

## November 2022 - Syllabus: Mental Health and Nutrition UCx PSY01ucX

### COURSE STAFF

#### Course Author / Instructor

Julia Rucklidge is a Professor of Clinical Psychology in the School of Psychology, Speech and Hearing at the University of Canterbury and the Director of Te Puna Toiora, the Mental Health and Nutrition Research Lab.

Over the last decade, Professor Rucklidge has become well known for her research investigating the interface between nutrition and mental health, and has published over a hundred empirical papers. Julia is also the recipient of numerous local and international awards and is frequently featured in the media discussing her work. Her TEDx talk, 'The surprisingly dramatic role of nutrition in mental health' has been viewed over 2.6 million times, and she recently co-authored a book, *The Better Brain: Overcome Anxiety, Combat Depression, and Reduce ADHD and Stress with Nutrition*, which launched in April 2021.

#### Moderators

There are a number of moderators involved in the course. The moderators are actively involved in research on the topics explored in the course so will provide you with valuable insights during your journey through the course. You will hear from the moderators regularly through the Discussion Forums.

### COMMUNICATION

The course team will send **emails** from time to time, and also post **updates/notices** on the course landing page.

Another key communication tool is the **Discussion Forums**. You shouldn't hesitate to ask questions in the Discussion Forums if something is not clear or you just feel a bit lost – chances are there are other learners who feel the same!

There are two types of discussion forum in the course:

1. **Most forums** are set up for you to share learning activities and/or communicate with other learners. It is best not to use these forums for communicating with the course moderators (it's too easy for us to miss an important question among all the task-related posts).
2. The **General Forum** is the best place to ask questions or direct comments to **course moderators**.

#### Asking questions / getting help

- The **General Forum** (located at the end of Module 1) is where you post any questions that you would like course staff to see.
- If you ask a question in the General Forum, a **moderator should respond within 3 working days**. *Note: with thousands of people in the course, we will do our best to reply to individual questions; however, we may need to post more general responses at times.*
- Learners are encouraged to **subscribe** to the General Forum, and/or to visit it regularly – sometimes another student has asked a question that is relevant to you too.
- We also encourage you **to try to provide answers to your class-mate's questions**. Often another learner's perspective is as valuable as a response from a moderator.

Please also read the additional information about the **Discussion Forums** at the end of this document.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Professor Julia Rucklidge has developed this course based on her world-leading research into the links between nutrition and mental well-being. The course will cover evidence supporting the premise that eating better, and taking additional nutrients when appropriate, can improve mental health for many people.

Professor Rucklidge along with other experts in psychology, toxicology, and nutrition will cover:

- The components of food we need to consider when making dietary choices.
- Why we need to consider micronutrients, such as minerals and vitamins, in our food.
- The history of using food as a treatment for mental health.
- The dietary patterns that have evidence to support their ability to improve your mental wellbeing.
- When dietary supplementation may be considered for mental health.
- The individual and environmental factors that influence our nutrient requirements.

This course will show that eating better, and when appropriate, taking additional nutrients, can improve mental health for many people.

### Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will have:

- Developed an understanding of the complexities associated with studying how food and nutrients might play a role in the expression of mental illness
- Developed skills to critically evaluate studies on food and mental health and the controversy associated with this line of research
- Gained a general knowledge of the role of nutrients and food in the expression of psychiatric and psychological symptoms
- Learned how to implement this knowledge into daily life

**Prerequisites:** None required. A background in psychology and knowledge of mental health problems is desirable.

**Time commitment:** 2-4 hours per week for those auditing the course, 4-6 hours / week for verified users.

## ENROLMENT OPTIONS

There are two enrolment pathways for this course:

1. you can enroll to '**audit**' the course at no cost, or
2. you can support the course by paying a fee to become a '**verified**' learner.

Your experience of the course will depend on which enrolment you choose - the table below outlines the main differences. *(Note: it's easy to upgrade to verified, even after you've started the course)*

| Audit (free)  | Verified (course fee paid)   |
|---|--|
| Access to the course content for <b>8 weeks</b> .   | <b>Unlimited access</b> to the course content.   |
| Can access the six Modules, pages and videos, and take part in <b>most</b> tasks and discussions.               | Can access <b>all</b> content, and take part in <b>all</b> tasks and discussions.  |
| Can't access the graded quizzes at the end of Modules.<br>Will not get marks or feedback on graded assessments. | Can access the graded quizzes at the end of each Module.<br>Will receive marks for graded assessments.<br><i>Note: Assessments need to be completed before the course end date (see below) to receive a certificate.</i> |
| Will not receive marks for completing any tasks.  | Will receive 'engagement' marks for completing selected tasks. Will be provided with checklists within the Modules to ensure they haven't missed important tasks.  |
| Will not receive a certificate or other verification that they have studied the course.                         | With a passing grade, will earn an official certificate to verify that they have passed the course.  |

## COURSE CONTENT

### Course Structure

The course is presented in six modules:

- MODULE 1: Nutrition and Mental Health: Why now?
- MODULE 2: Introduction to nutrients relevant to brain health.
- MODULE 3: Dietary patterns and mental health.
- MODULE 4: The factors that influence the supply of nutrients to the brain.
- MODULE 5: Supplementation as treatment for mental health problems: The evidence.
- MODULE 6: The bigger context: What can you do to build a better brain?

### Recommended readings

There are recommended readings in many sections of the course. Verified users are encouraged to complete the reading as it helps with graded assessments. Reading labelled as '**optional**' is provided in case you need help understanding concepts or are interested in learning more - you are not assessed on optional readings.

## ASSESSMENT

**End of Module Quizzes:** Available only to verified users. They are the primary assessment for the certificate and contribute 85% to your final grade. The quizzes contain multiple choice questions drawn from course content (including recommended reading). You have 3 attempts at each question.

**Engagement:** Only for verified users. Fifteen percent of your final grade will be based on taking part in selected tasks. You'll receive full marks so long as you participate in all the specified tasks – we don't assess the quality of contributions. Tasks that are part of the Engagement grade are listed in the 'live' course syllabus (view via tab at the top of the screen when viewing the course).

**Knowledge Checks** [not graded]: These are small quizzes throughout the course. They are a useful learning tool but are not graded and do not contribute to your final grade or eligibility for a certificate.

**Deadline for completing all assessments:** Work at your own pace through the course – just make sure you have completed all assessments before the course end date: **April 31<sup>st</sup> 2022.**

**Grading policy:** To earn a certificate you must be a verified learner and achieve an overall grade of 70%.

## DISCUSSION FORUM ETIQUETTE

**We really want to hear from you** in the discussion forums! Course discussions give you the opportunity to ask questions and to connect with other learners. There is supporting information on [participating in Course Discussion and using the Discussion Boards](#) in the [edX Help Centre](#)

For new to edX students - To help you get started with the edX learning experience, edX offers a course (of course!). You can find the edX [Demo course](#) on the [edx.org](#) website.

Quality discussions require:

- Thoughtful responses to guiding questions.
- Reading others' responses before adding your own.
- Avoiding repeating others' responses.
- Using a person's name when you comment to a posting. It helps to keep all of us oriented, and it helps us maintain a clearer sense of who is speaking and who is being spoken to.
- Using good grammar, spelling, punctuation, and avoiding abbreviations.
- Being thoughtful, considerate, and respectful in what you write. Feel free to disagree with each other but please abstain from aggressive, abusive, or bullying behaviour.

From time to time a moderator may deem it necessary to delete a post or thread, or to block a poster. This action will be rare but the moderators reserve the right to do this at their discretion.