Course Specification

Course Summary Information		
1	**Course Title**	MSc Forensic Psychology
2	**Course Code**	PT0978
3	**Awarding Institution**	Birmingham City University
4	**Teaching Institution(s)** (if different from point 3)	
5	**Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation** (if applicable)	

6	**Course Description**
	Want to study a Forensic Psychology Master's in Birmingham?. On our MSc Forensic Psychology, you will learn about some of the most dangerous offenders in society and their victims, the various approaches to assisting police with their enquiries (investigative psychology), the Criminal Justice System from a psychological perspective, the role of psychologists in various forensic settings. You will develop skills that will prepare you for a range of careers in the field of criminal psychology and criminal justice, or for further postgraduate studies. This course will also enhance your research skills and knowledge, through teaching you how to design high-level research projects, conduct statistical analysis, and to evaluate and scientifically report research findings. The core aim of the course is to prepare you to work with clients and professionals in a range of forensic and forensic-related settings. Equipped with a sound knowledge of key theoretical and applied issues in forensic psychology, you will gain not only a critical appreciation of theoretical and factual concepts, but an awareness of the strengths and limitations of research evidence. The course integrates psychological theory with the development of practical skills and an understanding of professional practice. **What's covered in the course?** The aims of the course are to: • Equip you with a detailed critical understanding of the key theoretical and applied issues in forensic psychology, including investigative psychology procedures, the court system, the development of offending behaviour, the assessment and treatment of offenders, and the effects of offending on victims • Provide an understanding of forensic psychology techniques and the roles of other criminal justice professionals in the detection, prosecution, assessment and treatment of offenders • Enable you to acquire an advanced ability to design research, conduct statistical analysis, and evaluate and scientifically report research in forensic psychology • Enhance your skills in communication, group work, professionalism and application of IT so that you can perform at a high level of competence in these areas On successful completion of the course, you will be able to demonstrate an advanced knowledge and critical understanding of the key issues in forensic psychology of relevance to both academics and practitioners. Graduates of this course are expected to have developed

	advanced academic, intellectual and professional skills, with the ability to work autonomously and in teams. You will be taught by experts in the field of forensic psychology with a wide range of research specialisms, including our Course Director, Professor Michael Brookes OBE, a Consultant Chartered and Registered Forensic Psychologist, appointed an OBE in 2013 for his services to HM Prison Service and the Care of Prisoners. You will also have the opportunity to attend lectures delivered by professionals currently working in forensic settings. Our Psychology department has a wide range of psychology testing labs, equipment, and software to support your studies, as well as a dedicated Psychology computer lab with networked computers with Psychology-specific software. **Career and further study prospects** Upon successful completion of this course, you will be prepared to work in a range of roles in the field of criminal psychology and criminal justice (subject to any conditions the roles have). These include Interventions Facilitator (including in Youth Offending Teams), roles in Prison and Probation Services (Prison Officer, Probation Officer roles), roles in policing (including Detective Constable, Vetting Officer, and Police Analyst roles), roles with the National Crime Agency Central Intelligence Hub, NHS and Forensic Mental Healthcare roles (including Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner, Mental Health and Wellbeing Practitioner, Children's Wellbeing Practitioner, Educational Mental Health Practitioners, Clinical Associate Psychology Apprenticeships, Assistant Psychologist, Support Worker, Healthcare Assistant), and charity roles (including Independent Domestic Violence Advisor, Domestic Violence Support Practitioner, Support Worker, Policy Researcher). Those who wish to pursue an academic career can apply for further postgraduate studies (PhD).

7	**Course Awards**		
7a	**Name of Final Award**	**Level**	**Credits Awarded**
	Master of Science Forensic Psychology	7	180
7b	**Exit Awards and Credits Awarded**		
	Postgraduate Certificate Forensic Psychology Postgraduate Diploma Forensic Psychology	7 7	60 120

8	**Variation from the University Regulations**
	This course has approved variations to the University's Academic Regulations. These can be accessed via the student contract page: https://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-contract

9	**Delivery Patterns**		
Mode(s) of Study	**Location(s) of Study**	**Duration of Study**	**Code(s)**
Full Time	City Centre	1 year	PT0978
Part Time	City Centre	2 years	PT0980

10	Entry Requirements
	The admission requirements for this course are stated on the course page of the BCU website at https://www.bcu.ac.uk.

