Programme specification
MA Criminal Justice

School: School of Psychological and Social Sciences
Entry from: 2019/20 in: September

Awarding institution: York St John University
Teaching institution: York St John University
Delivery location: York St John University
Programme/s accredited by: Not applicable
Exit awards: Postgraduate Diploma Criminal Justice
Postgraduate Certificate Criminal Justice
UCAS code / GTTR / other: Not applicable
Joint Honours combinations: Not applicable
QAA benchmark group(s): QAA Subject Benchmark Criminology (March 2014)

Mode/s of study: Full-time for 1 year
Part-time, up to 2 years
Language of study: English
Study abroad opportunities: No

Introduction and special features

The MA Criminal Justice builds on the existing strengths in teaching in social sciences at YSJU. It challenges students to engage with contemporary issues faced by the Criminal Justice System. In doing so, it fosters a deep level of understanding of how our justice and penal systems work. You will be encouraged to develop a critical understanding of key themes, issues and debates concerning crime, crime control and criminal justice.

A key focus for the MA Criminal Justice is the complex interplay between criminal justice and criminology. For over two decades, rapid change has been endemic in criminal and penal justice. Procedural stability has been absent as the traditional roles of prisons and probation have been changing. This has led to major changes in:

- perspectives on rehabilitation and punishment
- programmes of intervention and the philosophies underpinning them
- the organisation and structure of criminal and community justice agencies
- risk assessment
- sentencing models
- the scale of incarceration
- comparative justice and penal systems

The swift and relentless changes in the nature of the criminal and community justice systems in the UK have presented significant challenges for policy makers, managers and front-line practitioners. The MA Criminal Justice programme aims to respond to these challenges, and to provide detailed analysis of the complex problems that crime poses for societies today.

The need for innovative thinking on criminality and offending behaviour, informed by high-quality research, has never been greater. York St John offers a diverse, intellectually stimulating and
relevant programme. We will use our academic expertise to help you make links between cutting-edge criminal justice and criminological theoretical scholarship and the competing demands of contemporary practice.

MA Criminal Justice is designed for anyone with an interest in the social and political challenges which crime presents, including those who already are, or wish to become, involved in practice, and those who wish to study at a higher level. It is for all those with an interest in the increasingly important debates about how to reconcile crime control with respect for, and protection of, human rights.

Offering cutting-edge knowledge and insights into theory and practice, it will particularly appeal to recent graduates with an undergraduate degree in a relevant subject area who want to deepen their knowledge. In this respect, it provides a structured, thorough and wide-ranging approach to studying criminal justice at an advanced level and equips you with the knowledge and skills to open up diverse career paths. It will particularly appeal to those whose future employment is likely to involve public, private and/or non-governmental criminal justice work in the UK or internationally. Criminal justice practitioners and managers face an intense challenge to develop skills in managing the implementation of new policies and programmes in the context of a rapidly changing system. Those already working in probation, prison, or other criminal and community justice roles may wish to enhance their career development through continuing professional development.

This programme is also an invaluable stepping stone for those wishing to eventually embark on doctoral study. The programme aims to inspire you to critically engage with theory, research, policy and practice at the cutting-edge of the discipline. Whether you want to develop an academic career or reinvigorate your practice with the benefit of rigorous academic insight, you will become part of a dynamic learning community bringing together students from diverse backgrounds. This means you will benefit from fascinating insights into how different professionals, agencies, and organisations address current issues in criminal justice, crime and punishment.

The Modules

We will provide you with the necessary concepts, theories and methods required to help develop the practical skills that will ultimately allow you to participate in, and make a difference to, the criminal justice process or towards further academic study in this area. The MA Criminal Justice provides an excellent base from which to pursue a related Ph.D.

Modules will be structured around a diverse range of criminal justice, penological and criminological analyses and debates, covering issues such as: theory and practice in criminal justice; civil liberties and human rights; gender; race and ethnicity; theoretical criminological frameworks; contemporary issues in the international justice arena and research methods and skills. We provide a thorough grounding in the understanding of criminal justice and penal institutions and processes. The core themes of classic research on these processes will be comprehensively addressed, as will be contemporary issues and controversies in criminal justice and punishment.

We consider competing theoretical perspectives on the criminal justice process and encourage students to think about the role of the State and the criminal justice system in the regulation of human behaviour, and about the place and limitations of criminal justice interventions in producing safe societies. The MA Criminal Justice programme provides you with the opportunity to debate major philosophical ideas around for example, retribution, rehabilitation, and punishment and to consider how they may be applied in practice.

The MA Criminal Justice will be framed by an interdisciplinary approach to understanding crime, criminal justice policy, and the links between crime and societal responses. To achieve this, the MA Criminal Justice draws on the strengths of research-active teaching staff who possess a range of experience and expertise, are recognised as authorities in their field, and who are
currently engaged in research within the criminal justice arena. Throughout the degree, and where appropriate, guest lectures may be delivered by criminal justice practitioners, visiting experts and third sector organisations. In this way, you will benefit from the depth and breadth of our academic expertise and our extensive professional links. You will also hone high-level research skills to underpin the dissertation that is a key feature of the MA Criminal Justice.

