

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Programme Specifications for

**MSc Education
Child Development and Education**

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS FOR MSc Education (Child Development and Education)

1. Awarding institution/body University of Oxford

2. Teaching institution University of Oxford

3. Programme accredited by n/a

4. Final award MSc

5. Programme MSc Education (Child Development and Education)

6. UCAS code N/A

7. Relevant subject benchmark statement N/A

8. Date of programme specification January 2008

9. Educational aims of the programme

1. To promote students' critical understanding of child development theories and research, including cognitive, social and emotional aspects of development;
2. To provide students with a critical knowledge of widely disseminated programmes aimed at pre-school children and at the development of language and literacy, cognitive stimulation and the development of numeracy in school;
3. To develop students' knowledge and skills required for the analysis of current issues in the education of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in different early childhood settings and in schools;
4. To promote students' reflective knowledge of different ways of approaching the education and assessment of children with special educational needs;
5. To provide students with experience with a range of research methods used in the evaluation of educational and early childhood programmes (including those for families and institutional settings) and to develop their ability to analyse critically evaluation reports;
6. To encourage discussion on how theories of child development inform practice and how challenges faced in educational and care settings call for further theoretical and research enquiry;
7. To provide a strong basis for further studies in child development and education and encourage future applications to doctoral studies in this domain.

10. Programme outcomes

A. At the end of the programme, students will demonstrate:

1. Critical knowledge of theories and current research on children's cognitive, social and emotional development;
2. Sound understanding of basic concepts and methods of data collection, research design and analysis in cognitive development and in the evaluation of educational programmes;
3. Insight into how widely used programmes for early childhood education were designed, implemented and evaluated and the challenges faced in these steps of programme development;
4. The ability to critically discuss programme evaluation reports;
5. Insight into the ethical issues associated with research in educational, community and family settings and with vulnerable people
6. The ability to design and implement a sound research study, to analyse data and write a concise and rigorous report;

Related teaching/learning methods and strategies

Different methods of programme delivery will be used: lectures, seminars for discussion of specific topics, student led presentations, tutorials, workshops, a research internship and an independent research project carried out for the dissertation. Teaching sessions of three hours will be divided into lectures followed by seminars for the discussion of readings related to the lecture topic. These will provide the opportunity for students to discuss, for example, data collection methods, design and analysis of research papers and become familiar with statistical methods through their use in research. Tutorials will enable students to identify research questions, select areas for literature review, consider how they will carry out field work, and review drafts of the dissertation. Workshops (connected to Paper 3) will be used to discuss in greater depth approaches to data analysis and carry out analyses using available data sets and a suitable statistical package. The research internship, to be carried out in the relevant research groups, will allow students to be apprentices in a project, taking responsibility for a specific aspect or section of the on-going work under the supervision of an experienced researcher.

Students will be encouraged to attend the departmental seminars as well as those organized by the Child Learning and the FELL research groups to broaden the scope of their learning and their participation in the discussion of current research.

Assessment

Students will be required to take three papers:

- (i) Foundations of Educational Research

- (ii) Child Development
- (iii) Children's Learning and Development in the Family and Institutional Settings.

(i) Foundations of Educational Research is a common paper for the whole Masters in Education. (ii) Child Development will be taught over two terms (Michaelmas and Hilary) and assessed by means of two essays, one submitted at the end of each term. These essays, of a maximum of 2,000 words each, should demonstrate students' critical knowledge of child development theories and insight into the cross-fertilization between theory and challenges stemming from practical questions. Feedback about the first essay will be offered to students after the exam board in Hilary term to support students' learning. (iii) Children's Learning and Development in the Family and Institutional Settings will be taught over two terms (Michaelmas and Hilary) and assessed by two essays (with a maximum of 2,000 words each), the first covering the analysis of environments and programmes for pre-school (part 1) and the second for primary school (part 2) children. Feedback about the first essay will be offered to students after the exam board in Hilary term to support students' learning. The second paper will be a critical analysis of a report describing the evaluation of an intervention programme designed to promote children's development; participation in the workshops (referred to in the preceding paragraph) will prepare students for this paper. Both essays should demonstrate the students' knowledge of widely used child development programmes and a critical understanding of the challenges in designing and implementing such programmes, including issues related to children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds or with special needs. A dissertation reporting on an empirical study will be required and should demonstrate the students' insight into ethical issues and ability to design, carry out, analyse and report an empirical study.

