MSc Clinical and Health Psychology

School of Psychological Sciences
Faculty of Medical & Human Sciences

Module Information

*Please note that this is a sample guide to modules. The exact content and combination of modules may change without prior notice.
Semester One

Compulsory Components

Research Methods 1: Conducting Applied Research (15 credits)
Facilitating Change (30 credits)
Health and Society (15 credits)
Dissertation Planning

Semester Two

Compulsory Components

Research Methods 2: Design and Analysis (15 credits)
Mind and Body (15 credits)
Public Clinical Health Psychology
Clinical & Health Psychology in Action (15 Credits)
Dissertation Planning

Summer

Dissertation (60 credits)
Research methods 1: Conducting Applied Research

Course Unit Aims

- Provide an introduction to the psychological sciences research process and the psychological sciences research community with a focus on the area of Health and Clinical psychology.
- Assist students in defining and developing all stages of their own research project.
- Equip students with the necessary skills to critically appraise and review others’ research.
- Develop written presentation skills.

Course Unit Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate which methodological approach is most appropriate for investigating different types of research question posed in the area of health and clinical psychology
- Recognise the ethical and governance issues involved in clinical and health research
- Critically appraise and synthesise findings from published research.
- Design a research project to test a specific research question and write a grant proposal to a professional standard
- Write peer reviews to a professional standard
- Communicate succinctly research ideas for both a professional and lay audience

Course Unit Content

The course is concerned with giving students an understanding of the broad research framework, skills to review and appraise published work, experience of the peer review process, the ability to plan a programme of research and write a grant application, understanding of ethical and governance considerations, and the development of written dissemination skills. Weekly workshops will be supported by presentations on aspects of the research process. The skill base of students will be built up through a series of assessed assignments.

Facilitating Change

Course Unit Aims

- Provide an introduction to the core principles and features of contemporary, theory- and evidence-based approaches to facilitating psychological change in people with mental and physical health problems
- Encourage a critical analysis of the strengths and limitations of psychological interventions
- Equip students with an awareness of the reciprocal links between theory, research and clinical practice in the development and evaluation of psychological interventions
• Provide illustrative experiences of a range of interventions such as cognitive
   behavioural therapy (CBT)
• Encourage an analysis of the factors that are common to different psychological
   interventions, and those factors that differentiate them

Course Unit Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course unit, students will be able to:
• Understand the importance of assessment and formulation
• Understand the science and practice of CBT
• Gain knowledge of a range of issues and innovations in facilitating change within
   clinical and health psychology
• Critically analyse and evaluate the science and practice of clinical and health
   interventions
• Gain a basic experience in how a range of clinical and health interventions are
   practiced
• Gain basic skills in formulating a clinical problem from CBT and other perspectives.
• Develop an understanding of human change processes within a range of settings

Course Unit Content
This unit covers the key interventions within clinical and health psychology that are designed
 to facilitate change, improve well-being and promote recovery. This double unit is worth 30
 credits and will be taught in one semester: Part I involves understanding the principles of
 CBT; assessment and formulation; CBT for several mental health conditions and the
 application of this approach to physical health conditions. Part II involves increasing an
 understanding of other therapies for physical and mental health conditions.

Health and Society

Course Unit Aims

• Provide students with an understanding of the importance of social and economic
   factors including gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and disability in health
   and well being
• Provide an understanding of how this impacts on health seeking, wellbeing and
   access to, and effective use of available services.
• Inform how policies directly affect these factors and shape the health of the nation.
• Facilitate understanding of the impact of prejudice and discrimination on health and
   well being.

Course Unit Learning Outcomes

Having attended the course, students will be able to:

• Discuss how social-cultural factors contribute directly to physical and mental health
   and wellbeing.
• Understand how social and government policy affects the health of different
   populations within society.
• Describe how ones social situation contributes directly to our health behaviours
• Understand the impact of prejudice and discrimination on health and wellbeing.
• Critically evaluate the existing literature on how lifestyle and social policies contribute
   to health.
Discuss the health impact of prejudice and discrimination.

Course Unit Content
This unit examines how the social environment and different backgrounds influence the presentation of different physical and mental health experiences. How these factors shape government policy-making which in turn influences health care behavior, delivery and the health of the nation. The unit also explores the role that prejudice and discrimination play in these relationships.

