Year of entry: 2021/22

Programme Specification

1	**Awarding body**	University of London							
2	**Teaching Institution**	**Birkbeck College**							
3	**Programme Title(s)**	**MSc Psychological Research Methods**							
4	**Programme Code(s)**	TMSPSRMT_C							
5	**UCAS code**	N/A							
6	**Home Department**	Psychological Sciences							
7	**Exit Award(s)**	PG Dip, PG Cert							
8	**Duration of Study** (number of years)	1 year FT, 2 years PT							
9	**Mode of Study**	FT	x	PT	x	DL			
10	**Level of Award (FHEQ)**	7							
11	**Other teaching depts or institution**	N/A							
12	**Professional, Statutory Regulatory Body(PSRB) details**	N/A							
13	**QAA Benchmark Group**	N/A							

14	**Programme Rationale & Aims**
	The aim of the programme is to provide students with a range of generic transferable skills necessary for conducting research at PhD level within major areas of contemporary psychology. These skills include: • critically appreciating existing research and research methods, • formulating research questions and hypotheses, • conducting literature reviews, • designing and reporting experiments using both quantitative and qualitative methods, and • general and subject specific IT skills. • The course also aims to provide students with: • a detailed practical knowledge of contemporary qualitative and quantitative research methods and the epistemological and philosophical commitments underlying these methods. • research experience through a supervised research project **Distinctive Features:** • Combines Birkbeck's strengths in qualitative and quantitative psychological research methods • Face-to-face teaching, with a part-time (day release) option • While most other psychology departments within the UK are now offering taught masters-level research training courses, there are relatively few such courses offered within London.

15	**Entry Criteria**
	A second-class honours degree (2:2) or above in psychology or a relevant discipline. (e.g., Psychology, Education, Social Science, Cognitive Science, Speech/Communication Science, Neuroscience). Some students complete the course as the first year training component of a four year ESRC-funded PhD (under the ESRC's 1+3 programme).

16	**Learning Outcomes**
	On successful completion of this programme a student will be expected to have: **Subject Specific:** 1. Advanced knowledge of the different philosophical positions underlying a range of areas within contemporary psychology 2. Advanced knowledge of a range of issues and debates within philosophy of science relevant to contemporary psychological research (e.g. debates within the philosophy of mind) 3. Practical knowledge of all phases of developing, conducting and reporting a research project 4. Good understanding of conventions in psychological report writing and the purpose of each section within a research report. 5. Advanced understanding and being able to evaluate the logical flow of a scientific research report 6. Good understanding the relation between research questions and research methodologies 7. An advanced understanding of a range of research designs and the conditions under which each is appropriate 8. Advanced knowledge of a wide range of parametric and non-parametric univariate and multivariate statistical procedures, the conditions under which they may reasonably be applied, and how to interpret the results of the procedures 9. An increased awareness of the principles of qualitative research and an understanding of techniques associated with some key qualitative approaches. 10. Good understanding the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society and ramifications of ethical practice. **Intellectual:** 11. Enhanced ability to articulate some similarities and differences between qualitative methods and to evaluate the arguments presented for and against qualitative methodology. 12. A critical appreciation of contemporary research and research methodologies across a number of areas within psychology 13. Advanced understanding of alternative ways of addressing a research question and how to advance reported research 14. Critical thinking skills in relation to

- presenting and critiquing an argument
- reviewing and assimilating existing topic-specific literature and formulating a research question

15. Enhanced ability to apply research methodologies to wider work/life situations
16. Enhanced ability to formulate and test hypotheses
17. Enhanced ability to study a problem in-depth
18. Logical thinking (e.g., in relation to hypothesis testing)
19. Evaluation skills

Practical:

20. Enhanced essay and report writing
21. Enhanced numeracy in relation to understanding numerical data
22. General IT skills (e.g., use of web browsers, email, Word, PowerPoint, EndNote)
23. Subject specific IT skills (familiarity with SPSS)
24. Enhanced ability to conduct literature reviews using electronic search tools, electronic journals and databases (PsycInfo)
25. Enhanced ability to summarise and assess contemporary research succinctly
26. Enhanced ability to apply a range of research methods to specific research questions
27. Data collection and analysis skills
28. Enhanced ability to present data in a meaningful way, and to transform it into different presentational formats
29. Planning and organisational skills

Personal and Social:

30. Enhanced ability to work with others in small groups on practical research tasks
31. Enhanced ability to work independently
32. To effectively plan and organise substantive, medium-term, projects
33. Time management skills
34. To communicate effectively through both written reports and verbal presentations
35. An enhanced ability to appreciate (and formulate) a structured argument
36. A good understanding of the relevance of scientific research as reported in the media to everyday questions
37. An increased awareness of ethical issues and ethical practice

17	**Learning, teaching and assessment methods**

The course includes lecture-based theory modules, practical laboratory modules, and a supervised project. The teaching styles are matched to the content, and class sizes are kept small or moderate (10–40) to encourage student participation, even in lecture-based modules.

Two modules (*Advanced Quantitative Methods*, and *Qualitative Methods*) feature lectures with laboratory/practical session. These provide students with hands-on experience of using statistical software.

One module (*Generic Research Skills*) will involve small group collaborative learning. The class is split into smaller groups and each group will under the direction of the instructor explore solutions to generic organisational issues such as time management, IPR, organising large amounts of literature. It involves presenting orally an outline of their possible research topic.

Eight modules (*Fundamental Debates in Cognitive Sciences*, *Neuroimaging Methods, Intervention Design and Evaluation, Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, Computational Approaches to Mind*, *Structure and Measurement of the Human Brain*, *Child Development in a Global Context*, and *Sensorimotor Processes and Attention*) feature lecturing as well as guided discussion led by one member of academic staff. Students are encouraged to also contribute to the discussion. This provides students with opportunities to question and understand the motivation for different methods when addressing different questions.

One module (*Critical Book Review*) involves a critical reading of a book on a psychological topic. Students are encouraged to discuss their chosen book in class and with the instructor.

All modules involve self-directed learning in the form of self-paced reading and preparation for each of the sessions.

The supervised research project is carried out under the supervision of a member of academic staff with research interests in the area of the project. This provides students with access to a specialist in their project area who can provide expert advice on all aspects of the research. The project also ensures that taught skills are exercised within a constructive environment during the course.

Assessment procedures ensure that students develop a portfolio of work over the duration of the programme, and feedback on coursework required for some of the modules will encourage personal development.

The component modules employ a variety of assessment methods depending on the intended learning outcomes. Assessment will be as follows:

Generic Research Skills
One 10 minute presentation of dissertation background (literature review) and research question; The presentation will be assessed jointly by the course coordinator and each student's supervisor. The presentation will give students the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to conduct a literature review and develop a research question. The module will be marked on a pass/fail basis. If the presentation is judged to be inadequate, students will be asked to submit a written report.

Structure and measurement of the human brain
3 hour unseen written exam, marked according to the standard marking criteria outlined below.

Advanced Quantitative Methods

	4 worksheets to be completed throughout the course. Worksheets will be issued throughout the course at two weekly intervals. Each worksheet will consist of a series of statistical problems relating to material covered in class, and worked answers must be submitted within two weeks of the worksheet being issued. *Critical Book Review* 2000–2500 critical review of a book selected from a list provided by the course organiser. The review will be marked according to the standard marking scheme outlined below. *Families* One written essay plan worth 5% of the final mark, and one 2 hour written examination worth 95% of the final mark. During the examination, candidates will be required to complete two essay-style questions from a selection of four. *All other modules* 2000–2500 word essay marked according to the standard marking scheme outlined below. *Supervised Dissertation* 9000 - 11000 word research dissertation demonstrating initiative and creativity due end of the Summer in the year of registration (FT) or the end of Summer in the second year of registration (PT). The dissertation will be marked according to the standard marking scheme outlined below. *Marking scheme for essays, lab reports and dissertation (based on that currently used with MScs& MRes delivered by the Department))* 0–49% (fail): The submitted work is only tangentially related to the question or research issue; The material presented is very basic or irrelevant; The work relies heavily on superficial or subjective statements without supporting evidence; Analyses presented are inadequate; The conclusions drawn are sketchy and reveal a failure to understand core concepts. 50–59% (pass): The submitted work address the question or research issue but lacks depth and/or evidence of an analytic approach; There is some coherence of structure; The work demonstrates basic familiarity with a range of relevant material or a good level of understanding of some material with important omissions; Analyses are appropriate and competent but limited; The conclusions drawn are appropriate but lack insight. 60–69% (merit): The submitted work addresses the question or research issue in detail and shows evidence of a questioning and analytic approach; The structure is coherent and easy to follow; The work shows an ability to appreciate an extensive body of relevant knowledge and articulate key theories or concepts; The work demonstrates reading beyond the core material presented in lectures; The conclusions drawn are balanced and appropriate and reveal evidence of independent thought. 70–100% (distinction): The submitted work fully explores the question or research issue and goes beyond what would be expected of something in the 60-69% range; The works shows substantial evidence of the students own insight and analysis and/or convincingly integrates material going beyond the core assigned reading; In the case of the research dissertation,

