Programme Specification: MSc Assessment and Treatment of Sex Offenders  
(distance learning)

Course Outline:

The MSc in the Assessment and Treatment of Sex Offenders is offered by the Forensic Section of the School of Psychology. It is a two-year, part-time, distance-learning course. It is designed to provide the academic content and some practical training for people involved in delivering sex offender treatment programmes or managing sex offenders.

Pathways:

There are two pathways through the programme, dependent on the applicants’ current experience of working with sex offenders. The MSc comprises four 20 credit core modules (Cognitive Behavioural Theory and Practice, Assessment and Treatment of Sex Offenders, Research Methods, The Prevention and Management of Offending within the Community), and an empirical dissertation (worth 60 credits).

In addition to the above, students study one of two 40 credit option modules dependent on their experience and current situation with regards working with sex offenders. Those students who are involved in delivering sex offender treatment programmes complete a module, Practice Assessment and Clinical Skills, which is assessed through a 3000 word case formulation and a video assignment. However, those students who are responsible for the management of sex offenders instead complete a module entitled, Practice Assessment and Management Skills. This is assessed through a case formulation and a management plan.

MSc Assessment and Treatment of Sex Offenders: Existing strengths and weaknesses

A number of key strengths can be identified with regard to the Learning and Teaching Strategy’s Aim for Postgraduate Programmes:

- In addition to developing their knowledge and understanding in their subject area, the programme places great emphasis on the development of practical and research skills, both of which will be of transferable benefit to the careers of students taking the degree.

- The nature of the distance learning environment means that students must develop good time management skills and structure their learning so that they can meet deadlines. Written feedback is provided for all assessments allowing students the opportunity to reflect on their performance and work independently on improving their work. Students are also provided with a study support guide that contains useful tips for essay and report writing.

- The dissertation, which accounts for one third of total credits on the programme, provides students with the opportunity to practice and improve their research techniques and methods.

The main weaknesses and therefore areas for potential improvement are as follows:
• The nature of distance learning studies means that opportunity to develop their presentational skills (as opposed to clinical and communication skills, which are assessed in the video assignment) are restricted. Students undertaking the programme come from a professional background such that they have experience in this area in any case, but they are not developed within the course. The four contact days (two conference style and two study skills related) delivered by the Forensic Section per annum, which are not compulsory, offers some opportunity for verbal communication, but this is limited and is not assessed.

• Another area of weakness, again related to the nature of distance learning courses, is the lack of opportunity for collaborative work or teamwork. Again the four contact days offer a forum for group discussions, but these are not formally assessed.
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Entry Requirements:

Applicants for this course must normally have
- a second class honours degree (normally an upper second) in an appropriate subject (e.g. psychology, social science) or, an equivalent relevant professional qualification. In exceptional cases, candidates with relevant experience and who can demonstrate an appropriate level of academic ability may be accepted,

and

- Be actively working in the assessment, treatment, management or supervision of sex offenders.

Students for whom English is not their first language and who have not lived in a country where the first language is English for at least three years must demonstrate an IELTS of 6.5 or a TOEFL score of 575 with a score of 4.0 in the Test of Written English.

Aims and Objectives:

We aim to provide the academic content and some practical training for people involved in delivering sex offender treatment programmes or managing sex offenders.

Our objectives are that by the end of the course, successful students who complete the course should have:

- An appreciation of the dominant cognitive and behavioural therapies, and an illustration of how the theories that underpin the students’ understanding of behavioural therapy work in practice.

- A sound knowledge of the causes of sexual offending, the value of risk assessment and risk prediction, and the theoretical models that have been developed to explain sexual offending.

- Improved practical and clinical skills, through reflection on their practice.

- An understanding of the various psychological approaches to treat or manage sex offenders.

- The ability to undertake an empirical investigation in a sex offending related topic.

Course Content and Structure:

Students are required to complete five modules and a dissertation. Four of the modules are core modules that are compulsory for all students. In addition, students are required to study one of two option modules dependent on their experience and current situation with regards working with sex offenders. Those students who are involved in delivering sex offender treatment programmes complete a module, Practice Assessment and Clinical Skills, whereas those students who are responsible
for the management of sex offenders instead complete a module entitled, Practice Assessment and Management Skills. The details of these modules are outlined below.

