

## Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

### Basic Course Information

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| 1. | <b>Awarding Institution:</b>                         | Nottingham Trent University            |
| 2. | <b>School/Campus:</b>                                | School of Social Sciences, City Campus |
| 3. | <b>Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study:</b> | MSc Psychology in Clinical Practice    |
| 4. | <b>Normal Duration:</b>                              | 1 year FT                              |
| 5. | <b>UCAS Code:</b>                                    |  |

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

The MSc Psychology in Clinical Practice is your opportunity to explore the ways in which the science of psychology is applied to alleviating human distress through the work of clinical psychologists. The course is designed to help you to develop:

- A critical understanding of the theory and practice of clinical psychology, and the organisational and social context of clinical psychology services.
- The academic skills to undertake novel research in a clinical setting
- The experience of working within a mental health setting through six month placements with a local clinical psychologist

This blend of research and practical learning is reflected in the course team, which consists of clinical practitioners and academics who have considerable experience working with or researching the experiences of people who access clinical psychology services across the UK. This course will provide an ideal launchpad for any student interested in pursuing a further career in clinical psychology. Our aim is to support you to be well prepared for the demands of further clinical training, developing into:

- A clinical scientist, able to critically appraise and apply key features of clinical psychology research;
- A holistic academic, able to apply a broad range critical perspectives to your understanding of distress and mental health, particularly considering distress and service provision in a social context;
- A reflective academic, able to use an awareness of your own experiences and characteristics - past and present - to inform your knowledge and skills with regard to the science and practice of clinical psychology;
- A scholar of clinical practice, with an advanced understanding of key features in clinical psychology applications;
- A professional-in-the-making, prepared to manage the unique challenges and opportunities presented by work in clinical psychology settings.

Taken together, these five elements will provide you with an ideal foundation for the next stages of the clinical psychology training process, a Doctorate in Clinical

Psychology (DClinPsy). Your reflective development on this course will ensure that you have the knowledge, skills, and attributes required to embrace and succeed in your further development and training as a reflective-scientist-practitioner, and an openness to learning from the practice of clinical psychology to be experienced on a DClinPsy. You will be prepared for training to be an independent, ethical practitioner, sensitive to diversity issues and prepared for the challenges and opportunities that present themselves working in any context which supports people through times of distress.

Note: This course DOES NOT provide you with the accredited skills to register and practice as a clinical psychologist, which are only obtainable in the UK through completion of an accredited professional doctorate.

#### **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.

#### **Knowledge and understanding**

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

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of the academic knowledge base associated with the context of practice in clinical psychology;
2. Critically appraise key debates regarding the application of psychology to clinical contexts and client groups;
3. Demonstrate an integrative and critical understanding of the ethical, cultural, political and legal issues arising in clinical psychological practice and research;
4. Synthesise theoretical knowledge with an experiential understanding of reflective practice and make theory-to-practice links;
5. Critically evaluate a range of research designs, methods and analytic techniques applicable to advanced scholarship in clinical psychology.

#### **Skills, qualities and attributes**

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

1. Produce formulations to address clinical practice issues;
2. Produce a clinical psychological research project and plan for further research;
3. Demonstrate an ability to act as a reflective practitioner in relation to clinical practice;
4. Demonstrate a capability to work appropriately in a clinical psychology setting;
5. Communicate clinical psychological information effectively.

*See Section 10 below for details of interim awards and fall-back awards for students who fail to complete all credits available. Of particular note, students who do not complete their practice placement but otherwise complete 180 credits of academic work will be eligible for the MSc Theoretical Foundations in Clinical Psychology, which has the same learning outcomes as those listed, other than Knowledge & Understanding - 4, and Skills, Qualities & Attributes - 4.*

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

A variety of teaching methods have been selected to enable you to learn the wide range of topics covered by the course. Contact time with lecturers might variously be provided in the form of lectures, workshops, seminars, via the virtual learning environment (VLE) or through laboratory or field work. In each module, you will be directed to appropriate web addresses, specialist texts and primary literature. You are also expected to undertake independent studies without direction from tutors as part of your independent learning time. This may involve, for example, revision of course material and independent reading in the appropriate subject areas.

