



## Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study awarded by  
The University of Sheffield

1	<b>Programme Title</b>	Acquired Communication Disorders
2	<b>Programme Code</b>	HEST012 (MSc Full-time) HEST014 (MSc Part-time by Distance Learning - 2 years), HEST016 (MSc Part-time by Distance Learning - 3 years), Incorporating: HEST013 (PG Dip Full-time) HEST015 (PG Dip Part-time by Distance Learning) HEST033 (PG Cert Part-time by Distance Learning only)
3	<b>JACS Code</b>	B620, B630
4	<b>Level of Study</b>	Postgraduate
5	<b>Final Qualification</b>	Master of Science (MSc)
6	<b>Intermediate Qualification(s)</b>	Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip); Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert)
7	<b>Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)</b>	Not applicable
8	<b>Faculty</b>	Medicine, Dentistry & Health
9	<b>Home Department</b>	Human Communication Sciences
10	<b>Other Department(s) involved in teaching the programme</b>	None
11	<b>Mode(s) of Attendance</b>	Full-time and Part-time by Distance Learning
12	<b>Duration of the Programme</b>	1 year (Full-time) and up to 3 years (Part-time)
13	<b>Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body</b>	Not applicable
14	<b>Date of production/revision</b>	January 2014, March 2016, January 2020, March 2026

### 15. Background to the programme and subject area

This new programme is well placed in the Health Sciences School, Division of Human Communication Sciences (HCS) which is a multidisciplinary department covering psychology, education, speech and language therapy, psycholinguistics, linguistics, phonetics, computer sciences, and medical sciences. The Department has a particularly strong reputation for excellent research and teaching in the field of acquired communication disorders and our postgraduate students are taught by leading experts in this field. Further information is available on the departmental website at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/health-sciences>

The MSc Acquired Communication Disorders is part of an established portfolio of PGT programmes in HCS and comprises three courses: a) Pg Certificate; b) Pg Diploma; and c) MSc. Each stands as a separate course or a student can move from one to the other. The courses are designed for students who wish to develop their knowledge of acquired communication disorders, and their skills in evidence-based assessments and interventions. The research-led teaching is delivered through a series of modules. Each module has one study block of 1 - 2 days. These are held throughout the year. Attendance at these study blocks is expected and highly recommended by our current and past students. However, part-time students who are based outside of the UK, or who have special circumstances, can be exempted from attending these without being significantly disadvantaged as all students have access to the teaching sessions via recordings on Blackboard. Topics covered in the modules include aphasia; communication problems in dementia; communication problems in traumatic brain injury; dysarthria; dyspraxia; augmentative and alternative communication. There are also option modules so that students can follow their particular interests. Existing options include: Professional Research Skills; Special Topics in Human Communication Sciences; Developmental Disorders (e.g. Specific Language Impairment, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Learning Difficulties, Behavioural Difficulties, Alternative and Augmentative Communication, Auditory Processing Disorder); Speech Difficulties – assessment and intervention; Working with Early Years or Secondary Age pupils; Cleft Lip and Palate. Two new options (pending approval) will be added to this list from 2014-15 (Literacy1: Assessments & Constructs; Literacy 2: Difficulties & Intervention), and other options are available in other departments by arrangement and are confirmed each year. Of particular relevance is the proposed MA in Dementia Care, led by the

Department of Sociological Studies and the School of Nursing and Midwifery, which aims to run from 2014-5 and which has several relevant options, including Understanding Communication in Dementia and Psychosocial Approaches to Care and Treatment of People with Dementia.

This postgraduate programme in Acquired Communication Disorders will therefore appeal to applicants who may be new to this topic or already working in the area, e.g. Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs), including returners to work in SLT; those with a background in psychology or linguistics; Teachers of English as a Foreign Language; Lecturers and Researchers in related disciplines. The proposed programme in Acquired Communication Disorders will be the only one in the UK with this particular focus. Competitor programmes (the MRes in Speech, Language and Cognition, and the MSc in Language Sciences (with specialisation in Neuroscience and Communication), both at University College London; the MSc in Evidence Based Practice in Communication Disorders at the University of Newcastle; and the MSc Clinical Communication at Manchester Metropolitan University) all have a wider focus on communication disorders more generally. The proposed programme therefore will be of particular appeal to SLTs who currently have acquired communication disorders as their clinical specialism or who wish to have it as their clinical specialism, as well as those with a theoretical interest in the linguistic and psychological issues which are evident in communication disorders following brain damage.

