

**CENTRE FOR CRIMINOLOGY
FACULTY OF LAW**



**Programme Specification for
MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice
2011-2012**

1. Awarding institution/body	University of Oxford
2. Teaching institution	University of Oxford
3. Programme accredited by	N/A
4. Final award	MSc
5. Programme	Criminology and Criminal Justice
6. UCAS code	N/A
7. Relevant subject benchmark statement	<u>British Society of Criminology Subject Benchmarks</u>
8. Date of programme specification	September 2011

9. Educational aims of the programme

To provide students with the ability to:

- evaluate the major theories and fundamental concepts in criminology and criminal justice;
- analyse critically the inferences that can be drawn from empirical and historical observations of crime and the operation of the criminal justice and penal systems;
- develop analytical skills required for critical appraisal of criminological research;
- develop methodological skills to conduct criminological research.

To provide an advanced understanding of particular fields within criminology and criminal justice, relevant to their further careers or academic studies.

10. Programme outcomes

On completing the degree satisfactorily, students should:

- have a systematic understanding of the key theories and debates, and a critical awareness of current problems and new insights, at the forefront of criminology and criminal justice;
- be well equipped for critical analysis of crime, criminal justice and the development of criminal justice policy;
- have learnt how to assess critically the contribution of research to understandings of crime and justice;
- have demonstrated originality in the application of criminological and criminal justice knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how the established techniques of criminological and criminal justice research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge about offenders, offending, and the criminal justice response;
- have acquired basic methodological skills;
- have learnt how to produce substantial pieces of written work after researching particular topics for their options and for their dissertation.

Each student will develop a detailed knowledge and understanding of six particular areas of criminological enquiry (i.e. those areas studied through options and the dissertation), whilst all students will have acquired a solid understanding (through the compulsory core course and compulsory research methods course) of:

1. the importance of methodical inquiry in criminology;
2. historical, sociological and philosophical perspectives on criminal justice, punishment and the role of victims;
3. different theoretical perspectives on deviance, crime and criminal justice;
4. competing perspectives on the intersection of criminal policy, social policy, politics and academic research (particularly in the context of debates about the relationship between social stratification and crime and criminal justice);
5. the role of discretion in the criminal process;
6. social scientific research design and data collection.

Those students who have taken further optional courses in research methods will also be able to critically evaluate existing sources of data, choose and develop appropriate research methodologies and analyse research data at a more advanced level.

Teaching/learning methods

The primary method of teaching is through seminars at which all students are expected to contribute. While the courses involve some formal lecturing by staff, they generally take the form of seminars, workshops, presentations and practical exercises that demand preparation in advance by students and their active participation in class. These are supplemented by optional lectures and seminars with invited guest speakers, which make no requirement for students to conduct preparatory work or contribute.

The 'core' courses on 'Explanation and Understanding in Criminology' and 'Understanding Criminal Justice' run through the first six weeks of the first two terms respectively (Michaelmas and Hilary). The weekly ninety-minute classes are compulsory and students are expected to come prepared to contribute to each class. Preparation for classes is directed by detailed reading lists distributed to students during Week 0 of Michaelmas Term at the latest. In these classes, students should acquire the knowledge detailed above (points 1 to 5) through their own reading in preparation for classes (reading the required and suggested materials, digesting them and making preparatory notes should take approximately 18 hours a week), and through discussing the readings with the core course teacher and fellow students. Student learning is then consolidated through a revision tutorial at the end of each term, and through a revision tutorial at the end of each term, and through revision in preparation for the final assessment by unseen written examination.

Students also take the compulsory course 'Research Design and Data Collection' and two optional modules in the first term (Michaelmas Term), two optional modules in the second term (Hilary Term) and one optional module in the third term (Trinity Term), for the first six weeks of each term. Again, attendance at the weekly ninety-minute classes is compulsory and students are expected to be well prepared so as to be able to contribute fully to the discussion. Preparation for classes is directed by detailed reading lists distributed to students, at the latest, during Week 0 of each term (but more usually before the end of the

previous term). In these classes, students should develop a detailed knowledge and understanding of the course through their own reading in preparation for classes (reading the required and suggested materials, digesting them and making preparatory notes should take approximately 10 hours a week for each course), and through discussing the readings with the course teacher and fellow students on that course. Student learning is then consolidated through an end-of-term assessed essay.

In Trinity Term students also write a dissertation of 8,000 to 10,000 words on a topic of their own choice. The dissertation should be library-based, and should not involve the student in any empirical research. Students are expected to carry out the research independently, with only minimum guidance from their dissertation supervisor. In order to ensure that students achieve a rough equality of access to supervision, a maximum of six hours supervision time has been stipulated, which should only be exceeded in exceptional cases. This time is to include both contact with the supervisor and time taken to read through and comment on a draft. Ordinarily the following supervision structure will be followed:

- A preliminary meeting, to discuss and set the research question and devise a timeline for work to be submitted.
- An intermediate meeting, checking on the student's progress.
- One draft will be read (either chapter by chapter or a complete document).

Most students will choose to research an area close to one of their option or core course topics, although a few pursue intellectual interests which have not been specifically developed by this course.

Assessment

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is conducted by the following means:

- completion of a 3-hour unseen written examination jointly based on the courses 'Explanation and Understanding in Criminology' and 'Understanding of Criminal Justice'. Students are required to answer three questions under strict examination conditions.
- production of one term-time piece of coursework for 'Research Design and Data Collection'.
- production of six assessed essays (one for each substantive option and one for 'Research Design and Data Collection'), written unsupervised and unaided during the last three weeks of term. Students may not approach course tutors for clarification on essay questions or help with or feedback on essays.
- production of a dissertation,
- in the case of candidates who have taken 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis' and/or Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods', a series of practical assignments required for the relevant option.

The degree of MSc shall be awarded to any candidate who achieves a mark of at least 50 per cent for (a) the five options and the 'Research Design and Data Collection' course, (b) the core course paper, and (c) the dissertation, as well as satisfactorily completes the continuous assessment element of 'Research Design and Data Collection', and, where relevant, those of 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', and/or 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods'. The examiners award a distinction to any candidate who achieves marks of at least 70 per cent on at least six of the papers, as well as satisfactorily

completes the continuous assessment element of 'Research Design and Data Collection', and, where relevant, those of 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', and/or 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods'. In this calculation, both the core course and the dissertation shall count as two papers and each assessed essay shall count as one.

Students should be aware that unlike some other academic institutions, the Centre does not operate a quota system of distinctions, nor is there a Bell curve used on degree awards.

Component 1: The joint examination for 'Explanation and Understanding in Criminology' and 'Understanding Criminal Justice' typically includes questions on all of the topics covered in these courses throughout the first two terms. Examiners set papers in line with the content of the course. Some questions cut across topics to assess the extent to which students have understood how, for example, practices in one area of the criminal process impact on those in another. The Core Course exam paper is divided into two sections. Candidates are required to answer one question from the first section, one from the second, and a third from either.

Component 2: Options and 'Research Design and Data Collection':

Options other than 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and 'Qualitative Methods' shall be examined by means of an assessed essay of 3,500 to 5,000 words (inclusive of footnotes, but excluding bibliography and appendices), for which time will be set aside during the last three weeks (Weeks 7, 8, and 9) of the term in which the course runs. A selection of three titles (as determined by the Board of Examiners), shall be posted on the designated noticeboard at the Centre for Criminology by noon on Friday of Week 6 of the relevant term. Candidates shall be required to submit two typewritten copies of each essay to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford, not later than three weeks after this date, by noon.

The options 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and 'Qualitative Methods' shall be examined by an assessed essay of 2,500 to 3,000 words (inclusive of footnotes, but excluding bibliography and appendices), for which time will be set aside during the last three weeks (Weeks 7, 8, and 9) of the term in which the course runs. A choice from three titles (as determined by the Board of Examiners) will be posted on the designated noticeboard at the Centre for Criminology by noon on Friday of Week 6 of Hilary Term. Candidates shall be required to submit two copies of the essay to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford, not later than three weeks after this date, by noon. In addition, candidates taking 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis' and/or 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods' shall be required to complete to the satisfaction of the Course Tutor for the option a form of continuous assessment during term-time.

The course 'Research Design and Data Collection' shall be examined through one pass/fail term-time piece of coursework, as well as an end-of-term assessed essay of 2,500 to 3,000 words (inclusive of footnotes, but excluding bibliography and appendices), for which time will be set aside during the last three weeks (Weeks 7, 8, and 9) of the term in which the course runs. A choice from three titles (as determined by the Board of Examiners) will be posted on the designated noticeboard at the Centre for Criminology by noon on Friday of Week 6 of Michaelmas Term. Candidates shall be required to submit two copies of the essay to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford, not later than three weeks after this date, by noon.

Component 3: The dissertation must be between 8,000 and 10,000 words long on a topic of the student's choice, subject to the agreement of the Centre for Criminology's Board of Studies (hereinafter: "Board of Studies"). The dissertation is carried out independently, with only minimum guidance from a dissertation

supervisor. This tests the student's ability to work independently, to research the many sources of empirical or theoretical evidence for their thesis, and to produce a high-quality extended piece of written work.

All assessments that count towards the degree are 'double blind' marked internally by two examiners, or an examiner and an assessor. A sample of scripts from those marked as pass and distinction, as well as any failed papers, is also reviewed by an external examiner.

Formative Assessment

Students receive written feedback on all their end-of-term assessed essays and their dissertation in the form of a feedback form.

In Michaelmas Term, students are required to complete a 1,500-word practice essay related to either the Core Course or either of their two option courses, for formative assessment purposes, to be submitted by the end of Week 3. In addition, in Week 5 of this term the students attend a seminar on writing techniques, at which advice is given on the expectations of the examiners and feedback provided on their practice essays. In addition, in Weeks 2 and 6 of the first term the students should attend workshops on Academic Writing and on Referencing and Plagiarism, respectively. In Trinity Term a seminar is also provided giving advice on the expectations of the examiners in relation to the task of writing a dissertation.

In Michaelmas Term, students also have the opportunity to write an additional 2000-word practice essay, for their other option (other than the option they may have decided to write the compulsory 1,500 word practice for). This will be assessed and feedback will be given to students individually. Students may also have this opportunity for some of the options running in Hilary and Trinity Terms (students should seek advice from individual option tutors).

Moreover, formative assessment includes feedback through termly sessions for each student with their academic supervisor and (limited) feedback from dissertation supervisors.

Finally, there is an unseen two-hour, two-question MOCK examination for the 'Explanation and Understanding in Criminology' course (based only on the topics covered in Michaelmas Term), taken on Monday of Week 1 in Hilary Term, 16 January 2012 (date and time to be confirmed) at the Examination Schools. Students are required to answer two questions under strict examination conditions. This both provides an incentive for students to engage in early revision for the final examination and gives them the opportunity to practice their examination technique (this is particularly useful for students who have been out of formal education for a while). The result of this examination does not affect a student's final assessment for the MSc. Its purpose is to provide teachers with the opportunity to monitor the student's progress, identify areas of strength and weakness, and provide constructive feedback. Whilst the mock exam is not compulsory, students are strongly encouraged to take it.

Skills and other attributes

Students will have the opportunity to develop the following skills during the course:

I. Intellectual skills

1. The ability to analyse critically and to deal systematically and creatively with complex theoretical and empirical work.

2. The ability to present in a concise manner, their understanding of complex theoretical issues or sophisticated empirical evidence and the ability to communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
3. The ability to draw together ideas from different disciplines and to synthesise them coherently.
4. The ability to demonstrate self-direction and originality in their application of knowledge and in tackling and solving problems, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the field of criminology and criminal justice.
5. The ability to demonstrate creativity and originality in applying their knowledge to new research questions (through their dissertation research).

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

The main learning method is directed, private, library-based study in preparation for seminars in which students are expected to contribute fully to group discussion about the key issues and discuss different interpretations with one another. The dialogic character of argument in seminars is designed to encourage students to clarify and refine their ideas and responses to their preparatory reading. Students are encouraged to challenge each other and their tutors so that debates develop during class time. Supervision of dissertations helps students to refine their thinking and consider competing perspectives on their topic.

Assessment

On-going formative assessment and feedback in classes and supervision sessions. The opportunity to write practice assessed essays. Mock examination. Summative assessment through assessed essays on theoretical and substantive topics, term-time assignments, a dissertation and an unseen core course examination.

II. Practical skills

1. Strong written skills through preparing for formal assessments.
2. Good time management and the ability to keep to deadlines.
3. Good research skills, particularly through preparing the dissertation.
4. The ability to classify and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different research designs (specifically the “fit” among the methods, data, and argument) of criminological research both as published in refereed journals and as represented in policy/political debates in the popular press.
5. The ability to define, give the significance of, and use key concepts in research ethics.
6. The ability to choose appropriately, and describe in detail sufficient to justify to a non-specialist, a research design, a data source and a method of data analysis for a specific research project.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

For all students taking the MSc:

1. Preparing for formal assessments enhances written skills.
2. Good time management and the ability to keep to deadlines are encouraged through the demanding nature of the course with assignments taking place during term and assessments at the end of each of the three terms.
3. Good research skills are inculcated through the requirement that dissertations be largely self-directed. Skills include working independently towards: formulation of a thesis; secondary data analysis; comprehensive review of the literature; critical examination of theory and the development of theory; production of a well-structured and eloquent dissertation.

For those who take 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', and/or 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods':

1. Group projects, teacher and fellow student feedback sessions, practical 'hands on' work which includes the use of specialised software for data analysis.

Assessment

On-going formative assessment and feedback in classes. Summative assessment through term-time assignments and end-of-term assessed essays. Dissertation.

III. Generic skills

1. Essential skills of writing and presentation (including organising a thesis, using references and appendices, making citations).
2. Development of autonomous learning, showing responsibility and initiative.
3. Development of critical analysis.
4. Management of research (including managing their time, timetable, relationship with their supervisor).
5. The identification of library resources and how to use them (including searches on the Internet and research using other electronic resources, such as on-line journals).
6. Improvement of their general information and communication technology competence.
7. The independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.
8. Team working skills (in particular for those taking the Research Methods options).

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1. Seminars for which students need to prepare in the expectation that they will contribute fully to group discussion about the key issues and discuss different interpretations with one another.
2. Advice given by the Academic Supervisor at termly supervision sessions, by dissertation supervisors in Trinity Term, and in the detailed Graduate Student Handbook.
3. Basic library training offered during Weeks -1 and 0 of the academic year (induction weeks).
4. Seminar in Week 5 of Michaelmas Term providing feedback on the practice essay.
5. Workshops on 'Academic Writing' and on 'Referencing and Plagiarism', provided by Dr Jane Donoghue in Week 2 and 6 of Michaelmas Term, respectively.
6. Seminar on the skills needed to complete a dissertation, provided in Week 3 of Trinity Term.

Assessment

On-going formative assessment and feedback in classes and supervision sessions. Summative assessment through term-time assignments and end-of-term assessed essays, dissertation and unseen core course examination.

11. Programme Structures and Features

Induction programme

Induction Sessions

A two-week induction programme runs before the start of Michaelmas Term. The aim of the programme is to formally welcome students to the Centre, and provide a useful foundation for the course. Students receive introductory lectures, attend an introduction to the optional courses, meet their academic supervisor and are invited to a reception with all other members of the Centre. There is also a wide variety of IT, library and study-skill related sessions, including an introduction to the use of bibliographical, legal and social science databases. Finally, a seminar on plagiarism is offered by the Social Science Library, attendance at which is mandatory.

Introductory lectures

There are four introductory lectures held during Weeks -1 and 0 of Michaelmas Term. These lectures have one of two aims. Some are designed to introduce students who are not familiar with the Criminal Justice System of England and Wales to the basic structures and mechanics of this system, so that when they prepare for core course classes they do so sharing a base knowledge about the system. Others introduce students to a topic which they will cover in depth in a core course seminar.

1. The Field of Criminology
2. Explanation and Understanding in Criminology
3. Nuts and Bolts for Criminological Research
4. Structure of the English Criminal Justice System

Michaelmas Term

Compulsory courses

Core Course I: Explanation and Understanding in Criminology

Prof Ian Loader

This course develops a contextual understanding of the organizing categories and central claims of a range of modern criminological perspectives of crime and social control. In so doing, it equips students to recognize the principal problems, questions and conceptual dualisms that have shaped modern criminological thought, and to understand the nature of 'theory' and 'explanation' within criminology. The course addresses a set of key concepts and themes that have figured in criminological theorizing and debate, including the role of urban structure in explaining crime and crime control; the sources of social conformity; the intersection between crime and routine activity; the relationship between crime and inequality; and how to understand social reactions to criminal transgression. The final seminar assesses the capacity of modern criminological theory to shed light on contemporary trends in crime and social control. The course concludes with a lecture on 'Making sense of criminological theory' and a revision tutorial in week 7 to be led by a Graduate Teaching Assistant.

Research Design and Data Collection

Dr Jane Donoghue

How can social scientists be sure that the data used in research are valid and reliable? This course is focused on the challenges and the opportunities that different methods of data collection have for validity and reliability of data. Such methods include experiments and quasi-experiments; questionnaires and survey research; field research, and the collection of written documents. The scientific method, theory testing and research design will also be discussed. Ethical concerns are given special emphasis. This option will provide students with a knowledge base from which to choose appropriate ways to collect valid and reliable data given a particular research question. It will also help students assess the weight that can be placed on the findings of published research in the field of criminology.

These weekly ninety-minute classes are compulsory for all students. The discussions that take place in the classes are invaluable for assisting students with the final examination. Students are expected to come prepared to contribute to each class.

Options

Students also take two optional modules during Michaelmas Term. Again, attendance throughout the six weekly ninety-minute classes is compulsory and students are expected to be well prepared so as to contribute fully to discussion.

Social Explanation and Data Analysis

Dr Rachel Condry

This option introduces students to different methods of data analysis and theory testing, and in particular methods of interpreting meaning in data and the philosophical underpinnings of different analytical strategies. This option will provide students with a knowledge base from which to choose methods of data analysis best suited to answer a research question. Students with an interest in proceeding to a research degree following completion of the MSc, and who intend to use any of the methods covered in this course, are strongly encouraged to take this option.

The seminars will explore the following:

- The Philosophical Bases of Social Explanation
- Quantitative Analysis in Criminology
- Understanding Crime through Statistical Analysis
- Integrating Data from Mixed Methods
- Narrative Analysis
- The Interpretive Process and Developing Theory in Research

Crime and the Family

Dr Rachel Condry

The aim of this course is to explore the relationship between crime and one of the major institutions in society, the family. Through the analysis of empirical research and theoretical debate the course will provide a systematic examination of some of the intersections between the family and crime and punishment. The aim will be to interrogate common-sense understandings of the relationship between crime and the family and to explore just who is affected by crime and how they are affected, whether as primary or secondary victims of crime, or as parents, children, spouses or other kin of offenders.

The relationship between the family and the state and the ways in which the state intervenes into family life take particular shape around the problem of crime. We will explore how the family is constructed in both formal policy responses to crime and informal responses such as stigmatization and shaming. The course will consider the role of the family in criminological theory and in criminal justice policy and aim to unravel some of the complexities, tensions and implications inherent in contemporary constructions of the family and family life in these contexts.

Sentencing

Prof Andrew Ashworth, Prof Julian Roberts

The aim of this option is to explore some of the legal, theoretical and empirical issues of sentencing, largely by reference to England and Wales. As well as analysing decisions on the use of imprisonment, the course examines the arguments about previous convictions and sentencing, and the justifications for allowing certain factors to mitigate sentence.

Restorative Justice

Dr Carolyn Hoyle

Restorative justice is a term of unsettled meaning but can be seen as encompassing a diverse and developing set of values, processes and aims which share an orientation towards repairing the harm caused by crime. The most well-known restorative processes involve victims and offenders coming face-to-face to discuss the offence, the harm it caused, and how this might be put right. This course considers various models of restorative justice across the world. It examines the role of victims, offenders and communities, integrating theoretical and empirical knowledge and sociological critiques of different restorative approaches. It also tackles such difficult philosophical questions as whether restorative justice can be an appropriate substitute or supplement to formal state-administered justice, and whether it can operate satisfactorily when power imbalances between offenders and victims are great, as in cases of domestic or sexual violence.

