

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA/MA IN  
Psychoanalytic Observational Studies

**TRAINING  
PROGRAMMES**

OCTOBER 2010

*This course is delivered in Exeter at the  
Primary Care NHS Trust*

Ref. M7D



This is a course for those undertaking work with children, adolescents and families in multicultural and ethnic contexts. The course is designed to contribute to deepening the awareness and understanding of human development and interaction and to help students widen their approach to current work through applying a psychoanalytic frame of reference which is applicable to all cultures.

Students are helped during the course through regular contact with their personal tutor and seminar leaders to decide whether to continue to enrich their contribution to their current profession through greater psychoanalytic understanding, or whether to change profession and apply for clinical training.

The usual length of the course is 3 years for the Postgraduate Diploma and 4 years for the MA.

For some students, for instance those in full-time work or with a young family, it might be more practical to take the course on a modular basis and extend its duration to a maximum of six years to MA.

## Staff

### Organising tutor

Wendy Shallcross

### Assistant organising tutor

Felicity Weir

### Training advisory group

Biddy Youell

Jonathan Bradley

Catrin Bradley

Margot Waddell

### Assessment tutor

Maggie Fagan

### Liaison Tutor to Outlying Centres

Maggie Fagan

### Seminar leaders

Wendy Shallcross

Felicity Weir

Hannah Russell

Glyn Jackson

## Completion of the course

This course is a prerequisite for application to the Tavistock Clinic training in child psychotherapy.

## Content and method

Most of the teaching is undertaken in small group discussions (usually 5 students), with a seminar leader.

### Teaching events: First year

Most of the teaching is undertaken in small group discussions (usually 5 students), with a seminar leader.

### Work discussion seminars (weekly)

Students bring detailed studies of their work for discussion in seminars. This enables a wider acquaintance to be obtained with the different settings in which children are cared for by professional workers.

The studies presented include the interaction between the students themselves and their charges and in many cases pose questions about their role with colleagues in the organisation within which they are working. The presentation is then discussed by the rest of the group led by a psychotherapist experienced in work with children and adolescents, although not necessarily in the particular context within which the presenter is working.

No particular technique is taught in these seminars. The members are encouraged to consider and to discuss appropriate ways of dealing with the situation described after possible conscious and unconscious 'meanings' have been explored.

The aim of the seminar is to sharpen perceptions and to

enhance the exercise of imagination so that a richer understanding of the interactions described may ensue, on the basis of evidence of motivations springing from internal unconscious sources. Education in sensitivity and increased awareness is a gradual process inevitably attended by some degree of anxiety. 'Not noticing' is one outcome of the defences against experiencing pain in oneself and others. Becoming able to approach it more closely, and also coming to terms with the fact that there are no experts able to offer instant solutions is one of the problems which each student has to deal with to some extent. Likewise for the seminar leader, it can be a continual exercise to struggle with feelings of inadequacy in carrying the parental role attributed to them, and to do the best that they can from experience to throw some additional light on the situation presented.

Experience of these seminars has shown that discussion of work which takes into account emotions inevitably aroused by a closer involvement, adds greatly to its meaningfulness as a growing experience for seminar participants and leader alike.

### **Infant observation seminar (weekly)**

This seminar, together with the Young Child Observation seminar, more than any other, is helpful in training students to become receptive observers. They are required to visit for an hour a week, a baby growing up with its mother from birth onwards over the length of the two year period. As this is purely an observational and not a work situation there is no obligation to do anything. Indeed one has to learn to refrain from advice, action, active questioning and investigation and to take up a background stance of friendly attentiveness, which will allow the mother and any other member of the family who may be present to follow their usual routine with as little interference as possible. There is a wide variety of possibilities for observation within and across cultures from which students and staff learn directly about difference and about the rich diversity of shared experience of ordinary development.

Observations are recorded in detail after each visit, typed and presented for discussion in a small seminar group. In this way, each member has the opportunity to follow over the two years the early development of a small number of babies. For most people, other than mothers, the movements of a young infant are fairly unintelligible except in more generalised behavioural terms.

One has to allow oneself to come close to the baby in order to notice details and to remember them until some kind of significant pattern seems to emerge. This necessitates containing the emotional impact made by being at such close quarters to a mother and new baby, by being subjected to the early primitive anxieties in the baby and those evoked in the mother by her new responsibility. It may involve having to struggle with complicated emotions evoked in oneself as an observer and bystander, if the relationship one sees developing is an enviably close and loving one. Because any responsibility for intervention in the growth of this relationship is precluded, the student has the opportunity of observing how a mother/infant

couple (sometimes the whole family) live through crises and difficulties as best they can. Each member of the seminar has the opportunity to note at some time or another the difficulty we all have in struggling with states of mind (especially infantile) which look for somewhere to put the blame (usually upon mother), when things appear to be going wrong, in refraining from 'knowing better' ourselves, and in making omniscient diagnoses and predictions which may obscure further observations.

As this study and the seminar proceed, members usually begin to realise, in a way that is probably impossible to visualise beforehand, the relevance which infant observation has to work with older children and with adults, in helping one to recognise the persistence of infantile patterns of behaviour in later life.

### **Psychoanalytic theory I (fortnightly)**

Studies during the first year concentrate upon the work of Freud in the first two terms and more onto the writings of Abraham and Melanie Klein in the third term. Students are expected to read and to prepare between seminars. The aim is to encourage study of the development of Freud's thought, to try to follow the way in which he struggled to find theories to fit the observations he was making in his clinical work, and, in the third term, to consider developments brought in particularly work with children. The aim of encouraging students to approach psychoanalytic theory from a historical point of view, descriptively and phenomenologically, is to foster an attitude of mind which views theories as ways of organising and describing observations and experiences, and evaluates them insofar as they lead onto further questioning and allow for the emergence of additional experience and observations.

### **Seminar in child development research work (fortnightly)**

This is a one-year teaching event. The reading covers recent research in the field of Child Development with an introduction to its historical, cultural and biological context. Many of the central issues of the course, such as the nature-nurture controversy, the child's adaptation to the environment and the nature of the environment with regard to personal relationships, society and culture are considered. Students are also encouraged to make use of their own experience and observations and their relevance to the findings of research.

### **Teaching events: Second year**

#### **Young child observation seminar (weekly)**

This seminar, followed weekly for one year, gives students the opportunity to present observations of a young child observed in their family or in a non-family setting. The aim of this seminar, partly illustrated in the description of Infant Observation, is to sharpen observation and enrich, through experience, knowledge of child development, and to become familiar with the language, verbal and non-verbal, of children's communication with each other and with adults.

## **Infant observation and work discussion seminars (weekly)**

These continue as for the first year.

## **Psychoanalytic theory II (fortnightly)**

The works of Melanie Klein are studied in detail in Terms 1 and 2 particularly as they are seen to throw light upon the development of the personality, in both a pathological and healthy manner. In the third term two other major figures, Anna Freud and Winnicott are considered.

## **Written requirements**

Keeping records of observations and of work experience, undertaking the required reading for seminars and preparing for presentations in seminars requires a commitment of 9-10 hours per week. In addition, the written requirements for the Postgraduate Diploma/MA are:

### **Year 1**

#### **Formative Assessment**

- Evidence that a suitable infant observation is being undertaken.
- Submission of a 1000 word description of the infant observation experience.
- One infant observation presentation.
- Evidence that there is a suitable work setting.
- Submission of a 1000 word description of the work setting.
- One work discussion presentation.

#### **Formal Assessment**

- An essay on Child Development Research (3000 - 3500 words).
- An essay on first year Psychoanalytic Theory (3000 - 3500 words).

### **Year 2 / Year 3**

- Two papers (4000 words) on Infant Observation and on Work Discussion (and 1000 words on observation material and References).
- A shorter paper (3000 - 3500 words) on Young Child Observation
- A Psychoanalytic Theory essay (3000 - 3500 words).

### **Year 3 / Year 4**

- (Optional) A dissertation of 12-14,000 words based on one or more of the main units of the first two years.

NB 1: Although not obligatory, the MA dissertation does provide students with the experience of research before applying to the Clinical Training (M80), which is now a Professional Doctorate.

NB 2: Students applying for the clinical training need to submit the papers on Infant Observation, Work Discussion and Young Child Observation, one Psychoanalytic Theory essay and one of the essays on Child Development, together with their application form. This is separate from submission requirements for the Postgraduate Diploma/MA.

## **Tutorial arrangements**

Each student has a personal tutor. The tutor, together with the organising tutor, if necessary, is available to discuss issues connected with the course and with work.

## **Method of selection**

Students are accepted on the basis of application forms, references, relevant work experience, aspirations and personal interviews.

## **Personal analysis**

Personal analysis or psychoanalytical therapy is optional for students undertaking this course. Students who intend to apply for the clinical training should start analysis one year before they expect to begin clinical training if they are accepted. Applications to the clinical training should be made before the beginning of February of the academic year before they expect to start. Applicants should remember that they need to have already had analysis (with an approved analyst), at least three, and preferably four or five times weekly, for at least a year before they can begin undertaking clinical work. Four or five times weekly analysis is recommended during clinical training unless there are exceptional circumstances. Issues such as this are best discussed first with personal tutors.

## **Membership**

Approximately 5 places are available each year. Students are required to be working in a professional capacity with children, adolescents or families. They are generally expected to have had at least one year's experience of such work before commencing the course. The work will usually be of a non-clinical nature. Exceptionally, some students may be working in a clinical setting by virtue of their previous training and qualifications; they are required to consult their personal tutor before undertaking work as a psychotherapist. It should be noted that the Exeter course does not take any responsibility for finding work for students or for the management or supervision of their work.

## **Seminar times**

Tuesdays 12.00 - 6.15pm (Fortnightly 6pm).

The teaching events require a minimum of four hours of weekly attendance as day release (Tuesday). It is possible to carry on a full-time job during the course.

The observations, the reading and writing required and attendance at seminars will take at least 15 hours a week.

## Recognition and qualifications

The Postgraduate Diploma/MA in Psychoanalytic Observational Studies, is taught in Exeter and accredited by the University of East London. Students automatically register for the Postgraduate Diploma/MA on acceptance. The Diploma can be completed in three years and the MA degree two terms. Students may take a maximum of five years to complete the course to Diploma level, with another two terms to complete the MA dissertation.

Admission to the degree programme is open to a small number of non-graduates with suitable professional qualifications.

On satisfactory completion of the course we offer further opportunities for training and study.

- a. Clinical Training in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: Child and Adolescent (M80). It is one of the six courses recognised by the Association of Child Psychotherapists and is now a Doctoral Programme.

Applications may be made at the earliest in the fourth term of the course in Observational Studies. Further details are available from the Directorate of Education and Training

- b. The possibility for some students of applying to UEL to undertake work for a PhD.

## Closing date

There is no formal closing date but since demand is high, you are advised to apply as soon as possible. An interview is offered to all applicants.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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