This programme does not lead to a professional qualification in teaching or speech and language therapy, but it does provide an opportunity to specialise in this area and for continuing professional development (CPD). Flexible CPD is embedded into our PGT portfolio. Students can take a single module for CPD purposes and as a taster if not yet able or confident enough to commit to a full course. SLTs and other graduate staff employed by the NHS in East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber can obtain LBR funding to attend any of our individual PGT modules or for any of our Cert/Dip/MSc courses. Our MSc programmes also provide research training, and are a good basis for an MPhil/PhD. Our part-time MSc students often carry out their MSc project work where they are employed and feedback the findings into their hospitals or service.

Although supervised placements are not part of this programme, there is a range of general clinical observation opportunities with speech and language therapy clients (adults and children) available for full time students through the Department of Human Communication Sciences. Part-time students who are working in a related field alongside studying on this course are encouraged and supported to apply their developing knowledge and skills to their practice through reflection, workshops, reading groups, and discussions at the study blocks and specific activities via MOLE and the Discussion Boards.

Postgraduate students who have completed our existing PGT courses have reported that their career opportunities have been strengthened through the following:

- a) Development of a specialism through a postgraduate programme enhances job and promotion prospects. This is particularly relevant for the MSc in Acquired Communication Disorders where since this large and significant area of clinical specialism was not available as part of the portfolio of PGT programmes offered by Human Communication Sciences previously.
- b) A postgraduate qualification increases self-confidence, job satisfaction, and recognition of expertise by colleagues.
- c) SLTs have used their postgraduate qualification to strengthen their profile in independent practice.
- d) Psychologists might use a postgraduate qualification to increase chances of acceptance onto professional training courses in e.g. clinical psychology or speech and language therapy.
- e) A postgraduate qualification increases chances of being shortlisted for Research Assistant and other posts.
- f) The MSc is a route into postgraduate research (e.g. PhD or RA) and lecturing.

## 16. Programme Aims

### General Aims of the Postgraduate Programme in Acquired Communication Disorders

To enable students working, or wishing to work, with people with acquired communication disorders to have the opportunity to further their careers through specialist courses delivered full-time, or part-time by distance learning.

1. To gain a critical understanding of acquired communication disorders, the impact of these disorders on everyday life, and how intervention can assist the person with the disorder and their significant others.
2. To access and understand both research findings at the forefront of the field of acquired communication disorders following stroke, traumatic brain injury, dementia and other degenerative disorders, and current methods within the field (including both medical and social approaches), as well as critically engaging with evidence based practice.
3. To increase skills in the assessment and management of people with acquired communication disorders.

4. To maintain an international and cross-linguistic perspective throughout by drawing on students' data collected in their home language and using this as the basis for cross-linguistic comparisons in teaching and in research.
5. To allow students to independently develop their own interests through flexible learning and choice of assessment topics (Cert/Dip/MSc), option modules (Dip/MSc only), and a dissertation (MSc only).
6. To provide students with a sound foundation for PhD research, career development and employment in a range of contexts, e.g. in Education, Further and Higher Education, the NHS, the private sector.

### **Programme-Specific Aims**

#### ***PG Certificate***

1. To gain in-depth knowledge of acquired communication disorders and the similarities and differences between them from a range of theoretical and clinical perspectives.
2. To examine and evaluate approaches to the analysis of, and intervention for, acquired language disorders, such as aphasia, and independently evaluate how these approaches are used to create knowledge and clinical outcomes within this field.
3. To examine and evaluate approaches to the analysis of, and intervention for, acquired speech disorders, such as dysarthria and dyspraxia, including the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices.
4. To examine and evaluate approaches to the analysis of, and intervention for, acquired linguistic-cognitive disorders, such as dementia and traumatic brain injury.
5. To critically evaluate analysis and intervention approaches for people with acquired communication disorders and those they regularly communicate with.
6. To develop critical analysis skills and knowledge of evidence based practice in acquired communication disorders.

#### ***PG Diploma***

*As above for PG Cert plus the following:*

1. To develop research skills including research design, and methods of analysis.
2. To pursue options in related areas such as from the proposed programme in Dementia Studies due to start in 2014-5.
3. To develop more independent study skills.

#### ***MSc***

*As above for PG Cert and Diploma plus the following:*

1. To develop more advanced study skills and critical appraisal of the approaches used to generate findings in this field.
2. To design, carry out, and write up a piece of independent research in a related area under supervision which will address current issues in the field and provide new insights.
3. To practice dissemination of research through oral and written presentations in order to move towards being an independent researcher and/or critical practitioner in the field.

