

Duration: 24 - 36 months part time study (MEd/PgDip); 12 months part time study (PgCert)

Aims: Over the last decade the diagnosed incidence of children, young people and adults with autism has become a national concern. It is widely acknowledged that the educational and social needs of this group tend to be disparate, complex and individual in nature, and that the challenges of meeting their needs and promoting learning 'are considerable' (HMIE 2006 p3).

Research highlights a lack of practitioner training in autism as a key barrier to learning amongst those on the autism spectrum. This programme seeks to address this gap by offering an interprofessional postgraduate pathway in autism and learning designed for parents, teachers, social care workers, therapists and other practitioners who play key roles in supporting individuals on the autism spectrum. The Autism and Learning programme seeks to give participants an in-depth understanding of the condition and the working of the autistic mind, so that they can make sense of individual needs and enhance learning. The programme aims to equip participants with a range of practical approaches and strategies to enable learner access, participation, success and the fulfilment of potential.

Interprofessionalism is a distinctive characteristic of the programme. Participants will have a unique opportunity to re-construct their current professional knowledge and understanding of autism within a collaborative setting that encourages joint reflection and analysis, and the development of a shared understanding and approach. Joint training and collaborative working are cornerstones of good inclusive practice. They also facilitate greater consistency and coherence across learning environments, which is important for all learners, but critical to those on the autism spectrum who have a profound dislike of change and corresponding need for sameness and predictability. Interprofessionalism is therefore a recurring theme across the programme.

To add to this, an important feature of the programme is the expectation that participants emerging at certificate and diploma level will be able to apply their expertise to the benefit of their wider workplace community, and play an explicit role in staff support and training, workplace resource and policy development and workplace planning for inclusion and learning.

The specific aims of the programme are as follows:

- To develop knowledge and critical understanding of the concept of inclusion and associated principles of equality, social justice, participation and partnership.
- To develop a deep understanding of the complex conceptual issues in Autism.
- To critically review a range of theoretical perspectives within the autism literature.
- To critically evaluate current autism research in the field.
- To critically review a variety of strategies and approaches and their evidence base.
- To develop collaborative partnerships with individuals with autism, their families and/or carers, parents, colleagues and professionals from other agencies.
- To use acquired knowledge and understanding of autism to reflect critically upon practice.
- To apply acquired knowledge and understanding of autism to formulate effective support for learners with autism.
- To conduct professional enquiries and use research evidence to generate professional knowledge and enhance understanding and practice
- To apply acquired knowledge and understanding of autism to contribute to staff development and school / workplace improvement.

Content: The MEd programme is comprised of five courses contributing to a total of 180 credit points at SCQF Level 11 (PG5).

Year 1

ED50HP Autism, Inclusion and Participation (30 credit points)

ED55HQ Autism, Behaviour and Planning for Change (30 credit points)

Year 2

ED503Q Critical Approaches to Academic Literature (15 credit points)

ED503R Research Methods (15 credit points)

ED55HF Autism and Learning: Controversies and Dilemmas (30 credit points)

Year 3

ED50PJ Dissertation or Work-based Project (60 credit points)

Participants who successfully complete the first two courses (60 credits) may exit with a Certificate in Autism and Learning. Those who successfully complete the first five courses (120 credits) may exit with a Diploma in Autism and Learning. Those who successfully complete all six courses (180 credits) will achieve a Master of Education degree (Autism and Learning).

Assessment: Formative and summative assessment is a feature of all courses. All assessments are designed to arise naturally from course content and learning. There are two summative assignments (6,000 words each) at Certificate level and two summative assignments (6,000 words each) at Diploma level. There is a summative dissertation (16,000 words) at Masters level.