

Programme Specification 2025-26

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Awarding body	University of Cambridge
Teaching institution	Faculty of Education
Accreditation details	
Name of final award	PDES
Programme title	Postgraduate Diploma 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 Diploma in Educational Studies (PDES) is a highly regarded qualification which can enable recently-qualified or experienced practitioners, coordinators or curriculum leaders, senior managers and advisers to update and upgrade their skills or to prepare for new roles or career development. The Postgraduate Diploma involves academic study that is practice-focused and professionally relevant. All work that makes up the PDES is assessed against Master's level criteria and Master's level credits are attached to each element. Students who have successfully completed the PDES are eligible to apply for the Faculty's Masters programme.

Completion of a PDES is expected to have a major impact on individual professional learning including learning about methods of enquiry or development. It is also expected to have a significant impact on the student's practice or the practice of colleagues. The nature of the impact of PDES study will vary according to the aims and intentions of individuals undertaking the programme. The impact may be evidenced through:

- developments in practitioner learning.
- development of work based policies.
- changes in professional' practice.

Structure of the programme

There is one route to the award of the PDES:

- One 120 credit module requiring an assignment of at least 16,000 words.

Programme Outcomes

The PDES is achieved by the successful completion of a number of elements. Each of these elements is expected to have an impact on the knowledge, understanding and skills of the student, their pupils, their colleagues and/or their workplace. This impact is expected to be particularly significant, widespread and sustained where a number of elements are completed to achieve the PDES. All elements of the PDES programme are expected to develop:

- knowledge and understanding.

- research and analytical skills.
- the skills of systematic enquiry and/or leading development.
- skills of presentation.
- transferable skills.

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

Recruitment and Admissions

The Practitioner Professional Development programme offers opportunities for education 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 where appropriate 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

A wide range of teaching and learning methods will be used for the different elements of the PDES. These will vary according to the subject and, where relevant, the particular environments in which participants are working. Teaching methods employed in the PPD programme presently

include seminar/workshops, blended learning and individual or collaborative enquiry and/or development work.

PDES students will be offered supervision (this may be as a group, face to face or online) throughout their studies. This support involves:

- guidance about the nature of assignments, the standard expected, the planning of study, literature and sources and appropriate enquiry methods or techniques;
- monitoring and advising on handing-in dates;
- giving informative comment (written or oral) on work submitted by the preliminary handing-in-date, including broad indications of its quality and suggestions for improvement.

Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and development and to take the initiative in asking for 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.

PDES Assignments

Assignments for the award of a PDES should be 16,000 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 PDES is accredited at Master's 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 Master's level criteria below:

Generic criteria for accredited Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD)

PPD work submitted for accredited qualification is expected to meet Master's 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

Each assignment contributing to the PDES will be assessed individually. The module assignments where appropriate will need to show progression in professional learning.

PDESs may be assessed as pass or fail:

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

The Examination Board, which usually meets once a year will consider the case of each individual. A sample of work and the internal assessments will be referred to the External Examiner whose main function is to moderate standards. Occasionally the External Examiner may ask for an oral examination to be arranged with the student.

Possible Progression from PDES to Masters

Successful completion of the PDES can be used by candidates as an introduction to study for Master's degrees. Students completing the PDES are eligible to apply and be admitted directly into Year 2 of a part-time Master's degree programme.

Quality Assurance

The high quality of the PDES is supported and monitored by the following:

- The involvement of research active Faculty staff in teaching and/or in 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 Development (PPD) Management Group, the Learning and Teaching Committee and 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.
- Internal Examiners' moderation of assignments from a rotating representative sample of courses.
- External Examiners' evidence, verbal and in written reports.

The list of available courses in the PPD programme varies 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/>