

## **MA/PGDip/PGCert in Therapeutic Child Care**

Awarding Institution: The University of Reading

Teaching Institution: The University of Reading

Programme length: part-time over 24 months, including 2 residential workshops

Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences

For students entering in 2004

Date of specification 1 October:2003

Programme Director: Dr. Linnet McMahon

Board of Studies: Therapeutic Child Care Board of Studies

Accreditation: The course programme is approved for the Advanced Award in Social Work

### **Summary of programme aims**

This unique advanced multi-disciplinary course is for experienced staff working with emotionally troubled children and young people and their families in a wide range of settings. There is a particular focus on group care settings - residential and day (including residential child care, schools, therapeutic communities for children and young people, family centres, psychiatric or hospital units) but the course is also suitable for specialist social workers in adoption and fostering, child disability, and for workers in CAMHS teams. It offers those with considerable practice experience the opportunity to develop further in their therapeutic work with children and young people and their families or in making the transition to more senior responsibilities in management and supervision of staff. Past students have included workers and managers in therapeutic communities and residential child care, social workers, teachers, psychiatric and paediatric nurses, occupational therapists and play therapists.

### **Transferable skills**

Ability to work with unconscious as well as conscious processes in all work related relationships in a way that enables innovative working practices that are more likely to promote safe working environments for both clients and staff.

Use reflective practice and self in relationships.

Work creatively and effectively in organisations including working with colleagues in teams (including interprofessional work), including leading and managing constantly changing and challenging situations.

Be aware of the connections and overlap between the personal, theoretical and the professional, and ready to continue with their own and others' development in these respects. Promote and develop anti-oppressive practice in organisations as well as in individuals.

### **Programme content**

Taught modules to the equivalent of 120 M level credits + dissertation 60 M level credits (12,000-15,000 words). Total credits 180 for MA, 120 for PGDip, 70 for PGCert

<b>module code</b>	<b>module title</b>	<b>credits</b>	<b>level</b>
HCMG01	ADVANCED CHILD CARE PRACTICE 1. - Therapeutic Work with Children & Adolescents: Context, Principles & Practice	30	M
HCMG02	ADVANCED CHILD CARE PRACTICE 2. - Therapeutic Communication with Children & Young People	30	M
HCMG03.	PHILOSOPHICAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN THERAPEUTIC CHILD CARE	20	M
HCMG04	PROFESSIONAL WORKSHOP,	20	M

Observing and Understanding Organisational Life,  
including Residential Workshop & 5 day Visit of  
Observation

HCMG05	EXPERIENTIAL GROUP, COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND REFLECTIVE WRITING	20	M
HCMG06	ADVANCED CHILD CARE PRACTICE 3. - Management in Therapeutic Child Care	30	M
HCMG07	RESEARCH IN THERAPEUTIC CHILD CARE, DISSERTATION WORKSHOP) (INCLUDING RESIDENTIAL WORKSHOP	60	M

Students are required to attend all modules, including 02 and 06. They are required to complete the assignment task of either 02 or 06, in order to receive credit for that module. They are required to complete the assignment tasks of all other modules for the MA. For the Diploma they are required to complete all assignment tasks except HCMG07. For the Certificate they are required to complete assignment tasks of modules HCMG01/03/05

### **Part-time/Modular arrangements**

The programme requires a continuing and coherent student group and modules must be completed in the appropriate year.

The course involves regular one day a week attendance during university terms over two years, from 10 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. In addition there are two two-day residential workshops, one in each year. There are no placements but students undertake a five day visit of observation to a setting of their choice.

### **Progression requirements**

All modules must be successfully completed before proceeding to the dissertation stage. Students are expected to register for the two year MA course. In exceptional circumstances a student may exit after 1 year with a Certificate or after two years with a Diploma, provided that attendance has been satisfactory and sufficient credits gained.

### **Summary of teaching and assessment**

There is an ethos of participative and reflective learning throughout the programme. There is an emphasis on the connections between personal, professional and academic learning, and also on themes of empowerment and anti-oppressive practice. The course is underpinned with a psychodynamic framework. All of the assessed work draws on students' practice experience and requires the integration of theory and practice.

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

Mark:	Interpretation
70 - 100%	Distinction
60 - 69%	Merit
50 - 59%	Good Standard (Pass)
Failing Categories	
40 - 49%	Work below threshold standard
0 - 39%	Unsatisfactory work
For Masters degrees	

To pass the MA students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 40 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 70 or more for the dissertation will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation will be eligible for a Merit.

For PG Diplomas

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more and have no mark below 40. In addition the total credit for all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 40 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more will be eligible for the award of a Distinction Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more will be eligible for a Merit.

For PG Certificate

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more and have no mark below 40.

### **Admission requirements**

A relevant professional qualification in social work, nursing, teaching, occupational therapy, play therapy, counselling, educational psychology, etc.

and/or a degree or evidence of ability to work at an advanced academic level.

Readiness to reflect on personal and professional experience and to engage with the course group.

In addition students should have at least one year's relevant work experience since qualifying, and preferably be currently working with children or young people. They need the active support of their agency to attend the course.

In view of the amount of study required, students probably need to take the equivalent of one study day a week *in addition to* regular attendance at the University.

Some bursary support is available.

### **Support for students and their learning**

We aim to create a 'holding environment' in which students can develop their understanding of therapeutic practice in child care. Course members are encouraged to give support and feedback to each other, and the staff team is committed to developing a 'learning community' on the course. The course design therefore relies on continuing attendance by all.

Students are encouraged to tailor the content of their written work to meet their learning needs. Staff are committed to providing full support and feedback on all academic work. There is an initial unassessed 'practice' essay on which informal feedback is given.

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT services, which has several hundred computer and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning ([S@il](#)) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is

provided by Programme Directors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union

### **Career prospects**

Most students are experienced senior practitioners and managers. The course enhances their potential for career development and promotion within their own and associated fields of professional practice. Many past students have achieved this.

For qualified Social Workers, completion of the programme also meets the requirements for the Advanced Award in Social Work.

### **Opportunities for study abroad or for placements**

A one week visit of observation to an agency or organisation relevant to therapeutic child care gives opportunities for an observation placement within the UK or overseas

### **Educational Aims of the Programme**

The course grew out of Adrian Ward's recognition of the need for a specific training for staff working therapeutically with emotionally troubled children, especially in the course of daily living in group care settings. He designed and for ten years led this unique course based in psychodynamic thinking and the therapeutic community approach. The course has come to be valued by people working with children in a wide range of different settings and agencies. The course is actively supported by the Peper Harow Foundation and the Charterhouse Group of Therapeutic Communities, by The Mulberry Bush School, and the Planned Environment Therapy Trust, among others.

The course has a strong focus on the *therapeutic community model of practice and its application in different settings and agencies*. It includes work on a range of methods in therapeutic child care, including 'opportunity led' work in daily living, play therapy, focussed work, group work, as well as on management and ethical issues.

The course aims to match the mode of training to the mode of practice; thus there is an emphasis on working and deciding together as a group of staff and students in all aspects of the course, including management and decision making. Each day's work starts with an Opening Meeting of students and staff, chaired by each member in turn, matching the practice in many therapeutic settings. These meetings are for sharing important issues from each person's work during the preceding week and for debating and deciding any issues related to the work of the course. Similarly the day ends with a Closing Meeting for attending to any 'unfinished business' from the day's work. These meetings are a crucial part of the course and offer many opportunities for learning about working in and leading groups. At the end of the day's work the staff also meet as a reflective staff team.

There are many opportunities for personal and professional development, and the course expects commitment to and reflection on the use of self in professional practice.

### ***Programme Outcomes***

#### ***Knowledge and Understanding***

**A. Knowledge and understanding of:**

The therapeutic community model of practice and its application in different settings and agencies.  
Advanced Therapeutic work with children  
Philosophy and ethics in therapeutic Child Care  
Processes and dynamics in groups and organisations in child care  
Management and leadership in therapeutic child care  
Reflective practice and the use of self in therapeutic child care  
Current child care policy and provision issues

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

A style of teaching and learning which endeavours to create an environment for student learning matching the best practice in therapeutic work  
A variety of methods with an emphasis on seminar discussion and debate based on prior reading, and student presentations based on practice situations, together with professional workshops and the use of weekly course meetings and a weekly experiential group. There is also a residential experience and a 5 day visit of observation. Individual and group tutorials are provided.

*Assessment*

In the first year students write 3 essays or case studies connected with the academic work and drawing on their own observation and practice experience, together with a piece of reflective writing on their own personal and professional development during the course. In the second year they write a further essay, and a dissertation on some aspect of therapeutic child care.

***Skills and other attributes*****. B. Intellectual skills: ability to**

Systematically analyse current policy issues and provision in therapeutic child care. Critically evaluate and integrate theory, research and practice in therapeutic child care and related fields.

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

As previously stated with the addition of dissertation seminars, workshops and individual and group dissertation supervision

*Assessment*

Course work essays, a dissertation proposal and a dissertation proposal and a dissertation on a topic of the student's choice.

**C. Practical skills** – able to:  
Work in and lead groups, work effectively as a member of a team and organisation, manage staff teams. Assess and make provision for the therapeutic needs of emotionally disturbed children or young people. Provide therapeutic communication with children. Work in a way which promotes anti-oppressive practice

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

As previously stated.

*Assessment*

Written work must show evidence of sound child care practice.

**D. Transferable skills** – able to:  
Work with unconscious as well as conscious processes in all work related relationships in a way that enables innovative working practices that are more likely to promote safe working environments for both clients and staff. Use reflective practice and self in relationships and enable the understanding of the interplay of role and relationships and the influence of hierarchy in organisational settings. Work creatively and effectively in organisations including working with colleagues in teams (including interprofessional work), including leading and managing constantly changing and challenging situations. Be aware of the connections and overlap between the personal, theoretical and the professional, and ready to continue with their own and others' development in these respects. Promote and develop anti-oppressive practice in organisations as well as in individuals.

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

As previously stated

*Assessment*

Through written work as described.

*Please note:* This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably expect to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in module and programme handbooks.