



MSc Forensic Psychology and Criminal Investigation

“The University of Liverpool has been at the forefront of criminal investigation and forensic psychology for the past 15 years, having had both practical and academic experience of some of the most testing criminal investigations in the UK and Internationally. This programme is highly recommend to individuals interested in a career in Law

Enforcement, or other Criminal Justice domains, or for those already engaged in those professions as a credible way to enhance and supplement their practice.”

Professor Laurence Alison,
Professor of Forensic & Investigative Psychology
Academic Director, Centre for Critical and
Major Incident Psychology

The MSc in Forensic Psychology and Criminal Investigation, offered by the University of Liverpool’s world renowned School of Psychology, is one of the first postgraduate programmes in the field of forensic psychology and criminal investigation to be offered in an online format at an international level. Cutting edge research and contributions from the leading academics and practitioners in the field combine to create a rich, interactive and highly stimulating experience for students throughout the programme. During the programme students will thrive in the interactive e-learning environment with the use of multimedia, case scenarios tailored specifically for this programme

and designed by professionals in the field, and active discussions within the students’ virtual classroom. Upon graduation, students will have acquired a sound knowledge of the professional, legal and ethical issues, and practical communication and dissemination skills highly sought after in the field of forensic psychology and criminal investigation.

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

- The University of Liverpool’s School of Psychology is built on a strong history, a reputation for excellence and innovative research activity. The

School itself is home to the **Centre for Critical & Major Incident Psychology (CAMI)** and the **Centre for Investigative Psychology**, making it one of Europe's leading centres for forensic psychology with successful collaborations with several international organisations. Through these centres, the University has drawn upon its global reach of international practitioners and academics to create this MSc in Forensic Psychology and Criminal Investigation programme in an online format to more easily meet the growing global demand for psychology professionals in this discipline.

- The programme has been designed to appeal to individuals currently involved in the process of criminal investigation or for those who have an active and passionate interest in the psychology of crime, criminals and investigation. This programme is ideal for practitioners already working in the field, those pursuing a career in psychology, or those seeking a complete career change who have developed a keen interest in the field of forensic psychology and criminal investigation.
- Upon completion of this programme, graduates will be aware of the issues, skills and techniques required to become a highly competent psychology professional, or to apply psychological principles in their careers.
- The initial core modules of the programme cover the principles of leadership, critical incident management and crisis intervention, team effectiveness, judgement and decision making.
- Students will have gained an awareness of the fundamental issues involved in communications knowledge and conducting research as well as an awareness of the issues involved in case assessments.
- Students can apply what they have learnt to examples drawn from real-life studies and will be actively encouraged via rich multimedia channels and the theory and knowledge obtained in the modules.
- The programme will enhance opportunities for students to enter or progress their careers in a variety of professions in the public and private sectors, in roles ranging from crime analysis, police psychology and fraud investigation to health and safety inspection, law enforcement,

probation services and media research. A number of graduates may continue their academic journey and start PhD research.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

- Students are required to follow two, non-credit bearing, modules (Student Readiness Orientation and Foundations for Academic Success) that will prepare them for their online learning experience. For more information about these modules – full module descriptions including their duration, as well as the additional student support services available – please read the [Centre for Student Success document](#).
- The programme then comprises eight modules (15 credits per module) and culminates in a dissertation (worth 60 credit points). The first module is nine weeks in length and each subsequent module is eight weeks. Modules are sequenced in an order that is best suited to the students' development in the programme.

Preparatory Modules

- Student Readiness Orientation (0 credit)
- Foundations for Academic Success (0 credit)

Core Modules

- Command and Control: Leadership and Teams in Critical and Major Incidents (15 credits)
- Strategic, Tactical and Operational Decisions: Judgement and Decision Making in Critical and Major Incidents (15 credits)
- Fundamentals of Investigative and Forensic Psychology (15 credits)
- Applying Research Methods to Forensic Psychology and Criminal Investigation (15 credits)
- Psychology of Criminal Behaviour (15 credits)
- Sexual and Violent Crime (15 credits)
- The Psychology of the Courts (15 credits)
- Offender Profiling and Criminal Behaviour Analysis (15 credits)
- Dissertation (60 credits)

Programme Duration

- The programme takes on average 30 months to complete. However, since students progress at their own pace, they may choose to complete their studies in as little as 24 months or spread them over 36 months.

MODULES

Student Readiness Orientation

Aim: To equip students with the technical skills necessary to successfully study online, aided by inspirational testimonials from current students and alumni, in a rich multimedia environment.

- In this module, students will grasp the basic technical information and knowledge needed to successfully participate in an online curriculum. They will learn how to use the online classroom to get assignments, interact with instructors and other students, and submit work. In this introduction students will gain a clear idea of what is expected from them as they participate in an online classroom. Finally the orientation ensures students have an overview of the rules regarding quotation and citation – essential to any postgraduate study, whether online or campus-based.

Foundations for Academic Success

Aim: To provide students with a deeper insight into the requirements for successful participation in the postgraduate programme, and to give them the opportunity to put some of the essential skills and techniques learned during the Student Readiness Orientation into practice.

- As well as providing a foundation for academic success, this module will ease students into the credit-bearing modules – ensuring they are fully prepared to succeed on their programme of study. Assignments focus on the practical application of

writing and critical thinking skills. By the end of the module, students will be able to demonstrate their ability to evaluate scholarly resources, and define the role that proper citation and referencing plays in academic integrity. Students will be competent at doing basic searches in the University of Liverpool Online Library and be able to outline a logical and coherent argument with supporting evidence.

Command and Control: Leadership and Teams in Critical and Major Incidents

Aim: To develop a thorough knowledge of leadership and teamwork issues applicable to critical incident management and crisis intervention driven by principles of leadership and motivation.

- Students will learn to critically evaluate the various models of leadership as they apply in critical and major incidents, and adverse environments. This module will also assess and evaluate the impact and role stress plays on decision making. By the end of this module, students will be able to recognise the role of anger, aggression, impulsivity and stress when dealing with difficult suspects / offenders and in difficult negotiations. They will also recognise the influence and importance of leadership and effective team performance in a range of adverse environments.

Strategic, Tactical and Operational Decisions: Judgement and Decision Making in Critical and Major Incidents

Aim: To develop an in-depth knowledge of judgement and decision making issues relevant to critical incident management and crisis intervention.

- This module will enable students to apply and critique the differences between dynamic, time compressed decision making and slower, protracted enquires. Students will apply traditional and naturalistic decision making and their application to relevant agencies tasked with handling critical incidents. Upon completion of this module, students will appreciate the psychological

mechanisms that underpin decision error, action inertia and so called 'accountogenic decision'.

Fundamentals of Investigative and Forensic Psychology

Aim: To equip students with knowledge of the psychological processes most applicable in the relatively new and innovative field of investigative and forensic psychology.

- This module provides a foundation for subsequent modules on sexual and violent behaviour, courts and the judiciary, criminal behaviour and offender profiling, and behavioural investigative advice. During this module, students will explore the historical development, origins, methodological issues and conceptual debates surrounding the theory and practice of investigative and forensic psychology. Upon completion of this module, students will be able to confidently analyse and critique the relevant psychological processes and pluralistic nature of investigative and forensic psychology, as well as demonstrate an understanding of the similarities and differences within this specialised discipline.

Applying Research Methods to Forensic Psychology and Criminal Investigation

Aim: To demonstrate the ability to assess methodological paradigms within the creation and execution of, and understand the position of research in, applied psychological research.

- In this module, students will be introduced to multivariate statistics and methods, and obtain a range of data analysis techniques that can be applied in the 'real world'. Students will be able to explain and discuss the principles underlying quantitative research and demonstrate their understanding of the link between methodology, method and analysis. By the end of this module, students will be able to discuss and evaluate methodological approaches and demonstrate their knowledge about paradigmatic issues surrounding psychological research. Students will also be

introduced to the basic principles of experimental design and learn how to conduct analyses using SPSS during online Statistical Practical sessions.

