



# Postgraduate Certificate in *Educational Assessment and Examinations*



## Course outline for current and prospective students

January 2018

This document is regularly updated. Please check back for updates.

### Introduction

This is a one-year, part-time course worth 60 credits at Master's level (Level 7). It is a practice-based and professionally relevant course, grounded in current research and theory, led by tutors from Cambridge Assessment and the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education.

This course is for people who want to expand their knowledge and understanding of assessment and examinations. It will be valuable to you if you are working for an awarding organisation or a government body, if you are an examiner or if you are a teacher with a special interest in educational assessment and examinations.

This course is part of the [Faculty of Education Practitioner Professional Development Programme \(PPD\)](#). This information should be read in conjunction with the [PPD Admissions Guide](#).

The normal requirements for this course are that students must be capable of working at Master's degree level and demonstrate this by holding one or more of the following academic or other 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 an IELTS qualification with a minimum score of 7 in each element.

Since this course 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.

### Aims and benefits

The course will enable people working for awarding organisations and government bodies, and teachers with a strong and special interest in assessment, to develop their understanding and skills, and to prepare for new roles as assessment leaders in their institutions. It is expected to have a significant impact on individual professional learning about, and understanding of, educational assessment and its evaluation. The nature of the impact will vary according to the aims and intentions of individuals undertaking the course but all students will apply what they learn to their working contexts.

The course will enable students to:

- review the purposes of assessment;
- critique the validity and quality of forms of assessment;
- evaluate different approaches to validation;
- evaluate standard-setting, consistency and reliability in assessment;
- develop their knowledge and understanding of academic research;
- undertake small scale enquiry into assessment related issues;
- explore future directions in assessment.

The impact may be evidenced through:

- developments in practitioner learning and understanding;
- revised policies;
- changes in assessment practice;
- understanding of perspectives and views gathered from assessment stakeholders;
- personal reflections on the processes of development and change in assessment;
- recognition of implications for future practice.

The practice-focused and professionally relevant academic study will be at Master's level, and so the course may be used as part of a progression route to the [Cambridge Masters in Education](#).

## Tutors

The course is led by a teaching team of staff from the Faculty of Education and Cambridge Assessment. The team is chaired by [Dr Ayesha Ahmed](#).

**Andrew Watts** began his career as a teacher of English in secondary schools in the UK. After eleven years he moved to Singapore where he taught in a Junior College for over four years. He then worked for five years in the Ministry of Education in Singapore, focusing on curriculum development and in-service teacher development. In 1990 he returned to England and worked with Cambridge Assessment from 1992 to 2008. For most of that time he looked after teams that were developing national tests in English, Maths and Science for 14 year olds in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. From 2004 he set up and ran the Cambridge Assessment Network, which provides professional development opportunities for assessment professionals internationally. Since leaving Cambridge Assessment he has worked on numerous assessment projects on a freelance basis. In 2015 he began working on a PhD on the history of examinations in England, based at Wolfson College and the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education.

**Annabel Charles** was a secondary English teacher before spending 13 years working on a national test development programme in the research department at Cambridge Assessment. For the last 12 years, she has been a freelance consultant on a variety of projects linked to curriculum development and assessment. She has worked for national bodies such as QCDA and Ofqual on research and evaluation projects and developed curriculum, assessment and training material for a range of companies. She is currently Principal Examiner for an English specification and has also worked on a variety of tests for the UK and overseas. Annabel has been involved in training for schools, local authorities, the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors and Cambridge Assessment Network. She has an MA in Educational Assessment, is a Subject Expert for Ofqual and a Chartered Educational Assessor.

[Ayesha Ahmed](#) is a Senior Teaching Associate at the Faculty of Education. She has worked in educational assessment since 1997, the first 9 years of which was in the Research Division at Cambridge Assessment. Following this she was a freelance research and training consultant, carrying out projects for exam boards and Ofqual, including training question writers in the UK and internationally. For the past four and a half years she has been working at the University of Cambridge researching the assessment of spoken language and group work, and teaching on the Education Tripos. She is a Fellow of the Association for Educational Assessment-Europe, an Executive Editor of the journal *Assessment in Education: principles, policy and practice*, a member of the Research Advisory Group for Ofqual and for AQA and a Senior Member of Hughes Hall, Cambridge.

