

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MSc Psychological Research Methods (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Dip, PG Cert Psychological Research Methods
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home School/other teaching departments	Psychological Sciences
Location of delivery	Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) October
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	Psychology
Birkbeck Course Code	TMSPSRMT_C
HECoS Code	(100993) cognitive psychology (100497) psychology (100959) research methods in psychology
Start date of programme	October 2004
Date of programme approval	Spring 2004
Date of last programme amendment approval	March 2026
Valid for academic entry year	2026-27
Programme Director	Belinda Brooks-Gordon
Date of last revision to document	10/04/2026

Admissions requirements

Candidates are normally expected to have a second-class honours degree (2:2) or above in psychology or a relevant discipline (e.g., Education, Social Science, Cognitive Science, Speech/Communication Science, Neuroscience).

Applications are reviewed on their individual merits and your professional qualifications and/or relevant work experience will be taken into consideration positively. We actively support and encourage applications from mature learners.

Course 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,
- 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.

Course structure

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Status	Teaching term(s)
Full-time – 1 year					
7	PSYC074H7	Qualitative Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7	SC12001H7	Academic Skills for PG Students	15	Compulsory	1
7	PSYC007H7	Neuroimaging Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7	PSYC077H7	Advanced Quantitative Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7		Option module 1 (from group 1)	15	Option	2
7		Option module 2 (from group 1)	15	Option	2
7		Option module 3 (from group 2)	15	Option	2
7		Option module 4 (from group 2)	15	Option	2
7	PSYC078H7	MSc Psychology Research Dissertation	60	Core	1-3

Part-time – 2 years					
Year 1					
7	PSYC074H7	Qualitative Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7	SC12001H7	Academic Skills for PG Students	15	Compulsory	1
7		Option module 1 (from group 1)	15	Option	2
7		Option module 2 (from group 1)	15	Option	2
Year 2					
7	PSYC007H7	Neuroimaging Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7	PSYC077H7	Advanced Quantitative Methods	15	Compulsory	1
7		Option module 3 (from group 2)	15	Option	2
7		Option module 4 (from group 2)	15	Option	2
7	PSYC078H7	MSc Psychology Research Dissertation	60	Core	1-3
List of options					
Group 1					
7	PSYC004H7	Cognitive, Affective and Social Neuroscience	15	Option	2
7	SCPS215H7	Intervention Design and Evaluation	15	Option	2
7	SC12004H7	Neurodiversity through the Lifespan	15	Option	2
7	SC03006H7	Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science	15	Option	2
Group 2					
7	SCPS013H7	Critical Book Review	15	Option	2
7	SCPS220H7	Child Development in a Global Context	15	Option	2
7	PSYC003H7	Sensorimotor Processes and Attention	15	Option	2
7	SCPS231H7	Approaches to Research Synthesis	15	Option	2
7	SCPS149H7	Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience	15	Option	2

Core: Module must be taken and passed by student

Compulsory: Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)

Option: Student can choose to take this module

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all of the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, information about how and when you will be assessed.

Your learning for this course will be organised around the activities outlined below.

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.

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

Seven modules (Intervention Design and Evaluation, Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, Cognitive, Affective and Social Neuroscience, Neurodiversity through the Lifespan, Child Development in a Global Context, Approaches to Research Synthesis, 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.

How we will assess you

The course will use a variety of assessment methods. Assessment is used to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. For most of the modules associated with this course, your assessment will be through coursework, in the form of essays, a dissertation, and statistical worksheets. You will also be asked to prepare a poster presentation and to make a presentation outlining your dissertation project. The type of assessment of option modules varies, from a critical book review to exams on brain structure and neuroimaging methods. 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.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

‘Learning outcomes’ indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

At the end of this course, you should be able to show:

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

Careers and further study

Graduates can pursue career paths in psychology, education, human resources, market research or management. Possible professions include:

- research psychologist
- further education lecturer
- market researcher
- human resources officer
- educational psychologist.

Birkbeck's MSc Psychological Research Methods graduates will complete with a set of valuable attributes, for example:

- High-level written communication skills in English
- Research skills
- Skills in evaluating and assessing types of information
- Quantitative and qualitative analyses skills
- Planning and organisational skills
- Data collection and presentation skills

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on [the careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Students have access to a Postgraduate Psychological Sciences Learning Support Officer and to learning resources developed by the Learning Support Officer team of the Department of Psychological Sciences.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services.](#) This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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