

Development of The South London Higher Training Scheme in Forensic Psychiatry Psycho-Legal Syllabus

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This project aimed to develop a syllabus that forensic psychiatry higher trainees might use to develop their psycho-legal knowledge and skills.

Background

- The GMC curriculum specifies psycho-legal knowledge and skills as core learning outcomes for specialist training in forensic psychiatry.
- ‘Real-life’ work alone is unstructured and risks leaving major training gaps.

Methods

- Identify core psycho-legal issues in forensic psychiatry and optimal methods for learning.
- Developed syllabus reviewed by the South London Training Programme Director, and sent to the of the Forensic Faculty Specialist Advisory Committee for further review.

Results

- The Syllabus lists key clinical and legal constructs.
- Column A addresses legal constructs, and Column B clinical constructs. Each construct in Column B may potentially be ‘mapped onto’ each construct in Column A; where each ‘mapping’ represents a ‘case type’.
- Trainees can use this ‘case type’ to consider relevant clinical, legal, clinico-legal and ethical issues, a format based upon the Oxford Casebook of Forensic Psychiatry¹.
- There is also a guide to resources trainees may use to develop the required knowledge.
- The syllabus recommends using ‘workshops’. This allows for comprehensive coverage of the Syllabus.

Conclusions

This Syllabus and use of workshops have since been adopted to design psycho-legal teaching for forensic trainees in North, East and West London as outlined in Improving Psycho-Legal Skills for Forensic Trainees: Evaluation of an Online Teaching Programme².

Forensic Psychiatry Higher Trainee Psycho-Legal Syllabus: *Psycho-legal Case Types*

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
Acting Ethically as an Expert Witness/Duties of an Expert Witness	Neurodevelopmental disorders
Limits of expertise	Autism spectrum disorder
Sources of information	Disorders of intellectual development and learning
Resisting legal pressure	Attention deficient hyperactivity disorder
Use of psychological tests	Psychotic disorders
Bias	Acute and transient psychotic disorder
Medically relevant but legally inadmissible information	Schizophrenic illnesses
Duty or right to break confidentiality	Drug-induced psychosis
Pre-Trial	Delusional disorder
Fitness to be interviewed	Mood disorders
Diversion from Criminal Justice proceedings	Bipolar affective disorder
Public interest in prosecution	Depression
Confessions (reliability/suggestibility)	Neurotic or stress related disorders
Fitness to plead	Anxiety/panic
Effective participation and reasonable adjustments	Post-traumatic stress disorder
Remand to hospital for report	Obsessive compulsive disorder
Specific Offences	Adjustment disorder
Infanticide	Dissociative disorders
Joint enterprise	Dissociative amnesia
Killing in pursuance of a suicide pact	Dissociative neurological symptom disorder (conversion disorder)
Extradition	Substance misuse disorders
Stalking	Personality disorder
Defences	Emotionally unstable
Self-defence	Dissocial/psychopathy
Duress	Paranoid
Capacity to form mens rea	Schizotypal
Insanity	Other
Sane automatism	Paraphilic disorders
Loss of control	Factitious disorder
Diminished responsibility	Neurocognitive disorder
Mistaken belief	Amnesia
Sentencing	Delirium
Hospital orders	Dementia
Community orders (MHTR, DRR)	Traumatic brain injury
Risk assessment for the court	Childhood and adolescent mental health
Culpability	Disorders associated with the pregnancy, childbirth, or the puerperium
Mitigation	
Magistrate’s Court Specifics	
Mental Health Tribunal	
Use of allegations and behaviour without conviction	
Recommendations with focus on appropriate treatment test	
Mental health law	
Civil sections	
Community Treatment Order	
Public protection arrangements	
Recall to hospital	
Transfer from prison to hospital	
Interface with MCA, DoLS, & LPS	
Interface with human rights law (ECHR, CRPD)	
Duty to supervise in the community	
Coroner’s Court	
Civil cases	
Clinical and institutional negligence	
Personal injury	
Capacity to make a will	
‘Fitness to parent’	

Psycho-Legal Workshops

- Facilitator or trainee led.
- Focus on a ‘case type’ illustrated by an anonymized expert report, minus opinions & recommendations, or a ‘fictional’ case vignette¹
- Trainees consider the clinical, legal, clinico-legal and ethical issues that arise

1. Eastman N, Adshead G, Fox S, Latham R, Whyte S, *Oxford Casebook of Forensic Psychiatry*, Oxford University Press (in press)
2. Loughran et al., *Improving Psycho-Legal Skills for Forensic Trainees: Evaluation of an Online Teaching Programme*, poster at Faculty of Forensic Psychiatry Online Conference 2022