

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MSc
4	Programme Title	Evidence-Based Practice in Communication Disorders
5	Programme Code	5170P
6	Programme Accreditation	N/A
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	N/A
8	FHEQ Level	7
9	Last updated	May 2010

10 Programme Aims

- A. To promote an understanding of the principles of evidence-based practice and its application to human communication disorders.
- B. To enable students to make a contribution to the evidence base of the field in the form of an original investigation concerning assessment or intervention of speech, language or swallowing disorders, and in the process, develop personal research skills and research capacity for the profession.
- C. To enable students to develop their capacity to learn as part of lifelong learning.
- D. To provide access to Higher Education to students from a variety of educational backgrounds, and to provide a bridge to further postgraduate qualifications.
- E. That the programme meets the requirements of a Master's level qualification as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and that the programme outcomes have references to the general QAA descriptors for a higher education qualification at level 7.
- F. That the programme conforms to University policies and to QAA codes of practice.

11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- A1. Demonstrate advanced knowledge of current theory and clinical practice in their own area of specialism within the field of Speech and Language Therapy;
- A2. Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and components of evidence-based practice as they relate to the field of Speech and Language Therapy.

A3. Develop a critical understanding of research governance and ethics as they relate to clinical research, particularly with respect to the requirements of the UK's National Health Service.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Knowledge and understanding (A1-A3) are developed through lectures, seminars and tutorials. For A1 and A2, seminars involve group problem solving and discussion. Extensive private study is expected in preparation for lectures, seminars and tutorials. Students will be encouraged and expected to develop knowledge in their own area of specialism through independent reading and private study. This will be supported by the provision of reading lists, web-based materials and peer discussions using Blackboard Discussion Boards.

Assessment Strategy

Knowledge and understanding will be assessed by written assignments and the thesis (A1-A3). The nature of the written assignments will be such that a mix of theory, factual knowledge and practical application will be assessed. The nature of the thesis will ensure that key aspects of the taught modules of the Master's programme will be applied to the conduct of an original investigation and assessed through the written thesis document.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1. Critically appraise the methodological quality (internal and external validity) and potential impact on practice of existing evidence;
- B2. Critically evaluate and draw conclusions about the evidence relating to a clinical question;
- B3. Identify factors that enable or inhibit the uptake of new evidence and strategies for changing clinical practice and policy.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Intellectual skills are developed through critical appraisal of research studies (B1-B3) introduced in lectures and discussed in group seminars. Extensive private study is expected in preparation for lectures and seminars. This will be supported by the provision of reading lists, web-based materials and peer discussions using Blackboard Discussion Boards.

Assessment Strategy

Intellectual skills will be assessed by written assignments, including a systematic review and research application or manuscript, as well as the thesis (B1-B3). Key aspects of theoretical and applied knowledge within the content areas of (1) speech and language pathology and (2) evidence-based practice will underpin these assessments. The nature of the assessments will ensure that graduates possess all the key skills required to conduct an evidence-based practice in the delivery of clinical services.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- C1. Construct focussed clinical questions;
- C2. Find relevant evidence from primary and secondary sources;

C3.	Design and conduct an original investigation relating to an assessment or intervention procedure relevant to individuals with communication or swallowing disorders using the principles and methods of evidence-based practice;
C4.	Undertake appropriate statistical and/or qualitative analyses related to an investigation and interpret the findings in light of the existing evidence and clinical practice.
C5.	Communicate the findings of a clinical investigation to a professional audience in the form of a conference presentation and a manuscript suitable for submission to a scientific journal.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Practical skills in asking focussed clinical questions (C1) and finding evidence to answer them (C2) will be developed through lectures, seminars and computer-based practical sessions. Seminars will involve group discussions of key readings, both in terms of the theory underpinning clinical practice and the quality of the evidence conveyed in the research investigations. Group discussions and debate will be a key feature of a number of the modules in the programme, but in particular, the Critical Appraisal I and II modules. Skills to develop students' ability to design and carry out an original research investigation (C3) and conduct appropriate statistical analyses (C4) will be developed through lectures, seminars and tutorials, in addition to independent learning that will take place as a result of conducting a study. Skills involved in communicating the findings of a clinical investigation (C5) will be developed through lectures, seminars and tutorials. Extensive private study is expected in preparation for lectures and seminars. This will be supported by the provision of reading lists, web-based materials and peer discussions using Blackboard Discussion Boards.

