Introduction to the MSc in ABA/PBS Distance-Learning

Dr Thanos Vostanis, UKBA(cert), BCBA-D, IBA, Lecturer in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Overview

- Introduction to the Tizard Centre
- Course Aims
- Course Structure
- Essential Considerations
- Assessments and Grading
- Additional Information

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Introduction to the Tizard Centre

Introduction to the Tizard Centre

- Founded in the 1980s.
- National and international reputation of excellence.
- One of only a small number of academic groups in the UK specialising in intellectual and developmental disabilities or autism.

Our Focus

Who?

- Children, young people and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities or autistic individuals.

Where?

- Health, psychology, social care, and education.

Topics

- Behaviours of concern, mental health needs, offending behaviour, physical health, relationships, inclusion, education, service settings.
- Working with and supporting those who support this group (family carers, staff, services, etc.)
- Developing services, organisations and cultures to support these groups appropriately.

Applied focus

- Focus on wellbeing, self-advocacy, and quality of life.

What do we do?

Teaching

Postgraduate Courses

Consultancy

Positive Behaviour Support

Applied Behaviour Analysis

Active Support

Forensic Issues and Court Work

Precision Teaching and Instructional Design

Policy

Policy Developments

Calls for Evidence

NICE Guidelines

Research

Staff Research

Student Research

Tizard Learning Disability Review

Continuous Professional Development

Tizard Seminars

Tizard Behavioural Talks

Tizard Centre Recognition

- 2013: Queen's Anniversary Award for Higher Education in recognition of our "outstanding contribution to improving the lives of people with disabilities and their families."
- Rank highly for social policy in the league tables and research benchmarks.
- University – silver rating in Teaching Excellence Framework 2023.

THE QUEEN'S ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION
2013

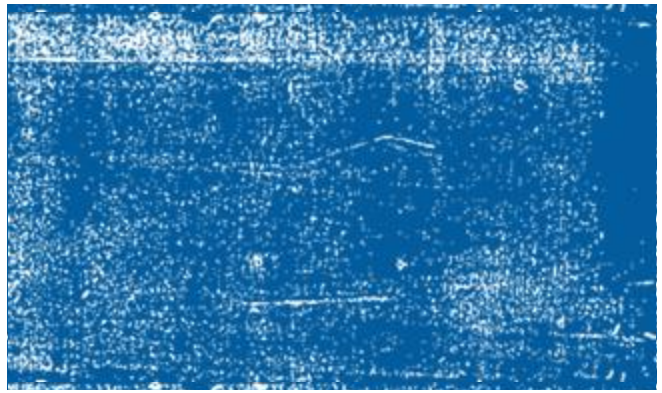
Our Mission

- Social justice.
- Anti-discriminatory practice.
- Social equality and rights.
- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families as our primary focus.

MSc in ABA/PBS

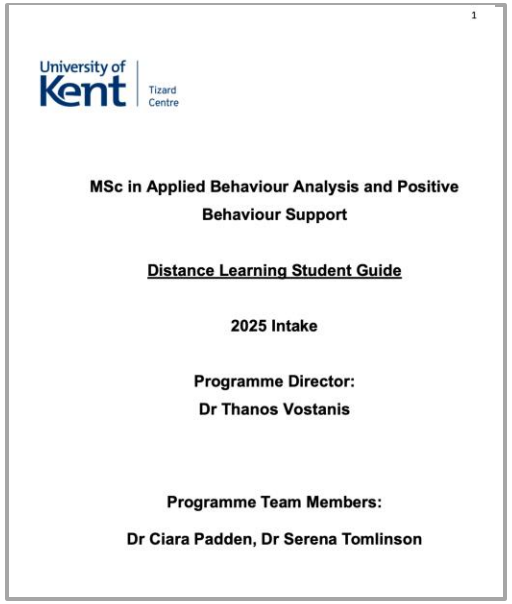
This Year's Team

- Dr Serena Tomlinson
- Dr Ciara Padden



The Handbook

- Your go-to guide.
- Please READ IT! ☺
- As distance learners, you have an additional guide.
- You can also use the timetable to track your progress.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University of Kent | Tizard Centre

MSc in Applied Behaviour Analysis and Positive Behaviour Support

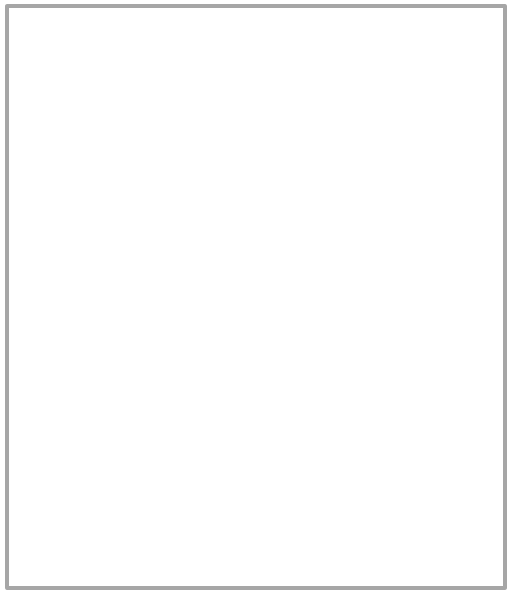
Distance Learning Student Guide

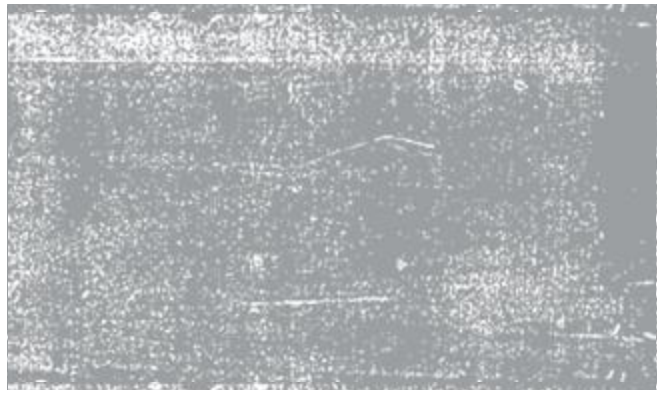
2025 Intake

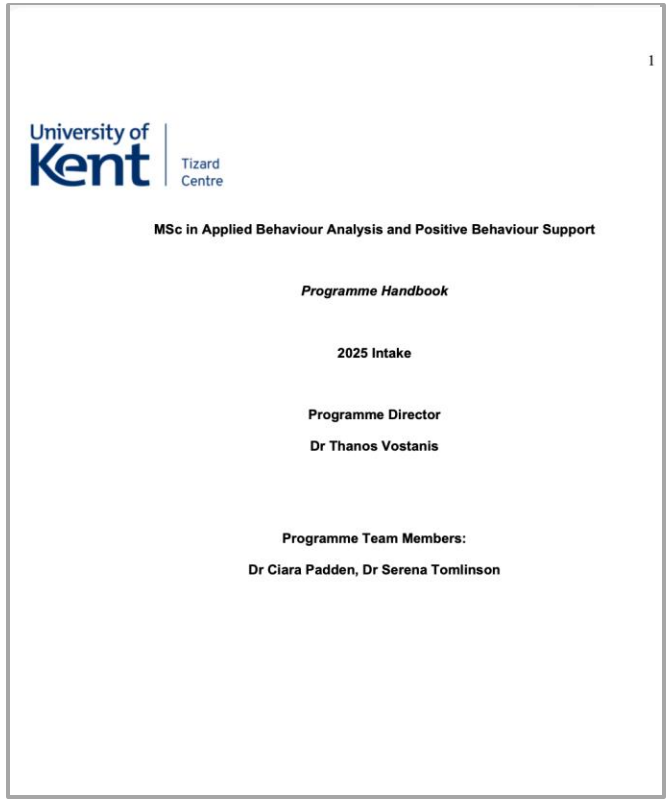
Programme Director:
Dr Thanos Vostanis

Programme Team Members:

Dr Ciara Padden, Dr Serena Tomlinson



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University of Kent | Tizard Centre

MSc in Applied Behaviour Analysis and Positive Behaviour Support

Programme Handbook

2025 Intake

Programme Director
Dr Thanos Vostanis

Programme Team Members:

Dr Ciara Padden, Dr Serena Tomlinson

Aims of the Programme

1. Contextualise the discipline within the broader societal landscape, reflecting the field's growth and evolution globally and notably in the UK.

2. Develop an advanced and nuanced understanding of theoretical concepts, experimental principles, and real-world applications related to applied behaviour analysis and positive behaviour support through diverse assessment methods.

Aims of the Programme

3

Specialise in providing values-driven, evidence-based, compassionate and ethically sound services to individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

4

Acquire advanced behaviour-analytic knowledge and skills applicable across diverse settings, including educational, health, community, and social care services supporting people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

Aims of the Programme

5

Cultivate independent learning, critical thinking and decision-making skills to evaluate, interpret, and employ the evidence derived from research in applied behaviour analysis and positive behaviour support.

6

Develop into versatile professionals, equipped to collaborate effectively within multidisciplinary teams serving individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

Aims of the Programme

Aims of the Programme

Subject to meeting additional requirements external to the course.

Fulfil the eligibility requirements to:

- Take the Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) or Board-Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) examinations via Pathway 2.
- Complete the supervised, competency-based fieldwork required to qualify as a UK-BA(cert).
- Sit the International Behavior Analysis Organization (IBAO) examinations to qualify as an International Behavior Analyst (IBA).

What if I am unsure about the certification I would like to pursue?

- This is a very personal decision.
- Primarily related to where you will reside for work.
- If uncertain, please come and speak to me directly when we mingle!

Programme Structure

MSc is the only entry pathway.

Total credits: 180

All modules need to be completed.

Alternative Exit Awards:

- PG Diploma
- PG Certificate

Alternative Awards

- If registered for MSc and pass all other modules and placements, but fail or cannot complete the dissertation/work-based learning.
- An alternative exit award may be offered by the Board of Examiners.
- Example: PGCert or PGDip.

Full-Time, Distance Learning, Students

Module Code	Term	Credits	Date Commencing
TZRD9041: Advanced Issues in Values, Ethics, and Professional Practice	Autumn-1	20	06 October
TZRD9051: Concepts & Principles in Behaviour Analysis	Autumn-1	20	
TZRD9031: Behavioural Assessment	Spring-2	20	12 January
TZRD9071: Research Methods in Behaviour Analysis	Spring-2	20	

Module Code	Term	Credits	Date Commencing
TZRD9001: Theory and Philosophy of Behaviour Analysis	Spring and Summer- 2 & 3	20	Spring: 12 January Summer: 13 April
TZRD9021: Developing and Implementing Behavioural Interventions	Summer-3	20	13 April
TZRD9011: Organisational Behavioural Management and Systems-Wide Approaches	Summer-3	20	
TZRD8891: Dissertation in Applied Behaviour Analysis/Positive Behaviour Support	Late Summer-4	40	06 July

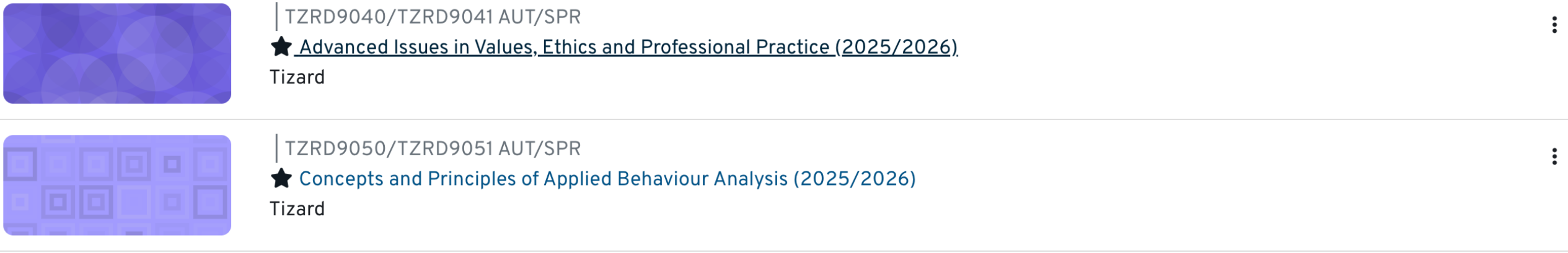
Teaching Full-Time

- Four 10-Week Terms.
- Teaching on a weekly basis.
  - Monday and Tuesday.
  - In some cases, Friday.
- Recordings made available typically within the day.
- Term 4: Dissertation.

Note

- Campus-Based and Distance Learning Modules have been merged into one to keep things simple for you.

- This is what the module codes will look like on Moodle:



Part-Time, Distance-Learning, Students

Year 1

Module Code	Term	Credits	Date Commencing
TZRD9041: Advanced Issues in Values, Ethics, and Professional Practice	Autumn-1	20	06 October
TZRD9051: Concepts & Principles in Behaviour Analysis	Spring-2	20	12 January
TZRD9071: Research Methods in Behaviour Analysis	Spring and Summer- 2 & 3	20	Spring: 12 January Summer: 13 April

