

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

MA Sociology of Childhood and Children's Rights

Awarding Institution: Institute of Education, University of London

Teaching Institutions: Institute of Education, University of London

Name of final award

Master of Arts (MA)

Postgraduate Certificate

Postgraduate Diploma

Programme title

Sociology of Childhood and Children's Rights

(N.B. formerly known as Childhood Studies and awarded with this title to those commencing the programme prior to October 2008)

Language of study

The Institute of Education teaches and assesses participants through the medium of the English language. Competence in English language is required of all applicants. Programme regulations may indicate the level of competence required of each applicant and may make its achievement a condition of admission.

Participants

The MA Sociology of Childhood and Children's Rights is designed for people who work with and for children, or who plan policies and provide services for them, or who are interested in conducting research on childhood and aspects of children's lives. Participants may be working in:

- NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in the UK and abroad such as children's charities and those concerned with disadvantaged and excluded groups.
- education, health, childcare, play, youth, child protection and other social services, including ones that affect children such as leisure, planning, and law and order;
- other local, regional or national agencies working for children including the new children's initiatives directed or sponsored by the Government
- review and evaluation services
- the mass media, IT and communication services;
- voluntary work such as being a school governor or helping with Sure Start;
- children's rights advocacy.

The mix of participants' backgrounds and interests is an important part of the programme as we learn from one another about children's diverse interests and experiences.

Educational Aims of the Programme

The masters degree in Sociology of Childhood and Children's Rights aims to:

- Offer a coherent but flexible master's level programme which will introduce participants working with children across a variety of professional fields, to social theories about childhood, and to the practical issues involved in promoting children's rights.
- Explore critically social constructions of childhood, and the implications these have had, and continue to have, for professional practice with children.
- Enable participants to take account of children's interests, knowledge, views and rights, and understand the complex relationships between the protection, provision and participation rights defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Develop and consolidate the Institute's research and teaching profile in this new and highly regarded field of study.

Module 1 Theories of Childhood and Children's Rights concerns sociological theories of childhood: how babies, children and young people are variously perceived and understood as children and as citizens with rights; how children's rights relate to the rights of adults who care and work for them.

Module 2 Children's Rights in Practice aims to reinforce knowledge gained from module 1, and to encourage participants to reflect on imaginative, realistic and ethical ways of putting this knowledge into practice.

Module 3 Researching Childhood introduces participants to current research about children and childhood, and enables participants to develop a sound understanding of general methodology and research methods as a basis for the critical appraisal of childhood research.

All three modules explore critically the theory and related practical issues of:

- The sociological study of childhood;
- Children's protection, provision and participation rights;
- The application of the knowledge to professional work with and for children;
- Aspects of research with or about children and childhood.

All three modules are based on the assumptions that:

- children constitute a social group, and one that is a permanent component of the social order/society, and is socially constructed in any given time and place;

- children, because of how they are defined by adults, constitute a 'minority' social group.

These two main points help participants to understand why children's rights are both important and distinctive; and also why they are regarded - by some adults - as problematic. The programme examines too how the rising interest in ethics and research with children also provides routes for understanding the importance and value of children's rights.

This programme is unusual in making close connections between sociological research, theories about childhood, ethics, and children's rights.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the programme participants will have developed:

- Critical analytical skills to help them to reflect upon and improve their own professional practice.
- Theoretical, methodological and analytical skills necessary to critique existing research and to undertake their own original research studies in related areas.
- Understanding of sociological, socio-legal and political theories and concepts of childhood and children's rights, including recognition of the varied childhoods experienced by children in the Minority and Majority worlds.
- Knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of people concerned with the care, education, health, welfare-advocacy or control of children and young people.
- Awareness of the importance of listening to and including children's own views and interests when planning and providing for them.
- An awareness of a range of research about children and with children and to the practical issues of researching childhood
- A sound understanding of general methodology and research methods as a basis for the critical appraisal of childhood research

Criteria for admission

Applicants are expected to have a good honours degree (2.2 or above) or equivalent social science, media or cultural studies, humanities, education or a related field; or an unrelated first degree with additional relevant experience in an appropriate field such as child care, health or education. You should preferably have professional experience of working with and for children.

European or international applicants are expected to have qualifications at an equivalent level.

