Programme Specification ARO 034a

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities provided.

This document is published on the University website and will be a publicly available record of the named programme.

The information contained in this form should be included in the Programme Handbook, either as presented below or in a format determined by the Faculty.

Section 1 Key Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awarding Body</th>
<th>University of Stirling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner Institution</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Name</td>
<td>Health Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award e.g. BSc (Hons), MA etc.</td>
<td>MSc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division (if applicable)</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCAS Code (UG only)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programme Code</td>
<td>TXX44-HPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of Study</td>
<td>Full Time ☒ Part Time ☒ Discontinuous ☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location/Method of Study</td>
<td>On Campus – UK ☒ International ☐ Where: Online ☐ Blended ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Points</td>
<td>September ☒ January ☐ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Programme</td>
<td>1 year full time, 2 years part time or up to 5 years discontinuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCQF Level</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Credit Value</td>
<td>180</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECTS Credit Value</td>
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<td>Relevant QAA Subject</td>
<td>Benchmark</td>
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<td>Professional Body</td>
<td>Accreditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>(all relevant</td>
<td>Name of accrediting body: British Psychological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accreditations to be</td>
<td>Required for programme: Yes</td>
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<td>listed)</td>
<td>Date of Accreditation: 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date of Renewal: 2021/22</td>
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Programme Director | Professor Ronan O’Carroll
---|---
Advisor of Studies | Dr Vivien Swanson
Programme Approved | 2002
Last Updated | 09 / 11 / 2017

Section 2 Overview

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

This programme aims to provide the first part (Stage 1) of postgraduate training in Health Psychology in accordance with the British Psychological Society requirements.

Key Features of the Programme

The course emphasises the application of psychology to health in different contexts and settings – identifying how psychological approaches can be used to understand and therefore change the way people think and behave in relation to health, illness and health care issues. As far as possible, each of the course modules will include teaching input from practitioners working with individuals or groups, either in a research or service delivery context.

The course has a strong experiential focus. In addition to the empirical research project, the students can opt to undertake a short (2-3 week equivalent) placement in a health care or organisational setting, to carry out an evaluation of service provision. This will be written up and presented as part of the course assessment.

Many people would argue that Scotland and its people have particular characteristics in relation to health and health care issues. This course aims to adopt a Scottish focus by considering the individual, social and cultural characteristics which might influence Scotland’s health, particularly in the light of the Scottish Government’s targets for improvement of the Nation’s health.

Psychology at the University of Stirling has a long history of collaboration and contact with local and national health care providers within Scotland. Course team members have been involved in many collaborative research projects (e.g., the Anxiety and Stress Research Centre, the Centre for Health Behaviour Change), teaching (NHS Education for Scotland) and professional consultancy. These existing links will be continued and built upon within the framework of the MSc Health Psychology course.

PROGRAMME AIMS

On successful completion of this programme, you should be able to:

1. understand and critically appraise the theoretical basis of health psychology, including psychological models and methods applicable to the study and understanding of health and health care issues.
2. critically evaluate the application of health psychology approaches to practice, policy and research in health service or related settings.
3. be aware of the unique contribution psychology can make to the understanding of health, illness and health care issues, within a multidisciplinary framework.
4. formulate, design and carry out their own empirical research project to a publishable standard.
5. via formal teaching and practical experience of health psychology applications, acquire relevant skills and core competencies which will provide a basis for professional training in health psychology (Stage 2) or other applications of psychology to health issues.
WHAT WILL I BE EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE?

On successful completion of this programme, you should be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding:

1. students will have a core knowledge base of health psychology theory, research and methods.
2. students will have critical awareness of the relationship between theory and interventions in health psychology.
3. students will understand and appreciate the appropriate use of a wide variety of instruments that measure psychological and health status.
4. students will have developed a broad knowledge base and key skills required to collect, analyse and report qualitative and quantitative data.
5. students will be able to explore issues concerning the relative efficacies of differing forms of interventions to promote health and well-being in different contextual settings.
6. students will acquire practical, evaluative experience of the delivery of health care in an applied setting, by undertaking a short placement.
7. students will develop understanding of the professional role of a health psychologist, in multidisciplinary contexts.
8. students will be sensitised to the ethical requirements of the research process in health care and community settings.
9. students will develop awareness of and sensitivity towards cultural equality and diversity issues in health and health care.
10. students will have developed skills in effective oral and written communication of research findings.
11. students will be able to work independently to design and complete a research project in health psychology that would be appropriate for submission for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Intellectual, Practical and Transferable Skills and other graduate attributes:

The programme outcomes include intellectual, practical and key transferable skills at an advanced level. Subject-specific intellectual and practical skills are connected with the knowledge and understanding of the theory, research and practice in health psychology. The core skills which students are expected to develop and demonstrate can be outlined as follows:

1. Academic Skills: advanced literacy and advanced numeracy; critical, review, and analytical skills; library and database skills; problem solving; creativity; advanced research skills; statistical and data analysis skills including specialist software (e.g. SPSS and NVivo).
2. Communication Skills; oral and written communication; individual and group research presentations; research grant applications; essay writing; communication of research methods and results; research report and dissertation writing
3. Self-Management Skills: awareness of professional issues and conduct; self-reflection; planning; applying study skills; organising academic work; working under pressure; time management; meeting deadlines
4. Interpersonal Skills: interaction in group work; leadership; listening; sensitivity; awareness of diversity

Values and Attitudes:

The overall philosophy of the course focuses on the value of applying psychological theory to health issues in order to promote health and well-being for individuals within a social context. The underlying focus is ‘bio-psycho-social’. This challenges the mind-body split of traditional medicine by proposing that psychological, physiological and social processes are interlinked in determining health and health behaviours.
There are three main strands to this approach in the Health Psychology course:

1. that theory should be soundly derived from principles of psychology, focusing on individual and social cognition, emotions and behaviour, whilst recognising the importance of biological, social and historical contextual factors.

2. the rigorous evaluation of the way that such theoretical approaches are applied in different contexts to promote health, to ensure that they are beneficial, ethical and effective. In particular, the course emphasises the role of constructive critical appraisal of research evidence in relation to the application of psychological theories and methods to health issues. It is held that maintaining this approach will ultimately lead to the most positive outcomes in the practice of applying psychology to the promotion of health and well-being.

3. the course has a strong applied focus. There is an optional empirical placement in a healthcare setting, sessions from external lecturers working in health and healthcare and supporting students in their own empirical health-related research. We aim to foster understanding of how psychological theories and methods can be successfully applied in different health and healthcare contexts.

HOW WILL I LEARN?

Modules are taught in two to three hour seminars which include lectures, workshops and practical or experiential sessions.

WHAT TYPES OF ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK CAN I EXPECT?

Assessment and Assessment Criteria
You will be assessed by formal exams and coursework (including oral presentations, essays, group work and critical reviews of research).

Feedback on Assessment
You will receive feedback on coursework within 3 weeks of completion of the assessment. Feedback is usually provided electronically on formal coursework. Feedback and Guidance sessions with teaching staff are available on all modules. These provide regular opportunities to discuss feedback further. More information about feedback on assessment can be found here; http://www.stir.ac.uk/academicpolicy/handbook/assessment/

Assessment Regulations
Highlight any exceptions to the assessment regulations for this programme
You will be expected to complete and pass each piece of assessment for any module (ie both coursework and exams) and all modules.

If you would like to know more about the way in which assessment works at the University of Stirling, please see the full version of the assessment regulations at:
Undergraduate
Postgraduate – Taught
Postgraduate - Research

WHAT WILL I STUDY?

Outline Programme Structure

The list below shows compulsory and option modules for this programme. Option modules are revised over time and, in some cases, will be dependent upon pre-requisite and/or co-requisites being taken. More information about these requirements can be found in the relevant Module Descriptors. The options available each year can be subject to change due to student demand and availability of teaching staff.
• Where an “Option list” is specified, you have a choice of which module to take at this point in the degree programme and these choices are listed below
• For year 1 and 2 where “Any Module” is used it means that you can choose from all modules available to the year group and you can see the full list by following these links:

Undergraduate
Postgraduate

Full Time - Year 1

Total year 1 credit value = 180
Compulsory credits = 180
Option credits = 0

Compulsory Modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Title</th>
<th>Module Code</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>SCQF Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives in Health Psychology</td>
<td>HPSP111</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications of Health Psychology</td>
<td>HPSP112</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Autumn/Spring</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis Methods in Psychological Research</td>
<td>HPSP113</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Autumn/Spring</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual, Social and Cultural Differences</td>
<td>HPSP114</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to Illness, Disability and Coping</td>
<td>HPSP115</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>HPSP116</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Spring/Summer</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part Time - Year 1

Total year 1 credit value = 80
Compulsory credits = 80
Option credits = 0

Compulsory Modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Title</th>
<th>Module Code</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>SCQF Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives in Health Psychology</td>
<td>HPSP111</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications of Health Psychology</td>
<td>HPSP112</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Autumn/Spring</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis Methods in Psychological Research</td>
<td>HPSP123</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Spring/Autumn</td>
<td>11</td>
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</table>

Part Time - Year 2

Total year 1 credit value = 100
Compulsory credits = 100
Option credits = 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Title</th>
<th>Module Code</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>SCQF Level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual, Social and Cultural Differences</td>
<td>HPSP114</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to Illness, Disability and Coping</td>
<td>HPSP115</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>HPSP116</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Spring/Summer</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
READING LIST

These are all books which give an overview of their topic area. Any health psychology text book will give an idea of the scope and broad theoretical approaches within health psychology. Those highlighted are particularly relevant to the MSc in Health Psychology course. Please note that these are for general background reading for those who are interested and all relevant material will be covered in detail on the course.


### SUPPORT FOR STUDENT LEARNING

#### Induction
You will receive an induction during the first days of your programme. This includes a range of social events, information sessions and activities to help you orientate yourself at Stirling and access the services available to you. These are opportunities to meet staff and other students from across the university, in the Faculty and on the programme.

The first seminar will provide an introduction and overview of the course. You will be given a course handbook, teaching timetables etc. This will be followed by an informal meeting with the course team and fellow students.

#### Study Skills Support
Student Learning Services (SLS) are committed to providing comprehensive guidance on all aspects of effective and efficient learning. The ultimate aim of the service is to enable you to make the most of your academic studies at the University and for you to become an independent, successful learner during your time at the University of Stirling. This is facilitated through collaborative work with experienced tutors and by offering a variety of courses, workshops and tutorials.

All students, whatever stage of their academic studies, are welcome to use Student Learning Services. However the service may be particularly beneficial:

- In your first two years of study.
- If you are making the transition from college to Higher Education.
- If you have been out of education for some time.

What SLS are able to do:

- Advise you on academic skills relevant to your studies at University.
- Help you consolidate your previous learning and develop new learning strategies.
- Advise on action-plans to potentially improve grades.
- Suggest practical solutions if you feel overwhelmed by assignment work.
- Help you gain confidence in the transition to Higher Education.

More information can be found here: [http://www.stir.ac.uk/campus-life/learning-support/student-learning-services/](http://www.stir.ac.uk/campus-life/learning-support/student-learning-services/)

### STEER
STEER is a University-wide peer support scheme linking in returning student "Captains" with new undergraduate or taught post-graduate "Crew" during their first year at Stirling.

The scheme aims to help you make the most of your time at the University, help new students - the Crew - settle in and realise the opportunities available to them. You can find out more information here: [https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/representation/studentsupport/steer/](https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/representation/studentsupport/steer/)

### Stirling Graduate School
For Research Postgraduate Students the Stirling Graduate School as well as your own faculty will provide support. More information can be found here: [http://www.stir.ac.uk/graduateschool/current-pg-students/skills-development/](http://www.stir.ac.uk/graduateschool/current-pg-students/skills-development/)

### Academic and Pastoral Support
**Adviser of Studies:** Advisers have an important role to play in enhancing your academic and personal development and are essential to ensuring you make the most of your time at university. Advisers provide
a personalised point of contact for you to discuss academic concerns or queries within the academic community. The general purpose of the role is to provide more in-depth advice on the academic options available to you and on the academic policies and regulations within the University. More information can be found here: http://www.stir.ac.uk/registry/advisers/

Personal Tutor: The role of a personal tutor is to help you feel part of the University community. They are a specific and consistent source of guidance, information and support for you throughout your studies. The tutor should be the your first formal point of contact for general academic guidance and pastoral support. More information can be found here: http://www.stir.ac.uk/tse/personal-tutor/

Support and Wellbeing: At university you may face non-academic issues where you need some expert help or guidance. There are lots of ways we can help you in your day-to-day life at University. Student Support Services provide a range of high-quality services to assist you during the course of your studies, help prepare you for life after graduation. We aim to enhance the student experience and help you to get the most out of your time at University. More information can be found here: http://www.stir.ac.uk/campus-life/support-and-wellbeing/

Student Union: you can also access support through the Students’ Union, more information can be found here: https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/representation/studentsupport/

Accessibility and Inclusion (A&I)
A&I are committed to offering a service which is welcoming and supportive of the needs of all students. Our service takes into account the full range of needs you may have, in a wide variety of circumstances including - physical and mobility difficulties, sensory impairments, specific learning difficulties including dyslexia and autistic spectrum disorder as well as medical conditions and mental health difficulties. A&I can also support you if you have short-term, temporary impairments or other difficulties as a result of an accident, injury, illness or surgery. More information can be found here: http://www.stir.ac.uk/student-support/accessibility-&-inclusion-service/

