



Module Specification

Anomalous Experiences and Mental Health

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Part 1: Information

Module title: Anomalous Experiences and Mental Health

Module code: USPK67-15-3

Level: Level 6

For implementation from: 2023-24

UWE credit rating: 15

ECTS credit rating: 7.5

Faculty: Faculty of Health & Applied Sciences

Department: HAS Dept of Social Sciences

Partner institutions: None

Field: Psychology

Module type: Module

Pre-requisites: None

Excluded combinations: None

Co-requisites: None

Continuing professional development: No

Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements: None

Part 2: Description

Overview: Not applicable

Features: Not applicable

Educational aims: See Learning Outcomes

In addition the educational experience may explore, develop, and practise but not formally discretely assess the following capacities to:

Describe major approaches in anomalistic psychology.

Define key constructs in anomalistic psychology.

Develop critical thinking.

Develop debating skills and contribution to group discussion.

Outline syllabus: The syllabus will be divided into two themes in which critical thinking skills and methodological issues in psychology research will be emphasised throughout: 1) explanations and models in anomalistic psychology; 2) the evaluation of specific anomalous experiences. An example outline of topics follows.

SECTION ONE: Introduction

Definitions and historical overview.

Pseudoscience and critical thinking

Methodological issues in the study of anomalous experiences and beliefs

SECTION TWO: explanations and models

Neurocognitive explanations (for anomalous experiences and beliefs):

Perceptual errors (e.g. apophenia)

Memory (e.g. false memories)

Reasoning errors (e.g. misjudging probability)

Individual differences:

Intelligence and creativity

Illusion of control and personality traits

Developmental models:

Magical thinking in childhood

Childhood abuse and dissociation

Mental health:

Anomalous experiences and schizophrenia

Spirituality and health

The psi hypothesis:

Extrasensory-perception (ESP)

Psychokinesis – experimental protocols and critical analysis

SECTION THREE: Specific anomalous experiences and conclusion:

Mediumship (anomalies of ‘self’)

Phenomenology, prevalence and correlates

Dissociative Identity Disorder and mediumship

Healing and prayer (anomalies of ‘wellness’)

The use of psychic healing (e.g. Reiki), its phenomenology and evidence base

The placebo effect

Out-of-body experiences and near-death experiences (body anomalies)

Bodily illusions (e.g. phantom limbs, tilted room illusion)

Phenomenology, neurological correlates, survival models

Apparitions and hallucinations (perceptual anomalies)

Prevalence, types, phenomenology, psychological explanations

Mystical experiences and flow (anomalies of time and space)

Prevalence, phenomenology, after effects,

Psychopharmacology (e.g. psilocybin research), neurobiology

Lucid dreams and sleep paralysis and conclusion (sleep anomalies)

Prevalence, types, phenomenology, psychological explanations

This outline relates to the chapter structure of a recent textbook, *Anomalous Psychology* (Holt et al., 2012).

Through completion of this module students will demonstrate qualities and transferable skills for employment, including the ability to:

Communicate effectively, both face-to-face and in writing

Present ideas clearly

Analyse and understand complex information, from different perspectives

Critically evaluate information

Retrieve and organise information from different sources.

Handle primary source material critically.

Solve problems and reason scientifically to consider alternative approaches and solutions.

Make critical judgements and evaluations to gain different perspectives on a question.

Be sensitive to contextual and interpersonal factors, including behaviour and social interaction.

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: A variety of approaches will be used with the aim of maximising the active engagement of students. These may include:

Lectures

Seminars

Online blogs and discussion

Scheduled learning: Students will participate in a lecture followed by a seminar, which will orientate students to the key issues, debates and concepts in a given area, followed by further discussion and exploration of these by students. Total contact time will be 36 hours.

Independent learning: Students will engage in independent thinking and research in relation to particular topics for about an hour and will post their findings in an online blog and discussion forum. Total time spent so doing will be about 30 hours. Regular feedback on the blog is designed to improve students' writing and critical evaluation skills.

The remaining time (approximately 84 hours) will be spent engaging with essential reading and assignment preparation and completion.

TEL: A culture of continuous learning will be developed through the implementation of online discussion boards and blogs to facilitate independent learning and the communication of ideas and resources between students. MyUWE and Blackboard, the university supported learning portal and virtual learning environment, will be used to support students' learning, conduct activities, organise and communicate learning materials. Students will be able to engage with the material, other students and members of staff through these systems and make use of the various functionalities built into them (e.g., blogs, journals, audio, video, discussion boards, wikis, etc.) as appropriate and useful for the module learning.

Module Learning outcomes: On successful completion of this module students will achieve the following learning outcomes.

MO1 Critically evaluate psychological approaches to the understanding of anomalous experiences (such as hallucinations, out-of-body experiences or mystical experiences).

MO2 Make informed methodological critiques of research in anomalistic psychology.

MO3 Develop and demonstrate understanding of research methods and experimental design in this area.

MO4 Reflect critically on the evidence-base for phenomena and integrate different psychological methods and approaches in their understanding of phenomena

MO5 Demonstrate independent learning and surface research skills.

Hours to be allocated: 150

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 114 hours

Face-to-face learning = 36 hours

Total = 150

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at [readinglists.uwe.ac.uk](https://uwe.rl.talis.com/index.html) via the following link <https://uwe.rl.talis.com/index.html>

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: Assessment has been chosen to encourage reflection, critical analysis and evaluation.

The summative assessment (assessment that contributes to module mark) includes two tasks: 1) Creation of a blog post and contribution to an online, student-led discussion, in relation to a particular question that follows each seminar. This will enable debate, the development of argument, the evaluation of research and cited support; 2) A timed essay that will require students to critically evaluate theoretical models in anomalous psychology, drawing on empirical evidence. This will be a seen essay that could require students to focus their critical analysis on one of the blog topics and extend their critical evaluation of it.

Opportunities for formative assessment (does not contribute to module mark) and feedback will arise through seminars, through work in pairs, in groups and in interaction with lecturers on a one-to-one basis.

The assessment criteria for the timed essay will follow the indicative qualities as outlined in the assessment guidelines in the Programme Handbook for Psychology. The timed essay (in controlled conditions) will last for one hour. The assessment criteria for the online discussion will be based on each student making an informed contribution to each discussion and writing a number of clear and coherent blog posts (of about 200 words each). These will also be marked according to the assessment guidelines in the Programme Handbook for Psychology. Feedback will be ongoing and will aim to improve students' writing and critical evaluation skills.

Assessment tasks:

Written Assignment (First Sit)

Description: Timed essay (1 hour)

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO4

Online Assignment (First Sit)

Description: Participation in post-seminar blogs and online discussion

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5

Written Assignment (Resit)

Description: Timed essay (1 hour)

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO4

Online Assignment (Resit)

Description: Participation in post-seminar blogs and online discussion

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5

Part 5: Contributes towards

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study: