

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

1. Key Information

Programme Title:	MSc Applied Positive Psychology
Awarding Institution:	Buckinghamshire New University
Teaching Institution(s):	Buckinghamshire New University
Subject Cluster:	Psychology
Award Title (including separate Pathway Award Titles where offered):	MSc Applied Positive Psychology
Pathways (if applicable)	-
FHEQ level of final award:	7
Other award titles available (exit qualifications):	Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma
Accreditation details:	-
Length of programme:	2 years part time (with an option to do the Extended Research Project module in year 3)
Mode(s) of Study:	Part Time
Mode of Delivery:	Distance learning
Language of study:	English
QAA Subject Benchmark(s):	Psychology (2019)
Other external reference points (e.g. Apprenticeship Standard):	
Course Code(s):	MSAPPPBP 2 year MSAPPPB3 3 year
UCAS Code(s):	
Approval date:	August 2023
Date of last update:	September 2024

2. Programme Summary

Positive psychology argues that psychological wellbeing is not simply the 'absence of disease' but a discrete and distinct state, influenced by a range of factors. Positive psychology focuses on distinct subjects and scientific methods aimed at understanding, developing and influencing health and well-being, and has been dubbed the psychology of "what makes life worth living". In contrast to a largely 'deficit'-focused mainstream

psychology, positive psychology explores what is already working and aims to build on the good in people. This developing discipline explores a range of subject areas such as discovering and harnessing existing strengths and positive emotions, building hope and resilience in the face of adversity, combatting barriers to positive change, and finding meaning, which together contribute to individual and societal flourishing. This programme is of interest to any individual seeking to develop existing professional and personal skills particularly oriented towards well-being, improved performance and the achievement of individual or organisational change. The programme offers an opportunity to deepen this understanding from a new psychological perspective to what some professions are describing as 'advanced practice skills'.

The degree is 'applied' in its nature and you will learn by applying each subject area within your own life and profession. The relative youth of the discipline means there remains a great deal of theorising and research left to be done – work that you as a postgraduate learner may realistically and readily contribute to. The programme is delivered in a unique and flexible manner that allows you to participate and learn together with learners from around the globe through 'flexible and distributed learning'. A variety of media and platforms will be used to ensure you have a range of choices and routes to engaging with the material, tutors and other learners, in a manner that can be flexibly fitted around other commitments. The programme is focused on allowing you to integrate positive psychology knowledge and skills into existing professional activity, especially in occupations involving the influencing of individuals, groups and organisations. Former graduates from the programme have applied this knowledge in the context of teaching, counselling, coaching, training, sales, and support work, to name a few. Others have used the opportunity to develop a new career direction or refocus their business.

3. Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes

Programme Aims

This programme aims to:

1. Encourage identification and critical evaluation of positive psychology theories, related psychological perspectives and research that may be used individually as well as within organisations and the broader systemic context.
2. Enhance learning of skills to understand and develop positive psychology interventions to promote individual and collective wellbeing and performance
3. Promote opportunities to enable critical understanding of a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and skills for exploring and evaluating positive psychology concepts, assessments and interventions
4. Facilitate the opportunity for learners to conduct, under supervision, an extended research project on a chosen topic within applied positive psychology
5. Equip learners to develop self-awareness and ability to work as a professional reflective practitioner/researcher

Programme Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding (K)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
K1	Define psychological theory and research on concepts contributing to wellbeing and flourishing of individuals and systems.
K2	Demonstrate understanding of how positive psychology may be applied to individual and systemic development.
K3	Recognise a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and skills used in positive psychology.
K4	Synthesise models of psychological growth available within the practice of applied positive psychology embracing a holistic approach for psychological development.
K5	Discuss critically the challenges of applying positive psychology interventions with others and in a professional context.

Analysis and Criticality (C)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
C1	Evaluate a personal and professional developmental activity in selected areas of positive psychology focused on the growth of personal well-being and/or performance.
C2	Analyse the impact of applying positive psychology theory, and broader psychological perspectives, in a personal, professional and/or wider systemic context.
C3	Differentiate how positive psychology interventions may be ethically and professionally applied with specific clients, organisational groups and/or wider systemic contexts.
C4	Investigate the philosophical and practical underpinnings of scientific research in positive psychology.
C5	Appraise one's own practice of positive psychology in relation to published literature through an extended research project.

Application and Practice (P)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
P1	Consolidate positive psychological theory in relation to one's own experience within personal or work domains.
P2	Communicate and present positive psychology project work to a professional standard.
P3	Develop positive psychology interventions against professional and ethical standards to promote individual, workplace and/or wider systemic well-being.

P4	Conduct research and interpret appropriate analyses of quantitative and qualitative data.
P5	Apply broader theories of psychological growth for understanding development over time within a personal or professional life domain.

Transferable skills and other attributes (T)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
T1	Review and evaluate theoretical and research literature from a range of sources.
T2	Communicate complex ideas clearly and succinctly in written, oral, visual or audio, and/or interactive formats.
T3	Learn material and communicate through various information technologies.
T4	Reflect on applying ethical principles in professional practice.
T5	Apply autonomous learning and develop own pathway of learning.

Graduate Attributes

The BNU Graduate Attributes of: Knowledge and its application; Creativity; Social and ethical awareness and responsibility; and Leadership and self-development 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.

On this programme, attributes are developed through the application of theories, methods and interventions of positive psychology within practical and researcher contexts of ethical responsibility (K1-5, C3, P1-5, T1, T4). Through personal reflective projects, research assignments, group work and supervised extended written work the attributes of leadership and creativity are fostered and a critical and innovative approach to extending theory and developing interventions is acquired (C1-5, T5). The application of the learning of research skills and professional practices prepares highly employable and enterprising individuals, who are socially and ethically aware professionals ready to take on the complex challenges of the 21st Century, positively, through applied positive psychology practice (C1-5, T2-T5).

4. Entry Requirements

The University's [general entry requirements](#) will apply to admission to this programme with the following additions / exceptions:

- Applicants would normally have achieved 2.1 in a social science degree; a first degree in psychology is not a pre-requisite. However, consideration of a candidate with a 2.2 classification may be permissible if aspects of their profile demonstrate the ability to engage and succeed in postgraduate study. Alternatively, candidates with professional qualifications and a minimum of three years of directly relevant work experience will also be considered following a formal interview process. Selection of the applicants is to be undertaken by the University course team who will comment upon the ability of the candidate to meet the academic entry criteria for Master's level study and to meet the academic demands of the programme. Learners who have successfully completed the Postgraduate Certificate award will be regarded as automatically eligible to enter the PGDip/MSc award within 5 years of completing the

Postgraduate Certificate as long as they can also demonstrate some currency with the topic area. For international learners we will customarily seek IELTS 6.5 overall and 6.5 in writing as an indication of eligibility and readiness to work at this level. However, we may ask for examples of written work to confirm experience of this level of communications. Learners who have completed to award 'Post Graduate Diploma in Positive Psychology' from the University of Iceland will automatically qualify to enter with advanced standing.

If you do not meet the entry requirements you may, if you have relevant professional experience, still be invited for interview, where you will be required to demonstrate the necessary knowledge and understanding for entry onto the course.

Previous study, professional and / or vocational experiences may be recognised as the equivalent learning experience and permit exemption from studying certain modules in accordance with BNU's [accreditation of prior learning](#) (APL) process.

5. Programme Structure

Level	Modules (Code, Title and Credits)	Exit Awards
7	<p>Core modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY7001 - Positive Psychology of Wellbeing and Emotions (20 credits) • PSY7003 - Positive Psychology in Practice (20 credits) • PSY7008 - Applied Research Methods (20 credits) • EDU7008 - Extended Research Project (Dissertation) (60) <p>Option modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY7040 - The Best in Us: Strengths, Hope & Resilience • EDU7005 - Positive Education and Other Evidence-Based Interventions (20 credits) • PSY7012 - Positive Psychology in Coaching (20 credits) • PSY7005 - The Journey of Change (20 credits) • PSY7007 – Systemic & Environmental Approaches in Positive Psychology • PSY7014 – Creativity and the Positive Psychology of the Arts 	<p>Postgraduate Certificate, awarded on achievement of 60 credits at Level 7</p> <p>Postgraduate Diploma, awarded on achievement of 120 credits at Level 7</p> <p>Masters Degree, awarded on achievement of 180 credits at Level 7, of which 60 credits via an Extended Research Project</p>

**Please note: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year (with a minimum number of students required to run and other considerations dictating this decision). Other option modules may also be introduced at a later stage enabling the programme to respond to changes in the subject area.*

6. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Learning and teaching

This programme follows a flexible and distributed approach to learning which is student-led and allows you to participate and learn in ways that suit you best at any given time. This includes choices to engage either synchronously ('live') or asynchronously (via recordings, online content, webinars and workshops, peer support, and online discussion boards). Across the programme there are options to attend face-to-face teaching sessions, though these are not mandatory so it is possible to complete the course entirely at a distance to give access to the widest range of students.

Assessment

A reflective approach to assessment is used throughout the programme, giving you the opportunity to apply theory and research findings to your own personal and professional context, before learning about how to apply it with others. Many of the assessments are therefore of a reflective nature. You are also encouraged to build on earlier assignments as you progress through the programme in order to develop expertise in areas that are most important and relevant to you. This culminates in an extended research project that brings together learning from across the programme.

Contact Hours

You can expect to receive on average approximately 2-4 hours of scheduled learning activities per week, on average. These hours will typically include 'live' (i.e., synchronous) online or hybrid teaching (webinars, workshops) and both synchronous and asynchronous online reflective and discussion-based activities, either individually or as part of peer learning and class-wide discussions. As each 20-credit module equates to 200 notional learning hours, you will see that the majority of these will come via independent study and work towards assessment tasks.

7. Programme Regulations

This programme will be subject to the following assessment regulations:

- *Regulations for Taught Degree Programmes (2023)*

8. Support for learners

The following systems are in place to support you to be successful with your studies:

- A programme handbook and induction at the beginning of your studies
- Library resources, including access to books, journals and databases - many of which are available in electronic format – and support from trained library staff
- Access to Blackboard, our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which is accessible via PC, laptop, tablet or mobile device
- Access to the MyBNU portal where you can access all University systems, information and news, record your attendance at sessions, and access your personalised timetable
- Academic Registry staff providing general guidance on University regulations, exams, and other aspects of students and course administration
- Central student services, including teams supporting academic skills development, career success, student finance, accommodation, chaplaincy, disability and counselling

- Support from the Bucks Students' Union, including the Students' Union Advice Centre which offers free and confidential advice on University processes.

9. Programme monitoring and review

BNU has a number of ways for monitoring and reviewing the quality of learning and teaching on your programme. You will be able to comment on the content of their programme via the following feedback mechanisms:

- Formal feedback questionnaires and anonymous module 'check-ins'
- Participation in external surveys
- Programme Committees, via appointed student representatives
- Informal feedback to your programme leader

Quality and standards on each programme are assured via the following mechanisms:

- An initial event to approve the programme for delivery
- An annual report submitted by the External Examiner following a process of external moderation of work submitted for assessment
- The Annual Monitoring process, which is overseen by the University's Education Committee
- Review by the relevant PSRB(s)
- Periodic Subject Review events held every five years
- Other sector compliance and review mechanisms

10. Internal and external reference points

Design and development of this programme has been informed by the following internal and external reference points:

- The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- The QAA Subject Benchmark Statement – see detailed mapping below
- The QAA Master's Degree Characteristics Statement
- The BNU Qualifications and Credit Framework
- The BNU Grading Descriptors
- The University Strategy

Mapping of Subject Benchmark Statement and any relevant Apprenticeship Standard to Programme Learning Outcomes

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
understand the scientific underpinnings of psychology as a discipline, its historical origins, development and limitations	x															x				
recognise the inherent variability and diversity of psychological functioning and its significance	x	x				x							x							
demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of a range of influences on psychological functioning, how they are conceptualised across the core areas and how they interrelate	x			x												x				

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
demonstrate detailed knowledge of several specialised areas and/or applications, some of which are at the cutting edge of research in the discipline	x	x			x	x														
demonstrate a systematic knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, including statistics and probability, and be aware of their limitations			x						x							x				
reason scientifically, understand the role of evidence and make critical judgements about arguments in psychology			x						x											
adopt multiple perspectives and systematically analyse the				x					x		x				x	x				

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
relationships between them																				
detect meaningful patterns in behaviour and evaluate their significance			x											x						
recognise the subjective and variable nature of individual experience	x						x		x		x		x		x					
pose, operationalise and critique research questions			x						x											
demonstrate substantial competence in research skills through practical activities			x											x						
reason analytically and demonstrate competence in a range of quantitative and qualitative methods			x											x						
competently initiate, design, conduct and										x				x						

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
report on an empirically-based research project under appropriate supervision, and recognise its theoretical, practical and methodological implications and limitations																				
be aware of ethical principles and approval procedures and demonstrate these in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project, and be aware of the ethical context of psychology as a discipline								X		X			X	X						X
communicate ideas and research findings by written, oral and visual means										X		X					X	X		

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
interpret and use numerical, textual and other forms of data										X				X		X				
be computer literate, for the purposes of furthering their own learning and in the analysis and presentation of ideas and research findings												X					X	X		
solve problems by clarifying questions, considering alternative solutions and evaluating outcomes					X	X	X			X				X						X
be sensitive to, and take account of, contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams					X		X	X							X				X	
undertake self-directed study and project management, in order to meet desired objectives						X				X	X			X				X		X

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)					
Benchmark / Standard requirement	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	
take charge of their own learning, and reflect and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning						x				x	x										x

Mapping of Programme Learning Outcomes to Modules

Programme Learning Outcome	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Level 7 (C) = Core, (O) = Option																				
PSY7001: Positive Psychology of Wellbeing & Emotions (C)	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x
PSY7003: Positive Psychology in Practice (C)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
PSY7008: Applied Research Methods (C)			x					x	x					x		x	x	x	x	
EDU7008: Extended Research Project (C)	x	x	x				x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
PSY7040: The Best in Us: Strengths, Hope & Resilience (O)	x	x				x	x			x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x
EDU7005: Positive Education & Other Evidence-Based Interventions (O)	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
PSY7012: PP in Coaching (O)	x	x		x	x		x	x		x		x	x			x	x		x	x

Programme Learning Outcome	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)					
	Module Code (Core)	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
PSY7007: Systemic & Environmental Approaches to PP (O)	x	x	x		x	x	x	x				x	x	x			x	x	x		x
PSY7005: The Journey of Change (O)	x		x	x	x	x				x	x	x			x		x	x	x		x
PSY7014: Creativity & PP of the Arts (O)	x		x			x	x	x		x		x	x				x	x	x		X