Learning Resources
You can find out more about the resources available to support your learning here: http://www.stir.ac.uk/campus-life/learning-support/

Section 4 Programme Evaluation and Enhancement

METHODS FOR EVALUATING AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Module Evaluation
Module evaluations are carried out each year and are an important way of getting student feedback on the modules we teach. We aim to evaluate every module we teach in every semester. You can find out more here: http://www.stir.ac.uk/registry/studentinformation/moduleevaluation/

Programme Review
Programmes are reviewed annually and on a 5 yearly cycle. You can get involved in a variety of different ways; by completing module evaluations, becoming a course representative and attending Student Staff Consultative Committees, or participating in the review process itself. You can find out more here: http://www.stir.ac.uk/academicpolicy/handbook/review-and-monitoring/

External Examiner(s)
Name of External Examiner: Dr Joseph Chilcot
Institution: King’s College London
### WHAT KIND OF CAREER MIGHT I GO ON TO?

*What career avenues does this qualification open up to the student?*

In the field of Health Psychology, psychological principles are used to facilitate changes in people’s health-related attitudes and behaviour. Health Psychologists are employed in various settings. Examples of the type of work a Health Psychologist might do are as follows:

- health assessments and management strategies for chronically ill patients, for example, those with cancer or chronic pain.
- rehabilitation programmes, e.g. for patients with coronary heart disease.
- working with patients and carers in palliative care.
- working with primary health care teams in the community.
- health education and health promotion in educational or industrial settings.
- conducting evaluative research in order to provide a research evidence base for health policy decisions.
- influencing health behaviours, for example in smoking cessation programmes, weight reduction, or sexual health.
- carrying out teaching and research in academic settings.
- teaching and training health care providers.

More information about Health Psychology in general, BPS Chartership and careers can be found at the British Psychological Society, Division of Health Psychology website http://www.bps.org.uk/dhp/

How does this programme facilitate your development of the Graduate Attributes?

**Connected**

Understanding and acting on the professional requirements and responsibilities of engaging in Psychological Research with participants from diverse backgrounds, and with a range of knowledge and skills. Engaging in participatory activities throughout the different research domains.

**Innovative**

Incorporating clear understanding of excellence and independence into actions throughout the course. Providing evidence of ethical and active research engagement, with an appreciation of the wider global consequences of this activity.

**Transformative**

Being able to extend knowledge and critique beyond a specific psychology research paradigm to multidisciplinary and real world contexts. Confidently taking on leadership roles within and beyond the discipline.

### WHAT STUDY ABROAD OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE?

None.

### WHAT PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE?

The Applications of Health Psychology (HPSP112) module includes an optional short observational placement in a healthcare setting and is expected to provide practical evaluative experience of health care structures and practices and foster reflection on your own professional skills and development. Placements have been organised in many different types of settings in previous years including secondary care (hospitals), primary care (GPs and clinics), community based services and voluntary organisations. For example:

- pain management clinic
Students are encouraged to identify and arrange their own placement, having first checked with the Course Director that the placement is appropriate and suitable.

**WHAT FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO ME?**

Eligible students will be encouraged to progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of health psychology training and Stirling will be offering a 3 year Professional Doctorate in Health Psychology from Spring 2018. Some members of the course team are Health Psychologists and can offer supervision for students wishing to follow the PhD route or the Independent route.

**WHAT OTHER INFORMATION DO I NEED TO KNOW?**

Information that should be displayed at module registration and/or on the Degree Programme Table webpages to help students understand any programme specific requirements or agreed exceptions to regulations. This could also include useful information that will enable a student to decide to take this programme, prepare for the programme, or that will be useful to them on completion of the programme e.g. professional recognition/accreditations etc.

Students accepted without a BPS-recognised qualification and intending to progress to BPS Stage Two training towards practitioner health psychologist status will be required to undertake an accredited Psychology conversion course following this programme.

**Section 6 Admissions**

**HOW DO I ENTER THE PROGRAMME?**

You must have a minimum of a 2.1 Honours degree in Psychology or a related subject. A qualification recognised by British Psychological Society (www.bps.org.uk) giving Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership is preferred.

Students accepted without a BPS recognised qualification and intending to progress to BPS Stage Two training towards practitioner health psychologist status will be required to undertake an accredited Psychology conversion course following this programme. See Psychology (accredited conversion course)