

## 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 Forensic Mental Health, FT and 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 Forensic Mental Health is designed for both graduates of psychology (or allied disciplines) and those who have a great deal of experience of working within forensic, forensic mental health, or mental health settings. A major strength of the course is the diversity within the cohort, with 'traditional' graduates, seeking to further their education and gain a stronger understanding of theoretical application in a particular context, joining practitioners seeking to extend their theoretical and academic knowledge and understandings in order to underpin their existing practice. Those graduating with an MSc in Forensic Mental Health will have the necessary skills to pursue professional careers in forensic mental health settings, and will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to be independent, ethical and culturally sensitive in their learning and future application of psychology. Students may also complete the course as a means of improving their knowledge and research skills in preparation for further doctoral training as either academic or professional psychologists (often as clinical or counselling psychologists).

The course is 1 year full time or 2 years part time, with fall back awards of PGCert (60 credits) and PGDip (120 credits). All modules are compulsory however there is a great deal of choice for you within the set module structure, with you having choices around assessment foci. You also conduct an extended piece of work on a subject of your own choice, as either a dissertation or an empirical project and also choose your own topic for a supervised extended essay supported by an underpinning tutorial programme.

The aim of the MSc Forensic Mental Health is to 'enable students to move from teacher dependence to learner autonomy' as you progress through the course. We aim to produce graduates who:

1. Are enthused about the discipline of psychology and its various applications, methods and techniques to the applied topic of forensic mental health
2. Have extensive knowledge of theoretical and practical issues in forensic mental health and a critical awareness of the current philosophical, theoretical and methodological problems, debates, and insights that shape the discipline.
3. Have the necessary research knowledge and skills to apply a range of appropriate research methods and techniques in response to specific

- research problems in forensic mental health,
4. Have robust understandings of the science-practitioner model of working, developed both through teaching and experiential learning.
  5. Adopt an independent and reflective approach to your learning and to your future careers.
  6. Are able to critically evaluate theories and empirical evidence relevant to psychological wellbeing and mental health.
  7. Have a good understanding of how to apply understandings and knowledge learned during your studies to everyday settings (e.g. the workplace).

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. Critically understand the academic knowledge base associated with the context of practice in forensic mental health;
2. Critically appraise key debates and synthesise these into your application of psychology when considering a range of forensic contexts and client groups;
3. Identify and critically assess the methodological issues relevant to psychology and forensic mental health;
4. Demonstrate an integrative understanding and critical appreciation of the ethical, cultural and legal issues arising from forensic mental health practice and research;
5. Synthesise theoretical knowledge with an experiential understanding of research-to-practice and make theory-to-practice links;
6. Understand a wide range of research methods and techniques applicable to advanced scholarship in forensic mental health.

**Skills, qualities and attributes**

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

1. Make contemporary theory-to-practice links by critically applying academic knowledge and research skills to assess, conceptualise and intervene to solve common problems encountered within a forensic mental health setting;
2. Select, justify and apply relevant and contemporary psychological theory and research to understand a range of forensic contexts and client groups;
3. Provide integrative accounts of forensic mental health theory and

practice, with an advanced appreciation of any associated ethical, diversity and professional issues;

4. Apply psychological knowledge and research in an independent, ethical, culturally sensitive and reflective manner;
5. Translate and apply a range of integrative skills necessary for employment as a professional in a forensic setting;
6. Demonstrate an independent, ethical, culturally sensitive and reflective approach to the application of psychology and research to a chosen area of forensic mental health, by planning, designing, and implementing an independent research project or theoretical dissertation.

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

A variety of teaching methods have been selected to accommodate a range of learning styles, and to support you in your development of subject-specific knowledge and understanding, and transferable skills, for example lectures, workshops, and seminars. Enquiry based learning is also integral to the course. You are provided with the opportunity to work in small teams on a number of modules.

Whilst lectures, seminars and workshops are used throughout the course to develop your subject knowledge and understanding, small group tutorials are provided in order to support you in your development of both subject knowledge and a range of transferable skills. This includes an opportunity for you to hear about volunteering work that you can take part in whilst studying the course, which is relevant to both your studies and to your future career development. You will also learn about academic scholarship and the avoidance of academic irregularity, as well as receiving specific career advice related to forensic mental health.

We also make extensive use of Nottingham Trent University's virtual learning environment 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 Forensic Mental Health 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 FMH are as follows:

**Research Project/dissertation:** An aim of the course is to provide you with the requisite research skills to undertake further postgraduate training or to pursue a professional career in forensic mental health related occupations. The research project/dissertation requires students to: work independently; synthesise material; to design, plan and carry out a piece of empirical research or theoretical dissertation; to consider and meet ethical standards; and to analyse research data. 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. You have a choice of whether to conduct research as an empirical project or non-empirical dissertation. Research is written up in ways that enable students to demonstrate communication for both lay and academic audiences.

