introduction	

Why Use this Course Companion to Cognitive Psychology?

This book is designed to help you succeed on your degree level psychology course. The aim is to provide you with a course companion that gives you a short cut to understanding the basics behind cognitive psychology. It is about helping you to gain the most from your degree level course, pass your examinations in psychology and achieve success in your assignments.

It has been designed and written to provide you, the reader, with an easy-to-navigate guide to the commonly taught curriculum in cognitive psychology, and the ways of thinking and writing that your examiners will be looking for when they start to grade your work.

This companion is not to be used instead of a textbook or wider reading, but rather as a means of memorising content and familiarising oneself with the basics of the discipline when preparing for an examination or planning an assessment essay. The book will help you to structure and organise your thoughts, and will enable you to get the most from your textbooks and the other reading that you will do as part of your course. This companion is designed to point you in the direction of key thinkers and key ideas, and to give you the briefest of introductions to their work and how to put their work in context. It will also point you in the direction of the most important readings and thinkers, and will encourage you to widen your reading and research so as to improve your attainment.

This guide therefore provides you with ways of applying the information that you are familiar with in a practical manner, and is aimed at ensuring that you gain the skills necessary to convey your theoretical/academic material successfully.

As you are still relatively new to the study of psychology you may assume that simply learning the material presented in lectures secures high achievement, but actually the learning and rewriting of information will not gain you top marks. Instead, you need to go beyond simply understanding the material to think critically about the

research presented to you. This ability to evaluate theories/studies is the essential skill from which a psychologist derives success.

How to Use this Book

This companion should be used as a supplement to your textbook and lecture notes. You may want to glance through it quickly, reading it in parallel with your course syllabus and textbook, and note where each topic is covered in both the syllabus and this companion. Ideally, you should have already obtained this book before your course starts, so that you can get a quick overview of each topic before you go into the lecture, but if you didn't do this, all is not lost. The companion will still be equally helpful as a revision guide, and as a way of directing you towards the key thinkers and theories in cognitive psychology.

Part One is about how to think like a cognitive psychologist: it will help you to get into the mindset of the subject and think about it critically. As a bonus, of course, it also means learning how to think like your examiner! Examiners want to see that you can handle the basic concepts of your subject: if you need a quick overview of the background to cognitive psychology, this is the section you will find most useful.

Part Two goes into the curriculum in more detail, taking each topic and providing you with the key elements. Again, this does not substitute the deeper coverage you will have had in your lectures and texts, but it does provide a quick revision guide, or a 'primer' to use before lectures.

You can also use this book either to give yourself a head start before you begin studying cognitive psychology – in other words, give yourself a preview course – or it can be used as a revision aid, or, of course, both. Each section contains within it the following features:

- **Tips** on handling the information in exams, or reminders of key issues. This will help you to anticipate exam questions, and help you to remember the main points to bring in when answering them.
- **Examples** that are useful for putting theory into a 'real world' context and can, of course, be used in exams to illustrate the points you make.
- **Running themes** of the areas that will always be of interest to a cognitive psychologist. You will find that these can almost always be brought into an exam question, and you will be expected to do so.
- Input from **key thinkers** in the field, which will be useful to quote in exams, as well as providing you with the main influences and theories within cognitive psychology.

- Sample **exam questions** with outline **answers**. These should help you to be better prepared for the actual questions, even though they will, of course, be different.
- The **Textbook guide** is about taking your thinking a stage further by introducing some texts which focus on academic thinking. This will help you to take a broader conceptual view of the topic; on a practical level, this is the type of thinking that moves you from a pass to a first!

Part Three is a study guide which will help you with getting more from your lectures, to remember more when you are sitting exams, and to write essays.

Following the main text is a glossary of the key terms that are used in the book and a list of references.