The School of Education offers an MA programme with study schools in Malta. The **MA in Early Childhood Education** is a unique, internationally renowned course, which has been running successfully since 1998. The mixed-mode, distance-learning style of this course is designed to be completed in two years, allowing study within the University of Sheffield, whilst remaining based in Malta.

The MA has gone from strength to strength since its successful launch in Malta in 2009. Students from around the world have successfully completed this distance-learning course, covering a broad range of issues and addressing theory and research relevant to their interest.

The course is designed for a range of early childhood professionals including:

- Early years practitioners
- FE and HE lecturers
- Teachers
- Nursery nurses
- Preschool assistants
- Childcare practitioners

- Voluntary and independent providers
- Advisors
- Inspectors
- Managers working in areas relevant to early childhood.

"Thank you for your support and encouragement; your love of teaching and concern for your students shines through."

- Student of the Malta MA in Early Childhood Education

Four features of the MA are particularly suited to the needs of education professionals working in a range of settings and services:

- The possibility of completing the degree in two years
- A modular structure, allowing course members to study at their own pace within the course timetable
- Assignments related to the professional interests, experiences and roles of all students
- The research expertise of staff within the School of Education, at the University of Sheffield.

shef.ac.uk/education/malta/ma-ece
Aims and Objectives of the Course

The MA in Early Childhood Education supports students to:

• Examine their work within the changing field of early years provision
• Further understand and support children’s learning and development
• Study international developments and consider developments in the Maltese context
• Reflect critically upon pedagogical practice and literature
• Develop theoretical and practical awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, methods and procedures, through which pedagogical practice can be investigated
• Acquire specialised knowledge in relation to the contexts of teaching and learning, in terms of policy and practice
• Enhance their understanding of early childhood education and care from birth to eight.
• Establish a commitment to self-learning, the development of life skills and foster intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and reflection and independent judgement.

Weekend Study Schools

The programme consists of four modules and a dissertation. Each module begins with an introduction at a study school and this is followed by online study using an extensive range of online learning resources.

Five compulsory weekend study schools take place in Malta, three in the first year and two in the second year. On these weekends, students work with the academic team from Sheffield on a mixed programme of lectures, seminars and workshops.

All our masters courses encourage students to use the learning resources provided in ways that suit their individual learning styles and according to their own professional development needs and the needs of their working environment.

Each module begins with an introduction at a study school and a range of resources is provided as a starting point for study.

Weekend study schools are held at St Catherine’s High School 11 Triq Alamein, Pembroke, Malta

Usual Weekend Study School Dates:
Year 1: October, January, May
Year 2: October, January

Support for study

Students are taught by members of the academic team during study schools and maintain contact with academic tutors by e-mail and Skype. These opportunities allow students to discuss assignment themes most suited to their circumstances and interests.

As well as study schools, students registered on the Malta-based MA programme have access to a wealth of online learning resources, including the electronic journal collections at the University of Sheffield.

"The tutors really push you hard, but they give you the support you need to really achieve too! I would do it all again; but I’m thinking of a PhD now!"

- Graduate of the Malta MA in Early Childhood Education

shef.ac.uk/education/malta/ma-ece

The University of Sheffield
The Course Structure

Module 1: Early Childhood Education - History and Policy

The first module explores the development of early childhood education provision, the history and social construction of childhood, the language of early childhood education, early intervention studies, current policy initiatives, diversity studies, special educational needs and inclusive education.

Module 2: Development, Learning and Curriculum

The second module reflects on theories of child development and learning, including policies, ideas of curriculum development and Foundation Stage practices, pedagogy in early education, theories of learning, and parental roles in children’s learning.

Module 3: Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood Education

The third module focuses on current early education issues in Malta, including quality in early education and care, children’s rights, parental involvement, inclusion, the arts, gender, family literacy, home learning, popular culture and digital literacies.

Module 4: Research Methods and Methodology

The fourth module involves observation, interviews and questionnaires, basic research designs, key concepts in statistics, qualitative research, reflections on involving children in research, ethnography, life historical study, evaluation, ethics, and research writing.

Entry Requirements

You will be eligible to apply for the masters programme if you are a graduate, have gained educational qualifications or demonstrated your capacity to work at masters level. You will also have normally completed two or more years’ service in educational work.

Applicants must have sufficient fluency in English language to successfully complete their course. Applicants who have successfully completed a degree at a university where English was the language of study, such as the University of Malta, and can provide sufficient evidence of this, will not normally be required to complete a separate English Language qualification.

Assessment

Each module will normally be assessed through a 30 credit assignment. These are followed by the dissertation, which is the focus of the fifth study school; the dissertation is an opportunity to concentrate on an issue of personal or professional interest to the student, and represents one third of the MA.

Contact Us

For further details of the programme please contact:

Enquiries
edu-enquiries@sheffield.ac.uk
+44 (0)114 222 8177

Fees & Local Arrangements
Ms Sue Midolo
sue.midolo@stcatherines.eu.

The Programme Team

The MA programme has been designed and developed by Professor Cathy Nutbrown [B.Ed., MEd, PhD].

The whole teaching team have established national and international reputations in teaching, researching and publishing in a range of early childhood topics; these include children from birth to three, family literacy, digital literacies, play, inclusive education, and languages.