

MA Independent Project Portfolio Guide

Programme: Children and Young People's Mental Health and ALN

Assessment 2: Portfolio Length: 9,000 words or equivalent

1. Overview

The MA Independent Project is an opportunity to explore a topic of interest in depth, demonstrating critical thinking, research skills, and applied understanding within the field of children and young people's mental health and Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The portfolio is designed to be flexible and may take a range of formats. Regardless of format, all submissions must demonstrate:

- Engagement with relevant literature
- Critical analysis and synthesis
- Application to practice, policy, or research
- Academic rigour appropriate to Master's level

2. Portfolio Options

Students may choose one of the following formats (or discuss an alternative with their supervisor):

A. Empirical Research Study (need full ethics form)

- Design and conduct a small-scale research project
- Include abstract, introduction, methodology, data collection, analysis, and discussion
- Suitable methods: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods

B. Work-Based Resource / Guidebook + Literature Review

- Develop a practical resource (e.g., toolkit, intervention guide, staff handbook)
- Accompanied by a critical literature review
- Must demonstrate evidence-informed practice

C. Educational Video + Literature Review

- Produce a video resource (e.g., training material, awareness campaign)

- Include a written critical literature review and rationale

D. Critical / Extended Literature Review

- In-depth synthesis of research on a focused topic
- May include systematic or scoping review elements

E. Infographic + Literature Review

- Create a professional infographic for a target audience
- Supported by a written critical review of the literature

F. Policy Analysis

- Critically analyse local, national, or international policy
- Explore implications for CYP mental health and ALN practice

G. Intervention Design and Evaluation Proposal

- Design a new intervention or programme
- Include theoretical rationale and an evaluation framework

H. Training Programme Development

- Create a structured training package for practitioners
- Include session plans, materials, and theoretical justification (literature review and rationale)

I. Case Study Analysis (need full ethics form if real-world)

- In-depth analysis of a case (real or composite)
- Integrate theory, research, and practice

J. Digital Resource or App Prototype

- Design a digital tool (e.g., app concept, online platform)
- Include evidence base, design rationale, and user considerations

K. Reflective Practice Portfolio

- Critically reflect on professional practice experiences
- Must be theory-informed and analytically rigorous

4. Structure Guidance

While structure will vary, most portfolios should include:

- **Introduction:** Topic, aims, and rationale
- **Literature Review:** Critical engagement with research
- **Main Output:** (e.g., study, resource, video, etc.)
- **Critical Discussion:** Analysis of strengths, limitations, and implications
- **Conclusion:** Summary and recommendations

5. Word Count Equivalence

For non-traditional formats:

- Written component typically forms the majority of the word count
- Creative/practical outputs must be accompanied by substantial critical writing
- Exact equivalence should be agreed with your supervisor

6. Ethical Considerations (Assessment 1 is ethics form/assessment and proposal)

- Ethical approval is required for empirical research
- Ensure confidentiality, consent, and safeguarding considerations
- Follow university and external ethical guidelines (BPS, BERA)

7. Assessment Criteria (Indicative)

Your work will be assessed on:

- Depth and quality of literature engagement
- Critical analysis and originality
- Methodological rigour (if applicable)
- Relevance to CYP mental health and ALN
- Clarity, coherence, and academic writing

8. Key Tips for Success

- Start early and plan your timeline
- Maintain regular contact with your supervisor
- Keep your focus clear and manageable
- Engage critically, not just descriptively
- Ensure your work has clear relevance to practice or policy

9. Support

Students are encouraged to seek support from:

- Supervisors
- Library services
- Academic skills support

Please discuss your chosen format with your supervisor to ensure suitability and feasibility.