

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Master of Science in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology

Awarding institution	Liverpool John Moores University
Teaching institution	The Alef Trust CIC
JACS Code	C858
Programme Duration	Part-Time: 3 years
Language of Programme	All LJMU programmes are delivered and assessed in English
Subject benchmark statement	There are no benchmark statements issued by the QAA or the British Psychological Society (BPS) that relate directly to this programme. Documents consulted in the development of this programme include the QAA's Characteristics Statement for Master's Degree (September 2015) and the BPS Code of Ethics 2017. The BPS documents setting out standards for accreditation of various Master's awards in professional fields were also consulted; whilst the awards (e.g. in sports and exercise psychology) do not relate directly to this programme, general issues of standards at Master's level were taken into consideration.
Programme accredited by	
Description of accreditation	
Validated target and alternative exit awards	Master of Science in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology Postgraduate Diploma in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology Postgraduate Certificate in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology
Link Tutor	David McIlroy

Educational aims of the programme

In naming the programme MSc in Consciousness, Spirituality, and Transpersonal Psychology (CSTP) the team responsible for designing the programme is recognising that no one sub-discipline of psychology fully encapsulates the aims of the programme. Transpersonal psychology has the aim of understanding those states of consciousness in which the individual experiences an expansion of self that seems to incorporate a broader, more holistic sense of the world. Often, but not always, such states of expanded awareness have distinct spiritual connotations. Some research into consciousness acknowledges these connotations and the transformational aspect that may accompany them, which is also a major topic of study for transpersonal psychology. However, many advances in consciousness research exclude such transpersonal dimensions from their approach. Finally, considerable recent research into the psychology of spiritual practices and the states they can engender evades connections with the approach of transpersonal psychology.

The three topics expressed in the title are thus cognate, whilst not being fully overlapping. The fundamental aim of the programme is to critically explore each of the three topics, focusing on the importance of studying them from a psychological perspective, and emphasising their common ground as well as their points of distinctiveness.

In working with current students in the design of this programme, it became evident that they strongly valued the sense of pursuing a transformational learning journey over their period of study. In recognition of this input, another overarching aim is to facilitate appropriate forms of practice and application, and to allow space for structured reflection on students' progress not only academically but in terms of this transformational journey which may find expression in the students' personal and professional lives.

Specific programme aims

- To provide an academically rigorous framework through which learners can appreciate the specifically psychological input into our understanding of consciousness, spirituality and transpersonal issues.

- To foster an intellectual environment in which learners can become aware of current issues in the above topic areas, drawing on skills of critical analysis, complex evaluation, and creative problem solving.
- To encourage a critical approach, both through embodied practice and research, to contemporary and traditional practices of a psycho-spiritual nature which purport to bring about some degree of beneficial transformation within the individual.
- To encourage learners to interrelate their understanding of consciousness, spirituality, and transpersonal issues drawn from academic study with that gained through experience in their own life, especially in applied and professional contexts.
- To enable the above to be achieved whilst learners are distant from any institutional location, by using online systems (including a collaborative learning environment, CLE, and webinar software) to cultivate an integrative learning community.

Alternative Exit/ Interim Award Learning Outcomes - Postgraduate Certificate

A student who is eligible for this award will be able to:

- Engage with advanced discussion of theoretical positions and models in relation to the study of consciousness, and psychological perspectives on spirituality.
- Demonstrate an understanding of integral practice from first-person experience and the relevant research literature, and critically reflect on processes of psycho-social and psychosomatic transformation.
- Demonstrate in writing and through oral presentation appropriate levels of critical analysis, reflection and contextual awareness in focused areas of study.

