



LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY

Course Specification

Master of Arts

School Mental Health Specialist

Course Code: MSMHS

2026/27

leedsbeckett.ac.uk

MA School Mental Health Specialist

Applicant Facing Course Specification for 2026/27 Entrants

Confirmed at October 2025

General Information

Award	MA School Mental Health Specialist
Contained awards	Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) School Mental Health Specialist Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) School Mental Health Specialist
Awarding body	Leeds Beckett University
Level of qualification and credits	Level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, with 180 credit points at Level 7 of the Higher Education Credit Framework for England.
Course lengths and standard timescales	Start dates will be notified to students via their offer letter. The length and mode of delivery of the course is confirmed below: The format is: 3 years (part-time, distance-learning, online delivery)
Part time study	PT delivery is usually at half the intensity of the FT equivalent course, although there may be flexibility to increase your pace of study to shorten the overall course duration. Some modules may be delivered in a different sequence from that defined within this information set but the modules offered within each level are consistent. Please note that a work placement option is not generally available to PT students.
Location(s) of delivery	Distance Learning
Entry requirements	Admissions criteria are confirmed in your offer letter. Details of how the University recognises prior learning and supports credit transfer are located here: https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/student-information/course-information/recognition-of-prior-learning/ Admissions enquiries may be directed to: AdmissionsEnquiries@leedsbeckett.ac.uk .
Course fees	Course fees are confirmed in your offer letter. A breakdown of any additional costs is included on the online prospectus entry for this course. Fees enquiries may be directed to Fees@leedsbeckett.ac.uk .

Policies, Standards and Regulations

<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/public-information/academic-regulations/>

Standard regulations apply to this course.

Timetable

Timetables for Semester 1 will be made available to students during induction week via:

- i) The Student Portal (MyBeckett)
- ii) The Leeds Beckett app

Any difficulties relating to timetabled sessions may be discussed with your Course Administrator.

Key Contacts

Your course director Claire Sewell

Your course administrator education@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Course Overview

Aims

The aims of the programme are to support learners to adopt a public health approach to mental wellbeing that will provide students working in schools and colleges with a thorough understanding of the theory and practice of evidence-based strategies to support children and young people in relation to:

- (1) Preventing mental illness and promoting protective factors
- (2) Early identification and support and early promotion of wellbeing for those with reduced wellbeing
- (3) Preventing relapse and the associated impacts of mental disorders such as stigma and risky behaviours.

The aims of the programme are to:

- enable students to synthesise the theory and practice which will promote the emotional resilience of pupils and staff in the schools and colleges where they work
- enable students to critique and lead wellbeing initiatives and establish cultures and practices conducive to good mental health and wellbeing across their school or college
- synthesise specialist, in-depth knowledge of the signs, symptoms and behaviours associated with poor or declining mental health of children and young people in their school or college
- equip students with the confidence and skills to critique, select and deploy evidence-based counselling skills and intervention strategies to support children and young people in need
- enable students to maximise the impact of parental involvement and pupil participation in wellbeing initiatives and interventions across their school or college community
- enable the student to work alongside the senior lead for mental health and to critically synthesise, apply and sustain evidence-based, data-driven whole school approaches to good mental wellbeing, including training and supporting colleagues with appropriate interventions
- to provide students with the opportunity to negotiate, plan, conduct and evaluate an extended research project (dissertation) that is relevant to the theoretical and professional content of the course.

Course learning outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1	Independently research, critically review and apply current evidence on protective factors and the promotion of self-efficacy and emotional resilience, to support positive wellbeing and mental health in school or college contexts.
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2	Critically reflect on current research and the latest thinking relating to high risk factors, indicators and behaviours associated with poor or declining mental health and wellbeing, and take these into account when implementing school or college-based systems, interventions, and practices
3	Demonstrate a critical understanding and specialist knowledge of a range of mental health conditions experienced by children and young people
4	Select and employ ethically approved, methodologically robust and age-appropriate intervention strategies to support emerging, mild or moderate mental health conditions of children and young people in need, including counselling skills, theories, techniques and strategies
5	Critically evaluate case studies, research papers and perspectives relating to the participation of children and young people and the involvement of parents and carers in order reflect on and improve current practices within their school or college
6	Critically evaluate local mental health provision, identifying where these services may be of benefit to pupils at their school or college and skilfully deliver CPD interventions, initiatives, and practices, informed by current research and learning from other organisations, to support colleagues in school or college.
7	Implement sustainable and embedded ways to evaluate school or college practices to support the mental wellbeing of pupils and staff
8	demonstrate their enhanced skills in independent thought, depth of knowledge and their ability to synthesise, apply and add theoretically knowledge to a specific body of knowledge. Additionally, they will further develop an independent outlook on learning techniques and research skills as a result of the Research Methods module and throughout the supervision

Teaching and Learning Activities

Summary

The programme will develop communities of practice through face-to-face and distance teaching and learning. All modules will utilise a conference style event for group discussion, presentations, feedback, and collaborative learning and will be led by colleagues with relevant professional practice and research expertise.

The course will involve students critically reflecting upon their professional practice, the current and potential activities within their school or college, their learning on the course and the interconnectedness of a community of practice.

Delivery for each of the seven modules will be delivered online using Leeds Beckett University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) as:

- a repository for learning materials and resources
- a forum for discussions

- a means of ongoing formative feedback and formal assessment.

Leeds Beckett University's Distance Learning Unit will ensure a consistent and interactive approach and a user-friendly experience.

The other aspects of delivery will involve face to face contact with course tutors and fellow students. The Senior Lead for Mental Health will serve as a work-based mentor for the student. The student will also receive supervision from a suitably trained and experienced course tutor who will support them as they apply the learning and development gained during the course to their role as the school mental health specialist.

The final module (if completing the PgDip) for the course involves a visit to another organisation followed by a work-based project. For this, each student will be allocated a project supervisor who will guide them in drawing up their project proposal and developing and investigating a negotiated line of enquiry to develop as an independent practice-researcher and to make a tangible improvement to mental health support at their school or college.

The dissertation will be the final module for the MA students. This module will provide students with the opportunity to focus on and extend their selected area of interest and present this as a substantial piece of primary research or as an extended literature review. The dissertation also demonstrates and enhances students' skills in independent thought, depth of knowledge and the ability to synthesise, apply and add theoretically to a specific body of knowledge. Students will also develop an independent outlook on learning techniques and research skills gained through the Research Methods module and throughout the supervision. Finally, the supervision will develop students' confidence through the challenge of presenting and defending an academic review of their area of chosen to focus of study.

The approach to learning, teaching and assessment is informed by a commitment to:

- helping students to undertake their role as the school mental health specialist as effectively as possible, through the application of theory and evidence within their school or college
- whole school or college evaluation of current practices
- the creation of realistic school or college improvement plans
- self-reflection and critical evaluation of practice and perspectives
- exposing students to up-to-date national and international research and practice in the application of mental health in schools and colleges
- making conscious and explicit the research-informed teaching and professional practice undertaken by all staff contributing to the programme

Course participants will work in different school or college sectors such as primary, secondary and further education and different types of organisations such as: Special Schools, Multi Academy Trusts, Pupil Referral Units, Maintained Schools, University Training Colleges, Six Form Colleges and Further Education Colleges. Whilst all assessment tasks and learning objectives are generic and apply to all course participants, learning

materials and activities will be differentiated to account for the educational settings and ages of children and young people.

Your modules

This information is correct for students progressing through the programme within standard timescales. Option modules listed are indicative of a typical year. There may be some variance in the availability of option modules. Students who are required to undertake repeat study may be taught alternate modules which meet the overall course learning outcomes. Details of module delivery will be provided in your timetable.

Level 7

Compulsory modules

Module title	Credits	Semester/ teaching period
Promoting protective factors for good mental health and wellbeing	20	1-2
Early identification of mental health support needs	20	1-2
Supporting children and young people with mental health needs	20	1-2
Parent / carer involvement and pupil participation to support good mental health and wellbeing	20	1-2
Working with school staff and outside agencies to support good mental health and wellbeing	20	1-2
Work based project - Sustaining and embedding positive mental health and wellbeing	20	1-2
Dissertation	60	1-2
Number of credits of compulsory modules	180	

Assessment and Scheduled Learning and Teaching Activities

The assessment balance and overall workload associated with this course are calculated from core modules and typical option module choices undertaken by students on the course. They have been reviewed and confirmed as representative by the Course Director, but applicants should note that the specific option choices students make may influence both assessment and workload balance.

A standard module equates to 200 notional learning hours, which may be comprised of teaching, learning and assessment, any embedded placement activities and independent study. Modules may have more than one component of assessment.

Assessment

Level 7

On this course students will be assessed predominately by coursework with some practicals.

Workload

The number of hours of workload generally equates to 1200 per level for an honours degree or 1800 for a Masters programme, corresponding to the national standard of 10 notional hours of learning for each UK HE credit point.

Overall Workload	Level 7
Teaching, learning and assessment	750 hours
Independent study	1050 hours
Placement	0 hours