# Psychology of Assessment and of Intervention in School Difficulties

## Prof. Daniela Traficante

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The aim of the course is to provide a theoretical-clinical overview of difficulties and disturbances that can result in learning difficulties at school, and furnish a normative framework for providing support to learning processes.

*Knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course students will be able to:

– understand behavioural characteristics, neuropsychological models and causative theories of the main neuro-developmental disorders (intellectual disability, language disorders, learning disorders, autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorder and hyperactivity);

– understand the legislation frame work referring to processes of inclusion and protection of people with special learning needs within the school environment;

– understand the main psychometric tools used in the diagnosis of neuro-developmental disorders;

– recognise and understand the basic principles to refer to for designing educational intervention for teaching-rehabilitation, including methodology for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of the suggested intervention.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course students will be able to:

– create an articulated, dynamic representation of the cognitive function profile and academic abilities of school-age children, differentiating between learning difficulties and disorders;

– summarise data related to assessment procedures within a diagnostic report for informing parents and teachers, in which useful elements for educational intervention are clearly provided;

– design and implement teaching-rehabilitation interventions, with particular emphasis on the use of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of treatment.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The first part of the course will look at the theoretical guidelines, neuro-psychological models and neuro-physiological correlates provided for describing disturbances in neurodevelopment, as specified by the DSM-5 (Intellectual Disorders, Autism, Attention Disorders, Language Disorders, Specific Learning Disorders). Special attention will focus on specific learning disorders providing practical means of diagnosis and intervention. By presenting research data and clinical cases, the course will explore risk indices and diagnostic criteria which will allow for the identification of signs of difficulty and/or specific disorders which could compromise normal cognitive, emotional and social development of school-age children. The second part of the course will take an in-depth look at the legal framework in which it is possible to plan protective measures for creating suitable teaching plans to help children with special learning needs and to promote the wellbeing of children/adolescents at school.

Specifically, the course will be divided into the following units:

Unit 1: Definition of neurodevelopmental disorders in DSM-5

* evolution of diagnostic criteria and comparison with ICD-10/11
* interpretative proposals deriving from the Consensus and new Guidelines promoted in the Italian scientific and clinical community

Unit 2: Primary Language Disorder

* the development of communicative and linguistic competence
* risk indicators for speech disorders
* assessment procedures and intervention techniques

Unit 3: Autism Spectrum Disorders

* diagnostic indicators
* interpretative theories of disorders
* assessment procedures and intervention techniques

Unit 4: ADHD

* diagnostic indicators
* interpretative theories of the disorder
* assessment procedures and intervention techniques

Unit 5: SLD: dyslexia and understanding disorder

* diagnostic indicators
* interpretative theories of the disorder
* assessment procedures and intervention techniques

Unit 6: SLD: dysorthography and written language disorders

* diagnostic indicators
* interpretative theories of the disorder
* assessment procedures and intervention techniques

Unit 7: SLD: dyscalculia and problem-solving disorders

* diagnostic indicators
* interpretative theories of the disorder
* assessment procedures and intervention techniques

Unit 8: The regulatory framework for the protection of disability

* the perspective of the International Classification of Functioning
* Law 104/92
* Law 170/10 and the 2012 circular on BES

Unit 9: Writing the report

* Diagnosis and certifications
* Structure of the SLD certification
* Analysis of clinical cases and drafting of the report

***READING LIST***

Path based on the contents of the lessons:

Content of the lessons (slides - notes)

D. Traficante-M.A. Zanetti, *BAS3. British Ability Scales*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano, 2022.

C. Vio-C. Toso-M.S. Spagnoletti, *L’intervento psicoeducativo nei disturbi dello sviluppo,* Carocci Faber, Roma, 2015.

Path based on texts:

D. Traficante-M.A. Zanetti, *BAS3. British Ability Scales*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano, 2022.

S. Vicari-C. Caselli (eds.), *Neuropsicologia del’età evolutiva,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 2017.

C. Vio-C. Toso-M.S. Spagnoletti, *L’intervento psicoeducativo nei disturbi dello sviluppo,* Carocci Faber, Roma, 2015.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures, discussions of clinical cases, presentation of film material. There will also be 15 hours of (optional) practical work during which students will be able to work on case studies and discuss the practical measures and procedures foreseen by the regulations in force.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed based on an oral test in two parts.

1. With reference to recognising and understanding, students will be asked to outline one of the neuro-developmental disturbances they have studied in reference to the experimental models and data found in the literature.
2. With reference to applying knowledge and understanding, a clinical case study will be presented and students will suggest their own diagnostic hypotheses and practical proposals in a school environment, in accordance with the laws in force. Overall assessment will be based on completeness, relevance and correctness of answers and language mastery.

In the overall assessment of students' knowledge, consideration will be given to completeness, relevance and correctness of their answers, as well as appropriateness of language. In particular, they will be assessed on their knowledge of the diagnostic criteria and neuropsychological theories of reference for classifying the neurodevelopmental disorders presented, as well as their competence in reading and interpreting the protocol of a clinical case and formulating an intervention proposal. Each answer will be assigned a mark from insufficient to excellent.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

Students should have sound knowledge of cognitive and emotional-relational development, with particular emphasis on the 6 -16 age bracket. In addition, students should have learned basic psychometrics so as to be able to obtain and interpret standardised scores.

Though regular attendance is not compulsory, it is strongly recommended.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.