

General Introduction

Have you ever watched a week-old baby apparently studying intently the people and objects around them and wondered what on earth they make of their new world and just what thoughts, if any, might be going through their mind?

Have you ever wondered why the happy nine-month-old baby who always used to greet you with smiles and laughs has suddenly started crying as soon as you approach?

Have you ever watched in horror as a six-year-old watches the latest blood-thirsty 'cops and robbers' programme on the television and then immediately starts thumping and shooting everybody, and wondered just what effects such violent television programmes might have on a child?

If you have answered 'yes' to one or more of these questions, then you'll find this course a source of constant fascination as we examine a wide range of psychological topics and answer all of these questions.



AQA Aims

The aims of this course are the same as the aims listed in the AQA 3561 (Home Economics - Child Development) specification. Please refer to the AQA website for full details. The stated aims for this subject are for the student to:

- a) increase their knowledge and understanding of human needs, the interdependence of individuals and groups, and the influence of social, cultural and economic factors;
- b) increase their awareness of the implications for home economics of rapid technological changes, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the growth of scientific knowledge and understanding, and develop their ability to respond effectively to such changes;
- c) foster a critical and analytical approach to decision-making and problem-solving in relation to the specified context;
- d) develop the knowledge and skills required for the effective and safe organisation and management of relevant resources.

The course should also help you to develop abilities and skills that:

- are relevant to the study and practice of child development;
- are useful in everyday life;
- encourage safe and ethical practice;
- are relevant to the evaluation of different types of information.

The course should stimulate curiosity, interest and enjoyment in the study of child development and its methods of enquiry, as well as interest in individuals and social environments.

But you do not need to worry about any of these aims at this stage!

The Sequence of Lessons

The course is divided up into three modules, as follows:

Module One: The Family

1. The Family
2. Planning a Family
3. Anatomy and Physiology of Reproduction

Tutor-marked Assignment A

4. Pre-conceptual Care
5. Pregnancy
6. Preparations for the Birth and the Birth

Tutor-marked Assignment B

Module Two: The Care of the Child

7. New-born Baby
8. Post-Natal Care of the Mother and Baby
9. Feeding and Nutrition

10. Hygiene

Tutor-marked Assignment C

11. Environment
12. Child Care Provision
13. Medical Needs and Childhood Illness
14. Health and Services Personnel

Tutor-marked Assignment D

Module Three: Development of the Child

15. Physical Development
16. Intellectual Development
17. Emotional Development

Tutor-marked Assignment E

18. Social Development
19. Play and Toys
20. Special Children

Tutor-marked Assignment F

21. Revision for the Examination

Practice Examination (TMA G)

Accompanying Textbooks

No accompanying textbook is required. All the topics named in the syllabus are covered to the level of detail required for the top grades.

In any subject, the successful student is generally the one who reads around the subject as widely as possible. This helps you to get different perspectives and fill in the gaps in your knowledge. If you want extra reading, the following is a good GCSE-level revision textbook:

Catherine Debley et al: *GCSE Child Development: The Revision Guide* (pub. CGP) ISBN 1-84146-794-4

One easy way to purchase supporting texts is through the OOL website (www.ool.co.uk). You'll find other useful books in your library or bookshop. But beware! There are many important psychology topics not included in your syllabus, and unless you have time to spare, it would probably be a mistake to spend time on such topics. If a topic is not in this course, it is not required by the syllabus and can be ignored.

The AQA Syllabus

This course is mainly linked to the Home Economics (Child Development) syllabus set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), numbered AQA 3561. You should be sure to acquire your own copy of the syllabus, either via the AQA Publications Dept or from the website www.aqa.org.uk.

The syllabus can be purchased from Publications, AQA, Aldon House, 39, Heald Grove, Rusholme, Manchester M14 4NA (tel: 0161-953-1170) or downloaded from www.aqa.org.uk/qual/pdf/AQA3181WSP.pdf.

AQA syllabus 3561 contains two tiers of Assessment: Foundation (grades G-C) and Higher (D-A*). A candidate can enter for one tier only but it is not necessary to decide when you are beginning your studies. Your tutor will advise you which is appropriate when the time comes.