Death Penalty

Dr Carolyn Hoyle

To provide students with a good understanding of the scope and practice of capital punishment and the movement, backed by international organizations and human rights treaties, to abolish the death penalty worldwide. Students will learn about the extent to which defendants in capital cases are protected by due process and have access to qualified defence counsel, and where they lack protection from police abuse,

unfair trials, and painful forms of execution. Further they will explore what happens when the due process safeguards fail and innocent people are convicted and sentenced to death. Further, they will consider whether capital punishment can ever be administered equitably, without discrimination on grounds of race. They will also learn about the influence of victims' families on the criminal process. Throughout this course students will draw on recent and controversial cases and decisions, as well as the social scientific literature.

Hilary Term

Compulsory course

Core Course II: Understanding Criminal Justice

Dr Rachel Condry

This course offers students a thorough grounding in the criminological/social-legal understanding of criminal justice/penal institutions and processes. The core themes of classic research on these processes are introduced, before students are introduced to contemporary issues and controversies in criminal justice and punishment. The course introduces students to competing theoretical perspectives on the criminal justice process and in so doing encourages them to think seriously about the role of the state/criminal law in the regulation of human behaviour and the place and limitations of criminal justice interventions in producing safe societies. The course concludes with a revision tutorial in week 7 to be led by a Graduate Teaching Assistant.

This weekly ninety-minute class is compulsory for all students. The discussions that take place in the classes are invaluable for assisting students with the final examination. Students are expected to come prepared to contribute to each class.

Options

Students also take two optional modules during Hilary Term. Again, attendance throughout the six weekly ninety-minute classes is compulsory and students are expected to be well prepared so as to contribute fully to discussion.

Prisons

Dr Mary Bosworth

This course examines the complex role of the prison in contemporary society as it is portrayed in policy documents, first-hand accounts, and scholarly analysis of imprisonment. Students will develop a critical understanding of the origins of the prison and of its daily practice. Particular attention will be paid to the experience of women and ethnic minorities behind bars. Topics will range from staffing to education as well as from how institutions deal with prisoners' mental health to how they maintain order. As an adjunct to the course, students will be given the opportunity to visit a prison in the local area. While the focus is on prisons in England and Wales, some comparative material from the US and elsewhere will be considered.

Crime, Political Culture and Political Ideologies

Prof Ian Loader

This option examines the causes, meanings and effects of this important development in contemporary societies. Its aim will be to examine the relationship between key concepts and traditions in political thought, the dynamics of electoral politics and political mobilization, and current developments in crime control. In so doing, it will introduce students to two important ways in which 'politics' intersects with questions of crime and its control. We will examine, first, the ways in which political debates over crime control are inescapably entangled with wider ideological contests between different political traditions and their competing conceptions of the good society (e.g., conservatism, liberalism, socialism, feminism,

communitarianism), and with struggles over the meaning and significance of some key ideas in political thought (e.g., order, authority, legitimacy, justice, freedom, rights). We will be concerned, secondly, to examine the ways in which crime and punishment are taken up and used by actors within the political process - with the place, that is, that crime occupies within contemporary political cultures.

The course begins by introducing students to the ways in which debates about crime and its control are entangled with these two dimensions of politics. We then seek to explore these connections in more detail by considering three recent controversies in the politics of crime and crime control – namely, the role of markets in the delivery of policing and punishment, the return of ‘dangerousness’ as a political problem, and the question of police legitimacy. We conclude by examining the relationship between crime and democracy and address recent debates about the respective roles that knowledge and politics (should) play in determining crime and penal policy.

Victims

Dr Carolyn Hoyle

This course will examine the development of victimology and, in particular, the developing role of victims within the criminal process, in the UK and in other jurisdictions. In doing so, it will encourage students to think beyond the rather narrow definition of ‘victims’ under consideration in the development of victim policy to look at how society responds to victims of atypical crimes and offenders who are, in many respects, victims. In going beyond the typical, the course will rely not only on the disciplines of criminology, criminal justice and victimology, but also engage with politics and social policy. Students will be expected to study empirical, theoretical and policy work in these areas.

Qualitative Methods

Dr Mary Bosworth

This course introduces students to different methods of qualitative inquiry, data gathering, analysis and reporting. Special emphasis is given throughout the course to ethical issues and cross-cultural and comparative practices. Students study examples of research techniques and carry out applied practice themselves. They will design a short questionnaire which they will administer to police officers. They will also gain practical experience of conducting computer aided data analysis by learning how to use NVivo. This option is compulsory for those students taking the MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice (Research Methods).

Statistical Methods for Social Scientists

Dr Ben Bradford

This course is designed for students who want to learn how to use quantitative analysis techniques in criminological contexts. It is aimed at those with little or no experience in quantitative methods, and will introduce students to some of the fundamental techniques of statistical analysis. Participants will learn both basic statistical concepts and how to use SPSS, the most widely used statistical package in the social sciences. The course is based around use of data from the British Crime Survey and emphasises the practical use of statistics in research settings. By the end of the course, students will be able to understand and critically assess papers containing quantitative data, use appropriate statistical methods, and present numerical analyses effectively in their dissertations.

Trinity Term

Options

Students take one optional module in Trinity Term. Again, attendance throughout the six weekly ninety-minute classes is compulsory and students are expected to be well prepared so as to contribute fully to discussion.

Youth Justice

Dr Jane Donoghue

The aim of this course is to provide students with a critical and advanced understanding of youth justice. The competing aims, principles, and strategies underpinning responses to offending behaviour in young people will be explored and the diverse ways in which these have influenced contemporary youth justice in the UK will be examined. In particular, the course will investigate the relationship between theory, research and policy in the shaping of youth justice policy and practice. The course will highlight the key shifts in state responses that centre on issues of justice, welfare, prevention, risk and related policy. Throughout, the course will draw closely on both ethnographic and quantitative data from current research in youth justice.

The course will raise numerous critical issues concerning the sentencing and detention of young people. Pre-trial procedures will be examined and also the structures and rationales of the courts and alternatives to them. The wide range of sentencing options and alternatives available to the courts and other agencies will be critically appraised. The development of crime prevention and community safety will be examined and the governance of youth anti-social behaviour will be paid particular attention. Throughout the module, attention is given to the importance of understanding the connections of youth crime with race, class and gender. This course will provide an opportunity to engage with the most up-to-date debates in an area of great interest in contemporary society.

Risk, Security and Criminal Justice

Prof Lucia Zedner

Key features of contemporary crime control are the rise of risk management and the pursuit of security. In the 'risk society' suspects are viewed less as bearers of rights than as carriers of risks that need to be managed and balanced against the public interest in security. This course analyzes the ways in which risk and security are transforming criminal justice thinking and practices. It explores the costs and benefits of these developments and examines the implications of security policies for justice and individual liberties.

