# Psychology of Assessment and of Intervention in School Difficulties

## Prof. Lynne Duncan; 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 some neuro-developmental disorders: language disorders, learning 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***

FIRST MODULE

In the first part of the course, Prof. Lynne Duncan (University of Dundee, Scotland) will explain the results of research conducted in the UK and France on the typical and atypical evolutionary trajectories of language learning. In particular, she will focus on the assessment procedures used at international level and on the main intervention approaches for the enhancement of language skills. It will also be possible to gain direct experience with adapting and applying the observational and psychometric tools used in other European countries to the Italian context.

SECOND MODULE

In the second part of the course, Prof. Traficante will deal with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Specific Learning Disorders (DSA), for which operational elements will be provided for diagnosis and intervention. Through the presentation of research data and clinical cases, the risk indices and diagnostic criteria that allow one to identify the signs of discomfort and/or specific disorders that can compromise the adequate cognitive, emotional and social development of the school-going individual will be addressed. The legislative context will also be discussed in depth, in which it is possible to design protection interventions for the realisation of appropriate educational plans to support the learning processes of children with special educational needs and to promote the well-being of the child/adolescent in the school context.

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

Unit 1: Primary Language Disorder

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

Unit 2: SLD: dyslexia and understanding disorder

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

Unit 3: SLD: dysorthography and written language disorders

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

Unit 4: SLD: dyscalculia and problem-solving disorders

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

Unit 5: ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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

Unit 6: The regulatory framework for disability protection

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

Unit 7: 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)

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

Scientific articles proposed by the lecturers for writing the report.

Path based on texts:

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.

B. Molteni, G. Airaghi, D. Sarti, *I disturbi del linguaggio nell’età evolutiva*, Hogrefe, Firenze, 2022.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures, discussions of clinical cases, presentation of film material. Practical activities will be proposed in which to apply the observational tools and coding of results obtained from the administration of clinical case tests. Students will therefore be able to carry out the study of cases and deal with the obligations and intervention procedures provided for by the current regulatory context.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed through the drafting of a brief report on the application of an observational tool for linguistic development and through an interview, which will be structured 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 the ability to apply knowledge and understanding, the report on the application of the observational procedures on linguistic development carried out by the student will be discussed, applying the tools proposed by the lecturers.

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***

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.