## 17. Programme learning outcomes

<b>Knowledge and understanding:</b>	
<b>Postgraduate Certificate:</b>	
<b>K1</b>	Knowledge of current research into acquired communication disorders.
<b>K2</b>	Understanding of the impact of acquired communication disorders on functional communication, psychosocial well-being and relationships, and everyday social interactions with significant others.
<b>K3</b>	Knowledge of a range of methods used in the investigation of acquired communication disorders.
<b>K4</b>	Knowledge of current assessments and interventions for people with acquired communication disorders and their significant others.
<b>K5</b>	Knowledge and understanding of the principles of evidence based practice in acquired communication disorders.
<b>Postgraduate Diploma includes K1–5 plus the following:</b>	
<b>K6</b>	Further knowledge and understanding of related topics (via options).
<b>K7</b>	Knowledge of a range of research methodologies used in the medical and social sciences.
<b>K8</b>	Critical understanding of the application of research methodologies.
<b>MSc includes K1-8 plus the following:</b>	
<b>K9</b>	Advanced knowledge and understanding of chosen area of study within the field of acquired communication disorders.
<b>K10</b>	Further knowledge and understanding of the process of research.

<b>Skills and other attributes:</b>	
<b>Postgraduate Certificate:</b>	
<b>S1</b>	Comprehensive search for relevant literature from a variety of sources.
<b>S2</b>	Synthesize research and practice from different perspectives, review relevant literature critically and develop a coherent and sustained argument in writing.
<b>S3</b>	Skills in designing assessment and intervention tasks suitable for people with acquired communication disorders.
<b>S5</b>	Ability to evaluate the evidence base for practice.
<b>Postgraduate Diploma includes K1–5 plus the following:</b>	
<b>S5</b>	Application of acquired knowledge to further study of chosen topics (via options).
<b>S6</b>	Competency in appropriate quantitative and qualitative research design and methods in the medical and social sciences.
<b>S7</b>	Ability to apply appropriate research methods to address key questions about acquired communication disorders and to evaluate practice.
<b>MSc includes K1–8 plus the following:</b>	
<b>S8</b>	Ability to critically analyse a chosen area, identify questions for investigation and carry out appropriate research procedures to address those questions, showing awareness of the ethical issues involved.
<b>S9</b>	Coherent presentation of this research process, with an evaluation of the findings, verbally and in a written form via the project report.

## 18. Teaching, learning and assessment

### **Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:**

A range of teaching and learning methods are employed on this programme including lectures, seminars, tutorials, practical workshop activities, and distance learning delivery via Blackboard according to the nature of the material to be learned and the mode of attendance of the student. Core Modules for both part-time and full-time students are taught in short blocks supported by distance learning materials. Full-time students attend regular tutorials while part-time students maintain contact with their tutor through Blackboard discussion boards and/or directly. Teaching includes seminars and workshops to allow students to engage as active participants in the learning process. This is particularly important in areas such as analysis of data, critical analysis, research presentations and other group activities. Lectures, seminars, guided reading, and critical analysis activities are used to develop the knowledge base outlined in Section 17 K1-10 above. Workshops, data analysis sessions, case studies, tutorials and practical activities are used to develop the application of this knowledge and develop skills S1-S9. Data analysis sessions, for example, allow students individually and in groups in class to improve their ability to inductively explore relevant clinical data and discover phenomena within acquired communication disorder data about which they may previously have been unaware, or only partially aware. Online materials are used throughout for developing both knowledge and skills. The theme of theory and practice links runs through all teaching and learning sessions. Options include a range of deliveries so that full-time students can attend regular classes, while part-time distance students also have a choice of on-line modules. Teaching sessions and research seminars are recorded and made available via Blackboard for all students so that part time/distance learning students who are not able to attend sessions in the department do not miss out. Full-time students whose first language is not English have also found these recorded sessions useful to revisit. Part-time students are further supported by tutors via email, telephone, Skype, and Google+ features as well as regular contact via Blackboard Discussion Boards and activities.

### **Opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes are provided through the following assessment methods:**

There are no unseen examinations on this programme and the assessments vary from module to module. Assignments tap both knowledge and skills and include essays, data analyses, case studies, and critiques of existing acquired communication disorder research and practice. The Research Project is assessed by means of a 12,000 word dissertation. Assessments are tailored to the requirements of the specific skill, ability, activity and knowledge area of each module, and include both theoretical and practical aspects. The assessment schedule is structured to provide feedback from early on in the course and to avoid overloading students at any one time.

