MSc in Forensic Psychology

www.kent.ac.uk/psychology
MSc in Forensic Psychology at Kent

**World Heritage City**
Canterbury is a beautiful city, situated 55 miles from London and 20 miles from the Channel ports. It is famous for its Norman Cathedral that dominates the sky-line. From the University it is only a short walk into the city centre where you will find shops, bars and restaurants. The picturesque coastal town of Whitstable with its world famous oysters, is only five miles away – great for fish and chips on the beach.

**Beautiful Location**
The University of Kent at Canterbury was founded in 1965 and today has over 16,000 students of over 110 different nationalities. The University is built on 300 acres of parkland in the midst of the Kent countryside on a hill overlooking the city. It combines modern architecture with open green spaces, courtyards, gardens, ponds and woodland. Accommodation is available on-campus and throughout the city. A wide range of activities is available to students including sports, clubs and societies, cinema and music. There is a well-equipped sports centre, with a fitness suite, dance studio, squash courts and sports halls. The Gulbenkian theatre hosts a variety of performances including many well known comedians, actors and musicians. There is a cinema on campus and a range of bars and eateries. Degree ceremonies take place in the historic setting of Canterbury Cathedral.

**Academic Excellence**
The Department of Psychology at Kent has established itself as a leading centre for research and teaching in theoretical and applied psychology and has a strong commitment to excellence in scientific research with a concern for problems of contemporary relevance.
Research Facilities
Research facilities at Kent are outstanding. The Department has a new building housing state-of-the-art laboratories and teaching facilities. There are three fully equipped colour video studios and 39 research laboratories all containing networked computers. We have a suite of cognitive laboratories equipped with EEG/ERP (event related brain potential) equipment which is a sophisticated means of measuring brain activity while participants are doing cognitive tasks; eye tracking equipment; four Dell workstations and sound-proofed cubicles.

The Forensic Psychology Preparation Room (FPPR)
FPPR is a dedicated learning resource exclusively for the use of postgraduate Forensic Psychology students (including research students). As such, it is maintained by the Forensic staff, not the Department, and we are currently considering ways of enhancing the facilities available. There is a filing cabinet in this room full of the latest forensic psychology tools (e.g., Risk Assessment Tools such as the HCR-20).

Why choose Kent?
At Kent we offer a supportive, dynamic and diverse environment for creative research and learning. We use a variety of methods including experimental, survey and archival approaches. Our course is one of the only broad based courses, also, with a strong cognitive focus (i.e., how offenders’ thinking contributes to their offending).

Graduate opportunities
The Department attracts excellent visiting scholars and postgraduate students from both within the UK and overseas. We have ‘1 + 3’ accreditation from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for all taught MSc programmes (Cognitive Psychology/Neuropsychology, Forensic Psychology, Health Psychology, Research Methods in Psychology, Social and Applied Psychology, Group Processes and Intergroup Relations). We are also recognised for ‘plus 3’ awards for students who wish to follow PhD programmes with us after an ESRC accredited taught Masters programme elsewhere.
BPS Accreditation at Kent
The MSc in Forensic Psychology at Kent has been accredited by the BPS as a professional training course since October 1996, it was awarded the highest number of commendations ever given. Following a visit from members of the BPS Division of Forensic Psychology in 2006, the programme has been unconditionally re-accredited for five cohorts of students. The programme received four commendations from the BPS accreditation team for:

- The quality and conciseness of the documentation, which was exemplary.
- The level of student satisfaction with the programme.
- The research ethos underpinning the course.
- The links that the programme has with external agencies. (e.g. Broadmoor Hospital, Canterbury Prison and the Trevor Gibbens Unit). For example all students go on at least 2 visits to these prisons/special hospitals that are paid in full by UKC.

Core Teaching Team

Programme Director
Dr Theresa Gannon

Other Teaching Staff
Dr Jane Wood
Dr Tendayi Viki
Dr Afroditi Pina
Dr Eduardo Vasquez

Introduction to the MSc in Forensic Psychology
The MSc in Forensic Psychology programme was introduced in October 1995, and teaching on the core forensic modules on the programme is enhanced by the contributions of several honorary teaching staff, all of whom are Chartered Forensic Psychologists working in applied settings (e.g. in Special Hospitals, RSUs and prisons). Recent research projects undertaken have included:

- an evaluation of the relapse prevention module of the Prison Service Sex Offender Treatment Programme
- an investigation of the incidence of sexual and physical abuse in the backgrounds of sex offenders with learning disabilities
- an investigation into non-verbal cues to lying in police interrogations
- an examination of organisational and psychological factors related to the treatment of offenders in a Maltese prison
- a study of the incidence of ADHD indicators in a young offender population
- a comparison of socio-demographic and psychological factors related to women who do, and do not, self-harm in a Special Hospital
- a study of the incidence of PTSD indicators in the prison population of the Channel Islands

We are particularly interested in receiving applications from suitably qualified graduates who have direct experience of the application of psychological principles in custodial or other forensic settings. As a significant element of the programme involves training in advance methodological and statistical techniques, we are unable to consider applications from candidates who do not qualify for the Graduate Basis for Registration (GBR ) with the BPS - Graduate Membership of the BPS is insufficient.
MSc in Forensic Psychology
The programme takes a broad-based academic approach to the areas of criminological, legal and forensic psychology. It is not our intention to provide specialist practical training in specific practitioner areas (e.g., in prisons, in the clinical treatment of offenders, in offender profiling).

Our experience is that students find that one of the most challenging and demanding aspects of the programme is the interface between the legal and the psychological, and the inclusion of legal issues and perspectives in addition to the more familiar psychological ones. Module convenors will recommend basic primers on relevant legal theory, practice and procedures. Students are also strongly recommended to monitor recent legal cases and developments throughout the year, in the various media available (e.g. the internet, newspapers, TV and radio, etc). In several modules, it is likely that reference will be made to recent legislation and policy, and students will be expected to be aware of the main issues related to such cases. Several of the aims and objectives for the MSc in Forensic Psychology are shared with the other MSc programmes taught within the Department. There are also a number of additional objectives that are specific to the MSc in Forensic Psychology.

General Aims:
- To provide students with an advanced training in psychological theory and its application in the area of their programme.
- To enable students to acquire advanced training and expertise in the design, statistical analysis and evaluation of research in the area of the programme.
- To satisfy the academic requirements for the Masters knowledge base specified by the relevant Division of the British Psychological Society.

General Objectives:
By the end of their degree programme, students will have acquired the following:
- Specialised knowledge of and critical insight into the key theoretical issues in the area of their programme.
- Advanced knowledge of and expertise in the methodological and statistical principles of psychology, including expertise in one or more specialised methodological and statistical techniques used in the area of their programme.
- Expertise in scientific writing: selecting, organising, analysing, evaluating and synthesising complex material in psychology; familiarity with the conventions for writing papers in the journals relevant to their programme.
- Skills in aspects of oral communication.

Additional Objectives for the MSc in Forensic Psychology Programme:
A sound understanding of the contribution of both theoretical and applied psychology to judicial systems.

- A detailed understanding of the application of psychology in relation to the assessment and treatment of offenders.
- A clear appreciation of forensic psychological practice, particularly in relation to the assessment and treatment of offenders, ethical issues, and the production of testimony.
Modules

SP805: The Psychology of Criminal Conduct (20 credits; 10 ECTS credits)
This module examines the topic of criminality from a broadly social psychological perspective. The evidence that consistent criminal tendencies can be reliably assessed is considered, and the extent to which personality factors can explain that consistency is evaluated. The concept of psychopathy is explored before examining more generally the relationship between crime, law and moral judgement. Theoretical perspectives on the origins of the criminal tendency in childhood are detailed and its abundant expression in adolescence highlighted and examined. The current emphasis on crime as reasoned action is evaluated, highlighting the role of rationalisation and normative beliefs in the justification of both ‘blue-collar’ and ‘white-collar’ crime. The role of opportunism in criminal decision making is considered in relation to environmental factors and attempts to prevent crime. The role of victims in creating, defining and reporting crime is analysed, and the psychological consequences of crime for victims and potential victims are explored.

SP847: Forensic Cognition: Theory, Research and Practice (20 credits; 10 ECTS credits)
What sort of thinking occurs in men who sexually molest children, rape adults, or commit acts of violence? Do these men think their actions are legitimate in some instances or do they know their actions are wrong but choose to offend nonetheless? Cognition, or thinking, is recognized as being a key component underlying the way people think and behave. Researchers and practitioners have spent endless time and resources investigating offenders’ cognition, to shed light on offenders’ antisocial behaviours. In this strongly research-based course, you will learn about some of the influential theories that have been developed to help explain offenders’ antisocial actions, the latest cutting edge research designed to help understand why men offend, and widely used treatment programmes designed to alter cognitive characteristics associated with offending in order to reduce recidivism. This course will not be limited to offenders’ cognition, however. You will also learn about fascinating social-cognitive phenomena associated with child and adult eyewitness testimony, and how memory can play havoc with the criminal justice system.

