Year of entry: 2022/23

Programme Specification

1	**Awarding body**	University of London						
2	**Teaching Institution**	**Birkbeck College**						
3	**Programme Title(s)**	**MSc Brain and Cognitive Development** **MA Brain and Cognitive Development**						
4	**Programme Code(s)**	TMSCOGBD_C TMACOGBD_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 Statement**	N/A						

14	**Programme Rationale & Aims**
	The aim of this programme is to offer a detailed introduction to the methods and findings from modern brain and cognitive development research, which will enable students from a variety of backgrounds to appraise these findings and carry our independent research projects appropriately (MSc) or integrate relevant literature into a comprehensive review (MA). The methods include biological, experimental, neuroimaging and genetic approaches, as well as survey and large-scale assessment methods more typical of social sciences (MSc). In the MA course, students will critically assess a body of literature in order to provide novel insights. The results cover the following broad areas: Neurobiology of development; genetics of development; Gene X Environment interactions; cognitive development; Social and economic constraints on child development. The programme is designed to be accessible for graduates from a range of disciplines in the human and life sciences, and for both full-time students over 1 year and part-time students over 2 years. This course provides access to world renowned developmental researchers and facilities with broad international appeal, combining Birkbeck's strengths in qualitative and quantitative psychological research. There is a focus on face-to-face teaching, with a part-time (day release) option. The MSc/MA in Brain and Cognitive Development offers a unique combination of theoretical approaches to studying development (neurobiological, genetic, social policy) that enables an overview of all factors contributing to children's development.

15	**Entry Criteria**
	Candidates are normally expected to have a second-class honours degree (2:2) or above in psychology, cognitive science, education, behavioural sciences or relevant discipline. A strong understanding of research methods and statistics is expected for the MSc programme. Relevant professional experience of childhood and development may also be considered. This course is a recognised ESRC training pathway, and it is expected that some students will complete the course as the first year training component of a four year PhD (under the ESRC's 1+3 programme).

16	**Learning Outcomes**
	On successful completion of this programme a student will be expected to be able to show: Subject specific: Knowledge of the different theoretical positions underlying a range of areas within developmental science Practical knowledge of all phases of developing, conducting and reporting a research project(MSc); knowledge of all phases of researching and critically appraising a body of literature (MA). Understanding of conventions in psychological report writing and the purpose of each section within a research report Understanding the interplay between social biological contexts in child development Understanding and being able to evaluate the logical flow of a scientific research report Understanding the relation between research questions and research methodologies An understanding of a range of research designs and the conditions under which each is appropriate Understanding the relation between quantitative and qualitative research in developmental science 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 Awareness of the principles of qualitative research and an understanding of techniques associated with some key qualitative approaches Understanding the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society and ramifications of ethical practice Understanding of how to critically appraise a book within the field Intellectual: Ability to articulate some similarities and differences between qualitative methods and to evaluate the arguments presented for and against qualitative methodology

	A critical appreciation of contemporary research and research methodologies across a number of areas within Developmental Science Understanding alternative ways of addressing a research question and how to advance reported research Critical thinking skills in relation to presenting and critiquing an argument Evaluating theoretical assumptions underlying contemporary Developmental Sciences Reviewing and assimilating existing topic-specific literature and formulating a research question An ability to apply research methodologies to wider work/life situations The ability to formulate and test hypotheses (MSc) An ability to study a problem in-depth Logical thinking (e.g., in relation to hypothesis testing) Evaluation skills Practical: Enhanced essay and report writing Enhanced numeracy in relation to understanding numerical data General IT skills (use of web browsers, email, Word, PowerPoint, EndNote) Subject specific IT skills (familiarity with SPSS; mainly MSc) Ability to conduct literature reviews using electronic search tools, electronic journals and databases (PsycInfo) Ability to summarise and assess contemporary research succinctly An ability to apply a range of research methods to specific research questions Data collection and analysis skills (MSc) Ability to present data in a meaningful way, and to transform it into different presentational formats Planning and organizational skills Personal and Social: Ability to work with others in small groups on practical research tasks Ability to work independently To effectively plan and organize substantive, medium-term, projects Time management skills To communicate effectively through both written reports and verbal presentations An enhanced ability to appreciate (and formulate) a structured argument and to appreciate the theoretical assumptions underpinning such arguments An understanding of the relevance of scientific research as reported in the media to everyday questions An increased awareness of ethical issues and ethical practice