Psychology of Criminal Behaviour

Aim: To develop an astute awareness of the aetiology of criminal behaviour (from biological to social learning).

- This module will raise the students' critical faculties of the psychological issues involved in investigating and managing criminal behaviour in forensic settings. Students will also explore and critically evaluate the varying methods agencies employ to investigate criminal behaviour, including risk assessment and risk management. Upon culmination of this module, students will be capable of demonstrating their theoretical knowledge of crime, and identify the procedures, policies and approaches of multi-agency responses to criminal behaviour. The psychological processes that multi-agencies implement to base their responses will also be ascertainable.

Sexual and Violent Crime

Aim: To develop an astute awareness of the aetiology of sexual violence (from biological to social learning).

- Students will mentally evaluate and determine the precision of the psychological issues involved in investigating sexual and violent crime. The methods employed by agencies to investigate sexual and violent crime, including risk assessment and risk management, are also critically analysed throughout the module. Students will be able to identify the procedures, policies and approaches of multi-agency responses to sexual and violent crimes, and understand the psychological processes that underpin these approaches. Key areas that will be explored include juvenile sex offenses, sexual deviance, internet offending, and domestic violence.

The Psychology of the Courts

Aim: To explore the psychological, investigative, and evidential perspective strands that impact upon the Criminal Justice System, the forensic viewing practices, and the courtroom procedures respectively.

- This module will develop through the critical analysis of psychological, investigative, and evidential perspective strands. The examination of the psychological perspective will allow students to explore perception and memory issues, together with the implications for witnesses and the Criminal Justice System. The investigative perspective will allow students to critically explore specific investigative areas such as identification issues and the effectiveness of forensic interviewing practices. The evidential perspective entails the application of the psychological and investigative perspective strands in the courtroom. The range of witnesses who interface with the Criminal Justice System will also be explored, together with diversity issues and the implications the responses from the courts have on the witnesses.
- Upon completion of this module, students will be able to assess to what extent cognitive psychological research is relevant to eyewitness testimony, and critically evaluate the contribution and impact of research on the Criminal Justice System. Forensic interviewing practices, witness and suspect management, and judicial (legalistic and juror) decision making will all be covered and analysed allowing graduates to qualify for key roles in the field of forensic psychology.

Offender Profiling and Criminal Behavioural Analysis

Aim: To develop an awareness and practical understanding of the psychological concepts necessary for offender profiling and criminal behaviour analysis.

- The aim of this module is to provide students with a methodological underpinning of behavioural profiling, suspect prioritisation, risk assessment, geoprofiling, and crime scene linkage methods. The

potential barriers that may impede these methods, and the psychological means necessary to avoid said drawbacks, are investigated. Students will also critically assess the use of psychologists and profilers as experts for offender profiling purposes, and learn how to interpret this expert advice to reduce ambiguity. Upon completion of this module, students will have gained the aptitude to discuss and evaluate the methodological approaches used in the aforementioned psychological concepts examined in this eight week study.

DISSERTATION

Aim: To prepare a significant piece of empirical or archival study, that will be an original or critical exposition, of existing knowledge within the field.

- The culmination of the programme, this written project demonstrates students' mastery and integration of all their previous learning. The dissertation is the cornerstone of the UK university system. It is an original, scholarly work that applies the students' new knowledge and experience and allows them to prove their proficiency in the skills and techniques they have studied and acquired.
- Students choose their dissertation topic in conjunction with their Personal Dissertation Advisor, an academic supervisor who will provide support throughout the study and writing process.

NOTE ON LICENSURE:

- The MSc in Forensic Psychology and Criminal Investigation is not a licensure programme and does not prepare an individual to become a licensed psychology professional.