Programme Specification

A Programme Specification provides a concise summary of the main features of a programme and its intended learning outcomes. It is intended to be used by prospective students, current students, academic staff and potential employers.

Programme Title:	
MSc Applied Forensic Psychology	
Programme (AOS) Code(s):	**MH1AFP1 (Full Time); MH1AFP2 (Part Time 2 Years); MH2AFP2 (Part Time 3 Years)**
UCAS Code:	**N/A**
Name of Final Award:	**Master of Science, MSc**
Level of Qualification:	**Level 7**
Regime of Delivery:	**Flexible & Distributed Learning: Blended Learning**
Mode(s) of Delivery:	**Full time, Part Time**
Typical Length of Study (Years):	**1 year (full time)** **2 years (part time)** **3 years (part time)**
Professional Body Recognition / Accreditation (including specific requirements where applicable):	

Brief Description of the Programme

Our specially-developed blended learning Master's offers the convenience of being able to complete forensic psychology studies alongside your current employment.

As a Forensic Psychologist, you may work directly with prisoners on treatment and rehabilitation programmes, and be involved in psychological interventions designed to modify criminal behaviour. You may also be called upon to give expert evidence to various audiences, including courts, and parole and mental health boards.

Within the programme you will develop an applied theoretical skills base for the practice of Forensic Psychology, with curriculum covering 8 key areas;

1.   Research and research methods (including an independent dissertation)
2.   The legal and criminal justice context (incl. investigative psychology)
3.   Assessment and formulation (tools for risk evaluation)
4.   Interventions (managing prisoners, patients, victims, professional and organisations)
5.   Client groups (with a focus on vulnerable individuals)
6.   Forensic settings (e.g. prisons, secure units, criminal and civil courts)
7.   Development and training (professional development and reflective practices)
8.   Advice and consultancy (communication principles for practice and policy)

Flexible Blended Learning
One of the few courses of its kind to be offered as a blended learning Master's, the programme will allow you to work through materials online, while also attending three, one-week blocks on

campus. You can choose to complete the course full time over a year, or part time over two or three years, fitting in the training more easily alongside your current work.

Practical Prison Focus
Crucially, in the attendance weeks, you will be based in forensic settings for two days each week. Bucks New University has strong links with a number of different prison establishments (based on category and population) such as HMP Bullingdon, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Woodhill, HMP Grendon and HMYOI Aylesbury. In the course, therefore, you will hear from qualified Forensic Psychologists, prison officers and senior managers, as well as have interactions directly with prisoners. In addition, there may be some attendance sessions where the forensic setting will be different, for example a courtroom or police/emergency services setting (e.g. for PS763 *Police Psychology & the Investigative Process* and/or PS764 *The Legal & Criminal Justice Context*).

This level of industry insight and contact will be invaluable in securing work and developing your confidence as a Forensic Psychology practitioner.

Who is it for?
This course is for anyone who has studied psychology at undergraduate level and wishes to specialise in prison work. You might be working as an intervention facilitator in prisons already and want to advance in your career. You may also have studied a degree such as criminology or sociology and have hands-on experience you can draw on working in the criminal justice system. The course is also designed to provide students with the core skills for any *Forensic Psychology* work.

Programme Aims

1	Provide a critical awareness and systematic understanding of the current knowledge, theory and evidence based practice relevant to the discipline of forensic psychology, as well as current areas of concern.
2	Develop skills and capabilities relevant to progress into forensic psychology practice (in accordance with the academic requirements of the Division of Forensic Psychology of the British Psychological Society).
3	Enhance knowledge of a range of techniques and research methods (quantitative & qualitative data analysis, interpretation, evaluation and synthesis) applicable to psychological enquiry in a range of forensic settings.
4	Applying relevant ethical, legal and professional practice frameworks (e.g. BPS, HCPC), and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
5	Develop communication skills in preparation for the dissemination of work to a wide range of written (e.g. professional reports, journal papers, conference posters) and oral (e.g. presentations, one-to-one feedback) formats.
6	Foster personal skills and professionalism to synthesise all of the above to inform the development of a professional identity as a trainee forensic psychologist.

Programme Learning Outcomes

The Bucks Graduate Attributes focus on the development of innovative leaders in professional and creative capacities, who are equipped to operate in the 21st Century labour market and make a positive impact as global citizens. The attributes are developed through the programme.

ID	Learning Outcome
Graduate Attribute: Knowledge and its application (K)	
K1	Critically evaluate current knowledge, theory and evidence based practice relevant to the discipline of forensic psychology, as well as current areas of concern, and identify specific research questions or problems to be addressed.
K2	Critically understand and demonstrate a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and skills used in forensic psychology.
K3	Demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of a range of influences on psychological functioning, how they are conceptualised in the forensic psychology, and how they interrelate with offending behaviour.
K4	Critically understand and evaluate various interventions and models of change (processes and their effect) available within applied forensic psychology.
K5	Summarise and defend empirically supported conclusions in both an adversarial legal context and academic forum (i.e. empirical journal articles and poster presentations).
K6	Demonstrate an in-depth critical understanding of a chosen aspect of forensic psychology through an extended dissertation project.
Graduate Attribute: Creativity (C)	
C1	Detect meaningful patterns in individual, group, and organisational behaviour and evaluate their significance utilising multiple theoretical perspectives to systematically analyse the relationships between them (in both investigative and forensic treatment settings).
C2	Creatively solve practical forensic assessment and management problems by clarifying questions, considering and making decisions about alternative solutions and outcomes, and the evaluation of those questions, solution and outcomes.
C3	Pose, operationalise and critique research questions within the field of forensic psychology.
C4	Comprehend and use a variety of numerical, statistical and other forms of data (and software or hardware), particularly in the context of presenting and analysing complex data sets.
C5	Disseminate work and research appropriately within a range of written (professional reports, journal papers, conference posters) and oral formats (presentations, one-to-one-feedback).
Graduate Attribute: Social and ethical awareness and responsibility (S)	
S1	Be aware of ethical principles/approval procedures, and demonstrate these in relation to personal research and study within various forensic environments.
S2	Communicate with sensitivity to, and react appropriately to, contextual and interpersonal factors with colleagues, supervisors, prisoners and the public, while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
S3	Demonstrate an in depth understanding of the formal legal and ethical frameworks that forensic psychologist's work within (BPS, HCPC).
S4	Recognise that specific knowledge and skills are required to work with particular client groups (and different forensic practice settings), for example children and young people,

	intellectually disabled, cultural minorities etc., and to demonstrate an understanding of the impact, and importance, of diversity and difference on practice.
Graduate Attribute: Leadership and self-development (L)	
L1	Plan and understand the management of psychological interventions to bring about change in thinking patterns during behavioural change interventions based on the most up-to-date empirical research.
L2	Demonstrate an ability to apply empirically grounded strategies to reduce the risk to the public of offending, by developing working relationships with individuals, and groups to the benefit of the self, wider communities and society.
L3	Recognise their own strengths and limitations that may affect forensic practice and develop self-support and self-care strategies via continued self-reflection of professional psychology skills and competencies in a range of forensic contexts (prisons, secure units, hospitals, the community, the courts).
L4	Demonstrate an ability to conduct and lead practice and research that is empirically and theoretically based, adopting a scientist-practitioner model in all tasks.
L5	Critically apply psychological theory to lead improvements to policies and the justice system, including; the legal process, process of detention, as well as consultancy work with legal professionals, and interdisciplinary or multi-agency government (and non-government) organisations.
L6	Demonstrate key general skills surrounding autonomy, accountability and team work (time management, independent learning and work completion, planning and evaluation of own learning and development, information retrieval skills, team work skills).

Programme Structure

Programmes are structured in stages. The number of stages will vary depending on the mode (e.g. full-time, part-time), duration and location of study which will be detailed in the Programme Handbook.

Modules are set at a specific academic level and listed as either core (compulsory) or optional. The level indicates the relative academic difficulty which will increase through the programme. Passing modules will reward you with academic credit. The amount of credits will depend on the complexity of the module and the level of effort required, which is measured in 'notional learning hours'.

Our Academic Advice webpages provide more information on the structure of taught awards offered by the University.

Please note: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year. Other option modules may also be introduced at a later stage enabling the programme to respond to sector developments.

Level 7

Code	Module Title	Credit	Core / Option	Compensable (Normally Yes)
PS763	Police Psychology & the Investigative Process	15	Core	No
PS764	The Legal & Criminal Justice Context	15	Core	No
PS765	Professional Practice Skills & Ethics	15	Core	No
PS766	Assessment & Management	15	Core	No

PS767	Vulnerable Groups in Forensic Settings	15	Core	No
PS768	Professional Practice Issues in Forensic Psychology	15	Core	No
PS772	The Journey of Change - Forensic Focus	15	Core	No
PS770	Applied Forensic Research Skills	15	Core	No
PS771	Postgraduate Forensic Dissertation	60	Core	No

Learning and Teaching Activities

Please see the [Academic Advice pages](#) for a description of learning and teaching activities that are recognised by the University. Detailed information on this specific programme is outlined below:

The programme will be delivered via 'flexible and distributed learning' (FDL), which is defined by the QAA as education via means that do not require the student to attend specific weekly classes at specific location, thus, covering terms such as 'blended learning' and 'distance learning'. Learning and teaching processes will be offered through Blackboard™ (Bb), the University's Virtual Learning Environment, as well as three, one-week blocks on campus to allow more detailed discussion of course materials and student-to-student interaction. This will additionally ensure students can easily fit training alongside their current work.

The methods utilised throughout the programme are aimed at developing students' understanding of the core areas of *Forensic Psychology*, providing them with a more in depth scope of knowledge and skills to build upon their undergraduate studies, or previous experience.

Unique to the programme is the forensic-context focus offered during the attendance weeks, wherein students will be based in forensic settings for two days each week. Content will thus be taught by a variety of individuals beyond academic staff, including qualified Forensic Psychologists, prison officers and senior prison managers, as allowing for interactions directly with prisoners. This crucial immersive industry experience will be invaluable in applying and developing the theory and skills students learn throughout the course, as well as their confidence as a Forensic Psychology practitioner, and comfortability in forensic settings.

Teaching methods utilised will include: online lectures, online classroom-based activities (utilising Blackboard Collaborate), independent learning methods, practical campus based sessions (including role-playing and simulation), and immersive study trips to various forensic settings to increase awareness and to develop practical skills (as highlighted earlier).

Research Skills are taught at the beginning of the course to ensure students have a good foundation in applied forensic research (planning, design and conducting research). This will include research methods and analytic techniques applicable to forensic psychology. Students will also be given summaries of, and signposted to, further study and learning of advanced statistical techniques in other, related modules (e.g. Smallest Space Analysis in PS763; efficacy of interventions in PS766 & PS767). There will be a summary 'refresher' research methods session (plus tutorials) at the beginning of each year on the part-time routes.

> **Online lectures** enable dissemination of knowledge to large numbers of students. They typically provide structure to the topic area in order to facilitate understanding and inspire students to think critically about the issues, promoting further independent learning.

Online seminars and discussion boards (BB Collaborate) will provide a forum in which students can engage with the subject, clarify issues and begin to discuss the subject matter critically via various pre-set activities.

Students will be expected to prepare in advance for each week's topic, and be involved in the learning process, to demonstrating their independent learning and critical evaluation skills.

Student-led online seminars facilitate development of cooperative team-work between students and individual communication skills, both of which are highly sought-after transferable skills.

Student presentations will also encourage students to critically examine the application of forensic psychological theory to human behaviour. Students are encouraged to work as a group to coordinate presentations to a professional standard.

Online Workshop activities will include the practical use of the statistics software package SPSS, which is used by social scientists for the analysis and presentation of quantitative data. Students will be able to follow along with demonstrations, as well as live screen mirroring exercises wherein they will develop their data analysis and evaluation skills to an advanced level.

The University has a **Virtual Learning Environment** called '*Blackboard*'', which is a digitally based programme that offers an abundance of supportive features used by lecturers teaching on this programme. Additional resources beyond lecture and activity materials will be available here in the forms of:

- *Peer support* – facilitated through the use of the discussion board facility
- *Self-assessment* - quizzes
- *Notices* – maintains communication between lecturer and students between teaching sessions.
- *Resources page* – on-line links to good academic articles of relevance to the module
- *E-Journals* – students registered on Blackboard have the ability to access full-text e-journals that the library subscribes to from anywhere that they have Internet access.
- *Course documents* – such as; lecture handouts, seminar activities, module guides, seminar readings, assessment guidelines, reading list etc.

