Programme Specification for MSc Investigative Forensic Psychology 2011/2012

Teaching Institution:
London South Bank University

Accredited by:

Faculty of origin:
AHS

Highest Award within the Programme:
MSc Investigative Forensic Psychology

Other Awards within the Programme:
PGCert/PGDip

Reference Points:
Internal: Academic Strategy

Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes

Handbook on Quality Management & Enhancement

Corporate Plan 2009-12

AHS Teaching & Learning Strategy 2009-12

AHS Executive Business Plan 2010-12

External: Framework for Higher Education Qualifications QAA

Rationale & Aims:
Forensic Psychology is a highly popular choice for Psychology graduates. In London and the South East there are six Forensic MSc degree courses and across the UK there are 24. In contrast there is only one MSc degree in Investigative Psychology, originally in Liverpool and now recently moved to Huddersfield. Investigative Psychology focuses on the investigative processes prior to sentencing, giving less emphasis to the more clinically focused study of the treatment and rehabilitation of offenders which forms the core of most Forensic Psychology courses. The Liverpool MSc in Investigative Psychology has received some 200 applications annually and normally takes between 15-25 students. Furthermore, Professor David Canter, the original course leader at Liverpool, indicated prior to our course being set up and validated in 2007 that demand for Investigative Psychology exceeds supply and that a London based course would be particularly well placed to recruit. In addition, in 2007 the Director of the Crime Academy, the body responsible for training needs of the Metropolitan Police Service, Chief Superintendent Steve Lovelock wrote letter of support.
suggesting that there would be a ‘huge demand’ for this course among their police officers.

Since the first cohort enrolled on the course in 2007 we have recruited between 13 and 20 students in each cohort. Each cohort contains a mix of graduates in Psychology, Criminology, Social Sciences and Forensic Science and those working within the Metropolitan Police Service, both police officers and civilians. The first cohort graduated in 2010, and included one distinction, eleven merits, and one pass.

Our Psychology Department has two full-time permanent senior lecturers in Investigative Forensic Psychology who are both experienced at teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level and who are research active. The course has allowed us to develop provision in this growing area of applied psychology and build on our successful and popular undergraduate level three options in Investigative Psychology and Forensic Psychology. Furthermore, the course has led to increased opportunities to collaborate with the police to conduct applied research and carry out consultancy work. The founder cohort graduated in 2010 and six of their dissertations were considered of sufficient standard to submit for publication in collaboration with their supervisors. We may in the future wish to consider developing a forensic route and seeking accreditation from the British Psychological Society. We would like to develop, with appropriate support, a distance learning version of the course.

In wider terms the course is consistent with our Faculty plan to maintain a raft of courses related to crime e.g. LLM in Crime and Litigation, and it also compliments the cross Faculty MSc in Crime Science.

Aims

The aim of the MSc Investigative Forensic Psychology course is to provide students with the knowledge and skills required to evaluate, apply, and advance current understanding of the theory and practice of Investigative Forensic Psychology. In so doing the course aims to:

Introduce students to Psychological concepts, theories, and models and consider how they may be useful for studying Investigative Forensic Psychology.

Introduce students to current issues within Investigative Forensic Psychology and encourage students to critically evaluate relevant theory and research.

Enable students to carry out research studies in the area of Investigative Forensic Psychology using both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Develop analytical and synthesis skills adopting multiple perspectives.

Enable students to apply their knowledge about Investigative Psychology to real life situations.
Develop the ability of students’ in relevant employment to reflect on their own learning and practice in the workplace.

Enhance the employability of students wishing to work in investigative contexts.

Develop students’ written and verbal communication skills

Programme Outcomes
A. During this course students will acquire knowledge and understanding of:

A1 Knowledge base: students will acquire deep and systematic understanding of how Psychological concepts, theories and models could be applied to and aid investigative processes. Students should be able to utilise knowledge, theories and evidence resulting from research at the forefront of this area.

A2 Ethical issues: students will acquire the awareness and ability to manage the implications of ethical problems that arise from investigations. For example, interviewing vulnerable witnesses and suspects. They will learn to work pro-actively with others to formulate solutions.

A3 Disciplinary methodologies: students will acquire a good understanding of techniques developed from research in Investigative Forensic Psychology such as Criteria Based Content Analysis and methodologies used in Investigative Forensic Psychology research such as quantitative and qualitative methods. Students should be able to apply relevant methods and techniques in their own research.

