



The science of the mind: investigating mental health

Introducing SDK228

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SDK 228 is called The Science of the Mind: Investigating Mental Health, and perhaps not surprisingly the title's extremely representative of really what the focus of the course is. So it's understanding a scientific perspective, if you like, on mental health and really understanding what the basics of that perspective are, and how the perspective has value but is also very, very limited.

The first book, which is called *Core Concepts in Mental Health*, and that's really just about setting students up with the basics that they will need on the course, so it's about understanding these different perspectives that we're taking. And what we're doing in SDK 228 is contrasting what we call a biomedical perspective on mental health, which is really saying that we can understand mental health best by looking at its underlying biological basis, and contrasting this with a biopsychosocial perspective, which obviously adds a bit more to that biology and says that psychological and social factors are also of importance.

Our second book is called *Mood and Wellbeing*, and this book covers anxiety and depression disorders, but we also have a wonderful chapter in there on positive psychology, which is a relatively new aspect of the psychology discipline. Our third book is then on *Addictions*, and we say addictions plural because it's really all about understanding what we might think of as an addiction so, typically, we have a view that really the word addiction applies to people who are addicted to drug substances, but we ask the question - might it be a little bit more than this - can people be addicted to gambling, for example? And then we go on to discuss *Dementias* and, again, plural although we do start out looking at all the dementias broadly, we then do narrow our perspective a little bit and we talk about Alzheimer's dementia in depth, particularly when we come to talk about the brain aspects of dementia.

What's exciting about SDK 228 is that it's about engaging students, asking them to think very critically about the material that's there, and we imagine that our students will come to us really with particular perspectives; these might be from personal experience, or it might be dependent on their academic backgrounds, or courses that they might already have studied, perhaps the jobs that they've done, and it's about asking them to take into account that their perspective might be different once they've done SDK 228, so to read these theories, these perspectives, these models, and then to engage with the vast amount of multimedia that we've developed for the course, and to engage with those and realise really some of those theories don't answer all of the questions, that there are limitations, and to understand why perhaps where one discipline fails, like a scientific discipline, there are other disciplines that can step in, and that maybe these have some different and very valuable answers.

SDK 228 we really hope has something in it for absolutely everybody because it is a multidisciplinary course. We know that our students will come from perhaps a life sciences background, or from a psychology background, because the module is slotted into some of these degree pathways, and we also have some students which will come to us from health and social care background, from a counselling background because likewise the module is also slotted into these degree pathways as well.

Perhaps they have a personal interest in mental health, they may know somebody who has suffered with a mental health condition, or they may even have suffered from a mental health condition themselves, or perhaps they work in this field, or they're interested in perhaps psychology, for example, and so we think we've got something there for everybody.

We have a big emphasis on learning about research matters in mental health, and these include quantitative but also qualitative research methods, so we hope very much that students will be able to go away and perhaps when they read about a media story, for example about some new treatment for dementia, they'll be able to take what they've learnt from the course and be able to make sense of that media story hopefully a little bit more than they maybe would have in the past.

What we'd really like to do is to have some students who start the course perhaps with a particular perspective, perhaps with some very strong opinions, who will then study the course and hopefully will change some minds. That would be excellent if we can achieve that.