The seminar topics are:

Week 1: Risk, Actuarial Justice, and the pursuit of Security

Week 2: Policing and Risk

Week 3: Assessing Dangerous Offenders, Public Protection, and Preventive Detention

Week 4: Security and the War on Terror

Week 5: The Practices and Burdens of seeking Security

Week 6: Risk, Security and Justice

Public and Private Policing

Dr Ben Bradford

This course examines police and policing in 21st century Britain and beyond. It considers processes of change and stability in the organizational and institutional structures of policing and their implications for criminal justice and society. The course is intended to both introduce students to current debates around public and private policing and provide insight into underlying themes concerning the reproduction of

social order and the legitimacy of the police. Topics covered include definitions of police and policing and the historical development of the British police; the nature and role of present-day public and private police services; police accountability and legitimacy; and the future of British policing.

Comparative Criminal Justice

Prof David Nelken

Why study criminal justice comparatively? How best can one go about doing so? This course will examine a number of recent examples of comparative research on a variety of criminal justice institutions, examining the role of political, cultural, legal and structural factors shaping the pursuit of criminal justice policy in different jurisdictions.

Questions to be explored in the course will include:

Why study criminal justice and other mechanisms of social control comparatively?

What makes a comparison a good one?

What methods are used for studying criminal justice comparatively and how do they shape possible findings?

What is the relative importance of culture, political economy or legal and constitutional structure in shaping patterns of criminal justice institutions and practices?

How can national differences, such as rates of incarceration best be explained?

How has globalisation affected differences among criminal justice systems and comparative research itself?

Dissertation

In addition to one option, in Trinity Term students also write a dissertation of 8,000 to 10,000 words on a topic of their own choice. They have a maximum of six hours supervision for this.

12. Support for Students and their learning

Pastoral Care

Students receive support on any non-academic matters from their college advisors, and can discuss with these advisors their academic progress.

The Centre for Criminology appoints an Academic Supervisor to each student. Whilst specifically concerned with their academic progress, academic supervisors can also offer support on a range of welfare matters. Students are expected to meet their academic supervisors at the beginning and end of the first term (Michaelmas Term), and at the end of the second and third terms, although students can contact their supervisor at any time during term if they have problems or concerns which they feel cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting. Likewise, supervisors might proactively arrange an additional meeting during term if they have pressing concerns about a student's progress. The Academic Supervisor is required to write a termly report on each student's academic progress and the content of this report is communicated to the student, the student's college and the Graduate Studies Office.

In addition, students can receive support from college or department specialist advisors, such as the Welfare Officer or Harassment Officer, Advisor to Women Students, or even the Head of Department. Many colleges have extensive 'Welfare Teams' of fellow students, academic and other staff (for example, nurse, doctor, and chaplain).

If students experience personal problems which they would prefer not to discuss with their academic or college supervisor, they can contact the University Counselling Service. In addition, during induction, a seminar is held on student mental health. This seminar, and the handout which accompanies it, explains the many pressures and challenges students might face during their studies and outlines some of the common problems and mental illnesses that can affect students, ways of dealing with them, and available sources of help. It also includes a detailed list of all main sources of help, within the University, locally within Oxford, and nationally, to help students cope with the more minor and the more serious problems. The handout explains the work of different support agencies and provides complete contact details.

Resources and Facilities

All MSc students have access to a wide range of resources and facilities offered by the Law Faculty and the Centre for Criminology. The Faculty provides workstations exclusively for law graduate students in the St Cross building. Each study space is equipped with an Ethernet socket providing access to the University computer network. There is also an adjoining sitting area, with a drinks machine. Students also have access to college and University computing equipment. IT support is provided by the University, and by each of the colleges or halls.

Students have access to the Social Sciences Library which houses an extensive criminology collection. Unlike many libraries in Oxford, this library, located on the ground floor of the Social Sciences Building in Manor Road, has lending (as well as reference only) copies of key books. The library has ample graduate workspace and state-of-the-art computing facilities. It is located on the ground floor of the Manor Road Building. The Centre for Criminology is situated on the top floor of this building.

The Bodleian Law Library is an extremely useful reference library for MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice students as it holds the Bodleian's main collection on this subject, and it receives material by copyright deposit. It also purchases items of academic merit from other countries. Series of relevant government papers are also held. It therefore has an extensive collection of UK and Irish law, including subsidiary jurisdictions, and has one of the largest holdings of UK statutes and law reports. It provides students with access to a book and journal collection which should cover most, if not all, of their academic needs, almost all on open shelves. It also has many CD-ROM and web resources on site-license. In term time the library remains open until 10pm on weekdays and during the day at weekends. It also remains open during the day until 7pm during the vacations. The library staff provide induction tours for new students as well as on-going support.

Seminars

The Centre for Criminology holds regular research seminars which all graduate students are expected to attend, and which attract distinguished speakers from the international academic community, government and criminal justice agencies. The Centre's research staff can also help with teaching and are available to advise students on their academic plans.

Services

The University provides numerous services to help all of its students. Those most relevant to postgraduates in criminology include:

- The Careers Service, which provides comprehensive information and impartial guidance to students and graduates of Oxford University at all stages of the career decision making process.

- The Computing Service, which provides high quality, low cost, IT support for all students from those just beginning to become familiar with computers to those who need advice about very advanced computer programmes. It also provides access to workstations at its site, computing courses, site-licensed software and email and web space accounts for all.
- The International Student Advisory Service, which runs an annual Orientation Programme for new international students, and provides advice about funding and other issues particularly affecting international students, including immigration questions.
- Student Funding Services, which provide information and advice to prospective and current students on fees and funding.
- The Language Centre, which provides resources and services for members of the University who need foreign languages for their study, research or personal interest.

13. Admission

1. Criteria

Within equal opportunities principles and legislation, applications will be assessed in the light of a candidate's ability to meet the following criteria:

2. Academic ability

Proven and potential academic excellence

Applicants are normally expected to be predicted or to have achieved a first-class or a high upper second class undergraduate degree (or equivalent international qualifications) in law, sociology, politics, economics, social policy, psychology, history, or another subject relevant to criminology.

(If you hold non-British qualifications, you are advised to check with the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARIC) www.naric.org.uk how your qualifications match these requirements.)

A high upper second class degree is normally defined as one in which an average mark of 65% or above is achieved. For applicants with a degree from the USA, the minimum GPA we seek is 3.7 out of 4.0.

Extensive employment experience within the broad field of criminal justice may be regarded by the Board of Admissions as compensating for a lack of an undergraduate degree to the required standard.

Appropriate indicators will include:

Three academic references/letters of recommendation: These should support exceptional academic motivation; capacity for sustained and intense work; developed ability to organize time and set own agenda for study; intrepid attitude towards investigation and learning.

