**COURSE OUTLINE**

**MSc /PGDip /PGCert: Language and Communication Impairment in Children (LACIC)**

Part-time study, by distance learning (online)

**Course Structure**

Each year of the course runs over a full calendar year, September to September.
The PG Certificate, PG Diploma and 3 year MSc courses each require around 12 hours study time on average per week across the year.

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<tr>
<th><strong>HCST 16 PG Certificate</strong> (1 year)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students complete 4 CORE modules, of 15 credits each:</td>
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<td>HCS 6024</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>HCST 17 PG Diploma</strong> (2 years)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 1:</strong> Students complete 4 CORE modules, of 15 credits each:</td>
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<td>HCS 6024</td>
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<td><strong>Year 2:</strong> Students complete 1 CORE module of 15 credits:</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCS 6048</td>
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<td>And OPTION modules* to a total of 45 credits from the following:</td>
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<td>HCS 6049</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCS 6087/6088</td>
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<td>HCS 6096</td>
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<td>HCS 6021</td>
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<td>HCS 6022</td>
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<td>HCS 6191</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>HCST 18 MSc</strong> (3 years)</th>
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<td><strong>Year 1:</strong> Students complete 4 CORE modules, of 15 credits each:</td>
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<td>HCS 6024</td>
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<td><strong>Year 2:</strong> Students complete 2 CORE modules of 15 credits:</td>
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<td>HCS 6048</td>
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<td>HCS 6049</td>
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<td>And OPTION modules to a total of 30 credits from the following:</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCS 6087/6088</td>
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<td>HCS 6096</td>
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<td>HCS 6021</td>
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<td>HCS 6022</td>
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<td>HCS 6191</td>
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<td>HCS 6192</td>
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<td><strong>Year 3:</strong></td>
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<td>HCS 6100</td>
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* Please note that Option modules may occasionally be subject to change

12/07/2017
Department of Human Communication Sciences, The University of Sheffield, 362 Mushroom Lane, Sheffield, S10 2TS www.shef.ac.uk/hcs
**HCST 19 MSc (Fast track, 2 years)**

**Please note:** this is a more intensive delivery of the Masters course, best suited to those who are studying alongside part-time (vs. full-time) work and lighter commitments outside study. Because it involves studying more than one module simultaneously for most of the course, the average time commitment per week across each calendar year of the course can sometimes be double that of the 3 year Masters route, so up to 24 hours per week at times. It is important to consider this carefully when deciding between the Masters routes – and to note that the total cost for 2 year and 3 year MSc routes is the same, so no fees are saved by following the fast-track 2 year route!

**Year 1:** Students complete 6 CORE modules, of 15 credits each:
- HCS 6024: Children's Learning
- HCS 6025: Spoken and Written Language
- HCS 6026: Language and Communication
- HCS 6027: Developing an Evidence Base for Practice
- HCS 6048: Research Methods A
- HCS 6049: Research Methods B

**Year 2:** Students complete:
- HCS 6100: Dissertation 60 credits
- And OPTION modules* to a total of 30 credits from the following:
  - HCS 6087/6088: Communication Diversity and Difficulties 15/30 credits
  - HCS 6096: Case Study 15 credits
  - HCS 6021: Speech Difficulties 1: Nature and Investigation 15 credits
  - HCS 6022: Speech Difficulties 2: Intervention and Management 15 credits
  - HCS 6191: Literacy 1: Assessments and Constructs 15 credits
  - HCS 6192: Literacy 2: Difficulties & Intervention 15 credits

*Please note that Option modules may occasionally be subject to change

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**Module Outlines**

**HCS 6024 Children's Learning (15 credits)**
This module promotes students' skills in distance/e-learning, through participation in online activity and use of e-resources. It presents theories of cognitive development, how these inform our understanding of children’s learning and the development of educational practice, and the interaction of learning and language. The individual differences in learning abilities within children in school is considered, including those children who may have significant difficulties across all learning and those who may have specific difficulty with certain aspects of learning. Aims are to:
- Induct students into the programme, prepare them for successful distance/ e-learning, and support them in reflecting on themselves as learners;
- Develop skills of academic writing;
- Provide an overview of children's cognitive development and theories of learning, and how these inform educational practice;
- Explore the relationship between learning and language, and the role of spoken language in education;
- Consider the individual differences in children’s learning.

**HCS 6025 Spoken and Written Language (15 credits)**
This module focuses on typical and atypical spoken and written language development in nursery/school age children and adolescents. It examines the relationship between speech, language, and literacy development by exploring the cognitive foundations of learning to read and write. Students develop a sound understanding of what theoretical perspectives and research findings say about the link between spoken and written language, and how children learn to read and write. Implications for teaching literacy are evaluated. Topics include speech and vocabulary development, written language development in school-age children and adolescents; phonological
awareness; decoding, reading comprehension, writing, spelling; and approaches to literacy teaching. Although a main focus is on English language the module also includes multilingualism and cross-linguistic comparisons as a theme throughout. Aims are to:

- Adopt different perspectives, (e.g. psychological, psycholinguistic, educational) to the study of the relationship between spoken and written language;
- Expand students’ knowledge of the linguistic and cognitive foundations of reading and writing development;
- Apply a psycholinguistic approach to the investigation of speech, vocabulary, language, phonological awareness, and literacy development;
- Introduce students to terminology for a range of speech, language and literacy difficulties as a foundation for subsequent modules;
- Build competence in interpreting and evaluating the evidence base for approaches to literacy teaching;
- Include multilingual and cross-linguistic issues in literacy development throughout;
- Develop students’ skills in critical analysis of research findings in the field;
- Develop students’ academic writing to include use of research evidence to support discussion.

**HCS 6026 Language and Communication (15 credits)**

This module describes children’s development of language and communication, including aspects of social and emotional development, as well as spoken language. The analysis of different components of language will be explored. Individual differences in language and communication skills are discussed. Theoretical perspectives and research findings about children’s language and communication difficulties will be evaluated. Implications for practice are explored, including intervention strategies. Aims are to:

- Outline children’s social, emotional, language and communication development;
- Examine the way in which language and communication difficulties impact on children’s learning;
- Discuss the relationship between spoken language and reading comprehension;
- Explore the theoretical underpinnings of the nature of children’s language and communication difficulties;
- Explore appropriate intervention and management issues;
- Develop skills in critical analysis of research findings in the field;
- Develop collaborative practice;
- Develop academic writing to include use of research evidence to support discussion.

**HCS 6027 Developing an Evidence Base for Practice (15 credits)**

This module develops knowledge, understanding and skills for the promotion of evidence-based practice for practitioners in education, health and social welfare contexts. Students will be introduced to levels and types of evidence, develop skills in framing questions about their practice, searching and reading the literature, and in critical analysis. Principles of assessment practice and psychometric interpretation will be explored. Students will develop skills in evaluating their own practice. Aims are to:

- Equip professionals with the knowledge and skills to develop an evidence-base for practice;
- Develop the understanding and skills to frame appropriate questions;
- Explore commonly used types of evidence in education, social welfare and health;
- Develop information literacy and skills for searching the literature;
- Develop the ability to critical analyse research literature that uses a range of methodologies;
- Support practitioners to develop as reflective practitioners who are evaluating their own practice.
**HCS 6048 Research Methods A  (15 credits)**

This module will develop students’ knowledge, understanding and skills of the range of research methodologies used in human communication sciences, education and health. The main aim of the module is to allow students to become competent consumers and producers of scientific evidence. Topics will include the qualitative and quantitative research cycle (e.g. study design, development of research questions), concepts of statistical analysis (e.g. descriptive statistics, presenting data, selected inferential statistics), qualitative research methods (e.g. interviews) and case study designs.

Aims are to:

- Support students to become competent in reading about and using scientific evidence and to undertake research;
- Inform students of key issues in design and implementation of research across the range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies;
- Develop understanding of key concepts of descriptive and inferential statistics;
- Acquire basic skills in presenting and analysing numerical data (descriptive and inferential statistics) using SPSS;
- Develop the ability to interpret the output from statistical data analysis;
- Develop understanding of qualitative methodologies and analysis of qualitative data.

**HCS 6049 Research Methods B  (15 credits)**

This module will expand students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in the range of research methodologies used in human communication sciences, education and health. It will further develop their competencies in interpreting and producing scientific evidence. The main aim of the module is to allow students to design and conduct a methodologically and statistically sound research project. Topics will include inferential statistics (parametric and non-parametric statistical tests, effect sizes and strength of relationships, regression), psychometrics (concepts, derived scores and confidence intervals), and qualitative research methods (e.g. mixed methods) and qualitative data analysis.

Aims are to:

- Further develop competencies in interpreting and producing scientific evidence;
- Expand knowledge of issues in design and implementation of research across the range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies;
- Develop an understanding of the following concepts in inferential statistics (statistical significance, effect sizes, strength of relationship, regression);
- Develop the ability to choose an appropriate test of significance;
- Promote awareness of key concepts in using SPSS to analyse numerical data (descriptive and inferential statistics, graphs) and interpret the output from such statistical data analysis;
- Extend students’ understanding of key concepts of psychometrics and how to use standardised tests of ability and achievement;
- Expand understanding of qualitative methodologies and analysis of qualitative data.

**HCS6087/88 Communication Diversity & Difficulties  (15 or 30 credits)**

This module allows students to select topics in the field of children’s language and communication impairments for more detailed study. Topics may include the following: autism and autistic spectrum disorders, persisting speech difficulties, *dyslexia, literacy: special topics, developmental language disorder (specific language impairment), language and multi-lingualism, language and communication in the early years, language and communication in adolescence, language and the environment. Theoretical perspectives and research findings within each topic are evaluated. Implications for practice are explored.

*The topic chosen for the assignment must be different from that studied for any other core or option module.*

Aims are to:

- Provide an opportunity for in-depth study of topics in the field of developmental disorders related to a student’s own interests and field of practice;
- Examine the way in which specific conditions impact on children’s learning;
• Explore the theoretical underpinnings of the nature of specific conditions;
• Provide opportunities for critical analysis of research findings in the field;
• Explore appropriate intervention strategies.

**HCS 6096 Case Study (15 credits)**
This module provides students with the opportunity to apply the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired in earlier modules to the study of an individual case. The case study will take one of two forms: the analysis of assessment information, and evaluation of findings in relation to theory and research evidence to provide the rationale for an explanation of the client’s difficulties; OR the planning, carrying out and evaluation of an intervention based on theory and research evidence.

Aims are to:
• Apply and integrate knowledge, understanding and skills developed in previous modules to practice.

AND EITHER
• Apply skills from data analysis and critical analysis to the study of a case;
• Use knowledge of theoretical models and research findings in the field to evaluate procedures for investigation and to discuss the nature of an individual's difficulties;
• Increase awareness of the impact of speech, language and communication difficulties on an individual's person's functioning.

OR
• Use knowledge of theoretical models and research findings in the field to provide a rationale for intervention and to discuss the outcome of intervention;
• Increase awareness of the ways in which interventions can be evaluated;
• Promote evidence-based practice.

**HCS 6021 Speech Difficulties 1: Nature and Investigation (15 credits)**
This module offers a study of the nature of developmental speech difficulties from a range of perspectives: historical, medical, developmental, linguistic/cross-linguistic, phonetic, acoustic, psycholinguistic, psychosocial, educational. It examines how developmental speech difficulties can be investigated, drawing on knowledge and skills from each of these perspectives. These investigations include qualitative analysis of speech data; psychometric testing and instrumental applications. Students will study current research into theoretical aspects of the nature of speech difficulties and implications for investigations in practice.

Aims are to:
• Develop students' understanding of the nature of developmental speech difficulties across the lifespan;
• Emphasise the associated difficulties which accompany speech difficulties, in particular, literacy and psychosocial aspects;
• Introduce students to a range of techniques used for investigating speech;
• Skill students in carrying out investigations of speech and its difficulties;
• Develop students' knowledge of how theoretical models and frameworks can be applied to the study of developmental speech difficulties.

**HCS 6022 Speech Difficulties 2: Intervention and Management (15 credits)**
This module draws on current research into the support of children with developmental speech difficulties in a range of contexts (e.g. schools, clinic, units) and situations. It adopts a range of perspectives (e.g. medical, developmental, linguistic/cross-linguistic, psycholinguistic, and biopsychosocial) in order to plan intervention programmes for children with developmental speech difficulties. Evidence for a range of intervention programmes is examined by applying critical analysis skills to the research methodologies adopted. Issues associated with service delivery are explored.

Aims are to:
• Develop students’ understanding of how theoretical models and frameworks can be applied to the management of developmental speech difficulties;
• Emphasise the associated difficulties which need to be taken into account when working with children/adults with speech difficulties, in particular, literacy and psychosocial aspects;
• Introduce students to a range of intervention and research techniques used for working with children with speech difficulties;
• Skill students in how to evaluate intervention studies;
• Highlight the importance of interaction skills when carrying out intervention with children/adults with speech difficulties;
• Examine the management of developmental speech difficulties by working through others, e.g. assistants/carers/parents;
• Train students to read research papers critically;
• Stimulate learning and equip students with the skills to study further.

