

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MSc/MA Health and Clinical Psychological Sciences (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Dip, PG Cert
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home School/other teaching departments	Psychological Sciences
Location of delivery	Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2years) September
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	N/A
Birkbeck Course Code	TMSHACPS_C (MSc) TMAHACPS_C (MA)
HECoS Code	100497 (Psychology)
Start date of programme	2018/19
Date of programme approval	Summer 2018
Date of last programme amendment approval	May 2025
Valid for academic entry year	2025-26
Programme Director	Beth Grunfeld
Date of last revision to document	21/05/2025

Admissions requirements

Candidates are normally expected to have a second-class honours degree (2:2) or above in Psychology.

Course aims

The aim of this programme is to offer an introduction to the methods and research findings from contemporary health psychology, as well as neuropsychology, trauma and addiction. The programme has an emphasis on mixed-method approaches, including advanced quantitative methods, qualitative approaches and evidence synthesis. The programme will enable students to appraise research in these areas and carry out independent research projects appropriately.

The principal educational aims are to:

1. Provide an up-to-date grounding in the theories, concepts and empirical findings in psychological aspects of health and illness
2. Provide formal training in quantitative and qualitative research methods, so that students are able to evaluate, plan and conduct research.
3. Equip students to apply the scientific and theoretical basis of their studies using a scholarly and critical approach.
4. Enable students to disseminate psychological approaches.
5. Enable students to develop an ethical approach to their work, so that they can recognise the applicability and limits of their own competence and the models and methods they use.

Distinctive features:

- Access to world renowned researchers and facilities with broad international appeal
- Combines Birkbeck's strengths in health psychology, clinical neuroscience, and mixed-methods
- Face-to-face and online teaching, with a part-time (day release) option
- A unique combination of theoretical approaches to studying health that enables an overview of factors contributing to health outcomes.

Important Note:

This course is not accredited by the British Psychological Society in either Health or Clinical Psychology. Please see the British Psychological Society website for a list of accredited courses

Course structure

The programme is designed for both full-time students over 1 year and part-time students over 2 years.

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Status	Likely Teaching term(s)
Full-time – 1 year					
7	PSYC074H7	Qualitative Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7	PSYC077H7	Advanced Quantitative Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7	SCPS231H7	Approaches to Research Synthesis	15	Compulsory	2
7	SCPS214H7	Current Challenges in Health	15	Compulsory	2
7	SC12001H7	Academic Skills for PG Students	15	Compulsory	1
7	SCPS232H7	The Psychology of Trauma and Addition	15	Compulsory	1
7	PSYC006H7	Neurocases and Clinical Assessment	15	Compulsory	1-2
7	SCPS215H7	Intervention Design and Evaluation	15	Compulsory	2
7	PSYC078H7	MSc Dissertation (MSc only)	60	Core	2-3
7	SCPS008D7	MA Dissertation (MA only)	60	Core	2-3
Part-time – 2 years					
Year 1					
7	PSYC074H7	Qualitative Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7	PSYC077H7	Advanced Quantitative Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7	SCPS231H7	Approaches to Research Synthesis	15	Compulsory	2
7	SCPS214H7	Current Challenges in Health	15	Compulsory	2
Year 2					
7	SC12001H7	Academic Skills for PG Students	15	Compulsory	1
7	SCPS232H7	The Psychology of Trauma and Addition	15	Compulsory	1
7	PSYC006H7	Neurocases and Clinical Assessment	15	Compulsory	1-2
7	SCPS215H7	Intervention Design and Evaluation	15	Compulsory	2
7	PSYC078D7	MSc Dissertation (MSc only)	60	Core	2-3
7	SCPS008D7	MA Dissertation (MA only)	60	Core	2-3

Core: Module must be taken and passed by student

Compulsory: Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)

Option: Student can choose to take this module

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all of the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, information about how and when you will be assessed.

Your learning for this course will be organised around the activities outlined below.

The programme includes lecture-based theory modules, practical research methods/analysis modules and either a supervised project (MSc) or a directed critical literature review (MA). The teaching styles are matched to the content, and class sizes are kept small or moderate (10–40) to encourage student participation, even in lecture-based modules.

Two modules (Advanced Quantitative Methods, Qualitative Methods) feature lectures with laboratory/practical sessions. These provide students with hands-on experience of using statistical software practical experience of using qualitative methods in a relatively self-contained setting.

Students on this programme will complete the following modules:

Academic Skills for PG Students (SC12001H7; 15 credits). This module introduces students to the key skills required for postgraduate study, and the nature of independent research. It covers skills such as essay writing, literature reviews, and presentation skills. It describes contemporary trends in psychological sciences research, including the open science and metascience approaches, and ways to combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies. It covers the importance of ethics and responsible uses of psychological research, and the public communication of science. The module is assessed by preparation of a poster presentation.

Advanced Quantitative Methods (PSYC077H7; 15 credits). This module covers advanced statistical procedures as employed in experimental psychology. The module is assessed through a series of written worksheets.

Qualitative Methods (PSYC074H7; 15 credits). This course will give Introduce some of the main qualitative approaches now used within psychology and provide practical guidance on conducting qualitative research. Furthermore, it will give students opportunities to engage in practical work with qualitative methods. The module is assessed by a 2000-2500 word essay.

Approaches to Evidence Synthesis (SCPS231H7; 15 credits). This module covers a range to approaches to the synthesis of research evidence that students will come across in their reading and during their careers. Approaches covered include narrative reviews, systematic reviews, meta-analysis, synthesis of qualitative data, and scoping reviews. The module will cover practical approaches to undertaking evidence synthesis. This module will be delivered online. The module is assessed by a 2500 word mini systematic review.

Current Challenges in Health (SCPS214H7; 15 credits). This module covers the role of health behaviours in disease risk and examines different patterns of risk across different sectors of the population. The module will explore the challenges in primary and secondary prevention of disease looking at issues surrounding health communication as well as methods to help people make more informed decisions about their treatment choices. It also examines some of the issues in relation to living with a chronic illness. The module is assessed by one 2500 word essay.

Psychology of Trauma and Addiction (SCPS232H7; 15 credits). This module focuses on providing a research-led, multidisciplinary, and applied approach to mental health and wellbeing focused on the human experience of trauma and addiction through their aetiology, clinical course, treatment and preventative approaches, associated comorbidities, protective and risk factors. The module will also explore the theoretical perspectives and individual differences which underlie trauma and addiction and how these can impact human health and wellbeing. It will encourage a critical exploration of theories and perspectives, as well as of the research methods used to investigate clinical and non-clinical samples. The module is assessed by two 1500 word essays.

Neurocases and Clinical Assessment (PSYC006H7; 15 credits). This module teaches students how lesion approaches can be used to advance the field of cognitive neuroscience. A series of case demonstrations will be given, each of a patient with a circumscribed brain lesion and associated functional deficit. The module is assessed by two 1000-1500-word essays.

Intervention Design and Evaluation (SCPS215H7; 15 credits). This module covers the main theories and methods used in the design and evaluation of health-related interventions in both controlled and real-world situations. The module is assessed through a mini systematic review written up in the style of a 2500 word research article.

Dissertation (PSYC078D7/ SCPS008D7; 60 credits). The final component of the programme is the 60 credit dissertation module. MSc students will be required to complete a research project in an area of health psychology or applied neuroscience and write this up as a report of 10,000 words. Due to issues with obtaining NHS ethics and approvals it is not possible to undertake an project requiring NHS data collection unless ethics/approvals are already in place. MA students will be required to complete a critical literature review on a topic related to health psychology or applied neuroscience and as agreed by their supervisor. This critical review should also be 10,000 words in length. In all cases, the dissertation must be supervised by an academic member of the Department of Psychological Sciences.

Full time students will normally complete the programme in one year and attend lectures on two days per week. It is expected that they will spend up to three days per week completing directed reading and coursework. Part time students will normally complete the programme in two years and attend lectures on one day per week. It is expected that they will spend similar time (pro rata) completing directed reading and coursework.

