Changes to Examination Regulations 2013

Medical Sciences Board

Approved: 19th March 2014

Title of Programme / Examination: MSc in Psychological Research

Brief note about nature of change: To introduce a new, compulsory module – MatLab Programming for Experimental Psychology; this necessitates the re-structuring of the programme into a core plus option(s) model.

Effective date: With effect from 1 October 2014

Location of change: Examination Regulations 2013

Details of change:

In Examination Regulations, 2013, delete from l. 2 on p. 764 to l. 34 on p. 766 inclusive, and substitute:

1. The Divisional Board of Medical Sciences shall appoint for the supervision of the course an Organising Committee, which shall have the power to arrange lectures and other instruction.

2. The Organising Committee shall appoint an academic adviser for each candidate.

3. Each candidate shall follow a course of study in Psychological Research for at least three terms and for a substantial part of the three subsequent vacations, as determined by the course timetable, and shall, when entering for the examination, be required to produce a certificate from their academic adviser to this effect.

4. The examination shall consist of the following parts:

   A. Core Modules

   Candidates shall be examined in each of six core modules:

   1. Research Evaluation

      Each candidate shall be required to submit a 2,000 word review of a journal article assigned by the Organising Committee. The deadline for submission shall be notified to students at the start of the course.

   2. Statistical Theory and Methods
(a) Each candidate shall be required to submit a series of reports based on SPSS data analyses carried out during statistical workshops. Each of the reports will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. The deadline for each submission shall be notified to students at the start of the course.
(b) Each candidate shall also be required to sit a two-hour written examination. The examination will be marked on a pass/fail basis and candidates failing to reach the required standard will have one further opportunity to enter for the examination before the end of the academic year.

3. MatLab Programming for Experimental Psychology

Each candidate shall be required to submit a piece of MatLab code that they have produced, which shall be accompanied by a report of no more than 2,000 words that explains the code. The deadline for submission shall be notified to students at the start of the course.

4. Computer Modelling of Brain Function

Each candidate shall be required to submit an essay of no more than 3,000 words. Essay topics must be approved by the Organising Committee. The deadline for submission shall be notified to students at the start of the course.

5. Project Design

Each candidate shall be required to submit a 3,000 word review of relevant literature and methods relating to their chosen research project. The deadline for submission shall be notified to students at the start of the course.

6. Mini Project

Each candidate shall be required to submit a written report of activities conducted in the mini-project. The deadline for submission shall be notified to students at the start of the course.

B. Optional Modules

Candidates shall be assessed in each of three optional modules, selected from the following list:

1. Philosophical Foundations of Psychology
2. Brain and Cognition
3. Emotion, Personality and Social Behaviour
4. Language and Development

For each optional module undertaken, candidates shall be required to submit an essay of no more than 3,000 words. Essay topics must be approved by the Organising Committee. The deadlines for submission shall be notified to students at the start of the course.

C. Research Project
Candidates shall be required to submit not later than noon on the first Monday in September, three copies of a typewritten or printed dissertation of not more than 10,000 words in length (excluding bibliography and any appendices) on his or her research project.

Candidates shall also be required to deliver a poster presentation based on their research project. However, this shall not contribute to the overall result for this module. The date on which candidates are required to deliver their presentations will be in the Long Vacation.

5. Candidates must achieve a pass in each of the modules in order to pass the examination overall. In the event that a candidate is deemed not to have achieved the required standard in an element of the examination, he or she will have the opportunity to re-submit or re-sit the relevant assessment on one further occasion before the end of the academic year.

6. Written submissions must be sent to the Chair of Examiners, M.Sc. in Psychological Research, c/o Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford:
   a) two copies of each of the required written submissions for the assessment of core and optional modules must be submitted by the times and dates specified at the start of the course.
   b) three copies of the dissertation on the research project must be submitted not later than noon on the first Monday in September.

Each written submission must be accompanied by a statement signed by the candidate confirming that it is his or her own work.

7. Candidates may be required to attend an oral examination at the discretion of the examiners and this may include questions on the candidate's dissertation, or on any other element of the examination.

8. The examiners may award a distinction for excellence in the whole examination.

Schedule

A. Core Modules

1. Research Evaluation This module is delivered as a series of oral presentations collaboratively prepared by groups of students followed by group discussions. The focus is on research articles that illustrate the use of particular kinds of methodology and/or design.
2. Statistical Theory and Methods This module comprises a series of statistical lectures and complementary statistical workshops.
3. MatLab Programming for Experimental Psychology This module provides practical training in MatLab programming for psychologists. This will provide students with programming skills early on in the course, which can then be used in research projects.
4. Computer Modelling of Brain Function This module provides an introduction to the goals and methods of computational modelling in the context of cognitive neuroscience, covering the architecture, function, and properties of a number of basic prototypical classes of neural network. It also looks at how these basic neural networks provide building blocks for larger-scale models of brain function. Lectures will be supplemented by practical sessions providing hands-on experience of computational modelling.
5. Project Design This module provides practical instruction in research and presentation skills. Students will undertake detailed planning of the Research Project.
6. **Mini Project** Small groups of 2-4 students will be assigned to research teams within the Department of Experimental Psychology and guided through research tasks involving, for example, setting up equipment and procedures for a study, collection of pilot data, coding and processing of data, and statistical analysis.

**B. Optional Modules**

1. **Philosophical Foundations of Psychology** This module begins with historical and foundational issues and progresses to philosophical issues arising from areas of contemporary research in psychology. Topics studied will include some of: the subject matter of psychology; levels of description; the epistemology of psychology; psychological understanding; cognitive science; the study of neuropsychological and psychiatric disorders; the scientific study of consciousness; and philosophical issues arising from areas of contemporary research.

2. **Brain and Cognition** This module covers methods used in research in cognitive psychology and neuropsychology. It presents foundational knowledge from neuroanatomy, neurological disorders, neurological and psychological assessment and the use of experimental methods, to familiarise students with the diverse methodologies which contribute to cognitive neuropsychology. Methodologies deployed in the investigation of perception and cognition are discussed and evaluated.

3. **Emotion, Personality, and Social Behaviour** This module provides a critical analysis of the range of methods and approaches used in social psychology and the study of individual differences.

4. **Language and Development** This module addresses methods used in selected areas of developmental psychology with a particular emphasis on language. Longitudinal designs, and observational and experimental methods are reviewed and evaluated with examples from recent research. Attention is also given to studies of brain function during development and to the uses of fMRI and EEG data. Particular issues arising from the study of infants lacking verbal skills are identified.

**C. Research Project**

Each student shall carry out a project involving data collection and analysis under the supervision of a research supervisor, on a subject selected in consultation with the academic advisor and approved by the Organising Committee. The Organising Committee shall be responsible for the appointment of the research supervisor.