**Assessed Essays/Executive Summary:** These enable you to demonstrate an ability to focus on a particular problem and to explore its parameters in a balanced fashion. In addition, the independent 'specialist 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.

**Group/individual 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, hand-outs, presentational software, tapes, video clips, etc.), and to handle an appropriate range of primary and secondary source material, while presenting conclusions and practical recommendations.

**Book proposal:** This will assess your abilities to marshal clear and concise arguments and show an appreciation of the key issues raised on specific topics discussed throughout the course of a module. The book proposal will allow you to demonstrate both specifically focussed within and synergistic understandings across areas.

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

The MSc Forensic Mental Health consists of 180 credits with all contributing modules being 'core' and no optional modules. You will share modules with students from other MSc courses taught within the Psychology Division because of the overlapping aims and content of these courses with the MSc Forensic Mental Health. This also has the benefit of exposing you to a variety of views and experiences from across the student cohort. Specifically you will

study one module (denoted below by \*) with MSc Forensic Psychology students. In addition, you will study three modules with students from MSc Psychological Wellbeing & Mental Health (denoted below by \*\*). Finally you will share one module with the MSc Psychological Wellbeing & Mental Health and MRes/MSc Psychological Research Methods students (denoted below by \*\*\*). You will also have two modules developed for, and delivered to, just the students on your own course. These are Forensic Mental Health and the Specialist Essay, the latter is delivered through the tutorial system. In addition, you will carry out an empirical research project or theoretical dissertation which focuses on a topic of your choosing under the supervision of a research active member of staff. This is taught throughout your time on the course.

In Term 1 all full time students complete one 20 credit and one 10 credit module. You also commence four 20 credit modules which are then taught across both Terms 1 and 2. The modules and material covered in Term 1 lay the foundations for more advanced understandings to be developed in Term 2.

#### Term 1

- Explanations of Crime, Criminal Behaviour and Victimisation\* (20 credits)
- Clinical Research Methods Methods\*\* (10 Credits)
- Contemporary Issues in Mental Health\*\* (20 Credits continuing in Term 2)
- Theory and Application to Mental Health\*\* (20 Credits continuing in Term 2)
- Research & Professional Skills\*\*\* (20 Credits continuing in Term 2)
- Forensic Mental Health (20 Credits continuing in Term 2)
- Tutorials (continuing & leading to Specialist Essay in Term 2)

In Term 2 all full time students continue the four 20 credit modules started in Term 1, as well as completing their Specialist Essay.

- Contemporary Issues in Mental Health\*\* (20 Credits continued from Term 1)
- Theory and Application to Mental Health\*\* (20 Credits continued from Term 1)
- Research & Professional Skills\*\*\* (20 Credits continued from Term 1))
- Forensic Mental Health (20 Credits continued from Term 1)
- Tutorials & Specialist Essay (10 Credits, continued from Term 1)

In order to complete the course, you must also complete an Independent Research Project or Dissertation (60 credits). This allows you the opportunity to carry out an extended piece of empirical or theoretical research of your own design, under the supervision of an individual staff member with specialist knowledge in the chosen area of study.

Taught modules are completed across two 10-week terms, with classes normally scheduled for two days per week. Term 3 onwards is for independent supervised study on the research project or dissertation. This focussed period of attendance is in recognition that many postgraduate students either live away from Nottingham, and so travel significant distance to attend, 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. This offers a degree of flexibility in order to offer an opportunity to people who wish to combine study and employment. The course team discuss this with students at induction and help organise their time appropriately across the two years.

#### **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 Forensic Mental Health. We strongly encourage your participation and interaction in all modules and provide a dedicated fortnightly tutorial system to further support learning and encourage the development of transferrable skills. Tutorials are hour-long timetabled sessions where group size is typically 6-8 students. Tutorials are a mixture of planned and student-led sessions and are also used to support the Specialist Essay in Term 2. All course tutors are drawn from the lecturers on MSc Forensic Mental Health. Building on these foundations, the MSc Forensic Mental Health aims to foster a dynamic and supportive learning environment in which students become enthused about the academic study of psychology.

EU and international students are given additional support through weekly English support tutorials that cover academic language and skills. They are an opportunity for students to show their work to a language tutor before handing it in. The tutor will then analyse the work to see whether the assignment conforms to the overall required structure and identify particular language strengths and areas that need additional work.

Academic and pastoral support for you is provided in various ways, with a considerable amount of work being provided face-to-face or by email. Within the course, students will be assigned a personal tutor who will provide both pastoral and academic support throughout the year (within the specialist essay/tutorial module). In addition, all students are given a course handbook (via NOW) which contains detailed information related to the course, for example, module outlines, notification of exceptional circumstances, and grade based assessment information.

At induction you are provided with information from support services, for example the Students' Union, Student Welfare, accommodation, financial advice, the careers service, counselling, services to support learning (for example computer and IT resources), the Library and Learning Resources, the Learning Support Unit and you are also introduced to policies relating to health and safety, equal opportunities, harassment, codes of behaviour, assessment regulations, complaints, and appeals.

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

Nottingham Trent University provides many resources to students with regard to developing their employability following completion of their studies. The main university resource coordinates opportunities in both paid and voluntary employment, and arranges workshops and presentations throughout the year. In addition, the School of Social Sciences has dedicated career consultants who can support you in planning your career, developing your CV, and reviewing applications, and will plan talks and events more tailored to social science students. The Division of Psychology has a team of academics with responsibility for further development of employability – including a dedicated postgraduate employability coordinator – who will ensure that psychology-specific opportunities and advice are available, and will provide specific information about careers in psychology through arranged events and individual conversations as appropriate.

A focus on practice areas relevant for employment is maintained throughout the MSc Forensic Mental Health. The course develops a range of transferable skills in students that are likely to appeal to a wide range of employers (including oral and written communication and presentation skills, effective planning and organisation, research and analytic skills, critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork and independence, use of IT and numeracy, and project management). Tutorials are used to help students recognise where and how you have acquired skills such as these in order that you can best present yourself to future employers.

Employability skills are embedded throughout the modules taught on the MSc Forensic Mental Health but are also addressed explicitly in the Research and Professional Skills module and the Theory and Application to Mental Health module. These modules run through terms 1 and 2 and provide students with a range of key research and dissemination skills necessary for the pursuit of

an academic or professional career in psychology as well as enabling you to solve real world problems faced by practitioners working in areas related to forensic mental health. These modules also teach students how best to present yourselves and your work both to prospective employers and to funding bodies. In Term 2 in the Research and Professional Skills module students will develop a personal development plan and professional CV, including a reflection on the skills you have acquired throughout the course. In Term 2 of the Theory and Application to Mental Health module, students will work on a problematic issue provided by a real world relevant organisation (for example a mental health charity, prison etc.). This will provide you with the opportunity to work on a real problem which the organisation faces and also to present your findings directly to that organisation. Not only will you benefit from developing contacts within the participating organisations but you will also advance your skills in presenting to potential employers, whilst still maintaining appropriate focus on theoretically grounded content.

The independent research project/dissertation is completed by students on the MSc Forensic Mental Health in term 3 and over the summer period. There may be opportunities for you to conduct this project in collaboration with external organisations and in settings outside of NTU. These collaborations may occur through particular contacts and associations available to the supervising member of staff or may be organised through contacts available to you. Examples of past collaborative projects have included students working with schools, prisons, in healthcare settings, and with a range of voluntary caregiving organisations.

The majority of students graduating from the MSc Forensic Mental Health are successful at gaining appropriate employment or progress to further study. Some students go on to pursue a range of professional careers in psychology through further specialist training, whilst others have progressed from the course to PhD study and an academic career. Some will go on develop careers in the highly competitive, high status psychology professions such as Clinical Psychology, for which this course provides a suitable foundation. You will receive support from the university's Careers Development Centre as well as Psychology's Postgraduate Careers Officer. The School of Social Sciences is 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 course has been developed in line with University regulations and guidelines. The course Committee (which has at least two meetings per year) oversees all quality management issues. At the first of these committee meetings, 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. It also addresses feedback from external examiners and

students.

The Psychology Division has a Teaching Committee which regularly addresses a range of learning and teaching issues in the context of our taught programmes.

External Examiners also 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 and Course Committees.

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.

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. Student feedback on specific modules is also sought continuously as part of a two way dialogue between staff and students and this is further enhanced by the use of the University's EvaSys module evaluation system. Further the Postgraduate Student Satisfaction Survey will be used to aid the course team's reflection on their overarching provision.

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.

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:

There are no course specific exceptions from the University regulations

16. **Additional Information**

Collaborative partner(s):	None
Course referenced to national QAA	N/A
Benchmark Statements:	
Course recognised by:	N/A
Date implemented:	April 2013
Any additional information:	