Teaching on this course is a combination of lectures and seminars. Lectures are designed to provide you with an outline or overview of the topic, to engage you with the material and direct you to other resources. They are a springboard for your own learning. Seminars are group sessions where you will be asked to contribute to discussion or group work around the topic, with material set in advance for which you need to prepare.

How we will assess you

The course will use a variety of assessment methods. Assessment is used to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. We use a variety of assessment methods. For most of the modules associated with this course, your assessment will be through the following types of assessment.

Module Title	Assessment
Qualitative Methods	2000-2500 word essay

Advanced Quantitative Methods	Worksheets
Approaches to Research Synthesis	2500 word mini systematic review
Current Challenges in Health	2500 word essay
Academic Skills for PG Students	Poster presentation
Psychology of Trauma and Addiction	Two 1500 word essays
Neurocases and Clinical Assessment	Two 1000-1500 word reports
Intervention Design and Evaluation	2500 word essay
MSc Dissertation (MSc only)	Dissertation
MA Dissertation (MA only)	Dissertation

For MSc students the dissertation – a supervised research project – is carried out under the supervision of a member of academic staff with research interests in the area of the project. This provides students with access to a specialist in their project area who can provide expert advice on all aspects of the research. The project also ensures that taught skills are exercised within a constructive environment during the course.

For MA students, the dissertation (a directed critical literature review) similarly is supervised by a subject expert.

Assessment procedures ensure that students develop a portfolio of work over the duration of the programme, and feedback on coursework for those modules that require it encourages personal development.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

‘Learning outcomes’ indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

On successful completion of this programme a student will be able to demonstrate:

Subject Specific:

- Knowledge of the different theoretical positions and debates underlying a range of areas within health psychology
- Understanding of the main psychological factors which can influence health, illness and healthcare delivery
- Understanding of the psychosocial/cultural/socioeconomic contexts in which behaviours and healthcare take place
- Knowledge of the main qualitative and quantitative techniques used to conduct research in health psychology and clinical neuroscience
- Practical knowledge of all phases of developing, conducting and reporting a research project
- Knowledge of a wide range of parametric and non-parametric univariate and multivariate statistical procedures, the conditions under which they may reasonably be applied, and how to interpret the results of the procedures

Intellectual:

- A critical appreciation of contemporary research and research methodologies used across a number of areas within health, affective and clinical/neuro psychological sciences

- Ability to critically evaluation of research evidence and of the student's own work
- Ability to formulate research questions and development of appropriate research designs
- Ability to critically evaluate research within its methodological context.
- Understanding of how to design theory-based interventions how to evaluate the efficacy of health psychology interventions

Practical:

- Effective searching, collating, summarising and reporting on relevant material from appropriate sources in health, affective and clinical-neuro psychological sciences.
- IT skills, including use of web browsers for research, email, Word, PowerPoint, referencing software and familiarity with SPSS
- Ability to conduct literature reviews using electronic search tools, electronic journals and databases
- Ability to summarise and assess contemporary research succinctly
- Data collection and analysis skills
- Ability to present data in a meaningful way, and to transform it into different presentational formats
- Planning and organizational skills

Personal and Social:

- Ability to work with others in small groups on practical research tasks
- Ability to work independently
- Ability to effectively plan and organize coursework and project work
- Effective time management skills
- Effective communication through both written reports and verbal presentations
- An increased awareness of ethical issues and ethical practice

Careers and further study

Graduates from the programme work in many different settings including assistant psychologist roles, healthcare, consultancy and researchers. Our students also go onto further study including applying to PhD programmes or a Clinical Psychology Doctorate.

Birkbeck's MSc/MA Health & Clinical Psychological Sciences graduates will complete with a set of valuable attributes, for example:

- The ability to work as part of a team
- High-level oral and written communication skills in English
- Strong research skills
- Strong qualitative and quantitative analysis skills
- Skills in evaluating and assessing types of information
- The ability to present yourself and an argument
- Ability to disseminate psychological approaches
- Understanding of ethical issues in both research and practice

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Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on [the careers pages of our website](#).

Academic Regulations and Course Management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services](#). This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our

Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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