

Introducing PSYC A209

PSYC A209 Child Development

This publication forms part of an Open University course ED209 *Child Development*. Details of this and other Open University courses can be obtained from the Student Registration and Enquiry Service, The Open University, PO Box 197, Milton Keynes, MK7 6BJ, United Kingdom: tel. +44 (0)870 333 4340, email general-enquiries@open.ac.uk. Alternatively, you may visit the Open University website at <http://www.open.ac.uk> where you can learn more about the wide range of courses and packs offered at all levels by The Open University.

To purchase a selection of Open University course materials visit <http://www.ouw.co.uk>, or contact Open University Worldwide, Michael Young Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, United Kingdom for a brochure. tel. +44 (0)1908 858785; fax +44 (0)1908 858787; email ouwenq@open.ac.uk

Copyright © 2006 The Open University

The Open University
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without written permission from the publisher or a licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd. Details of such licences (for reprographic reproduction) may be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd of 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

Open University course materials may also be made available in electronic formats for use by students of the University. All rights, including copyright and related rights and database rights, in electronic course materials and their contents are owned by or licensed to The Open University, or otherwise used by The Open University as permitted by applicable law.

In using electronic course materials and their contents you agree that your use will be solely for the purposes of following an Open University course of study or otherwise as licensed by The Open University or its assigns.

Except as permitted above you undertake not to copy, store in any medium (including electronic storage or use in a website), distribute, transmit or retransmit, broadcast, modify or show in public such electronic materials in whole or in part without the prior written consent of The Open University or in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Edited, designed and typeset by The Open University.

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by The Alden Group, Oxford.

SUP 77900 0

1.1

Contents

■	ED209 Learning outcomes	4
■	How to use this booklet	5
■	Introduction	5
■	Course structure	7
■	Course materials	7
	Study guides	8
	The four course books	9
	Study Calendar	12
	Glossary	12
	The Methods and Skills Handbook	12
	Media Kit DVD-ROM	13
	fOCUS II and Neural Networks DVD-ROM	13
	Neural Networks Study Booklet	13
	Offprints	13
	The ED209 website	14
	SAFARI	14
	Assignment Booklet	14
	Specimen Examination Paper and notes	15
■	Studying the course	15
	Study techniques	15
	Your personal reactions	16
	Tutorial and other regional support	17
■	Finding information	17
	Books	18
	Journal articles	18
	Library help	18
■	Ethics	19
■	Your views on the course	19
■	And finally ...	20

ED209 Learning outcomes

By the end of the course you should be:

- 1 able to describe the main theoretical approaches in current developmental psychology;
- 2 able to apply the theories, concepts and methods presented in the course to developmental questions or problems of your own choosing;
- 3 capable of understanding and evaluating the research literature of developmental psychology;
- 4 familiar with some aspects of the professional application of developmental psychology and its place in our society, so that you can appraise its various roles and functions;
- 5 aware of the research methods used to study child development and able to understand them.

How to use this booklet

This booklet introduces you to *ED209 Child Development*. It is the second thing that you should read (the Course Chair's letter is the first). In this booklet we introduce you to the different materials that make up the course and what they contain. We explain how they fit together and how you can work with them to organize your work through the year, complete the assignments and reach the final examination feeling well prepared. When you have finished reading this booklet you should turn to *Study Guide 1*, which sets out what you will study in the first part of the course.

Introduction

Welcome to *ED209 Child Development*. Whatever specific interests you have in children and their development, as a parent, a teacher, or in some other role, we hope that you share with us a more general interest in the whole period of childhood from the very first days of life through to adolescence. We hope to sustain and increase your interest: perhaps one or more of the things that we cover will spark off new ideas and questions that you will wish to pursue when you have finished the course. In making the course, we have brought together many psychologists, each with their own specialisms and research areas, to introduce you to the numerous and varied topics which today make up developmental psychology. The variety of these topics, and the different ways in which each is presented, will, we hope, make your year of study with us engaging and rewarding.