**HCS 6100 Dissertation** (60 credits)

Students will design, implement and write up a research project on a topic of their choice, under the guidance of their academic supervisor.
Aims are to:
• Enhance students’ knowledge and understanding of the process of research;
• Provide further research training and experience of carrying out an original research project to develop students as research practitioners;
• Provide opportunities for students to advance their knowledge and understanding in their chosen area of study within the field of language and communication impairment;
• Provide opportunities to undertake data analysis in the methodology selected;
• Develop research presentation skills;
• Provide an opportunity to write up research.

**HCS 6191 Literacy 1: Assessments and Constructs** (15 credits)

This module explores the practical, theoretical and ethical issues related to assessing literacy skills in education, health and research. The main aim of the module is to enable students to critically evaluate what existing assessments are assessing, as well as providing the skills to create their own valid and reliable assessment tools. Topics will include exploration of the subcomponents of literacy e.g. phonological processing, word decoding and comprehension. The module will also look at the properties of good assessment through the lens of concepts such as reliability, validity and psychometrics.
Aims are to:
• Expand students’ knowledge of the range of assessments used to describe and characterise an individual’s literacy skills, both formal and informal;
• Develop students’ ability to identify how broader skills in literacy and language are dependent upon a series of measurable subcomponents;
• Promote understanding of the concepts of reliability and validity in assessment;
• Develop the ability and confidence of students to design their own assessment tools;
• Develop the ability of students to score, analyse and interpret assessment findings;
• Advance students’ ability to communicate assessment findings to other stakeholders e.g. colleagues, parents and students.

**HCS 6192 Literacy 2: Difficulties & Intervention** (15 credits)

This module is designed to provide students with the opportunity to explore how and why individuals struggle to learn to read and write with fluency and confidence. It will take a developmental perspective and examine pre-cursors to reading difficulties, issues in the early years, as well as the types of difficulty that persist into secondary school and beyond. We will cover both widely-discussed diagnoses such as dyslexia, as well as reading difficulties that do not fit so neatly into a single category. The module will discuss the behaviours associated with literacy difficulties, as well as what we know about evidence-based intervention.
Aims are to:
• Expand students’ knowledge of the range of difficulties individuals can encounter in acquiring fluent and confident reading and writing skills;
• Facilitate students’ understanding of how the diversity in the range of difficulties individuals encounter intersects with current pathways of diagnosis for reading difficulties, across countries;
• Expose students to what we know about current interventions for literacy difficulties and best-practice;
• Raise awareness of the wider academic, socio-emotional and vocational implications of having a literacy difficulty.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Independent Study: This is the main mode of delivery for course content in this distance learning programme. You are provided with a range of online learning support material via MOLE, the University’s online learning environment. These will include readings and associated learning activities, links with appropriate web-based material and participation in online discussions. Core readings will be supplied electronically via the University Library.

Please note:
• Applicants should be confident in their IT skills, in using a computer and the internet.
• The course involves extensive reading, as well as other learning activities. A proportion of the reading (and other study activities) will be computer screen-based.
• It is important to apply for the course well in advance of the September start date. Processing of applications by the University takes time and only when an offer has been made and accepted will a University computer account be set up for a new student. The course can’t be accessed until a student’s University computer account is up and running. Late application can lead to significant delay in gaining access to the course, which is why application by 31st July for a September start is recommended.

Weekend Study Blocks
There are weekend study blocks associated with many of the modules. While not mandatory, students are expected to attend these if at all possible, as these are an integral part of the course. We do understand that this may not be possible for students based outside of the UK, or who have particular circumstances. The lectures and workshops will support your independent study. The weekends also provide an excellent opportunity to meet fellow students and tutors and share experiences.

Tutorial Support: Contact with tutors and other students is maintained through MOLE, in discussion boards and other activities, and by email. This will support your independent study and assignment preparation.

Assessment: Each module is assessed by written assignment.

Progression through the Course
Students are able to apply to transfer flexibly between the course levels in June/July of each year. Following advice from tutors, a student may:
• enrol on the PG Certificate and decide to move to the PG Diploma at the end of year 1
• enrol on the PG Diploma and decide at the end of year 2 to move to the 3 year MSc route
• enrol on the PG Diploma or MSc & decide to finish with the PG Certificate at the end of year 1
• enrol on the MSc & decide to finish with the PG Diploma at the end of year 2.

If you require any further information about the course, please contact

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