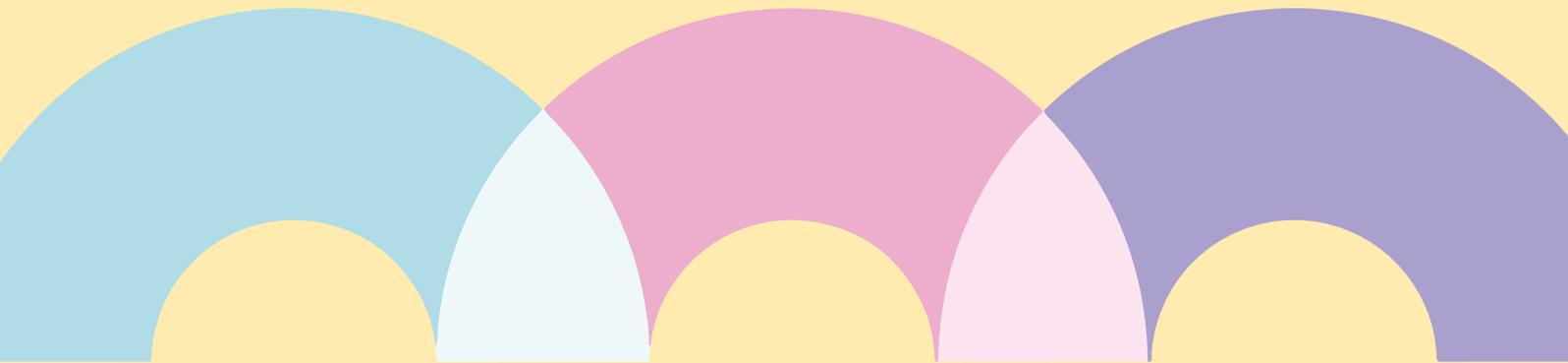


# Programme Guide

## MSc in Early Child Development and Clinical Applications



# Overview

This two-year full-time MSc programme provides a multi-perspective theoretical foundation in early child development, drawing on psychoanalysis, neuroscience, and developmental psychology, as well as current clinical perspectives. Students are able to apply this understanding in a) a supervised clinical placement usually in the NHS, Anna Freud or external charities/organisations, b) a two-year observation of a baby in their home, and c) a substantial research project. This programme is in keeping with current research and clinical practice, making it ideal for those:

- Planning to work, or already working with infants, children and families, who wish to deepen their theoretical understanding and enrich their clinical practice
- Wishing to proceed to child and adolescent or adult psychoanalytic/psychodynamic psychotherapy training, or a doctorate in clinical, counselling or educational psychology
- Interested in developing a career in academia/research with children and families or progressing to a PhD

## Programme Aims



- To give a multi-perspective theoretical grounding in early child development
- To develop practical observational and clinical skills for work with children and parents in the early years
- To engage deeply with an area of knowledge and develop the skills required for conducting reliable and valid research
- To develop skills in integration across theory, clinical practice and research



## Distinctive features of this programme

- A multi-perspective approach to early child development, with psychoanalysis as the predominant theoretical framework, complemented by neuroscience and developmental psychology.
- Practical skills through supervised clinical placement in a clinical setting, a two-year parent-infant observation and two-year research project;
- Integration of diverse knowledge and skills taught throughout the MSc course through series of workshops;
- Recognised pre-clinical course for Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy training

## Anna Freud



Anna Freud is the leading national charity supporting young minds through innovative therapeutic practice, training and research. The vision of Anna Freud is a world in which children, young people and their families are effectively supported to build on their own strengths to achieve their goals.

## UCL



UCL is one of the foremost teaching and research institutions in the United Kingdom. It was founded in 1826 to provide higher education for all who could benefit from it, regardless of religion, race or class, and is both the oldest and the largest of the various colleges and institutes that make up the University of London.

The MSc is also based within the UCL Division of Psychology and Language Sciences, one of the world's leading integrated departments of research and teaching in mind, behaviour and language. UCL is ranked first for research power in Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience by the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), with more than two thirds of our research in these areas rated as world-leading (4\*).

# Modules are grouped into 'families'

## Year 1

| Module 'family'           | Autumn   | Spring  | Summer   |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| Developmental Foundations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Child Development I</li> <li>• Psychoanalytic Theories of Infancy and the Caregiver-Child Relationship</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Child Development II</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Child Development III</li> </ul>  |
|                           | Parent-Infant Observation I (all three terms)  |   |  |
| Science and Practice      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple Perspectives on Developmental and Psychopathology I</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied Psychoanalytic Concepts</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention in Mental Health</li> <li>• Multi-disciplinarity and Multiple Perspectives in Early Years</li> </ul> |
| Research                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Methods I: (formative)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Methods II: Introduction to Statistical Analysis</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multivariate Data Analysis (formative)</li> </ul>   |
|                           | Qualitative Research (all three terms)   |   |  |
|                           | Research Project I (all three terms)   |   |  |

## Year 2

| Module 'family'           | Autumn   | Spring  | Summer |
|---------------------------|--|---|--------|
| Developmental Foundations | Parent-Infant Observation II (all three terms)                                       |   |        |
| Science and Practice      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clinical Competencies: Masterclass I</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clinical Competencies: Masterclass II</li></ul> |        |
|                           | Clinical Placement (all three terms)   |   |        |
| Research                  | Research Project II (all three terms)  |   |        |

## Programme Duration

The programme duration is two full calendar years and involves four- or five-days study per week.

## Programme Content



The programme's theoretical modules are taught through a combination of weekly lectures and workshops, allowing students to consolidate their learning by discussing readings and lecture material. Observations are discussed in small groups led by an experienced psychoanalytic clinician. Clinical placements are supervised by clinicians, normally psychoanalytic clinicians. Clinical competencies masterclasses are taught by experienced clinicians with various approaches. Research projects are carried out under the guidance of an individual research supervisor. The modules outlined above are complemented by the Integration and Development Seminars, which run across the two years and aim to help students better integrate the diverse knowledge and skills taught throughout the MSc course, necessary for future clinical and academic careers. Teaching will be primarily based at Anna Freud at the newly built Centre of Excellence in Kings Cross, London.

## Developmental Foundations



These modules provide the developmental foundations for learning in this programme. Three modules, one each term, focus on a multi-perspective understanding of Early Child Development and the impact of these early years on later stages of life. Another module introduces Psychoanalytic Theories of Infancy and the Caregiver-Child Relationship, with particular attention to some of the key concepts that have shaped the psychoanalytic approach, developed from the work of key thinkers in the field. In parallel to this, students carry out a two-year Observation of an infant and family in their home. This observation allows to see 'theory in action' but also develop observational and self-reflective capacities, which are key for therapeutic work.

## Science and Practice

These modules provide an understanding of how psychoanalytic theories, neuroscience and developmental research are applied to current clinical work with parents and babies. The Applied Psychoanalytic Concepts module explores how psychoanalytic concepts and theories are adapted and developed in contemporary clinical work with children and families. Prevention in Mental Health introduces the concept of preventive mental health, focusing on general promotion of health programmes and selective preventive interventions in high-risk groups. In Multiple Perspectives on Developmental Psychopathology 1 students gain an overview of psychopathology from multiple perspectives. Multi-disciplinarity and Multiple Perspectives in Early Years module looks at the importance of professional networks in early work, understanding different clinical approaches in the early years. Clinical Competencies masterclasses and a supervised clinical placement allow the application of learning from the first-year taught content of the programme and development of clinical skills in practice.

## Research



Both formative and assessed Research Methods modules expose students to a range of research methodologies, including quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and data analysis techniques. The programme provides training on SPSS, which is a statistical analysis software package. Developing these skills enables students to conduct their own Research Project and write-up a journal-type research paper.

## Fees



### 2025 – 2026

**UK:** £16,800 (year one only)

**Overseas:** £39,200 (year one only)

**Please note:** UCL fees are payable per year and fees may vary in the second year.

### Open Events:

We hold open events for prospective students across the academic year. Please refer to our website for details and booking:

[www.annafreud.org/training/postgraduate-study/upcoming-events/](http://www.annafreud.org/training/postgraduate-study/upcoming-events/)

## Application Process

Applications can be made at:

[www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate/apply](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate/apply)

## Teaching

Teaching on this programme will begin in September 2026 and is mostly based at Anna Freud, Kings Cross.

## Further Information

Full details of the course can be found on the UCL website. Specific enquiries may be sent to: [earlydev@annafreud.org](mailto:earlydev@annafreud.org)

## Application Deadline

1 June 2026



The programme description is correct at time of going to print but is subject to change without notice.