17	**Learning, teaching and assessment methods**
	The programme includes lecture-based theory modules, practical laboratory modules and a supervised project (MSc) or a supervised dissertation (MA). The teaching styles will be matched to the content, and class sizes will be kept small or moderate (10–40) to encourage student participation, even in lecture-based modules. Two modules (advanced quantitative methods and qualitative methods) will feature lectures with laboratory/practical session. These will provide students with hands-on experience of using statistical software and practical experience of using qualitative methods in a relatively self-contained setting. One module (Generic Research Skills) will involve small group collaborative learning. The class will be 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 will involve presenting orally an outline of their possible research topic/dissertation. Three modules (Genetics of Development, Child development in a Global Context, & Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience) will feature lecturing as well as guided discussion led by one or more members of the academic staff. One module (Current Research in Brain and Cognitive Development) will link with the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development seminar series. This module will feature attending of scholarly lectures as well as guided discussion by one member of academic staff. Students will be encouraged to also contribute to the discussion. This will provide students with an opportunity to question and understand the motivation for different methods when addressing different questions. All modules will involve self-directed learning in the form of self-paced reading and preparation for each of the sessions. The supervised research project/dissertation will be carried out under the supervision of a member of academic staff with research interests in the area of the project. This will provide students with access to a specialist in their project area who can provide expert advice on all aspects of the research. The project will also ensure that taught skills are exercised within a constructive environment during the course. 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.

18	**Programme Description**
	Full Time: Term 1 Generic Research Skills Advanced Quantitative Methods Genetics of Development Current Research in Brain and Cognitive Development Qualitative Methods

	Term 2 Current Research in Brain and Cognitive Development Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience Child Development in a Global Context Critical Book Review Dissertation **Part Time:** Year 1 Advanced Quantitative Methods Qualitative Methods Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience Current Research in Brain and Cognitive Development Year 2 Genetics of Development Qualitative Methods Child Development in a Global Context Critical Book Review Dissertation

19	**Programme Structure**

Full-Time programme – 1 year

Year 1

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	PSYC077H7	Advanced Quantitative Methods	15	Core MSc /Compulsory MA
7	PSYC074H7	Qualitative Methods	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS225H7	Current Research in Brain and Cognitive Development	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS149H7	Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience	15	Compulsory
7	PSYC062H7	Generic Research Skills	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS007H7	Genetics of Development	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS220H7	Child Development in a Global Context	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS013H7	Critical Book Review	15	Compulsory
7	PSYC078D7/ SCPS008D7	MSc/MA Psychological Research Dissertation	60	Core

Part-Time programme – 2 years

Year 1

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	PSYC077H7	Advanced Quantitative Methods	15	Core MSc /Compulsory MA
7	PSYC074H7	Qualitative Methods	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS149H7	Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS225H7	Current Research in Brain and Cognitive Development	15	Compulsory

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Year 2				
Level	**Module Code**	**Module Title**	**Credits**	**Status***
7	PSYC062H7	Generic Research Skills	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS007H7	Genetics of Development	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS220H7	Child Development in a Global Context	15	Compulsory
7	SCPS013H7	Critical Book Review	15	Compulsory
7	PSYC078D7/ SCPS008D7	MSc/MA Psychological Research Dissertation	60	Core

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**	Dr. Natasha Kirkham
21	**Start Date** ***(term/year)***	Autumn 2010
22	**Date approved by TQEC**	Summer 2010
23	**Date approved by Academic Board**	Summer 2010
24	**Date(s) updated/amended**	May 2022