

MSc in Research Methods in Psychology

For students entering in 2012/3

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| Awarding Institution: | University of Reading |
| Teaching Institution: | University of Reading |
| Relevant QAA subject Benchmarking group(s): | |
| Faculty: | Life Sciences Faculty |
| Programme length: | 1 years |
| Date of specification: | 03/Dec/2012 |
| Programme Director: | Dr Sarah Halligan |
| Programme Advisor: | |
| Board of Studies: | MSc Programmes in Psychology |
| Accreditation: | |

Summary of programme aims

The purpose of the programme is to prepare graduates in Psychology and allied disciplines for research-related careers in academic, clinical, educational or health psychology, or for careers in which familiarity with data-analytic principles and techniques are of relevance. Topics are covered in more depth, and with greater emphasis on current research, than is typically possible in the course of an undergraduate degree in psychology. Students are exposed to a variety of teaching methods, culminating in the completion of a piece of original research. The course provides both the theoretical background, and the practical experience, for students to realise their potential as independent researchers in various fields of psychological enquiry. Students are required to operate at a more advanced level than in an Honours degree, with emphasis on the psychological issues which arise with particular prominence in this field of enquiry.

Transferable skills

By the end of the course, students will have developed the following transferable skills:

- Ability to use computers for statistics, data analysis, and communication.
- Ability to use database/library resources.
- Writing skills: writing of papers, abstraction of others' work from written and oral material, critical evaluation.
- Ability to make oral presentations.

Programme content

Compulsory modules:

| <i>Code</i> | <i>Module title</i> | <i>Credits</i> | <i>Level</i> |
|-------------|--|----------------|--------------|
| PYM0RT | Research Methods and Transferable Skills in Psychology | 20 | 7 |
| PYM0S1 | Data Collection and Analysis 1 | 10 | 7 |
| PYM0S2 | Data Collection and Analysis 2 | 10 | 7 |
| PYM0QQ | Applying Qualitative Methods in Psychological Research | 10 | 7 |
| PYM0PP | Project Preparation | 10 | 7 |
| PYM0EP | Empirical Project (MSc only) | 60 | 7 |

Optional modules

Methods modules: At least three modules to be selected from the following:

| | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------------|----|---|
| PYM0CP | Methods in Clinical Psychology | 10 | 7 |
| PYM0CG | Methods in Cognition | 10 | 7 |
| PYM0DP | Methods in Developmental Psychology | 10 | 7 |
| PYM0NS | Methods in Neuroscience | 10 | 7 |

Modules to bring total up to 180 credits to be selected from a list such as the following:

| | | | |
|--------|---|----|---|
| PYM2CL | Clinical Neuropsychology | 10 | 7 |
| PYM2N2 | Cognitive Neuroscience | 20 | 7 |
| PYM3P1 | Development of Psychopathology | 10 | 7 |
| PYM3P2 | Topics in Developmental Psychopathology | 10 | 7 |
| PYM0FM | fMRI Data Analysis | 10 | 7 |
| PYM0PL | Placement | 20 | 7 |

Part-time or modular arrangements

The course may be undertaken over two years on a part-time basis. Selection of modules between the two years will be agreed between the student and the Board of Studies, at the commencement of the course. It is anticipated that students will normally complete at least 80 credits' worth of modules in Year 1. Modules must be assessed in the year that they are studied. The Empirical Project (PYM0EP) must be undertaken in Year 2. Modules must be begun and completed in the same academic year.

Progression requirements

Acceptance onto any module is conditional on the student having attempted all assessments set in previous modules. The Empirical Project will normally be the last piece of work to be submitted for assessment (by Dissertation).

Summary of Teaching and Assessment

Teaching is by a variety of methods, including lectures, small group seminars, web-based work-throughs, self-paced workshops, individual feedback on written work, and one-on-one supervision. Assessment mirrors this diversity, with methods including written assignments and other coursework, portfolio, seen examinations, open-book test, submission of practical reports, oral and poster presentations, and submission of project dissertation.

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

Mark Interpretation

70 - 100% Distinction

60 - 69% Merit

50 - 59% Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories:

40 - 49% Work below threshold standard

0 - 39% Unsatisfactory Work

For Masters Degrees (180 credits)

Award of PG Diploma will follow University of Reading published criteria (see <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-class.aspx>).

For PG Diplomas (120 credits: as MSc but without a Project)

Award of PG Diploma will follow University of Reading published criteria (see <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-class.aspx>).

For PG Certificate (60 credits, without a Project)

Award of PG Certificate will follow University of Reading published criteria (see <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-class.aspx>).

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained an Honours degree in psychology or related discipline (e.g., cognitive science, linguistics, philosophy). Applicants should have gained, or expect to gain, a class mark of 2(1) or better (i.e., 60%+ [or international equivalent, e.g. B+ US letter grade]). Applicants holding 2(2) degrees may apply and each case will be considered on its own merits. We discourage applications from holders of Third Class degrees.

Admissions Tutor: Dr Anastasia Christakou

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support is provided by a wide array of services across the University, including: the University Library, the Student Employment, Experience and Careers Centre (SEEC), In-sessional English Support Programme, the Study Advice and Mathematics Support Centre teams, IT Services and the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@il)

computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Personal Tutors, School Senior Tutors, the Students' Union, the Medical Practice and advisers in the Student Services Centre. The Student Services Centre is housed in the Carrington Building and offers advice on accommodation, careers, disability, finance, and wellbeing. Students can get key information and guidance from the team of Helpdesk Advisers, or make an appointment with a specialist adviser; Student Services also offer drop-in sessions and runs workshops and seminars on a range of topics. For more information see www.reading.ac.uk/student

Support for graduate students in the Department of Psychology similarly includes both learning and pastoral support. Learning support includes use of workrooms dedicated to MSc students with networked PCs and printer, access to the Departmental library, a specially selected reprint collection, provision of photocopying cards, and ready access to members of staff who are respected scholars in the fields taught. Pastoral support augments the University's care systems, with each student being allocated a Personal Tutor. New students undergo an induction programme in the week before they start the course. A comprehensive handbook is available for the course; this is available on-line, as are a wealth of other resources via the Department's intranet. Teaching is usually in small groups with much opportunity for students to discuss matters and support one another. There is an active Student - Staff Committee with postgraduate representation.

Career prospects

Graduates will have good prospects in careers which involve the understanding of research methodology as it applies to the social sciences and to psychology in particular. Career prospects in research-related academic, clinical, educational, and health fields are good. It is anticipated that approximately half of graduates will progress to careers involving research (interpreted broadly). The remainder will be able to use skills gained on the course in the many career areas requiring a principled approach to qualitative and quantitative data.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

Ample opportunity for first-hand research involvement is available to students on the course through volunteer placements in laboratories at the Department of Psychology and the Centre for Integrative Neuroscience and Neurodynamics (CINN), offering training and experience in a wide variety of psychological assessment techniques.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. Understanding, at an advanced level, of a broad variety of methods in, and approaches to, empirical enquiry in the social and biological sciences, especially psychology.
2. Advanced understanding of the principal qualitative and quantitative research methods used in psychological research.
3. The use of computer programs to perform qualitative and quantitative analysis of data.
4. The components of a research study.
5. Ethical issues as they relate to research in psychology.
6. Theoretical issues as they apply to psychological research.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

- 1 and 5 are introduced to students using a web-based, self-paced workthrough.
- 1-5 are covered in lectures and seminars, and are further supported by practical experience, most notably in the completion of an empirical project.
- 1 and 2 are supported by the requirement to attend a number of departmental seminars given by visiting speakers, who are generally leaders in their field.
- 3 is covered by a comprehensive lecture programme followed up by supported workshops and self-paced exercises in data collection and analysis.
- 4, 5 and 6 are supported in small group seminars.

Assessment

- 1, 3, 4 and 6 are assessed by practical coursework, essays, and the requirement to complete an original piece of psychological research.

- 2 is assessed directly through coursework, and an in-class test, as well as indirectly in the empirical project (through the rationale for the methods actually deployed by the student).
- 5 and 6 assessed as part of the requirement to complete two project proposals during the course (one of which will be taken to fruition by the student).
- 6 is assessed throughout.
- In all cases, students are expected to perform at a level above that required for undergraduate study.

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills - *able to*:

1. Understand, at an advanced level, the theoretical framework(s) in which psychological research is conducted.
2. Give an account of the basics of research design, data capture, and analysis, as they apply to the social sciences.
3. Understand the basis on which evidence-based reasoning may be articulated or evaluated in the context of psychological research.
4. Select from a number of possible methods, the one most appropriate to a particular data set and a given research question or questions.
5. Critically evaluate the design and conduct of psychological research.
6. Write well-structured and well-argued essays.
7. Abstract complex orally presented material, at a level beyond the capabilities of most undergraduates.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

- 1-5 are explicated in seminars.
- 2 is supported in small group seminars, as well as by self-paced study using web-based teaching.
- Coursework assignments give opportunity for formative feedback in support of 2, 5 and 6.
- Feedback to students on coursework in 'Methods' modules (at least three of which must be offered) assists students in the deployment of their intellectual understanding to practical research related issues, supporting 1-5, and particularly 3.

Assessment

- 1-6 are assessed in coursework.
- 7 is assessed by students handing in a number of abstracts of departmental seminars.

C. Practical skills - *able to*:

1. Perform advanced searches for information relevant to specific topics.
2. Choose and apply appropriate data analytic techniques, from a list including analysis of variance and covariance, regression, factor analysis and other multivariate techniques.
3. Plan and carry out, with supervision, psychological research at the graduate level.
4. Collect and manage data.
5. Write up empirical psychological research.
6. Make an application for ethical approval.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

- Dedicated seminars, practical classes, and exercises deliver 1, 2.
- A dedicated library and resources session supports 1.
- 3 and 4 are initially explicated as part of the Methods modules (i.e., PYM0CG, PYM0CP, PYM0DP, PYM0NS); they are then consolidated by direct supervision of a research project and associated dissertation.
- Support for 6 is delivered by special seminar.

Assessment

- 1, 3 and 6 are assessed by the requirement to undertake a project planning assignment.
- 2 is assessed by coursework assignments and an in-class test.
- 3-6 are assessed in the main by the student undertaking an empirical research project, and then writing this up as a dissertation.

D. Transferable skills - *able to*:

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1. Communicate concisely or at length in writing.
 2. Give oral presentations.
 3. Work with a group.
 4. Plan and implement a project.
 5. Solve practical problems.
 6. Use IT to write, to present information visually, to manage and analyse numeric data, to communicate, and to find information.
 7. Manage time.
 8. Condense complex orally delivered information.
- Transferable skills are integrated in subject-based teaching. 1 is learned, with formative feedback, through essays and other written assignments.
 - 2 is included in seminars.
 - 3 forms a natural part of the compulsory modules PYM0S1 and PYM0QQ.
 - 4 and 5 are explicated in the methods modules, and further consolidated by the supervised empirical project.
 - 6 and 7 pervade all aspects of the course.
 - 8 is supported by formative feedback on research seminars written up by the student.

Assessment

- 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8 are formally assessed as coursework.
- An adequate standard in 3, 5, and 7 is required to pass the course.

Please note - This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance process or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.