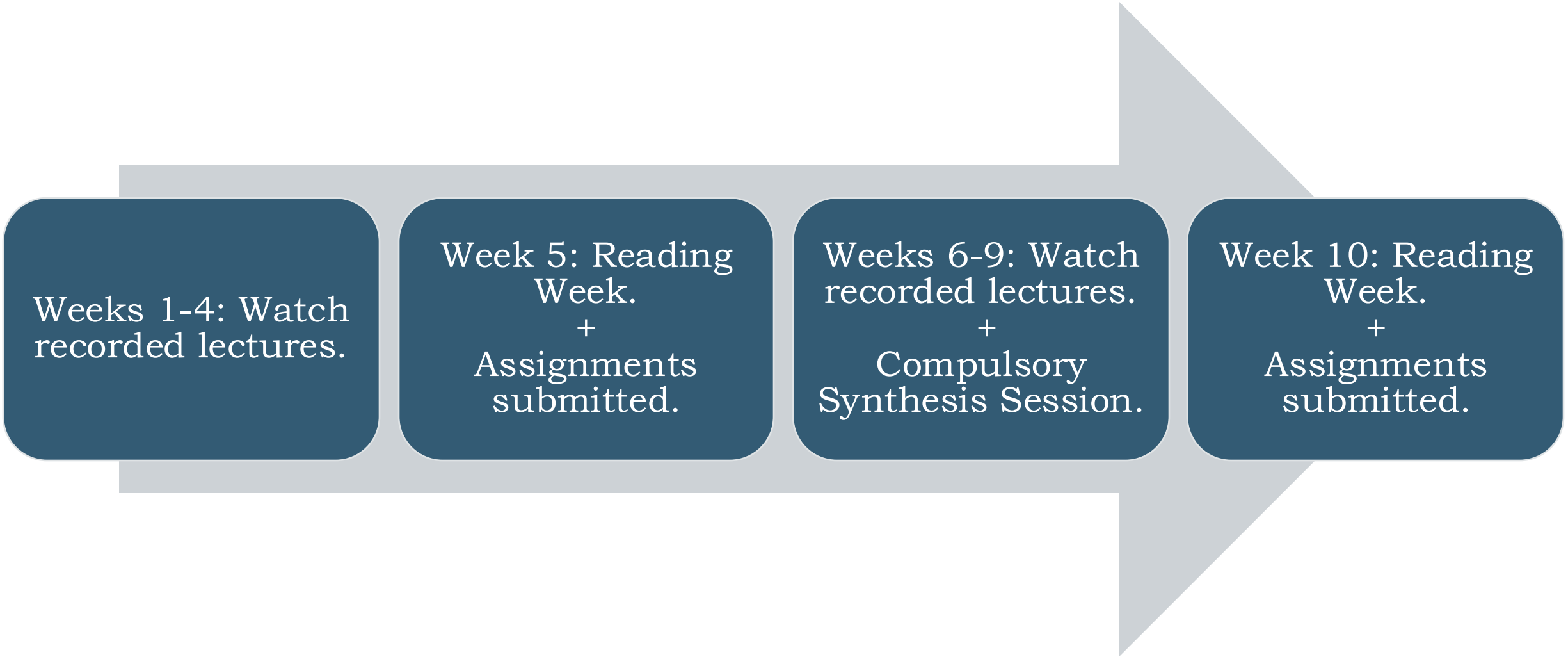
Module Code	Term	Credits	Date Commencing
TZRD9031: Behavioural Assessment	Summer	20	13 April
TZRD9001: Theory and Philosophy of Behaviour Analysis	Late Summer- 4	20	06 July

Year 2

Module Code	Term	Credits	Date Commencing
TZRD9021: Developing and Implementing Behavioural Interventions	Autumn-1	20	TBC next year
TZRD9011: Organisational Behavioural Management and Systems-Wide Approaches	Spring-2	20	
TZRD8891: Dissertation in ABA/PBS OR TZRD8001: Work-Based Learning in ABA/PBS.	Summer & Late Summer-3 & 4	40	TBC next year

All Students (Full-Time and Part-Time)

Teaching Part-Time



Dissertation

Full-Time Students:

- Non-Empirical Topics provided by the academic team.
- Students choose 3 topics and get allocated one of them.

Part-Time Students:

- Empirical and Non-Empirical Topics OR work-based learning.

All students

- Dissertations—Students pair-up to work on a topic together.
- Dissertations—Group Supervision with option for individual supervision if needed.
- Work-Based Learning—Group Supervision.

Work-Based Learning

Only available to Year 2 Part-Time students.

- Focus on supporting a focal person.

Requires:

- Consent
- Assent

Develop a Portfolio.

- Includes write-up of paper (Intro, Method, Results, Discussion).
- Video recording all steps of the process.

Work-Based Learning

Complete:

- Assessments, including baseline.
- Experimental Analysis (e.g., FBA, Reinforcer Assessment, Preference Assessment).
- Intervention Design
- Intervention Implementation

Essential Considerations

Delivery Mode & Attendance

You are expected to watch all the recordings.

You are strongly encouraged to complete all the activities.

Attendance at the online synthesis sessions is compulsory.

Synthesis Sessions

Important:

- Essential that you come prepared, having watched most, if not all, lectures.
- Completing at least some of the readings in advance is also recommended.
- Be prepared to participate in activities, having your camera and mic on.
- Sessions will be recorded.
- Closed captions might not be entirely accurate!

Terms and Conditions—Synthesis

https://forms.office.com/e/61G6Msx5TF

Online Module Synthesis Session - Terms and Conditions, MSC in ABA/PBS

Online Module Synthesis sessions form a core part of the course and play an important role in enhancing the learning experience for Tizard students. They are designed to give distance learners the opportunity to ask questions, practise applying knowledge, and collaborate with their peers.

We recognise that distance learning often takes place from a work or home environment; however, it is essential to maintain a consistent level of quality during these sessions to ensure the best possible experience for everyone. For this reason, we have set out a series of criteria that all distance learners are expected to follow.

Please note that we are unable to offer flexibility around these criteria. If you believe you will be unable to meet them, you should contact the module convenor as soon as possible to explain your circumstances and, where relevant, provide supporting evidence.

Repeated absence from these sessions will trigger the engagement process, as all Synthesis sessions are compulsory. Further details can be found in your handbook.

Technical and Participation Requirements

1. I agree to keep my camera on and visible throughout the entire duration of the session to facilitate engagement and maintain academic integrity.

2. I will remain ready to unmute my microphone at all times when requested by the instructor or when participating in discussions.

3. I will join the session from a private space where other individuals are not visible or audible in the background, ensuring a professional and distraction-free learning environment.

4. I will log in using my official university Microsoft Teams account only. Personal or alternative accounts are not permitted for these sessions.

5. I will not have any AI assistants activated (including but not limited to voice assistants, chatbots, and AI-powered applications) during the session.

Workload

The full-time course requires approximately 40 hours/week to ensure you make the most of your time with us.

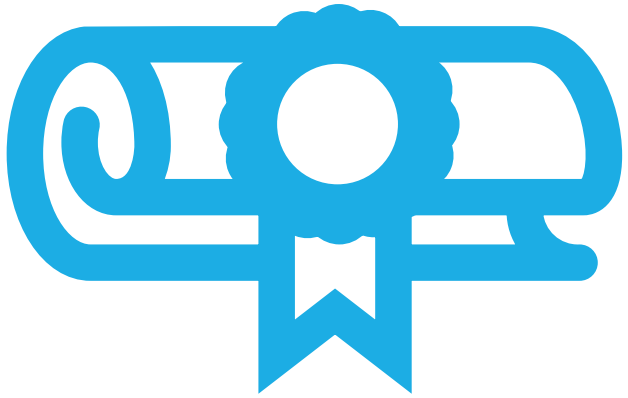
The part-time course requires approximately 20 hours/week to ensure you make the most of your time with us.

Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to prioritise your studies, as you will risk:

- Achieving poor outcomes.
- Delaying your completion.
- Becoming burnt out.
- Ending up not enjoying the course.

