

Programme Specification 2025-26

POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Awarding body	University of Cambridge
Teaching institution	Faculty of Education
Accreditation details	none
Name of final award	PCES
Programme title	Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Studies
HECOs code(s)	100459 (education studies)
Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Education
Qualifications framework level	FHEQ Level 7 (Masters)
Date specification was produced	November 2022

Aims of the Programme

The Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Studies (PCES) provides teachers and others with the opportunity to gain a qualification based on systematic and sustained work in the field of education. The route to the award of the PCES two 30 credit modules each requiring assignments of at least 4,000 words;

Work submitted for the Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Studies (PCES) will focus on specific issues or practical problems arising out of professional concerns. The PCES provides continuing professional development and helps students prepare for potential career advancement. Students may set out to use the PCES to help address a particular issue, arising out of a review or appraisal, in their own professional development or, drawing upon team or institutional targets, in the development of their school, college or service. Students are encouraged to make these links and to create productive relationships between their own practice and proposed research. On completion of the 60 credits required, students can elect either to exit the programme and receive a PCES or continue on to the Postgraduate Advanced Certificate in Educational Studies or the Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Studies.

Structure of the PCES

For further information on the structure of the PCES for students obtaining it through two 30 credit modules, please refer to the Programme Specification for the Postgraduate Award in Educational Studies (PAES).

A Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Studies (PCES) should always be carefully planned, focused on a clear professional purpose and rigorous in terms of analysis and review.

Programme Outcomes

The PCES requires sustained commitment to an enquiry or development project resulting in a substantial piece of written work). There is therefore the expectation that this will have a significant impact on the development of the student's:

- knowledge and understanding;

- research and analytical skills;
- skills of presentation;
- transferable skills.

Details of what might constitute these outcomes are given in the generic criteria for PPD awards below.

It is expected that completion of a PCES will lead to impact upon professional learning and upon the practice of the individual or the practice of colleagues. Evidence of impact will be evaluated against the stated aims and intentions for the research. Evidence of impact may take a variety of forms, including evidence of:

- developments in pupils' and students' learning;
- developments in professional learning of the student and of colleagues;
- changes in staff practices;
- development of policy.

Recruitment and Admissions

The Practitioner Professional Development programme offers opportunities for professionals to develop high levels of understanding and skills which relate directly to the policy and practice of the contexts in which they work. This programme involves studying at Master's level and it is therefore necessary that applicants demonstrate the potential to work at this level. However, since the PPD programme is aimed at practising professionals, professional experience and engagement are recognised as alternatives to recent academic qualifications as indicating the potential for working at Master's level.

Entry requirements for the programme are designed to ensure that candidates have a good chance of successfully completing the programme while not limiting recruitment to only those with strong academic backgrounds.

Entry Requirements:

Applicants for the PPD programme should have:

- a) Relevant experience of working in an education or related professional setting.
- b) Demonstrate a reflective and enquiring approach to their work which supports improvement in professional practice and/or policy.
- c) Demonstrate the ability to work independently and collaboratively with the support of Faculty supervision
- d) Demonstrate a willingness and ability to engage with academic and professional literature that will support empirical and/or literature-based enquiry into policy and/or practice.

It should be noted that Accredited Prior Learning (APL) (i.e. credits gained from other institutions) are not accepted to gain accelerated entry to the PPD programme, although these credits can be considered as part of an applicant's entry qualifications to support the application, if considered relevant.

Demonstration of Requirements

Applicants are given the opportunity to demonstrate that they meet the entry requirements listed above through a personal statement and a proposal for the intended enquiry. Applications should be supported by two references (preferably at least one who is able to comment on the academic potential of the candidate).

Since work produced for the PPD programme will be assessed at Master's level, it is particularly important that candidates demonstrate requirement (d) above. This may be through the following academic qualifications:

- A good honours degree
- A PGCE assessed at Master's level
- Recent (within three years) completion of professional qualifications at level six or above
- Overseas qualifications equivalent to the above (For an assessment of overseas qualifications contact National Academic Recognition Centre for the United Kingdom)
- Non-English speaking overseas applicants may also require a recent IELTS qualification with a minimum score of 7 in each element.

Requirement (d) may alternatively be demonstrated through professional writing, for example:

- Professional documentation, e.g. policy documents for a school or group of schools, substantial reports on present practice within or between schools, etc.
- Publications in professional journals or other forms of professional communication.
- Reviews of education publications.

Demonstration of requirement (d) should be supported by production of the relevant certificates and/or by an academic reference from a course tutor, publication editor or senior colleague who is able to comment on academic capability.