On this course, you will benefit from the Reflective Practice Group which will underpin the entire curriculum. This tutorial is based on an experiential learning strategy, in that you will be supported to develop a self-awareness regarding the practice of clinical psychology, your developing professional identity, course material and independent study, your personal experiences of the course, ethical issues and so on. This tutorial will be facilitated by staff members, with a gradual movement towards you taking a more self-directed mode of reflective practice as the course progresses.

Your experience of research work within a clinical setting will be a foundation for the development of core employability skills including team-working and effective communication.

## **9. Assessment Methods**

The Psychology Department pursues a policy of establishing a varied, fair and rigorous assessment regime based upon clearly specified criteria. The course duly makes use of a variety of assessment practices across its modules. The assessment methods on the MSc Psychology in Clinical Practice are practical reports, assessed essays, oral presentations, a reflective practice diary, and a clinical research project and proposal.

## **10. Course structure and curriculum**

The MSc Psychology in Clinical Practice consists of 180 credits completed within a single academic year. There is a mixture of compulsory and optional modules. You will have some opportunity to express a preference for the field of their clinical placement – and thus subject matter for their research project – although this preference cannot be guaranteed. The following modules are completed over the course of the year:

- The Practice Placement module is the basis for you to be placed within local clinical teams with practicing clinical psychologists or their allied professions, and to undertake a piece of empirical clinical research. Placements are normally arranged by the course team for you, although in particular circumstances we might agree to facilitate a student-arranged placement. They normally start in the January of the academic year, and working within a clinical team will provide a unique opportunity for observations of mental healthcare in practice, such as joining team meetings, case conferences, and

potentially shadowing clinical work. Although you are very unlikely to be given any caseload of your own, the placement supervisors may at their discretion arrange specific clinical tasks for your involvement. This module also provides you with a theoretical and experiential understanding of reflection and its importance in professional practice. Additionally, it is the vehicle by which most students will complete the following three modules:

- For the Clinical Research Project module, you will write up a piece of empirical clinically-based research to a standard suitable for submission to a peer reviewed journal, using data gathered through your practice placement if possible. This task will be carried out under the supervision of an individual academic staff member from the university, in collaboration with the placement supervisor. The initial project design will normally be in place before you start the course, and so your task for this module is focussed on design refinement and subsequent implementation.
- For the Clinical Research Proposal module, you will build on your experience in placement to design a second piece of research which could feasibly be conducted within the same clinical setting by a subsequent student on placement.
- For the Specialist Clinical Practice Essay module, you will apply your scholarship of clinical practice and reflective practice to develop your own professional identity with regard to the work conducted by clinical psychologists in your placement context.

Your preparation for understanding and working with the challenges of the practice placement will be supported by three compulsory 20 credit clinical modules.

- The Clinical Psychology: Theory into Practice module will explore the principles and practices underpinning these core aspects of clinical psychology work. The module will examine some leading theoretical models of formulation and psychological intervention, and how well they apply to different clinical populations. The processes of assessment, formulation and intervention will be explored using a range of presenting difficulties, and students will be taught about the inter-relationship between each clinical process, and how these processes can be critically evaluated.
- The Clinical Psychology: The Self, Services, and Society module This module will allow students to develop skills in integrating and synthesising theoretical and empirical sources with regard to the interaction between the social identity of people experiencing major distress, the context of the services which they may access, and the wider environment of the society in which both operate.
- The Clinical Psychology: Professional Practice module allows you to develop a comprehensive understanding of the British Psychological Society and Health and Care Professionals Council standards of conduct, performance and ethics. You will consider how these guidelines can be applied and understood in terms of their developing professional practice and research skills. Term 1 will consider core practitioner and research skills, such as developing and maintaining healthy therapeutic and work relationships, professional ethics and

code of conduct, interviewing skills, psychometric testing, and choosing appropriate research designs. Term 2 will integrate learning from both Term 1 of this module and earlier learning in the three other professional modules to practice core skills employed with clinical psychology, including therapeutic techniques and interview methods.

Clinical psychology is a profession in which the rigour of scientific processes are applied and developed in the applied setting of clinical work. As such, you will be supported to develop your identity as a psychological researcher through the completion of 40 credits related to advanced research methods.

In Term 1, you will complete the following compulsory modules:

- The Advanced Experimentation & Statistics 1 module examines the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of statistics used in experimental research. The module also covers application of various statistical techniques and computer software, such as SPSS and R.
- The Qualitative Research Design & Analysis 1 module aims to provide you with a comprehensive philosophical and methodological grounding in qualitative research. Additionally you will develop the necessary skills to manage and handle qualitative data, alongside a range of data analytic techniques used by qualitative researchers in psychology.

In Term 2, you will choose two out of the following five modules:

- The Mixed Methods module considers the ontological, epistemological, practical, and theoretical issues involved in combining qualitative and quantitative research in psychology. It demonstrates some of the most effective ways in which quantitative and qualitative research techniques can be employed together within a single research course, and it will also introduce some unusual methods which combine quantitative and qualitative elements within a single procedure (for example, repertory grids and Q methodology).
- The Psychometric Scales in Research and Practice 2 module illustrates how psychometric theory can be applied to the design of high quality survey research, and provides you with an understanding of the uses of measurement within different areas of Psychology, including the application of psychological testing, design issues in survey-based research, methodological issues relating to administration of psychological measures, and the analysis and interpretation of data obtained from survey research.
- The Testing Psychological Theories Using Structural Equation Modelling module introduces you to the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of structural equation modelling (SEM), and equips you with the skills, and understanding, to appropriately construct, analyse, and interpret theoretical path analytic, CFA, and SEM models using LISREL software. You will also be equipped with the skills to use other advanced multivariate techniques, like latent class analysis and multinomial logistic regression.

- The Advanced Experimentation & Statistics 2 module introduces additional advanced statistical topics such as logistic regression, Poisson regression, meta-analysis and multilevel modeling. The module builds on practical topics introduced in Advanced Experimentation & Statistics 1 such as dealing with violations of assumptions and the limitations of standard research designs for real world data (e.g., handling unbalanced or missing data in repeated measures analyses).
- The Qualitative Research Design & Analysis 2 module This module will provide you with both the theoretical underpinnings and analytic practice of conversation analysis (CA), membership categorisation (MCA) and discursive psychology (DP).

A Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) and Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Theoretical Foundations of Clinical Psychology or PGCert in Psychology are also available as interim awards for those students who do not progress through all stages of the course. Students achieving 60 credits will be awarded a PGCert, 120 credits are required for award of a PGDip. If you fail to attend or complete the practice placement but complete 180 credits of academic work, you will receive the alternative award MSc Theoretical Foundations of Clinical Psychology. This award will not meet the 4<sup>th</sup> Skills & Qualities Learning Outcome related to a capability to work in a clinical psychology setting; the 4<sup>th</sup> knowledge and Understanding Learning Outcome is also transformed to "Demonstrate an ability to act as a reflective practitioner in relation to a developing professional identity".

The time requirements of the placement - alongside the necessity of the teaching that runs parallel to the placement - mean that this course is only available with a full time option. You should expect to spend three days a week (15-16 contact hours) on campus in Term 1 attending lectures, seminars, and tutorials. In Term 2, teaching on campus is reduced to 7-8 contact hours over 1-2 days a week, with 3 days on placement. After the Easter break, the placement remains with the same requirements, but with attendance at university reduced to fortnightly workshops and reflective practice tutorials, alongside academic supervision of your research work.

On the work-based placements, you are a representative of NTU and might be involved in complex and sensitive work. NTU has committed to only sending students who have engaged with the taught MSc content, providing assurances to our NHS partners that you will be appropriately competent in the required skills and prepared for the demands of the placement. In order to fulfil this assurance, your attendance and engagement will be monitored, and you will only be able to commence or continue your placement if you are able to demonstrate a satisfactory level of engagement with the course and learning available, including during our mid-term review during the first term. Failure to do so may lead to the you having to defer elements of your studies, be transferred to the MSc Theoretical Foundations of Clinical Psychology (the non-placement version of the course), or being awarded a lower classification (PGDip or PGCert) subject to the relevant assessment regulations.

### **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**

You will be assigned a personal tutor who will provide pastoral and academic support throughout your study. You will meet your tutor (and a range of other teaching staff) during an induction event which will be organised before the course begins. You will also be provided with a Course Handbook which will include a range of information about studying at Nottingham Trent University. Additionally, you will meet with the teaching staff from across the course team on a weekly basis at the reflective practice group. A weekly reflective session is akin with the support often available in clinical practice, and aims to provide you with the opportunity to reflect on practice and experiences.

Work within a mental health setting can be challenging. The psychologist or therapist supervising your work on placement will meet with you for formal supervision at least once a fortnight. You will also have identified points of contact within your work setting for further support between these sessions. There will also be a working relationship between your work placement and the university, which will include a placement visit towards the start and end of the placement.

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

The course will be of particular interest to psychology graduates seeking to pursue a career in clinical psychology via doctoral training courses (DClinPsy). Admission onto such courses is highly competitive, and completion of this course will support you to demonstrate that you have both the academic grounding and experience of clinical research to be in a more favourable position for acceptance onto either training or further work as an assistant psychologist.

You will also be in a favourable position to consider alternative careers in healthcare and health research – either within core health providers such as the NHS or within academic departments locally or internationally.

The course has been designed by academic staff with previous careers in clinical psychology within the NHS and with the training of clinical psychologists, and also with ongoing clinical work in local mental health services. Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust – the largest provider of mental health services in the UK – have been alongside the university in the formative stages of the course development. The course design is therefore well aligned with the skills and qualities that are typically needed for the work of a clinical psychologist.

The Department of Psychology has a proud record of enhancing employability for its postgraduate students, with 92% of our postgraduate students employed or engaged

in further study six months after leaving (Latest DLHE survey postgraduate results 2014/15).

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

Responsibility for the standards and quality of the course will rest with the course committee which meets once a term. Other groups that will input into the quality assurance for the course are the Psychology Learning and Teaching Committee and the Student Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC). The Psychology Learning and Teaching Committee meet several times each term to monitor and discuss quality issues across courses. The Student Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC) meets twice a term to discuss matters arising of concern or interest about particular modules, the overall course, Departmental facilities or beyond. This committee has been successful in effecting good communications between psychology students and staff, and consists of student reps (one of which will be a student enrolled in the MSc Psychology in Clinical Practice) and staff members. Issues raised by both students and staff are able to be addressed promptly, and proactive initiatives can be raised to improve the learning experience of all students.

At a more local level, quality assurance and enhancement issues are monitored by module leaders, who are encouraged to position themselves as 'reflective practitioners', critically evaluating the quality of their modules. Part of this role involves their writing an annual report on their module, which requires them to reflect, on the basis of evidence, on the module's strengths and potential areas for development. Module Leaders' Reports within the Department have been praised by External Examiners as 'a model of good practice' and as 'refreshingly self-critical'.

## 15. 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:

You will be required to sign and perform to an honorary contract issued by the host organisation for your placement. Should a student fail to perform to the professional standards expected by their host organisation, they can expect to face disciplinary measures within the organisation, which could lead to the termination of their contract; the course leader will be an active participant in the decision-making process in such an event. Students may also be held to further account by the university with reference to the Student Code of Behaviour. Should a placement either not commence or be terminated through the choice of, or conduct by, the student, the university will not normally agree to arrange an alternative placement.

Attendance at timetabled teaching and placement will be recorded, and an appropriate level of engagement is required for the student to be eligible to undertake their work-based placement (as noted above). Failure to demonstrate this engagement may require a deferment of studies, enrolment onto the fall-back award (subject to appropriate assessment specifications and regulations).

### Additional Information

Collaborative partner(s): Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Course referenced to national QAA Benchmark Statements:

Course recognised by:

Date implemented:

Any additional information:

You are again reminded that this course DOES NOT provide you with the accredited skills to register and practice as a clinical psychologist, which are only obtainable in the UK through completion of an accredited doctoral training.

Students considering careers in psychology might also be interested to view course specifications for the Nottingham Trent University's MSc Forensic Psychology, which provide a BPS accredited route into professional practice as a forensic psychologist. Students without the appropriate GBC degree or who are unsuccessful in their application to this course might wish to consider our suite of other postgraduate courses, including MSc Psychological Well-Being and Mental Health or MSc Forensic Mental Health