Assessment Strategy

Practical skills will be assessed through the design and conduct of an original research investigation and communicated in the form of a thesis and poster presentation (C1-C4). These will also be assessed by written assignments, a computer-based MCQ and a short presentation (C3-C4). C5 will be assessed through the thesis and a poster presentation to a professional audience. Key aspects of theoretical and applied knowledge within the content areas of (1) speech and language pathology and (2) evidence-based practice will underpin these assessments. The nature of the assessments will ensure that graduates possess all the key skills required to conduct an evidence-based practice in the delivery of clinical services, as well as conduct an original research investigation.

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

D1. Demonstrate library and IT skills related to conducting research.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Library and IT skills (D1) will be developed and practiced throughout the programme, through lectures and practicals. Extensive private study is expected in preparation for lectures and seminars. This will be supported by the provision of reading lists, web-based materials and peer discussions using Blackboard Discussion Boards.

Assessment Strategy

Library and IT skills (D1) will be developed through library practical sessions using electronic databases. The assessment will be of a practical nature and examine the use of library and IT skills within the context of speech and language pathology.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features
Basic structure of the programme
The MSc will be delivered as a two-year part-time programme designed to accommodate working professionals. The MSc consists of 8 modules totalling 180 credits. The taught modules of the programme (120 credits) will be delivered from September to June of the first year, with a research project (60 credits) taking place in the second year. All of the following modules are compulsory:
Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)
Modules will be delivered in five 2-4 day teaching blocks over the first year, and two in the second year, requiring students to be present on campus a total of 19 days. The blocks have been timetabled to ensure that teaching requirements can be met with minimal impact on the working demands of students. It is expected that independent study will take place between teaching blocks and without the need to be on campus. During this time, peer-to-peer interaction will be encouraged through the use of electronic discussion boards on Blackboard, the University's virtual learning environment. Students will also be able to contact each other and members of the teaching staff by email. As well as having a University email address, students will be able to access software (e.g. statistical, bibliographic, word processing, spreadsheet, database) and library resources (e.g. electronic journals and on-line databases) using the University's Remote Access Service (RAS).
Programme regulations (link to on-line version)
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/programme

13 Criteria for admission
<p><i>Entry qualifications</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic degree leading to a qualification as a Speech and Language Therapist: (a) from UK universities, upper second-class or first class undergraduate degree or Master's degree or (b) from institutions outside the UK, the equivalent of the above. 2. Registered with the Health Professions Council as a Speech and Language Therapist in the UK (or the equivalent licensing body outside the UK, if applicable). 3. At least 1 year post-qualification experience working as a Speech and Language Therapist. 4. Reference from relevant clinical service manager (employer) indicating that applicant has approval in principle to conduct a research project within their clinical service. In order to complete the research project applicants must be in employment and have access to clinical population. <p><i>Admissions policy/selection tools</i></p> <p>Formal interview to determine motivation and suitability for the programme and to ensure that the candidate has agreement in principle to conduct a research project in the clinical or educational service in which they are based (documented in reference from current employer).</p> <p><i>Non-standard Entry Requirements</i></p> <p>We strongly encourage applicants who do not meet the academic qualification of the entry requirements but who do have extensive clinical experience to apply for this and to discuss their application with the Programme Director or Admissions Tutor. Exceptions to the entry qualifications may be made with approval of the Programme Director and Admissions Tutor.</p> <p><i>Additional Requirements</i></p> <p>None</p>

Level of English Language capability

IELTS 7 (or equivalent) Minimum of 6.5 in Listening and Speaking elements required

14 Support for Student Learning

The Student Services portal provides links to key services and other information and is available at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wellbeing>

Induction Session

This will include general introduction to University life and the University's principle support services and general information about the School and their programme, as described in the Degree Programme Handbook. Students will be given detailed programme information and the timetable of lectures/seminars/practicals/tutorials/etc. The International Office offers an additional induction programme for overseas students.