Research Methods 2: Qualitative and Quantitative Design and Analysis

Course Unit Aims
- Ensure that students have familiarity with a broad range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and analysis techniques.
- Provide students with hands-on experience of data generation and data analysis techniques of relevance to health and clinical psychology.
- Ensure that students can interpret the ‘output’ of data analysis techniques.
- Ensure that students understand the limitations of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Course Unit Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course unit, students will be able to:
- Understand the concepts underlying both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Evaluate which methodological and data analytic approaches suit different types of research question
- Understand the scope of different data generation and analysis techniques
- Identify which analysis techniques are appropriate to address different types of research question
- Generate meaningful data using a range of approaches
- Apply a range of analysis techniques to data sets.
- Interpret correctly ‘output’ from different analysis techniques
- Report different types of results to a professional standard.

Course Unit Content
Qualitative and quantitative methodologies and analysis will be covered in equal proportions. Qualitative topics will include interviewing and focus groups methods for data generation and practical experience of the most commonly used techniques for analysing qualitative data in clinical and health psychology (Thematic Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis). Quantitative methods will include case series, longitudinal design and regression analysis, experimental design and analysis of variance, randomised clinical trials, questionnaire design and factor analysis, and structural equation modeling. Hence, this unit
provides the practical analysis and interpretation skills necessary for effective appraising of published research and conducting the empirical dissertation work.

**Mind and Body**

**Course Unit Aims**
- Provide students with an understanding of the role of psychological factors in disease and illness, with a particular focus on medically unexplained illness.
- Illustrate the historical development of ideas and knowledge about the mind and the body in relation to illness.
- Using modern research, discuss some methodological issues which are important when we are trying to understand the relationship between mind and body.
- Develop skills of critical reading of original research papers within this field.

**Course Unit Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit students will be able to:

- Set current understandings of psychosomatics within a historical context
- Illustrate the differences between medical and bio-psycho-social approaches to illness
- Show how medically unexplained illnesses can be understood using bio-psycho-social approaches
- Describe and critically evaluate research on the role of illness cognitions in the experience and management of threats to health
- Outline the influence of interpersonal factors in dealing with health concerns
- Describe current research on the role of psychological factors in the functioning of the immune system
- Integrate ideas and concepts from several literatures including (cognitive psychology, biological psychology, history and medicine)
- Show a sophisticated and sympathetic understanding of illness without disease

**Course Unit Content**

The unit starts with a historical introduction to the topic of psychosomatics, showing how ideas about psychosomatic illness originating in the early 20th century have influenced current thinking, both lay and professional, and tracing the development of holism. The idea of medically unexplained illness will then be introduced and the contributions of different approaches (biological, cognitive, emotion-regulation, interpersonal, socio-cultural) to our understanding of medically explained and unexplained conditions will be discussed. Throughout, there will be a focus on methodological and measurement issues, and students will be encouraged to evaluate the relative contributions of the different research approaches, and how they can be integrated. The unit will finish with a consideration of therapeutic strategies for the management of medically unexplained conditions.
Clinical & Health Psychology in Action

Course Unit Aims

- Introduce students to the ways in which psychologists work within clinical and health settings at the present time and future directions
- Provide an understanding of the science and practice of psychology in healthcare and related settings
- Encourage students to identify how psychologists can influence and support health and wellbeing at individual, group and population levels
- Explore factors that inhibit the effective use of psychology in healthcare delivery

Course Unit Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the healthcare services within which psychologists and psychology contribute
- Appreciate the different levels at which psychology interventions can function and what factors inhibit and facilitate their implementation
- Identify and describe the range of psychological theories that can be used within different healthcare settings and related services
- Use psychological theory and understanding to develop an intervention to address a problem within a healthcare workplace setting
- Formulate and design an applied intervention to meet a specific healthcare need
- Understand the diversity of psychologists’ roles within applied clinical settings

Course Unit Content

The unit will introduce students to a range of ways psychologists work within clinical and healthcare settings, and the science behind their roles. Students will learn about a range of roles and settings where the science of health and clinical psychology is applied. This includes psychologists working within healthcare and related services, as well as non-psychologists using evidence or understanding derived from clinical/health psychology. Students will learn how communication between health professions and individuals facilitates or hinders effective care. Students will be encouraged to consider the different psychological theories used within these roles and how interventions can occur at individual, group (e.g. family, organisational unit) or population levels.

Public Clinical and Health Psychology

Course Unit Aims

- Provide an overview of public health principles, with a particular emphasis on how these apply to topics of central interest to clinical psychology and health psychology
Illustrate what clinical psychology and health psychology have to offer to major public health problems such as alcohol and drug usage, obesity, and depression

Illustrate how these problems can be addressed by population based interventions, e.g. through the NHS, legislation or regulation, based on key insights produced by clinical psychology and health psychology

 Equip students with the epidemiological tools to appreciate that the burden of physical and mental illness is a product of the behaviour and social environment of populations, the determinants of which can be understood at a population level, rather than an individual level

Encourage analysis of how these public health problems can be tackled at a population basis to prevent such problems arising, rather than through intensive interventions to tackle problems once arisen.

Course Unit Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand key epidemiological principles that indicate why many health problems are a feature of populations not “sick” or high risk individuals
- Understand why the best way to tackle problems that are features of populations is often by intervening at a population level, rather than with “sick” or high risk individuals
- Describe why approaches that focus on “sick” individuals is not addressing the root causes of poor health, and will have limited effectiveness and cost-effectiveness in improving health
- Be able to apply frameworks to the development and evaluation of complex interventions to improve health
- Have a basic level of competence at using psychological theories to develop concrete intervention materials
- Be able to work effectively in teams
- Be able to deliver conference-standard presentations
- Take an informed critical approach to many assumptions underlying clinical psychology and health psychology about the effectiveness and appropriateness of treating individuals.

Course Unit Content

The unit begins by covering key concepts from epidemiology, which will inform the substantive topics. It outlines an approach based on viewing many major public health problems as being a feature of populations not individuals, and why the best way to tackle these problems is by intervening at a population level. An explicit aim is to focus on population causes and population cures, rather than focusing on “sick” or high risk individuals, who are just those at the extremes of the distribution in a population. The major of the sessions will then cover several substantive issues that illustrate these general principles: obesity, screening for disease, alcohol consumption, substance abuse, parenting effects on children, international effects of parenting on children, a lack of happiness (from a positive psychology perspective), and depression. The final session will cover issues to do with getting evidence-based interventions implemented into practice.
Dissertation

Course Unit Aims:
- Provide students with a unique experience of designing, conducting and reporting an independent, original research project.
- Enable students to critically appraise and synthesise published research
- Enable students to formulate and work with a relevant research question
- Ensure students gain an understanding and application of appropriate research and data-analytic methodologies
- Develop research-writing and presentation skills
Demonstrate the ability to communicate complex data to a suitable audience.

Course Unit Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course unit students will be able to:

- Have an in-depth understanding of the literature in a specific area of clinical and/or health psychology
- Generate timely and theoretically grounded research questions
- Understand how to identify an appropriate research question and identify and employ the appropriate research methods and analysis techniques necessary to answer their research question
- Understand how to interpret their data and the clinical implications
- Understand the requirements of scientific writing and the requirements of data presentation
- Understand the ethical issues and processes involved in research
- Demonstrate independent thought, presentation skills and self-management project skills (e.g. time management, prioritisation of tasks)
- Be able to identify a suitable journal publication and justify this decision
- Be able to identify a suitable journal publication for presenting research findings and present the study accordingly

Course Unit Content

Under supervision students will produce a research dissertation. Potential projects and supervisors will be provided before the start of Semester 1 for students to select from. We will attempt to match students to their preferred project supervisor wherever possible. Students and supervisors will meet (October/November, Semester one) in order to arrive at a preliminary outline of a dissertation research proposal and plan the programme of work required to complete the work for submission in September 2014. The supervision period will extend across the whole academic year (semester 1 & 2 and the summer). The dissertation will be presented in the form of a journal article. The exact format of the review will be according to a journal publication identified by the student as suitable for disseminating the work. Students will adhere to author guidelines (included as an appendix). Typically the presentation will consist of an introduction/background to the study, a clear description of methods and analysis of data appropriate for addressing the research questions/hypotheses. It will present an interpretation and discussion of the findings and, where appropriate consideration of implications for future research and clinical practice. Students will also produce a brief description of the selected publication, justification of its appropriateness for disseminating the findings and a reflection of the process of writing for publication.
Additionally students will produce a poster presentation of their research and will be required to present this for assessment. The poster presentations will be on the same day as the dissertation hand-in (23\textsuperscript{th} September 2014) and the MSc students for the next cohort will be invited to attend. If students cannot attend then they can submit their poster presentation on CD in advance to be shown on this day.