

## Programme Specification (PG)

Awarding body / institution:	Queen Mary University of London
Teaching institution:	Queen Mary University of London
Name of final award and programme title:	MSc Psychology: Mental Health Sciences
Name of interim award(s):	PGCert, PGDip
Duration of study / period of registration:	12 months
Queen Mary programme code(s):	PMSF-QMBIOL1 PSPSM / C8B1
QAA Benchmark Group:	Psychology
FHEQ Level of Award:	Level 7
Programme accredited by:	This is not a BPS accredited programme.
Date Programme Specification approved:	
Responsible School / Institute:	School of Biological & Chemical Sciences

Schools / Institutes which will also be involved in teaching part of the programme:

Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine

Collaborative institution(s) / organisation(s) involved in delivering the programme:

### Programme outline

This is a new course provided by the Department of Psychology at SBCS and the Centre for Psychiatry at the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine. The MSc programme provides interdisciplinary training integrating social, developmental, cognitive, and genetic approaches to understanding psychiatric disorders and will include hands-on training in a range of advanced methods for studying the causes and consequence of mental illness.

Initially, students will learn about how mental health can be viewed in different contexts at the Center for Psychiatry: from causal and protective factors to prevention, stigmatization, rehabilitation and social integration. The next part of the programme will be run by the Department of Biological and Experimental Psychology at SBCS. Here, students will develop the skills required to translate their knowledge of psychiatry from the clinic to basic sciences and investigate the aetiology of disorders from developmental, social, cognitive, neuroscientific, and genetic perspectives. Students will learn about each of these perspectives in depth and explore the interplay between them in three advanced methods modules with hands-on training in a variety of different methods relevant to the mental health sciences including developmental psychology, EEG, psychophysiology, behavioural genetics and genomics, and cognitive and behavioural neuroscience.

A core element to the programme will be the development and completion of an independent empirical research project focusing on mental health. Students will develop a research question in semester A and use the skills they acquire in semester B

to collect and analyse data or conduct secondary analyses of existing data. Semester C will focus entirely on the completion of the research project and the production of an MSc dissertation.

This course is suitable for students who aim to pursue a research career in the field or a related discipline, or those who are interested in pursuing clinical training in programmes with a strong research focus (e.g., Doctorate of Clinical Psychology). The course is also suitable for medical professionals who want to gain a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of mental illness. However, they will need to have sufficient background knowledge in Psychology/Psychiatry.

## Aims of the programme

The primary aim of the proposed programme is to equip students with the skills required to conduct and critically evaluate interdisciplinary research in the mental health sciences.

Specific aims of the programme are:

- 1) To develop a comprehensive understanding of how mental health can be viewed in different contexts: from causal and protective factors to prevention, stigmatization, rehabilitation and social integration. This will be achieved in the 30-credit Mental Health in Context module.
- 2) To gain an in-depth understanding of the different approaches to forward and reverse translation of findings between the clinical and basic sciences, critically evaluate these approaches and apply them to a novel research question. This will be achieved in the 15-credit module Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences I
- 3) To develop the skills required to design, analyse, interpret and critically evaluate findings from observational and experimental data in the mental health sciences. This will be achieved in the 15-credit module Advanced Research Methods and Statistics.
- 4) Provide students with skills to be able to interpret and critically evaluate findings from cognitive and neuroscientific studies of mental health and hands-on training in the collection and analysis and interpretation of data using EEG and fMRI. This will be achieved in the 15-credit module Cognitive Neuroscience.
- 5) To provide a detailed and integrated understanding of the role of social and environmental factors in the development of mental health problems and psychological wellbeing and critically evaluate the central concepts, theories and research findings from social epidemiology approach. This will be achieved in the 15-credit module Social-Environmental Influences on Mental Health and Well-Being.
- 6) Provide students with skills to be able to interpret and critically evaluate findings from the psychiatric genetics and genomics literature and hands-on training in molecular analyses. This will be achieved in the 15-credit module Psychiatric Genetics and Genomics (if students don't have sufficient knowledge on genetics, they will be able to attend the BSc Psychology Level 6 module Nature, Nurture and Mental Health instead, which includes similar content but doesn't require the same degree of biological knowledge).
- 7) Develop students' transferable skills and employability by providing training in science communication, project management and career development. This will be achieved in the 15-credit module Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences II
- 8) Provide students with the skills to plan and conduct interdisciplinary research in mental health independently in a research environment, apply methodology to the solution of unfamiliar problems and communicate research results and scientific concepts in both a written and oral format. This will be achieved in the 60-credit MSc Project module.

## What will you be expected to achieve?

Please see below for learning outcomes.

Graduate attributes are based on the Queen Mary's statement of graduate attributes. The learning outcomes for academic content and disciplinary skills are based on the QAA benchmark statements for psychology. Nevertheless, the QAA state that the published standards only apply to graduates (up to level 6) and should only be considered a starting point for level 7 courses. We therefore adapted the QAA benchmark statements to include the higher level of knowledge and skills required for a level 7 course and ensure that they focused on mental health sciences. For example, the QAA statement "demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of a range of influences on psychological functioning and how they interrelate" was adapted to "to develop an in-depth knowledge of social, genetic, cognitive and neuroscientific explanations of mental health and an understanding of the complex interplay between these factors"

The learning outcomes for academic content and skills were also aligned with the FHEQ framework for level-7 courses. However, outcomes were adapted to ensure that they were directly applicable to mental health sciences. For example, the FHEQ outcome "Demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level" was adapted to "Plan and conduct an original, self-directed interdisciplinary research project in mental health in a professional research environment, tackling and solving problems autonomously". Similarly, "a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship" was adapted to "develop the skills required to design, analyse, interpret and critically evaluate findings from observational and experimental data in the mental health sciences."

Academic Content:	
A 1	To discuss and critically evaluate the key social, genetic, cognitive and neuroscientific theories of mental illnesses and those that combine these factors, for example, the diathesis-stress hypothesis.
A 2	To critically evaluate the different approaches taken to translate findings between clinical and basic sciences such as investigating "endophenotypes" of mental illnesses.
A 3	To understand, and have first-hand experience of, the key methods used in social, genetic and neuroscientific studies of mental health including social epidemiology, behavioural genetics and electroencephalogram (EEG).

Disciplinary Skills - able to:	
B 1	Interpret and critically evaluate findings across the mental health sciences and integrate knowledge from social, genetic, cognitive and neuroscientific perspectives
B 2	To develop the skills required to design, analyse, interpret and critically evaluate findings from observational and experimental data in the mental health sciences.
B 3	Plan and conduct an original, self-directed interdisciplinary research project in mental health in a professional research environment, tackling and solving problems autonomously
B 4	Communicate scientific concepts, research questions and results and in both a written and oral format to a variety of different audiences including basic scientists, clinicians and the general public.

Attributes:	
C 1	Show rounded intellectual development including transferable key skills that support their career goals and continuing education transferable key skills to help them with their career goals and their continuing.
C 2	To be clear communicators that can apply different forms of communication in various social, professional and cultural settings
C 3	Grasp the principles and practices of research in the mental health sciences and produce analyses which are grounded in evidence.

### How will you learn?

Learning will take place through a mixture of lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, lab practicals, journal clubs, 1:1 meetings, and independent learning.

Lectures, seminars tutorials, and workshops will be designed to maximise student engagement with individual and group-based exercises, role play, group discussions, problem based learning and hands-on training. Students will also receive 1:1 teaching through regular supervision meetings with their dissertation supervisor (once agreed between them in semester A). In addition, it is expected that the student will be integrated into their supervisors research group. This means they will receive additional

guidance from PhD students and postdocs in the lab. By attending their supervisor's lab meetings, the student will also have the opportunity to hear about similar projects, update others on their progress and discuss their data collection, analyses, and findings throughout the project. Students will also be encouraged to attend the Centre for Psychiatry, SBCS, and Psychology Department seminar series.

Students will receive 1:1 support and guidance from a dedicated personal tutor from the psychology department. This will allow students to assess and reflect on their progress on the course, including interpreting and acting on feedback. Personal tutors will also provide opportunities for students to discuss their career development and provide guidance on applications for their next destination as well as providing students with academic references.

## How will you be assessed?

The programme is designed to incorporate a broad range of different assessments. These include mostly different kinds of coursework (essays, a research proposal, lab reports, presentations, in-class assessments, a science communication piece and dissertation).

The full assessment profile of each of the modules is given below

Mental Health in Context (30 credits)

Critical Essay (100%)

Advanced Research Methods and Statistics (15 credits)

Problem-based coursework (50%)

Examination (50%)

Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences I (15 credits)

Presentation (20%)

Research proposal (80%)

Cognitive Neuroscience (15 credits)

In-class activities (30%)

Experimental plan (30%)

Lab report (40%)

Social-Environmental Influences on Mental Health and Well-Being (15 credits)

Report (100%)

Psychiatric Genetics and Genomics (15 credits)

Lab report (100%)

Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences II (5 credits)

CV and application (20%)

Science communication piece (article and video) (80%)

MSc Project module (60 credits)

Presentation (10%)

Dissertation (90%)

Lectures, seminars, tutorials and workshops will be designed to maximise student engagement with individual and group-based exercises, role play, group discussions, problem solving learning and hands-on training. This approach not only increases engagement but also provides opportunities for students to receive feedback and evaluate their progress on the course as they learn. Students will also receive written feedback on their coursework and exams within 3 working weeks to allow them to make best use of the guidance given in subsequent assessments. Through 1:1 sessions with their personal tutors, students will have the opportunity to discuss their progress on the course and the feedback they have been given and how to act on it.

### How is the programme structured?

Please specify the structure of the programme diets for all variants of the programme (e.g. full-time, part-time - if applicable). The description should be sufficiently detailed to fully define the structure of the diet.

Students will take:
In semester 1
1 x 30 credits (comp)
1 x 15 credits (core)
1 x 15 credits (comp)
In semester 2
4 x 15 credits (comp)
Over semester 1-3
1 x 60 credit (comp project)

### Academic Year of Study FT - Year 1

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Selection Status	Academic Year of Study	Semester
Mental Health in Context	WOFM981	30	7	Compulsory	1	semester 1
Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences I	PSY711P	15	7	Core	1	Semester 1
Advanced Quantitative Methods and Statistics	PSY702P	15	7	Compulsory	1	Semester 1
Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences II	PSY713P	15	7	Compulsory	1	Semester 2
Social and Developmental Determinates of Mental Health	PSY704P	15	7	Compulsory	1	Semester 2
Cognitive Neuroscience	PSY705P	15	7	Compulsory	1	Semester 2
Psychiatric Genetics and Genomics	PSY706P	15	7	Compulsory	1	Semester 2
Psychology MSc Research Project	PSY700P	60	7	Compulsory	1	Semesters 1-3

### What are the entry requirements?

<p>A 2:1 or above at undergraduate level in Psychology with suitable content will be considered. Degrees in Medical, Health, and Biological Sciences or other fields related to Psychology will be considered on an individual basis.</p> <p>For candidates where English is required, we need IELTS scores of 7.0 overall with at least 6.5 writing and 5.5 in the other components, or the equivalent. This is slightly higher than for other MSc programmes in SBCS due to the fact that most assessments require extensive and complex writing and we would anticipate that anyone below this standard would struggle to</p>
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complete

### **How will the quality of the programme be managed and enhanced? How do we listen to and act on your feedback?**

QMUL has an extensive set of quality assurance policies which aim to manage and enhance the quality of taught programmes (<http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality-assurance>).

In line with Queen Mary's quality assurance and enhancement framework, feedback on the programme will be sought from students by a variety of means. This will include internal mechanisms (informal staff/student discussions and focus groups, Student Module Evaluations and the SBCS PGT Student-Staff Liaison Committee (PGT SSLC) and external mechanisms (the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, PTES).

The programme director will seek feedback from informal discussions with psychology academics at monthly psychology staff meetings. Further feedback from students will also be sought at coffee mornings which will run each semester. We will appoint a student representative to attend selected psychology staff meetings to ensure that the student voice is formally captured. Further feedback will be sought by asking students to complete module evaluation forms developed as part of Queen Mary's quality assurance and enhancement framework. These forms ask students to respond on a 5-point Likert scale (from definitely agree to definitely disagree) to 11 different phrases such as "The module is well taught" and "The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance". The forms also allow for free text comments on the best things in the module and what can be improved.

Student feedback will be collated by the programme director and discussed in bimonthly Psychology Teaching Committee meetings and where necessary at the monthly psychology staff meetings. Any subsequent changes to the programme will be discussed at the SBCS Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC), which advises the School/Institute Director of Education on all matters relating to the delivery of taught programmes at school level including monitoring the application of relevant QM policies and reviewing all proposals for module and programme approval and amendment before submission to the Taught Programmes Board.

The PGT Student-Staff Liaison Committee provides a further opportunity for students and staff to communicate and discuss matters arising in the proposed programme. This could include content and assessment of modules, the pastoral care system and academic and social facilities. The PGT SSLC is chaired by the Director of Taught Programmes (PGT) and all MSc students are invited to attend. The committee meets twice per year and the meetings provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their experience of the MSc programme and to provide feedback.

SBCS operates an Annual Programme Review of their taught undergraduate and postgraduate provision. APR is a continuous process of reflection and action planning which is owned by those responsible for programme delivery; the main document of reference for this process is the Student Experience Action Plan (SEAP) which is the summary of SBCS's work throughout the year to monitor academic standards and to improve the student experience. Students' views are considered in this process through analysis of the PTES and module evaluations.

### **What academic support is available?**

All lecture materials, including the recommended reading will be made available to students on the QMPlus Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) prior to teaching. Module specific forums will be used on QMplus to engage students in discussions between teaching sessions and provide students with the opportunity to ask questions (including the option to do so anonymously). Lecture capture (video recordings) will be made available to all students following teaching sessions using a dedicated online system (Qreview).

Students will attend an established two-day induction event for incoming master's students in SBCS. This will include introductory talks from the Director of Postgraduate Taught Programmes, the Programme Director and tours of the psychology labs and facilities with a question and answer session. The second day includes enrolment and registration, talks providing careers information, learning development (e.g., developing research and writing skills), understanding plagiarism, the student union and WISE (Women in Science and Engineering). Students will also attend a library tour and health and safety induction, tour of the Mile End Campus and social event. A copy of the SBCS MSc student handbook will be provided to all incoming students. This handbook includes detailed information about QMUL and the school, enrolment and registration, communication, student records, online learning and IT services, student support and feedback, the QMUL calendar and semester dates and scheduled



teaching and timetables.

Existing psychology essay marking criteria for level 4,5,6 will be developed to include level-7 criteria in consultation with the exam board chair. This will be made available to all students at the start of term during induction. For other assessments not applicable to this mark scheme, module organisers will develop marking criteria and make these available to students before they are set the assignment. Students will be made aware of plagiarism and academic scholarship at several points throughout the proposed programme. First, this will be discussed during the two day induction with a talk from the dedicated plagiarism officer at SBCS (see induction for more details). Second, students will be encouraged to read the SBCS MSc student handbook which includes a section on plagiarism. Finally, we will include a tutorial on plagiarism, academic scholarship and correct referencing in Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences I which will include an online formative assessment (plagiarism quiz) to allow students to check their understanding of these issues.

Each student will be assigned an Advisor (personal tutor) at the start of term. Students will be randomly assigned to one of the staff with teaching responsibilities on the MSc. The role of advisors is to act as a valuable point of contact for academic, pastoral and personal issues and the students advocate in QMUL. In the vast majority of cases, advisors should support their advisees with general reassurance, support, and common sense advice. However, in more complex cases, the advisor should help the student identify appropriate support services which may include referral to the SBCS student support officer, programme director, director of taught programmes, or college based support services such as the Advice & Counselling Service and Disability & Dyslexia Service. Advisees will be invited to meet their advisors as a group as part of induction week (Semester 1: W0). This session will include introductions between advisees and students and their fellow group members. It will also allow advisors to discuss the purpose of the advisor scheme, lay ground rules for how students contact the advisor, remind students to read the SBCS masters students handbook, explain the different student support services that are available to students, and how to access them. Advisees will meet their advisor for another 15 minutes at least at two further times (Semester 1: week 10; Semester 2: week 10). The first of these meetings will focus on advisors getting to know their advisees' plans better. This will include discussion of their career goals, interests, strengths and weaknesses and any potential barriers for engagement. The latter meeting will focus on reviewing academic progress, identifying any barriers to engagement and discussion of career plans including gaining work experience and developing job applications or applications for further study. SBCS provides extensive support for advisees led by the director of student experience. This includes an extensive handbook for advisors and regular reminders on the advisor process.

### Programme-specific rules and facts

n/a

### How inclusive is the programme for all students, including those with disabilities?

Queen Mary has a central Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS) that offers support for all students with disabilities, specific learning difficulties and mental health issues. The DDS supports all Queen Mary students: full-time, part-time, undergraduate, postgraduate, UK and international at all campuses and all sites.

Students can access advice, guidance and support in the following areas:

- Finding out if you have a specific learning difficulty like dyslexia
- Applying for funding through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)
- Arranging DSA assessments of need
- Special arrangements in examinations
- Accessing loaned equipment (e.g. digital recorders)
- Specialist one-to-one "study skills" tuition
- Ensuring access to course materials in alternative formats (e.g. Braille)
- Providing educational support workers (e.g. note-takers, readers, library assistants)

- Mentoring support for students with mental health issues and conditions on the autistic spectrum.

### Links with employers, placement opportunities and transferable skills

The proposed programme will provide graduates with a comprehensive understanding of the diagnosis, course and multiple causes and consequences of psychiatric disorders. This MSc would therefore enhance future applications for clinical training such as the Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. Please note, however, that the MSc itself does not lead to a clinical qualification and that the programme is not accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS). The MSc also provides students with advanced, interdisciplinary training in the science of mental health. This includes with hands-on training in a number of different approaches including EEG, psychophysiology, and genomics. This means that students are also very well prepared for a career as a research psychologist (via a PhD).

The course has been designed with employability in mind and aims to enhance each of the core employability elements of knowledge, attributes and skills that are highly valued by a wide range of employers from a wide number of careers in the public and private sector. Specific examples of these are provided below

#### Knowledge

The modules Mental Health in Context, Cognitive Neuroscience, Social-Environmental Influences on Mental Health and Well-Being, and Psychiatric Genetics and Genomics will provide graduates with the most recent evidence-based knowledge of the causes and consequences of mental health. This is an extremely valuable core knowledge for those pursuing careers related to psychology such as social work, coaching or education. However, an up to date, evidence-based understanding of mental health is becoming increasingly important for those with management responsibilities across all employment sectors.

#### Attributes

As a whole, the proposed programme aims to develop graduates who engage critically with knowledge and acquire and apply knowledge in a rigorous way. Each of the modules will emphasise the development of critical analysis skills and extensive training in critical analysis of the literature will be provided in Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences I and II. Marking criteria for essays, lab reports, presentations and the MSc research project will place particular emphasis on evidence of critical thinking ensuring that this attribute is well developed on graduation.

#### Skills

The proposed programme aims to develop a wide range of transferable skills that are most valued by employers including communication skills, organisational skills, and IT skills. Specific training in communication skills will be provided in Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences I and II, including communicating complex ideas to basic scientists and clinicians (assessed through a presentation and research proposal) and the general public (assessed through a science communication piece). The development of organisational skills will be supported through tutorials in Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences I and II. These skills will be enhanced through the experience of organising their work throughout the course in order to successfully meet deadlines. However, these skills will be further enhanced through the experience of conducting the MSc Project which will require students to be organised and methodical and monitor and report on their progress to ensure they are on track to meet the deadline. Each of the modules in the programme will provide specific training to enhance the IT skills of graduates. This will include the use of literature searching and referencing software in Academic Skills in Mental Health Sciences II, software for statistical analysis in Advanced Research Methods and Statistics, as well as basic programming in MatLab in Cognitive Neuroscience.

## Programme Specification Approval

**Person completing Programme Specification:**

Cristina Cioffi

**Person responsible for management of programme:**

Cristina Cioffi

**Date Programme Specification produced / amended by School / Institute Learning and Teaching Committee:**

6 Jan 2022



Programme Title: MSc Psychology: Mental Health Sciences

**Date Programme Specification approved by Taught Programmes Board:**