B. Skills and other attributes

I. Intellectual and practical skills

Students will have the opportunity to develop the following skills during the course:

1. Critical analysis of research and theoretical papers;
2. Skills associated with data collection techniques;
3. Statistical analysis at an intermediary level, using appropriate statistical packages (primarily SPSS);
4. Skills in carrying out literature searches and organizing bibliographic resources using ICT;
5. Skills necessary to plan, conduct and report an original research study;
6. Oral presentation skills using appropriate ICT and audio-visual resources.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

The development of skills will be promoted through a variety of opportunities for practical engagement in research (e.g. research internship, dissertation), critical analysis of research papers, oral presentations in seminars and workshops. Descriptions are included under A above; further details can also be found in the brief overview of the modules.

Assessment

Besides the assessments described under A above, students will also have feedback on their oral presentation and, through tutorials, on their work while designing, implementing, analysing and reporting their dissertation work.

II. Transferable skills

Students will develop:

1. Oral and written presentations skills;
2. ICT competence;
3. Expertise in the preparation of data bases and techniques of analysis;
4. Ability to discuss ideas critically and to work as member of a team;
5. Autonomous learning strategies and time management.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

See above.

Assessment

See above.

11. Programme Structure and Features

The programme will be offered on a full-time basis. The programme comprises three modules designed to prepare students for the compulsory papers, workshops related to specific uses of data analysis in research discussed during lectures and seminars, and tutorials designed to support the students in the work towards the completion of the dissertation. The three papers and the dissertation are compulsory and students must pass each paper and the dissertation. Essays are completed during the first two terms and the dissertation must be submitted by the end of the Summer holidays.

Students will participate in a two week research internship in Hilary Term, along the lines arranged for MSc Educational Research Methodology, which offers them the opportunity to be apprentices with an experienced researcher, usually as a member of a team, and to write a report in order to reflect on this learning experience. The internship supervisor provides

feedback to the student during and at the end of the internship.

Brief description of modules

(i) Foundations of Educational Research is part of the common core of all Masters in Education and is taught over two terms. It is assessed by two essays of 2,500 words, one completed on each term.

Its aims are:

- That students should become familiar with important aspects of the nature of educational research, its history, philosophy and current challenges, and its different traditions, and its position in relation to other social/natural science research
- That students should develop their capacity to frame research questions and to devise appropriate designs
- That students should begin to develop their competence and confidence in using a range of qualitative and quantitative approaches to gathering, analysing and interpreting evidence
- That students should become skilled and critical readers and users of different kinds of educational research including large scale international and comparative datasets
- That students should be introduced to the importance of ethical issues and codes of ethics in educational research

(ii) Child Development will be taught over two terms and assessed by two essays, one to be completed by the end of each term.

This module covers child development theories including cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional aspects of development from infancy to late childhood, and normative and non-normative development.

More specifically:

- cognitive development will include a critical analysis of Piaget's and socio-cultural theories of development, current issues in the development of pre-school children (e.g. the development of the executive function and its relation to later performance in school), the role of working memory in children's school learning, the connections between theory, research and practice in the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science in school;
- language development will cover a range of issues in both L1 development and childhood bilingualism, for both sequential and simultaneous bilinguals with a view to introducing students to the complexities of language development and important consequences of learning multiple linguistic systems at an early age;
- children's social and emotional development will include a critical analysis of: attachment theory, studies of mother-child interaction and their consequences for children's development and understanding of the other (e.g. sensitivity to others' emotions), theories of moral development, the impact of social and family

environments on children (e.g. maternal stress, poverty, day-care environments, multilingual and multicultural settings), peer relationships and their importance for children's social and emotional development, the development of identity and knowledge of society in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

(iii) Children's Learning and Development in the Family and in Institutional Settings will be taught over two terms, covering the analysis of environments and programmes for pre-school (Part 1, Michaelmas Term) and for primary school (Part 2, Hilary Term) children. It will be assessed by two essays one to be completed by the end of each term.

Part 1: Young children's development in the family, the community and in pre-schools

- basic topics in the study of young children's development, including risk and resilience in early development (contributions of the child, the family and the environment),
- the role of pre-school education in children's learning,
- interdisciplinary methods of working with families,
- language development programmes, early childhood interventions (local, national and international examples) / specific focus on language development or also socio-emotional development,
- evaluations of early childhood interventions (national and international examples, and the education and assessment of children with special educational needs.