Each module is designed to be a self study guide and is accompanied by a number of provided readings. In addition, students are provided with several complementary books, some of which are specifically tailored to helping students with statistics and research methods whereas others are more introductory sexual offending textbooks. A study support guide is provided to each student, which details tips on researching and essay writing amongst other topics. A course handbook containing administrative information such as submission dates, marking guidelines and so on, is provided to each student. Finally, when students are beginning their dissertation, they are sent a dissertation handbook that includes, amongst other things, guidelines on how to conduct a study and what information each section of the report should contain.

**Module 1 - Cognitive-Behavioural Theory and Practice**
Unit 1  Behavioural Cognitive and Theory Practice
Unit 2  Cognitive Psychology - The Theoretical Tradition
Unit 3  Cognitive-Behavioural Theory
Unit 4  Cognitive-Behavioural Practice Techniques
Unit 5  Cognitive-Behavioural Approaches and the Treatment of Offenders

**Module 2 - Assessment and Treatment of Sex-Offenders**
Unit 1  Theory of Sexual Offending
Unit 2  Typologies of Sexual Offenders
Unit 3  Juvenile Sex Offenders
Unit 4  Assessment of Sex Offenders
Unit 5  Treatment of Sex Offenders
Unit 6  Relapse Prevention - Theory & Practice

**Either:**

**Module 3- Practice Assessment and Clinical Skills**
Unit 1  Working with Sex Offenders
Unit 2  Clinical Skills
Unit 3  Management Skills
Unit 4  Assignments

**Or:**

**Module 3- Practice Assessment and Management Skills**
Unit 1  Working with Sex Offenders
Unit 2  Clinical Skills
Unit 3  Management Skills
Unit 4  Assignments

**Module 4 – The Prevention and Management of Offending in the Community**
Unit 1  Theories of Crime and Prevention
Unit 2  Multi-Agency Public Protection Units
Unit 3  Internet Child Abuse
Unit 4  Circles of Support and Accountability
Unit 5  Media Representations of Sexual Offending
Unit 6  Sexual Exploitation in Sport and its Prevention

**Module 5 - Research Methods**
Unit 1  Introductory Information
Unit 2     Ethics and Applications
Unit 3     Literature Review
Unit 4     Survey Methodology
Unit 5     Experimental Methodology
Unit 6     Evaluation
Unit 7     Qualitative Methods
Unit 8     Beginning Statistics
Unit 9     Advanced Statistics

**Dissertation**

Students must submit a satisfactory dissertation of not more than 15000 words on an approved topic. Research proposals are scrutinised by an Ethics Committee and must be approved before a student can commence their study. The study is completed under the guidance of a dissertation supervisor from the academic staff. The measures and consent forms a student plans to use must be submitted and approved by their supervisor along with a draft method prior to data collection.
# Subject and Professional Skills

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Outcomes</th>
<th>Teaching Methods</th>
<th>How Demonstrated</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge and Concepts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced knowledge of psychological theories/research in relation to the management, supervision or treatment of sex offenders.</td>
<td>Course modules, attached and supplementary readings, textbooks, course conference.</td>
<td>Assessed essays, video assignment, case formulation or care/management plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Techniques</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding how theory and research findings can be applied to improvement of practice and selection of relevant treatment and management techniques.</td>
<td>Course modules, attached and supplementary readings, textbooks, course conference.</td>
<td>Assessed essays, video assignment, case formulation or care/management plan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Analysis</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to independently evaluate concepts and techniques, to critique material read and hence construct an informed opinion.</td>
<td>Course modules, attached and supplementary readings, textbooks, course conference.</td>
<td>Assessed essays and research methods assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to present individual cases in a clear and constructive way, to organise research findings, to construct an argument, to write assignments to a high standard.</td>
<td>Course modules, attached and supplementary readings, text books, course conference</td>
<td>Assessed essays.</td>
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## Transferable Skills

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<th>Intended Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing Learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to self-motivate and manage one’s learning in scheduling work adequately and meeting deadlines</td>
<td>Course modules, attached and supplementary readings, text books, course conference</td>
<td>All assessed work</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to conduct literature review and identify relevant material, ability to</td>
<td>Course modules, in particular the Research Methods Module and</td>
<td>Assessed essays, video assignment, case</td>
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write research proposal considering ethics and methodological issues  
Prevention and Management of Offending within the Community, attached and supplementary readings.

**Working Relationships**

Drawing on the expertise and guidance from academic or support staff, informal interaction with fellow students at conference or via email/listserver.  
Email/listserver interactions with students, formal interactions with staff, individual tutorials with staff at course conference.  
Some group work in the form of seminars at Induction and Dissertation skills days although not formally assessed.