## 19. Reference points

### **The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:**

The learning outcomes for the Postgraduate Programme in Acquired Communication Disorders have been developed in parallel with our existing 3 Postgraduate Programmes in a) MSc/Dip/Cert in Speech Difficulties, b) Pg Certificate in Cleft Palate Studies and Dip/MSc in Cleft Palate and Speech (CLASP), c) MSc/Dip/Cert in Language and Communication Impairments in Children (LACIC), plus a fourth new proposed MSc/Dip/Cert programme in Language and Literacy to run from 2014-15 (pending approval). This ensures that in addition to subject specific content and skills, students also acquire general research skills and transferable skills, and emphasis is placed on their own personal and career development.

The Strategic Plan of the University of Sheffield informed the design and the content of the curriculum, and in particular we have referred to the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy 2011-16 to ensure our courses have an international appeal and are geared to employability in a diverse and changing world. Our long experience of delivering speech and language therapy professional training for the NHS, and our strong track record of delivering CPD courses for practitioners in education, health and social services are a good foundation for delivering this new programme and achieving shared goals. We have referred to NHS criteria in ensuring that our PGT courses are strong on application to practice, in order to achieve and sustain the 'Learning Beyond Registration' (LBR) funding for clinicians working in the NHS in East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber.

Our outstanding performance in the last RAE enables us to deliver research-led teaching on acquired communication disorders, an area where our staff have an international reputation. Current research grants continue to support our research in this area. These staff are engaged in the development of this new programme and are experienced in delivering research led teaching in an accessible way.

In addition to the above, we have referred to the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Handbook for Practice (*Communicating Quality*). We have drawn on our departmental and faculty teaching strategies to ensure that we build on the skills of the Sheffield Graduate and sustain ongoing development of students' professional

knowledge and skills at a postgraduate level. In particular, critical evaluation of practice and delivering evidence based practice are embedded in our programmes.

We also have close links with both present and past students and have consulted them from the very beginning about the development and delivery of our PGT portfolio.

## 20. Programme structure and regulations

### MODULES

All modules apart from the dissertation are 15 credits each.

Modules 1 and 2 below have been specifically developed for this new programme and will also be option modules for students on other PGT programmes. The remaining modules listed already exist in our PGT portfolio.

**All students on PG Certificate / PG Diploma / MSc will study the following four core modules (total 60 credits):**

1. \*New - Acquired Language Disorders: Analysis and Intervention.
2. \*New - Acquired Speech Disorders: Analysis and Intervention.
3. Methods in Clinical Linguistics.
4. Developing an Evidence Base for Practice.

**PG Diploma / MSc students will also study the following 15 credit modules total 120 credits:**

5. Research Methods in HCS A.
6. Research Methods in HCS B for MSc students and for PG Dip students who wish to progress to the MSc, otherwise PG Dip students can choose an alternative 15 credit option module.
7. Two further 15 credit option modules.

**MSc students will also study the following module in addition to the above (total 180 credits):**

8. Dissertation (60 credits).

### COURSE STRUCTURE

**Pg Certificate in Acquired Communication Disorders** is a one year part-time by distance learning course. Students who successfully complete the first four core modules above (Total 60 M-level Pg credits) will be eligible for this Pg Cert award or can transfer to the Diploma or MSc courses.

**Diploma in Acquired Communication Disorders** is a one-year (full time) or two year (part-time by distance learning) programme. A full time student will complete modules 1-7 above in one calendar year. A part-time student will complete the modules as follows:

**Year One:** Part-time students complete the first four core modules (60 credits) specified in the Pg Certificate course (modules listed under 1-4 above).

**Year Two:** Students complete the 5<sup>th</sup> core module (Research Methods A), either Research Methods B (compulsory if going on to MSc level) or an option (see 6 above), plus two further option modules (see 7 above). Total 120 credits.

Students who complete these 8 modules successfully will be eligible for the award of the Postgraduate Diploma in Acquired Communication Disorders or can transfer to the MSc. Students who are unable to complete the 8 modules within the maximum registration period but who have successfully completed the first 4 core modules specified for the Postgraduate Certificate in Acquired Communication Disorders will be eligible for this PG Cert award.

**The MSc Acquired Communication Disorders** is a one-year (full-time) or two or three-year (part-time by distance learning) programme.

A **full time student** will complete all the modules in one calendar year.

A **2 year part-time** student will complete the modules as follows:

Year One: Students complete Modules 1-6 above (Total 90 credits):

Year Two: Students complete two further option modules of 15 credits each (30 credits) and submit a dissertation based on their chosen research project (60 credits) – Total 90 credits.

To be eligible for the Masters award, students must have acquired 180 credits from the successful completion of Year One and Year Two modules as prescribed above.

**3 Years Part-time** - Part-time students who transfer to the MSc from the Certificate or Diploma courses spread the MSc modules over a 3 year period. Students who transfer will normally have achieved an average mark on Year One and/or Year Two modules of 60 or over, with no module mark below 55. Students who do not complete the Masters programme within the maximum registration period but who have accumulated 120 credits from the Year One and Year Two modules above, will be eligible for the award of Postgraduate Diploma in Acquired Communication Disorders. Students who have accumulated 60 credits for the first four core modules specified for the Pg Certificate in Acquired Communication Disorders will be eligible for this PG Cert award.

Please refer to the [Programme Regulations](#), [General University Regulations](#) and the [On-line Directory of Modules](#) for detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules.

## 21. Student development over the course of study

This curriculum focuses on the analysis/assessment of, and intervention for, acquired communication disorders, and has been tailored to the needs of both full-time students and to part-time students who are working. It targets the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for developing evidence based practice, and research. Students can follow the programme full-time for one year or part-time with distance learning over two or three years. Distance learning allows international students to attend the course in Sheffield or to study from their homes while maintaining contact with staff and peers via Blackboard, Skype tutorials and Google+.

Students can register for an MSc from the beginning of their studies or move from Certificate to Diploma to MSc (subject to permission of the programme director and based on satisfactory progress). Throughout the programme module coordinators and a personal tutor will help support learning and students receive feedback on each assessment prior to submitting the next one. Students have the opportunity to submit an un-assessed practice essay for feedback prior to completing their first assessed assignment. This is supported by an English Language support tutor for those students whose first language is not English.

Students on the **PG Certificate** will study 4 modules which focus on acquired language disorders, acquired speech disorders, clinical linguistics, and evidence based practice. Students will reflect on their own practice, develop their academic writing skills, and critically evaluate book chapters, applied research papers and approaches to assessment and intervention. Students can complete their studies at this point or move on to the Diploma or Masters in Acquired Communication Disorders.

Students on the **Diploma** course add to the Certificate modules one or two modules in research methods which deepens their knowledge of evidence based practice, increases their ability to critically evaluate more theoretically driven research papers, and provides a foundation for designing a research project. In addition students choose 3 further options in order to pursue their own interests and topics relevant to their current or future employment. This allows the development of more in-depth knowledge and understanding of specific topics in the field, and the opportunity to apply skills in evaluation for example to a written assignment, a case study, or critical review. Students can complete their studies at this point or move on to the Masters in Acquired Communication Disorders (but must complete Research Methods B as one of their three options if they want to progress to the MSc route).

In the **Masters** course, students add to the above a research project where they use their knowledge and understanding of research in the field to design a study, analyse data and write up the findings in a written dissertation. This highlights the research process as well as the specialist content, and includes seeking ethical approval to carry out the project. Each student is allocated a project supervisor who provides guidance at each stage of the project and feedback on draft sections of a research report. Students complete their PGT studies at this point. However, successful students are encouraged to discuss PGR opportunities and they share some MSc teaching sessions and research presentations with current PGR students to allow them some insight into what a PGR student's experience might be like.

## 22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to the programme is available in the University's On-Line Prospectus at [www.shef.ac.uk/prospective/prospectus.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/prospective/prospectus.html) and also in the Divisions website at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/health-sciences>.

Applicants will normally have a good BA or BSc degree (1st class, upper 2nd or equivalent) in a relevant discipline such as Education, Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy/Pathology, Linguistics, Biological Sciences, Computer Sciences.

Candidates with a professional diploma or ordinary degree in speech and language therapy or other can be accepted if the candidate can show continued learning and experience after the first qualification; such candidates may however be recommended for the Pg Certificate or Diploma in Acquired Communication Disorders in the first instance rather than the MSc directly.

For students who do not have English as a first language, the English language requirement is an IELTS average score of 7 with no component less than 6, or the equivalent.

## 23. Additional information

The design of the course above is to allow maximum flexibility for part-time students who are likely to be working as speech and language therapists or similar. Full-time students are encouraged to take advantage of other teaching and learning opportunities in the department, for example auditing other teaching sessions and attending regular research seminars and PGR presentations. This programme does not result in a professional qualification in speech and language therapy (for that applicants should see our MMedSci in Clinical Communication Studies)

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at [www.shef.ac.uk/ssid](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid).