

# Multi-professional credential in learning disabilities and autism for advanced practice

## Background

To support the delivery of advanced clinical practice across a wider range of health and social care settings, Health Education England (HEE) has commissioned a multi-professional credential at advanced practice level specifically for registered health and care practitioners working in learning disabilities and autism services.

The credential is based on HEE's (2020a) [Advanced Clinical Practice: Capabilities framework when working with people who have a learning disability and/or autism](#).

The above capabilities framework is founded on HEE's (2017) [Multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England](#), and its associated standards of education and training within the specified capabilities for each of the four pillars of advanced clinical practice. The capabilities set out the clinical expectations of nurses, allied health professionals, pharmacists, and psychologists working at an advanced level of practice, delivering healthcare to individuals with learning disabilities and/or autism.

The credential is aimed at staff in 'Tier 3' of Skills for Health (2019a) *Core Capabilities Framework for Supporting People with a Learning Disability*, and Skills for Health (2019b) *Core Capabilities Framework for Supporting Autistic People*; Tier 3 is defined as "health, social care and other professionals with a high degree of autonomy, able to provide care in complex situations and/or may also lead services for people with a learning disability and autism" (Skills for Health, 2019a, p.10).

Advanced clinical practice is delivered by experienced, registered health and care practitioners and is characterised by a high degree of autonomy and complex decision making. This area of practice is underpinned by a Master's level award or equivalent that encompasses the four advanced clinical practice pillars of clinical practice, leadership and management, education and research, with demonstration of core capabilities for specific pillar.

A national webinar was held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020 that provided details about the multi-professional credential in learning disabilities and autism for advanced clinical practice, which is available to view [via this link](#) on YouTube.

## Programme Development

The HEE Learning Disability and Autism Programme is working in partnership with the HEE's national Centre for Advancing Practice for the delivery of this programme.

The Centre for Advancing Practice is providing national funding for the development of this multi-professional credential and the provision of 40 commissioned places.

A learning disabilities clinical advisor, Rebecca Chester, has been seconded from Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust to support the project.

The credential will be:

- 60 credits (2 x 30 credit modules) at level 7 (Masters) and will form a Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert);
- 50% clinical and 50% theory;
- Delivered via online distance learning.

Please note this PG Cert credential is only a route to learning disabilities / autism advanced practice recognition when it is either:

- Undertaken as an integrated element within an MSc Advanced Clinical Practice *or*
- Is undertaken as a stand-alone course by an individual who is either completing or planning to complete an MSc Advanced Clinical Practice into which this credential can be integrated via recognition of prior learning (RPL) *or*
- Is undertaken as a stand-alone course by an individual who already has an existing MSc Advanced Clinical Practice.

Taken as a PG Cert credential only, with no other advanced practice preparation, it is *not* solely regarded as an advanced practice credential and will *not* afford the trainee recognition as a learning disabilities / autism Advanced Practitioner.

## Programme Delivery

Following a procurement process, contracts have been awarded to:

- Edge Hill University *and*
- University of Cumbria

Both universities involved offer a full advanced clinical practice Master's programme and so the credential can be:

- undertaken as a stand-alone award;
- undertaken as part of a full Master's programme at the same university;
- may potentially be incorporated into another advanced practice Master's programme at another university, under RPL arrangements.

The PG Cert credential course content for both universities will comprise the following:

- 2 x 30 credit level 7 modules delivered online.
- 50% theory 50% practice.
- Experts by experience involvement in design and delivery.
- Designed and delivered in partnership with experts from practice.
- Content will be mapped to HEE's (2020) *Advanced Clinical Practice: Capabilities framework when working with people who have a learning disability and/or autism.*

### **Edge Hill University** (please see Appendix 1 for further details)

Students undertaking the advanced practice PG Cert credential for people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people at Edge Hill University will commence online in September 2021, this will be preceded by an online induction / introduction event in March 2021, followed by regular online keeping-in-touch meetings until teaching commences.

The course content will include:

- This will be a 45-week programme, run over 12 months.
- The two 30 credit modules will run concurrently over the period.
- Has gone through internal QA processes and formal external validation in January 2021.
- Students can stop after the PG Cert, or continue and study a PG Dip (80 credits), and progress to the full MSc Advanced Clinical Practice with a 40 credit research and enquiry module.

### University of Cumbria *(please see Appendix 2 for further details)*

- The PG Cert credential will be available online from October/November 2021 and run to August 2022.
- A full Master's advanced practice program which integrates the credential will also be available from March 2021.
- In order to undertake the credential, applicants must already be an advanced practitioner or be able to evidence that they are working towards that role.
- Students undertaking the full Master's will complete in October 2023.

### HEE Funding Offer

The national funding available for this initial cohort is only for the tuition fees for the 60 credits of the PG Cert component. Subsequent funding for a full MSc Advanced Clinical Practice will be at the discretion of the regional HEE Faculties for Advancing Practice, and such future funding being available.

There are 40 funded places available nationally for the PG Cert credential component and these will be allocated strategically across regions, linked to service improvement and workforce transformation plans. Organisations will have the option to purchase additional places over and above any regional allocation.

To enable appropriate regional allocations to be made, please complete [this online scoping survey](#) for each applicant you wish to nominate for completing the PG Cert credential. If you have more than one applicant you would like to put forward, please rank them in order of priority (an option is available in the survey for doing that). *Please note:* if you are requesting a funded place on the PG Cert but your nominee does not currently have an advanced clinical practice Master's award, you will be required to ensure that enrolment with a university is in place to undertake a full Master's award in advanced clinical practice within 2 years of completing the PG Cert credential.

For those wishing to be funded<sup>1</sup> by HEE the following filtering criteria will apply:

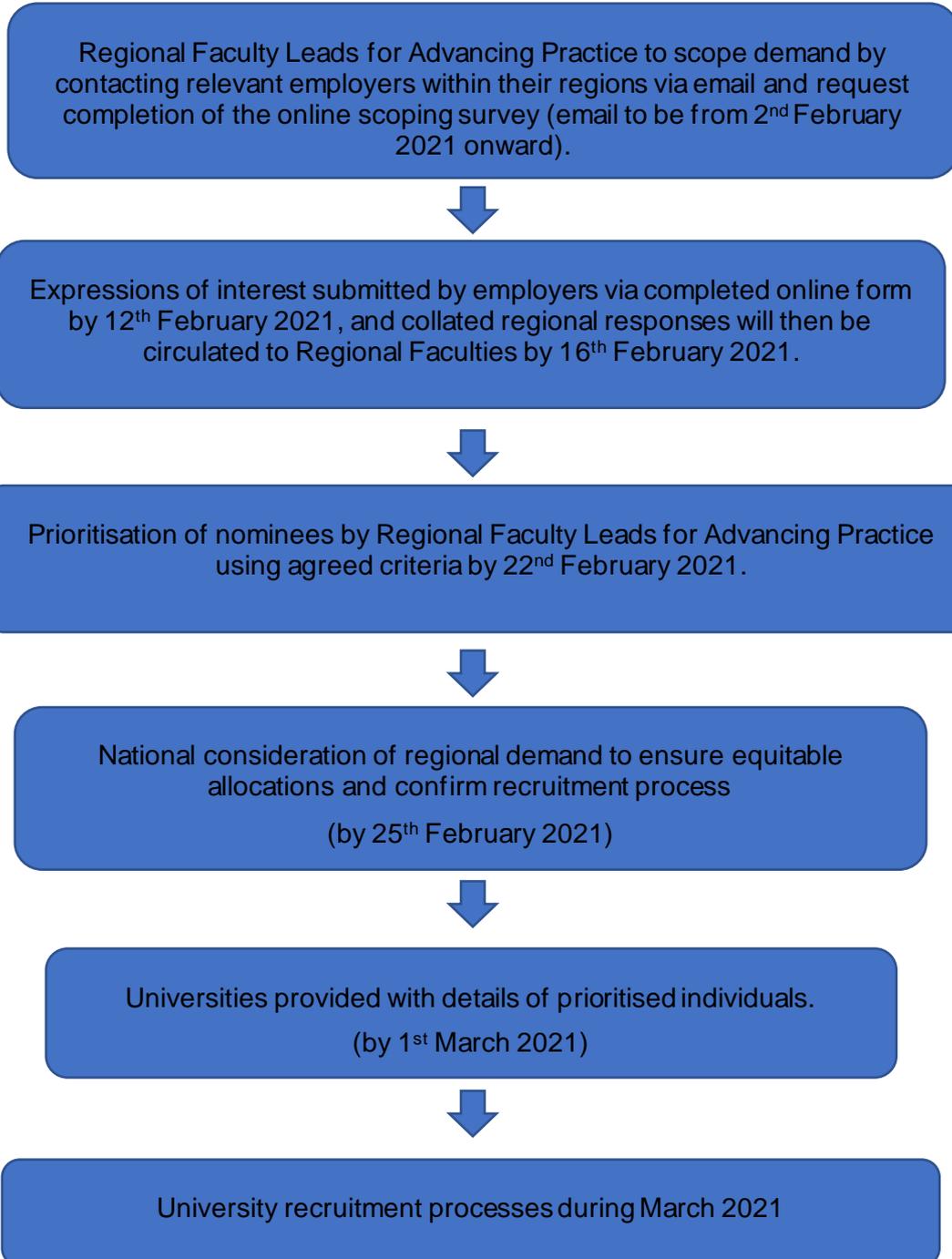
1. Nominees should have existing MSc Advanced Clinical Practice qualification and will undertake the credential as an additional qualification *or*
2. Are already on an MSc Advanced Clinical Practice programme or have been recruited to a programme and have a start date. Wishes to undertake the credential either as part of their current course (RPL) or as an additional qualification *or*
3. Wishes to undertake the credential and will undertake an advanced clinical practice Master's within 2 years of completion of the PG Cert credential.

Additionally, there will need to be a workforce development plan in place for prospective nominees to work in an advanced clinical practice role for learning disabilities / autism within their employing organisation, and there will also need to be identified workplace support and planning for the supervision and assessment of the prospective trainee from an advanced clinical practice perspective, in accordance with HEE's (2020b) guidance on [Workplace Supervision for Advanced Clinical Practice: An integrated multi-professional approach for practitioner development.](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> This credential is not available for funding as stand-alone CPD. Those currently working at, or towards advanced level practice, within learning disability and autism services where a workforce need has been clearly identified will be prioritised in this first cohort of funding. Beyond the 40 funded places it will be possible for Regional Faculties to fund additional places on the credentials themselves.

## Process of allocation of places funded by HEE for the Multi-professional advanced clinical practice credential in learning disabilities and/or autism ⇒



## **Appendix 1 – Edge Hill University information and entry criteria to study the advanced practice credential for people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people**

The advanced practice credential for people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people at Edge Hill University can be studied as a PG Cert or as part of the MSc Advanced Clinical Practice Programme. The credential is designed to enable health and social care professionals to extend their knowledge to an advanced level within their specialist field of practice in meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people. The credential is HEE accredited and students will be able to use the credential as part of an MSc Advanced Clinical Practice Programme, or as a standalone PG Cert as part of HEE's Centre for Advanced Practice portfolio accredited route.

The credential will allow you to develop a systematic and critical understanding of the breadth and depth of knowledge within your specialist area of practice.

All potential applicants for the programme must normally meet the following criteria<sup>2</sup>:

- Be registered with a relevant health/social care related UK Professional Statutory Regulatory Body.
- Be an experienced practitioner, typically with 2 years in practice or the equivalent.
- Hold a health/social care-related professional qualification and higher education degree.
- Have access to appropriate practice in a suitable clinical area to complete the work-based component of the programme.
- Have a suitable reference from the student's line manager to evidence suitability of the applicant to enter and complete the programme.
- All applicants will be interviewed to confirm suitability. This will be completed by members of the programme team, service users and carers and key stakeholders from practice.

Students undertaking the PG Cert advanced practice credential for people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people at Edge Hill University will commence online in September 2021, and this will be preceded by an online induction / introduction event in March 2021, followed by regular online keeping-in-touch meetings until teaching commences.

---

<sup>2</sup> These are validated entry criteria set by Edge Hill University, who will be making the final decisions on entry to places on the credential programme that are being funded by HEE.

## **Appendix 2 - University of Cumbria information and entry criteria to study the advanced practice credential for people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people**

The University of Cumbria's advanced practice credential in learning disabilities and autism will initially be offered as part of their established distance learning MSc Advanced Clinical Practice Programme. The learning disability and/autism PG Cert credential will then subsequently commence in October/November 2021. Applicants for the PG Cert credential will study alongside other trainees studying the credential as an integrated part of their MSc Advanced Clinical Practice

Alternatively, for people who already hold an advanced practice qualification, or are currently studying an Advanced Practice Qualification, or can evidence that they are working at an advanced practice level (through the HEE portfolio route), the credential can be studied as a standalone Post Graduate Certificate (60 academic credits at Master's level). This is an opportunity for advanced practitioners to enhance their knowledge and clinical skills in learning disability and autism through a Health Education England accredited route (the credential).

The MSc Advanced Clinical Practice programme and advanced practice PG Cert credential are offered via flexible distance learning and will enable graduates to practice at an advanced level, improve the care of patients/clients, enhance their leadership skills and professional development.

### **Entry and Selection Criteria:**

#### MSc Advanced Clinical Practice Programme Route:

For applicants wishing to study the credential as part of the MSc Advanced Clinical Practice programme; details of the entry and selection criteria for the MSc can be found by clicking [on this link](#).

Students undertaking the MSc Advanced Practice Programme will commence in March 2021, with the specific learning disability and autism PG Cert credential commencing in October/November 2021 (final dates to be confirmed).

#### Stand-alone route:

In order to apply to study the PG Cert credential as a stand-alone programme, applicants will need to demonstrate one of the following<sup>3</sup>:

- Current qualification in Advanced Clinical Practice
- Trainee/student Advanced Clinical Practitioner
- Evidence that they are working at an advanced practice level (through the HEE portfolio route)

---

<sup>3</sup> These are validated entry criteria set by the University of Cumbria, who will be making the final decisions on entry to places on the credential programme that are being funded by HEE.

## References

Health Education England (2017) *Multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England*. Accessed 20 January 2021. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yc9scy5w>

Health Education England (2020a) *Advanced Clinical Practice: Capabilities framework when working with people who have a learning disability and/or autism*. Accessed 20 January 2021. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/y3r5br8j>

Health Education England (2020b) *Workplace Supervision for Advanced Clinical Practice: An integrated multi-professional approach for practitioner development*. Accessed 28 January 2021. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/y6hdeu9b>

Skills for Health (2019a) *Core Capabilities Framework for Supporting People with a Learning Disability*. Accessed 20 January 2021. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/y26jpxc4>

Skills for Health (2019b) *Core Capabilities Framework for Supporting Autistic People*. Accessed 20 January 2021. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/y32d8zyn>