



the british  
psychological society  
promoting excellence in psychology

## GUIDANCE

# Guidance for BPS accredited programmes for undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes in psychology in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak

## INTRODUCTION

In such unprecedented and challenging times the British Psychological Society recognises the need to remain agile and flexible to support both individuals and our education partners in continuing to safeguard accreditation for programmes disrupted by the current crisis. This document is intended to serve as a guide for such programmes which have been affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. The advice and guidance it contains is intended to cover a six month period commencing 30 March 2020. During this time the situation will be regularly reviewed and further recommendations or extensions to this guidance may be made.

- We expect that programmes will follow current UK government guidance, the UK Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code, and their guidance, and their own university's regulations, policies and advice on teaching and learning at distance, and assessment.
- This document offers guidance on how programmes can enable their students to develop and demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes as defined in the accreditation standards with a flexibility that recognises the current public health emergency; to maintain continuity as far as possible, and is intended to advise on interim measures while the public health emergency continues.
- The flexibility being proposed relates to how programme content is assessed, and how learning outcomes are met in line with Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC) rather than a dilution or removal of these. Similarly, students are still expected to gain the range of experience outlined in the standards, with regard to breadth and depth, but assessment methods may vary on what would traditionally have been the case.

- In the spirit of the no detriment policy, programmes should continue to endeavour to minimise the impact of necessary changes on individual assessment and progression wherever possible. That said, exceptions cannot be made to the requirements of professional regulation or course accreditation.
- This document is based on the expectation that duty of care and safeguarding students is paramount, and that any flexibility employed as a temporary measure is within what is deemed reasonable and fair. We are not reducing or changing any of our standards. Therefore notification to the Partnership and Accreditation Team at the BPS of modifications to programmes in terms of assessment will not be required. Any reasonable adjustments employed should be logged and recorded at university programme level.
- We expect that programmes and services will continue to support students' wellbeing in the circumstances. It is recognised that all of our accredited programmes across the four nations will be experiencing the impact of the outbreak and specific issues will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, in collaboration with specific stakeholders within particular national contexts.
- This document should also be read in conjunction with the recent specific QAA guidance <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/support-and-guidance-covid-19>.

## BPS ACCREDITATION STANDARDS IN RELATION TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK

### Standards for the Accreditation for undergraduate, conversion and integrated Masters programmes in psychology

Accreditation through partnership is the process by which the British Psychological Society works with education providers to ensure quality standards in education and training are met by all programmes on an ongoing basis. Our approach to accreditation is based on partnership rather than policing and we stress that accreditation remains an important and integral part of an individual's development as a psychologist, and is the first stepping stone and preparation for the wider psychological workforce.

Our standards are organised around eight overarching standards, in the spirit of that partnership we have worked with our Training committees (made up from representatives from universities across the UK) to provide the following reasonable adjustments where these are now required:

PROGRAMME STANDARD	GUIDANCE
<p><b>Programme Standard 1: Credits and level of award</b></p> <p><b>A number of universities are applying a no detriment policy nationally for assessment in the current circumstances (also known as safety-net)</b></p>	<p>Our instructions are as follows:</p> <p>In the spirit of the no detriment policy, programmes should continue to endeavour to minimise the impact of necessary changes on individual assessment and progression wherever possible. <b>That said, exceptions cannot be made to the requirements of professional regulation or course accreditation.</b></p> <p>These are exceptional times and we have sought as a professional body to offer flexibility and support to programmes and students, accommodating changes to assessment and teaching and learning approaches. The core principle when potentially applying an overarching policy to any accredited psychology programme is that as long as the programmes can continue to demonstrate breadth and depth of assessment in the core areas, then there will be no impact on accreditation.</p> <p>We accept that some of the assessments may not be in the usual format without the need for formal programme modifications.</p>

PROGRAMME STANDARD	GUIDANCE
<p><b>Programme standard 2: Programme content (learning, research and practice)</b></p> <p><b>Section h. Empirical Project</b> A graduate of psychology will have successfully completed a series of practical reports throughout their programme, culminating in an empirical project reporting on a substantial piece of research (or a piece of work which delivers the same learning outcomes of equal quality). The project typically involves the collection of original empirical data from participants, or equivalent alternatives such as computational modelling of empirical data or secondary data analysis, such as a meta-analysis [section 5.8 Subject Benchmark Statement]. The empirical practical component will normally involve the completion of a psychology project at Level 6 or above. The project must be passed and cannot be condoned or compensated.</p> <p>The empirical psychology project will include carrying out an extensive piece of empirical research that requires them individually to demonstrate a range of research skills including planning, considering and resolving ethical issues, analysis and dissemination of findings [section 4.4 of the Subject Benchmark Statement]. Students may undertake their empirical projects as part of a project or laboratory group, provided they are still required to demonstrate the above skills individually.</p> <p><b>Placements</b></p>	<p>With regard to flexibility around dissertations/empirical projects our instructions are as follows:</p> <p>In direct response to the current difficulties faced by students who are unable to collect data alternatives need to be found. In the light of the unprecedented situation, for all accredited undergraduate and Masters conversion courses, we have to allow some flexibility.</p> <p>As it is within the standards for students on accredited programmes to use secondary data for dissertations, where possible it will be permissible that this is the best course of action as it allows the students the experience of a completing a dissertation.</p> <p>In certain cases it would be ideal if programme staff could provide the students with some secondary data sets for them to use for their research.</p> <p>Alternatively a student could also use/collect data from the internet/TV/radio.</p> <p>In some extreme cases it may not be possible for the students to collect data by any of the methods suggested, in these instances we would suggest that if appropriate the programme staff could provide students with a simulated data set so they would still benefit from the experience of conducting a project, (obviously without the data collection phase).</p> <p><b>Exceptional circumstances:</b> where any of the above are not possible it will be permissible that the student conducts a systematic review of the literature in the area that they are researching. We expect that this would, hopefully, be a very small minority of students.</p> <p>Where students are unable to access or complete work based placements, or are unable to access practice based work remotely due to issues surrounding home working, confidentiality, GDPR etc, the programme or work based learning units should seek to provide 'placement aligned activities' which rate competency but are not reliant on face to face or service-based work.</p>

PROGRAMME STANDARD	GUIDANCE
<p><b>Other considerations</b></p>	<p>Consideration should be made by programmes as to how they will manage student absence due to illness and self-isolation or caring or work responsibilities in line with standard university regulations, placement contracts and policies.</p> <p>Consideration should also be given to the fact that many students will not be used to working at distance at a time when they will no doubt face many other pressures and demands.</p> <p>Where students are unwell and unable to proceed with their studies, the standard protocols for managing absence should be met. For those self-isolating, the reasonable adjustments suggested within this document should allow almost all to continue with their progression in a meaningful manner.</p> <p>Where possible, interruptions during this time should not be used unless the standard criteria for this are met. At this point we would suggest that having to self-isolate does not form a basis for interruption and programmes should explore ways to restructure their teaching if necessary, to provide opportunities for students to continue to work towards completion. This is in recognition that interruptions have implications for the end date for qualification.</p> <p>In the scenario that students do require extensions beyond their end date, providers should commit to supporting this.</p>

**Please be assured that The Society and The Undergraduate Education Committee continues to work on further guidance as required. As the situation progresses we will work with our accredited providers in partnership to find solutions that support progression whilst maintaining standards and quality.**



the british  
psychological society  
promoting excellence in psychology

St Andrews House,  
48 Princess Road East,  
Leicester LE1 7DR, UK

 0116 254 9568  [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)  [info@bps.org.uk](mailto:info@bps.org.uk)