11	Course Aims
	The core aim of the course is to prepare you to work with clients and professionals in a range of forensic and forensic-related settings. The course integrates psychological theory with the development of practical skills and an understanding of professional practice. Equipped with a sound knowledge of key theoretical and applied issues in forensic psychology, you will gain not only a critical appreciation of theoretical and factual concepts, but also an awareness of the strengths and limitations of research evidence. Psychologists with knowledge and skills in forensic psychology work empirically and theoretically: that is, they adopt a scientist-practitioner perspective. UK forensic psychologists have contributed to the development of research and assessment tools, their implementation, and best practice guidance in legal contexts, including civil and criminal, at home and internationally. This combination of empirical base, theoretical understanding, and use of reputable guidelines ensures they deliver research, interventions and other forensic services of the highest standard. In conjunction with being equipped to teach or supervise other forensic professionals, psychologists with knowledge and skills in forensic psychology aim to create and sustain inclusivity and diversity across the domains in which they work. As with all other professional psychologists their work is subject to ethical, cultural and reflective practice in collaborative supervision with other psychologists, to achieve service user engagement and goals with particular populations, across diverse settings in dealing with particular problems. Our Master's degree focuses on four core areas: (1) research, (2) consultancy, (3) teaching and training, and (4) planning and managing psychological interventions. In addition to these core areas, psychologists with knowledge and skills in forensic psychology may acquire a range of other skills such as managing and bringing about change in thinking patterns during behavioural change interventions. Skills acquired during training are theoretically based and highly transferable across a range of contexts. The same behavioural change principles, for example, are applicable in settings as wide ranging as reducing the risk to the public of offending to enhancing investigation processes, and working with individuals and groups to the benefit of self, wider communities and society. In addition to those who have offended, forensic psychology provides knowledge of assisting victims of crime including victims of domestic abuse and rape. They also provide knowledge and skills about working with offenders who have mental health difficulties, personality disorders and those who have drug addictions or have misused other substances. Other criminal justice organisations also employ psychologists with forensic knowledge and skills, be it to assist victims and witnesses in court processes or investigations, to act as an 'expert witness', and/or to support the police and/or other law enforcement agencies. In addition, psychologists with forensic knowledge and skills have high level research and consultancy skills that enable them to develop appropriate and targeted research studies. These can range in scope from the analysis of outcomes of a service provision to large scale publishable research. Indeed, psychologists with forensic knowledge and skills have made significant contributions to international research focusing on a range of issues relevant to psychological applications

relevant to the criminal justice system using evidence-based practice to guide their approaches as reflective science-practitioners.

The course upholds Birmingham City University's four core values of:

- **Excellence:** We take pride in ensuring the highest quality standards of academic achievement and professional service delivery.
- **People focused:** We value everyone, recognising that what we do is for the benefit of all those connected with the University.
- **Partnership working:** We work constructively with each other, our students and wider University community to create strong and successful working relationships.
- **Fairness and integrity:** We take a fair and balanced approach to our activities and are mindful of the impact of our actions.

Incorporated also are the British Psychological Society values of:

- **Respect:** Psychologists value the dignity and worth of all persons, with sensitivity to the dynamics of perceived authority or influence over clients, and with particular regard to people's rights including those of privacy and self-determination.
- **Responsibility:** Psychologists value their responsibilities to clients, to the general public, and to the profession and science of Psychology, including the avoidance of harm and the prevention of misuse or abuse of their contributions to society.
- **Competence:** Psychologists value the continuing development and maintenance of high standards of competence in their professional work, and the importance of preserving their ability to function optimally within the recognised limits of their knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience.
- **Integrity:** Psychologists value honesty, accuracy, clarity, and fairness in their interactions with all persons, and seek to promote integrity in all facets of their scientific and professional endeavours.

An awareness of current UK legislation applicable to the work in forensic and forensic related settings is promoted alongside facilitating an understanding of the complex issues involved when forming professional, particularly therapeutic relationships with clients, and the issues and impact of working in highly secure, medium levels of security, and open or community forensic settings. Integral to this is the need to reflect upon and monitor one's behaviour.

Underpinning the course is therefore the upholding of ethical principles, conduct, attitudes, and judgements through promoting and delivering the highest standards of behaviour, the expression of clear ethical principles and standards and, by providing discussion opportunities on these issues. The dignity and worth of all persons, acting in the interests of others, and recognising the potential conflict between assisting offenders and protecting the public are emphasised.

In addition to providing teaching on the BPS' Code of Ethics and Conduct and relevant supplementary ethical guidelines, you are made aware of the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students. This includes formal teaching on ethics, embedding ethical principles within all modules and ensuring you understand the ethical frameworks that apply to their research, how to engage with these, as well as being aware of the ethical implications of the research that they encounter and working with people more generally. The course will also seek to foster appropriate understanding of, and competencies in, ethical decision-making and practice, both at the general level and specific to

	the sorts of situations and contexts that applied psychologists face in their work, at the appropriate level. In evaluating an understanding of working ethically, there are in place mechanisms for identifying and dealing with academic and professional misconduct. The course is delivered by a specialist staff team who have academic and/or professional backgrounds in forensic psychology. Their particular strengths help shape the course with their professional contacts facilitating guest lectures by those currently working in forensic and forensic-related settings. This is an approach encouraged by the University who are keen to create flexibility for courses to develop distinctive identities, by making the most of particular strengths around research and practice shared by their staff team, or those that are reflected in the strategic priorities of their Department or University. Indeed, courses are encouraged to develop specific emphasis and focus on some areas in more depth than others, to reflect the areas of strength of the staff team delivering the course, or to promote a distinctive identity for the course as a whole. As such, this course has developed strong 'assessment and treatment of offenders, 'forensic and transferable skills', 'investigative psychology', 'psychology of law and justice', and 'victimology' modules. These also build on the research undertaken by staff team members and emphasise the demonstrable research culture, evidenced by the active current publication record of members of the course team and other staff allied to the delivery of the course.

12	**Course Learning Outcomes** **Upon completion of the course, you will be able to:**
1	Use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to advanced scholarship in the discipline. Conduct qualitative and quantitative empirical research of relevance to forensic psychology, using the appropriate skills and capabilities to collect and analyse data, and report and critically evaluate research findings.
2	Critically discuss the psychological theories and evidence of relevance to processes in the justice system, including: the legal framework of the civil and criminal justice systems; processes of investigation; the legal process; the process of detention; working with litigants, appellants, and individuals seeking arbitration and mediation; and interdisciplinary and multi-agency working.
3	Analyse and evaluate the different approaches to assessment and formulation in relation to assessing individuals, groups and / or organisations, as well as the processes and tools of assessment in line with the particular focus offered within this course.
4	Evaluate and compare the range of interventions available for offenders, patients and at-risk individuals, victims / survivors, professionals, groups and organisations. Discuss the different approaches, identify strengths and weaknesses of these approaches to inform the selection of appropriate interventions, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
5	Apply knowledge and skills to enable you to progress to working with a range of client groups including: different types of offenders, patients and at-risk individuals; victims / survivors; individuals across the lifespan (including children and young people in conflict with the law); males and females; professionals, groups, and organisations.
6	Apply knowledge and skills to enable you to progress to working within a range of settings and contexts relevant to forensic psychology, including: prisons; secure units; hospitals; mental health; police; courts (including criminal, family and civil); community settings; charities and social enterprise. Explain issues of organisational culture and systems, and the ways in which these impact on the practice of forensic psychologists and other professionals. Your understanding of legal and professional practice frameworks, though relevant to the full Stage 1 curriculum, will be particularly relevant to your developing understanding of the work of forensic psychologists in different settings.
7	Take responsibility for your own professional development and use reflective practice in your current and future development as a forensic psychology student, practitioner, or academic. Critically discuss forensic psychological theories and evidence underpinning the development and training of others.
8	Evaluate forensic psychological theories and evidence relevant to working with organisations to contribute to the development of practice, guidance and / or policy. Discuss principles and procedures that forensic psychologists use when evaluating the practice of organisations and conducting consultancy

13	**Level Learning Outcomes**
	Postgraduate Certificate in Forensic Psychology (60 Credits)
1	Evaluate the importance of ethical practice in forensic psychological practice and the ethical dilemmas that can occur when working with client groups.
2	Critically discuss and evaluate the function, knowledge requirements, and skills of a forensic psychologist in the role of consultant.
3	Recommend appropriate procedures in forensic psychological practice and produce insightful professional reports.
4	Effectively communicate knowledge in forensic psychology.
5	Analyse and evaluate key theories and research relating to victims of crime.
6	Systematically evaluate the impact of crime on victims.
7	Critically analyse the ethical issues when researching and working with victims.
8	Evidence enhanced communication skills when working with victims and their families.
9	Use a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methods and methodologies and explain key statistical concepts.
10	Make informed decisions regarding the choice of the appropriate inferential statistics based on the research question/hypothesis and the type of data.
11	Use software packages to analyse and interpret research data, and answer a research question.
12	Report and present results in line with the APA guidelines.
	Postgraduate Diploma in Forensic Psychology (120 Credits) *In addition to the above LOs, students will be able to:*
13	Explain and appraise the Criminal Justice System and its processes.
14	Explain and appraise the application of psychological research and theory at various stages of the criminal justice process.
15	Explain and critically evaluate the psychological factors which may be relevant at the various stages of the criminal justice process.
16	Reflect on your learning, experiences, and your role as a psychologist in the Criminal Justice System.
17	Critically discuss the psychological theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the assessment and treatment of offenders.
18	Critically evaluate a range of assessment methods relevant to offending behaviour in a variety of forensic contexts.
19	Critically evaluate a range of treatment interventions relevant to offending behaviour in a variety of forensic contexts.
20	Evaluate potential barriers to successful assessment and treatment for offenders and propose logical ways to avoid and overcome these barriers.
21	Use a variety of advanced data analysis techniques and explain advanced statistical concepts.
22	Apply and justify the selection of the appropriate advanced inferential statistics and research methods techniques based on the research question/hypothesis and the type of data.
23	Analyse, interpret, and evaluate research data to answer complex research questions with the use of appropriate software packages.
24	Report and interpret results from advanced statistical analyses in a concise and informative manner and in line with the APA guidelines.

	Master of Science in Forensic Psychology (180 credits) *In addition to all the above LOs, students will be able to:*
25	Critically discuss psychological concepts relating to police investigations.
26	Discuss and evaluate key aspects of techniques used in investigative psychology.
27	Critically evaluate the utility of investigative psychology techniques.
28	Communicate effectively complex ideas and theoretical frameworks in investigative psychology.
29	Critically review relevant literature/methodologies, select, and justify a topic that requires further investigation through the design and implementation of an empirical study.
30	Identify and critically discuss ethical issues in conducting research in forensic psychology and prepare ethics applications for research in this field.
31	Collect and analyse data in a systematic and rigorous manner using appropriate techniques.
32	Undertake independent research in forensic psychology.
33	Disseminate your research and research findings in oral and written format, with clear, logical findings critically appraised.

14	**Course Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy**
	Our learning and teaching principles are underpinned by practice-based and enquiry-led approaches. Both approaches will expose you to a range of learning activities that offer you opportunities to apply psychological theory and research to contemporary forensic phenomena. This will not only enable you to understand how people respond in varying forensic situations but will also encourage you to challenge misconceptions about human behaviour and society as they relate to forensic psychology. A unique aspect of our course is the on-going development of our modules, combining core forensic psychology in applied contexts supported by visiting practitioners. These applied modules reflect real world forensic contexts. This will give you a more interdisciplinary and holistic perspective of forensic psychology. You will explore why people commit crimes, how the society we live in perceives and treats offenders and victims of crime, the legal and criminal justice system and innovative, 'cutting-edge' investigative psychological techniques. You will be taught by academics and professionals who are active researchers with relevant qualifications (e.g., Chartered Psychologists, Registered Forensic Psychologists, PhDs in Psychology and Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching), ensuring that you will receive a curriculum which is up to date and relevant to today's forensic issues. We are also continuously updating our teaching methods and on-line technologies to support and provide you with a blended learning experience. We have further ensured that our Master's degree course is inclusive to all students by taking a global perspective to the content of your degree. We also acknowledge that our teaching and assessment methods should be easily accessible to all students, regardless of race, gender, or disability. **Learning and Teaching content** To help you achieve the above learning outcomes, we have carefully planned the curriculum so that Term 2 modules build on the content of Term 1 modules. At the start of your Masters' learning journey, we will manage your transition to Level 7 teaching by clarifying the core elements and structure of each module and emphasising the need for you to be more critically aware and to evaluate more critically research findings and current, sometimes conflicting, theories than was the case with your undergraduate studies. The dissertation, which is empirically focused, will enable you to undertake real-world quantitative or qualitative based research that will assist your understanding of individual behaviour, group functioning, or

organisational performance and enhance your employment opportunities with a wide range of criminal justice agencies or, for some, in non-forensic settings.

You will also further develop your psychological literacy skills, particularly your writing and presentation skills. This will include writing research reports and essays according to APA (7th ed.) style. You will also learn how to retrieve and organise effectively more sophisticated information than was the case at undergraduate level, handle primary source material critically and enhance your capacity to make defensible, well-argued, judgements.

There will also be an increased emphasis on practical and transferrable skills. You will collect, comprehend and examine data effectively, with the opportunity to become increasingly computer literate in a number of statistical packages and experimental equipment. Specialist hardware and software is available for teaching and research activities with the potential for students being taught how to use it, as part of their own research and learning.

In order for you to become an attractive postgraduate for employers, we will encourage you to problem solve, critically evaluate information and will provide opportunities for developing your emotional intelligence and resilience. You will work in small group settings that emulate collaboration within a working environment. Your presentation and communication skills will also be developed through the course as part of the assessment process and in group exercises. You will also develop the capacity to work independently with the planning of your work, completing your research ethics form, and undertaking your research project being three opportunities to further develop your academic, intellectual, and professional skills.

Your Learning and Teaching experience
The range and depth of skills required from successful postgraduates in forensic psychology requires that a range of learning, teaching, and assessment strategies are employed on this course. Learning takes place in the University through face-to-face teaching sessions, the University's virtual learning environment (Moodle), and in criminal justice settings.

Learning and teaching on the course takes varied forms including lectures/seminars, workshops, personal tutorials, staff office hours, independent study, electronic learning, reflective thinking, court visits, and discussion groups. To ensure that you are prepared for face-to-face teaching you will be expected to engage in pre-sessional tasks which will include reading recommended book chapters, journal articles, and pre-prepared material. Much of your learning will be self-directed, independently lead.

The assessment of your learning and teaching (formative and summative)
We have clearly aligned your learning outcomes, teaching content, and teaching approaches to your summative assessments. Our lectures/seminars though are much broader than this and provide both the context and additional material to enable you to have a fuller understanding of the module you are studying.

A distinct feature of your postgraduate degree course is the range of formative activities that are offered prior to the submission of your summative (formally assessed) work. Formative opportunities are integral to your learning and understanding as they articulate the requirements for summative assessments. The verbal or written feedback from these learning activities are also designed to improve and contribute to your learning. Examples of formative activities include comments on dissertation chapter drafts, on your research proposal and ethics application. We also offer scheduled one-to-one meetings during our office hours for more detailed feedback if required. The formative activities will help you complete your summative assessments with a clear focus and confidently.

	Your formative feedback will feed into a diverse range of modes of summative assessments (Coursework, Time-limited Coursework, and In Person) to assess your learning, which include written assignments such as essays and reports, time-limited coursework, and individual presentations. Once you have completed each module, your formative and summative feedback can be “fed-forward” to enhance future learning. Although summative assessment methods vary from module to module, the Course Leader and the course team have worked together to ensure that they function as an integrated, comprehensive, and consistent scheme. This ensures a consistency of approach between modules and enables workloads to be co-ordinated. Nevertheless, many submission deadlines occur shortly before the commencement of a new term and, as a postgraduate student, there is an onus on you to plan your workload and self-manage your study. **Our expectations of you as a student** We expect you to take an enquiry-led and practice-based approach to your studies. You are expected to be the driver of your own learning experience. We will provide the tools to establish both core and enhanced academic skills and psychological literacy. This will allow you to become increasingly autonomous, enabling you to supplement your knowledge with independent research and utilise the skills that you gain to solve real life problems. You are encouraged to effectively utilise feedback to improve future work. Our expectation is also that you attend all the teaching sessions offered. Merely reading the notes of others won’t give you the insight needed to fully understand subject content or the depth required in your answers. The teaching session allows the lecturer to explore subject material with you and typically provides you with an opportunity to ask questions. These teaching sessions will be most beneficial if you have done some preparation in advance. If there is material you do not understand from previous weeks but have done nothing to address the problem then you may find any new material harder to follow. You need to be active in your learning. Review previous notes to ensure you understand them, organise material so you can find it and plan you time so you can achieve a balance between work time and other time. Additionally, academic research across the education sector indicates a strong link between levels of student participation and academic achievement. As part of our learning community, we expect you to take responsibility for your attendance and active participation in your studies. The University monitors attendance and we undertake to contact students if their failure to participate gives cause for concern. Remember, employers often ask us about attendance when seeking references. Based on the content, assessment, and interactive experiences, you will be able to adapt in varied forensic and other settings, but also have the capability to continue learning. In turn, this will allow you to develop personally and meet future requirements both in the workplace and in further study. Overall, within this postgraduate degree we expect you to take advantage of the numerous opportunities provided in order to establish your own personal employment and academic pathway. The completion of your Masters’ degree should not be the end of your learning but the beginning of a continual process of personal and professional development.

15	Course Requirements
15a	**Level 7** ***In order to complete this course you must successfully complete all the following CORE modules (totalling 180 credits):***

Module Code	Module Name	Credit Value
PSY7046	Investigative Psychology	20
PSY7047	The Assessment and Treatment of Offenders	20
PSY7048	Victimology	20
PSY7050	The Psychology of Law and Justice	20
PSY7051	Advanced Research Methods	20
PSY7052	Dissertation	40
PSY7055	Forensic and Transferable Skills	20
PSY7056	Research Methods in Forensic Psychology	20

15b Structure Diagram

Full-Time Structure

Semester One				
Forensic and Transferable Skills (20 credits)	Victimology (20 credits)	Research Methods in Forensic Psychology (20 credits)	The Psychology of Law and Justice (20 credits)	Dissertation Project Sessions
Semester Two				
Advanced Research Methods in Forensic Psychology (20 credits)	The Assessment and Treatment of Offenders (20 credits)	Investigative Psychology (20 credits)	Dissertation Project Sessions	
Semester Three				
Dissertation Project (40 credits)				

Part-Time Structure

Year 1 Semester One	
Victimology (20 credits)	Research Methods in Forensic Psychology (20 credits)
Year 1 Semester Two	
Advanced Research Methods in Forensic Psychology (20 credits)	The Assessment and Treatment of Offenders (20 credits)
Year 1 Semester Three	
Reflection and Preparation for Year 2	

Year 2 Semester One		
The Psychology of Law and Justice (20 credits)	Forensic and Transferable Skills (20 credits)	Dissertation Project Sessions
Year 2 Semester Two		
Investigative Psychology (20 credits)	Dissertation Project Sessions	
Year 2 Semester Three		
Dissertation Project (40 credits)		

16 Overall Student Workload and Balance of Assessment

Overall student *workload* consists of class contact hours, independent learning and assessment activity, with each credit taken equating to a total study time of around 10 hours. The following information gives an indication of how much time you will need to allocate to different activities.

- *Scheduled Learning* includes lectures, practical classes and workshops, contact time specified in timetable
- *Directed Learning* includes placements, work-based learning, external visits, on-line activity, Graduate+, peer learning
- *Private Study* includes preparation for exams/assignments.

The approximate percentage of the course assessed by coursework, exam and in-person is shown below.

Level 7

Workload

% time spent in timetabled teaching and learning activity

Activity	Number of Hours
Scheduled Learning	216
Directed Learning	164
Private Study	1420
Total Hours	1800

Balance of Assessment

Assessment Mode	Percentage
Coursework	90%
Exam	0%
In-Person	10%