Teaching and learning strategy

All our Modules contribute to the acquisition of knowledge and understanding as specified above. Information regarding the Modules concerned in achieving specific programme outcomes may be found in the curriculum map (see Appendix 1). For each Module students will have a mix of large group and small group sessions. The large group sessions aim to give students a core of knowledge including an overview of the topic and key theories and concepts involved. Students will receive an indicative guide for reading for each week in the Module guide so they can come prepared to the session thus promoting greater discussion of the topic between the lecturer and students, and enhancing student learning. Small group sessions will focus more on consolidating knowledge gained during large group sessions and where possible will contain practical demonstrations and workshop activities. To do this small group sessions will contain a variety of exercises such as brainstorming, role play, group presentations, consideration of case studies and problem solving tasks. Students will be encouraged to reflect on situations in their work place which are relevant to topics being discussed and evaluate research which could lead to ideas for best practice and its development.

All Modules will be supported by detailed Module guides which will contain an overview of the Module aims and learning outcomes, a week-by-week breakdown of lecture and seminar topics and information about essential and supplementary reading for the Module. Additionally each Module will be supported by the e-learning environment Blackboard. Information about each Module will be available on Blackboard, for example lecture and seminar handouts and Module guides. Students will also be able to have on-line discussions on Blackboard via the discussion board to which all students and staff teaching on the MSc will
have access. Students will be introduced to Blackboard and its functions during sessions in semester 1. Students are encouraged to raise any questions or issues about topics directly with the lecturer and they can also discuss academic problems with their personal tutor. The Module specifications provide greater details concerning the teaching and learning strategy that pertain to each Module.

Assessment

The assessment strategy for the MSc Investigative Forensic Psychology ensures a range of appropriate assessments that test the knowledge, understanding and skills that comprise the programme outcomes. The assessment strategy for each individual Module is appropriate to the learning outcomes for that Module. With the exception of research methods, all Modules are assessed by coursework. Examples of coursework assessments include essays, critical reviews, written reports for practitioners, presentations, research proposals, and the dissertation. The assessments for the research methods Modules consist of a two hour short answer examination, in addition to practical reports, and a presentation. See details of the summative assessment diet and schedule in Appendix 2. Blackboard is used to provide students with formative assessments, such as quizzes to check their learning as they go through a Module.

B. Students will develop their intellectual skills such that they are able to:

B1 Analysis: with critical analysis undertake investigation of complex, incomplete or contradictory areas of research literatures within Investigative Forensic Psychology and communicate the outcome effectively.

B2 Synthesis: with critical awareness, synthesise information from different areas of Psychology applicable to investigative processes in a manner that may be innovative, utilising knowledge, theories and evidence gained from research at the forefront of this area.

B3 Evaluation: demonstrate a level of conceptual understanding that will allow them to critically evaluate research including alternative methodologies and approaches in Investigative Forensic Psychology.

B4 Application: demonstrate initiative and originality in problem solving by using knowledge gained from the course at a professional or equivalent level.

Teaching and learning strategy

All Modules contribute to the development of intellectual skills to a greater or lesser extent, but the following allocations indicate the principal Modules involved in the teaching and learning strategy for each outcome.


Assessment

Modules will be assessed by essays, practical reports, critical reviews, practitioner reports, presentations,
C. Students will acquire and develop practical skills in Investigative Forensic Psychology such that they are able to:

C1 Work effectively as a group leader or member.

C2 Learning resources: for example, engage with the web based learning environment Blackboard and carry out in-depth literature searches in the library and on the web using search engines such as Psychinfo.

C3 Self evaluation: reflect on their own learning of concepts, theories and evidence resulting from research in Investigative Forensic Psychology with a view to applying knowledge in a professional work environment.

C4 Management of information: competently undertake research tasks (review literature, design hypotheses and studies, analyse data, draw valid conclusions) in Investigative Forensic Psychology with minimum guidance.

C5 Autonomy: become an independent and self critical learner able to identify own continuing professional development needs.

C6 Communications: communicate confidently and effectively in a range of different situations.

Teaching and learning strategy

The Modules primarily associated with the acquisition of these programme outcomes are:


C2 Students will be encouraged to utilise a full range of learning resources including electronic resources for all Modules.


C6 All Modules will encourage effective communication skills. For example, all Modules will develop student’s written communication abilities. The Dissertation, Psychological Aspects of Investigation, and Investigative Research Methods 2 will in particular develop students’ verbal communication abilities.
Assessment

Modules will be assessed by essays, practical reports, practitioner reports, critical reviews, presentations, research proposals, dissertation and examination. Each Module is assessed individually and independently.

