Programme Specification: Post Graduate Taught

For Academic Year 2025/26

1. Course Summary

Names of programme and award title(s)	MSc Forensic Science
Award type	Taught Masters
Mode of study	Full-time Part-time
Framework of Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) level of final award	Level 7
Normal length of the programme	1 year full-time or 2 years part-time
Maximum period of registration	The normal length as specified above plus 3 years
Location of study	Keele Campus
Accreditation (if applicable)	Accreditation will be sought from the Chartered Society of Forensic Science (CSFS) (see section 10 for further details)
Regulator	Office for Students (OfS)
Tuition Fees	**UK students:** Full-time fee for 2025/26 is £11,400 Part-time fee for 2025/26 is £6,300 per year* **International students:** Full-time fee for 2025/26 is £17,700

How this information might change: *Please read the important information at http://www.keele.ac.uk/student-agreement/. This explains how and why we may need to make changes to the information provided in this document and to help you understand how we will communicate with you if this happens.*

** We reserve the right to increase fees in subsequent years of study by an inflationary amount. Please refer to the accompanying Student Terms & Conditions for full details. Further information on fees can be found at http://www.keele.ac.uk/studentfunding/tuitionfees/*

2. Overview of the Programme

The MSc Forensic Science at Keele University provides the opportunity for students to acquire postgraduate-level generic and subject-specific knowledge, research, and technical skills across a broad range of disciplines within Forensic Science. It will develop students' knowledge and understanding of advanced analytical methods applied to forensic science investigation, skills within the courtroom, students' reasoning skills within forensic science, building knowledge and understanding in the application of research and management skills within Forensic Science. Students will be supported in their development of these skills through taught group sessions and applied projects, and one-to-one discussions with their dissertation project supervisors.

The School of Chemical and Physical Sciences at Keele conducts internationally recognised fundamental and applied research in many areas in the Forensic Science and related disciplines, ranging from Forensic Chemistry and Investigation, to Forensic Biology, Forensic Anthropology/Archaeology, Forensic Entomology and

Ecotoxicology, Forensic Geoscience, Environmental and Wildlife Forensics. Students on the MSc Forensic Science programme will benefit from our expertise in these areas and our collaborative research links that provide the foundation for collaboration opportunities with institutions around the world, along with opportunities in industry, the public sector and the third sector based primarily in the UK. International students will be able to take advanced academic English for postgraduate students, with one-to-one support sessions open to non-native English speakers.

In addition to the development of discipline-specific skills, students will be supported in enhancing key professional and employability skills through developing critical thinking, innovation, reflective writing, autonomous learning and written and oral presentation skills: all vital skills for future employment, lifelong learning and continued professional development irrespective of the student's chosen career path.

The focus of the MSc Forensic Science is in building forensic science research skills and there is substantial 'hands on' research training. Students would leave the course prepared for a professional forensic science-related role within the criminal or civil judicial system, police or forensic practice, commercial forensic laboratory, forensic research, or to progress onto a PhD in any associated discipline.

This postgraduate taught course will give students the opportunity to progress to Masters level and focus on higher level skills development, critical thinking, independent thought, problem-solving skills, advanced Forensic Science knowledge and to complete an independent research project in a specific area of Forensic Science.

3. Aims of the programme

The broad aims of the programme are informed by the QAA Benchmark Statement for Forensic Science, as well as embedding Keele curriculum expectations and graduate attributes, which are under the following generic categories:

Academic Knowledge and expertise

- engender and develop an enthusiasm for Forensic Science and provide an intellectually stimulating and beneficial learning experience
- acquire postgraduate-level generic and subject-specific knowledge and research skills across a broad range of disciplines within Forensic Science
- develop a strong educational background for a career as a forensic practitioner, in academia or the public sector.
- foster **critical thinking**, awareness of and engagement with current Forensic Science methods and techniques within Forensic Science, some of which are at, or informed by, the forefront of the discipline