Additional Course Costs

There are costs associated with all studies, additional to the tuition fee, which require consideration, when planning and budgeting for expenditure. Costs are indicative and for the total length of the course shown unless otherwise stated and will increase with inflation; depending on the programme they may include equipment, printing, project materials, study trips, placement activities, DBS and/or other security checks.

While a primarily online based learning course, there will be the requirement of travel to the High Wycombe Campus for two or three one-week periods each academic year (or Aylesbury Campus) for practical based workshops and forensic-setting visits or enhanced immersive skills based learning. Travel to the university and accommodation (unless otherwise specified) will be the responsibility of the students.

Contact Hours

1 unit of credit is the equivalent of 10 notional learning hours. Full time undergraduate students study 120 credits (1200 hours) and full-time postgraduate students study 180 credits (1800 hours) per year or 'stage' of the course.

Course Stage	Scheduled Activities (Hours)	Guided Independent Study (Hours)	Placement / Study Abroad (Hours)
Full time (Year 1)	210	1590	
Part time (Year 1)	100	500	
Part time (Year 2)	110	1090	
Part time (Year 3)	30	570	

Assessment Methods

The Assessment and Examination webpages provide further information on how assignments are marked and moderated, including a description of assessment activities. These also include further information about how feedback on assessed work is provided to students, including our commitment to ensure this is provided to students within 15 working days (the 'three-week turnaround').

Summative assessments are designed to test the achievement of the learning outcomes. Some modules include formative assessments. Whilst these do not give marks towards the final module grade, they offer students a valuable learning resource by way of feedback from the tutors, which can offer direction for improved performance on the summative assignments.

A range of summative assessment methods may be employed on this course, as follows:

- **Time-constrained assignment** will enable the students to demonstrate the breadth of knowledge gained on a module. It will familiarise the students with examination style questions with which they will be confronted, either in the same module or subsequent modules.

- **Poster presentation** will enable the students to demonstrate the skills to present a complex piece of research in a brief, concise and visual format. Students may be required to work independently or in groups to coordinate a presentation to a professional standard.

- **Oral Presentations** will permit students to demonstrate their knowledge through effective communication skills, and to demonstrate sensitivity to contextual and interpersonal factors.

- **Examinations** will allow the students to demonstrate their ability to synthesise a plethora of theoretical, empirical and applied literature in their examination answers. It will examine their capacity for independent thought, and ability to analyse and evaluate the information they are presenting in an original manner. Most examinations are unseen; however, some modules utilise a 'seen' examination, where the questions are released to the students two weeks prior to the examination date. These foster a higher level of analysis and evaluation than is possible in an unseen situation.

- **Essays** will provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate in-depth understanding of a particular aspect of their learning. It will encourage them to engage in conducting a systematic literature review and provide the opportunity for them to demonstrate their capacity to critically analyse, synthesis and evaluate the principles, processes and debates inherent in the material, and to present a rational, coherent, information-based argument.

- **Research Reports** will be required in some modules. It will enable students to demonstrate their ability to: define a research problem, critically review relevant academic literature, formulate relevant hypotheses, operationalise variables and design a study, analyse and interpret the forthcoming data, to discuss the findings in relation to the literature, evaluate the contribution of the study to the knowledge area, and write the report in a formal scientific style.

- **Professional Style Reports** will be required for some modules, allowing students to develop highly useful transferable skills. Examples of these include court reports, expert witness reports and risk assessment/management reports, all important aspects of required within the day-today working of a Forensic Psychologist.

- **Reflective Accounts** will incorporated into some modules. Such assessments will ensure students maintain a high level of self-awareness throughout the degree, and actively engaging in ethical practice throughout, as per the BPS Code of Ethics & Conduct, the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics, and Health and Care Professions Council's Guidance on Conduct & Ethics for Students. Students will be required to reflect on aspects of their studies including their own position in any boundaried relationships established as part role-playing, simulation exercises or group presentations, as well as after each prison, and/or forensic setting, visit.

- **Empirical Dissertation** represents a major piece of independent research activity within the field of Forensic Psychology chosen by the student. This will involve collecting original empirical (quantitative or qualitative) data from participants, or equivalent alternatives such as computational modelling of empirical or secondary data analysis, making use of large data sets. It will be undertaken with support from an academic supervisor and with regular meetings throughout the academic year. This work will have the structure commonly found in research reports and journal articles, and may potentially be publishable.

Classification

Calculation of final award:	Level 7 – 100%

For full details of assessment regulations for all taught programmes please refer to our Results webpages. These include the criteria for degree classification.

Admissions Requirements

Please see the Application webpages for more information on how to apply, including a statement on how we support students from a variety of backgrounds. Please also see our general entry requirements for taught programmes. Applicants who do not meet our published entry requirements are encouraged to contact our admissions team for further advice and guidance.

Typical applicant profile and any programme-specific entry requirements

The Course Team expects an entrant to a Master's programme to be eligible for the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC). This means the applicant must have gained at least a **Lower Second Class Honours** (or its equivalent) in a BPS accredited degree and must have passed the empirical psychology project in that degree.

Applications are accepted, however, specifically from practitioners who are currently working in a forensic setting who may not have eligibility (i.e. who have entered forensic-setting employment via a different route). As part of the application process, any additional academic support may be identified which will be provided as part of the course.

Do applicants require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check?	No

Opportunities for students on successful completion of the programme

Whether students choose to pursue further training in Forensic Psychology, or continued study or research in academia, or a related career path, this course will develop transferable employability skills relevant to many career paths in the forensic domain.

By the end of this course, you'll be well equipped to work in a variety of forensic psychology environments whether that's in prisons, the probation service or victim work.

You could also specialise in delivering interventions in prisons and other rehabilitation settings.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Previous study, professional and / or vocational experiences may be recognised as the equivalent learning experience and permit exemption from studying certain modules. Please refer to our Credit Accumulation webpages for further guidance.

Student Support

During the course of their studies, students will be supported in the following ways:

- At the start of their studies all students will receive a full **induction** to the programme which will include introduction to the staff responsible for delivering the course, and access to library and IT facilities
- The **Programme Handbook** will outline the exact nature of the course and how it is structured, including the availability of option modules
- Each student will be allocated a **Personal Tutor** who will support their academic development, be able to advise and guide them with their studies and, where necessary, give advice on study options
- Students will be able to access our full range of **support services**, including the Learning Development Unit for skills and study support, the Library, the Careers and Employability Team, Student Finance Team, Accommodation and Counselling Services

Appendices

Quality Assurance

Awarding Body:	**Buckinghamshire New University**
Language of Study:	**English**
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s):	**BPS Standards for Masters & Doctoral programmes in forensic psychology (October 2017); QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Part A: *Setting & Maintaining Academic Standards*) – Level 7 qualification descriptors; QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (Psychology) 2016[1]**
Assessment Regulations:	*Academic Assessment Regulations*, **accessible via the Academic Advice webpages (https://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice) With the following exception: The pass mark for all modules on this programme is 50% due to PSRB requirements.**
Does the Fitness to Practise procedure apply to this programme?	**No**
Date Published / Updated:	**September 2019, February 2022**

Other awards available on programme (Exit Qualifications)

Please refer to the *Academic Qualifications Framework* for Exit Qualifications recognised by the University and credit and module requirements.

Name of Exit Qualification:	**Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)**
Full name of Qualification and Award Title:	**Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Forensic Psychology**
Credits requirements:	120
Module requirements:	120 Credits at Level 7 excluding PS771 Postgraduate Forensic Dissertation.
Learning Outcomes	

Critically evaluate current knowledge, theories and evidence based practice relevant to the discipline of forensic psychology, as well as current areas of concern.

Demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of a range of influences on psychological functioning, how they are conceptualised in the forensic psychology, and how they interrelate with offending behaviour.

Critically understand and evaluate various interventions and models of change (processes and their effect) available within applied forensic psychology.