Study skills support

Students will learn a range of Personal Transferable Skills, including Study Skills, as outlined in the Programme Specification. Some of this material, e.g. time management is covered in the appropriate Induction Programme. Students are explicitly tutored on their approach to both group and individual projects.

Numeracy support is available through Maths Aid and help with academic writing is available from the Writing Centre (further information is available from the Robinson Library).

Academic support

The initial point of contact for a student is with a lecturer or module leader, or their tutor (see below) for more generic issues. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of Section or School may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Staff-Student Committee and/or at the Board of Studies. Support will initially be available via email and phone, in addition, there will be a discussion forum on Blackboard with input from the DPD. Existing professional networks (e.g. Special Interest Groups) will be utilised as additional forms of support.

Pastoral support

All students are assigned a personal tutor whose responsibility is to monitor the academic performance and overall well-being of their tutees. In addition the University offers a range of support services, including one-to-one counselling and guidance or group sessions / workshops on a range of topics, such as emotional issues e.g. Stress and anxiety, student finance and budgeting, disability matters etc. There is specialist support available for students with dyslexia and mental health issues. Furthermore, the Union Society operates a Student Advice Centre, which can provide advocacy and support to students on a range of topics including housing, debt, legal issues etc.

Support for students with disabilities

The University's Disability Support Service provides help and advice for disabled students at the University - and those thinking of coming to Newcastle. It provides individuals with: advice about the University's facilities, services and the accessibility of campus; details about the technical support available; guidance in study skills and advice on financial support arrangements; a resources room with equipment and software to assist students in their studies.

Learning resources

The University's main learning resources are provided by the Robinson and Walton Libraries (for books, journals, online resources), and Information Systems and Services, which supports campus-wide computing facilities.

All new students whose first language is not English are required to take an English Language Proficiency Test. This is administered by INTO Newcastle University Centre on behalf of Newcastle University. Where appropriate, in-session language training can be provided. The INTO Newcastle University Centre houses a range of resources which may be particularly appropriate for those interested in an Erasmus exchange.

15 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Module reviews

All modules are subject to review by questionnaires which are considered by the Board of Studies. Changes to, or the introduction of new, modules are considered at the Board of Studies and/or the Speech and Language Sciences Curriculum Review Committee. Student opinion is sought at the Staff-Student Committee and/or the Board of Studies. Due to the nature of the programme a virtual staff student committee will be made available to the students. New modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

Programme reviews

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. The FTLC takes an overview of all programmes within the Faculty and reports any Faculty or institutional issues to the University Teaching and Learning Committee.

External Examiner reports

External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies. The Board responds to these reports through Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. External Examiner reports are shared with institutional student representatives, through the Staff-Student Committee.

Student evaluations

All modules, and the degree programme, are subject to review by student questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Staff-Student Committee and the Board of Studies. The results from student surveys are considered as part of the Annual Monitoring and Review of the programme and any arising actions are captured at programme and School / institutional level and reported to the appropriate body.

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback

Feedback is channelled via the Staff-Student Committee and the Board of Studies.

Faculty and University Review Mechanisms

The programme is subject to the University's Internal Subject Review process. Every five years degree programmes in each subject area are subject to periodic review. This involves both the detailed consideration of a range of documentation, and a two-day review visit by a review team which includes an external subject specialist in addition to University and Faculty representatives. Following the review a report is produced, which forms the basis for a decision by University Teaching and Learning Committee on whether the programmes reviewed should be re-approved for a further five year period.

