Nurses and other health professionals in intellectual disability (ID) work in a broad range of services including long-stay settings, community, day-care, care of the older person, child and adolescent. These professionals will have a diversity of roles, on a continuum ranging from intensive physical nursing of persons with a severe degree of disability to supportive guidance in management of children, adults and older persons.

Evidence of health needs for people with an intellectual disability highlight the clear need for the nurse/professionals in intellectual disability care to hold added expertise in this area.

The rationale for this part-time Master’s degree/postgraduate diploma is to facilitate the upskilling of qualified nurses and others working in this critical area.

The philosophy which underpins this programme is grounded in values and beliefs relating to the nature of four fundamental philosophical nursing concepts, namely; nursing, environment, person and health.

This programme is designed to provide the nurse/other professional with the opportunity to become knowledgeable, informed, reflective and to develop his/her professional self so that he/she can be empowered and enabled to fully undertake the role and responsibility of care, within the intellectual disability services.

The exploration, application analysis, evaluation and synthesis of nursing/caring theory, evidence based practice and research support this aim.

The student will be guided to strive for excellence in delivering care, to practice with self-awareness and compassion, to high ethical, legal, and clinical standards from a strong evidence base, within the profession of nursing, social care practice or other health care disciplines.

On successful completion of the programme, graduates will be able to critically examine the supports and barriers that influence the ability of people with an intellectual disability to integrate into their community. They will also be able to critically evaluate the specialist knowledge and skills required to care for service users in the intellectual disability service. Furthermore, they will have attained a threshold of practitioner skills as required by registration and professional bodies, in particular the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland and CORU. Graduates will also be able to recognise and assess the health needs of people with an intellectual disability; coordinate health promotion and illness prevention strategies; manage the early onset of disease and plan for its impacts on service delivery. They will conform to professional boundaries and norms and critique primary health care initiatives in relation to intellectual disability.
They will also be able to apply professional and clinical competencies to a high degree in the practice of intellectual disability, a significant proportion of which will be informed by evidence-based best practice in the discipline.

Graduates will have the knowledge to critically appraise particular aspects of recent research in the domain of intellectual disability. They will have the competence to manage community-based residential alternatives for people with an intellectual disability, incorporating a person-centred approach that promotes independence and well-being that is reflected across the lifespan.

They will be able to accurately deploy standard techniques of analysis and enquiry with the area of intellectual disability and apply advanced research skills and design and conduct a research project demonstrating the development of an original idea. They will have the knowledge to apply professional and clinical competencies to critically generate, interpret and evaluate evidenced-based information and to plan, devise and conduct research and scholarship.

Furthermore, they will be able to integrate professionally the range of acquired specialised, transferable skills such as communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and team-work as a context and focus in graduates’ everyday professional practice as a working intellectual disability practitioner. They will also assist all associated with the intellectual disability service to achieve and maintain optimum health, independence, and recovery in a professional caring manner and critically participate as a member of the multi-disciplinary team ensuring professional accountability is maintained.

Finally, they will be able to critically assess and evaluate national health and social care policy and its impact on the delivery of care in the area of intellectual disability at a professional level. They will be able to evaluate and integrate ethical and legal issues relevant to the practice of nursing/social care with particular reference to the specialist requirements of intellectual disability care and the emerging development of new legislation in these areas.

Duration
1 yr. - (PgD)
2 yrs - (MSc)

Level
9

Minimum Entry Requirements
Applicants will have a BSc in Nursing/Midwifery or in any other discipline e.g. Social Care Practice or other Healthcare Professions, plus a minimum of two years’ postgraduate experience, two of which should be immediately prior to application.

Applicants may be interviewed for recognition of prior learning purposes. Nursing candidates for the course must be registered on the active file as a nurse with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland. All applicants must have current direct experience of working with clients with an intellectual disability for the duration of the course.

Modules
Year 1 - Primary Health and Social Care, Advanced Management and Leadership Skills, The Expanding Role of the Nurse in the Intellectual Disability Service, Contemporary Issues in Intellectual Disability Nursing Practice, Health-related Research, Clinical Practice Module.

Year 2 - Critical Ethical and Legal Issues in Intellectual Disability, Advanced Health Research, Dissertation.

Progression
The student who completes year 1 of the programme can exit and receive a postgraduate diploma, or they can also progress to year 2 and upon completion receive a Master's degree. Graduates from the MSc may be in a position to progress to Doctoral studies at AIT and elsewhere.