with classes scheduled from Monday-Wednesday. Term 3 onwards is for independent supervised study on the empirical research project. This focussed period of attendance is in recognition that many students on the MSc/PgDip Psychology either live away from Nottingham, or complete the course in the context of existing familial or work-based commitments.

Part-time students on the course will divide the 180 credits over two years and offers a degree of flexibility in order to offer an opportunity to people who wish to combine study and employment. You are required to attend Research Methods and Statistics modules in Year 1 and will leave the Contemporary Psychology, Applied Research in Psychology and Research Project modules until year 2. All other modules are flexible in terms of which they choose to do in year 1 and which are left until year 2. The course team discuss this with students at induction and help organise their time appropriately across the two years.

A non-accredited Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) and Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Psychological Studies are also available as interim awards for those students who do not progress through all stages of the course.

**11. Admission to the course**

For current information regarding all entry requirements for this course, please see the 'Applying' tab on the course information web page.

**12. Support for Learning**

The teaching staff pride themselves on being an approachable and friendly team and the range of academic, pastoral and careers support offered to you is a key feature of the MSc/PgDip Psychology. All the core modules on the course are taught exclusively to MSc/PgDip Psychology students by a small team of experienced staff, used to dealing with students from a wide variety of backgrounds and with varying skills and experiences. We strongly encourage your participation and interaction in all modules and provide a dedicated weekly tutorial system to further support learning and encourage the development of transferrable skills.

Tutorials are hour-long timetabled sessions where group size is typically six students. Tutorials are a mixture of planned and student-led sessions and are also used to support the Applied Research in Psychology module in term 2. All

course tutors are drawn from the lecturers on the MSc/PgDip Psychology. Building on these foundations, the MSc/PgDip Psychology aims to foster a dynamic and supportive learning environment in which you become enthused about the academic study of psychology.

International students are given tailored support through additional weekly sessions with the Psychology Division's English Language Support Officer. This is a member of staff who is familiar with the demands of the course. These additional sessions are open to international students from across all of our postgraduate courses and are designed not only to facilitate language and study skills, but to provide a supportive environment for students who may be studying in the UK for the first time. Even those who do have good English language skills often require support for getting used to employing discipline-specific language to enable them to cope with the demands of a psychology course. In addition, the study skills support is provided for those students that come from an educational environment that is very different to the UK Higher Education system.

A key feature of the MSc Psychological Research Methods is with respect to the subject-specific careers support that is available to all students. The Psychology Division has a dedicated Postgraduate Careers Coordinator who sets up a range of career related events throughout the year. Invited talks are presented by psychologists from specialist areas such as clinical and educational psychology, in order to give postgraduate psychology students professional advice and guidance on career progression and applying for further training in specific fields of psychology. Most notably, the Postgraduate Careers Coordinator also provides career advice for students, helping you to make the most of your previous and current qualifications and experience. Advice is given about CV preparation, content and presentation, as well as the writing of personal statements and PhD/job applications in general. You will often receive this advice relative to specific PhD/job applications and through discussion of the advertised post, the job and person specifications and the essential criteria required for appointment.

### **13. Graduate destinations / employability**

The study of psychology enables the development of a wide range of analytical abilities, a proficiency in research methods and analysis, as well as good written and verbal communication skills. Employability skills are embedded throughout the modules taught on the MSc/PgDip Psychology but in particular the Research Methods module and the independent research project provide students with a broad range of skills that are valued by employers, such as research and analysis, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, project management, team-working, numeracy and IT skills. Tutorials and sessions with the Postgraduate Careers Coordinator are used to help you recognise where and how they have acquired skills such as these in order that they can best present themselves to future employers.

The majority of students graduating from the conversion course are successful at gaining employment. Many of the students each year go on to

pursue a range of professional careers in psychology through further specialist training, whilst others progress from the conversion course to PhD study and an academic career. Some will go on to develop careers in the highly competitive, high status psychology professions such as Clinical Psychology, Forensic Psychology, Educational Psychology for which a BPS accredited degree is vital. A number of our graduates are now either career researchers or academics working in the subject area of psychology in higher education. The skills and knowledge acquired during the course are also suited for careers in, for example, research, social and youth work, advertising and marketing, human resources and teaching.

All students receive support from the university's Careers Development Centre as well as Psychology's Postgraduate Careers Officer. The School of Social Sciences are active in organising careers events designed to support career planning and throughout the year the Psychology Division invite visiting speakers from different professions within psychology.

#### **14. Course standards and quality**

The quality management of the MSc/PgDip Psychology has developed in line with University regulations and guidelines. The Course Committee, which meets once a term, oversees all quality management issues. The first of these committee meetings is known as the Annual Review and it is here that the Course Standards and Quality Report (CSQR) is presented. This is a report prepared by the members of the course management team which reflects on issues of standards and quality raised in the previous year.

The Psychology Division also has a Teaching Committee which addresses a range of learning and teaching issues.

External Examiners play a crucial role in the quality management and enhancement of psychology provision. Their comments are invited at meetings of the Board of Examiners and their recommendations addressed through the Teaching Committee and Course Committee.

One important aspect of quality control and enhancement operates at a local level through Module Leaders, who are encouraged to position themselves as 'reflective practitioners', critically evaluating the quality of their modules. They are required to write an annual report on their module, reflecting, on the basis of evidence, on its strengths and potential areas for development. Student feedback is part of the evidence that is used. Module Leaders' Reports have been praised by External Examiners as 'a model of good practice' and as 'refreshingly self-critical'.

Ongoing student feedback is also systematically sought via student representatives who formally report to the Course Committees and who liaise more informally with Course and Deputy Course Leaders.

In addition a Postgraduate Student-Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC) has been created to further enhance communication between students and the



teaching team. The aim of the SSCC is to enable student representatives from all postgraduate courses in psychology to meet and to discuss issues that their peers have raised. The expectation is that regular dialogue and discussion will help to inform practice in all aspects of subject provision.

The MSc/PgDip was successfully reaccredited by the BPS in April 2012. The visiting BPS panel commended the conversion course for the following aspects of good practice:

1. The staff team work hard to create an environment that is inclusive, welcoming and supportive, both for applicants to the course and for students, who clearly feel that their needs are well met.
2. Ethics training is clearly embedded across all of the courses, and students demonstrated a confident understanding of the ethical challenges they may encounter in their research, and which practising psychologists need to deal with.
3. The course offers thorough breadth and depth of coverage of the core curriculum areas in relation to the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership of the Society (GBC).
4. Core coverage is complemented through the provision of a good number and range of research-led modules that allow students to tailor their option choices to their likely career aspirations.
5. Course staff work hard to sustain an open and responsive culture in which student feedback is valued as an essential contributor to course development.
6. Students' learning is underpinned by a high level and quality of laboratory facilities and library provision.

**7. Assessment regulations**

This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in its [Academic Standards and Quality Handbook](#)). Any course specific assessment features are described below:

There are no course specific exceptions from the University regulations

**8. Additional Information**

Collaborative partner(s):	None
Course referenced to national QAA Benchmark Statements:	Psychology
Course recognised by:	British Psychological Society
Date implemented:	April 2013
Any additional information:	

