

**University of Birmingham**  
**MRes Clinical Psychology**

**What are the aims of the course?**

*Aims*

- To develop understanding and experience of research methods and techniques appropriate for clinical and applied settings.
- To develop students' skills in planning and conducting research, and in dissemination of their research outcomes. (These include generating research questions; designing projects which will answer those questions; liaising with service-users and professionals; acting ethically, sensitively and professionally; information-handling; data-analysis, and critical evaluation).
- To develop students' transferable skills in team work and effective communication (both written and spoken), to facilitate entry into further research and/or clinical training in related disciplines.

*Course ethos*

- Our aim is to provide you with a range of learning opportunities – some of these may be quite structured (e.g. the taught component), and others may require considerably more independence (e.g. the research component).
- Taken together, we hope that these elements will help you to adopt a spirit of critical open-mindedness towards the research process, and a sensitive and responsible attitude towards working in clinical settings.

**How long is the course?**

1 year full-time, 2 years part-time.

**Can I do the course part-time?**

Yes. You will need to be able to be released from other commitments for a week in October; a week in January; placement-and project-related work as agreed with a supervisor (usually one or two days per week); and two 10-week stints of Mondays. This is spread over two years, and there are a couple of different ways of putting the elements together [see below]. Contact one of the course team if you want to discuss your options.

**I'm working in the NHS already. Can I do my placements at my current place of work?**

This is a possibility, if you have appropriate supervision. Contact someone from the course team, and we'll help you to work it out.

## What is the structure of the course?

**Trimester 1**  
AUTUMN

**Trimester 2**  
SPRING

**Trimester 3**  
SUMMER & VACATION

<b>Foundation: Psychological issues</b> <i>Mondays</i>		<b>Research project</b> 6 months (with supervision on Clinically relevant project)
<b>Psychological Research in Clinical Settings 1</b> [with MSci from 2011]  <i>Delivered in teaching block, Semester 1, week 2.</i>	<b>Transferable skills</b> <i>Mondays</i>	
One from: - <b>Computer Use</b> - <b>Design and Analysis 1</b> - <b>Principles of Applied Psychology</b> [from 2011]	<b>Psychological Research in Clinical Settings 2</b>  <i>Delivered in teaching block, Semester 2, week 1.</i>	
<b>Research Placement 1</b>	<b>Research Placement 2</b>	

## What are the fees?

*Latest fees are here:*

<http://www.psychology.bham.ac.uk/postgraduate/programmes/clinpsych.shtml>

## Are there any bursaries?

This varies a little from year to year, but there are unlikely to be any full bursaries. Most students seem to be self-funding. One of two have done it part-time, and had it funded by their existing NHS employers, and have then tied their placement and project work in with that employer's interests.

Check for details:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/combined/psychology/clinical-psychology.aspx#CourseDetailsTab>

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/dr/fees/index.aspx>

### **I have a 2:2 – is it worth me applying?**

We do consider applicants with a 2:2, but we receive approximately 8 applications per place, and in practice we have rarely been able to offer places to applicants with 2:2s and below.

### **How much prior experience do I need? How are applicants selected?**

We don't have a threshold for work experience, but on top of the basic academic requirements, we rate each application in terms of:

- academic extras [e.g. a 1st, or a conference presentation]
- the personal statement [esp. whether it shows that people know what they're getting into, and why, in terms of clinical research]
- the references
- evidence of ability to communicate clearly
- evidence of interest in and suitability for applied psychology / working with people [e.g. work experience]

### **When can I apply?**

Any time up until 31<sup>st</sup> of May in the year which you wish to study, but please note that we must have **all of the components in the summary document** (see our 'How to Apply' pdf), plus **at least one completed reference** in order to consider your application. Referees may not be aware that they need to provide a reference *before* you can be offered a place. Please liaise with your referees to let them know what you need them to do.

### **When will I hear?**

No decisions are made until June, when we rate and then rank all of the applications which we have received. We have 10-12 places to fill each year, and we interview the highest-ranked applicants on our list in June, before making them a formal offer. We will normally also keep a reserve list of applicants each year, and as we hear back from the recipients of our initial offers we are often able to make some make further offers during July and August.

### **What do I write in the personal statement part of my application form?**

See the more detailed guidance on 'How to apply' for the course. Try to tell us why you would like to take the course, what you hope to gain from it, and to give us a sense of *some general areas* that you are interested in, and a sense of *how you see the role of research* in clinical psychology. Also, please tell us about what you have learned from any relevant experiences of working with people (generally) or in applied psychology (specifically).

### **Do I need to contact a supervisor for my research? Do I need to submit a proposal?**

For the MRes, you don't need to submit a proposal for a particular idea, or find a supervisor. That's only for PhDs. It's a bit confusing, because the University has some standard instructions, and the same application form, for all research degrees, but ours is a bit different. What we do like to have is a sense of *some general areas* that you are interested in, and a sense of *how you see the role of research* in clinical psychology. You can write this information on the personal statement part of your form, and you should include it in the 'summary document' which you upload with application (see 'How to apply').

### **What are the placements?**

- A placement is bit like working as a Research Assistant or a Psychology Assistant – you help someone to complete one aspect of their research
- The placements are all research-based; they are all clinically-relevant; some of them re based in the NHS, and some at the University.
- It might involve one or two of: literature review, ethics application, recruitment, pilot study, data collection, data analysis, audit, service evaluation, dissemination – etc. etc.
- We allocate autumn placements in advance, and try to match them to your interests and prior experience as best we can
- We offer some choice for spring placements and projects [depending on what is on offer]

### **What is the research project?**

- One of the placements will usually involve the groundwork for the project.
- The project is a complete piece of work, with 'standalone coherence.'
- It may well lead to a publication – and should be of standard which makes this a possibility.
- All of our placements and projects are in 'clinically relevant' areas.

### **Do I get to choose my placements?**

- We allocate autumn placements in advance, and try to match them to your interests and prior experience as best we can
- We offer some choice for spring placements and projects [depending on what is on offer]

### **Do I get paid on placement?**

Not as a feature of the MRes, no.

### **What kind of placements are offered?**

In practice, the research that MRes students get involved with in any one year is driven by the interests of the supervisors who offer placements and projects. These vary a bit from year to year, but all of them have applied and clinical relevance.

We have particularly active research groups that regularly offer placements in the areas of:

- Clinical health psychology [cancer, diabetes, coeliacs]
- Psychosis and early intervention
- Addiction and substance use
- Physical ill-health and distress
- Older adulthood, dementia and end of life issues
- Neuropsychology and rehabilitation
- Childhood neuro-developmental disorders
- Community-based interventions for young people and families
- Therapeutic process [CBT, systemic and psychodynamic]

Example placements and projects from previous years:

- Developing a simple and reliable measure of wellbeing for older adults
- Using longitudinal data to investigate the relationship between diabetes and depression
- Evaluating the effectiveness of a support group for people diagnosed with bipolar mood disorder
- Exploring therapists' experiences of unsuccessful therapy
- Understanding service-users' experiences of re-learning to walk using an electrical stimulation device

### **How many days do I need to be at the University?**

A week in October; a week in January; and two 10-week stints of Mondays in the autumn and spring, plus any study time, group work, and meetings which you arrange.

### **How many days do I need to be on placement?**

This is flexible: placement-and project-related work is as agreed with a supervisor; but we ask you to be available to work on placement-and project-related work around 3 days per week if you are full-time.

### **What clinical skills will I learn?**

This is a research training course, not a clinical training course.

### **Who takes the course?**

- People looking for a career in clinical research and planning on taking a PhD, or on pursuing employment in an applied research organisation
- People hoping to build up a profile of knowledge and experience that will enable them to compete for Psychology Assistant posts
- People who have applied experience but who want to boost or refresh their research skills in order to improve their chances of obtaining a DClinPsy training place

### **What do previous students say about the course?**

Our student feedback is very good! Students enjoy the course and learn a lot from it.

- ‘Invaluable in building my confidence and skills’
- ‘Excellent supervision and guidance – truly grateful for the experience’
- ‘You gain and grow so much personally and professionally’
- ‘Has given me the confidence to carry out all forms of research’
- ‘Thoroughly enjoyed all parts of the course, especially the placements’
- ‘I never learned so much in one year!’