Admissions criteria
You must meet the University’s general entry criteria for postgraduate study. In addition, you would normally have:
- a bachelor’s degree or equivalent, achieved at Class 2.2 or above, from an approved University or Institution;

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of Accredited Prior (Experiential) Learning (APL/APEL). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

YSJU in exceptional cases reserve the right to interview applicants directly to help clarify their eligibility, as appropriate.

Programme aims
The overall aim of the programme is to develop your capacity to understand issues relating to criminal justice and to carry out research that is relevant to you. This will involve project planning and implementation alongside decision making and both analysis and evaluation. As a student on the MA in Criminal Justice you will be required to identify a researchable problem and formulate an approach to investigating this: for many students this will be something that is related to your work or the work that you want to do in the future. You will be supported in undertaking this work so that your ability to shape criminal justice is enhanced.

As such this programme aims to provide an advanced, specialised and scholarly education in criminal justice to develop an advanced understanding of crime and criminal justice from critical theoretical, policy, legal, political and practical perspectives. You will be supported as you:

- develop a broad perspective on crime and responses to offending.
- develop the ability to critique criminal justice policy and practice.
- develop an enquiring, analytical and creative approach to criminal justice
- develop and enhance life-long learning skills and self-direction in order to work with self-direction and originality.
Programme learning outcomes

Level 7
On successful completion of this level of study you will be able to:

7.1 Systematically review and critically evaluate current research, issues and developments in the field of criminal justice
7.2 Select, compare and justify the use of a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods including an appreciation of how the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative and quantitative methods shape research design, methods, and the analysis and presentation of data
7.3 Plan, justify and conduct an original piece of research, using established techniques within the discipline and demonstrating the use of appropriate ethical procedures
7.4 Provide a critical evaluation of existing literature to suggest clear research questions which are addressed using appropriate methods, including demonstration and awareness of reflection and ethical issues
7.5 Communicate the results of study concisely in ways which demonstrate awareness and critical understanding of the complexities of issues along with the ability to reflect critically on their own particular standpoint where appropriate

Programme Structure

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<th>Term</th>
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<th>Credits</th>
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*C: Compulsory, CA: Compulsory for award, O: option or E: elective.

Please note that all modules are subject to staffing and timetable availability each year.

Learning, teaching and assessment

This is a taught MA programme which recognises your status as a graduate student and, therefore, places a significant emphasis on your independent learning. The programme thus aims to provide an environment in which you are encouraged to take responsibility for your role in managing your learning and outcomes. Multiple formative and summative feedback points are offered across the programme. Our approach to teaching has been designed in tandem with our assessment strategy. This, in turn, has been designed to develop skills, and to enhance engagement. We have sought to develop assessments that are authentic and appropriate which also have the effect of encouraging active engagement. The teaching, learning and assessment philosophy which underpins it aims to promote independence of direction, thought and approach. Taught classes are opportunities to provide both the core information pertinent to the module’s specified field of interest and for your ideas to be clarified and challenged. This aims to provide active learning opportunities for students and staff. These will include discussion, debate,
presentations often related to readings of key literature or related materials.

You will be supported in your studies through an academic supervisor. You will be able to book tutorials with them and seek guidance with regards to the development and progression of your studies. Tutorials allow discussion of various topics in a focused manner and help to draw out individual ideas, arguments and experiences that may be drawn upon in modules and assignments.

Independent Study constitutes the bulk of the work undertaken outside of scheduled teaching hours on the programme. Typically, this will include reading, note-taking, assessment planning and the application of new concepts to familiar phenomena. You will gradually build your capacity to work independently as you progress through the MA Criminal Justice and will be supported by module and programme staff and library and study skills staff.

A key focus of our learning and teaching strategy is analysis of the complex interplay between criminal justice and criminology. In addition to developing theoretical frameworks for analysis, we provide a wide-ranging awareness of the practical dimensions of our discipline, offering you our insights into real world criminal justice and criminology in action. You have the opportunity to undertake modules underpinned both by our research and our relationships with the police, probation, prisons and other criminal justice agencies.

In the Dissertation module, you will be able to instigate and develop your own research interests. This module enables you to, in discussion with your supervisor, design a research project to best showcase your interests at a level appropriate for the award of an MA Criminal Justice.

**Progression and graduation requirements**
The University’s [general regulations for](#) postgraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section.

**Internal and external reference points**
This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission Statement](#) [see page two]
- [Strategic Plan 2015-20](#) [see page four]
- QAA subject benchmark statement
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

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Date written / revised: 25/10/2018

Programme originally approved: