

Prifysgol Wreccsam Wrexham University

Module specification

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Module Code	POL612
Module Title	Life Inside: Prisons, Prisoners and Penology
Level	6
Credit value	20
Faculty	FSLS
HECoS Code	100484
Cost Code	GACJ
Pre-requisite module	N/A

Programmes in which module to be offered

Programme title	Core/Optional/Standalone
BA (Hons) Criminology and Criminal Justice	Optional
BSc (Hons) Criminal Psychology	Optional
HMP Berwyn Outside-In Module	Standalone

Breakdown of module hours

Learning and teaching hours	24hrs
Placement tutor support hours	0 hrs
Supervised learning hours e.g. practical classes, workshops	0 hrs
Project supervision hours	0 hrs
Active learning and teaching hours total	24 hrs
Placement hours	0 hrs
Guided independent study hours	176 hrs
Module duration (Total hours)	200 hrs

Module aim

This outside-in module provides a unique experience for university and prison students to study a shared curriculum which provides an advanced, critical understanding of prisons as complex social institutions and the practices that govern them. It examines the lived experience of imprisonment, exploring how identity, power, adaptation and resilience shape daily life within custody. Students will critically evaluate contemporary penal policies and the challenges facing the prison estate, integrating academic theory, research evidence and experiential learning to develop a nuanced understanding of penal systems. The module develops reflective and

communication skills by requiring students to produce an ethically informed, critically reflective account of prison life and will enable students to cultivate their reflective and communication skills through structured, peer-informed dialogue; fostering both critical insight and professional engagement with the experiences of others.

Module Learning Outcomes

At the end of this module, students will be able to:

1	Critically examine key theories, concepts and debates in penology and apply them to the lived experience of imprisonment.
2	Analyse the social, cultural and psychological dynamics shaping daily life in prisons, such as rehabilitation, power, identity, vulnerability, adaptation and resilience.
3	Evaluate contemporary penal policies and practices using academic research and experiential/lived experience insights.
4	Demonstrate reflective learning and practice by peer reviewing a critically reflective account of prison life and penological theory.

Assessment

Indicative Assessment Tasks:

This section outlines the type of assessment task the student will be expected to complete as part of the module. More details will be made available in the relevant academic year module handbook.

Assessment Overview:

This module is assessed 100% through coursework, consisting of:

Assessment 1: Peer review: Students will review one peers' anonymised reflection. Feedback will be structured using a rubric, encouraging constructive, academically grounded and ethically sensitive commentary.

Assessment 2: Critical reflective account of prison life: Each week, students will write 200-250 word reflections and incorporate those into a single, cohesive 3000-word account; demonstrating critical engagement with criminological theory, research literature and experiential learning.

The 3000-word reflective account is developed incrementally over the 12-week module via weekly short reflections, which form scaffolded, formative stepping stones and support ongoing engagement, particularly for prison learners

Assessment number	Learning Outcomes to be met	Type of assessment	Duration/Word Count	Weighting (%)	Alternative assessment, if applicable
1	4	Written Assignment	3000 words	25%	N/A
2	1-3	Written Assignment	3000 words	75%	N/A

Derogations

N/A

Learning and Teaching Strategies

This module follows Wrexham University's Active Learning Framework (ALF), combining face-to-face teaching with self-directed study and both synchronous and asynchronous activities. The strategy is designed to support learning by linking theory to real-world practice. Where possible, a single site visit to HMP Berwyn will allow students to experience aspects of prison life and enable students to contextualise theory and learning. This approach develops reflection, ethical awareness and professional skills, ensuring all students can critically engage with knowledge of criminal justice contexts.

Welsh Elements

This module situates the study of prisons and penal practice within both UK-wide and Welsh contexts. Students will critically examine national policy, legislation and contemporary debates in criminal justice, while also considering how Welsh Government priorities, regional strategies and local practices influence prison life, rehabilitation and resettlement. This approach ensures learning is relevant to both UK and Welsh frameworks, reflecting diverse cultural, legal, and organisational settings.

Students can submit their work, access forms, resources, email correspondence, and personal tutorials in Welsh.

Indicative Syllabus Outline

- Introduction to Penology and the Purpose of Imprisonment
- Penological Theory
- Prison as a Social Institution
- Life Inside: Insider Perspectives
- Vulnerability, Trauma and Mental Health
- Cultivating a rehabilitative culture: Staff–Prisoner Relationships

- Rehabilitation, Education and Desistance
- Reflexive practice: Formative Peer review
- Violence, Self-Harm, Segregation and Safety
- Experiential site visit to operational prison
- Comparative Penal Cultures and the Future of Imprisonment

Indicative Bibliography

Please note the essential reads and other indicative reading are subject to annual review and update.

Essential Reads:

Jewkes, Y., Crewe, B., & Bennett, J. (Eds.). (2016), *Handbook on Prisons* (2nd ed.). Routledge: London.

Liebling, A., Price, D., and Shefer, G. (2011), *The Prison Officer*. 2nd ed. Routledge: London.

Maruna, S. (2007), *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Other indicative reading:

Crewe, B. (2011), Depth, weight, tightness: Revisiting the pains of imprisonment. *Punishment & Society*, 13(5), 509–529. Available via Resource Finder:
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474511422172>

Sykes, G. (1958), *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*. Princeton University Press.

Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Irwin, J., and Cressey, D. R. (1962), Thieves, Convicts and the Inmate Culture. *Social Problems*, 10(2), 142–155. Available via Resource Finder: <https://doi.org/10.2307/799047>

McNeill, F. (2012), Four Forms of ‘Offender’ Rehabilitation: Towards an Interdisciplinary Perspective. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 17(1), 18–36. Available via Resource Finder: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8333.2011.02039.x>

Administrative Information

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