



Circular: 0034/2026

To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary, Post Primary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards

Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma of Teacher Professional Learning for Teachers working with Students with Special Educational Needs - Autism

Introduction

The programme will aim to develop teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills in working with students with autism and, thereby, to contribute to the school's overall capacity in this area.

1. The Programme 2026/2027

ATU St Angelas is offering a Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in Arts in Special Educational Needs - Autism Teacher Professional Learning Programme in collaboration with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for teachers of Autistic students. In accordance with programmes being offered by ATU St Angelas, this programme is accredited by Atlantic Technological University (ATU) and will lead to an award of a Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in Arts in Special Educational Needs - Autism.

Up to 25 places will be available on the programme for the year 2026/2027

2. Aim and Content

The aim of the programme will be to develop teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills in working with autistic students and, thereby, to contribute to the school's overall capacity to provide inclusive education to autistic students.

Qualifications will be awarded by ATU to participants who successfully complete the programme. **Participants will be assessed on the basis of full attendance at the programme, successful completion of selected tasks and written assignments, in addition to their work in schools.**

Consideration will be given to applications for recognition for prior learning (RPL) under the University's RPL policies and procedures. Relevant NCSE courses in the learning and teaching of autistic students will be considered in this context.



Further details are available to applicants from ATU St Angelas, Sligo on their website at [Special Educational Needs - Autism - Atlantic Technological University](#) and the National Council for Special Education on their website at www.ncse.ie.

3. Duration and Organisation

This Postgraduate Certificate is a professional development programme which must be completed in **one** academic year.

The Postgraduate Diploma is a professional development programme which must be completed within a timeframe of **two** years.

On completion of the Postgraduate Certificate in year one, candidates who wish to complete the Postgraduate Diploma must do so in the following academic year.

The programme comprises four modules, as follows:

- **Postgraduate Certificate in Special Educational Needs - Autism**
 - **Module one (Core Module)** - Understanding Autism: Theoretical Perspectives and Implications for Practice

And

Module two - Engaging Autistic Students: Assessment and Planning for Teaching and Learning

Or

- **Module three** - Autistic Students: Teaching Approaches
- **Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Special Educational Needs – Autism**
 - **Module one** - Understanding Autism: Theoretical Perspectives and Implications for Practice
 - **Module two** - Engaging Autistic Students: Assessment and Planning for Teaching and Learning



- **Module three** - Autistic Students: Teaching Approaches
- **Module four** - Supporting Autistic Students with reference to Emotional Regulation and Promotion of Positive Behaviour

Completion of Modules 1 (Core) and 2 or 3, together with successful completion of the necessary course work and a practicum will attract a Postgraduate Certificate in Special Educational Needs - Autism.

Completion of the additional two modules together with the necessary course work will attract a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Special Educational Needs - Autism.

Participants will not necessarily be required to complete individual modules sequentially.

The programme will require from a minimum of eighteen days (Certificate) to a maximum of thirty-seven days (Diploma) release from school over the two-year period.

Attendance on at least 5 Saturdays at a central venue will be a requirement for successful applicants.

Class visits from NCSE and ATU St Angelas' personnel for the purposes of support provision and practicum assessment respectively are an essential component of the programme.

4. Eligibility

Please note that all teachers must be registered in accordance with Section 31 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001. Please refer to the Teaching Council website www.teachingcouncil.ie for further information.

This programme is for registered teachers who hold a post currently funded by the Department of Education and who are currently working with autistic students or will be working with autistic students for the duration of the Programme in recognised Primary schools including Special Schools and recognised Post-Primary Schools. **The programme is designed specifically to assist teachers in meeting the learning and teaching needs of autistic students.** Potential applicants must therefore have a teaching role in relation to autistic students.

Candidates should note that evidence of having completed Teaching Council Garda vetting is required for participation in the course.

(a) **Primary:**

Teachers will be required to forward a copy of their Registration Certificate or Confirmation of Registration letter¹ from the Teaching Council, when submitting their application form (see

¹ Confirmation of Registration letter is available to download from the Registered Teacher Login Facility on the Teaching Council website www.teachingcouncil.ie



footnote below). If the “Education Sector(s)” field is blank, teachers will be required to provide evidence that they have qualifications suitable to teach in either the mainstream primary sector or to teach students with Special Educational Needs in the primary sector.

Applicants from Primary Schools should have successfully completed their probationary period.

(b) Post-Primary

Teachers will be required to forward a copy of their Registration Certificate or Confirmation of Registration letter from the Teaching Council, when submitting their application form (see footnote below). If the “Education Sector(s)” field is blank, teachers will be required to provide evidence that they have qualifications suitable to teach in either the mainstream post-primary sector or to teach students with Special Educational Needs in the post-primary sector.

Applicants from Post-Primary Schools should have successfully completed their Induction and Post Qualification Employment (PQE).

(c) Special Schools

Teachers will be required to forward a copy of their Registration Certificate or Confirmation of Registration letter from the Teaching Council, when submitting their application form (see footnote below). If the “Education Sector(s)” field is blank teachers will be required to provide evidence that they have qualifications suitable to teach either in the mainstream primary or post-primary sectors or to teach students with Special Educational Needs in the primary or post-primary sector or to teach in special school settings.

Applicants from Special Schools should have successfully completed their probationary period.

Teachers who are participating in this programme must continue to have a teaching role in relation to autistic students for the duration of the programme. It is also advised that school management should make every effort to ensure that autistic students continue to benefit from teachers’ knowledge and expertise in this area, through assigning the learning and teaching of autistic students to teachers who have successfully completed this programme. Collaborative practices, such as team-teaching, can also form a part of these arrangements.

5. Applications and Selection

Eligible teachers, nominated by their school authorities who wish to be considered for admission to the Postgraduate Certificate in Arts in Special Educational Needs – Autism should apply via this link: [Postgraduate Certificate in Arts in Special Educational Needs - Autism](#).



Eligible teachers, nominated by their school authorities who wish to be considered for admission to the Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Special Educational Needs – Autism should apply via this link: [Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Special Educational Needs - Autism](#).

Please read instructions for completing the online application carefully and ensure that all the required information/documentation is available before commencing the online application process.

Closing Date

The completed application form must be received by **5pm on Friday April 17th 2026**.

For any queries, please contact the Centre for Special Educational Needs, Inclusion and Diversity at cseid.stangelas@atu.ie

6. Funding

As this programme is part-funded by the Special Education Section of the Department of Education through the NCSE. **Applicants will be responsible for the payment of a fee of €350 per module.**

7. Travel and Subsistence

The NCSE will cover the cost of Travel and Subsistence for attending their full day seminars.

8. Extra Personal Vacation

No extra personal vacation will be allowed in respect of attendance at the Programme.

9. Substitution

Substitution, which must be approved by the managerial authority of the school/ETB, will be allowed. The substitution must be deemed necessary to cover the approved periods of absence of the teacher from teaching duty for attendance at the course. Documentation from the NCSE/ATU St Angelas specifying the absence details must be retained by the school.

10. Salary Arrangements

All teachers on release from their school under the terms of this Programme will continue to receive their salary in the usual way.

Please note that successful completion of this programme will not result in any entitlement to additional remuneration from the Department of Education.



11. Master's Programme

Those who successfully complete the Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Special Educational Needs - Autism, and who satisfy the relevant requirements, are eligible to progress to an MA in Special Educational Needs - Autism at ATU St Angelas. Further information on the MA in Special Educational Needs - Autism Programme in ATU St Angelas is available on the ATU website, [Master of Arts in Special Educational Needs - Autism](#)

Brendan Doody

Principal Officer

Special Education Section

March 2026

Appendix A
Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in Arts in Special Educational Needs
- Autism 2026-2027



<p style="text-align: center;">Module One</p> <p>Understanding Autism: Theoretical Perspectives and Implications for Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory Day • NCSE 4 Day Introductory Course or 5 Day Summer Course (primary only) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction to Autism ○ Autism Good Practice Guidelines ○ Learning Environment ○ Communication and Autism ○ Wellbeing ○ Overview of NCSE Relate ○ Role of the SNA (collaborative partnerships) ○ Sensory Processing ○ Understanding Social Differences • Preparation for Teaching and Learning for Autistic Students (Primary) • Planning for Autistic Students (Post-Primary) • A Sensory Perspective on Learning and Participation • Autism and Co-occurring Additional Needs • Class Visit (NCSE Advisory Team: Autism)
<p style="text-align: center;">Assessment</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Essay</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Module Two</p> <p>Engaging Autistic Students: Planning for Teaching and Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SCERTS Model (Social Communication Emotional Regulation and Transactional Supports) (3 day) • Attention Autism Level 1 (online) • Visual Structured Teaching Methodologies (2 day) (<i>Only for students completing Modules 1 and 2 for the Certificate</i>) • Unlocking potential- A Neuro-Affirmative Approach to Assessment (2 Day) <p>Language and Communication: Supporting Interaction and Communication for Neurodivergent Students (3 day)</p> <p>Class Visit (NCSE Advisory Team: Autism)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Assessment</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Practitioner Research</p>



<p>Module Three Autistic Students: Teaching Approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Structured Teaching Methodologies (2-day) • Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools (2 day) • Social Narratives • Thrive – Creating Classrooms for Autistic Students to Thrive (5 Day) <p>The following options are offered in this module, and participants must choose two from the following list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lámh • DIRFloor-Time • Supporting Autistic Students as they Transition through Education (Primary or Post-Primary) • Relationships, Sexuality and Autism • Intensive Interaction • Inclusive Music, Drama and Art for Autistic Learners <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants must choose the 2-day seminar: Autism, Mental Health and Managing Anxiety
<p>Assessment</p>	<p>Practicum</p>
<p>Module Four Supporting Autistic Students with reference to Emotional Regulation and Promotion of Positive Behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Social Differences (Primary and Post Primary) • Relate Model of Support (3 Day) • Reflections on Emotional Regulation and Wellbeing Supports (5 days) • Class Visit (NCSE Advisory Team: Behaviour and Wellbeing for Learning)
<p>Assessment</p>	<p>Literature Review</p>
<p>Practicum</p>	<p>Completion of the practicum is an essential element for both the Postgraduate Certificate and the Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Special Educational Needs - Autism (See section 3 of Circular)</p>





Postgraduate Programme

Postgraduate Certificate

Module one (Core Module)	Understanding Autism: Theoretical Perspectives and Implications for Practice
-----------------------------	--

And

Module two	Engaging Autistic Students: Assessment and Planning for Teaching and Learning
------------	---

Or

Module three	Autistic Students: Teaching Approaches
--------------	--

Post-Graduate Diploma

Module one	Understanding Autism: Theoretical Perspectives and Implications for Practice
Module two	Engaging Autistic Students: Assessment and Planning for Teaching and Learning
Module three	Autistic Students: Teaching Approaches
Module four	Supporting Autistic Students with reference to Emotional Regulation and Promotion of Positive Behaviour