**Gill Francis** has 14 years' experience in working in educational settings and is familiar with testing practices in the Caribbean and UK contexts. She is a trained primary school teacher and holds a Bachelor's degree in Educational Testing, Measurement and Evaluation and an MPhil in Education and Psychology. More recently, she has provided consultancy services to CIE and is currently pursuing a PhD in education at the Faculty of Education with a concentration on cognitive psychology. Her research experience includes investigating teachers' perceptions and applications of the test development process in classroom summative testing and exploring cognitive factors that affect achievement for students from poor SES backgrounds.

**Jill Grimshaw** is the Course Director and Senior Manager for the Cambridge Assessment Network. She has many years' experience of working in assessment and is particularly interested in making assessment useful, purposeful and understandable for those who use it. She trained as a secondary school teacher of MFL and has more recently worked predominantly with teachers and assessment professionals. She has written and delivered many different types of course on the subject of assessment.

**Riikka Hofmann** is a Research and Teaching Associate in the Faculty of Education. Her research focuses on classroom interaction, learning through talk, pedagogic innovations, professional learning and change, student engagement and young people and professionals' agency and identities as learners, studied from the perspective of sociocultural psychology. Riikka has taught on the Faculty's Masters courses since 2003 and is the Coordinator of the MPhil Research Methods course and Co-coordinator of the MPhil/MEd Educational Research. She also teaches at the SSRMC. Riikka has taught all age groups from infants to doctoral students and her teaching also closely engages with research. Prior to coming to Cambridge, Riikka studied Education Studies, Psychology and Sociology and Social science research methods at the Universities of Helsinki and Munich while being involved in various research projects in both institutions.

**Martina Kovalja** is an educational researcher and a speech and language therapist. She did both her MPhil and PhD in Psychology and Education at the University of Cambridge. Previously she worked as a speech and language therapist, a researcher investigating metacognition and self-regulation in young children, and as an independent consultant. For the past two years, Martina has worked as a researcher for Cambridge Assessment on projects related to educational assessment in an international setting.

**Shakeh Manassian** began her career as an ESOL teacher, and moved to working in assessment in 1999, when she joined Cambridge English as a subject officer. She has experience of working for a number of awarding bodies as assessment manager, as examiner and as Principal Examiner. In 2003 she began working as a consultant in assessment and has been a trainer for the Cambridge Assessment Network since 2005. She has also been involved in development projects with Cambridge International Examinations, providing support and training in language testing. Currently working at SQA, her particular area of interest is exam question development.

**Simon Williams** After 20 years' experience in teaching, training and educational management and an MA in English Language Teaching, Simon followed his interest in educational assessment and moved to Cambridge Assessment, where he spent five years working in Test Development and, following an MBA, in Business Development. He then became Deputy Head of MRCP(UK) Central Office, responsible for the academic and operational aspects of examinations for junior doctors. He currently works in educational services in the public sector in Scotland. His principal area of interest is the use of assessment in, and for, the workplace.

**Szilvia Papp** holds a PhD in Second Language Acquisition from the University of Edinburgh. As senior lecturer in higher education, she taught on linguistics, applied linguistics, EFL/ESOL and teacher training courses in Hungary and the UK. She was involved in curriculum development, entrance testing, supervision of postgraduate dissertations and theses, course leadership, and external examining. At Cambridge English Language Assessment, she had research and validation responsibility for the *Cambridge English: Young Learners* tests and all Cambridge English Teaching Qualifications. Currently Szilvia works as a consultant for Cambridge Assessment. Her research interests include all aspects of the assessment of children and adolescents (aged 6–16) and younger learners (aged 3–6).

## Course format

This is a part-time blended learning course with a mix of online learning and six Saturday Day Schools held at the Faculty of Education in Cambridge. Included in the course are six tutor-led online Research Methods sessions. Please see the [sample course timetable](#) at the end of this booklet.

Students are expected to log into the VLE on a regular basis and at least once a week in order to participate fully in the course. The majority of the interaction is via asynchronous discussion forums, which students and tutors participate in at any time to suit individual circumstances. Participants receive a daily email, summarising the day's activity.

The six Research Methods modules will each entail a week's work and are spread across the year. Part of each week will be a synchronous online session for the group and the tutor to meet. Dates and times for these sessions will be confirmed in the course timetable before the start of the course. These Research Methods modules are a necessary requirement for students who wish to progress to a Master's in Education.

In addition to the online course, students must complete two 4,000 word assignments over the year.

## Student resources

### Practitioner Professional Development Handbook

This course is part of the Faculty of Education Practitioner Professional Development Programme (PPD).

### VLE

This course is conducted via the Faculty of Education VLE, so it is essential that students have consistent and reliable access to an internet-connected device (computer or tablet). Students will receive course communications via email and via the VLE.

Login details and guidance in accessing the course will be provided to students at the start of the course.

### Library access

Students on this course have access to the University Library (UL) and the Faculty of Education Library. Students are entitled to a RAVEN account, which provides access to the Libraries' online resources.

There is information about the Education Library online at <https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/library/>.

### Course assignments

Students will submit two assignments via the VLE and supervisors will provide feedback there. Assignments will be submitted in the Lent term and at the end of the course.

Details of the assignment requirements are included below.

## Reading list

Recommended pre-course reading (available as ebooks or print copies)

Swaffield, S. (Ed.) (2008) *Unlocking assessment: understanding for reflection and application*. London; New York: Routledge (online sample available [here](#)) .

Stobart, G. (2008) *Testing Times: The Uses and Abuses of Assessment* London: Routledge (online sample available [here](#)) .

Black, P. (1998) *Testing, Friend or Foe? The theory and practice of assessment and testing*. London: Routledge (online sample available [here](#))

## Contact details

For more information about the course, please contact us at:

[thenetwork@cambridgeassessment.org.uk](mailto:thenetwork@cambridgeassessment.org.uk)

[ppd@edu.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ppd@edu.cam.ac.uk) .

## Sample course timetable

- This is a **sample** timetable, giving an indication of the course content and how it is organised.
- All teaching weeks begin on a Friday.
- All **Day Schools** are held at the [University of Cambridge Faculty of Education](#).
- All **Research Methods** weeks include a live online webinar on the Wednesday evening.
- Further optional live webinars will be announced during the course.

### Unit 1 – Principles of assessment

Week	Topics
0	Welcome and introductions; get to know the e-learning site
1	DAY SCHOOL 1: Saturday 09:30-16:00 Purposes of assessment
2	Validity (1)
3	Validity (2)
4	Research Methods 1 ONLINE SESSION: Wednesday 17:00-18:00
5	DAY SCHOOL 2 : Saturday 09:30-16:00 Validity (3)
6	Validity (4) <i>Assignment 1 set</i>
7	Research Methods 2 ONLINE SESSION: Wednesday 17:00-18:00
8	Academic writing skills <i>Assignment 1 title and outline due (late November)</i>
9	Reliability (1)
10	Reliability (2)
	<b>Christmas break</b>
11	Study week <i>Assignment 1 draft due (early January)</i>
12	Research Methods 3 ONLINE SESSION: Wednesday 17:00-18:00
13	DAY SCHOOL 3 : Saturday 09:30-16:00 Reliability (3)
14	Reliability (4)
15	Study week <i>Assignment 1 final submission deadline: early February</i>

## Unit 2 – Validation of assessment

Week	Topics
16	Study week (reflection)
17	DAY SCHOOL 4: Saturday 09:30-16:00 Validation (1) <i>Assignment 2 topic discussions begin</i>
18	Validation (2)
19	Validation (3)
20	Research Methods 4 ONLINE SESSION: Wednesday 17:00-18:00 <i>Agree Assignment 2 title/research question and outline</i>
21	Validation (4): Ensuring validity and the practice of validation
22	Validation (5): Ensuring reliability
23	Study week <i>Assignment 2 discussions online</i>
	<b>Easter break</b>
24	DAY SCHOOL 5: Saturday 09:30-16:00 Research Methods 5 (Day School) & 6 ONLINE SESSION: Wednesday 17:00-19:00 (options sessions)
25	Trust and accountability
26	Standards
27	Impact, including impact of large-scale surveys
28	DAY SCHOOL 6: Saturday 09:30-16:00 The future of assessment
29	Study week
30	Study week <i>Assignment 2 draft due (early June)</i> <i>Course ends early June</i>
	<i>Assignment 2 final submission deadline: early July</i> <i>Final results by 31 August</i>

## Course assignments

Each student must submit two 4,000 word assignments for summative assessment.

### Assignment 1

#### 1. Online contributions

This is the work you complete online on a weekly basis, including contributions to the discussion forum/chat rooms and your reflective journal. These will provide evidence of your participation, your learning and the application of your learning to your own context and practice.

Following the third Day School, your reflective journal should include an entry which is a critical reflective commentary looking back over topics covered and your learning through Unit 1.

While your online contributions will not be formally assessed, you are expected to participate in the discussion forum/chat rooms and your reflective journal on a regular basis and to complete the work set. Although it is the level of engagement and quality of thought that is important, rather than the extent of your contributions, there is a notional equivalence for this element of around 1,000 words.

#### 2. Essay

Identify an issue related to validity in an assessment that you know well and explore how current interpretations of validity help to illuminate and suggest ways the issue might be addressed.

You should agree your own essay title in discussion with your supervisor, recording it in your reflective journal.

Number of words: 3,000 - 3,500

### Assignment 2

#### 1. A 4,000 word report of a 'research study' (small scale enquiry).

The research undertaken will focus on an assessment issue of personal / professional interest related to the course content and will be informed by the students' study of research methods.

The topics for the assignments will be agreed with tutors and will allow students to apply the outcomes of their studies to their own work contexts.

The research study report will be submitted at the end of the course.

### Assessment criteria

All PPD assignments are assessed against the following generic criteria:

#### *Focus of the study:*

- the determination of a clear and ethically acceptable focus which satisfies the specification of the assignment in question is expressed in an approved title and may address an appropriate professional purpose.

#### *Knowledge and understanding* including:

- the development of understanding of key concepts and issues within the fields studied
- knowledge of those fields of study and familiarity with a range of relevant literature;
- knowledge, understanding and critical awareness of methodological issues related to professional enquiry and/or development
- knowledge and understanding of ethical principles relevant to professional enquiry and/or development work.

#### *Research and analytical skills* including:

- demonstration of ethical attitudes throughout their professional enquiry and/or development work



- critical reflection and analysis (as shown in the account of learning based on the units attended by the participant and/or in the accounts of systematic enquiry);
- comment upon and evaluation of reading that has been carried out;
- the ability to link the analysis and interpretation of data with theoretical perspectives;
- the structuring of information so that it is intelligible to a reader who has no knowledge of the research work undertaken
- provision of a thorough account of relevant ethical considerations for completion of the project and for reporting the project and disseminating the findings.

*Skills in presentation* including:

- the use of clear and accurate English, which should also conform to the usual academic protocols including referencing conventions;
- the use of an appropriate range of presentational devices, e.g. tables, figures and appendices;
- the ordering, sequencing and labelling of ideas made coherent by the provision of an explanatory commentary within the report
- writing appropriately for different audiences.

*Transferable skills*, for example:

- skills in planning and time management;
- written and verbal communication skills;
- skills in evaluating evidence of impact upon individual professional learning, and upon individual practice or the practice of colleague.