Legal and Contextual Issues

Legal and Contextual Issues (Paul Summers)

Overview

This broad module will look at the contextual aspects of forensic psychology. It will provide students with the opportunity to scrutinise the contributions of practitioners and researchers throughout the criminal justice process, from the usefulness of theories put forward to explain criminal behaviour to the role of psychologists in managing offenders released into the community following a custodial sentence.

Learning Objectives

After completing this module students should be able to:

- Recognise and understand the criminal justice framework within which they will work as forensic psychologists;
- Evaluate various biological, sociological and psychological theories of crime and how these might be applied to a case study.
- Identify factors that may impact on the accuracy of eyewitness memories and what steps investigators can take to minimise their influence.
- Understand the Parole Board Hearing process and reflect on the importance of preparing defensible reports.
- Consider the effectiveness of interventions used in the community to reduce re-offending.
- Highlight the psychological processes operating in courtrooms and describe how and why some jurors are susceptible to bias.
- Reflect on how child and juvenile witnesses and victims are supported during the criminal justice process.
- Describe how forensic psychology can inform police investigations and crime analysis.

Topics Covered

- The Criminal Justice Framework
- Theories of Crime
- Eyewitness Testimony
- Expert Testimony
- Forensic Psychology in the Community
- Psychological Bias in the Courtroom
- Legal Processes as they Affect Children
- Investigative Psychology

Teaching Methods

Lectures and student-led presentations