Programme Specification: Post Graduate Taught

For Academic Year 2025/26

1. Course Summary

Names of programme and award title(s)	MSc Psychological Research Methods
Award type	Taught Masters
Mode of study	Full-time Modular Part-time
Framework of Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) level of final award	Level 7
Normal length of the programme	One year full time / Two years part time / Up to five years modular
Maximum period of registration	The normal length as specified above plus 3 years
Location of study	Keele Campus
Accreditation (if applicable)	n/a
Regulator	Office for Students (OfS)
Tuition Fees	**UK students:** Full-time fee for 2025/26 is £10,100 Part-time fee for 2025/26 is £5,600* **International students:** Full-time fee for 2025/6 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.*

* *These fees are for new students. 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 Psychological Research Methods programme is designed to provide you with expertise in a range of advanced quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, including a variety of research designs, data handling and collection methods and analytical approaches, and have opportunities to put this into practice in both scientific and applied areas. You will not only learn cutting edge research methodologies in psychology, but will also be given formal training on, and experience with, creating evidence-based policy and practice interventions.

You will learn about a range of methods such as eye tracking, surveying, EEG methods, meta-analysis and systematic reviewing. You will explore a range of advanced quantitative approaches including factor analysis, Bayesian analysis, computational modelling and machine learning. You will also explore a range of qualitative methodologies such as semantic and social constructionist approaches to thematic analysis, ethnographic

methods and discursive methodologies, along with mixed methodologies. This course provides a broad and well-rounded set of methodologies to provide you with the expertise to address research questions with the varying forms of data you may need to capture.

These skills develop both your advanced analytical capacity and your digital skills. You will make use of analytical software including the open-source analytical software JASP and the programming interface of MATLAB to implement a wide variety of analyses through both graphical user interfaces and computational programming, both of which you will be explicitly taught through the course.

Having learnt these techniques, you will have the opportunity to employ these advanced methods and approaches through a year-long dissertation on a topic in your chosen research area of interest or else choose to join a live research project developed by an expert in the discipline. You will also have the opportunity to apprentice with another academic during your second semester as part of your professional practice module. Here you will work one-to-one with a supervisor to contribute to part of an active research project and have opportunities to have further discussions and to learn directly from your supervisor. Keele University also offers a work placement where you will take your research methodological expertise outside of the walls of academia and put your skills into practice in an authentic real-world context. Finally, you will learn about how you can carry out psychological research alongside stakeholders to develop impactful research and discover how you can use psychological research to influence government and organisational policy and practice.

MSc Psychological Research Methods combines developing your advanced research methodological expertise with considering the practicalities of translating your knowledge into application. You will study advanced and contemporary issues in psychological research methods including computational modelling, machine learning and reproducibility, while also exploring how to conduct research to implement change in organisational and governmental policy and practice and gaining first-hand experience of this through a work-based placement.

Experiential learning underpins your learning on this course. There are opportunities to engage in professional practice through research and academic projects as well as a range of authentic assessments relevant to a career implementing scientific research methods. The programme is designed to provide a broad base of advanced analytical and computational techniques.

Keele University is committed to providing transformative and innovative learning opportunities, developing student capabilities, inclusive learning opportunities and learning beyond the curriculum to develop interpersonal professional and employability skills. MSc Psychological Research Methods engenders these values through the use of varied assessments that authentically reflects the practical aspects of the programme, with modules that range from advanced research techniques through to opportunities to translating your studies into practice on a placement opportunity and on research projects supervised by established and renowned academics. The course can be studied over one year full time, two years part time, or up to five years by completing the course on a modular basis, offering flexibility to accommodate a range of personal desires and circumstances.

By joining the course, you will become a member of one of our research networks. These networks are a home to our academic staff exploring research in cognition and cognitive neuroscience, health psychology, forensic psychology, child psychology, and social psychology

The course has the potential to put you in a strong position to continue into PhD research and onwards into academia with a range of research methodological expertise to apply to a wide range of research questions within and beyond psychology. This course also offers you the opportunity to develop your analytical skills and expertise and put these skills into practice in an authentic context. With a demand for a good understanding of human behaviour, an ability to interpret and analyse complex forms of data, and an ability to communicate ideas clearly to others, this course will equip you with demonstrable transferrable skills and experiences to prepare you for your future career. Given the data analytical focus of this course, the career routes are many and varied, but example career directions include:

- Applying for ESRC PhD studentships
- Academia
- Consultancy
- Governmental organisations
- Healthcare
- Management
- Research and development
- Immediate professional and commercial practice
- Market research
- Public agencies
- Education and teaching
- Charitable and voluntary organisations

3. Aims of the programme

The broad aims of the programme are to enable you to:

- Use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to advanced scholarship in psychological research methods.
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods and different forms of data, and to evaluate their appropriateness for research in varying contexts.
- Define and formulate research questions and testable hypotheses, and to design appropriate research to answer these questions using relevant methods of data collection, consistent with the British Psychological Society's principles of ethics and research governance.
- Understand and implement quantitative and qualitative approaches to research and data analysis techniques.
- Design and implement scientific research studies to answer psychological research questions while observing the British Psychological Society's (BPS) principles of professional ethics and conduct.
- Enhance your written and communication skills, independent learning skills, and critical reflection and evaluation skills.

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:

- Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies as they apply to addressing psychological research questions.
- Empirical methodologies used to explore key issues in psychological research.
- The meta-scientific issue of robust and ethical scientific practice.
- How to influence organisational policy and practice using an evidence-based approach.
- The role of the British Psychological Society's code of ethics and conduct when carrying out research.

Subject specific skills

Successful students will be able to:

- Evaluate methodologies in relation to research questions.
- Conduct a literature review of a chosen topic within a chosen psychological discipline.
- Develop a set of research questions or hypotheses for researching a psychological question.
- Carry out an empirical study in psychology.
- Apply appropriate analysis of data collected in a psychological context.
- Report the results of an empirical study, applying skills of presentation, interpretation and discussion of findings that are appropriate within the field of psychology.

Key or transferable skills (including employability skills)

Successful students will be able to:

- Communicate in various formats to audiences of differing levels of expertise.
- Take ownership of their independent learning, identifying and developing skills and capabilities.
- Critically reflect on and evaluate information and ideas in the solution of problems.
- Use digital technologies includes word processing, analytical software, email and the internet.
- Manage their time effectively and to work to deadlines.
- Work as a member of a team.
- Employ scientific research methods to address practical and theoretical questions.
- Learn to improve work based on written feedback from tutors.
- Handle and ethically manipulate data.
- Applying relevant ethical, legal and professional frameworks.

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:

- Lectures and recorded lectures.
- Class-based discussion with students and tutors.
- Practical work and laboratory classes.
- One-to-one project supervision.
- Work-based and/or academic-based placement.
- Directed asynchronous learning (for example, directed reading, a quiz, video content).
- Reading scientific articles.
- Personalised written and face-to-face feedback.
- Electronic submission and return of marked coursework with feedback.
- IT instruction (e.g., analytical software).
- Use of the Keele Learning Environment (KLE).

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.

6. Teaching Staff

A dynamic range of staff holding or working towards an accredited Higher Education Teaching qualification bring a diversity of teaching and research expertise. Tutors on the course have a range of experiences, including staff with experience of advanced statistical and computational quantitative analyses and qualitative approaches, internationally recognised leaders in their field, and those who manage and engage with research groups (comprising research staff, postgraduate research students and/or postdoctoral researchers) and national and international research societies.

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 academic year runs from September to September and is divided into three semesters. The number of weeks of teaching will vary from course to course, but you can generally expect to attend scheduled teaching sessions between the end of September and mid-December, and from mid-January to the end of April. Our degree courses are organised into modules. Each module is usually a self- contained unit of study and each is usually assessed separately with the award of credits on the basis of 1 credit = 10 hours of student effort. An outline of the structure of the programme is provided in the tables below.

All of the modules delivered as part of your programme are compulsory modules - that is, a module that you are required to study on this course.

A summary of the credit requirements is as follows.

Year	Compulsory	Optional	
		Min	Max
Level 7	180	0	0

Module Lists

Level 7

Compulsory modules	Module Code	Credits	Period
Applied Psychological Research Methods	PSY-40163	30	Semester 1
Advancing Research: Computational Modelling, Statistics, and Open Science	PSY-40185	30	Semester 1
Applied Research Dissertation	PSY-40169	60	Semester 1-3
Professional Practice in Psychology	PSY-40179	30	Semester 1-3
Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan	PSY-40183	30	Semester 2

Part Time, Year 1

Compulsory modules	Module Code	Credits	Period
Applied Psychological Research Methods	PSY-40163	30	Semester 1
Professional Practice in Psychology	PSY-40179	30	Semesters 1-3
Using Research to Change Practice Across the Lifespan	PSY-40183	30	Semester 2

Part Time, Year 2

Compulsory modules	Module Code	Credits	Period
Advancing Research: Computational Modelling, Statistics and Reproducibility	PSY-40185	30	Semester 1
Applied Research Dissertation	PSY-40169	60	Semesters 1-3

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**
Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies as they apply to addressing psychological research questions.	Applied Psychological Research Methods - PSY-40163 Advancing Research: Computational Modelling, Statistics, and Open Science - PSY-40185
Empirical methodologies used to explore key issues in psychological research.	Advancing Research: Computational Modelling, Statistics, and Open Science - PSY-40185 Applied Psychological Research Methods - PSY-40163 Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183
The meta-scientific issue of robust and ethical scientific practice.	Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183 Advancing Research: Computational Modelling, Statistics, and Open Science - PSY-40185
How to influence organisational policy and practice using an evidence-based approach.	Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183
The role of the British Psychological Society's code of ethics and conduct when carrying out research.	Professional Practice in Psychology - PSY-40179 Applied Research Dissertation - PSY-40169 Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183

Subject Specific Skills	
Learning Outcome	**Module in which this is delivered**
Evaluate methodologies in relation to research questions.	Applied Research Dissertation - PSY-40169 Applied Psychological Research Methods - PSY-40163 Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183 Advancing Research: Computational Modelling, Statistics, and Open Science - PSY-40185 Professional Practice in Psychology - PSY-40179
Develop a set of research questions or hypotheses for researching a psychological question.	Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183 Applied Research Dissertation - PSY-40169
Carry out an empirical study in psychology.	Applied Research Dissertation - PSY-40169 Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183
Apply appropriate analysis of data collected in a psychological context.	All modules
Report the results of an empirical study, applying skills of presentation, interpretation and discussion of findings that are appropriate within the field of psychology.	All modules

Key or Transferable Skills (graduate attributes)	
Learning Outcome	**Module in which this is delivered**
Communicate in various formats to audiences of differing levels of expertise.	All modules
Take ownership of their independent learning, identifying and developing skills and capabilities.	All modules
Critically reflect on and evaluate information and ideas in the solution of problems.	All modules
Use digital technologies includes word processing, analytical software, email and the internet.	All modules
Manage their time effectively and to work to deadlines.	All modules
Work as a member of a team.	Professional Practice in Psychology - PSY-40179 Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183 Applied Research Dissertation - PSY-40169
Employ scientific research methods to address practical and theoretical questions.	All modules
Learn to improve work based on written feedback from tutors.	All modules
Handle and ethically manipulate data.	Applied Research Dissertation - PSY-40169 Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183 Applied Psychological Research Methods - PSY-40163 Professional Practice in Psychology - PSY-40179
Applying relevant ethical, legal and professional frameworks.	Professional Practice in Psychology - PSY-40179 Applied Research Dissertation - PSY-40169 Using Evidence-Based Approaches to Change Practice Across the Lifespan - PSY-40183

8. Final and intermediate awards

MSc Psychological Research Methods	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

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:

- Analytical practical multiple-choice test
- Laboratory report
- Dissertation
- Reflective essay
- Programming a computational model
- Policy brief
- Group presentation
- Reflective essay

- Ethical application

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

This programme does not have accreditation from an external body.

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?

See the relevant course page on the website for the admission requirements relevant to this programme: https://www.keele.ac.uk/study/

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is considered on a case-by-case basis and those interested should contact the Programme Director. 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?

Support for student learning on the programme is provided in the following ways:

- **Academic Staff:** All academic staff are available to see students during advertised weekly student appointment slots.
- **Module Leaders:** Any questions or concerns you may have in relation to the content taught and assessed on a given module on the MSc Psychological Research Methods course are to be directed towards the module leader who will offer support and guidance.
- **Academic Mentors:** You are allocated an academic mentor for the duration of your studies as part of the University's Academic Mentor system and in accordance with the University Code of Practice on Academic Mentoring. The role of the academic mentor is to meet formally with you periodically to discuss your progress and performance and to offer support and advice. You can make arrangements to see your academic mentor at any time.
- **Programme Lead**: The MSc Psychological Research Methods course is led by an academic member of staff who takes responsibility for operation of the course. Should you find yourself unable to reach out to your academic mentor, your programme lead is the next point of contact.
- **Postgraduate Taught Director:** Should you find yourself in a position where neither the module leader, academic mentor nor programme lead are appropriate contact options, the Postgraduate Taught Director is available to help support you.
- **Student Experience and Support Officer (SESO):** If you need to talk to someone, whether it is about your studies or life outside of them, you can access advice, guidance, and one-to-one support from their Student SESO based within the School of Psychology.
- **Use of e-learning/the Keele Learning Environment (KLE):** All modules belonging to the MSc Psychological Research Methods course are supported by learning resources that are accessible to students via the KLE.
- **Students with disabilities, medical conditions, or dyslexia:** Students admitted to the MSc Psychological Research Methods course with disabilities or medical problems are asked to disclose their condition to Student Services via the SESO (above) and the Disability and Inclusion Tutor nominated within the School. Students will meet with a member of the University's Disability Support & Inclusion team. Academic mentors and module leaders are responsible for ensuring reasonable adjustments are made.
- **School Academic Skills Tutor:** The academic skills tutor designs and runs study support workshops in each semester and are available to you by appointment for one-to-one advice.
- **Keele Careers and Employability Support:** The University offers you an opportunity to gain support and advice regarding your career options. In addition, the School of Psychology careers tutor can also offer guidance. You are encouraged to consult with the careers tutor for any assistance in deciding upon postgraduate research, funding opportunities, career options and for assistance in applying for jobs and placements. Briefing sessions are organised for students interested in continuing to postgraduate research

and other career directions. The Psychology Notice Board on the KLE also contains a 'Careers' folder with a range of resources for students.

14. Learning Resources

Almost all of the teaching in Psychology is carried out in the same building, which contains three lecture rooms, two teaching laboratories and a number of seminar rooms. These rooms may be arranged either in traditional lecture format or more informally to allow students to work together in small groups. All of the rooms are equipped with computers, internet access and electronic whiteboards or projection equipment. There is a psychology Learning Resources room with computers and internet access which is available to postgraduate students for independent study and also a number of student project rooms and research laboratories that are available to be used to carry out project work.

Other learning resources available to students on the MSc Psychological Research Methods programme include:

- Academic Skills Tutors who run learning support workshops (e.g. essay-writing, literature searching, APA referencing sessions) outside of the planned curriculum. The Academic Skills Tutors are also available by appointment to provide students with one-to-one support.
- Technical support is available from technicians and university IT services in terms of access to equipment that might be required for research (e.g. audio and video recording) and access to software.
- Students can access the undergraduate Research Participation (RPT) Scheme if they need undergraduate student participants for their research (for research-based modules such as the dissertation). This is a scheme where all undergraduates are required to participate in a certain amount of research to gain experience of different approaches. There is an RPT co-ordinator who approves access to the scheme, and full information is provided on how to access this in the Programmes Handbook.
- The Keele Learning Environment (KLE), which provides easy access to a wide range of learning resources and support materials in electronic format. In accordance with the Keele Education Principles, students will be provided with asynchronous materials (such as short videos, quizzes, reading, etc.) for them to engage with in their own time in order to enhance learning that takes place in the classroom.
- Microsoft Teams is used to complement teaching and facilitating the development of a learning community, with online sessions, question and answer threads, peer-to-peer communication and resource sharing.

Students also have the opportunity to hear from, and talk to, a range of guest speakers who are invited by the School to present the findings from up-to-date research they are currently carrying out in their own area of psychology. Students will be invited to join the research group for their programme, which will hold informal research meetings at which they can hear about other staff and student research and give presentations of their own work.

15. Other Learning Opportunities

All MSc Psychological Research Methods students have extensive opportunities to engage with the research life of the School of Psychology. For example, many of our research projects are offered as extra-curricular volunteering opportunities, students can attend research groups meetings relevant to their interests, and staff are always keen to support students to write the research up for publication where appropriate.

We are also keen to help our MSc students integrate with our postgraduate research students and students from other schools. We encourage joint social events between Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students.

16. Additional Costs

Additional costs may be incurred where a student elects to conduct a dissertation project that requires off-campus travel (PSY-40169). The programme provides the opportunity for a work placement (PSY-40179). This may require off-campus travel. The costs associated with travel will depend on the chosen mode of travel and the frequency of travel arranged between the student and the supervisor.

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/subject-benchmark-statement-psychology
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

Previous documents

Version No	Year	Owner	Date Approved	Summary of and rationale for changes