### **What should I expect to learn?**

*Successful graduates will, at an appropriate Masters level, be able to:*

- Identify relevant research objects of enquiry, and investigate these with answerable research questions.
- Design, perform, analyse and interpret research within the relevant areas.
- Demonstrate theoretical understanding of current approaches within the relevant areas.
- Demonstrate practical expertise with current techniques within the relevant areas.
- Adopt a flexible approach in formulating appropriate strategies for conducting research in applied settings.
- Demonstrate awareness of commitments to service-users and participants throughout the research process.
- Demonstrate awareness of professional and ethical issues in the development, dissemination and application of research findings.
- Employ a reflexive and critical approach to the evaluation of research.
- Express themselves clearly in written and spoken English to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- Work effectively as individuals and in groups.

### **Where do graduates from the program end up?**

Our students have consistently gone on to take up places on clinical training courses, PhD programs, assistant posts and postgraduate research jobs.

### **Is there any recommended reading?**

- *It would be worth reading one of these general methods books, because they relate quite well to the taught modules:*
- <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Real-World-Research-Scientists-Practitioner-researchers/dp/0631213058>
- [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Research-Methods-Clinical-Psychology-Practitioners/dp/047149089X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1311671075&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Research-Methods-Clinical-Psychology-Practitioners/dp/047149089X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1311671075&sr=1-1)

- *People without any prior knowledge of clinical psychology may also find these useful:*
- [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Clinical-Psychology-Practice-Helen-Beinart/dp/140516767X/ref=pd\\_sim\\_b\\_2](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Clinical-Psychology-Practice-Helen-Beinart/dp/140516767X/ref=pd_sim_b_2)
- [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Formulation-Psychology-Psychotherapy-Lucy-Johnstone/dp/1583917004/ref=pd\\_bxgy\\_b\\_img\\_b](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Formulation-Psychology-Psychotherapy-Lucy-Johnstone/dp/1583917004/ref=pd_bxgy_b_img_b)

### **How do the full-time and part-time options work?**

There is some flexibility with part-time students, in terms of when they choose to focus on research, and when to take the taught components. Here's how it works:

- The full time course is one year. The part-time course is two years.
- Three of our modules (Psychological Research in Clinical Settings 1, Psychological Research in Clinical Settings 2, and Principles of Applied Psychology) are delivered across 2 short study blocks: the second week of the Autumn term (Oct), and the first week of the Spring term (Jan).
- The other modules (Transferable Skills, Foundation) are delivered on Mondays, in the autumn and spring terms (10 weeks each).

So full-time students do all of that, during the Autumn and Spring terms. This means that barring those two 1-week blocks, which come at the beginning of each of the first two terms, they work on placement-related activity for about 3 days per week for each of the 10 weeks. A placement is about 300 hours of work. Full-time students then do their project over the summer term (April to August), when there is no timetabled teaching - so at that point they are working up to 4-5 days per week on the main project.

For part-timers there is some choice. Usually all part-timers nominate the first term as a 'teaching term' and so they do the October study block (Psychological Research in Clinical Settings 1, and Principles of Applied Psychology). They also usually come in Mondays to do the other module, and to keep up with groupwork with their peers on the FT program. In the Spring term, however, some part-timers will choose to stay in teaching mode (doing the January block - Psychological Research in Clinical Settings 2 - and continuing to come in Mondays). Other part-timers will leave the second teaching term until Y2, and will do a placement in the Spring term of Y1 instead. Depending on how you put the components together from there, and what placement-project combination people are pursuing, the remainder usually needs to be worked out with the course team. But it's worth noting that the part-time student has two summers during the course of their study, but only one project to do, so obviously, if people have regular work commitments on certain days of the week, it can be helpful to plan to spread the project more thinly, over two terms, or two summers.

### **Who to contact?**

Dr Michael Larkin  
Tel 0121 414 6036  
Email [m.larkin@bham.ac.uk](mailto:m.larkin@bham.ac.uk)