

### **About the programme:**

The CPD (Continuing Professional Development) web-based programme is offered by distance learning. It is interactive, so it is essential that all the students have a regular access to the computer, Internet connection and a personal e-mail address.

This module will be of particular interest to those who are working (going to work) with children and adults with autistic spectrum disorders in the home, classroom or residential environment. Psychologists, teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, learning support assistants, residential social workers and parents will be among the people who will find this module useful.

The programme contains lectures (both via the Internet and provided in a written form on the course website), on-line webinars, discussions, activities and assignments. There are regular on-line discussions when the students get an opportunity to meet (on-line) their fellow-students, share experiences, exchange ideas, ask questions, and discuss their work with their tutor/lecturer.

Structure: All study-materials are structured as Modules that are divided into Units. Each Unit includes on-line materials, activities, questions to reflect on, self-assessment tests (allowing the students to monitor their progress and identify 'weak points' to be addressed before the end of each unit), online discussions.

Learning Strategy – The course is 100% online. Learning is supported through web-based text materials, online lectures/webinars and tutorials and online contact. Total hours: **270**.

Study time will vary from one student to another, but it is approximated to take about 7-8 hours a week of student time, including reading study materials, tutorials, and working on the assignments. The programme offers flexibility that allows students to study when they have time rather than following rigid timetable. The only structured times are for webinars and deadlines for written assignments.

Assessment: To meet the course outcome students have to provide portfolios at the end of each unit containing a reflective log and written assignments (details are provided at the end of each Unit).

Qualifications: Successful completion of the course will result in **University Certificate: Autism Spectrum.**

## **MODULE 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO AUTISM**

**Learning Methods:** Online 90 hours

### **Module Synopsis:**

This module will introduce students to key concepts and causal theories of autistic spectrum disorders. It will present the history of autism, discuss definitions, give the main facts about the condition, describe common symptoms and early signs of autism, explain how ASD is diagnosed and differentiated from other conditions, provide information about treatments for ASD. The module will identify and explore specific strengths and weaknesses of children with ASD and will discuss a wide range of treatments/ approaches to meet their needs.

### **Module Aims:**

- To present an overview of the main characteristic of ASDs in the light of recent research;
- To explain diagnostic criteria of ASD and consider the principles and problems of diagnosing ASDs;
- To enable understanding of individuals with autism;
- To identify the key issues in the care and education of individuals with autism;
- To consider a range of interventions that can be used to meet the needs of people with ASDs.
- To look at all the issues relevant to children with autism in a wider context: families with autistic children and their relationship with professionals; to consider problems the families experience and ways to support them.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the module the student should be able to:

- Identify key characteristics of autism;
- See the main trends in the development of our understanding of ASD
- Be aware of current research into ASD;
- Be able to identify diagnostic criteria for ASD and distinguish it from similar conditions;
- Be able to critically evaluate key theories of causation in ASD;
- Explore implications arising from specific restrictions in communication, socialisation, and cognitive functioning for an individual with autism
- Critically examine a variety of biomedical, neurosensory, psychodynamic, behavioural, educational and cognitive approaches in relation to the individuals with autism;
- Appreciate the effects of autism on parents, siblings and other family members.

### **Outline Syllabus:**

Introduction (an induction week)

Unit 1: DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERSTANDING OF AUTISM:

Unit 2: DIAGNOSING AUTISM AND DIFFERENTIATING IT FROM OTHER CONDITIONS/DISORDERS. EARLY DIAGNOSIS. EFFECT OF DIAGNOSIS ON FAMILIES WITH AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Unit 3: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: SPECTRUM OF APPROACHES (Interventions/Treatment of ASD: Biomedical; neurosensory; psychodynamic; interactive; behavioural/ educational; cognitive; communication/ language therapies; others.)

## **MODULE 2: SENSORY PERCEPTION IN AUTISM**

**Learning Methods:** On-line 90 hours

### **Module Synopsis:**

In this Module we will discuss possible sensory-perceptual experiences of children with autism. If we can understand the causes of certain behaviours we can develop appropriate strategies to support individuals. If we know what to look for, it will be easier for us to understand the child's problems and abilities and to find appropriate methods to reduce their difficulties while building on their strengths.

### **Module Aims:**

- to develop understanding of the role of sensory problems in individuals with ASD;
- to inform you of a range of possible sensory patterns experienced by persons with ASD and appropriate intervention techniques to eliminate/reduce them;
- to consider different approaches to the concept of the 'sensory-perceptual deficits' in autism and different strategies and treatments that focus on sensory issues.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of the Module you should be able to:

- understand the range of the sensory-perceptual problems faced by individuals with ASDs;
- interpret the behaviours caused by sensory-perceptual differences;
- identify the sensory-perceptual difficulties of individuals with ASD you work with;
- assess the impact of these difficulties on their learning;
- interpret the way in which individuals with ASDs behave in the light of your understanding of their perceptual styles;
- be aware of relevant strategies, treatments and environmental changes that can help individuals overcome these difficulties;

- appreciate the limitations and strengths of different approaches, techniques and methods addressing sensory-perceptual difficulties experienced by people with ASDs.

**Outline Syllabus:**

Unit 1: THE ROLE OF SENSORY PERCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES IN AUTISM

Unit 2: SENSES, PERCEPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SENSORY AWARENESS

Unit 2: POSSIBLE SENSORY EXPERIENCES IN AUTISM - IDENTIFICATION AND STRATEGIES

Unit 3: OTHER SENSORY CONDITIONS AND ‘SENSORY TREATMENTS’

**MODULE 3: COMMUNICATION IN AUTISM: LEARNING AUTISTIC LANGUAGES AND BECOMING AN INTERPRETER**

**Learning Methods:** On-line 90 hours

**Module Synopsis:**

This module provides a basic introduction to the development of communication and language in autism and communication difficulties in ASDs. It explains ‘autistic languages’

**Aims:** to understand:

- different thinking and learning styles in autism
- non-verbal and verbal languages
- the communication difficulties associated with autism

**Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this module you will:

- Show understanding of the communication difficulties displayed by individuals with ASDs
- Interpret the meaning of verbal language of the individuals with ASDs that might seem idiosyncratic
- Identify the ways individuals with ASDs communicate (verbally and non-verbally)
- Identify the ways to enable the communication environment for the individual(s) with ASDs you live/work with
- Choose the communicative system(s) to interact with the individual(s) with ASDs you live/work with

## **Outline Syllabus:**

Unit 1: COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING IN AUTISM (ATTENTION, MEMORY, THINKING STYLES)

Unit 2: LANGUAGE, LEARNING STYLES AND DEVELOPMENT IN AUTISM

Unit 3: KEY STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION IN AUTISM

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In order to undertake the course, you will need basic knowledge of English. [As all the reading materials will be presented on-line, the students can use ‘google translate’ to help with comprehension of certain paragraphs they find difficult, or ask their tutor to help. Mistakes in spelling and grammar won’t count.]

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What our students say about the Autism Spectrum course:

[Autism Spectrum Course. Student reviews – Video](#)

[Autism Spectrum Course. Student reviews.](#)

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