Those who do not meet these criteria have to show an ability to meet the demands of the programme through a qualifying assignment which is normally one or more of the following forms, to be agreed by the Programme Leader: an essay, a critical review, a written statement, an unseen written paper, a portfolio of materials, and/or a *viva voce* examination.

Applicants will normally have some related professional experience.

Applicants whose first language is a language other than English may be required to provide evidence of their English language proficiency.

The Institute of Education is committed to admitting and supporting participants with disabilities and welcomes applications from them.

Participants do not need to be "registered disabled" to draw on these services, though in order to provide services in the long-term we will need to ask for medical or other evidence, as appropriate.

Disabilities Support can also support people who have a temporary mobility / dexterity impairment / other difficulty as a result of an accident, injury, illness or surgery.

We aim to treat every person as an individual, with needs which may differ from those of other people with a superficially similar disability. We do not therefore have standard procedures for participants with dyslexia, nor standard procedures for visually impaired participants: each person's needs are considered individually.

Mode of study

The programme is available full-time and part-time. Entry point is October only.

Programme structures and requirements, levels, modules, credits and awards

(The Institute of Education uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), as a guide to support periods of study undertaken abroad and to assist student mobility. Currently it is assumed that two UK credits equate to one ECTS. Therefore a module of 30 credits would typically equate to 15 ECTS credits.)

There are three core 30 credit modules and preparation of a 60 credit 20,000 word dissertation. Participants take one additional 30 credit optional module.

Theories of Childhood and Children's Rights

This module considers the following topics: Sociology of childhood (theoretical frameworks, macro studies, concepts of children's competence); children's rights and responsibilities (participation, child protection); social capital and children; early years; and international perspectives on childhood (including refugee and trafficked children).

Children's Rights in Practice

This module covers the following topics: Links between the sociology of childhood and children's rights; communication between children and adults; adult-child roles and responsibilities in history – evidence from the The Foundling Museum; analysing encounters between adults and children in film and literature; legal constructions of childhood; international NGO work in majority world countries within a children's rights framework; children's participation in practice.

Researching Childhood

This module covers the following topics: introduction to research; ethical issues; differing methods used in research with children and on childhood (qualitative and quantitative, use of videos, visual and creative methods, birth cohort research, documentary research, research with children in majority countries).

Participants who for academic or personal reasons are unable to successfully complete the 180 credits required for the masters award may exit with the completion of 60 or 120 credits respectively (achieved through taught elements) and be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma in the subject area.

Teaching, learning and assessment strategies to enable outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated

Participants are encouraged to reflect upon their own experiences and backgrounds in teaching sessions, especially when discussing social constructions of childhood. Formative and summative assessment of written skills are provided on submission of draft and final 5000 word module assignments and 20,000 word dissertation.

Participants select the topics of their assignments and dissertations, with guidance from tutors.

Information about assessment regulations

Participants must successfully complete all elements of the programme, to achieve the minimum credits required for the award. All coursework, is assessed according to the grade-related criteria for the programme level, found in the programme handbook.

All assignments are independently marked by two staff members, who meet to discuss and reconcile the marks and comments for each individual. Assignments are graded from A to D, with D being a failing grade. Participants are permitted to represent a failed assignment on one further occasion, within 12 months of the original submission.

An external examiner is appointed by Senate and plays an important role in monitoring the quality of the programme and evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching and support provided for the programme participants and the reliability of the judgements made in assessing them.

Further details about assessment regulations can be found at http://www.ioe.ac.uk/studentInformation/documents/Study_Home/Regulations_f_or_the_Assessment_of_Students.pdf

Support for learning

- Information for applicants;
- Email contact with programme leader when deciding whether or not to apply; programme handbook and module handbooks;
- Optional (but highly recommended) CAPLITS support sessions;
- Support and supervision by a personal tutor (though heavily time-limited to a minimum and possibly inadequate amount by the WMS);
- Peer support and networking is facilitated within the group;
- Access to full range of welfare and union facilities etc.

Methods for evaluating and improving the programme

- Each module is evaluated at the end of the module anonymously.
- A programme representative also gathers participants' opinions and views about the programme.
- Programme committee meetings (with all tutors and the programme representative(s) twice a year.
- External examiner.

Indicators of quality and standards

- Progression to further study, enrollment on MPhil/PhD programmes
- Entry into employment in children's NGO sector
- Promotion within and outside of organizations for participants who already work for children's NGOs.

Date of completion/amendment of specification

July 2010