

Programme Specification¹ (2026 – 27)
Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Studies

Programme title	<i>Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Studies</i>
Name of final award	<i>PCES</i>
Awarding Body	<i>University of Cambridge</i>
Teaching institution	<i>University of Cambridge Faculty of Education</i>
PSRB/Accreditation details and date the course was last accredited	<i>None</i>
UCAS code	<i>None</i>
HECoS code(s)	<i>100459 (education studies)</i>
ATAS code	
Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	<i>Education</i>
Qualification framework level	<i>FHEQ 7 (Masters)</i>
Date specification approved	<i>27/04/2026</i>
Linked course	<i>N/A</i>

Brief overview of the course

(Please explain the purpose of the programme in a brief paragraph of no more than 5-6 sentences.)

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 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.

¹ 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 academic year.

Educational Aims

What are the educational aims of the programme?

Work submitted for the Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Studies (PCES) will focus on specific issues or practical problems arising out of professional concerns. There will be emphasis on systematic professional development and ethical practice. Students are encouraged to make links and to create productive relationships between their own practice and proposed research. 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. The course aims to:

- enable students to build their professional practice and develop a systematic and critical understanding of practitioner learning, strengthening their capacity to evaluate their own learning, development, and professional decision-making within complex and evolving practice contexts.
- support students to build confidence and capability in shaping work-based or other policies, using research, theory, and professional experience to enhance their effectiveness and influence within their own organisations and beyond.
- support students to critically reflect on, enhance, and re-shape their own professional practice, fostering informed judgement, professional identity, and a clear sense of themselves as agents of change.

Learning Outcomes - *What is a student expected to learn from the programme? These should have been included on the new course proposal when the course was first approved.*

(Please refer to the guidance on [Learning Aims and Outcomes](#) and the [Office for Students](#) sector-recognised standards for sector expectations of the graduates of higher education qualifications)

The PCES requires sustained commitment to an enquiry or development project resulting in a substantial piece of written work, or equivalent. There is therefore the expectation that this will have a significant impact on the development of the student's knowledge and understanding and skills. On successful completion of the PGCert, students will be able to demonstrate:

Knowledge and Understanding

K1 - A critical and systematic understanding of professional knowledge, drawing on relevant theory, research, policy, and practice to inform their professional role.

K2 - Critical knowledge of, and engagement with, key debates relevant to their area of professional practice, including consideration of personal, organisational, and policy contexts.

K3 - Understanding of how to synthesise and communicate professional knowledge in ways that support informed decision-making within their own practice and professional setting.

K4 - Insight into the complexities of their own workplace or professional context, including factors that shape practice and approaches to supporting pupils, clients, or colleagues.

K5 - A sound understanding of ethical principles in research, evaluation, and professional practice, and their implications for professional conduct and responsibility.

Skills and other attributes:

S1 - Effective research and analytical skills, enabling critical engagement with professional literature and evidence.

S2 - The skills of systematic enquiry and practice evaluation, supporting the development and improvement of professional practice.

S3 - Clear and appropriate presentation and communication skills, enabling the articulation of professional learning to relevant audiences.

S4 - A range of transferable skills, including professional judgement, reflective practice, collaboration, and autonomous learning.

S5 - The ability to engage in critical reflection, demonstrating awareness of professional values, assumptions, and their influence on practice.

Programme structure

Please give a brief outline of the course structure and how it supports progress. Please note details of individual papers/modules are not needed. What elements does the programme contain? If you have a part-time route show how this is aligned with the full-time course.

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).

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.

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.

Teaching and Learning

Please indicate which methods are used, i.e., lectures, seminars, practical sessions etc. Include any activity that does not lead to summative assessment. How is the programme taught? How do students learn?

PCES assignments are marked by either the course tutor or the supervisor. Feedback will be given and will include formative comments to support progression in the completion of further PPD assignments.

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).

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.

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 difficulties arise concerning supervision arrangements.

Assessment

Please list below summative assessments for the course and how they meet the learning outcomes listed above. Ensure these are aligned with your course regulations ([Statutes and Ordinances](#)).

Assessment	Learning Outcome
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	The assignments demonstrate the students' ability in meeting K1-5 and S1-5

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.

Progression and Career Destinations

Please describe the opportunities for the students' personal and professional development (including transferable and employability skills). Please include information relating to successful graduates' prospects for employment.

Preparation for employment is provided in the opportunities for acquisition of relevant and transferable skills outlined above.

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.

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.