

FACT SHEET ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY COURSE - SPRING 2023

BACKGROUND:

The revision of the BA:

In 2019, the acting leadership decided to set down the study board as steering committee for a revision of the bachelor education in psychology to be implemented in September 2021. This was based on 1) a wish to update the old curriculum, which would be 10 years old in 2021, and 2) the faculty decision that all subject elements should be divisible by 7.5 ECTS points to fit a common structure at UCPH (UCPH's internal market for courses). Consequently, the number of lectures were reduced from 28 to 20 lectures and the number of pages from 1500 to 1200 standard pages of compulsory literature and from 300 to 200 standard pages of self-selected literature

The teaching group:

The new teaching group in Developmental Psychology (which includes 9 teachers) is very different this year for several reasons. First, it was decided to prioritise permanent staff for teaching rather than external teachers, to ensure greater involvement in teaching by members of the department and to save expenditures on DVIP. Second, most of the teaching group in Developmental Psychology from previous years have left (Hviid, Villadsen, Bang, Murakami, Hedegaard) and new VIPs within the field have been hired (including 3 new tenure-track assistant professors). This inevitably means that the course will look different, as the pool of teachers has changed, and each teacher has the obligation to assign up to 3 texts for each of their own lectures.

Previous evaluations:

Repeated comments from many years of teaching evaluations have been that many students found the course dominated by one perspective, unstructured and with no apparent link between topics, and many missed a more coherent overview of child developmental milestones. In revising the course, we were very mindful of this consistent student feedback.

THE NEW COURSE (approved by the Study Board November 16 2022)

Fagbeskrivelsen:

In fulfilling the definition and aims stated in the Studieordning, we wanted to create an exciting, challenging, and comprehensive overview of current knowledge in the field of developmental psychology. As one of our core BA courses, the aim is to provide a solid base in theory, empirical research, and method, including multiple perspectives. This same balance is sought in all our BA core courses. The developmental psychology course is not an applied course and should not be seen as containing information that can be applied directly in practice. Nevertheless, all future psychological practice is crucially dependent on our students getting a solid scientific foundation in these areas, e.g. clinical and pedagogical psychology and many other applied areas. Further, it should be highlighted, that the group of teachers includes both highly skilled basic researchers as well as researchers within applied areas, many of these also having clinical skills. This means, that in many lectures the teachers will include perspectives on how developmental psychology is being translated into practices in many areas in Denmark.

The choice of textbook for the course

To address the previous student evaluations, we aimed to develop a coherent course that would provide the students with a solid overview of current knowledge and trends within developmental psychology - based on the core principle that theory and empirical research must inform one another. We aimed to create a balanced, internationally oriented developmental psychology, in line with the department and university strategy, so that future Danish psychologists have knowledge of a broad range of theories, empirical research and methods that are the bedrock of developmental psychology. In doing this, we decided to base the new course on a well-known and acknowledged undergraduate textbook (*How Children Develop*, Siegler et al.2020). This textbook is also used in other Danish universities (e.g. Aarhus).

The textbook trajectory represents an excellent introduction to the field, to the topics that are most relevant and well-researched, and to the different themes (e.g. the sociocultural perspective) that recur in history and topic. This textbook was especially chosen for its repeated emphasis on the sociocultural perspective as all teachers in the course recognize that the culture and context in which children develop are inseparable from the developmental trajectory and outcome. This theme will be present in each topic, including those on brain development and genetics.

The additional readings on the pensumliste chosen by the teachers for each of their lectures document a great variety and act as supplements to the textbook in adding further perspectives to the topics. 20% of assigned readings are empirical papers. The remaining texts are theoretical papers, review papers and papers explicating tools for assessing relevant dimensions of childcare. We would also like to point out that some of the authors whose primary texts are no longer on the pensumliste are nevertheless apparent in other texts that are. For example, Stern, Baldwin and Bruner are relied on heavily in Trevarthen & Reddy (2017), and the work of Feldman (2007) and Gergely & Watson (1999) are clearly influenced by both Stern and Winnicott; Bruner is further well-covered in the textbook chapter on language; Butler is neither a psychologist nor developmental psychologist, but their ideas are translated by Morgenroth & Ryan (2021) for a psychology audience. Finally, the textbook does an excellent job at covering key founders of the field like Vygotsky and Piaget, who reappear throughout, and it is rare to find the original texts (always translations) on undergraduate reading lists.

We also note that the curriculum that has been approved by a majority in our study board, and that it is broadly similar to the curricula for developmental psychology at other Danish universities, including Aarhus, Aalborg and SDU. Notably, most of the texts whose absence has raised concerns also do not appear on the pensumlist at these institutions:

https://studerende.au.dk/fileadmin/studerende.au.dk/BSS/Psykologi/Undervisning/Pensumlist/er/E22/Udviklingspsykologi_pensum_E22_NS.pdf

https://www.psykologi.aau.dk/digitalAssets/1033/1033099_semesterplan-3.-sem_e21.pdf

<https://odin.sdu.dk/sitecore/index.php?a=fagbesk&id=49979&listid=3782&lang=da>

EVALUATION OF THE COURSE

The course will run for the first time in Spring 2023. We will naturally make sure to encourage all students to participate in the midway evaluation as well as in the final evaluation of the course in the end of the semester. We will further invite several students to participate in a thorough evaluation of the course after its first iteration. This, in conjunction with continuous critical reflection and discussion among the teaching staff (which also includes teachers from previous years who thus have in-depth knowledge on the previous curriculum as well as the new curriculum), will inform adjustments to the course content in future years and ensure that it continues to grow and change in a manner that balances the development of the field with student interests and needs in the education.

Dora Kampis

Ingo Zettler

Jesper Dammeyer

Johanne Smith-Nielsen

Katarina Harrison Begus

Katrine Røhder

Mette Skovgaard Væver

Sophie Reijman

Victoria Southgate