

MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice
Joint degree of University of Glasgow School of Social and Political Sciences,
and Strathclyde University Law School

Introduction

A taught MSc in Criminal Justice was established in 2001 as a joint degree of the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde, but was administered at that time through the Glasgow Graduate School of Law (GGSL) at Strathclyde. From 2009-2010, the content of the existing MSc was overhauled and it was renamed as the MSc In Criminology and Criminal Justice (MSc CCJ). New courses were added and the administration of the MSc was taken over by the University of Glasgow. Currently, the MSc is taught jointly by Glasgow University staff who are also members of the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR) consortium, and staff from the Law School in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS), University of Strathclyde. It is administered by the University of Glasgow, but students are enrolled on the basis of having full status in the two universities. The arrangements between the two universities are laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding.

The programme has been successful in obtaining ESRC recognition in the most recent Recognition Exercise undertaken in relation to the establishment of the Scottish Doctoral Training Centre, Socio-legal /Criminology Pathway.

Recruitment

The programme has recruited steadily since inception in 2001. It attracts mainly UK/EU students with a handful of International students (1-2 each year). In 2009-2010, the year of the re-launch, it attracted 12 new students (3 part-time and 9 full-time). As 2009-2010 was a transition year when Glasgow took over administration, there were also an additional 7 students who had registered for the degree on a part-time basis at Strathclyde in 2008-2009 and were undertaking their second year, yielding a total of 19 students on the programme in 2009-2010. In 2010-11, 19 students registered for the course (6 new or returning part-time, and 13 full-time). Of these, 15 are UK, three are EU, and one is an international student.

Student Progress

Several students have gone on to take PhDs. In the academic year 2009-10, 6 of the 7 returning second year part-time students graduated at Strathclyde, the 7th student is re-sitting this year. Of those 'new' students registered at Glasgow in 2009-2010, one distinction and five merit awards were made; this reflects in part the high standard of students coming through the programme. With the recent ESRC recognition of the programme as part of the Scottish DTC, it is anticipated that the number of high calibre students will grow.

Teaching

The MSc CCJ consists of 3 core courses and 3 optional courses, plus a dissertation on a topic of students' own choice. The 3 core courses are *Understanding and Explaining Crime and Social Control* (which is focused primarily on theoretical perspectives in criminology); *Criminal Justice and Process* (which explores the structures and processes of criminal justice) and *Research and Enquiry in Crime and Justice* (which investigates research methods used in criminological research). Two of the core courses are convened by Glasgow staff and the third is jointly co-convened, with the dissertation convened by Glasgow. For the 3 optional courses, students choose from a range of optional courses: *Punishment and Penology* (convened by Strathclyde); *Crime, Media and Popular Culture* (co-convened); *Rehabilitation and Desistance from Crime* (convened by Glasgow); *Crimes of the Powerful* (convened by Glasgow), and; *Crime and*

Community (convened by Glasgow), or others which are offered in the School of Social and Political Sciences.

From 2011-2012, a new optional course *Criminological Perspectives on Security* will be convened by staff at Glasgow, and the existing *Crimes of the Powerful* course will be substituted by *The Global Criminal Economy*.

The dissertation is convened by Glasgow, though supervision is provided by staff at both institutions.

The external examiner's report for the academic session 2009-10 was extremely favourable, and commented that '*the courses offered are interesting and imaginative in content and assessment. The teaching team have an impressive breadth of expertise and are committed to providing a teaching and learning experience of the highest quality. I was impressed with everything I saw.*'

The external examiner's report noted some concern about the differential marking scheme that was in place as a result of the transitional year when administration of the MSc programme passed from Strathclyde University to Glasgow. Whilst the new 2009-2010 intake (registered at Glasgow) were marked under the common code of assessment (22 point scale) the second year part-time students who were registered at Strathclyde adhered to the Strathclyde marking code (100%). This was for one year only and all students will be marked using 22 point scale from now on.

The external examiner also raised the variability of the feed-back provided to students across different courses. We have since introduced a common feed-back sheet (based on that used in the *Research and Enquiry* course) in all courses of the programme to reduce disparity in extent of feed-back.

Student Feedback

Student feedback is very positive, and the students enjoy being integrated into a vibrant postgraduate culture. SCCJR run a seminar series attracting national and international speakers; a lively working lunch programme, and an Ethnography reading group in which students participate.

SCCJR also enjoy good professional relations with a range of local and national criminal justice policy and practice organisations in Scotland. In order to enhance the student learning experience, negotiations have recently been underway with a number of criminal justice and community safety statutory and third sector organisations in order to map a way forward for collaborative research endeavour, which allows PGT students to undertake linked dissertations which feed into and inform informational/research needs of such organisations. This in turn provides students with opportunities to undertake 'real world' research, and enhances their employability. It is important to note that the requirements for Dissertation take precedence in any such arrangement although, following completion of the Dissertation, students will submit a short report on their research to the organisation concerned. This follows developing 'good practice' elsewhere in the College of Social Sciences. In 2010-2011, some students will be undertaking dissertations supported by the Scottish Crime and Drugs Enforcement Agency (SCDEA), the Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN), and Strathclyde Police Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

Management and Monitoring

Although the programme is administered by the University of Glasgow, it is managed and monitored by a committee drawn from staff from both Strathclyde and Glasgow Universities. This committee meets annually. In addition, the teaching team meets annually to discuss teaching and academic matters.

Partnership Arrangements

It should be noted that there has recently (7th March 2011) been email communication from Strathclyde that they wish to withdraw from the partnership for 'commercial reasons' and seek an exit point at the end of September. An MSc CCJ Programme Committee meeting is being scheduled for 19th April 2011. Unfortunately, this falls outside the current timeframe for reporting to UoG's Academic and Student Administration Committee (ASC), however the ASC will be informed of developments and the likely implications for the delivery of the programme in 2011-2012 as soon as possible after the April meeting.

Professor Michele Burman
Programme Co-Director
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