**Data Presentation**

Ability to present research findings clearly with the correct interpretation, ability to present clinical cases in a concise and constructive way.  
Course modules, attached and supplementary readings, text books, course conference  
Assessed essays, video assignment, case formulation or care/management plan and research methods assignments.

**Communication Skills**

Good oral and written communication skills developed in the context of formal written assignments and video assignment, seminars and email interactions.  
Course modules, attached and supplementary readings, textbooks, course conference.  
Assessed essays, video assignment, case formulation or care/management plan and research methods assignments.

**Special Features**

The course places an emphasis on self-directed independent learning and the improvement of clinical and management skills by the application of theory to practice.
Module Specification

Module 1: Cognitive-Behavioural Theory and Practice

Credits: 20
Contact: Ruth Hatcher
Assessment Arrangements: 1 assignment (3000-4000 words)

Lectures 0
Private Study 14 hours per week
Total hours 14 hours per week

Subject Knowledge
Aims: This module focuses on the psychological theories that provide an explanation for human behaviours. The aim of the module is to undertake a detailed examination of various theoretical perspectives and models of the mind, including learning theory, psychodynamic theories, cognitive-behavioural theory and models of memory. The application of these theories to the assessment, management and treatment of sexual offenders is also discussed.

Learning outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Identify the origins and define the characteristics of cognitive-behavioural and psychodynamic theories.
2. Explain the role of cognitive mediation in behaviour, the difference between social learning and behaviourist approach to human learning.
3. Summarise the recent theories on the relationships between cognition, emotion, motivation and behaviour and their application to cognitive-behavioural therapies.

Skills
Aims: This module aims to develop the following: skills of independent learning, the application of theory to practice through data presentation, communication skills, and managing and reflecting on one’s learning.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Critically evaluate and use secondary data and research findings to construct an answer relevant to the essay question being asked.
2. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline.
3. Present the essay answer in an appropriate format following given guidelines.
4. Communicate ideas through written word effectively.

Methods:
Private study, and tutorial support directly or via Blackboard.

Additional Resources
Library facilities, Blackboard.
Module Specification

Module 2: Assessment and Treatment of Sex Offenders

Credits: 20
Contact: Ruth Hatcher
Assessment Arrangements: 1 assignment (3000-4000 words)

Lectures 0
Private Study 14 hours per week
Total hours 14 hours per week

Subject Knowledge
Aims: This module is designed to offer an account of psychological theoretical models that have been developed to explain the causes of sexual offending. The module also introduces students to the various types of offenders as well as risk assessment and risk prediction. It also presents the penile plethysmograph as a mean of assessment and gives a detailed description of the cognitive-behavioural approach that is applied in the treatment of sexual offenders. The module ends with a section on relapse prevention.

Learning outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Define the causes of sexual offending and the various types of sexual offenders.
2. Evaluate the use of the penile plethysmograph as a mean of assessment.
3. Explain how the theories underpinning cognitive-behavioural treatment are put into practice.

Skills
Aims: This module aims to develop the following: personal learning skills, the application of theory to practice through data presentation, communication skills, and managing and reflecting on one's learning.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Critically evaluation and use secondary data and research findings to construct an answer relevant to the essay question being asked.
2. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline.
3. Present the essay answer in an appropriate format following given guidelines.
4. Communicate ideas through written word effectively.

Methods:
Private study, and tutorial support directly or via Blackboard.

Additional Resources
Library facilities, Blackboard.
Module Specification

Module 3: Practice Assessment and Clinical Skills

Credits: 40
Contact: Ruth Hatcher
Assessment Arrangements: 2 assignments (one video assignment plus one 1000 assignment and one 3000 word assignment)

Subject Knowledge
Aims: This module aims to improve the students’ practical and clinical skills. Students are first introduced to the effects of burnout and the role of supervision. Students are required in this module to produce a video of one of their treatment sessions and offer a written factual account and self-evaluation. In addition, students are required to write a comprehensive case formulation detailing the individual case of one group participant.

Learning outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Recognise the importance of supervision and the dangers of burnout.
2. Show how literature affects personal treatment styles.
3. Understand the ethical implications of how to carry out research with a vulnerable population.
4. Reflect on one’s own learning.

Skills
Aims: This module aims to develop the following: practice skills, research skills, personal learning skills, communication skills, presentation skills, problem solving, and managing and reflecting on one’s learning.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Relate the theory to practice whilst facilitating a treatment session.
2. Improve practice by showing an ability to reflect on one’s performance.
3. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline about an individual case.
4. Use secondary data and research findings to support and reinforce professional opinion.

Methods:
Private study, and tutorial support directly or via Blackboard.

Additional Resources
Library facilities, Blackboard.
Module Specification

Module 3: Practice Assessment and Management Skills

Credits: 40
Contact: Ruth Hatcher
Assessment Arrangements: 2 assignments (two 3000 word assignments)

Lectures 0
Private Study 14 hours per week
Total hours 14 hours per week

Subject Knowledge
Aims: This module aims to improve the students’ practical and management skills. Students are first introduced to the effects of burnout and the role of supervision. Students are required in this module to produce a comprehensive case formulation detailing the individual case of one group participant. Students are also required to complete a management or care plan for an offender that they have been working with. This plan considers the support provided for an offender and whether this is appropriate when considering the offenders’ needs and risks as understood by information learnt in previous modules.

Learning outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Recognise the importance of supervision and the dangers of burnout.
2. Show how literature affects personal treatment styles.
3. Understand the ethical implications of how to carry out research with a vulnerable population.
4. Reflect on one’s own learning.

Skills
Aims: This module aims to develop the following: practice skills, research skills, personal learning skills, communication skills, presentation skills, problem solving, and managing and reflecting on one’s learning.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Relate the theory to practice whilst facilitating a treatment session.
2. Improve practice by showing an ability to reflect on one’s performance.
3. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline about an individual case.
4. Use secondary data and research findings to support and reinforce professional opinion.

Methods:
Private study, and tutorial support directly or via Blackboard.

Additional Resources
Library facilities, Blackboard.
Module Specification

**Module 4: The Prevention and Management of Offending within the Community**

**Credits:** 20

**Contact:** Ruth Hatcher

**Assessment Arrangements:** 1 assignment (3000-4000 words)

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<td>14 hours per week</td>
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<td>Total hours</td>
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**Subject Knowledge**

Aims: This module focuses on the psychological, criminological, social, and legal theories that explain offending behaviour, its prevention and its representation within society. The module provides information on the practical applications of offending prevention and management and will link theories with these examples. Key and developing issues in crime prevention and representation will be discussed.

**Learning outcomes:**
Students will be able to:
1. Identify the theories behind crime prevention programmes and treatments
2. Explain the role of social theories of crime prevention, management and representation.
3. Summarise key ideas and concepts in the reduction of sexual offending.

**Skills**

Aims: This module aims to develop the following: personal learning skills, the application of theory to practice through data presentation, communication skills, and managing and reflecting on one’s learning.

**Learning Outcomes:**
Students will be able to:
1. Critically evaluate and use secondary data and research findings to construct an answer relevant to the essay question being asked.
2. Write concisely and objectively using appropriate conventions for discipline.
3. Present the essay answer in an appropriate format following given guidelines.
4. Communicate ideas through written word effectively.

**Methods:**
Private study, and tutorial support directly or via Blackboard.

**Additional Resources**
Library facilities, Blackboard.
**Module Specification**

*Module 5: Research Methods*

**Credits:** 20

**Contact:** Ruth Hatcher

**Assessment Arrangements:** 1 assignment (subdivided into two parts)

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<td>Total hours</td>
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**Subject Knowledge**

Aims: This module aims to introduce students to a variety of research methods, techniques and statistics that can be used when conducting psychological research and to their underlying principles. It aims to draw to their attention issues such as validity and reliability, how these issues can be assessed and the inherent trade-offs between some types of validity. It aims to introduce students to ethics in research and special populations they may encounter.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students will be able to:
1. Demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of research techniques.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the assumptions and principles that underlie certain techniques/methods.
3. Develop a good understanding of research ethics and special considerations for vulnerable forensic populations.
4. Develop familiarity with common statistical packages and the output they produce.

**Skills**

Aims: This module aims to develop the following: research skills, data analysis and presentation, communication skills, problem solving, critical evaluation, and managing and reflecting on one’s learning.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be able to:
1. Conduct a literature review using on-line resources
2. Critique a research study on the grounds of research methodology
3. Construct a research proposal
4. Demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions about what research techniques are appropriate in what situations.

**Methods:**

Private study, and tutorial support directly or via Blackboard.

**Additional Resources**

Library facilities, Blackboard.