Accreditation reports

N/A

Additional mechanisms

None

16 Regulation of assessment

Pass mark

The pass mark is 50%.

Course requirements

Progression is subject to the University's Masters Degree Progress Regulations, Taught and Research and Examination Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees. There are reassessment opportunities, with certain restrictions.

The University employs a common marking scheme, which is specified in the Taught Postgraduate Examination Conventions, namely:

Summary description applicable to postgraduate Masters programmes

Summary description applicable to postgraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes

<50	Fail
50-59	Pass
60-69	Pass with Merit
70 or above	Pass with Distinction

<50	Fail
50 or above	Pass

Role of the External Examiner

An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, following recommendation from the Board of Studies. The External Examiner is expected to:

- i. See and approve assessment papers
- ii. Moderate examination and coursework marking
- iii. Attend the Board of Examiners
- iv. Report to the University on the standards of the programme

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/requests>)

The School brochure (contact enquiries@ncl.ac.uk)

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/>

The Degree Programme Handbook

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Annex 1. Map of Intended Learning Outcomes to Modules

Intended Learning Outcome	Modules (all are compulsory)
A1. Demonstrate knowledge of current theory and clinical practice in their own area of specialism within the field of Speech and Language Therapy	SPE8300 Critical Appraisal 1 SPE8301 Critical Appraisal 2 SPE8302 Research Project
A2. Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and components of evidence-based practice as they relate to the field of Speech and Language Therapy	SPE8304 Principles of Evidence-Based Practice in Communication Disorders SPE8302 Research Project
A3. Develop a critical understanding of research governance and ethics as they relate to clinical research, particularly with respect to the requirements of the UK's National Health Service	SPE8308 Research Project Management SPE8302 Research Project
B1. Critically appraise the methodological quality (internal and external validity) and potential impact on practice of existing evidence	SPE8304 Principles of Evidence-Based Practice in Communication Disorders SPE8300 Critical Appraisal 1 SPE8301 Critical Appraisal 2 SPE8307 Scientific Writing for Publication SPE8302 Research Project
B2. Critically evaluate and draw conclusions about the evidence relating to a clinical question	SPE8304 Principles of Evidence-Based Practice in Communication Disorders SPE8300 Critical Appraisal 1 SPE8301 Critical Appraisal 2 SPE 8302 Research Project
B3. Identify factors that enable or inhibit the uptake of new evidence and strategies for changing clinical practice and policy	SPE8304 Principles of Evidence-Based Practice in Communication Disorders
C1. Construct focussed clinical questions	SPE8304 Principles of Evidence-Based Practice in Communication Disorders SPE8302 Research Project
C2. Find relevant evidence from primary and secondary sources	SPE8305 Library and IT Skills SPE8300 Critical Appraisal 1 SPE8301 Critical Appraisal 2 SPE8302 Research Project
C3. Design and conduct an original investigation relating to an assessment or intervention procedure relevant to individuals with communication or swallowing disorders using the principles and methods of evidence-based practice	SPE8306 Research Methods in Assessment and Intervention SPE8302 Research Project

Intended Learning Outcome	Modules (all are compulsory)
C4. Undertake appropriate statistical and/or qualitative analyses related to an investigation and interpret the findings in light of the existing evidence and clinical practice	SPE8306 Research Methods in Assessment and Intervention SPE8302 Research Project
C5. Communicate the findings of a clinical investigation to a professional audience in the form of a conference presentation and a manuscript suitable for submission to a scientific journal	SPE8307 Scientific Writing for Publication SPE8306 Research Methods in Assessment and Intervention SPE 8302 Research Project
D1. Demonstrate library and IT skills related to conducting research.	SPE8305 Library and IT Skills SPE8300 Critical Appraisal 1 SPE8301 Critical Appraisal 2 SPE8302 Research Project