Principles of Social and Psychological Enquiry  DD801

Presentation pattern  October to May

Module description
To what extent should a social and psychological researcher care about the issues that arouse public concern? How do methods chosen by researchers relate to their worldviews? This 60-credit postgraduate module brings into critical focus the business of conducting and communicating social and psychological research today. The module prepares students to ask questions about how research gets constructed and who is doing the constructing. Designed for students fascinated by the dynamics of research who wish to actively intervene in professional or everyday environments influenced by social and psychological research, the module provides training in how to carry out qualitative and quantitative analysis and assess the veracity of different methods. Students will be equipped to confidently assess social and psychological studies and communicate their assessments to academic and non-academic audiences, offline and online.

Students will have the opportunity to explore research and theoretical literature independently. They will also learn to think critically and analytically about the historical, disciplinary and societal frameworks that form the context in which research and knowledge production are conceptualised, conducted, published and discussed more broadly.

This module is a foundation for the MSc in Psychology, the MSc in Forensic Psychological Studies and the MA in Crime and Justice. The module will provide a new role for Associate Lecturers, who will be actively engaged in coaching students in relation to their own objectives in studying the module. The AL role, as such, will involve coaching, facilitating and enabling students – from a range of academic backgrounds and disciplines – to develop the study and research skills knowledge required for the second 120-credit module of their chosen Masters. The module is delivered wholly online.

Areas covered in the module
This interdisciplinary module draws from criminology, sociology, cognitive, counselling, forensic and social psychology. Topics across these fields have been selected for their contemporary relevance including questions about criminalisation of vulnerable people, such as the homeless and people seeking refuge. They have also been chosen to problematise common-sense understandings of issues such as the rise of anxiety and humanitarianism and charitable giving

Topics include: Categorisation and Homelessness, Drugs and Harm, Anxiety, Mental Health Classification, Experimentation and Expertise, Constructing Obedience, Collective Identity and the Crowd, Attitude Measurement and Public Opinion.

Person specification
The person specification for this module should be read in conjunction with the generic person specification for an associate lecturer at The Open University.

As well as meeting all the requirements set out in the generic person specification, you should have:

- a good honours degree in psychology or cognate discipline, either single or joint (the psychology component should comprise at least 50%)
- a relevant postgraduate qualification in psychology or cognate discipline or a recognised professional qualification and/or a demonstrable track record in research or other activity of relevance to the teaching of postgraduate psychology. Specialised experience of working/researching in areas covered by the module will be accepted.
- up to date knowledge of recent developments and debates within qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches in psychology and an appreciation of how these relate to the production of knowledge
- experience of teaching an interdisciplinary range of topics across psychology and social issues at postgraduate level, in an integrated and engaging manner
- experience of teaching social and psychological materials
- experience and skills appropriate for teaching, facilitating and supervising students via a virtual learning environment (VLE) and online forums

It would be an advantage to have:

- experience of teaching psychology at Masters level
- familiarity with non-standard means of assessment

Additional information

The module is delivered solely online via the VLE and also involves multi-media teaching materials (e.g. external websites). It is vital that tutors are open and willing to engage with these different media and the learning and teaching environments they represent.

Module related details - a full explanation can be found on the website

| Credit awarded to the student for the successful completion of a module: | 60 |
| Number of assignments submitted by the student: | 4 |
| Method of submission for assignments: | 2 |
| Level of ICT requirements: | 3 |
| Number of students likely to be in a standard group: | 15 |
| Salary band: | 7 |
| Estimated number of hours per teaching week: | 6 |

The teaching and assessment strategy for this module has not yet been approved and therefore the information is subject to change.