Professional skills

- develop practical, analytical, **problem-solving** and **numeracy and data literacy** skills, exploring new approaches to solving problems, within Forensic Science
- develop **digital readiness**, literate, written and oral reporting skills to a level appropriate to the professional forensic scientist and the ability to convey scientific outcomes to non-scientists
- engender a sound understanding of continuity of evidence and how the forensic crime scene, the laboratory and the court contribute to the forensic and legal process
- **research skills** of devising, planning, executing and reporting on an original investigation or research project within the discipline, both as an individual and as part of a team
- **reflective practice** and **career management**

Personal effectiveness

- develop **leadership, communication** and **time management** skills, **collaborate** as part of a team, become **adaptable**, **resilient**, **self-aware** and **empathetic** of others

Social and ethical responsibility

- recognise and respect **equality, diversity and inclusion,** acting **ethically** with **integrity and respect**

4. What you will learn

The intended learning outcomes of the programme (what students should know, understand and be able to do at the end of the programme), can be described under the following headings:

- Subject knowledge and understanding
- Subject specific skills
- Key or transferable skills (including employability skills)

Subject knowledge and understanding

Successful students will be able to:

- demonstrate Forensic Science knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights;
- critically apply a wide range of instrumental and/or other techniques relevant to forensic science and use them competently to analyse a range of relevant materials and with regard to quality assurance issues;
- demonstrate problem-solving within forensic science by drawing on their scientific understanding and knowledge, and experience of experimental techniques;
- critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in their area of Forensic Science;
- demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge, and how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in Forensic Science;

Subject specific skills

Successful students will be able to:

- evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses;
- research, devise, plan, execute and report on an original investigation or research project within the discipline;
- execute practical work and critically analyse the results from experiments or investigations and draw valid conclusions;
- select and utilise appropriate software, databases and other digital resources for the analysis and interpretation of instrumental and/or other laboratory data;
- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- work safely in the laboratory and manage risk assessments and other practices in a competent fashion;
- demonstrate a high level of scientific skills and knowledge, and transferable skills, in a UK-based workplace setting;

Key or transferable skills (including employability skills)

Successful students will be able to:

- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

The Keele Graduate Attributes

The Keele Graduate Attributes are the qualities (skills, values and mindsets) which you will have the opportunity to develop during your time at Keele through both the formal curriculum and also through co- and extra-curricular activities (e.g., work experience, and engagement with the wider University community such as acting as ambassadors, volunteering, peer mentoring, student representation, membership and leadership of clubs and societies). Our Graduate Attributes consist of four themes: **academic expertise, professional skills, personal effectiveness, and social and ethical responsibility.** You will have opportunities to engage actively with the range of attributes throughout your time at Keele: through your academic studies, through self-assessing your own strengths, weaknesses, and development needs, and by setting personal development goals. You will have opportunities to discuss your progress in developing graduate attributes with, for example, Academic Mentors, to prepare for your future career and lives beyond Keele.

5. How is the programme taught?

Learning and teaching methods used on the programme vary according to the subject matter and level of the module. They include the following:

- interactive lectures, tutorials, workshops, seminars, practical/laboratory classes, problem-based learning, directed reading and independent study and project work, individual presentations and linked discussion, in addition to one-on-one meetings/discussions with individual research supervisors.
- all students are expected to engage in independent study for the duration of the programme.

Apart from these formal activities, students are also provided with regular opportunities to talk through particular areas of difficulty, and any special learning needs they may have, with their Academic Mentors or module lecturers on a one-to-one basis.

These learning and teaching methods enable students to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme in a variety of ways. For example:

- Develop a structured approach to the design and management of projects including consideration of ethics, grant application and project planning through a series of lectures and small group activities and discussions.

- Share best practice and develop communication and group collaboration skills through a series of student-led talks.
- Acquire advanced laboratory competencies and analytical skills appropriate to Forensic Science which will be acquired through working in a research environment at Keele.
- Consider the application of new or existing knowledge to novel, up-to-date problems within the chosen discipline or in new innovative contexts through seminars and group activities.
- Develop scientific critique, writing and presentational skills appropriate for a career in research in academia or forensic practitioners.

Modules will focus on generic research skills such as academic writing, critical paper evaluations, reviewing literature, data analysis and presentation skills, oral presentation skills and research design and management, alongside specific skills in their chosen area of Forensic Science. This should adequately prepare the student for their dissertation research project.

The dissertation will allow students to apply their research skills acquired earlier in the programme and develop advanced research, practical and analytical skills. This provides excellent research training within the specialist area and allows a range of employability skills to be developed. Specialist research themes that students will study include:

- **Forensic Biology** - including DNA analysis, biomaterials, entomology, biomarkers, wildlife forensics and aquatic analysis;
- **Forensic Chemistry** - including analytical forensics, materials analysis counterfeit detection, environmental forensics, chemical fingerprinting and food fraud;
- **Forensic Anthropology** - including taphonomy, forensic osteology, trauma analysis, forensic geophysics, dental anthropology, forensic archaeology and victim identification;
- **Crime Scene Investigations** - including digital imaging, evidence handling, evidence in court conflict analysis, blood analysis, digital forensics and education/pedagogy.

The Keele Learning Environment (KLE) will provide a virtual resource to support learning and teaching activities, enhance student development and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion of issues that may arise during programme delivery.

6. Teaching Staff

The teaching staff comprise a number of expert academics within the School of Chemical and Physical Sciences (SCPS) at Keele University with active research interests in a range of scientific disciplines. The teaching and research profiles of the staff that currently deliver and support the Forensic Science programme can be found at: https://www.keele.ac.uk/scps/ourpeople/forensicscience/.

The SCPS academic staff involved in the MSc Forensic Science have expertise and interests in Forensic Science, with some also have professional experience in forensics laboratories, and undertaking active and cold case work. In addition to the members of the programme team who deliver and coordinate individual modules, other relevant Faculty of Natural Science staff support the MSc Forensic Science through research project supervision at Keele and professional and technical support.

Academic staff are active researchers and many have a distinguished track record in publications, the generation of research grant income, forensic practitioner collaborations and journal editorship. Several staff have particular interests in the development of forensic science education and/or have played an active role in the promotion of UK Forensic Science activities (e.g. via membership of the Chartered Society of Forensic Science). Additionally, many staff contribute to widening participation and science outreach activities, and have demonstrated innovation and good practice in teaching and learning to take account of the diverse needs and disabilities of all students.

The University will attempt to minimise changes to our core teaching teams, however, delivery of the programme depends on having a sufficient number of staff with the relevant expertise to ensure that the programme is taught to the appropriate academic standard.

Staff turnover, for example where key members of staff leave, fall ill or go on research leave, may result in changes to the programme's content. The University will endeavour to ensure that any impact on students is limited if such changes occur.

7. What is the structure of the programme?

The MSc Forensic Science programme runs full-time over one full year (with a September start) with three semesters; Semester 1 starting in September, Semester 2 starting in January and Semester 3 starting in June. Alternatively, students can take the programme part-time.

The programme comprises of four compulsory modules designed to develop research skills: *Forensic Research Skills*, *Contemporary Topics in Forensic Science*, *Research Project Design & Management*, and the *MSc Forensic Research Project* module. In addition to these 105 credits of compulsory modules, students will take 75 credits

of optional modules.

The Interpretation, Evaluation & Presentation of Evidence is covered in both *Crime Scene to Court*, which is a 30-credit module, and *Forensic Science Principles*, which is also a 30-credit module. Students without a BSc in Forensic Science must pick either *Crime Scene to Court* or *Forensic Science Principles*, but this will be agreed with the programme lead based on academic background or previous experience.

The structure of the programme is designed to develop generic research skills, e.g. critical reading, thinking and reflective writing, scientific writing, scientific communication (written and oral) and project design, along with subject-specific research skills such as laboratory and/or field methods and data analysis and interpretation.

All students should discuss option choices with their programme director, Academic Mentor and project supervisor.

Year	Compulsory	Optional	
		Min	Max
Level 7	105	75	75

Module Lists

Level 7

Compulsory modules	Module Code	Credits	Period
Forensic Research Skills	FSC-40045	15	Semester 1
Contemporary Topics in Forensic Science	FSC-40051	15	Semester 1-2
Research Project Design and Management	FSC-40035	15	Semester 2-3
MSc Forensic Research Project	FSC-40061	60	Semester 2-3

Optional modules	Module Code	Credits	Period
Academic English for Postgraduate Students 1	ENL-40001	15	Semester 1
Marks and Traces Advanced Examination	FSC-40041	15	Semester 1
Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry	FSC-40043	15	Semester 1
Digital Forensics: Applications and Advanced Examinations	FSC-40055	15	Semester 1
Advanced Topics in Forensic Biology	FSC-40057	15	Semester 1
Crime Scene to Court	FSC-30049	30	Semester 1-2
Forensic Science Principles	FSC-40037	30	Semester 1-2
Literature Review	FSC-40015	15	Semester 2
Environmental and Wildlife Forensics	FSC-40029	15	Semester 2
Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial	FSC-40039	15	Semester 2
Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis	FSC-40049	15	Semester 2

Level 7 Module Rules

1. Placement onto the correct level of Academic English is based on a diagnostic language assessment on arrival. Native or near-native English speaking international students may, as an alternative, take an option module relevant to their research area.
2. Students without a BSc in Forensic Science must pick either *Crime Scene to Court* (FSC-30049) or *Forensic Science Principles* (FSC-40037), but this will be agreed with the programme lead based on academic background or previous experience.
3. Students with a BSc in Forensic Science are not able to take FSC-40037.
4. Previous academic background or experience may limit the eligibility of some optional modules. This will be considered on an individual basis with the programme lead.

Part-time route

Year	Compulsory	Optional	
		Min	Max
Level 7	120	60	60

Year 1

Compulsory modules	Module code	Credits	Period
Forensic Research Skills	FSC-40045	15	Semester 1
Contemporary Topics in Forensic Science	FSC-40051	15	Semester 1-2
Literature Review	FSC-40015	15	Semester 2-3
Research Project Design & Management	FSC-40035	15	Semester 2-3

Optional modules	Module code	Credits	Period
ENL-40001: Academic English for PG Students	ENL-40001	15	Semester 1
Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial	FSC-40039	15	Semester 1
Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry	FSC-40043	15	Semester 1
Digital Forensics: Advanced Applications and Examinations	FSC-40055	15	Semester 1
Marks & Traces Advanced Examination	FSC-40041	15	Semester 1
Crime Scene to Court	FSC-30049	30	Semester 1-2
Forensic Science Principles	FSC-40037	30	Semester 1-2
Advanced Topics in Forensic Biology	FSC-40057	15	Semester 1-2
Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis	FSC-40049	15	Semester 2
Environmental & Wildlife Forensics	FSC-40029	15	Semester 2

Year 2

Compulsory modules	Module code	Credits	Period
MSc Forensic Research Project	FSC-40061	60	Semester 2-3

Optional modules	Module code	Credits	Period
ENL-40001: Academic English for PG Students	ENL-40001	15	Semester 1
Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial	FSC-40039	15	Semester 1
Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry	FSC-40043	15	Semester 1
Digital Forensics: Advanced Applications and Examinations	FSC-40055	15	Semester 1
Marks & Traces Advanced Examination	FSC-40041	15	Semester 1
Advanced Topics in Forensic Biology	FSC-40057	15	Semester 1-2
Environmental & Wildlife Forensics	FSC-40029	15	Semester 2
Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis	FSC-40049	15	Semester 2

Part-time route notes:

Year 1 will include 30 credits of options, unless it is a requirement for the student to undertake FSC-30049 or FSC-40037 which will take the place of these. For the part-time route, the FSC-40015 is a compulsory module to enable the balancing of the student workload.

Year 2 will include 30 credits of options, these should be different from those taken in year 1 (if applicable).

Learning Outcomes

The table below sets out what students learn in the programme and the modules in which that learning takes place. Details of how learning outcomes are assessed through these modules can be found in module specifications.

Level 7

Subject Knowledge and Understanding	
Learning Outcome	**Module in which this is delivered**
Demonstrate systemic project management skills incl. consideration of ethics, applications for funding and data management	MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061 Forensic Research Skills - FSC-40045 Research Project Design and Management - FSC-40035
Develop a critical awareness of current issues and important insights appropriate to the research discipline	Environmental and Wildlife Forensics - FSC-40029 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043 Crime Scene to Court - FSC-30049 Marks and Traces Advanced Examination - FSC-40041 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Contemporary Topics in Forensic Science - FSC-40051 Literature Review - FSC-40015 Forensic Science Principles - FSC-40037 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049

Subject Knowledge and Understanding	
Learning Outcome	**Module in which this is delivered**
Integrate complex knowledge into professional written communication	Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Research Project Design and Management - FSC-40035 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043 Forensic Science Principles - FSC-40037 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049 Environmental and Wildlife Forensics - FSC-40029 Marks and Traces Advanced Examination - FSC-40041 Crime Scene to Court - FSC-30049 Advanced Topics in Forensic Biology - FSC-40057
Critically evaluate current literature appropriate to research discipline	Literature Review - FSC-40015 Environmental and Wildlife Forensics - FSC-40029 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Digital Forensics: Applications and Advanced Examinations - FSC-40055 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061
Apply a comprehensive understanding of the analytical approach to new scientific problems	Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061

Subject Specific Skills	
Learning Outcome	**Module in which this is delivered**
Manage practical project work effectively	Crime Scene to Court - FSC-30049 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Research Project Design and Management - FSC-40035 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061 Forensic Research Skills - FSC-40045 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043 Forensic Science Principles - FSC-40037
Use scientific research principles to select appropriate techniques of experimental design and analysis to research questions or hypotheses	Crime Scene to Court - FSC-30049 Forensic Science Principles - FSC-40037 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061 Research Project Design and Management - FSC-40035 Forensic Research Skills - FSC-40045

Subject Specific Skills	
Learning Outcome	**Module in which this is delivered**
Report the results of an empirical study, applying appropriate skills of presentation, interpretation and discussion of findings	MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049 Forensic Research Skills - FSC-40045 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043
Demonstrate independent court or laboratory or field competencies	Marks and Traces Advanced Examination - FSC-40041 Forensic Science Principles - FSC-40037 Environmental and Wildlife Forensics - FSC-40029 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Crime Scene to Court - FSC-30049
Evaluate complex scientific data	Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049 Environmental and Wildlife Forensics - FSC-40029 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Crime Scene to Court - FSC-30049 Forensic Research Skills - FSC-40045 Advanced Topics in Forensic Biology - FSC-40057 Forensic Science Principles - FSC-40037 Digital Forensics: Applications and Advanced Examinations - FSC-40055 Marks and Traces Advanced Examination - FSC-40041 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061

Key or Transferable Skills (graduate attributes)	
Learning Outcome	**Module in which this is delivered**
Demonstrate self-direction and dedication to independent learning	Literature Review - FSC-40015 Research Project Design and Management - FSC-40035 Forensic Research Skills - FSC-40045 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061
Demonstrate effective time management and work to deadlines	Forensic Science Principles - FSC-40037 Research Project Design and Management - FSC-40035 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Crime Scene to Court - FSC-30049 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061 Forensic Research Skills - FSC-40045 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049 Literature Review - FSC-40015 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043
Demonstrate self-direction and independence in implementing and managing academic activities	Research Project Design and Management - FSC-40035 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061 Crime Scene to Court - FSC-30049 Literature Review - FSC-40015 Forensic Research Skills - FSC-40045 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Forensic Science Principles - FSC-40037 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049
Demonstrate innovation and originality in the understanding and application of new knowledge	Marks and Traces Advanced Examination - FSC-40041 Major Scene Investigation: From Crime to Trial - FSC-40039 Contemporary Topics in Forensic Science - FSC-40051 Digital Forensics: Applications and Advanced Examinations - FSC-40055 MSc Forensic Research Project - FSC-40061 Forensic Analysis: From Academia to Industry - FSC-40043 Environmental and Wildlife Forensics - FSC-40029 Forensic Research Skills - FSC-40045 Forensic Anthropology: Complex Scenes, Recovery and Analysis - FSC-40049 Literature Review - FSC-40015 Advanced Topics in Forensic Biology - FSC-40057

8. Final and intermediate awards

Master's Degree	180 credits	You will require at least 150 credits at Level 7
Postgraduate Diploma	120 credits	You will require at least 90 credits at Level 7
Postgraduate Certificate	60 credits	You will require at least 40 credits at Level 7

In order to obtain an MSc degree, students are required to obtain 180 credits, including a 60 credit dissertation/project. Since the aim of the course is to provide students with the necessary generic and subject specific skills to enable them to follow a career in research or as a forensic practitioner, the dissertation/research project is the major route by which these skills will be obtained.

9. How is the Programme Assessed?

The wide variety of assessment methods used on this programme at Keele reflects the broad range of knowledge and skills that are developed as you progress through the degree programme. Teaching staff pay particular attention to specifying clear assessment criteria and providing timely, regular and constructive feedback that helps to clarify things you did not understand and helps you to improve your performance. The following list is representative of the variety of assessment methods used on your programme:

- Court presentation
- Case reports
- Dissertation
- Group Report
- Literature review
- Portfolio
- Poster presentation
- Reflective Diary

This programme's varied assessment strategy ensures the student develops employability skills, and research and academic skills, appropriate for a career in research or industry. The assessment design is based on several key principles that promote independent learning, student autonomy and responsibility for personal learning, and the development of innovation and originality within Forensic Science.

Forensic Research Skills offers taught sessions in key research skills such as research design, critical reading and thinking, data analysis and statistics, health and safety, risk assessment and ethics, scientific writing and presentation skills. Group work, clear communication and a holistic awareness of key challenges in the discipline are also key employability skills in both forensic practitioners and academia: students will work together across a number of modules.

Literature Review module requires students to critically appraise current literature and integrate their new knowledge into a structured argument and is assessed by a literature review. This will develop the student's information literacy and skills in searching for, selecting and critically evaluating peer-reviewed research literature relevant to their MSc research dissertation and then synthesising this information into a literature review. Information literacy and being able to critique information are important skills in both research and industry. Feedback will be given via regular seminar/tutorial meetings with the supervisor helping to develop the student's confidence in discussing and critiquing science and scientific issues.

Students who do not speak English as a first language, or international students identified as needing support in *Academic English,* have the option to take an appropriate language course, ENL-41000, which will develop the student's skills in a second language and help prepare them for their collaborative project or Dissertation at Keele University.

The *MSc Forensic Research Project* module is assessed by a 15,000 - 20,000 word (or equivalent) master's thesis/dissertation and represents the culmination of the programme, providing an opportunity for students to put together a number of key learning outcomes from across the programme and to begin to take true responsibility for the formulation, management, conductance and final interpretation and presentation of a new piece of scientific research.

A full assessment brief is provided within each module handbook.

Marks are awarded for summative assessments designed to assess your achievement of learning outcomes. You will also be assessed formatively to enable you to monitor your own progress and to assist staff in identifying and addressing any specific learning needs. Feedback, including guidance on how you can improve the quality of your work, is also provided on all summative assessments within three working weeks of submission, unless there are compelling circumstances that make this impossible, and more informally in the course of tutorial and seminar discussions.

10. Accreditation

Once the programme has run, accreditation will be sought from the Chartered Society of Forensic Science (CSFS).

11. University Regulations

The University Regulations form the framework for learning, teaching and assessment and other aspects of the student experience. Further information about the University Regulations can be found at: http://www.keele.ac.uk/student-agreement/

If this programme has any exemptions, variations or additions to the University Regulations these will be detailed in an Annex at the end of this document titled 'Programme-specific regulations'.

12. What are the typical admission requirements for the Programme?

It is expected that applicants will already hold an honours degree in a scientific discipline appropriate to the chosen research project area. Those who do not hold a scientific degree are able to join the programme on the basis that they take the Forensic Science Principles module FSC-40037. The minimum degree category for entry onto this programme is a lower second class honours degree from a recognised university or equivalent, in line with the 50% pass mark required for successful completion of this course.

Consideration will be given to candidates who do not meet these criteria, but can evidence appropriate, alternative professional qualifications and/or experience.

Applicants who have not had their secondary or tertiary education through the medium of English are expected to have attained the equivalent of an IELTS score of at least 6.5 (with no subtest lower than 5.5) or hold a previous degree which has been taught and examined in English (www.keele.ac.uk/pgapply/)

English for Academic Purposes

Please note: All new international students entering the university will sit a diagnostic language assessment. Using this assessment, the Language Centre may allocate you to an English language module which will become compulsory. NB: students can take an EAP module only with the approval of the English Language Programme Director and are not able to take any other Language modules in the same academic year.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is considered on a case-by-case basis and those interested should contact the Programme Lead. The University's guidelines on this can be found here: https://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/programmesandmodules/recognitionofpriorlearning/

13. How are students supported on the programme?

The Programme Lead will be responsible for the MSc Forensic Science programme and will hold an introduction session at the beginning of the programme to provide general guidance and advice to programme delivery and lines of accountability and student support. The Programme Lead will also be available either directly (through office appointments) and Teams calls or indirectly via email or Teams chat threads for advice on specific problems students may encounter at any point throughout the programme.

Module leaders are available either directly via Teams or in person or indirectly via email or Teams chat for module-specific problems. One-to-one meetings will be arranged as necessary for student consultation. It is the responsibility of module leaders to ensure that appropriate feedback is provided to all students regarding both formative and summative assessment. They will ensure that such feedback is of a high quality and delivered in a timely fashion.

Each student will be appointed a named Academic Mentor from the academic teaching team for pastoral and academic guidance. Students will be able to meet with their Academic Mentor over the year (in person or by Teams) and normally students will meet with their Academic Mentor on approximately five occasions during the year. Academic Mentors will also introduce and promote the University's Personal Development Planning system to further promote and develop student learning. In addition, there will be an independent advisor available to liaise with students, either as a group or individually, on any aspect of the programme or personal development. Individual project supervisors can provide additional academic guidance on research-related issues.

All students are entitled and encouraged to make use of all central university services, including the Keele Postgraduate Association. The student cohort will also be represented on the MSc Forensic Science Student-Staff Voice Committee.

14. Learning Resources

The programmes will be taught in modern teaching rooms across the University which are equipped with computers, internet access and projection equipment. Rooms may be arranged either in traditional lecture format or more informally to allow students to work together in small groups.

Practical research training will be undertaken in appropriate research laboratories within the Faculty of Natural Sciences and students will experience authentic observation and interpretation via their research activities.

Individual module handbooks will provide a recommended reading list, which comprise both traditional text based resources and a range of electronic multi-media resources that will be accessed through KLE. MS Teams will be used to enhance the student experience, learning and support during the period of engagement and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion of issues that arise. Where feasible, students will be housed in a PGT office or within the offices available to research groups. Access to the University electronic resources should be available in these offices via Wi-Fi or direct internet connection.

The programme will be supported by a number of guest speakers working within Forensic Science who will give presentations at research group meetings, School Meetings, research seminars or society meetings. Students are encouraged to make full use of the learning opportunities these activities present by asking questions, staying to talk to the professionals after the sessions or contacting them later through email to answer any questions they may have on their particular area of expertise or general career advice.

The Library has many resources for Forensic Science, both on campus and online. Further information about the library can be found at: https://www.keele.ac.uk/library/. To access online library services off campus students will need an Athens username and password, which is available from the computer help desk.

Students will have access to the IT Services at the University located in the library building. IT Services are responsible for the computing infrastructure in the university and for the support of all staff and students undertaking academic computing tasks. There is a large number of open access PCs available for students. All student PCs use a standard platform, which includes software such as Microsoft Office, web browsers, and other standard applications that may be needed. Printing facilities are available either in Schools or in the library building.

15. Other Learning Opportunities

Students are encouraged to take full advantage of the research seminar opportunities taking place in the School and they are expected to attend (where possible) all presentations relevant to their subject area (usually held within normal working hours 9am - 5pm). Seminars are usually advertised via email.

Both Home and International students may have the opportunity to collaborate with another institution or organisation whilst carrying out their research project at Keele University. Both of these learning opportunities may require funding from the student for in-person visits, but visits will be optional.

Opportunities to attend events and guest lectures will be available through the active Keele University student-led society - Keele University Forensic Society, which is open to undergraduates, postgraduates and staff members. The Forensic Society regularly advertises events through email and representatives are present at induction events at the beginning of the academic year to take modest subscriptions to the Society.

Students can also opt, or be recommended by their project supervisor (where practical and possible), to attend lectures, seminars and practical sessions, on appropriate Forensic Science modules in addition to the modules they are taking for their degree. This may be useful for further developing key skills in their area of Forensic Science and should be cost neutral.

16. Additional Costs

Laboratory PPE:

All PPE equipment (laboratory coats and glasses) are provided by the School at no cost to the student. Students will be required to have two laboratory notebooks, these are provided at no cost to the student in the induction session and can be used for multiple modules/years. Replacement items are available from the School Stores, the 2024/25 price for these are listed below:

Laboratory Book - £1.50 Laboratory Glasses - £3.50 Laboratory Coat - £13

Stationery:

Students will be required to supply appropriate writing equipment but this would be a minimal (<£10) cost. All core textbooks are available in the main University Library. To increase the availability of these resources, eBooks are also purchased alongside the printed text where available; these can be accessed through the University Library Catalogue. Additional costs may be incurred if the student wishes to purchase any book for themselves.

Travel:

Some travel costs may be incurred if an external project or collaboration is undertaken; any such costs will be discussed with the student before the project is confirmed. It will be possible for the student to select an internal project and that would not incur any additional travel costs.

Dissertation:

All students undertake a dissertation, which in some cases MAY include fieldwork. Students are responsible for organising their own transport and accommodation as well as paying any costs incurred whilst carrying out any Dissertation fieldwork. These costs are extremely variable as they are dependent on where the student carries out their project. For example, some projects will involve carrying out a field-based investigation on campus which will involve no costs.

These costs have been forecast by the University as accurately as possible but may be subject to change as a result of factors outside of our control (for example, increase in costs for external services). Forecast costs are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain representative. Where additional costs are in direct control of the University we will ensure increases do not exceed 5%.

As to be expected there will be additional costs for inter-library loans and potential overdue library fines, print and graduation. We do not anticipate any further costs for this programme.

17. Quality management and enhancement

The quality and standards of learning in this programme are subject to a continuous process of monitoring, review and enhancement.

- The School Education Committee is responsible for reviewing and monitoring quality management and enhancement procedures and activities across the School.
- Individual modules and the programme as a whole are reviewed and enhanced every year in the annual programme review which takes place at the end of the academic year.
- The programmes are run in accordance with the University's Quality Assurance procedures and are subject to periodic reviews under the Revalidation process.

Student evaluation of, and feedback on, the quality of learning on every module takes place every year using a variety of different methods:

- The results of student evaluations of all modules are reported to module leaders and reviewed by the Programme Committee as part of annual programme review.
- Findings related to the programme from the annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and from regular surveys of the student experience conducted by the University, are subjected to careful analysis and a planned response at programme and School level.
- Feedback received from representatives of students on the programme is considered and acted on at regular meetings of the Student Staff Voice Committee.

The University appoints senior members of academic staff from other universities to act as external examiners on all programmes. They are responsible for:

- Approving examination questions
- Confirming all marks which contribute to a student's degree
- Reviewing and giving advice on the structure and content of the programme and assessment procedures

Information about current external examiner(s) can be found here:
http://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/externalexaminers/currentexternalexaminers/

18. The principles of programme design

The programme described in this document has been drawn up with reference to, and in accordance with the guidance set out in, the following documents:

a. UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
b. QAA Subject Benchmark Statement: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/forensic-science
c. Keele University Regulations and Guidance for Students and Staff: http://www.keele.ac.uk/regulations

Version History

This document

Date Approved: 18 September 2025

What's Changed

Amendments to part-time modules to align with full-time (FSC-40021 and FSC-40013 replaced with FSC-40049

and FSC-40061; also FSC-40015 amended to SEM2-3)

Previous documents

Version No	Year	Owner	Date Approved	Summary of and rationale for changes
1	2025/26	KRISTOPHER WISNIEWSKI	12 June 2025	
1.1	2024/25	DAVID THOMPSON	19 August 2024	Module diet has been updated to include those taken by students studying on the part-time route
1	2024/25	DAVID THOMPSON	13 August 2024	