Alternative Exit/ Interim Award Learning Outcomes - Postgraduate Diploma

A student who is eligible for this award will be able to:

- Engage with advanced discussion of theoretical positions and models in relation to transpersonal psychology, the study of consciousness, and psychological perspectives on spirituality.
- Demonstrate an understanding of integral practice from first-person experience and the relevant research literature, and critically reflect on processes of psycho-social and psychosomatic transformation.
- Demonstrate in writing and through oral presentation the skills of critical analysis, informed reflection and contextual awareness in relation to complex issues and contemporary debates in transpersonal psychology and allied areas
- Identify research methodologies that would be appropriate for specific research questions arising in transpersonal psychology and allied areas.

Target award Learning Outcomes - Master of Science

A student successfully completing the programme of study will have acquired the following subject knowledge and understanding as well as skills and other attributes.

A student who is eligible for this award will be able to:

1. Contextualise research into consciousness, contemporary issues in the psychology of spirituality, and the challenges addressed by transpersonal psychology in relation to the history of psychology and cultural trends more broadly
2. Critically evaluate theoretical positions and models developed in these topic areas in terms both of the quality of research underpinning them and also of their efficacy in contexts of applied professional practice and individual psycho-spiritual growth
3. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the relationship between psychology and other relevant disciplines (e.g., philosophy, anthropology, comparative religion, applied arts) in addressing the topics of interest on this programme
4. Synthesise knowledge from diverse sources in order to express well-formulated and informed arguments on specific issues
5. Synthesise knowledge in order to construct a research question that is fully contextualised in the chosen field and operationalised in ways that facilitate effective execution of the research
6. Understand and apply the principles of data collection and data analysis as typically employed in transpersonal research methods
7. Demonstrate skills of critical reasoning and deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively
8. Be capable of targeted literature searching, and searching for sources on the internet using informed discrimination
9. Creatively appraise and integrate information from a variety of sources
10. Plan, conduct and report on a programme of original, empirical research, with due regard to issues of ethics and the conventions applying to research in academic psychology
11. Reflect on, and make use of, feedback to evaluate their knowledge base, performance and skills, and use

this information to monitor progress and inform future academic and professional development

12. Demonstrate insight in engagement with personal development practices, as well as competence in the critical evaluation of such practices, considering impact and efficacy.
13. Employ skills of self-reflection, as well as alternative modes of knowing typically utilised in transpersonal studies (e.g. intuition, embodied awareness and contemplative knowing)
14. Retrieve and organise information effectively
15. Organise self-management of learning, utilising time-management skills and effective planning strategies
16. Develop cultural awareness, empathy, and collaboration skills in working with others
17. Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills
18. Integrate work-based, or personal, experience with theories and models developed through research and scholarship.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The methods used to enable outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated are as follows:

The CLE is employed to provide a range of formats through which learners are introduced to key areas of knowledge. This range includes core content written by module leaders, lecture videos, pod casts, live webinars, and key readings available as resources on the CLE. Key readings (book chapters, review articles, and primary research papers) are presented as 'core' or 'in-depth' for a given topic. Students are expected to further their in-depth understanding of key areas of knowledge through literature searches. Discussion, through which critical analysis, self-reflection, and wider reading is fostered, takes place both in asynchronous forums and in webinars designed to penetrate more deeply into issues aired in the forums. The two formats are employed to encourage both peer-to-peer, and student-to-tutor, dialogue.

Students are placed in learning groups which run throughout the first two years of the programme. Year three students will have the option of self-organising into groups, the logistics of which the programme team will support if required. In brief, year one learning groups focus on academic skills, and they support the teaching modules; in year two the groups similarly support teaching, but additionally take a more whole-person perspective, facilitating reflection on transpersonal goals. (See programme document for more details.) Learning groups will meet approximately once per month, although the frequency may vary according to assessment and other demands. Learning groups will meet live on the webinar platform; they will be scheduled taking student time zones into account and they will be led by personal tutors.

Students' progress in devising, and conducting, a programme of integrative practice is monitored through group supervision, reinforced by one-to-one supervision where required. Students are further offered experiential practice sessions that explore a broad range of embodied practices (e.g. mindfulness, movement and active imagination).

Research skills will be taught and practiced through the student's engagement in a group research project, involving individual and group work. These skills will be further honed through one-to-one supervision targeted at the student's own research question for the research dissertation.

Contact across year groups is fostered through extra-curricular community-wide events. These will include occasional guest online lectures given by leading researchers in relevant areas, and regular sessions in which practitioners applying whole-person, or transpersonal, skills in their specific professional field will run webinars.

Assessment

The assessment strategy aims to foster in-depth and active learning to achieve the stated learning outcomes, and has been designed to achieve an appropriate match between teaching and learning methods and assessment tasks. It includes the provision of summative, formative, and peer feedback, an appropriate balance of assessment tasks over the programme, and inclusivity of a range of student approaches to learning. A variety of assessment methods is therefore utilised across the programme.

Forums and webinars provide opportunities for formative feedback from both peers and tutors. Specific sessions of the learning groups will be devoted to upcoming assessment tasks, enabling students to receive directed formative feedback. Each module will include one or more assessment forum, in which module leaders and/or their assistants will provide advice and guidance during the preparation of assignments.

Coursework assessment is used to provide timely and detailed summative assessment. Most items of coursework are assessed by module leaders and/or their assistants, with one item (in 7506ALEFTP Research Design) being peer assessed. Assessment methods include essays, reports, reflective portfolios, posters, individual and group webinar presentations, research proposal, blog post and dissertation.

Programme structure - programme rules and modules

To exit the programme with a Postgraduate Certificate the students must complete and pass all modules offered

in year 1, thereby achieving 60 credits.

To exit the programme with a Postgraduate Diploma the students must complete all modules normally offered in years 1 and 2, thereby achieving 120 credits. (PG Dip students will not have taken 7500ALEFTP Research Dissertation.)

Module Sequencing:

Year 1:

7501ALEFTP Approaches to consciousness

7503ALEFTP Learning through integrative practice (yearlong module)

7502ALEFTP Spiritual psychology

Year 2

7504ALEFTP Transpersonal psychology

7505ALEFTP Applied transformative psychology

7506ALEFTP Research design (yearlong module)*

Year 3

7500ALEFTP Research dissertation*

* In exceptional circumstances, the research dissertation module could be taken in year 2 (in order to facilitate graduation earlier than would normally be the case. Such students would take Research design in year 1. Students requesting this would have to:

- Be a graduate of an undergraduate psychology degree at class 2:1 or above that meets the graduate basis for chartered membership of the BPS
- Seek approval from the Programme Leader, who will assess both their academic suitability and whether or not they have sufficient time availability to put in the required hours of study
- In accordance with regulation PGA4.3 of the LJMU Academic Framework, submit the research dissertation only after having successfully completed 7506ALEFTP Research design.

Level 7	Potential Awards on completion	Master of Science
Core	Option	Award Requirements
7500ALEFTP RESEARCH DISSERTATION (60 credits) 7501ALEFTP APPROACHES TO CONSCIOUSNESS (20 credits) 7502ALEFTP SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY (20 credits) 7503ALEFTP LEARNING THROUGH INTEGRATIVE PRACTICE (20 credits) 7504ALEFTP TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY (20 credits) 7505ALEFTP APPLIED TRANSFORMATIVE PSYCHOLOGY (20 credits) 7506ALEFTP RESEARCH DESIGN (20 credits)		180 core credits at level 7 0 option credits at level 7

Information about assessment regulations

All programmes leading to LJMU awards operate within the University's Academic Framework.
<https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/about-us/public-information/academic-quality-and-regulations/academic-framework>

Variance authorised 26/2/18 to allow (i) Semesters to be up to 20 weeks' duration, and (ii) yearlong delivery of two 20-credit modules: 7503ALEFTP Learning through Integrative Practice and 7506ALEFTP Research Design.

Opportunities for work-related learning (location and nature of activities)

There is no formal work-based learning during this MSc, although students may conduct the research for their dissertation in a professional setting. In the existing programme that has been running for five years, a number of students have conducted research in contexts related to their professional activities. These have proved highly successful, both in terms of the research quality and also for the student's advancement in their profession. Further, in this programme students may choose to explore applications of learning in work contexts in two modules: In 7503ALEFTP Learning through integrative practice students can opt to place a component of their integrative practice in a work context, beginning to explore what it means to apply transpersonal ideas within this specific context, e.g. in collaboration with colleagues or clients. In 7502ALEFTP Applied transformative psychology students are equally encouraged to engage practically with two approaches to psycho-spiritual transformation, beginning to apply one of the approaches in a professional or community context relevant to the student. From our past experience, these forms of experiential and applied learning are highly effective in facilitating the students' lived engagement with theory, thereby expanding discernment, ethical maturity and critical thinking skills.

Criteria for admission

A/AS Level

The minimum requirement is normally an undergraduate degree at class 2.2 honours in the case of UK awards or an equivalent level if a non-UK degree. Examples of equivalents include USA Grade Point Average of at least 3.0 or a Graduate Record Examination score of at least 550. Degrees in subjects other than Psychology may be accepted provided the candidate can show a suitable level of relevant background knowledge and competence. In particular, applicants for the MSc programmes require a sufficient educational background and experience in order to successfully complete graduate-level research methods and a dissertation.

Candidates without an undergraduate or graduate degree may be considered, subject to their demonstration of professional qualifications and/or experience to a level and relevance which is deemed appropriate for admission to the programme. Such applicants may also be asked to submit a 1,500 word essay, the title of which will be negotiated with the Programme Leader. Candidates will also be required to have basic technology skills, IT equipment and internet access of the required capacity, and the capacity for self-directed learning to ensure successful participation in the online programmes.

Overseas qualifications

English Proficiency: For all applicants whose first language is not English, proficiency in English is required up to the following tested standards:

IELTS 6.5, with no less than 5 in any single component.

TOEFL: PBT 580, CBT 233, IBT 90-91

Or

Completed an English degree in the UK or from a majority English speaking country.

External Quality Benchmarks

All programmes leading to LJMU awards have been designed and approved in accordance with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in the UK (FHEQ) and subject benchmark statements where applicable.

The University is subject to periodic review of its quality and standards by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Published review reports are available on the QAA website at www.qaa.ac.uk

Programmes which are professionally accredited are reviewed by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and such programmes must meet the competencies/standards of those PSRBs.

Support for students and their learning

The University aims to provide students with access to appropriate and timely information, support and guidance to ensure that they are able to benefit fully from their time at LJMU. All students are assigned a Personal Tutor to provide academic support and when necessary signpost students to the appropriate University support services.

Students are able to access a range of professional services including:

- Advice on practical aspects of study and how to use these opportunities to support and enhance their personal and academic development. This includes support for placements and careers guidance.
- Student Advice and Wellbeing Services provide students with advice, support and information, particularly in the areas of: student funding and financial matters, disability, advice and support to international students, study support, accommodation, health, wellbeing and counselling.
- Students studying for an LJMU award at a partner organisation will have access to local support services

Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Student Feedback and Evaluation

The University uses the results of student feedback from internal and external student surveys (such as module evaluations, the NSS and PTES), module evaluation questionnaires and meetings with student representatives to improve the quality of programmes.

Staff development

The quality of teaching is assured through staff review and staff development in learning, teaching and assessment.

Internal Review

All programmes are reviewed annually and periodically, informed by a range of data and feedback, to ensure quality and standards of programmes and to make improvements to programmes.

External Examining

External examiners are appointed to programmes to assess whether:

- the University is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for awards in accordance with the FHEQ and applicable subject benchmark statements
- the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with University policies and regulations
- the academic standards are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which external examiners have experience
- the achievement of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience

and to provide informative comment and recommendations on:

- good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment observed by external examiners
- opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students

Please note:

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content, teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in module and programme guides.