We know that students on *ED209 Child Development* have very varied backgrounds. If you are one of the many who are studying child development as their first introduction to the formal study of psychology, we have tried to ensure that you will find that the ideas, concepts and evidence that are at the heart of psychologists' study of children's development have been clearly explained and interrelated. On the other hand, you may have studied other psychology courses with The Open University, most probably *DSE212 Exploring Psychology*. If so, you should find that the understanding gained from these courses will complement your work on *ED209 Child Development*; you will find some common ground in the description and discussion of theories, research and practical applications, but you will doubtless also find contrasting perspectives and emphases. We hope that you will be able to put these sorts of experiences to good use to extend the breadth and the depth of your growing knowledge of the discipline.

In this course, we are introducing you to a specific discipline within psychology. Psychology in general and developmental psychology in particular are subjects that arouse a great deal of interest, attention and controversy. Hardly a week goes by without a report in the media which claims to have a bearing on

our understanding of children's development and the important influences on it. Some of these are accounts of research conducted by psychologists. Others are reports from committees or working parties which have attempted to bring together and evaluate the available evidence on a given topic with a view to arriving at recommendations on such questions as how to deal effectively with 'delinquent' children or the benefits and costs of nursery education. Others are articles in which 'experts' offer their own perspectives on issues – often in a somewhat polemical way. It is a good idea to look out for such reports and articles and build up a file of them for your own use. Among other things, they serve to keep you up-to-date with current developments and provide material on which you can practise your critical skills. This course will help you to evaluate how people have gathered their evidence and the arguments that they use to make sense of it.

The nature of the evidence presented varies greatly and this reflects the diverse methodological approaches apparent in contemporary developmental psychology. However, whatever the type of evidence, theories evolve as a result of a process in which results from research feed back into and modify theories about child development, and the nature of those theories, in turn, informs and directs the next wave of research. The course aims to give you an understanding of this process, often referred to as the 'research cycle', in the specific context of child development.

Above all, however, in writing this course we have tried to make developmental psychology accessible: we have used many examples, case studies and illustrations, and have done our best to present the ideas in a way that is clear and easy to follow. You will find that the course expects you to be active, to get involved with the content, and we do encourage you to engage with the activities we've developed.

The course comprises four distinct parts, which you will be studying in order. Each part has its own study guide, which is the central element of your study. The relevant study guide is the first thing you should refer to at the start of each week, and is designed to help you integrate all the different components of the course. Most of your work will be centred on the four main texts (Books 1, 2, 3 and 4) and the *Methods and Skills Handbook*, but you will also need to watch and listen to the video and audio materials and make use of different pieces of computer software and online activities that are provided. You will also receive a glossary of key terms for the course, and your assessment materials. And last, but not least, you will have the support of your tutor, contact with other students in your area through tutorials or other means, and a link with your Regional Centre for any other help you may need.

You may be following this course with a view to completing The Open University's package of psychology courses that is recognized by the British Psychological Society (BPS) as conferring the Graduate Basis of Registration. Full details of these arrangements are given in the University's *BPS Recognition Leaflet*, which is included with the first course mailing.

Course structure

- Part 1 introduces you to the main theoretical approaches in developmental psychology by considering a series of topics relating to development in infancy and early childhood.
- Part 2 extends further into middle childhood and adolescence and focuses on the emotional and social aspects of personal development.
- Part 3 is an examination of the various process involved in the development of children's language and thinking.
- Part 4 has an applied focus and deals with a number of areas in which developmental psychology has had an impact. You are expected to study just one of these, in some depth. You are also required to carry out a literature search to identify additional relevant materials.

Generally speaking, each part of the course is divided into 8–10 weeks of study. Most of your study will be based on a chapter from one of the course books, plus one or more course elements. The study guide for each part of the course tells you how to study the week's course materials. In each week of the first 6 months of the course you will also read a section from the *Methods and Skills Handbook*. Each section covers aspects of research methods that extends topics in the chapter that you have read that week or helps you to develop a skill.

You will be asked to prepare six written assignments (known as tutor-marked assignments or TMAs for short) during the course of the year and there will also be an end-of-course examination.

The *Study Calendar* that you have been sent with the course materials summarizes important information about the course. You may want to look at this now.

Course materials

The course materials include the following elements:

- study guides for Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4;
- Book 1: *Psychological Development and Early Childhood*;
- Book 2: *Children's Personal and Social Development*;
- Book 3: *Cognitive and Language Development in Children*;
- Book 4: *Developmental Psychology in Action*;
- *Methods and Skills Handbook*;
- *Study Calendar*;
- *fOCUS II and Neural Networks* DVD-ROM which contains the fOCUS software for observation skills learning associated with the *Methods and Skills Handbook*, and video examples of psychological assessments. It also contains the Neural Networks software which will introduce you to neural networks simulations;

- *Neural Networks Study Booklet* which will guide you through the Neural Networks software;
- *Media Kit* DVD-ROM which contains video and audio bands for the course and the practical assignments;
- *Software Guide* for the computer-based materials provided on the DVD-ROMs;
- *Glossary* which gives concise definitions of technical terms and words used in developmental psychology;
- ED209 website which gives access to various course materials and also to online conferencing and OU systems such as the SAFARI (Skills in Accessing, Finding and Reviewing Information) online tutorial;
- *Assignment Booklet* containing details of your tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) for the course, plus guidance;
- *Specimen Examination Paper* and notes.

Details of these elements and how they fit together in your study pattern are given below.

Study guides

There are four study guides, one for each part of the course. As noted above, you should use the study guides as the central element in your study, and they are the first place you should go to when planning your work for the week.

The study guides each have a similar format. They are divided into sections – one for each week of the course. The ‘Study activities’ list at the beginning of each section provides a summary of what you are expected to cover during the week and the course materials that you will need. It also sets out the order in which to study the materials and indicates how they interrelate.

Each section contains guidance notes, providing an introduction to the chapter topic and alerting you to other chapters that relate to the one you are studying. There are also notes on the study guide icons found in the book chapter margins. (When you reach an icon in a book chapter, these indicate that you can turn to the study guide and find notes that expand and explain specific learning points.)

Each section also contains a chart of the ‘Key concepts, theories and issues’ for the chapter you are studying. As you study, you should use these charts to check whether you have covered the key points in each chapter. They will also be useful in your revision.

As well as providing guidance for your reading of the four main course books, you will also find notes on the video and audio materials. **Make sure that you read these before viewing or listening.** Finally, the study guides also direct you to specific sections of the *Methods and Skills Handbook*, and provide background material.

The four course books

The four books which contain the main teaching text for your year's study are:

- Book 1, *Psychological Development and Early Childhood*, edited by John Oates, Clare Wood and Andrew Grayson.
- Book 2, *Children's Personal and Social Development*, edited by Sharon Ding and Karen Littleton.
- Book 3, *Cognitive and Language Development in Children*, edited by John Oates and Andrew Grayson.
- Book 4, *Developmental Psychology in Action*, edited by Clare Wood, Karen Littleton and Kieron Sheehy.

Together, the four books cover the main areas of research and theory in contemporary developmental psychology. The books' subject matter reflects in part the historical divisions within the subject, but there are other reasons for the way the books have been prepared.

Book 1 focuses on early childhood. It is broad in its coverage and introduces you to many of the approaches dealt with in more detail in Books 2 and 3. Book 4 aims for similar integration, by picking up strands of the previous three books and relating them to the many practical applications of developmental psychology.

Chapters

Each chapter has been written by one or more psychologists who are well versed in their field, with the aim of introducing you to key ideas, techniques, evidence and controversies. As a result, you will find differences in style and voice from one chapter to the next. This is because the books portray the different orientations within each field of study. There is much lively debate within developmental psychology as to the significance and importance of the areas we cover. You should try to adopt an analytic, critical stance to what you are studying; indeed, we positively encourage you to question the various ideas, theories and interpretations in the course. We hope you will end the course with a firmer basis on which to take issue with positions in the field, with arguments which use evidence appropriately.

Learning outcomes

Each chapter begins with a set of 'learning outcomes'. These spell out what we expect you to have learned by the time you have finished your study of the chapter. For this reason, you will find it helpful to look at them before you start the chapter, so that you have an idea of where you are going and what we consider to be the important outcomes of your study. If it fits in with your study style, you could use the learning outcomes as headings for your notes.

You may also find it helpful to go back to the learning outcomes after you have completed a chapter, to check that you have covered all of them in sufficient depth: you might ask yourself, 'Could I answer a question on this learning outcome from what I've studied in the chapter?' This can also be a helpful revision aid as a quick way of summarizing chapter contents.

Readings

Many of the chapters have readings following the study text, which may be extracts from journal articles or other sources. These give you experience of reading psychological literature, including summaries by experts in their fields and classic developmental studies. The chapter itself will contain guidance on when you should read these.

Study guide icons



To help you while you are reading the chapters, you will find in the margins a special icon, like the one in the margin here, that indicates that there is something relevant in the study guide section for this chapter: it may be a further explanation or a pointer to a useful cross-reference to another chapter or book.

Activities

In each chapter, you will find instructions for activities which give you the opportunity to work with the material. The activity is always headed with a brief description of its purpose and an estimate of how long it will take you to complete it. In all cases, we have chosen to highlight certain parts of your study in this way because we consider that your understanding will be enriched by a more active involvement. Some of the activities have been included specifically to encourage you to think critically about what you have just read.

Many of the activities will be more useful if you are able to do them with one or more other people, or if you can discuss what you have done with someone else, for example, at a tutorial session. Where this would be of particular benefit, the activity states this. You should carry out as many of these activities as you can.

Some of the activities specifically suggest working with children or adults. If you are unable to do this, you can often gain some value from the activity by thinking about the points that it raises. Note, also, that some of the activities are potentially quite time-consuming and you may need to plan to do them when you have a clear hour or so, rather than halting your study of the chapter at the point where they occur in the text.

Research summaries and boxes

Within most of the chapters, you will find two special uses of boxes. One type, headed 'Research summary', describes a particular research study, a set of studies or a specific technique. Sometimes these are classic studies or techniques which are widely referred to in the psychological literature. Alternatively, they may make an important point particularly well, or illustrate debates within research. You will find it helpful to make sure that you have grasped the essence of the summary.

The other type of box, headed, for example, 'Box 1', usually contains material that gives a particular example to illustrate a point made in the text that we consider especially important.

Section summaries

Each section within the chapters concludes with a summary which concisely sets out the main points of the section. In conjunction with the chapter learning outcomes, these summaries will help you to check that you have not missed anything important while studying and to organize your revision.

Further reading

Some chapters list a small number of other books in which you will find further treatment of the chapter's topics. These are not required reading, but are provided in case you wish to find out more about the area covered by the chapter.

References

When academics quote or cite other people's work, it is standard practice to acknowledge and give full details of that work. The authors of the chapters give references for the various research findings, arguments, theories and points of view that are covered. In the text, these are indicated by a name and date (for example, Brennan, 2006) and the details of initials, full title, publisher and so on are given in the list of references at the end of the chapter.

You will see that many of these references are to academic journals (regular publications that publish formal academic reports of research): these are the main forum for the dissemination of research findings within the academic community. For a paper to appear in a journal, it has to pass the test of 'peer review': the process in which other respected academics in the field look closely at submitted papers, and only when they are satisfied that the research reported meets the standards of scientific enquiry are the papers published.

In your study of Books 1, 2 and 3 we do not expect you to follow up these references. However, in Book 4 you will be required to conduct your own search of academic journals and do some independent reading around one chapter that you will choose to study in depth. One way that you could begin to read around the chapter might be to look at the references section at the end and search for some of the key articles that were cited in the text. You should also note the way in which these references are given: you should acknowledge your own sources in the same way when you write your assignments. Specific guidance on presenting your references is given in Section 4 of the *Methods and Skills Handbook*.

Studying the book chapters

Our suggestions for the study of all the books in this course are as follows:

- Before you start on a particular chapter, read the study guide section for the chapter to gain an overview of its content.
- Spend some time looking at the learning outcomes at the beginning of each chapter before you begin to read the chapter. The 'Key concepts, theories and issues' chart for each chapter offers prompts for key points to look for when reading the chapter.
- Do not get 'stuck' on detailed points that you do not fully understand. Note any points that you do not understand and prepare to discuss them in a

tutorial or in a study group, or return to them when you have finished your first reading of the chapter.

- Make your own notes on the chapter, using your own words as much as possible and noting the page number of any sections of text that you copy down directly as quotations.
- Re-read the chapter introduction and the section summaries, and check your understanding against the learning outcomes.

Study Calendar

This is a key document which gives you an overview of all the different parts of the course on one sheet of paper. Most importantly, it will help you to plan your work by giving the dates during which you should be working on particular book chapters and other course materials, and the due dates for assignments.

As you will see from the *Study Calendar*, we have designed the course so that each of the chapters of Books 1 to 3 generally occupies one week of study. There are also weeks set aside specifically to enable you to focus on working on assignments but that are also useful for revisiting parts of the preceding book that you found particularly interesting or difficult, and to tidy your notes. Book 4 is different in that you have a choice as to which chapter you select for focused study during the weeks allocated: you will be using an Open University Library online tutorial called SAFARI in order to source additional readings to enhance your knowledge of the specific chapter you are working on. The options for studying Book 4 are described in more detail in *Study Guide 4*.

Glossary

The *Glossary* gives concise definitions of technical terms and words used in developmental psychology. It also contains brief details of prominent psychologists whose work is given attention in the course books.

The Methods and Skills Handbook

The *Methods and Skills Handbook* is a key element in your study of the course. From the overview given in the *Study Calendar* you will see that in each week of the first 6 months of the course you will be directed to do some work on research methods in a way that extends elements of the chapter that you will have read that week, or work on improving your skills. The study guides also show which sections of the *Methods and Skills Handbook* to read in each week, and give a brief introduction to your methods and skills study. Sometimes this may be to do with the practical side of collecting and analysing data, while in other weeks we will explain how to prepare written material and develop your ability to conduct literature searches.

The handbook also asks you to work with other course materials which you will be guided to in two main ways. First, there are activities throughout the handbook which ask you to watch individual video bands either in Media Kit (on the *Media Kit* DVD-ROM) or video examples in fOCUS (on the *fOCUS II and*

Neural Networks DVD-ROM). Second, certain sections of the handbook contain a brief introduction and then go on to ask you to work through other elements of the course material. These are all computer-based and include working through two interactive learning units provided on fOCUS and three online tutorials on SAFARI. The handbook also directs you to work through the *Neural Networks Study Booklet* and accompanying *Neural Networks* software, on the *fOCUS II and Neural Networks* DVD-ROM.

Media Kit DVD-ROM

This contains a wide selection of audio-visual materials for the course and transcripts of these materials. You will be directed to particular audio or video bands through the study guides, and through the *Methods and Skills Handbook*. In addition, as mentioned above, you will find notes on every audio-visual item in the study guide section for the week in which you are studying. You should read these notes before you start to view or listen to the materials. This DVD-ROM also contains audio-visual material for use in your practical assignments.

fOCUS II and Neural Networks DVD-ROM

This DVD-ROM provides you with resources that you will need for your methods and skills work. The fOCUS software contains two interactive learning units to help you to develop your understanding and skills in observation as a research method, as well as video examples of a range of psychological assessments described in the course. In conjunction with the study guides, the *Methods and Skills Handbook* will direct your use of this resource.

Neural Networks Study Booklet

The *Neural Networks* software allows you to explore what neural networks are in terms of their components and how they function. The support materials provided in this booklet explain why some psychologists believe this is a fruitful way to explore aspects of child development, and move on to the ‘hands on’ part which enables you to have a go at building and running neural networks for yourself using the software. The study guides and the *Methods and Skills Handbook* will tell you when to start using the *Neural Networks Study Booklet*.

Offprints

We have included a small number of papers and extracts to extend your reading of topics beyond the books’ coverage. Where these have been included, they are found at the end of the relevant study guide. Some additional offprints are also provided electronically via the course website.

The ED209 website

The ED209 website (also referred to as the ED209 eDesktop) contains links to a range of online resources including an online Study Calendar, searchable electronic copies of course materials and conferencing. The ED209 website is accessible via your StudentHome page. Details of StudentHome and how to access the ED209 website are given in the leaflet accompanying the Online Applications CD-ROM in your course mailing.

SAFARI

SAFARI is an online tutorial provided by the OU Library which gives you a 'hands-on' way of building your skills in different ways of searching academic and literature sources, for example, by accessing electronic databases, journals, and other resources. You will need these skills when you come to work on Part 4 of the course. In Part 4 you are asked to select one chapter from Book 4 which you will then study for the next 4 weeks and you are also required to carry out a literature search to identify additional relevant materials. More details are in *Study Guide 4*.

Assignment Booklet

The *Assignment Booklet* gives detailed guidance on each of your assignments, including how to access the appropriate resource materials. It also contains general guidance on how to approach all the TMAs, along with administrative details of how to complete the required submission forms (called PT3 forms) and send in the assignments.

During the year you will be expected to complete six assignments. These will take different forms, with the earlier assignments being more structured. The assignments can be thought of as being primarily concerned with either conducting and writing about practical work, or writing about theoretically orientated questions. However, you should note that both types of assignment will expect you to draw on your study of the course books and the *Methods and Skills Handbook*.

Methodology/practical assignments

These three assignments, TMAs 02, 04 and 06, require you to consider the practicalities of collecting data, and, in TMAs 04 and 06, to then analyse sample data provided on the *Media Kit* DVD-ROM. You will be expected to relate your analyses to developmental research. While these assignments will help you to begin to acquire the skills that are an essential part of a psychologist's toolkit, you should remember that employing these techniques does not make you a psychologist, and that even very experienced psychologists are wary when making judgements about individuals.

Essay-type assignments

There are three of these assignments, TMAs 01, 03 and 05. For early TMAs we provide extensive guidance; later in the course we encourage you to develop your own approach to answering questions. Further details are given in the *Assignment Booklet*.

Specimen Examination Paper and notes

Your study of the course as a whole will be assessed by a final examination of 3 hours. A specimen examination paper and accompanying notes will be included in a later course mailing. It should be noted that one of the compulsory examination questions is a 'seen' question that will be sent to you in a mailing well in advance of the examination, and will relate to your study of your Book 4 topic. You will be expected to prepare notes and learn their content so that you can produce a good answer to this question under timed conditions in the examination.

Studying the course

Study techniques

Remember that you should use the study guides as your key reference points for navigating through each part of the course. You will also find it useful to keep the *Study Calendar* close to hand.

You should be able to study each chapter and its associated materials within a single week of about 12 hours' study time, while leaving you time within this for the completion of your assignments. It is best to plan ahead and pace yourself, so you are able to keep up-to-date with the schedule summarized in the *Study Calendar*. It is likely, however, that you will find some chapters more demanding or difficult than others. Rather than getting bogged down and falling behind in your study, you should move on to the next chapter. You can then return to the one that you had difficulties with during the assignment weeks which follow each of the first three parts of the course. If you run into this sort of problem, your tutor should be able to offer you some further help and guidance on the best study strategy.

Many people are wary of using computer software as part of their learning, but we would encourage you to make use of all the resources in this course that require a computer. All of them have been developed to be easy to use if you follow the detailed guidance provided.

The important thing is not to lose heart and give up on the course if you hit a difficult patch: there's a lot of material included, and we don't expect you to cover all of it in equal depth. Indeed, we'd be pleased to think that you are going to find some parts particularly interesting and spend more time on these. This is

especially true of Part 4 of the course, where you are specifically expected to make a choice about what to focus on.

Whatever your experience of studying with The Open University or elsewhere, you can always improve and develop the ways in which you study. We hope that the way in which this course has been prepared and written will help you in this process. If you feel in need of more general advice and support with study skills there are several helpful books on the market. We particularly recommend *The Good Study Guide* by Andrew Northedge (published in 2005 by The Open University), which is designed for OU students.

Your personal reactions

Because this course is about child development, it devotes quite a lot of attention to issues surrounding child-rearing practices and the beliefs and attitudes that are associated with them. It also deals with the impact on children of situations which may be problematic for development, such as discord and divorce in the family, post-natal depression, difficulties of attachment and similar circumstances. Because childhood is rarely idyllic, even though we might wish it had been for us or that it could be for our own children, it's probably inevitable that some parts of the course are going to touch on areas that evoke emotional reactions in you, perhaps unexpectedly strong ones. If this is the case, we would encourage you to discuss these feelings with someone else: a friend, fellow-student or your tutor.

It is one of the tenets of this course that a proper study of child development should not be 'ethnocentric'; in other words, it should not take for granted the dominant model of childhood and child-rearing in one culture as a standard against which other models are judged. For this reason, the course will encourage you to question some of your basic assumptions about these matters, and again, this may stir up strong feelings. In particular, some of the activities you will be doing may bring you up against some parts of your own experience, when you were a child, or as an adult now, which you find hard to deal with dispassionately. Our advice to you, if this happens, is to stop the activity or reading that you are doing and turn to another part of the course for a while. You may then be able to come back later to the part that you earlier found difficult, and be more able to proceed.

Some challenging of your own values and attitudes is almost inevitable, and working through the reasons why you hold them can be an important part of clarifying and making more explicit your own theories of child development. For this reason, we do encourage you to reflect on what the course content means for you, your own childhood and how you behave towards children, either your own or those with whom you work professionally. Our own conviction is that a better understanding of child development can contribute to a more understanding, empathic and supportive attitude towards children, in which children and the points they have reached in their development are both valued and respected.

Tutorial and other regional support

You will be allocated a tutor who will grade your assignments and make detailed written comments on them. You may also need to telephone your tutor from time to time (your tutor will let you know the most convenient times for this, and can also tell you about using email). About once a month you may have the opportunity of attending a tutorial session with other students in your tutor group. There is no obligation on you to attend these sessions but those who do usually find them a valuable way of extending their learning, sorting out their problems and making contact with other students. Even if you find it inconvenient to attend the tutorials, it will usually be possible for you to form a 'self-help' group with other students in your region. Your tutor will normally circulate a list of those students who are happy for their names and addresses to be released to other students in the group. You can also join the ED209 FirstClass web-based conference run by the Open University Students' Association (OUSA).

Your course tutor is the first person that you should contact over problems, and will usually be able to help you. Your Regional Centre is another prime point of contact regarding your study of the course, any queries that you might have and any problems that arise during the year.

The details of the tutorial programme for the year and other study activities are decided by your region, and it will tell you about these.

Finding information

If you want more information than is provided in the course materials, you may be able to obtain it from books and journals. An excellent approach to finding information is to use The Open University's electronic library, Open Library, to search online resources such as journals, books, newspapers and reference works. You can access Open Library via your StudentHome page.

You will find links to library subject pages for psychology and education on your ED209 website Course resources section. To access the resources you will need passwords. Almost all of the databases will require your Open University computer username and password (or OUCU for short), sent to you in your first course mailing. You will find instructions about this on your StudentHome page under 'Library passwords'.

The OU Library has created a database of academic libraries that are willing to provide some facilities for OU students. You can find details on the 'Libraries-Libraries near you' link on Open Library. Most of these libraries allow university students to use their resources for reference, but they usually require a fee if you want to borrow books. Everybody has the right to use a public library, but only the larger ones will have the breadth and depth of coverage you require. Many public libraries now allow their users to access the internet and you may find this a useful place to access Open Library. Public libraries will also, for a small fee, obtain books on interlibrary loan and photocopies of articles on from the British Library.

Books

The library catalogue is the best place to start to look for books, as this will give you details of the books that your library holds on a specific subject. The Open Library catalogue is called Voyager and can be accessed from the homepage of the Library website. Students who can visit the Milton Keynes area regularly may use the Library at Walton Hall to borrow books, but other students can only use the electronic books. To find these in Voyager, click on 'Search' and highlight 'Electronic Books' in the limits box. You can search by subject and any books you find will be available electronically.

To find details of books not held in your library you can consult online databases such as the catalogues of the major research universities, the British Library or the database WorldCat. You will find links to these from Open Library in the 'electronic resources section' under 'catalogues and bookshops'.

Journal articles

To find details of journal articles you will need to search indexes such as PsycInfo, ChildData, the British Education Index (BEI) or the Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), the American education database. These can all be searched over the internet. You will find details of these databases in the 'electronic resources' section of Open Library. PsycInfo, ChildData, BEI and ERIC are bibliographic databases, which means that they only give details of the articles. You can then check if the article is available in full text by going to the 'electronic journals' section under 'electronic resources' on the Open Library homepage and typing the title of the journal into the search box. You can also access the full text of journal articles by searching databases such as Academic Search Premier and PsycARTICLES which are full text databases.

Library help

If you are unfamiliar with using electronic resources, the library has a helpdesk which is available during office hours, Monday to Friday. You can also leave a message outside these hours and one of the librarians will get back to you as soon as possible.

You can send us your enquiries in the following ways:

- click on the 'Librarians On Call' help button on the library home page to chat with librarians live;
- telephone +44 (0)1908 659001;
- email lib-help@open.ac.uk;
- fax +44 (0)1908 653571;
- minicom (text-based phone often used by hearing impaired users) on +44 (0)1908 655455.

As part of ED209 you will be using the SAFARI tutorial. Sections 3 and 4 of SAFARI deal with using databases to find books and journals on your subject. There is a link to SAFARI from the ED209 website.

Ethics

Although you are not being asked to collect data from individuals it is important to be aware of the ethical standards set for psychologists. The British Psychological Society has prepared a detailed code of conduct, ethical principles and guidelines, in a booklet which you will receive if you apply to become a student member of the society. That booklet makes the following general statement:

In all their work, psychologists shall conduct themselves in a manner which does not bring into disrepute the discipline and the profession of psychology. They shall value integrity, impartiality and respect for persons and evidence and shall seek to establish the highest ethical standards in their work. Because of their concern for valid evidence, they shall ensure that research is carried out in keeping with the highest standards of scientific integrity. Taking account of their obligations under the law, they shall hold the interest and welfare of those in receipt of their services to be paramount at all times and ensure that the interests of participants in research are safeguarded.

(The British Psychological Society, 1994, Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines, p. 1)

As a student, you will not be offering psychological services to anyone, but you will be engaged in research, albeit in an introductory way, and hence the statement above is directly relevant to your own conduct throughout the course. You should read it carefully and follow its guidance.

Good research which involves collecting information from participants must be founded on a relationship of mutual trust and respect. The ED209 *Methods and Skills Handbook* contains a full section on research ethics, and the British Psychological Society's Ethical Principles are included there as an appendix.

Your views on the course

The ED209 Presentation Course Team at Walton Hall will also be monitoring the running of the course, and will welcome any comments you have on any aspect.

The address to write to is:

ED209 Presentation Team
Faculty of Education and Language Studies
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

 **And finally ...**

We wish you well in your study of the course. We would like to encourage you to make full use of all the different elements of the course, and in particular to use the study guides as your signposts to the best route through the course.