CRIMINOLOGY AT KEELE

Developing the Distinctive Graduate

Keele University is committed to giving students the opportunity to develop a wide range of capabilities:

1. An open and questioning approach to ideas, demonstrating curiosity, independence of thought and the ability to appreciate a range of perspectives on the natural and social worlds
2. An appreciation of the development and value of your chosen subjects of study, awareness of their contexts, the links between them, and awareness of the provisional and dynamic nature of knowledge
3. Information literacy: the ability to locate, evaluate and synthesise large amounts of frequently conflicting information, ideas and data
4. The ability creatively to solve problems using a range of different approaches and techniques, and to determine which techniques are appropriate for the issue at hand
5. An appreciation of the social, environmental and global implications of your studies and other activities, including recognition of any ethical implications
6. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively in written and verbal forms for different purposes and to a variety of audiences
7. The knowledge, skills, self-confidence and self-awareness actively to pursue your future goals
8. The ability and motivation to participate responsibly and collaboratively as an active citizen in the communities in which you live and work
9. A professional and reflective approach, including qualities of leadership, responsibility, personal integrity, empathy, care and respect for others, accountability and self-regulation
10. The flexibility to thrive in rapidly changing and uncertain external environments and to update skills and knowledge as circumstances require.

Whether you study criminology alone by taking Single Honours, as one of two Dual Honours principals, or as a Major or Minor subject, we will help you to develop these attributes throughout your time at Keele. Here is a short summary of some of the ways we will do this.

An open and questioning approach to ideas ...

From the first few weeks of your first year you will begin to appreciate that, in the words of the sociologist Peter Berger, ‘things are not what they seem’. You will look, for example, at how official statistics and other ‘facts’ about crime are put together or ‘constructed’. In the same module, Understanding Crime, you will go on to examine different approaches to explaining crime, many of them closely related to contrasting ways of looking at the social world more generally. Later, in your
third year, you will be able to choose from modules that ask searching questions about issues such as the value of the death penalty, the connections between crime and immigration, and how our perceptions of crime are influenced by, or reflected in, popular culture. Throughout your time studying criminology at Keele you will be encouraged to pursue your own interests and develop your own perspectives on crime and how it can be controlled. You will be rewarded for thinking creatively in assessments and never being afraid to question what you have read or been told.

An appreciation of the development and value of your chosen subject(s) ...

What is crime? Who commits it? And how do we control it? These are critical questions for society. And these are the questions that criminology tries to answer. It does this by drawing on many other disciplines including sociology, psychology, law, politics, history and anthropology. It is, as one eminent criminologist has noted, a ‘rendezvous discipline’. We offer modules – Psychology and Crime, and Crime, Culture and Conflict 1700-1914 are two of them – that make some of these connections explicit. You will learn how criminology matured as a ‘science’ and why some people doubt whether it is or should be seen as one. In Research Methods in Criminology you will see how criminological knowledge is accumulated, and come to appreciate the limitations of these processes. Several modules, including Criminal Justice: Process, Policy and Practice in the first year, look at how this knowledge is (or isn’t) used to devise strategies for preventing and responding to crime in practice. Third year modules taught by active researchers take you to the frontiers of criminological thinking. At this level you will also have the opportunity to test out your own ideas by researching and writing a dissertation.

Information literacy ...

Being able to find the resources you need to contribute to class discussions and prepare for assessments is one of the keys to success in criminology. You will always be given guidance about what to start reading. But you will also be expected to ‘read round’ your subject, to track down references and make judgements about the reliability and usefulness of different sources of information. If you want to know what life in prison is like, why are books and peer-reviewed journal articles about the ‘pains of imprisonment’ more credible than media stories about inmates living it up at taxpayers’ expense? And what is wrong (and right) with Wikipedia? All your assessments will involve collecting, analysing and synthesising information from a range of sources. By the end of your three years you will have the confidence and the skills to find and evaluate material for yourself and undertake a piece of independent research.

The ability creatively to solve problems ...

What is it about some people and some places that make them particularly prone to crime? Can anything be done to improve their safety? And what do ‘communities’ have to do with all this? These are just two of the problems you will confront in criminology – in this case in the second year elective module Building Safer Communities and a third year module on immigration, communities and crime. You will learn to draw on criminological theory and findings from research – evidence of ‘what works’ and why (not) - in answering questions like these and devising practical ways of reducing levels of offending. The compulsory core module Research Methods in Criminology, also in the second year, is all about identifying problems clearly and selecting appropriate means of
investigating them. The 10,000 word research dissertation and other final year modules allow you to put these techniques into practice.

An appreciation of the social, environmental and global implications of your studies ...

You only have to think of the impact of terrorism, the trade in illegal drugs or the possibility of mass migration in response to climate change to recognise that crime, and the conditions that go with it, is an increasingly global problem. (It is equally important to acknowledge that it is often a very local one too.) The work of the International Criminal Court in bringing people accused of war crimes and genocide to justice is an example of how responses to crime are changing in response. Our second year core module *Crime and Justice in a Global Context* addresses these issues directly. Other, third year modules are similarly international in their perspectives examining the use of the death penalty in the United States and crime and policing in post-apartheid South Africa. If direct experience of other countries is what you’re after, we offer study abroad opportunities at Keele’s partner universities in North America, Australia, Europe and South Africa as well as week-long exchange visits to Ball State University in Indiana for an on-the-spot look at criminal justice US-style. The ethical implications of doing criminological research are explored in our second year module on methods, while gaining ethical approval is an integral part of the process for anyone planning to do their own research as part of their dissertation project. More generally, we hope you will come to see crime as a social problem – something that is done by individuals perhaps, but something for which we, as social beings, all share a certain amount of responsibility.

The ability to communicate clearly and effectively ...

Helping you to write well – clearly, concisely and in a scholarly manner – is a priority in the first year of the programme and you will be given feedback on how to improve the presentation of written work throughout your time with us. We also provide opportunities for you to develop, practice and be assessed on presentation skills: how to use audio-visual aids effectively; and how to engage and hold an audience. The assessment tasks you will be asked to complete range from the traditional essay with its emphasis on observing the formalities of scholarly writing to reports that demonstrate your ability to get to the heart of a matter and propose solutions to practical problems with a busy practitioner or key decision-maker in mind.

Pursuing your personal goals ...

We know that students come to Keele to study criminology for many different reasons. If you share our passion for the subject, our programmes are flexible enough to allow you to develop your own interests whether they are in prisons and probation, policing, mental health or the history of crime. For those of you who want to make a career of responding to crime, its causes and consequences, we offer a module called *Working for Justice*. This second year elective module provides an overview of the careers available in the criminal justice system and helps you to develop some of the investigative, interviewing and evidence-gathering skills you will need to succeed in them. It also looks at aspects of the application process and what you can do to maximise your chances of getting a job. At the same time we provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all our students – one in which you feel able to make mistakes and learn from them, to be clear about, and comfortable with, your own strengths and weaknesses.
Participating responsibly and collaboratively as an active citizen ...

It is something of a cliché to say that you get out of life what you put into it. We believe that this is true when it comes to studying criminology. So you will always be encouraged to be an active learner by contributing constructively to discussions in seminars and tutorials or using electronic voting equipment to test your own knowledge in lectures. You will have to meet the challenges of being a member of a team by doing group work on a presentation or working collaboratively on a case study. You will learn to recognise that an effective team is more than a collection of individuals, greater than the sum of its parts. You will have to deal with freeloaders (and make sure you don’t become one yourself), and quite possibly take on the burden of leadership too. We have a proud record of producing active university citizens in criminology with recent graduates being elected to sabbatical positions in the Students’ Union and winning awards in the University’s Student of the Year competition.

A professional and reflective approach ...

In criminology we aim to demonstrate the professional and reflective approach to our teaching and research we expect you to show as a student. We take what students say about our programmes seriously and do what we can to respond positively to module evaluations and the reactions of student representatives. We see staff and students as members of a community of learners who respect each other and act accordingly. We take responsibility when things go wrong as well as credit when we get them right. And we expect you, the student, to do the same, whether it is by letting us know if you are unable to attend a class or responding positively to the feedback you are given on your work.

The flexibility to thrive in rapidly changing and uncertain external environments ...

A lot of criminology, the ‘rendezvous discipline’, consists of looking at the same things – crime, criminals and crime control – from many different perspectives. In learning to see a crime problem like murder from the position of a criminal lawyer, a sociologist, a social psychologist, a psychiatrist, an historian, even a dramatist (think of Shakespeare) or a children’s author (such as J K Rowling), you will develop the ability to see the world and its problems in all their complexity. You will be able to grasp how others may see the same problem very differently to you and understand how something as mundane as the internet has had a profound effect on the ways we interact with each other, some of them involving behaviour – accessing child pornography, gambling and downloading ‘pirated’ music or videos - that society may want to control.

The distinctive Keele graduate

In addition to what we offer as part of our programmes in criminology, Keele’s flexible degree structure allows plenty of scope for you to pursue other interests, to learn a foreign language or take a module in something completely outside your main subject(s). During your time with us, you will also have opportunities to develop knowledge and skills through working, volunteering or running a student society. Put all of this together and you will leave with a distinctive and invaluable set of attributes, a distinctive Keele criminology graduate.