Written work produced by the student: Two pieces of written work are required. These should not normally exceed 2,000 words in length and should be written in English. Extracts from longer pieces are welcome but should be prefaced by a note which puts them in context and it should be indicated with square brackets

what elements have been omitted from the original piece of work. Ideally the works should relate to the proposed area of study. The pieces of work will be assessed for: comprehensive understanding of the subject area; understanding of problems in the area; ability to construct and defend an argument; powers of analysis; powers of expression.

Personal statement: This should not normally exceed one to two pages in length and should be written in English. This will be assessed for: your reasons for applying; evidence of motivation for and understanding of the proposed area of study; the ability to present a reasoned case in English; commitment to the subject, beyond the requirements of the degree course; capacity for sustained and intensive work; reasoning ability; ability to absorb new ideas, often presented abstractly, at a rapid pace.

Performance at interview(s): Students are not normally interviewed.

Additional material: No other documents should be submitted with the application. However, occasionally, additional documents (eg extra reference(s), explanation on degree classification) may be requested from candidates once they have applied or at later stages of the selection process, to enable the Board of Admissions to make a well-informed decision on the application.

When reviewing all application materials, the Board of Admissions will be looking for evidence of the following criteria:

Application: exceptional academic motivation; capacity for sustained and intense work; developed ability to organize time and set own agenda for study; intrepid attitude towards investigation and learning.

Knowledge: applicants will normally have a broad, deep, advanced, and integrated understanding of a subject relevant to criminology such as law, sociology, economics, politics, psychology, social policy, or history.

Reasoning ability: outstanding analytical abilities, the ability to separate speedily the relevant from the irrelevant, and the ability to develop and sustain complex arguments under pressure; capacities for accurate observation and insightful criticism, including willingness and ability to engage with other social science disciplines; originality and creativity of thought, open-mindedness, and capacity for lateral thinking; excellent powers of synthesis and economy of thought.

Communication: willingness and ability to express highly complex ideas clearly and effectively in English, with a particular eye to finesse and economy and an aspiration to professional standards of style and organization in scholarly writing.

Applicants and their referees are encouraged to address these criteria specifically.

3. Other qualifications and experience

Relevant research or professional experience may be an advantage.

4. Availability of supervision, teaching, facilities and places

Since the number of applications received always exceeds available places, the Centre for Criminology cannot admit every student who meets the basic entry requirements.

5. English language requirement

Applicants whose first language is not English are usually required to provide evidence of [proficiency in English at the higher level](#) required by the University. The Centre for Criminology's preference is for the IELTS test score. You must supply your test result with your application.

6. Deadlines and required full set of application materials

Please refer to the [Graduate Admissions website](#) for information on the deadlines which must be met, and the full set of supporting materials required, in order for applications to be guaranteed to be considered.

7. Availability of funding

Whether you have yet secured funding is not taken into consideration in the decision to make an initial offer of a place, but please note that the initial offer of a place will not be confirmed until the admitting college is satisfied that you have sufficient funding to cover your fees and living costs for the standard period of fee liability for your course.

8. Disability, health conditions and specific learning difficulties.

Students are selected for admission without regard to gender, marital or civil partnership status, disability, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or social background. Decisions on admission are based solely on the individual academic merits of each candidate and the application of the selection criteria appropriate to the programme of study. Further information on how these matters are supported during the admissions process is available on the [University's Equality and Diversity website](#).

9. Other information

None.

10. Assessors

All applications will be assessed by a Board of Admissions comprising three members of the academic staff with relevant experience and expertise.

11. Course webpage

Further information is available from the websites on the [MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice](#) and the [MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice \(Research Methods\)](#).

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

Student Feedback

This course has a number of objectives. The Director of Graduate Studies for Criminology and teachers are committed to making a thorough evaluation to assess whether the aims and objectives of the course are being achieved and to improve the course by identifying its strengths and weaknesses. There are various methods by which we seek to obtain feedback from students about their experiences. There are informal means by which students can communicate their experiences of this course: through their meetings with

their Academic Supervisor and through direct communication with the course teachers. Rather more formal is the role of the **Student Representative**. Students have the opportunity to elect a representative amongst their cohort in Week 0 of Michaelmas Term. This person attends termly meetings with the Board of Studies to represent the students' needs and interests. Apart from this, there is a more structured method for conducting course evaluation, namely the use of anonymous questionnaires administered in Week 6 of each term.

The questionnaires cover the following areas:

- Core course (content, methods of teaching);
- Research Design and Data Collection (content, methods of teaching);
- Options (content, methods of teaching);
- Academic supervision;
- Library services and IT provision;
- Teaching environment and facilities;
- Quality of teaching and learning;
- Assessment arrangements;
- Academic support;
- Dissertation (Trinity Term only).

The questionnaires are administered by the Graduate Studies Administrator and no teaching member of staff is present while students fill in the questionnaire. The feedback is then collated, and the findings presented to the Board of Studies.

The Board of Studies feeds back to the students, via the Student Representative, their responses to students' comments and concerns. The Board makes clear which of the suggestions for change they feel able to act upon. In some cases change might not be possible until the following academic year.

Subject to the requirements of data protection legislation, the Graduate Studies Administrator maintains a database on its alumni to track how our students fare in the employment or higher education market, to review the appropriateness of the course for certain careers, to help students keep in touch with each other, and to provide new students with ideas about where to seek careers guidance.

Staff appointment, training and appraisal:

- Newly appointed members of academic staff are required to attend a training programme organised by the Oxford Learning Institute that address such topics as lecturing, supervising, teaching in small groups and publishing.
- A senior member of the academic staff is also assigned to each more junior appointee as a mentor, with a brief to provide advice and support pro-actively on teaching matters as well as other aspects of professional development.
- Teaching by recently appointed members of academic staff is witnessed and evaluated by a more senior member of academic staff (not the mentor) before the appointment is confirmed at the five-year point.
- Teaching assessment and self-assessment also play an important part in the Faculty's system of continuing staff appraisal.

Curriculum Review and Course Management

Responsibility for the course is vested in the Law Board within the Social Sciences Division. The divisional board has formal responsibility for the maintenance of quality and standards for all courses under its aegis.

Responsibility for the organisation and delivery of the MSc is shared between the Director of Graduate Studies and the Board of Studies. The Board of Studies reports to the Management Committee of the Centre for Criminology (which has representatives from the division outside of Criminology and Law) and to the Law Faculty's Graduate Studies Committee. The Graduate Studies Committee reports to the Law Faculty Board, which reports to the Social Sciences Divisional Board. These Boards take an active interest in major curriculum changes as well as academic appointments.

The role of the Board of Studies is:

Open Business –

1. to ensure that the relevant procedures for MSc students, whether at department or faculty level, are followed appropriately and monitored regularly;
2. to ensure that the department and faculty procedures relating to the MSc operate effectively, and in conformity with the requirements set out in the Examination Regulations;
3. to review students' access to and use of department and faculty equipment, resources and facilities;
4. to review (on an annual basis) the Course programme specification;
5. to review (on a termly basis) the progress of the Course;
6. to monitor the continuing standard of the course, and the results of students on the course, in the light of assessment results and reports from internal and external examiners;
7. to review policies and procedures relating to marketing of the course and admissions to the course (including monitoring admissions in relation to Centre for Criminology and Law Faculty limits on the number of candidates admitted);
8. to review students' needs and interests (as indicated by the student representative, elected each year during induction week, by general student and tutor feedback and by formal course evaluation procedures);
9. to review the continuing appropriateness and effectiveness of the content/syllabus of the course, especially in relation to the aims and learning outcomes identified for the course, in the light of any developments in subject knowledge and practice, and issues highlighted in internal and external examiners' reports and recommend (to the Law Board) changes to the course content or methods of learning;
10. to review (on an annual basis) the range of options offered and amend the list of options accordingly;

11. to review (on an annual basis) staff resources, physical facilities available to support the Course and arrangements for teaching and to cooperate with the Criminology and Criminal Justice teaching group regarding needs and available teaching resources;
12. to formulate examination conventions for approval by the Social Sciences Divisional Board;
13. to review the continuing appropriateness of examining procedures established by the Board of Examiners;
14. to review (on an annual basis) the assessment methods and to monitor their continued appropriateness for the learning outcomes;

Closed Business –

1. to discuss and review students' progress with a focus on students who are experiencing difficulties (as indicated by the supervisors' reports reviewed by the Director of Graduate Studies for Criminology);
2. to decide on the appropriate course of action and possible sources of support for a student who needs to be advised that desired academic standards have not yet been, or are unlikely to be, achieved;
3. to seek to identify means whereby support can be provided to the supervisor(s) where serious concerns about a student's ability or application in relation to the satisfactory completion of the course have been raised;
4. to consider all complaints and appeals about the course and to refer them, where appropriate, to the Proctors' office;
5. to recommend to the Faculty's Examinations Committee (on an annual basis) a Chair of Examiners (who reports to the Board of Studies on all examination procedures) and a Board of Examiners and assessors.

To these ends, the Board of Studies meets each term during Week 7 and comprises the Director of Graduate Studies for Criminology, all the members of the Board of Examiners, the Director or Assistant Director of the Centre for Criminology and the Student Representatives (for open business only).

Review beyond the Faculty

- The report of external examiners is a major source of insight into the MSc's strengths and weaknesses.
- The Social Science Divisional Board and the University's Education Committee issue guidance and provide general supervision.
- The Law Faculty is subject to six-yearly reviews by the University as well as the Quality Assurance Agency's Institutional Review process.
- The Centre for Criminology Management Committee, which meets termly, reviews the progress of the course, including, as appropriate, reports from the Chair of Examiners, the External Examiner and the Director of Graduate Studies for Criminology.

- PGT courses are reviewed by the Social Sciences Division after their first five years of operation.

15. Regulation of assessment

All examinations for the MSc (including assessed essays and dissertations) are regulated by the University's Examination Regulations, and compliance with these is supervised by the University Proctors (a judicial authority appointed independently of the administration). In addition, the University and the Social Sciences Division have general policy guidelines relating to the examination process. Examination conventions specific to this programme, governing matters not dealt with in the Regulations, are agreed by the MSc Board of Examiners and then approved initially by the Board of Studies and then by the Faculty's Examinations Committee, reporting to the Faculty Board. The Examinations Committee also appoints the Board of Examiners and Assessors and supervises the conduct of examinations. The Nominating Committee recommends to the Vice Chancellor the name of the External Examiner, who usually serves for two years.

The Board of Examiners is responsible for the setting of papers and for the marking of scripts. University Regulations permit the Board to be assisted in setting and marking by Assessors, and a few members of academic staff in the Centre for Criminology and the wider Law Faculty serve as Assessors for the MSc.

Questions for the assessed essays are set by the option tutor and approved by the External Examiner, and finally by the Board of Examiners. Each essay is then double-blind marked by the two assessors for each option. A sample of scripts from those marked as pass and distinction, as well as any failed papers, is also reviewed by an External Examiner.

Dissertation titles are approved by the Board of Studies (closed business) during Hilary Term. Dissertations are double-blind marked by two assessors appointed by the Board of Examiners (the supervisor for the dissertation, appointed by the Board of Studies, has no responsibility for marking the dissertation). A sample of scripts from those marked as pass and distinction, as well as any failed papers, is also reviewed by an External Examiner.

The unseen Core Course Examination is set by two of the examiners, approved by the Board of Examiners and the External Examiner, and double-blind marked by the two examiners who set the paper. It is customary for these two examiners to consult those who taught the criminological theory/ criminal justice core courses about the questions which should be set in the examination.

Arrangements for Reassessments

Arrangements for reassessment shall be as follows:

(i) *Core Course*: Candidates who fail, or withdraw from, the core course examination may resit the examination in the Trinity Term of the following academic year. Such candidates who have completed successfully either or both of (a) the options and 'Research Design and Data Collection' (i.e. have obtained an aggregate mark of 50 per cent or more) and (b) the dissertation, may carry forward the marks gained for the successfully completed components. Candidates may also carry forward their certificate of satisfactory completion of the continuous assessment element of 'Research Design and Data Collection', and, where relevant, those of 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', and/or 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods'.

(ii) *Options and 'Research Design and Data Collection'*: Candidates who have failed to obtain an aggregate mark of 50 per cent for all assignments for the options and 'Research Design and Data Collection' together, or who have withdrawn from any assessment, may resubmit assessments for which they obtained a mark of 49 per cent or less. Candidates may resubmit assessed essays in which they have obtained a mark of 49 per cent or less to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford, according to the standard timetable for submitting essays in the following academic year. Such candidates who have completed successfully (a) the core course examination, (b) the dissertation, and (c) any assessment for which they have received a mark of 50 per cent or more, may carry forward the marks gained for the successfully completed components. Candidates may also carry forward their certificate of satisfactory completion of the continuous assessment element of 'Research Design and Data Collection', and, where relevant, that of 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', and/or 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods'.

(iii) *Continuous assessment element of 'Research Design and Data Collection', 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and 'Qualitative Methods'*: Candidates who fail to complete an assignment which forms part of the continuous assessment element of Research Design and Data Collection, Social Explanation and Data Analysis and/or Statistical Methods for Social Scientists and/or Qualitative Methods to the satisfaction of the respective Course Tutor may be required to resubmit that assignment once by noon on Friday of Week Nine of the relevant term.

(iv) *Dissertation*: Candidates who fail, or withdraw from, the dissertation may resubmit the dissertation by the required date in Trinity Term of the following academic year. Such candidates who have completed successfully (a) the core course and/or (b) the options and/or (c) Research Design and Data Collection, may carry forward the marks gained for the successfully completed components. Candidates may also carry forward their certificate of satisfactory completion of the continuous assessment element of Research Design and Data Collection, and, where relevant, that of 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', and/or 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods'.

The Role of Examiners

Internal and external examiners are required to produce reports after the examinations for consideration by the Faculty of Law, the Centre's Management Committee, the Social Sciences Board and the Education Committee. The External Examiner writes a yearly report to the Vice-Chancellor commenting on whether the standards are appropriate to the award, in part by comparisons with the standards of comparable institutions, and on whether the assessment procedures and the regulations governing them, are fair and appropriate. The External Examiner is also required to report on whether the conduct of the examination and the determination of awards have been fairly conducted, and whether individual student performance has been judged in accordance with the regulations and conventions of the Examining Board. Specifically, External Examiners' reports are expected to cover the following points:

- the standards demonstrated by the students;
- the extent to which standards are appropriate for the award;
- the design, structure and marking of assessments;
- the procedures for assessment and examinations;
- whether or not external examiners have had sufficient access to, and the power to call upon, any material necessary to make the required judgements;

- students' performance in relation to their peers in comparable courses;
- the coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and their consonances with the explicit roles required of them;
- the basis and rationale for any comparisons made;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort;
- the quality of learning which may be indicated by student performance.

The Report is addressed to the Vice-Chancellor, and will be considered by the Faculty of Law, the Social Science Division Board, the Education Committee, and the Centre for Criminology Management Committee. It is also circulated to all MSc Course tutors.

Marking Scale

The degree of MSc shall be awarded to any candidate who achieves a mark of at least 50 per cent for (a) the five options and the 'Research Design and Data Collection' course, (b) the core course paper, and (c) the dissertation, as well as satisfactorily completes the continuous assessment element of 'Research Design and Data Collection', and, where relevant, those of 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', and/or 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods'. The examiners award a distinction to any candidate who achieves marks of at least 70 per cent on at least six of the papers, as well as satisfactorily completes the continuous assessment element of 'Research Design and Data Collection', and, where relevant, those of 'Social Explanation and Data Analysis', and/or 'Statistical Methods for Social Scientists' and/or 'Qualitative Methods'. In this calculation, both the core course and the dissertation shall count as two papers and each assessed essay shall count as one.

Students should be aware that unlike some other academic institutions, Oxford does not operate a quota system of distinctions, nor is there a Bell curve used on degree awards.

70-100: Distinction level

Papers which are awarded a distinction will be well structured, well argued and comprehensive. They will be analytical, rather than merely descriptive and will go beyond the most obvious sources of knowledge. The candidate will have demonstrated an unusually clear grasp of most of the issues (including all the more important ones), used an unusually wide range of material, and displayed very good skills in evaluating the material and using it to construct arguments which deal with the issues.

80-100: Superb work showing fine command of intellectual debates and making a creative contribution to them.

75-79: Excellent work, intellectually stimulating argument.

70-74: Fine work showing powerful analysis, a distinctive argument, and full awareness of the secondary literature and critical engagement with it.

50-69: Pass

Papers which are awarded a pass mark will demonstrate a competent grasp of most of the more important issues, a familiarity with and understanding of a reasonable range of relevant materials, and good skills in evaluating the material and using it to construct arguments which deal with the issues.

65-69: Strong pass: Strong and well-developed independent critical analysis that moves beyond issues discussed in seminars. Clear and logical arguments and an awareness of nuances and complexities in debates. Strong evidence of independent research drawing on a wide range of literature. Some indication of distinction potential; no significant errors of fact or interpretation.

55-64: Good pass: Sound analytical standard with most points developed rather than stated. Some evidence of independent critical analysis and evaluation and synthesis of material. Addresses the question and provides a reasonably focused answer. Some awareness of nuances and complexities in debates.

50-54: Pass: Basic analytical skills apparent from identification of intellectual problems with some structured discussion of them. Partially addresses the question but lacks focus. Broadly satisfactory grasp of key issues. Arguments appropriate, but underdeveloped.

Candidates are expected to pay attention to academic style, grammar, use of referencing and citation conventions and clarity of expression, as these will be taken into account in the assessment process.

0-49: Fail

An unsatisfactory piece of work. At best, the answer will simply describe the most relevant research and debates but will not demonstrate any skill at analysis or argumentation. It is likely that this candidate will not have clearly demonstrated much understanding of the question or the issues it raises. Some of the most relevant material is likely to have been ignored and irrelevant material included.

45-49: Marginal fail: inadequate development of points made.

0-44: Outright fail: inadequate coverage and inadequate analysis.

16. Academic integrity: good practice in citation, and the avoidance of plagiarism

The Board of Studies places strong emphasis on the avoidance of plagiarism, academic integrity and good practice in citation. To this end, a compulsory Plagiarism and Reference Management Seminar organized by the Social Science Library during induction week, as well as a highly recommended workshop on referencing and plagiarism organized in Week 6 of Michaelmas Term by Dr Jane Donoghue, cover plagiarism and how to avoid it. Moreover, students are welcome to seek further guidance from their course tutors, dissertation supervisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. The course handbook contains a section devoted to academic integrity, which refers to the Education Committee guidance.

17. Indicators of quality and standards

Issues of quality and standards are addressed in both internal and external examiners' reports and other forms of course evaluation (see 14 above) on an annual basis.

The Course is under the aegis of the Faculty of Law which was awarded 5* in the 1996 and 2001 Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE); Awarded 'Excellent' in the last teaching quality inspection on behalf of HEFCE; placed #1 for law in the Guardian Education University Guide 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2011; and placed #2 for law (behind Cambridge) in The Times Good University Guide 2009 and 2012 and the Guardian Education University Guide 2010. The new QS World University Rankings have placed Oxford second in the world for Law, behind Harvard.

In November 2008 the Social Sciences Division reviewed the MSc and MPhil in Criminology and Criminal Justice and the MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice (Research Methods). The review concluded that the courses form “a successful suite of distinctive programmes of very high quality, situated in the rich research environment provided by the Centre, and attracting high calibre students.” The Centre was praised for providing students with a thorough and intellectually challenging grounding in criminology and criminal justice.

The Director of Graduate Studies makes the External Examiner’s report available to all supervisors and puts in place mechanisms designed to ensure that all of those involved in the Course can build on the strengths identified. In his External Examiner Report, the previous External Examiner praised the course as an ‘exemplary programme’, displaying both rigour and distinctiveness, and enhanced by a dedicated academic and administrative staff group. He has found the quality of the work produced by students consistently high, and has been impressed by the care with which work is assessed. The current External Examiner commented in his first report that some of the students’ “work is impressive; many essays are genuinely outstanding and the best work is publishable”. He considered this to be “an indication of high standards in the recruitment and selection of students onto the programme, thorough and stimulating teaching and supervision and providing students with the highest quality of course materials”. He also found the quality of marking and assessment to be “rigorous”.