

MSc/Diploma Psychology of Early Development

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading
Faculty of Science	Programme length: 12 months (24 part-time)
For students entering in 2002	Date of specification: 30 Aug 2002
Programme Director: Dr G Schafer	
Board of Studies: Drs Schafer (chair), Ellis, Kirkham	

Summary of programme aims

The purpose of the course is to prepare graduates in Psychology and allied disciplines for academic, clinical, educational, health, and research careers involving infants and preschool children, or in disciplines where familiarity with psychological functioning in infancy and early childhood is of relevance. The course introduces students to topics of relevance to the psychological understanding of preschool children in more depth, and with greater emphasis on current research, than is typically possible in the course of an undergraduate degree in psychology. Students are exposed to a variety of teaching methods, culminating in the completion of a piece of original research. It is intended that graduates of the course will be able to work independently in fields involving the psychological understanding of infants and/or preschoolers.

Transferable skills

By the end of the course, students will have developed the following transferable skills:

- Ability to use computers for statistics, data analysis, and communication.
- Ability to use database/library resources.
- Writing skills: writing of papers, abstraction of others' work from written and oral material, reviewing of work of peers.
- Ability to make oral presentations.

Programme content

<i>Compulsory Modules</i>		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
EDMES1	<i>Essentials of Research Methods for the Social Sciences</i>	20	M
EDMES2	<i>Research Transferable Skills for the Social Sciences</i>	10	M
PYM0TI	<i>Theoretical Issues for Psychologists</i>	10	M
PYM0S1	<i>Data Collection & Analysis 1</i>	10	M
PYM0S2	<i>Data Collection & Analysis 2</i>	10	M
PYM0QQ	<i>Qualitative, Survey, and Psychometric Methods</i>	10	M
PYM0DP	<i>Methods in Developmental Psychology</i>	10	M
PYM1CD	<i>Cognitive Development</i>	10	M
PYM1SD	<i>Normal and Abnormal Social Development</i>	10	M
PYM0EP	<i>Empirical Project (MSc only. Must be undertaken in a relevant field)</i>	60	M

/contd.

Optional Modules

Modules totalling 20 credits may be selected from a list such as the following:

		Credits	Level
PYM0RD	Research Design and Data Management	10	M
PYM0S3	Data Collection & Analysis 3	10	M
PYM0CP	Methods in Clinical Psychology	10	M
PYM0CC	Methods in Cognitive Psychology	10	M
PYM0SP	Methods in the Study of Perception	10	M
PYM3PY	Development of Psychopathology	10	M

Part-time/Modular arrangements

The course may be undertaken over two years on a part-time basis. Selection of modules between the two years will be agreed between the student and the Board of Studies, at the commencement of the course. It is anticipated that students will normally complete at least 80 credits' worth of modules in Year 1. Modules be assessed in the year that they are studied. The Empirical Project (PYM0EP) must be undertaken in Year 2.

Progression requirements

Acceptance onto any module is conditional on the student having attempted all assessments set in previous modules. The Empirical Project will normally be the last piece of work to be submitted for assessment (by Dissertation).

Summary of teaching and assessment

Teaching is by a variety of methods, including lectures, small group seminars, web-based work-throughs, self-paced workshops, individual feedback on written work, and one-on-one supervision. Assessment mirrors this diversity of methods, with methods including written assignments and other coursework, portfolio, unseen essay- and short notes examinations, open-book test, submission of practical reports, oral presentations, and submission of project dissertation.

Marks should be interpreted within the following framework:

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
70% - 100%	Distinction
60% - 69%	Merit
50% - 59%	Pass
0% - 49%	Fail

University guidelines set the pass mark at an overall average of 50% for all programmes and at 50% for individual modules. Candidates should also achieve not less than 40% in any module and that marks below 40% in a total of 20 credits may be condoned *provided that the candidate has pursued the course for the module(s) with reasonable diligence.*

MSc Merit: at least 50% in **each** module, with marks in excess of 60% being awarded in individual modules whose cumulative credit weighting represents at least 50% of the total weighting for the course.

MSc Distinction: at least 50% in **each** module, with marks in excess of 70% being awarded in individual modules whose cumulative credit weighting represents at least 50% of the total weighting for the course.

A **Diploma** may be awarded to students who complete modules totalling 120 credits and who gain a mark of at least 40% in **each** module, with marks in excess of 50% being awarded in

individual modules with cumulative credit weighting of 80 credits. Note that Diploma students do not undertake an empirical project.

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained an Honours degree in psychology or related discipline (e.g., cognitive science, linguistics, philosophy). Applicants should have gained, or expect to gain, a class mark of 2(1) or better (i.e., 60%+ [or international equivalent, e.g. B+ US letter grade]). Applicants holding 2(2) degrees may apply and each case will be considered on its own merits. Applicants whose academic qualifications do not meet these formal standards may in the first instance be admitted to the Diploma course; they may then transfer to MSc status subject to satisfactory performance in their first two terms. We discourage applications from holders of Third Class degrees. The Admissions Tutor for this course is Dr. Schafer.

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. (1) Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. (2) Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Programme Directors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

Support for graduate students in the Department of Psychology is similarly aimed at both learning and pastoral support. Learning support includes use of workrooms dedicated to MSc students with networked PCs and printer, access to the departmental library, a specially selected and maintained reprint collection, provision of photocopying cards, and ready access to members of staff who are all respected scholars in the fields taught. Pastoral support augments the University's care systems, with each student being allocated a Personal Tutor from the Board of Studies.

New students undergo an induction programme in the week before they start the course. A comprehensive handbook is available for the course; this is available on-line, as are a wealth of other resources via the department's intranet. Teaching is usually in small groups with much opportunity for students to discuss matters and support one another. There is an active Student-Staff Committee with postgraduate representation.

Career prospects

Graduates will have good prospects in careers which involve the understanding of infants and young children in a variety of academic, clinical, educational, health, and research fields. It is anticipated that approximately half of graduates will go into careers involving research (interpreted broadly). The remainder will be able to use skills and insights gained on the course in areas as diverse as health care, health policy, education, international development, and counselling.

Educational aims of the programme

Students are required to operate at a more advanced level than in an Honours degree, with emphasis on the psychological issues which arise with particular prominence in this field of enquiry.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. Advanced concepts, theories, and evidence in the core domains of: research methods, theoretical issues for psychologists, early cognitive and social development.
2. A broad variety of methods and approaches in the psychological understanding of preschoolers and infants.
3. Applications of psychological understanding of infancy and the preschool years.
4. Particular difficulties inherent in the psychological study of infants.
5. Ethical issues in the psychological study of preschoolers and infants.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1-5 are covered in lectures and seminars. 2, 4 and 5 are further supported by practical experience, most notably in the completion of an empirical project.

1 and 2 are supported by the requirement to attend a number of departmental seminars given by visiting speakers, who are generally leaders in their field.

Assessment

1-4 by coursework essays and unseen examinations.

1, 3, 4, and 5 are assessed directly in the empirical project, and 2 is assessed indirectly (through the rationale for the methods actually deployed by the student).

Students with a particular interest in practical issues can offer an optional assessment (in PY0RD) of a 'hands-on' nature.

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – able to:

1. Use advanced evidence-based reasoning to argue or evaluate a claim about developmental psychology pertaining to the preschool years.
2. Apply multiple perspectives and levels of explanation to understand behaviour of preschoolers and infants.
3. Critically evaluate the design and conduct of psychological research into the preschool years.
4. Write well-structured and well-argued essays.
5. Abstract complex orally presented material.
6. Understand the theoretical framework(s) in which psychological research is conducted.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1-3, and 6, are explicated in seminars.
6 is supported by self-paced study using web-based teaching.

Coursework essays give opportunity for formative feedback.

Feedback to students on coursework in 'Methods' modules (one of which is compulsory) assists students in the deployment of their intellectual understanding to practical research related issues, supporting 1-4, and particularly 3.

Assessment

1-4 and 6 are assessed in coursework essays, and, in the case of 'Methods' modules (one of which is compulsory) other assignments (e.g., critical evaluation, literature review, and project planning). and unseen examinations.

5 is assessed by students handing in a number of abstracts of departmental seminars.

6 is assessed by portfolio.

C. Practical skills – able to:

1. Perform advanced searches for information relevant to specific topics.
2. Choose and apply appropriate data analytic techniques.
3. Plan and carry out, with supervision, psychological research relevant to the understanding of the preschool years..
4. Write up empirical research relevant to the understanding of human infants and preschoolers.
5. Make an application for ethical approval.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Dedicated seminars, practical classes, and exercises deliver 1 and 2.

A dedicated library and resources session supports 1.

3 and 4 are initially explicated as part of the compulsory module PYM0DP Methods in Developmental Psychology; they are then consolidated by direct supervision of a research project and associated dissertation. Support for 5 is delivered by special seminar.

Assessment

1 and 2 are assessed by the requirement to undertake a project planning assignment.

1-5 are assessed in the main by the student undertaking an empirical research project relevant to the understanding of human infants or young children, and then writing this up as a dissertation.

D. Transferable skills – able to perform the following at graduate level:

1. Communicate concisely or at length in writing.
2. Give oral presentations.
3. Work with a group.
4. Plan and implement a project.
5. Solve practical problems.
6. Use IT to write, to present information visually, to manage and analyse numeric data, to communicate, and to find information.
7. Manage time.
8. Condense complex orally delivered information.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Transferable skills are integrated in subject-based teaching. 1 is learned, with formative feedback, through essays and other written assignments.

2 is included in seminars.

3 forms a natural part of the compulsory modules PYM0S1 Data Collection and Analysis 1 and PYM0QQ Qualitative and Quantitative Data, and is additionally a major component of the optional Methods courses PYM0CC Methods in Cognitive Psychology, and PYM0SP Methods in the Study of Perception.

4 and 5 are explicated in the compulsory module PYM0DP Methods in Developmental Psychology, and further consolidated by the supervised empirical project.

6 and 7 pervade all aspects of the course.

8 is supported by formative feedback on research seminars written up by the student.

Assessment

1, 2, 4, 6, and 8 are formally assessed as coursework.

An adequate standard in 3, 5, and 7 is required to pass the course.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably expect to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in module and programme handbooks.