D. Students will acquire and develop transferable skills such that they are able to:

D1 Application of skills: behave professionally in complex and unpredictable situations and in accordance with professional standards and good practice.

D2 Autonomy in skill use: apply knowledge of Investigative Forensic Psychology in professional practice.

D3 Technical expertise: apply technical expertise developed in Investigative Forensic Psychology to situations encountered in the real world and adapt that expertise for novel situations.

Teaching and learning strategy

D1 Investigators often have to respond in complex and unpredictable situations, all Modules will provide students with knowledge of Investigative Forensic Psychology and Research Methods that could govern good practice.

D2 All Modules contribute to students’ knowledge which they should be able to use in a professional situation.

D3 The following Modules will in particular develop students’ technical expertise and ability to apply skills and knowledge to real world situations and adapt that knowledge for novel situations: Research Methods 1 & 2, the dissertation.

Assessment

Modules will be assessed by essays, practical reports, critical reviews, presentations, practitioner reports, research proposals, dissertation and examination. Each Module is assessed individually and independently.

Entry Requirements

All applicants will be interviewed by the Course Director. In so doing we will be able to assess applicants in terms of their academic and professional suitability. Potential applicants can e-mail to ask for details of the course to mscifp@lsbu.ac.uk which is a shared mail box for members of the course team.

In order to be considered for entry to the first stage of the programme applicants will be required to have one or more of the following qualifications:
1) An honours degree in a relevant subject area (e.g. Psychology, Forensic/Social Sciences) or International equivalent. Students should have attained a 2:2 or above.

2) A higher national diploma in a relevant subject and a minimum of three years post-qualification experience in a relevant field

3) A postgraduate diploma (e.g. PgDip in Psychology)

4) Appropriate equivalent skills and experience (AP(E)L). Applicants have to demonstrate the following: a) Intellectual ability to undertake postgraduate work. Applicants will be asked to demonstrate such competence by undertaking a written critical evaluation of a specified research paper. This is also assessed as part of the interview process in particular in relation to verbal evidence of familiarity with Investigative Forensic Psychology. b) Relevant experience indicative of a motivation to study Investigative Forensic Psychology and the ability to apply knowledge gained during the course to their future work. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate such experience as part of the interview process, through work based experience such as experience of investigative processes including evidence gathering and interviewing (e.g. in Customs and Excise, Home Office, and Immigration etc) and through certificated evidence of successful completion of non honours level training and assessments (e.g. Inspector Police Objective Structured Performance Related Examination (OSPRE) or Detective National Investigators Exam). This information should be apparent on the application form, through referees’ statements and will be explored as part of the interview process. (Also see note about APL under point 11.)

For International students a minimum English Language (IELTS) score of 6.5 is required.

In order to be considered for entry to the 2nd year of the programme applicants will be required to have at least one of the following: -

1. A postgraduate certificate in a relevant subject area where at least 50% of the learning outcomes are equivalent to those of the first year.

2. Equivalent training and professional experience (AP(E)L). For example, a first degree in psychology and experience of working at a rank above Inspector in the Police.

**Programme Structure**

A two and a half year part-time programme and from 2012/13 a 14 month full time programme is proposed. Part time students who wish to exit the programme having successfully completed year one Modules (psychological aspects of investigation, decision making in the forensic context, and witness psychology) will be awarded a Post Graduate Certificate in Investigative Forensic Psychology. Part time students who in addition to successfully completing year one Modules, successfully complete year two Modules (investigative research methods 1 and 2, and vulnerable witnesses and suspects) but who choose not to complete the dissertation will be awarded a Post Graduate Diploma in Investigative Forensic Psychology. Students who successfully complete all six of the taught Modules and the dissertation will be awarded an MSc Investigative Forensic Psychology.
Modules of the Programme

Students must complete six 20 credit taught Modules and a 60 point dissertation. All six 20 credit Modules are compulsory with no alternative pathways. Part - Time

Year 1: Psychological Aspects of Investigation, Decision Making in the Forensic Context, and Witness Psychology.
Year 2: Investigative Research Methods 1 & 2, and Vulnerable Witnesses and Suspects
Summer of year 2 and semester 1 of year 3: Dissertation

Full - Time

Summer year 1 and September/October semester 1 year 2: Dissertation

Accredited Prior Learning

Students with Psychology Degrees (BSc or PgDip) eligible for Graduate Basis for Registration may be exempt from completing Research Methods 1. They will still be required to complete the remaining five Modules and the dissertation. Individual applications for accreditation of prior learning will be considered in accordance with FAHS policy on APL.