There is **one written examination paper**, containing “short answer” or structured questions. This represents 50% of the total marks for the GCSE. The paper lasts 90 minutes if you opt for the Foundation Tier, or 2 hours if you go for Higher Tier. Higher Tier papers also include some “free response” essay-style questions. All questions will be compulsory.

The other 50% of the assessment is **coursework**. This consists of a child study occupying approximately 30 hours which must include both research/investigation and observational visits made over a period of at least six months. So, depending on when you intend to take the examination, you will need to plan a long way ahead!

There are three main study areas:

1. **The Family:** This section of the specification requires knowledge and understanding of the nature of the family, and the stages of pregnancy from conception to birth.
2. **Care of the Child:** This section of the specification requires knowledge and understanding of the post-natal care required by mother and child, and the wider care of the developing child.
3. **Development of the Child:** This section of the specification requires knowledge and understanding of the ways in which the child develops and the factors which may influence this development.

Coursework

The coursework is an in-depth study of the development of a **single child** between 0-5 years made over a period of at least six months.

The study will comprise both research/investigation and observations. Each candidate must produce a written report, on A4 paper, which records in an appropriate manner, the research, collected findings, analysis and conclusions, using ICT (computers) as appropriate. The document will also include the plans for the related research work.

The research will focus on a relevant area of child development which will be observed during the observational visits. It is recommended that the coursework will occupy approximately 30 hours.

The specification is designed, primarily, for classes of 14-16 year-olds who will have the opportunity for class visits (perhaps once a week or once a fortnight) to a nursery school or crèche facility. Many students following this course will not fall into that category. If you are not working as part of a group, it may be that there are family members (siblings,

grandchildren, nephews, nieces, etc) who can play the part of suitable subjects. But please follow all the rules, as explained in the lessons that follow. Or it could be that you can arrange your own individual visits to a nursery school.

But remember that your research must focus on a single child, aged no more than 5. Research which looks at twins (say) or larger groups of children is *not* acceptable. And remember that the examiners expect you to rely on a series of planned visits, *not* a continuous observational process, as you might have with your own child.

What is the nature of the study?

The Child Study will involve candidates in both written and practical work. The nature and quantity of written work may vary according to the type of research/observation undertaken, but should include the following items:

- a) a statement of the research/observation to be undertaken
- b) relevant factors and priorities
- c) evidence of testing, observing, recording decisions, analysing viewpoints with supporting reasons. Additional relevant materials may be included, e.g. photographs, examples of a child's work
- d) appropriate forms of research, e.g. practical work, testing, IT-produced reference data, questionnaires, interviews etc.
- e) an observational study to include:
 - an introductory visit
 - i. to identify the stage of development the child has reached
 - ii. to decide upon the focus for research during the observational visits
 - six further visits over a period of six months to cover planning, observations and research.

The research will be concerned with the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of the child which may be explored through a range of themes e.g.:

- play
- toys/books
- creativity
- speech
- concepts
- parent(s) and child
- playgroups/nurseries/childminders

- safety
- healthy eating

The Introductory Visit

The introductory visit is one of the most important elements of the study because it should:

- identify the initial levels and stages of development of the child being studied
- be used to identify a focus for research and investigation throughout the study
- formulate planning and execution the rest of their study;
- provide a point of reference for recognising change and progression throughout the study period;
- provide a basis for effective evaluation throughout the study period.

In choosing activities/investigations, you could:

1. Choose three (or more) different activities to do with the child based on their research (e.g. three different creative play activities).
2. Plan and carry out an inventory/comparative investigation/interview/risk assessment in addition to their observation activity.
3. A combination of 1 and 2.

Option 1 enables candidates to very easily identify aims and expectations for observing and evaluating aspects of development, but many find it difficult to identify separate and appropriate aims and expectations for this as part of their research. Where they choose to look at the activities chosen separately as part of a comparative investigation, aims, expectations and evaluations are often easier to identify. A simple chart outlining the planning for each visit helps to gain marks

Aspects of Investigation

One important aspect of studying child development is the ability to do your own research and make objective observations. This course helps you develop this skill in various lessons, notably in the last module.

You will be expected to understand the necessity of formulating precise hypotheses to promote inquiry and the use of scientific methods and techniques that aim for objectivity.

You will learn about the distinction between dependent, independent and controlled variables.

There are many experimental and field methods; you will learn the advantages and disadvantages of each type of method.

You will also need to understand experimental control, the construction of treatment groups, archival data, unobtrusive measures, surveys and interviews – including an understanding of the principles of construction and administration. You will observe people in naturalistic and experimental settings.

There are also a number of **ethical considerations**. Care must be exercised with regard to the invasion of personal privacy and keep in mind at all times the necessity of minimising pain and stress to individuals participating in studies by the minimal use of deliberate deception, the preferred use of informed consent and the debriefing of participants.

Private Candidates and Examination Centres

You are responsible for making the necessary arrangements to take the examination at a centre that is registered with AQA. If you are not already linked to a school or college, you are advised to contact local schools or colleges to request accommodation for the examination well in advance of making your entry in case difficulties arise. You must obtain the permission of the head of the centre to sit the examination at that centre, and the head must sign your *Registration Certificate*.

Unfair Practice

Any candidate attempting to use or suspected of having used unfair means in any part of an examination, including coursework, will be reported at once to AQA. You must not, for instance, copy information straight from this pack or any other text.

Study Technique

There is no single study technique that is right for this course. Indeed, there are as many different ways of studying as there are learners. So you will have to find the methods which are right for you in your own personal situation. However, the following tips represent some of the best advice for the majority of 'open' learners.

Discipline is undoubtedly the key. You must set aside a specific period each day or definite times each week and stick to it! Don't let yourself make excuses for not getting down to work. Set yourself definite targets – not just the date of your examination but the date when you are going to submit your first assignment and so on. Break your study up into small 'bite-sized' pieces.

Don't just skip over the bits that don't make sense to you. In a subject like this, all the topics are closely linked together, and if you don't understand part of one lesson, it is going to affect your ability to study other lessons as well. So go over the difficult section until it begins to make sense. If the lesson materials are not clear to you, look at the way the same ideas are covered in your supplementary reading. If you're still not sure, it should be possible for you to contact your tutor (by phone or post). Don't be shy about doing that!

Don't underestimate the amount of study that is needed to gain the top grades. Simply memorising all the ideas in the lessons may not be enough. You should be studying even when you are not studying! Television, radio, newspapers and magazines give you a picture of how the world around you is changing and provide you with valuable up-to-date examples. So keep a look-out for programmes or articles that might be useful to your studies. Study the behaviour of children everywhere. What are the patterns of behaviour within your own family or at your place of work or education? Why and how do these patterns change? If you already have an enquiring and critical mind, you are well placed to succeed.

Study the syllabus. This will tell you not just what you need to study but what the underlying objectives are – *why* you are studying these things. A brief analysis of the syllabus is given below, but we strongly advise you to get hold of the complete syllabus and work out which parts of the course will help you with which sections of the syllabus, and so on. Get hold of practice examination papers as well, if you can. These will show you what sorts of question you are likely to face and what kinds of skill you will need to demonstrate.

Make full use of your tutor. They are paid to help you, after all! Take advantage of any opportunities for tutorials and other practical help. Make sure you submit all your Tutor-Marked Assignments for marking. Your tutor will spend quite a bit of time on the marking, so you should take full note of whatever comments you get. The comments are usually more important than the marks because they are designed to show you ways in which you can improve.

Do all the tests. Just because you think you understand something, you should not skip over the tests. They are there to reinforce the ideas and plant them firmly in you memory. A fuller description of the assessment structure of the course is given below.

Self-Assessment Tests and Activities

The Self-Assessment Tests (SATs) are a crucial element of the course. You will find a number of these in every lesson. Usually, they consist of quite straightforward questions that test your memory and understanding of the material that you have just worked through. Often they will consist of one-word answers. But do not just skip over them. Check in the answers at the end of the lesson that you have got them right; if you have not, it is a sure sign that you should go back over the preceding section until the point is clear.

The Self-Assessment Tests are also designed as a useful revision aid. They are clearly marked off from the main body of the lesson, so when you come to a Tutor-Marked Assignment or to your examination, you can go back over the Self-Assessment Tests at a rapid pace. This will tell you what has stayed in your memory and what has drifted away. Keep going over these tests until you can get them all right because between them they contain just about all the essential ideas that you will need for your examination.

Some of the lessons also include **Activities** sections. These are like the Self-Assessment Tests except that they do not ask specific questions and there are no answers provided. They are designed to open out your thinking and to get you to observe what is going on around you. Sometimes they will suggest something practical that you can do: a little bit of research that would be useful, perhaps. It is important that you do not neglect these hints and suggestions.

Making Notes

Every student will want to take their own notes as the course proceeds, to help with the learning process and to assist with examination revision. What sorts of notes should they be? How lengthy? There are no fixed answers to these questions. Some students seek reassurance in writing out elaborate reams of notes that they boil down later; others are happy to keep note-taking to a minimum by merely recording key references. Without being too dogmatic, a number of points relating to the needs of the GCSE course might be made:

- it is important to cross-reference facts, sources and conclusions as they are encountered in the course, so that knowledge and skills are not separated in revision;
- notes should be kept as brief as possible (i.e. without omitting crucial facts or concepts);
- details of individual sources should not be copied out, unless they contain crucial information; while knowledge of the major types of source for each theme and topic is obviously useful, candidates are not expected to know particular sources in advance.

It is strongly recommended that students make notes under each of the headings given throughout the text, every lesson. These may then be compared with the summary that closes each lesson. Do you feel that the summary is full enough? If not, make sure that your own notes fill in any gaps that you feel exist.

The course contains plenty of white space, particularly in the left-hand margin. This is because most students find it helpful to write notes directly on the course they are studying. This will help when you are planning essays or when you are skimming through the course later for revision.

Tutor-Marked Assignments and Practice Tests

The course includes seven Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs), two per module and one practice examination. You should treat these assignments like miniature examination papers and submit your finished papers to your tutor for marking. When the marked assignments are returned to you, you should also receive a copy of the suggested answers. These will give you an indication of the sorts of answer that might have gained you top marks.

More than half the lessons do not finish with a TMA. Instead there is a Practice Test, which is designed to test your

understanding of the lesson. Again, you will gain most benefit if you do not refer back to earlier parts of the lesson but treat it as a mini-examination. Suggested Answers to the Practice Tests are to be found at the end of each module.

Do not worry if your own answers are not the same as those provided. Child Development is not an exact science, so there is plenty of room for your own ideas as long as they are well backed up with evidence. You should be able to provide examples that are more up to date than those provided with the course!

AQA's Special Arrangements for Private Candidates

Private candidates must contact AQA before starting any coursework to request the 'Supplementary Information' that is available.

The coursework undertaken by private candidates will be assessed by moderators appointed by AQA. It must be sent to AQA no later than 30 April in the year of the examination. Private candidates may also be required to attend, at their own expense, for interview on a date arranged by AQA (usually in June). The interview will test whether the project is all your own work by seeing whether you fully understand what you have written. If you are uncertain whether you qualify as a private candidate, you will need to discuss the situation with your tutor.

Grade Descriptions

The system of grading seems to change slightly each year, so you will need to check the syllabus for the year you are aiming for. Because too many students were getting a grade A, a new grade called A* ('A starred') has been introduced that is even better than a grade A.

It is generally agreed that a grade C at GCSE is equivalent to a pass in the old 'O' level examination and the bare minimum if you want to go on to 'A' level.

What comes next?

What does this course lead on to? Vocational progression may be achieved through study at an appropriate level of one of the following:

- a) NVQs in Early Years Care and Education (Levels 2/3); Caring for Children and Young People (Level 3 only); Playwork (Levels 2/3).
- b) Cache Diploma in Childcare and Education (NNEB); BTEC National Diploma in Early Years (Level 3).

The skills and knowledge acquired should be relevant and transferable to other settings, enhancing career opportunities or providing a coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study for students of various ages and from diverse backgrounds who may not progress to further study of the subject.

Using the Internet

All students would benefit from access to the Internet. You will find a wealth of information on all the topics in your course. As well as the AQA website (www.aqa.org.uk), you should get into the habit of checking the Oxford Open Learning site (www.ool.co.uk) where you may find news, additional resources and interactive features as time goes by. If you have not already done so, you may register for your free copy of *How to Study at Home*, our 200-page guide to home learning, or enrol on further courses. Put it on your Favourites list now!

Good luck!

Copyright © Oxford Open Learning 2005