	the dissertation requires few modifications to be of a publishable standard in a peer reviewed journal. All submitted work will be marked and moderated by members of staff and moderated by the visiting examiner. Students will be issued with a candidate number for use with essays, lab reports and dissertations so that marking will be blind. Assessment procedures will ensure that students develop a portfolio of work over the duration of the programme, and feedback on coursework required for some of the modules will encourage personal development. Grade of award and assessment procedures will be regulated in accordance with the College Common Awards Scheme.

18	**Programme Description**
	Full-Time Students Programme Description: **Year 1** ***Term 1*** Generic Research Skills Advanced Quantitative Methods Qualitative Methods Neuroimaging Methods ***Term 2*** Option: Intervention Design and Evaluation Option: Sensorimotor Processes and Attention Option: Structure and Measurement of the Human Brain Option: Fundamental Debates in Cognitive Sciences Option: Computational Approaches to Mind Option: Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience Option: Child Development in a Global Context Option: Critical Book Review **Part-Time Students Programme Description:** **Year 1** ***Term 1*** Generic Research Skills Advanced Quantitative Methods ***Term 2*** Option: Fundamental Debates in Cognitive Sciences Option: Computational Approaches to Mind Option: Intervention Design and Evaluation Option: Critical Book Review ***Year 2*** ***Term 1*** Qualitative Methods Neuroimaging Methods

	Term 2 Option: Sensorimotor Processes and Attention Option: Structure and Measurement of the Human Brain Option: Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience Option: Child Development in a Global Context

19	**Programme Structure**

Full-Time programme – 1 year

Year 1

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	PSYC062H7	Generic Research Skills	15	Compulsory
7	PSYC077H7	Advanced Quantitative Methods	15	Compulsory
7	PSYC074H7	Qualitative Methods	15	Compulsory
7	PSYC007H7	Neuroimaging Methods	15	Compulsory
7		Optional module 1 (from group 1)	15	Option
7		Optional module 2 (from group 1)	15	Option
7		Optional module 3 (from group 2)	15	Option
7		Optional module 4 (from group 2)	15	Option
7	PSYC078D7	MSc Psychology Research Dissertation	60	Core

Part-Time programme – 2 years

Year 1

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	PSYC062H7	Generic Research Skills	15	Compulsory
7	PSYC077H7	Advanced Quantitative Methods	15	Compulsory
7		Optional module 1 (from group 1)	15	Option
7		Optional module 2 (from group 1)	15	Option

Year 2

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	PSYC074H7	Qualitative Methods	15	Compulsory
7	PSYC007H7	Neuroimaging Methods	15	Compulsory
7		Optional module 3 (from group 2)	15	Option
7		Optional Module 4 (from group 2)	15	Option
7	PSYC078D7	MSc Psychology Research Dissertation	60	Core

List of indicative Options

Group 1

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	PSYC105H7	Fundamental Debates in Cognitive Sciences	15	Option
7	PSYC107H7	Computational Approaches to Mind	15	Option

7	SCPS215H7	Intervention Design and Evaluation	15	Option
7	SCPS013H7	Critical Book Review	15	Option
Group 2				
7	SCPS149H7	Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience	15	Option
7	SCPS220H7	Child Development in a Global Context	15	Option
7	PSYC026H7	Structure and Measurement of the Human Brain	15	Option
7	PSYC003H7	Sensorimotor Processes and Attention	15	Option

Status*

CORE – Module must be taken and passed by student; COMPULSORY – Module must be taken, mark can be reviewed at sub-exam board; OPTIONAL – Student can choose to take this module

20	**Programme Director**	Eddy J. Davelaar
21	**Start Date** ***(term/year)***	October 2004
22	**Date approved by TQEC**	Spring 2004
23	**Date approved by Academic Board**	Summer 2004
24	**Date(s) updated/amended**	July 2020 (for 2020/21)