SP806: The Psychology of Law and Justice (20 credits; 10 ECTS credits)
This module examines the social psychological processes involved in defining an act as criminal and deserving of prosecution and conviction. When do we rightly blame someone for wrongdoing? Do not models of blame inform our criminal justice system? The actions of victims, police, witnesses and the courts are examined in turn. The police feature prominently in the early stages, interacting crucially with the public, the victim and the suspect. Given evidence supplied by the police, the decision whether or not to prosecute will be taken. Before a case comes to trial, opportunities for the suspect to bargain, implicitly or explicitly, over the precise charge will have occurred. In court the prosecution and defence present their alternative narratives of the events that are alleged to have taken place. The behaviour, attitudes, and role of witnesses are given separate consideration. Following a guilty verdict, the judge again features prominently, and factors determining what sentence is to be passed will be examined. The position of psychologically ‘abnormal’ offenders will be discussed in relation to the appropriateness of present practice. Public attitudes to punishment will also be examined.

SP825: The Psychological Assessment and Treatment of Offenders (20 credits; 10 ECTS credits)
This module examines the variety of perspectives and practical methods employed by practising Forensic Psychologists in the treatment and training of both normal and psychologically disturbed offenders. The module sessions examine the assessment and treatment of offenders in both Special Hospital and prison settings including sex offenders, arsonists, violent offenders, and female offenders who have been sexually abused, and the treatment of addictions. Specific emphasis is placed upon how Forensic Psychologists assess offender risk. This module is taught by practising Forensic Psychologists from Broadmoor Hospital.

SP801: Advanced Statistics and Methodology (40 credits; 20 ECTS credits)
The aim of this module is to provide a postgraduate-level orientation to both basic and advanced contemporary statistical and methodological issues in psychology. It is compulsory for all our MSc students. The methodological issues considered include validity and reliability in measurement; experimental, quasi-experimental, and correlational research designs in the laboratory and field; observational, archival, and qualitative research methodologies; meta-analysis; and the problem of bias in psychological research. The statistical techniques taught include univariate and bivariate descriptive and inferential statistics; psychometric techniques; exploratory data analysis; basic and advanced topics in ANOVA and ANCOVA; multiple regression; factor analysis; and structural equation modelling.

SP809: Research Dissertation in Criminological, Legal or Forensic Psychology (60 credits; 30 ECTS credits)
As part of the programme, you will be expected to conduct a piece of empirical research in the area of Forensic Psychology. Although all your time from the beginning of Summer Term to the end of the programme will be spent on your project, you should begin to discuss ideas for your project with potential research supervisors at as early a stage in the year as possible. Topics examined by students have been: Bullying in prisons; Female child molesters’ Cognition and Rape prone men’s ability to interpret women’s facial cues.
Application

Application forms and brochures are available from:

Anna Redmond
Department of Psychology
Keynes College
University of Kent at Canterbury
Canterbury
CT2 7NP
Email Enquiries psych-gen@kent.ac.uk
Telephone (01227) 827709

Enquiries about the programme should be directed to:

Dr Theresa Gannon
Email: T.A.Gannon@kent.ac.uk

Travelling to the University by road:

**London:** M2, A2 (56 miles; 89km)
**Chatham:** M2, A2 (31 miles; 50km)
**Dover:** A2 (16 miles; 26km)
**Folkestone** (Tunnel Terminal): M20/A20, A260, A2 (23 miles; 36km)
**Ramsgate:** A253, A28 (18 miles; 29km)
**Ashford:** A28 (14 miles; 22km)
**Maidstone:** (26 miles; 42km) and
**Tonbridge** (40 miles; 64km): M20, M2, A2

From the **North or West:** M25, M20, M2, A2

**Canterbury to the University:** Canterbury central ring road, A290 Whitstable Road, St Thomas Hill, approx. 1 mile (1.6km) along the A290, University entrance on right (signposted) near top of hill.