The assignment to be submitted at the end of this term will focus on the role of the family, the community and different types of child care and education in the period up to school entry, considering protective and risk factors and/or policy issues.

Part 2. Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Learning Programmes for Children

- design and evaluation of programmes for promoting children's literacy, numeracy and cognitive development in school. The specific programmes will be chosen to focus on current debates.
- systematic reviews and meta-analyses of the effectiveness of different approaches to the teaching of literacy in schools.

Students will be asked to give presentations about the design of these literacy, numeracy and cognitive development programmes, consulting available reports, systematic reviews and meta-analyses, and critically analyse the evidence provided. The assignment to be submitted at the end of this term will be a critical analysis of a research report (chosen by the tutors) on the effectiveness of one educational programme. This essay will allow for the assessment of students' critical understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the programme and the research design and statistical analyses used in the programme's evaluation.

12. Support for Students and their learning

All students will have access to a wide range of resources and facilities within the department. The Department of Education is able to offer excellent teaching

accommodation, a common room with wireless access to the internet, workspace which includes IT stations, access to the Educational library (open until 7 p.m.) and to the computer room and common room facilities (available around the clock). A student handbook and reading lists are available on the web; many lecture notes and further readings are posted on weblearn at the tutors' discretion. The Department also encourages students to work together when preparing class presentations and the data analysis portfolio, promoting mutual support among students.

In addition to departmental provision, students have access to all the first-rate library resources of the University, including remote access to the electronic services (available 24-7), to the resources and training courses of the Oxford University Computing Service (OUCS), to training courses on data analysis provided by the Division, and to bibliographic training courses.

The course director has overall responsibility for the course, co-ordinating teaching, and arranging specialist supervision for dissertation writing. The Department's Director of Graduate Studies oversees all arrangements and is responsible for quality assurance across the MSc Education, and a Chair of the Examination Board, who is responsible for quality assurance of the examination process. These officeholders can be of assistance to students when their counsel is needed.

Within their college, students have a college advisor who is responsible for their general welfare and is available to assist in any problems on the academic side. There is also a general Tutor for Graduates or Senior Tutor (in graduate colleges).

There are a number of schemes at college or university level offering financial support in cases of hardship.

The University runs a counselling service offering advice and support to all students.

13. Criteria for Admission

Candidates for admission should normally have at least a good upper second class degree, or its equivalent, in Psychology, Education, or a related domain of studies. Research or teaching experience with children is desirable. Candidates for whom English is a second language are required to obtain a minimum score of 7.5 in IELTS, or 600 in TOEFL (plus a score of 4.5 in TWE and 55 in TWS). In addition, it is essential that students will have good general IT skills when starting the course.

Applications will normally be considered in the light of a candidate's ability to provide evidence of potential academic excellence. This will be assessed by considering the candidate's previous academic performance and post-degree experience, if applicable, the references provided, the statement included in the application, and the performance during an interview with a potential supervisor or the Department's Director of Graduate Studies. The Department will also consider the fit between the programme of studies proposed by the candidate, the Department's supervision resources and facilities.

14. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of learning

There will be an annual evaluation of the course based on the performance of students, the feedback of the board of examiners, and tutors' and students' feedback. Examiners' reports (both internal and external) are required each year for submission to the Department of Education's Departmental Board, the Social Sciences Board, and the Educational Policy and Standards Committee (EPSC) of the University. The department is required to report steps that will be taken to address any particular issues identified.

Major period reviews of the course will be scheduled, including a review after five years of all new graduate courses by the University's EPSC and the Social Sciences Board. Changes to the programme agreed by the department must be reviewed and approved by the Social Sciences Board and the EPSC.

Staff support through specially appointed advisors, appraisal, and assessment of teaching by less experienced staff are included in the Department's support and development programme. Training courses in supervision and tutorials, for example, are offered by the University's Oxford Learning Institute

15. Regulation of assessment

The examinations shall be under the supervision of the Departmental Board of the Department of Education, which, with the concurrence of the Social Sciences Board, is responsible for approving examining conventions. The Nominating Committee proposes the names of examiners for approval by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors. The Department of Education has an Exam Board with four internal examiners and one external examiner for each of the routes to the MSc in Education. The same composition will be followed in this route. It is the examiners' responsibility to appoint appropriate assessors for any component of the examination requiring specialist expertise outside that of the examiners.

All written assignments and the dissertation will be subjected initially to blind double marking. Examiners and assessors will then compare their respective marks and come to an agreed mark for each assignment and dissertation. When a disagreement between the two examiners cannot be resolved, it is the responsibility of the external examiner to mark a third time to resolve the differences.

Criteria for the different marks have been approved by the University and will be used by internal and external examiners and assessors. These also include regulations for awarding a distinction, requesting students to a *viva voce* examination when necessary, and making a final decision when the student attended a *viva voce* examination.

Internal and external examiners will be required to produce reports after the examinations for consideration by the department's Departmental Board, the Social Sciences Board, and the EPSC.

External examiners act as impartial advisors, providing informed comment in order to:

1. Verify that standards are appropriate to the award, in part by comparison with the standards of comparable institutions, and to ensure that the assessment procedures and the regulations governing them are fair and otherwise appropriate;
2. Ensure that the conduct of the examination and the determination of awards have been fairly conducted, and that individual student performance has been judged in accordance with the regulations and conventions of the Examining Board.

External examiners are expected to report to the Vice-Chancellor in each year in which they act. Their reports are expected to cover the following points:

- the standards demonstrated by the students
- the extent to which standards are appropriate for the award
- the design, structure, and marking of assignments
- the procedures for assessment
- whether or not external examiners have had sufficient access to, and the power to call upon, any material necessary to make the required judgments
- students' performance in relation to their peers in comparable courses
- the coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and their consonance with the explicit roles required of them
- the basis and rationale for any comparisons made
- the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort
- the quality of teaching and learning which may be indicated by student performance

The report is addressed to the Vice-Chancellor, and will be considered by the Social Sciences Board and the Educational Policy and Standards Committee of the University. The report will also be scrutinised by the Departmental Board of the Department of Education, by the Board of Examiners, and more widely within the department.

Course and examination requirements

Every candidate will be required to pass all three papers (Part 1) and the dissertation (Part 2). The dates for submission of essays will be the last day of term and for the dissertation will be the final Friday in September of the subsequent year. Procedures for submission, including the time and place, will be included in the Course Handbook.

The dissertation will have a minimum of 15,000 and maximum of 20,000 words (including tables, figures, appendices and endnotes but excluding the list of references). It will contain a report of an original empirical research, which can be based on primary or secondary data, or a meta-analysis of previous studies. The subject will be selected by the candidate in consultation with the supervisor and must be closely related to one or more of the themes of the course. The subject selected by the candidate must be approved by the supervisor on behalf of the Director of Graduate Studies and the Departmental Board of the Department. The writing standards will be based on those used for publication in the domain of research.

Three printed copies of the dissertation and one soft copy (using a programme available in the Department) must be delivered to the MSc examiners, c/o Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY, no later than the deadline set by the Course Team.

Candidates wishing to submit dissertations later than this date must obtain the approval of the Departmental Board at least two weeks in advance of the deadline. Such approval will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. One bound copy of the dissertation of each candidate who is successful at examination shall be retained by the Department for deposit in the departmental library.

Marking criteria will follow those adopted by the other MSc in Education routes. Candidates will be asked to submit assignments at stated times. All questions and assignments will be double-marked.

Marking Scale and Grade Descriptors

1. Distinction

i) upper level: 80 > 100

- substantial and in-depth reading of wide range of appropriate literature; strong evidence of critical analysis;
- strong and critical exploration of theoretical perspectives; strong understanding of relevance to topic;
- compelling line of argument that provides strong structure to essay;
- Offers original and illuminating perspectives on topic set;
- perfect referencing and bibliography;
- compelling and cogent style of written English; pleasing presentation.

ii) lower level: 70 > 79

- wide and appropriate scope of literature showing strong understanding; high degree of original choice; some evidence of critical analysis;
- confident exploration and application of theoretical perspectives; clear understanding of relevance to topic;
- coherent and engaging line of argument supported by strong structure to essay;
- Strong and illuminating engagement with topic set;
- detailed and accurate referencing and bibliography;
- clear, accurate and engaging use of written English; attractive presentation.

2. High pass: 60 > 69

- refers intelligently to wide & appropriate range of relevant literature; some evidence of original choice;
- evidence of sound understanding and relevance of theoretical perspectives;
- clear and appropriate structure; explicit and coherent line of argument;
- Relevant and responsive to the topic set;
- reliable and consistent referencing and bibliography;
- clear and accurate use of written and good presentation.

3. Lower pass: 50 > 59

- unoriginal and/or limited choice of literature; over-dependence on secondary sources;

- superficial reference to or exploration of theoretical perspectives; little evidence of relevance to topic;
- some degree of essay structure; lack of coherent argument;
- superficial engagement with topic set; some degree of space-filling;
- inconsistent and incomplete referencing & bibliography;
- mostly adequate written English and acceptable presentation.

4. Fail: <49

- insufficient & inappropriate reference to literature;
- lack of engagement with theoretical perspectives;
- lack of clear essay structure and/or coherent argument;
- fails to explore topic set in any depth;
- inaccurate and inadequate bibliographical information; lack of transparency;
- poor written English and shoddy presentation.

First and second markers will consult together in any cases of disagreement over marks. If agreement cannot be reached, a third reader, usually an External Examiner, will read the scripts. The final marks will be awarded at a Board of Examiners Meeting. In computing the overall mark for each Paper, a simple average will be used. However, a candidate receiving two or more fail marks for their questions will automatically fail that Paper.

An External Examiner will read all assignments and dissertations with provisional failing marks and those Dissertations where there is a possibility (but not a certainty) of a Distinction. Oral Examinations (*viva voce*) on the written Papers will be held in cases where candidates have been awarded overall failure marks.

Over-length Dissertations may have the initial mark awarded reduced by up to 5 marks.

The University rules concerning arrangements in cases of illness, disability etc. as detailed in *Examination Regulations 2007*, p. 32, 11.1 to p. 34, 11.11, and to the arrangements for permission for candidates whose first language is not English to use a dictionary in the written examinations as detailed in *Examination Regulations 2007*, p. 39, 13.7. All students should note that they are required to submit work by the deadline specified. An extension can only be granted if written permission has been obtained. Unauthorized late submission will result in an automatic deduction of 20% to the overall grade of the assessed work.

Award of Distinction

Candidates who pass all Papers (Part I) and have at least two distinction marks in the Papers in Part I and a distinction mark for the dissertation (Part II) will be awarded a Distinction.

Re-sits

Candidates who fail to satisfy the examiners in the essays or the dissertation may enter again for the examination on one, but not more than one, subsequent occasion. This will take place on the next occasion when the papers or dissertation are examined. The re-submitted dissertation may be based on the same empirical research and candidates must ensure that

they have addressed all the feedback received from examiners. Essay titles will be those published for the occasion when the candidate is examined.

16. Indicators of quality and standards

The course will be one of the routes in the Masters in Education, which currently contains three other routes. The programme has been assessed positively by external examiners, who have found the standards to be at least comparable to those in other universities and have also commented on the excellence of many dissertations, which would merit publication in academic journals. The Department of Education achieved a rating of 5 in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise and has ESRC postgraduate training recognition (1+3) for both full-time and part-time modes. Its teacher training was considered 'very good with several outstanding features' in the report of OfSTED in 2001.

The Course Team is formed by experienced researchers of international recognition as well as younger but already nationally recognized researchers. The research contributions of the academic staff leading this programme cover cognitive, social and emotional development and include programme evaluation, socio-cultural analyses, non-normative development (e.g. deaf children's literacy and numeracy development), bilingualism and cross-linguistic comparisons, making this an attractive programme both for UK students and for candidates from different parts of the world. The programme aims to recruit graduates and professionals who wish to prepare themselves for leadership in the education and care of children. Teacher trainers and teachers who wish to take a leadership role in early years curriculum, literacy, numeracy, language development or special needs will find that this course provides them with a strong basis for engaging in knowledge creation in schools or other educational settings. Policy makers who wish to lead the implementation of new educational programmes or the evaluation of educational policies and interventions will develop the theoretical knowledge and research skills required for taking on these responsibilities. Graduates who wish to specialise in research in child development in the pre-school and school context will develop the breadth and depth of analysis for a critical understanding of how children's individual contributions interact with the different learning environments and result in different levels of achievement. The collaboration between the academics responsible for this programme and the professionals and graduates recruited as students will provide the opportunity to create a special environment for the integration between theory and practice in child development.