Changing Routes

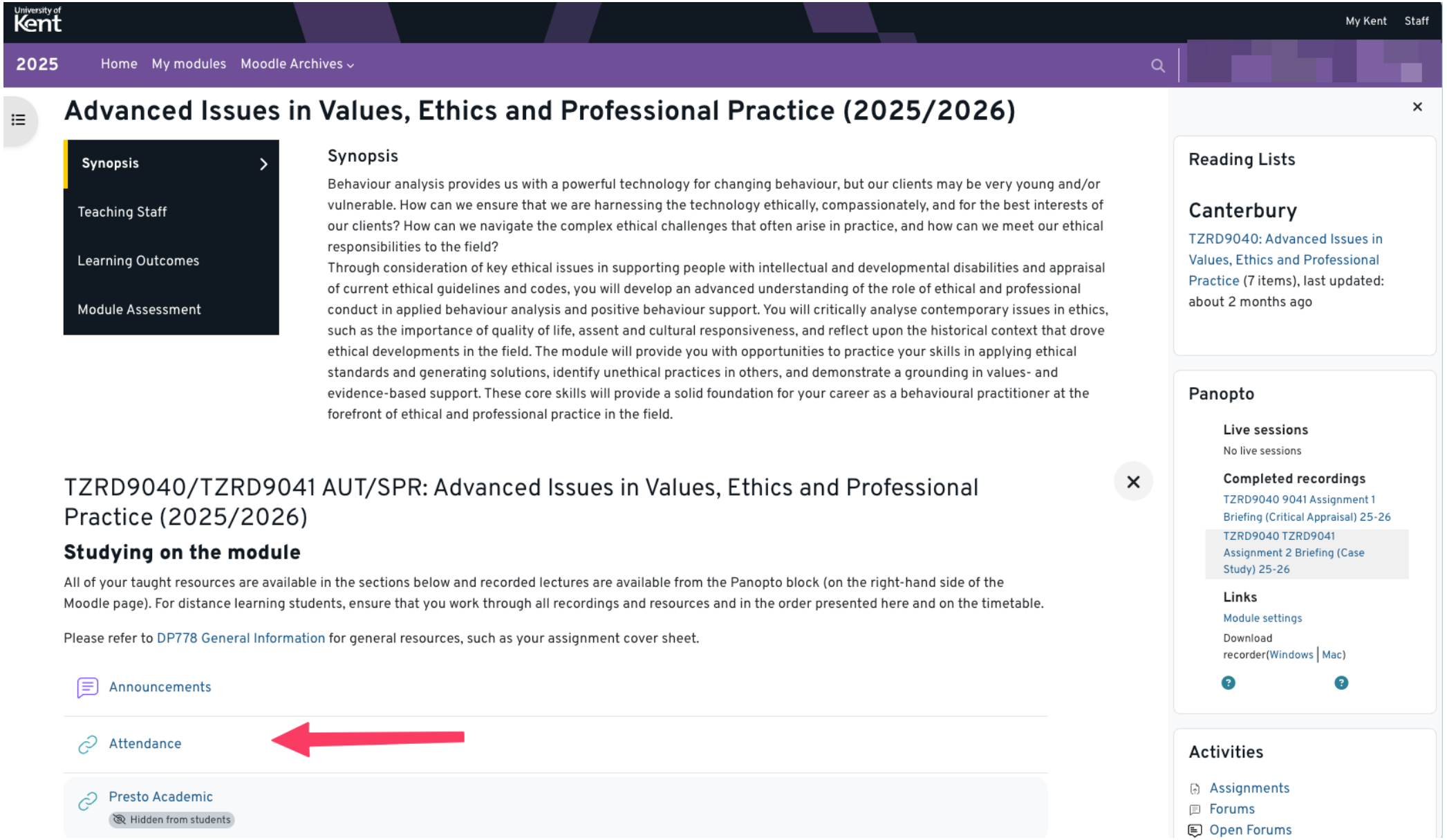
- If you signed up for the full-time distance learning course but are in full-time employment, you have set yourself up for a tough year!
- I strongly recommend you switch to part-time.



Attendance Expectations

- Attendance at synthesis sessions is closely monitored.
- According to our attendance policy, persistent or prolonged absences will be addressed (see the handbook).
  - For example, students may be required to meet with the programme director or to repeat or to intermit studies the following year.

Recording Attendance

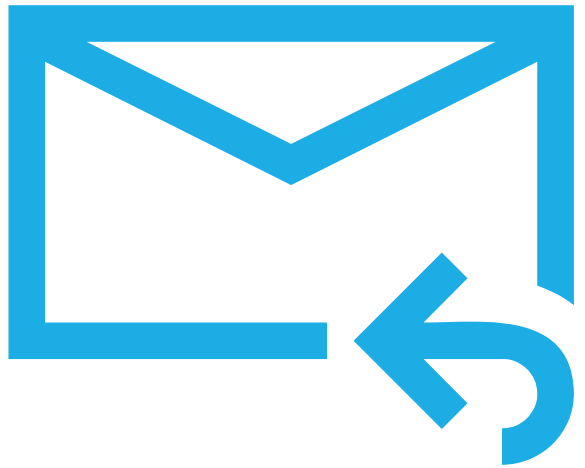


Recording

- Teaching sessions are video & audio-recorded.
- Campus-based students are still expected to fully attend all required sessions in person.
- You can find out more about KentPlayer here: KentPlayer - Your studies - University of Kent
- Closed captions are available–bear in mind that they won't necessarily be entirely accurate.

Communication

- Regularly check your University email.
- Do NOT contact us using private messages on TEAMS or Moodle.
- Gather all questions in one email.
- Allow us five days to respond.



Staff Workload

Important to understand your academics' workload.

Priorities include:

- Research
- Consultancy
- Teaching

Staff Workload

Research

- PhD Supervision
- Grant Applications
- Publishing Papers
- Reviewing Papers
- Present at Conferences
- Editorial Work

Consultancy

- Individual Cases
- Short Courses
- Collaboration with Services

Teaching

- Not only in the MSc in ABA/PBS!
- Undergraduate Courses
- Other Postgraduate Courses

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Assessments & Grading

Assessment

All modules include two assessments broken into:

- 30% weighting of the overall mark.
- 70% weighting of the overall mark and pass-compulsory.

The only exception is TZRD9040/TZRD9041.

- 50% each assignment, and none of them is pass-compulsory.

More information is in your handbook.

Consent & Confidentiality

Some assignments will involve video recordings.

- In those cases, you will be explicitly expected to address confidentiality.

In other assessed work (e.g., dissertations), you will gather data from participants.

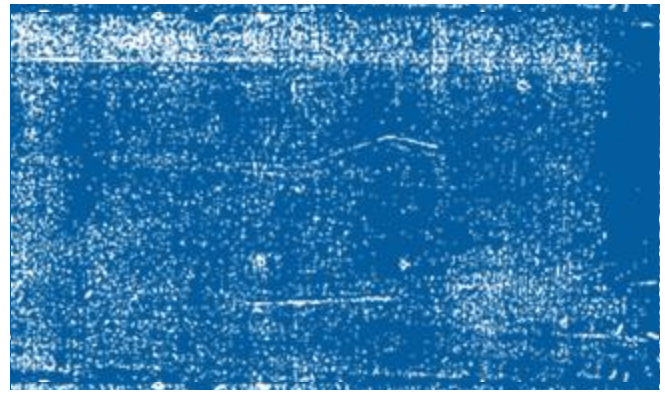
- In those cases, you will be expected to gain informed consent, monitor assent, and also ensure confidentiality.

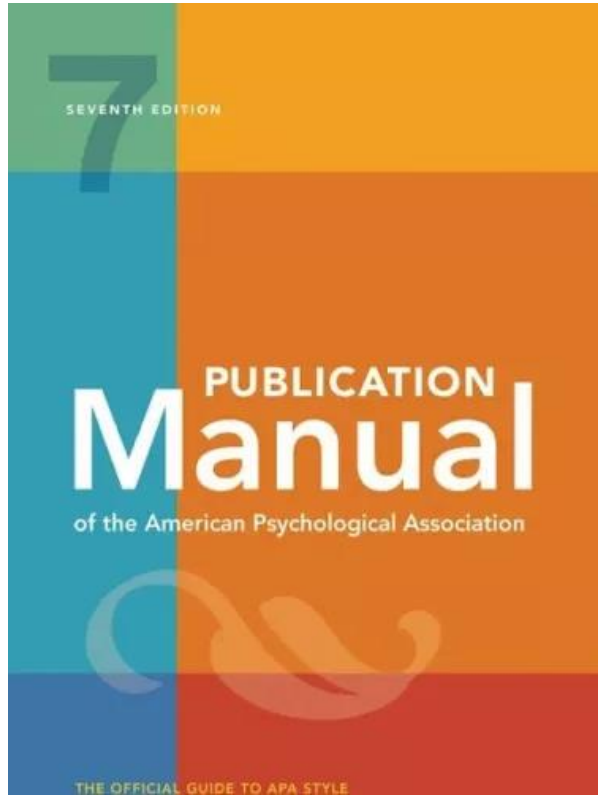
Marks will be deducted for not adhering to these expectations.

- More information in your handbook.

Academic Integrity

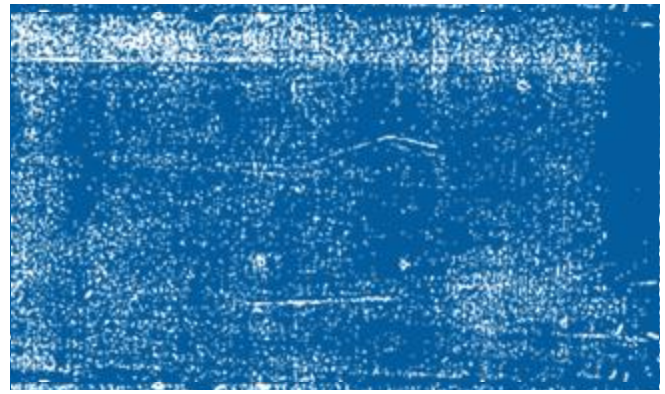
- APA formatting in all assignments.
- Do NOT share your assignments with each other-Might lead to Plagiarism.
- Do NOT copy the work of others.
- Do NOT use Chat-GPT, Grok, Claude or other LLMs.

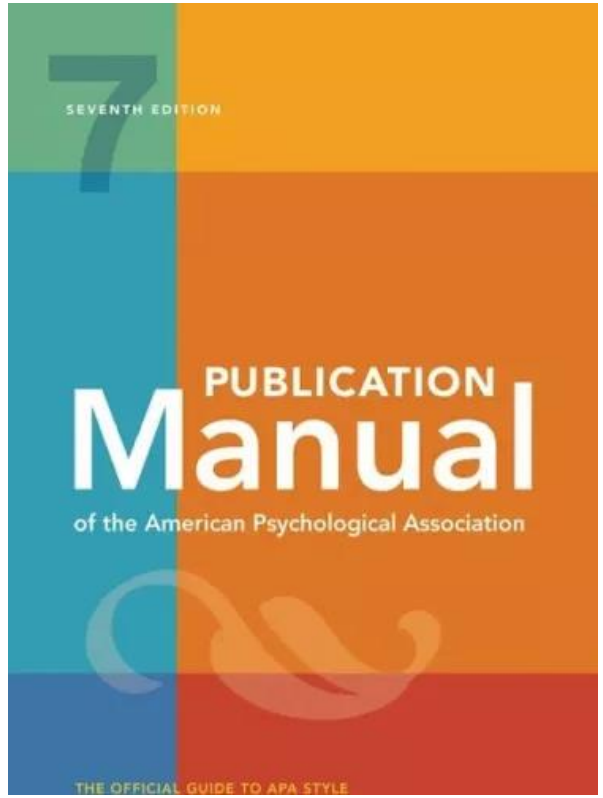




Academic Integrity

- Always cite/reference the work of others. (Software can help).
- Seek support from our librarian!
- Read detailed guidance in the handbook.





Terms and Conditions–AI

https://forms.office.com/e/N2h2ksryiY

AI Use Policy Acknowledgement Form MSc in ABA/PBS

As future Behaviour Analysts, it is essential that you develop your skills to fluency. Our discipline involves supporting vulnerable populations, and ethical, socially valid practice requires that you demonstrate your own knowledge and abilities. Reliance on AI-generated content risks undermining these skills and could lead to harmful outcomes for the individuals we serve.
This form confirms that you have read, understood, and agreed to abide by the MSc programme's AI use policy.

1. You may use AI tools only for the following purposes:

- Accessing materials, summarising content, or supporting note-taking (e.g., Microsoft Copilot, Notion AI).
- Grammar and spelling checks (e.g., Grammarly, Microsoft Editor).
- Research support (e.g., RAYYAN for systematic reviews, Covidence).
- Transcribing interviews (e.g., Otter AI, Sonix).

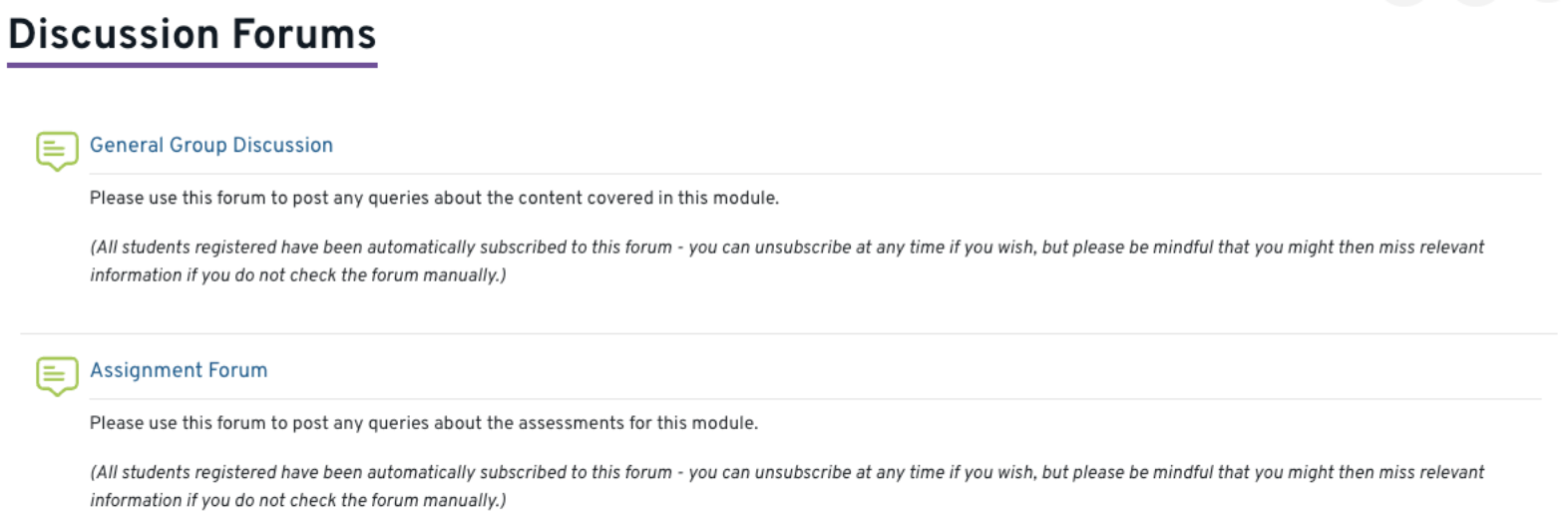
2. You must **not** use Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, GROK, Claude, or Gemini to generate, paraphrase, or write assignment content, unless a module explicitly permits this for a specific task.

3. Consequences of breach

- Any assignments suspected of containing AI-generated content will be referred through the University of Kent's formal Academic Misconduct Procedures, where you will be notified, have the opportunity to respond, and retain the right of appeal.
- If a student is found responsible for misuse, penalties may range from a mark reduction or module failure to more serious sanctions, depending on severity

WhatsApp Groups

- What you discuss in those groups is up to you.
- Our official communication channel is the Moodle Forums.
- Be careful when discussing assignments!!!



Submitting Assignments

- All assignments are submitted electronically on Moodle.
- Students can resubmit to the inbox until the deadline to check their similarity report.
- The final assignment must be uploaded by the deadline.
- For submissions requiring appendices, they should be added after the references section.
- Deadline is 12:00 on the date the assignment is due unless otherwise specified.

Submitting Assignments

- All assignments should have a cover sheet.
- Available on your General Information Module.
- Your assignment will **NOT** be marked without it.

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Tizard Centre

Front Cover Sheet & Plagiarism/Data Declaration

A copy of this is required to be submitted with electronic copies of your assignments.

Programme title:

Assignment Module Number & Title:

Student Number:

Student Examination Number:

Student Name:

Word Count:

Tutor's Name:

Tick this box if you have an ILP*: ☐

Plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Declaration:

I confirm that this assignment and the accompanying appendices, including written work and data collection, are my own original work except where I have acknowledged the use of other people's ideas or words by referencing the material as outlined in the course handbook.

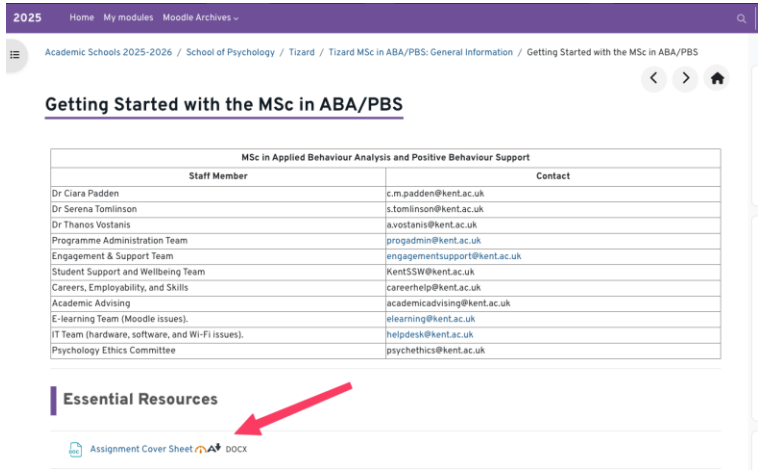
I confirm that all data are genuine and collected in keeping with the handbook and teaching requirements.

I confirm I have read and understood the definition of plagiarism in the course handbook.

I confirm I have read and understood the information related to the unauthorised use of AI in the course handbook.

Signed: → Date:

*ILPs will only be considered during marking if they specifically refer to the assessment of submitted work.



2025 Home My modules Moodle Archives

Academic Schools 2025-2026 / School of Psychology / Tizard / Tizard MSc in ABA/PBS: General Information / Getting Started with the MSc in ABA/PBS

Getting Started with the MSc in ABA/PBS

MSc in Applied Behaviour Analysis and Positive Behaviour Support	
Staff Member	**Contact**
Dr Ciara Padden	c.m.padden@kent.ac.uk
Dr Serena Tomlinson	s.tomlinson@kent.ac.uk
Dr Thanos Vostanis	a.vostanis@kent.ac.uk
Programme Administration Team	progadmin@kent.ac.uk
Engagement & Support Team	engagementsupport@kent.ac.uk
Student Support and Wellbeing Team	KentSSW@kent.ac.uk
Careers, Employability, and Skills	careerhelp@kent.ac.uk
Academic Advising	academicadvising@kent.ac.uk
E-learning Team (Moodle issues).	elearning@kent.ac.uk
IT Team (hardware, software, and Wi-Fi issues).	helpdesk@kent.ac.uk
Psychology Ethics Committee	psychethics@kent.ac.uk

Essential Resources

Assignment Cover Sheet DOCX

Submitting Assignments

- Assignments submitted after the deadline without an approved extension will incur mark deductions per the policy:

Up to 24h late.	**Mark capped at 60%.**
Up to 48h late.	Mark capped at 50%.
More than 48h late.	Mark of zero.

Grading

We aim for a three-week turnaround (during term time).

- You will be notified of any deviation from this.
- Exception: dissertations where marks are available after the relevant Board of Examiners.

You will receive feedback on your assignments – via Moodle – and an overall grade.

- The feedback is more important than the grade!
- Read the feedback!

Grading

Grading follows the relevant annotation for the assignment (see Moodle for details).

- Assignments are moderated to ensure consistency in marking.

All marks returned to students are subject to moderation and the ultimate decision lies with Board of Examiners.

- October BoE
- June BoE

Grading

- Grading uses categorical marking.
- Classifications:
  - Pass – 52-58%
  - Merit – 62-68%
  - Distinction – over 72%

Numerical Scale	Classification
100 95 85 82 78 75 72	Distinction
68 65 62	Merit
58 55 52	Pass
48 45 42 38 35 32 25 20 10 0	Fail

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Additional Information

Requirements for Award

- To pass the programme, students must achieve a pass mark (i.e., 50+) on all relevant modules.
- See Moodle for the Divisional/School policy on mitigating circumstances.
- Subject to Board of Examiners approval, you may (at a fee) be invited to resubmit work or resit exams that have failed, but resubmissions will typically be capped at 50.

Career Opportunities

Specialists in ABA and PBS are in high demand across various settings, including:

- Mainstream and Special Education
- NHS Services
- Community support services
- Residential Services
- Home programmes
- Early Intervention Clinics

Advanced qualifications can lead to more senior roles and increased responsibilities.

- Clinical Supervisor
- Behaviour Consultant
- Behaviour Specialist
- Practice Leader
- Associate Director
- Head of Positive Behaviour Support

Research Opportunities

Many MSc students proceed to pursue research.

PhD research scholarships available.

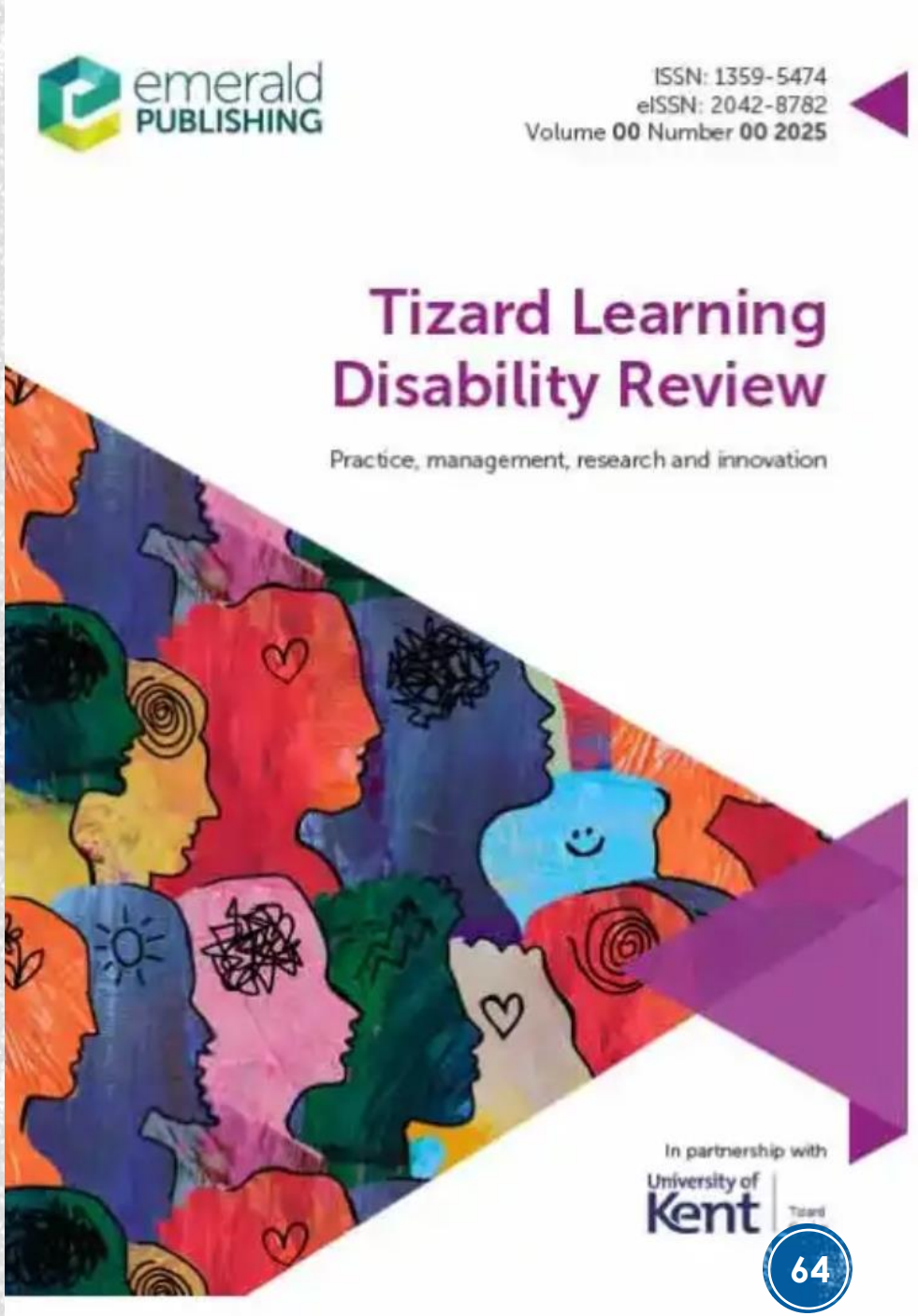
- Very competitive.

Research assistant opportunities available.

- Will vary depending on available grants.

Tizard Learning Disability Review

- Peer-Reviewed Journal
- Impact Factor and indexed in the major databases.
- Great opportunity for our MSc students to experience the process of peer-review.



Feedback

Student Evaluation Form at the end of each module.

- Please provide constructive feedback – we use this to adapt our programme where necessary.

Staff/Student Liaison Meetings.

Student representatives.

- If interested, let me know.

Who Do I Go To?

University of Kent Services Guide for Academic Staff

First Point of Contact

Where to direct students when they have general queries

Nexus

Templeman Library D Block & Sibson

https://student.kent.ac.uk/support/nexus

Please encourage students to start here if they're unsure where to go

Programme Administration

Queries about module registrations, timetable, marking submission

progadmin @kent.ac.uk

Engagement Support

Student engagement support, managing extensions, attendance absence

engagementsupport @kent.ac.uk

Careers, Employability and Skills

Career guidance, employability support, and skills development

careerhelp @kent.ac.uk

Student Support and Wellbeing

Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and wellbeing support

KentSSW @kent.ac.uk

Academic Advising

Queries about Academic Advising, Presto Flow

academicadvising @kent.ac.uk

Keeping up with News

- **Mailing lists:** (TPN, Tizard News)-Use Personal Email.
- **Facebook:** Search Tizard Centre.
- **X:** Search Tizard Centre and Tizard_ABAPBS.
- **LinkedIn:** Search Tizard Centre.
- **YouTube:** Subscribe to the Tizard Centre Channel.

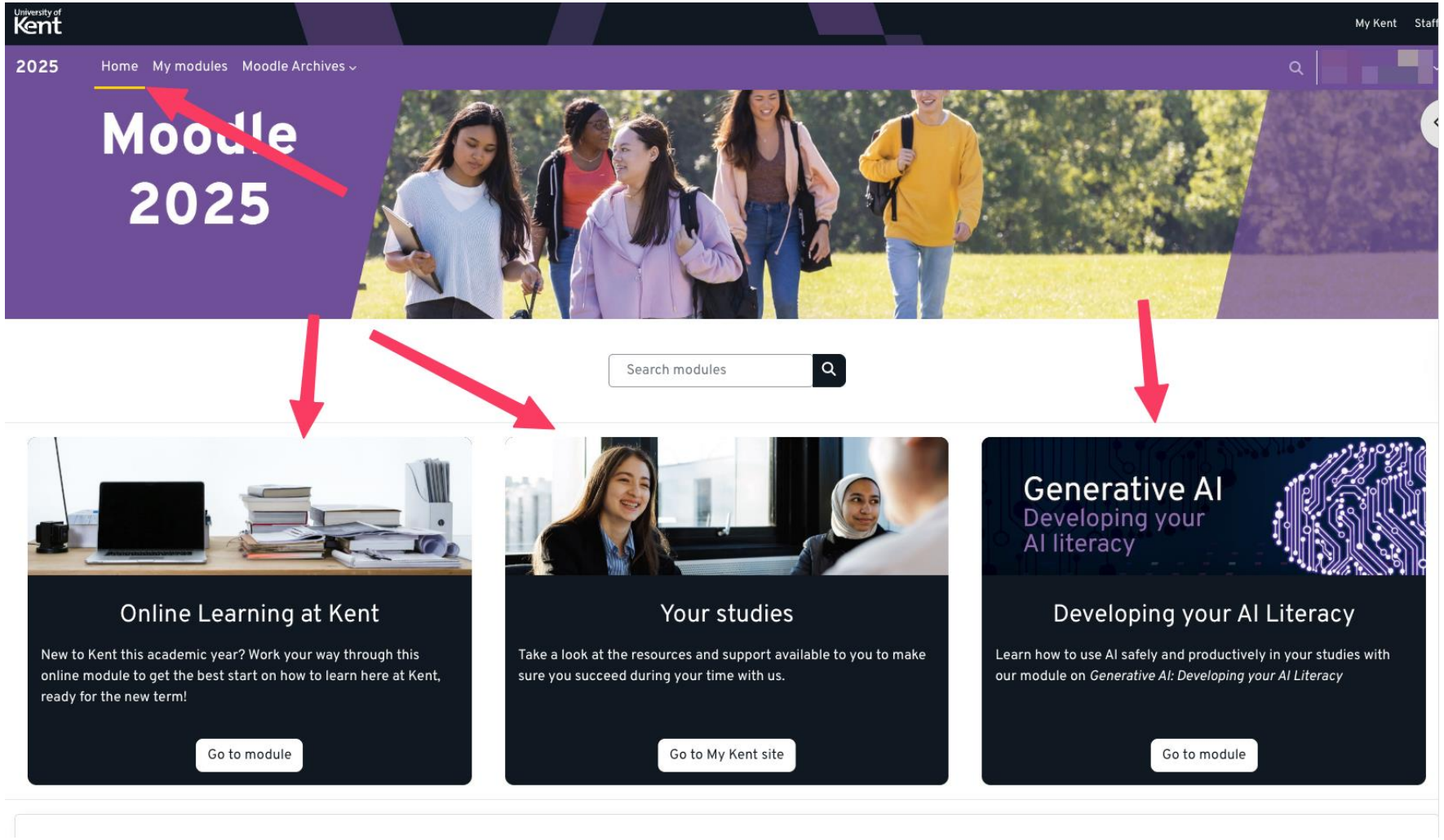
Events

- **Tizard Behavioural Talks.** CEU/APD Event. Typically, once a month. ABA/PBS Focus.
- **Tizard Seminars.** Spread throughout the year. Typically, every few months. IDD/Autism Focus.

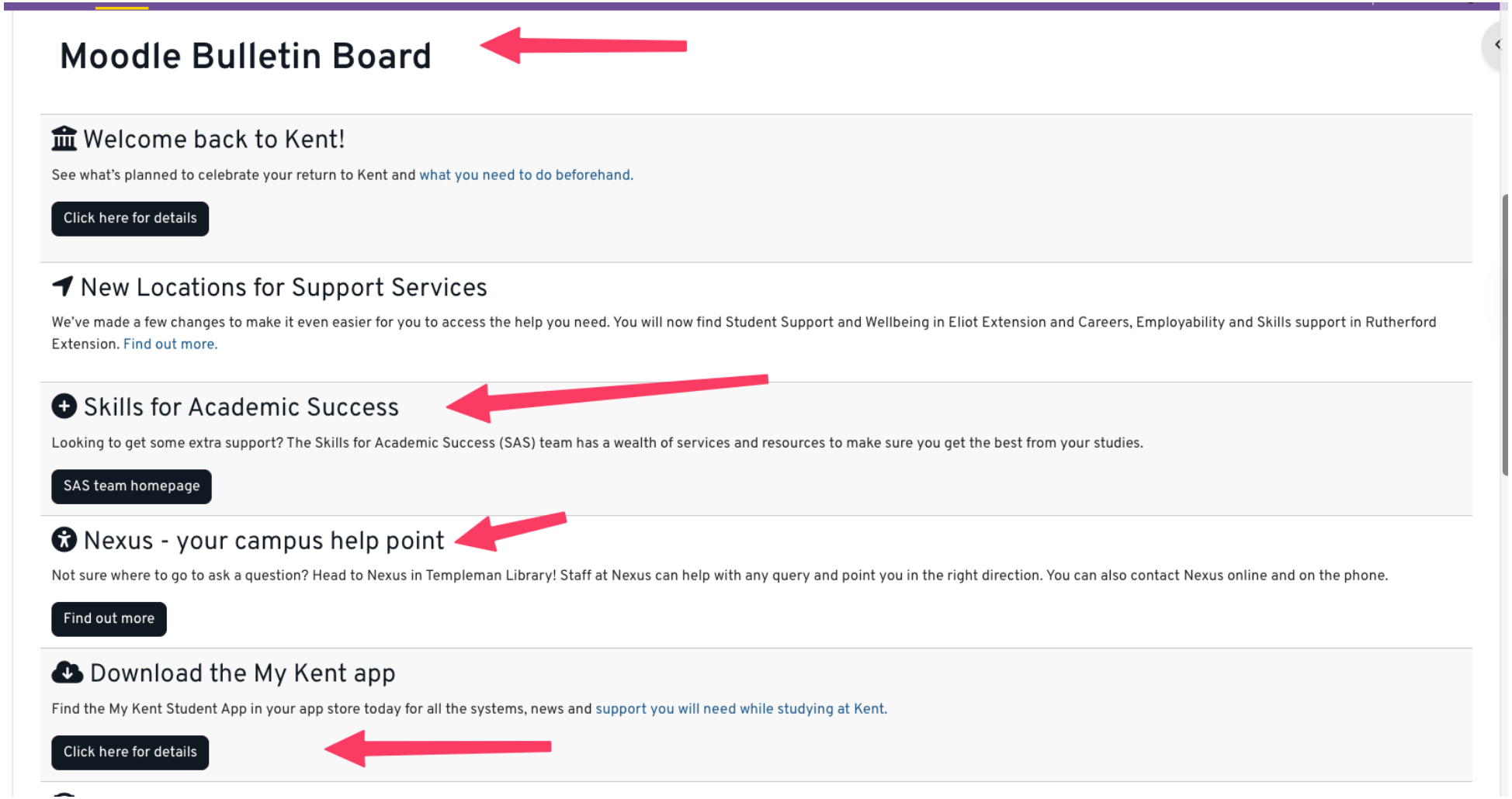
UK-SBA

- Keep in touch with general ABA/PBS events, activities!
- One organisation that you should consider joining is the UK-SBA.
- Students benefit from reduced membership rates (£25/year), and member benefits include student rates for UK-SBA events and EABG/EABA conference registration.
- See: https://uk-sba.org/

Additional Support



Scroll Down from your Home Page



Next Week

Official Start of Teaching Term.

Some additional induction resources have been made available on Moodle as video recordings:

- BCBA orientation.
- Skills for Academic Success.
- Induction to the library with Andy Prue.

These can be accessed on your General Information Module.

Who to ask?

- Throughout the year, you might have questions.
- If you are unsure who to ask…
- See Appendix 2 in your handbook.

Questions?