



Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an award from
The University of Sheffield

1	Programme Title	Language and Communication Impairment in Children
2	Programme Code	HEST009 (3 year Masters route)
3	JACS Code	B600
4	Level of Study	Postgraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Master of Science (MSc)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	Masters (M)
6	Intermediate Qualification(s)	Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert)
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	Department	School of Health Sciences: Division of Human Communication Sciences
10	Other Departments involved in teaching the programme	None
11	Mode of Attendance	Part-time by Distance Learning
12	Duration of the Programme	Normally 3 years (with a maximum duration of 4 years)
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
14	Date of production/revision	December 2007, March 2016, January 2019, March 2026

15. Background to the programme and subject area

The **MSc in Language and Communication Impairment in Children (LACIC)** is a continuing professional development, distance learning programme for professionals (such as teachers, speech and language therapists and educational psychologists) who work with children with language and communication impairments. The programme aims to develop best practice for inclusive and special education. It provides learning opportunities for students to develop their knowledge and understanding of speech, language and communication across the continuum, and extends existing skills in working effectively with children with special educational needs. Students will also acquire the knowledge and skills to support evidence-based practice and for carrying out research, in preparation for the final dissertation. This programme does not provide a professionally accredited qualification in either teaching or speech and language therapy, but gaining the award is likely to enhance promotion prospects for those who wish to further their career in these specialist areas.

The Division of Human Communication Sciences has a multi disciplinary staff of speech and language therapists, psychologists, linguists, and phoneticians, and links with the Department of Education. It is, therefore, in an ideal position to offer such a programme. At present, there is only one other distance learning programme on this subject in the UK. The delivery of the programme by distance learning provides maximum flexibility for learners balancing the demands of study and continuing employment. All course content and essential reading is provided online, with ongoing support from teaching staff through online discussion and e-mail. Independent learning is complemented by attendance at study blocks at the University, providing the opportunity to meet and work with teaching staff, and fellow students.

Further information is available at the Health Sciences website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/health-sciences>

16. Programme aims

The MSc in Language and Communication Impairment in Children aims to:

1. Provide the knowledge and understanding for practitioners to develop best practice for inclusive and special education.
2. Provide an advanced professional development programme to promote successful collaborative practice for professionals who work in an educational context with children who have speech, language and communication difficulties.
3. Provide a continuum of learning opportunities that allow practitioners to build on their own existing knowledge and experience.
4. Increase knowledge and understanding of language and communication impairments, consider the consequences for children's learning and reflect on implications for practice.
5. Enable students to engage critically with current theory and research findings in the field of language and communication impairment.
6. Provide the methodological and professional skills to evaluate practice and to conduct and report research in the field.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding:

On completion of the Post-Graduate Certificate students are expected to be able to demonstrate:

K1	An informed knowledge and understanding of the role of spoken language in education, models of speech, language and communication, and the pattern of typical speech, language and communication development.
K2	A critical understanding of theories of cognitive development and how these relate to aspects of classroom practice that facilitate language learning and language teaching.
K3	An informed knowledge and understanding of the individual differences in speech, language, literacy and communication skills in children, and of the intervention strategies used in inclusive and special education.
K4	An appreciation of the roles and responsibilities of professionals involved in the education of children with language and communication difficulties.
K5	A critical knowledge and understanding of key research findings relevant to speech, language and communication impairment.
K6	Knowledge and understanding of the principles of evidence-based practice.

In addition to the above, on completion of the Post-Graduate Diploma students are expected to be able to demonstrate:

K7	An informed knowledge and a critical understanding of children with specific developmental conditions that affect speech, language and communication.
K8	Knowledge and understanding of the range of research methodologies used in the field of social welfare, education and health.

In addition to the above, on completion of the MSc students are expected to be able to demonstrate:

K9	Advanced knowledge and understanding of their chosen area of study within the field of language and communication impairment.
K10	Knowledge and understanding of the process of research.

Skills and other attributes:

On completion of the Post-Graduate Certificate students are expected to be able to:

S1	Undertake a comprehensive search of the research literature.
S2	Critically analyse research findings relevant to speech, language and communication impairment.
S3	Synthesize research and practice, review relevant literature and develop a coherent and sustained argument in writing.

S4	Work collaboratively with other professionals involved in the education of children with language and communication difficulties.
S5	Analyse the speech, language and communication impairments, experienced by children.
S6	Evaluate the evidence base for their practice.
S7	Apply knowledge of cognitive, language and communication development, and of individual differences in these areas, to classroom (or other relevant educational) contexts.
<i>In addition to the above, on completion of the Post-Graduate Diploma students are expected to be able to:</i>	
S8	Apply acquired knowledge and understanding to investigation of cases, of the nature of an individual's impairment or of an intervention.
S9	Critically evaluate research methodologies, methods and techniques relevant to the field.
<i>In addition to the above, on completion of the MSc students are expected to be able to:</i>	
S10	Successfully complete an independent research study in the field, including identifying appropriate research questions, choosing appropriate methodology, implementing an appropriate ethical framework, conducting data analysis and producing a written report.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

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

- 1. Induction procedures:** Prior to the start of the programme, students have access to a pre-course web-site that provides a reading list and links to materials to prepare for return to study and for the development of information literacy to support e learning.
- 2. Independent study** is the main element in this distance learning programme. Learning support materials are provided via MOLE (Blackboard) and the Library e resources for all modules. This includes core readings and associated activities. Extension materials are provided across a continuum to enable students to build on their existing knowledge base. Independent study via MOLE (Blackboard) and the e resources covers almost all learning outcomes (K1-8, K10, S2, S4-10). Use is also made of an interactive CD Rom, specifically developed for students to target K1, S5.
- 3. Seminars** are held during study weekends to enhance the understanding of module subject content gained from independent study and specifically address K1-10, S2, S4, S6-10. In the first year learning opportunities are available in searching the literature (S1) In the third year these are dedicated to critical analysis of research papers and planning for the research project and dissertation (K5, K8, K10, S2, S9, S10).
- 4. Online Tutorial and collaborative activity and Discussion boards** focus on the critical analysis of theoretical perspectives and research findings (K2, K5, K8, S2) the development of collaborative practice and the application of knowledge and understanding to practice (K3, K4, K6, S4, S6, S7, S9).
- 5. Feedback on outlines prepared for assignments, and on assignments** support students' ability to develop academic skills in writing (S3).
- 6. Tutorial support via email / telephone** is also available to support assignment writing (S3).
- 7. Individual supervision face to face, and via email / Skype / telephone:** is provided to support students who are completing an empirical research project and completing a written dissertation (K9, K10, S10).

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

Learning outcomes are assessed in the following ways:

	Written Assignments	Data exercises	Multiple-choice	Dissertation
K1	x			
K2	x			
K3	x			

K4	x			
K5	x			
K6	x	x		
K7	x			
K8	x	x	x	
K9				x
K10				x
S1	x			x
S2	x			x
S3	x			
S4	x			
S5	x			
S6	x			
S7	x			
S8	x			
S9	x			
S10				x

19. Reference points

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

The learning outcomes reflect recommendations from The Joint Professional Development Framework (DfES, ICAN 2001).

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2008)

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/The-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx>

University Strategic Plan

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/strategicplan>

Learning and Teaching Strategy (2016-21)

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/staff/learning-teaching/our-approach/strategy2016-21>

and the research interests of the staff of the Division of Human Communication Sciences.

20. Programme structure and regulations

The HCST18 MSc route in Language and Communication Impairment in Children can be studied over three years, part-time distance learning, although students are allowed up to one further year after this initial study period for the purpose of completing all the assignments. During this additional period, students will continue to receive tutorial support by email, or by telephone or Skype if required.

Year One: Students complete four Core Modules of 15 credits each (A candidate who successfully completes these four modules will be eligible for the intermediate award of Postgraduate Certificate).

Year Two: Students complete two Core Modules of 15 credits, and modules to a total of 30 credits from a range of approved options (A candidate who successfully completes the four Year One modules, and the two core modules to a total of 60 credits in Year Two, will be eligible for the intermediate award of Postgraduate Diploma).

Year Three: Students complete an original research project and complete a dissertation, and this carries a weighting of 60 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, and the dissertation.

Students must successfully complete all Year One and Year Two modules before progressing to Year Three and the research dissertation. Students who initially enrol on the PG Certificate or the PG Diploma will normally achieve an average mark on Year One and Year Two modules of 60 or over, with no module mark below 55 to

transfer to the MSc and complete the research dissertation.

Candidates who do not complete the programme within the maximum four year maximum registration period but have successfully completed core modules in Year One and 45 credits (including HCS 6048) in Year Two will be eligible to be considered for the award of Postgraduate Diploma. Candidates who have successfully completed 60 credits (HCS 6024, 6025, 6026 AND 6027) within a maximum of two years, will be eligible for the award of Postgraduate Certificate.

This curriculum has been tailored to the needs of professionals working with children with special educational needs, with a particular focus on language and communication. It includes the development of knowledge, understanding and skills for the development of an evidence base for practice. This is a key area of high relevance to the target student group. The programme develops implications of theory and research for practice and collaborative practice. The latter principle is key to current Government policy for services to children.

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

The first module to be assessed on the programme is delivered at Honours (H) level to allow student to re-acquaint themselves with academic study and to develop their skills as distance learners using e learning. It includes opportunities for reflection of themselves as learners, for the development of e learning skills and to develop academic writing skills.

All subsequent modules are delivered at Masters (M) level. In the second module to be assessed students have opportunities to further develop academic skills in searching for literature and in critical analysis of research papers. Students will be required to demonstrate critical analysis skills in this and subsequent assignments.

Year One modules present an overview across the field of language and communication impairments, and an introduction to research and evidence based practice. In Year Two critical thinking and analytical skills are further developed. The options available in Year Two, allow the development of more in-depth knowledge and understanding of specific topics in the field, and the opportunity to bring together the knowledge and understanding acquired and to implement skills in evaluation through online learning activities and assessments. In Year Two and Three students also use their knowledge and understanding of research and of the field to complete an original research project and to complete a written dissertation.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Applicants to the MSc programme will normally have:

- two years full-time relevant work experience with children.
- a minimum of an upper second class degree at undergraduate level.

Applicants for the PG Certificate or PG Diploma programmes will normally have:

- two years full-time relevant work experience with children.
- a first degree or a degree-level professional qualification.

In addition to the formal entry requirements, all applicants will also be expected to have easy access to a personal computer and to the internet and possess basic word processing skills.

Applicants whose first language is not English must meet the requirements of the University of Sheffield which can be found at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/postgraduate/info/englang>.

Further information regarding application is also available on the Health Sciences website:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/courses/2020/language-and-communication-impairment-children-msc-pg-certificate-pg-diploma>

23. Additional information

For details of staff and research interests visit: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/health-sciences/our-research/clusters>

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 <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid>.