The Faculty welcome applications from students who have applied to a PPD course previously and were unsuccessful, but in these cases applicants must be able to demonstrate a change in their circumstances that improve their suitability for the course, e.g. further qualification or experience in order to support their new application. The Faculty reserves the right to use information from a previous application in assessing a re-application and to seek further evidence of ability to follow this course if it deems necessary.

Please note that PPD students are members of the Faculty of Education with access to all Faculty services such as library membership and IT support. Successful completion of the PPD programme entitles students to a University of Cambridge award. Students do not though, have College membership. Use of some central University facilities may be restricted (for example sports clubs).

If you continue to the Faculty of Education's Master's programme, you will at that point be admitted to the central University, through the college system, as a full member of the University, with fees also going to a College.

Teaching and Learning Methods

For details of teaching and learning methods for those students following two 30 credit modules please see the Programme Specification for the Postgraduate Award of Educational Studies (PAES).

Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and development and to take the initiative in asking for a supervision – especially if problems or difficulties are encountered. Students should consult the PPD Course Manager or the PPD Administrator if particular difficulties arise concerning supervision arrangements

PCES Assignments

Assignments for the award of a PCES should be 8,000 words or equivalent. This need not be in the form of an academic essay. However, the assignments must include a substantial element of critical reflection/analysis that brings coherence to the work.

The PCES is accredited at Masters Level and this should be reflected in the quality of the work produced for assessment. This work should show some evidence of development in relation to each of the generic PPD Masters level criteria below:

Generic criteria for accredited Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD)

PPD work submitted for accredited qualification is expected to meet Masters degree Level 7, according to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ, 2008). This level of achievement is reflected in the expectations embedded in the general PPD assessment criteria, which identify key areas of knowledge, understanding, critical engagement and transferable skills. The demands of complex professional activity are realistically acknowledged and celebrated in PPD assessment, drawing on the FHEQ requirement for students to demonstrate that they:

... understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems. They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments. (pp 21-2)

FHEQ Level 7 achievement may be demonstrated through systematic enquiry in a number of forms. PPD students at the Faculty of Education are expected to engage in some form of enquiry work which might include:

- empirical work which is planned and sufficiently rigorous for the purpose;
- literature-based enquiry for a clear professional purpose;
- development work soundly based on relevant literature and/or rigorous enquiry;
- rigorous professional self-review and self-analysis.

PPD work is assessed against the following generic Master's level criteria:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant and ethical professional practice, policies, theories and process of change
2. Critically analyse multiple sources of evidence
3. Reflect on the challenges and affordances of professional practice and opportunities of change
4. Develop a coherent argument supported by policies, theories and practices
5. Reflect on the leadership required for effecting change

PPD awards may be cumulative with increasing numbers of Master's level credits attached to the higher levels of award. For students on a cumulative programme, there is an expectation of progression towards the higher level awards. The extent to which the criteria are addressed by individual assignments is expected to develop throughout such a programme of study. There will however need to be clear evidence of achieving Level 7 criteria at diploma level or at entry to the second year of a master's programme.

Assessment procedures

PCES assignments are marked by either the course tutor or the supervisor. Submission dates are set by either the course tutor or the supervisor and should not usually be more than two terms from when the candidate is admitted. Feedback will be given which relates to course specific guidance for the assignment as well as to the generic assessment criteria above. Feedback will include formative comments to support progression in the completion of further PPD assignments.

PCESs may be assessed as pass or fail:

- Pass
The report satisfies the assessment criteria sufficiently well for the award of a PCES.
- Fail
The report falls short of a pass standard in relationship to a substantial proportion of the assessment criteria.

A pass can only be awarded if the marker is confident that the work is of a sufficiently high standard that it is equivalent to work produced for Year 1 of the Master's degree.

Quality Assurance

The high quality of the PCES is supported by the following:

- The involvement of research active Faculty staff in supervising or overseeing the supervision of students;
- A formal evaluation of students' experience is conducted at the end of the year, and issues arising are considered within the Faculty of Education by the Practitioner Professional

Master's Development Team (PPMDT), the Learning and Teaching Committee & PPD and the Faculty Board with a view to enhancing the programme for the future;

- Overview of courses and course outcomes by the PPD manager;
- Moderation of assignments by Examiners from a rotating representative sample of courses;
- External Examiner evidence, verbal and in written reports.

Accreditation for further learning

The course may be taken on a free-standing basis leading to the award of a **Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Studies (PCES)**. Alternatively, students who are currently studying or wish to enrol for a higher award on the PPD programme may count this as one of their units. All participants are expected to attend regularly and to complete a related assignment to the satisfaction of the course tutor.

The list of available courses in the PPD Programme vary by year; please contact the Faculty for details.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academical year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the *Reporter*. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academical year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: <https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/>