Summarise and defend empirically supported conclusions in both an adversarial legal context and academic forum (i.e. empirical journal articles and poster presentations).

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[1] Note: *Used only as a reference for QAA expectations of what is expected of Psychology graduates and, therefore, what is expected (in part) for incoming students onto the MSc.*

Detect meaningful patterns in individual, group, and organisational behaviour and evaluate their significance utilising multiple theoretical perspectives to systematically analyse the relationships between them (in both investigative and forensic treatment settings).

Creatively solve practical forensic assessment and management problems by clarifying questions, considering and making decisions about alternative solutions and outcomes, and the evaluation of those questions, solution and outcomes.

Comprehend and use a variety of numerical, statistical and other forms of data (and software or hardware), particularly in the context of presenting and analysing data.

Disseminate work and research appropriately within a range of written (professional reports, posters) and oral formats (presentations, one-to-one-feedback).

Communicate with sensitivity to, and react appropriately to, contextual and interpersonal factors with colleagues, supervisors, prisoners and the public, while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

Have an in depth understanding of the formal legal and ethical frameworks that forensic psychologists work within (BPS, HCPC).

Recognise that specific knowledge and skills are required to work with particular client groups (and different forensic practice settings), for example children and young people, intellectually disabled, cultural minorities etc., and to demonstrate an understanding of the impact, and importance, of diversity and difference on practice.

Plan and understand the management of psychological interventions to bring about change in thinking patterns during behavioural change interventions based on the most up-to-date empirical research.

Ability to apply empirically grounded strategies to reduce the risk to the public of offending, by developing working relationships with individuals, and groups to the benefit of the self, wider communities and society.

Recognise their own strengths and limitations that may affect forensic practice and develop self-support and self-care strategies via continued self-reflection of professional psychology skills and competencies in a range of forensic contexts (prisons, secure units, hospitals, the community, the courts).

Critically apply psychological theory to lead improvements to policies and the justice system, including; the legal process, process of detention, as well as consultancy work with legal professionals, and interdisciplinary or multi-agency government (and non-government) organisations.

Demonstrate *some* key general skills surrounding autonomy, accountability and team work (time management, independent learning and work completion, planning and evaluation of own learning and development, information retrieval skills, team work skills).

Name of Exit Qualification:	Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert)
Full name of Qualification and Award Title:	Post Graduate Certificate in Forensic Psychology
Credits requirements:	60
Module requirements:	Four core modules passed: (PS765, PS770, PS763, PS764) **not including** PS771 Postgraduate Forensic Dissertation; PS767 *Vulnerable Groups in Forensic Settings*; PS766 *Assessment & Management;* PS772 *The Journey of Change – Forensic Focus*; PS768 *Professional Practice Issues in Forensic Psychology*

Learning Outcomes

Critically evaluate current knowledge, theory and evidence based practice relevant to the discipline of forensic psychology, as well as current areas of concern.

Summarise and defend empirically supported conclusions in both an adversarial legal context and academic forum (i.e. empirical journal articles and poster presentations).

Detect meaningful patterns in individual, group, and organisational behaviour and evaluate their significance utilising multiple theoretical perspectives to systematically analyse the relationships between them (primarily in investigative, policing and legal settings).

Comprehend and use a variety of numerical, statistical and other forms of data (and software or hardware), particularly in the context of presenting and analysing data.

Disseminate work and research appropriately within a *limited* range of written (reports, posters) and oral formats (presentations, one-to-one-feedback).

Be aware of ethical principles/approval procedures, and demonstrate these in relation to personal research and study within various forensic environments.

Communicate with sensitivity to contextual and interpersonal factors with colleagues, prisoners and the public, while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

Recognise their own strengths and limitations that may affect forensic practice and develop self-support and self-care strategies via continued self-reflection of professional psychology skills and competencies in a *limited* range of forensic contexts (prisons, the courts).

Critically apply psychological theory to lead improvements to a *limited* array of policies and the justice system, focused on the legal process and process of detention

Demonstrate *some* key general skills surrounding autonomy, accountability and team work (time management, independent learning and work completion, planning and evaluation own learning and development, information retrieval skills, team work skills).