

# Studying Education

If you are interested in studying education at postgraduate level there is a tempting range of courses that allow you to specialise in almost any area of education that interests you. (For study at undergraduate level, see the note at the end of this sheet.)

If you want to train as a teacher, please refer to *Teacher training* in this series. If you are interested in training as a teacher of English, please refer to *Study English language teaching* in this series.

## Checklist: why study education in the United Kingdom?

- You can study at institutions with an international reputation for educational research.
- UK degrees and academic awards are recognised for their high quality throughout the world.
- UK universities have a tradition of welcoming international students and you will be made to feel at home.
- The opportunity to improve your fluency in English will improve your job prospects and help both you and your employer develop international links.

## 1 What do I need to think about?

There are several reasons for engaging in the study of education at a postgraduate level, and you should first be clear about your own reasons.

- You may be a qualified and experienced teacher wanting to advance your knowledge in your own main sphere of teaching, whether it is a curriculum area (like science education) or a particular phase or stage of education (like early years education, secondary schooling, or further and higher education).
- You may be mainly interested in gaining a higher degree or academic award to enhance your academic qualifications, and because you enjoy intellectual and academic challenge.
- You may want to develop your career in a particular direction, and need to strengthen your knowledge and understanding of specific aspects of education, such as leadership, organisational management, policy issues or curriculum development.
- You may want to change the direction of your career and require professional training and a recognised qualification in areas such as counselling and guidance, or educational psychology.
- You may want to move into educational research or teaching in a higher education institution, and need experience and evidence of research capability in order to do this.

Which of these is closest to your situation? Thinking clearly about this will help you to make the right choice about the kind of course or programme that is best for you, and – just as important – what you want to get out of it in personal, academic, professional or career terms.

## What courses and programmes are there?

UK courses in education designed for teachers and other education professionals		
Academic award	Who would take it?	Qualification and credit requirements
<b>Postgraduate certificates and diplomas</b> Qualifications in their own right that can also lead into a Master's course	Teachers and others who want to specialise in a particular area of education, and may not wish to commit themselves to a full Master's degree	PG Certificate: 60 credits at Master's level PG Diploma: 120 credits at Master's level Certificates usually take three to six months full-time Diplomas usually take up to nine months full-time.
<b>Master's degrees</b> Higher degrees, which include a dissertation on a topic studied in depth	Teachers and others who want to specialise in a particular area of education or several related areas for a full Master's degree	MA (Master of Arts) MSc (Master of Science) MEd (Master of Education) 180 credits at Master's level Normally one year full-time
<b>Professional doctorate</b> Doctoral programmes, which combine taught units, coursework, and individual research with a thesis	Mid-career education and training professionals whose work requires them to have a high level of research capability and an informed understanding of policy and practice	EdD (Doctor of Education) 540 credits at doctoral level
<b>Research degrees</b> Higher degrees consisting of individual research work, leading to a publishable thesis	Anyone wanting to undertake original academic research into a specific area of interest, and who already holds a good honours degree or Master's degree or equivalent	MPhil (Master of Philosophy) Minimum usually one year full-time PhD or DPhil (Doctor of Philosophy) Usually three years full-time
<b>Other courses</b> , including short courses, individual study attachments and tailor-made courses, are available.		

## 2 What subjects can I study?

There is a huge range of education and education-related subjects you can study. In most universities you register for study in a particular area or specialism (which provides depth, coherence and unity in your studies). Many programmes also offer opportunities to take modules outside a specialist area (providing breadth, flexibility and variety). Examples of the range of subjects and topics are:

- adult and continuing education
- arts education
- assessment and evaluation
- bilingual and multilingual education
- careers and educational guidance
- child development
- community studies
- continuing professional development
- counselling and guidance
- curriculum design and evaluation
- distance education
- early childhood studies
- education and development
- educational disability and rehabilitation
- English as a second language
- further education
- globalisation and education
- higher education
- inclusive education
- information technology in education
- initial teacher education
- international and comparative education
- language studies/linguistics
- management and leadership
- management and policy studies
- mentoring and coaching

- multicultural education
- nursery education
- organisation development
- philosophy of education
- planning
- primary and nursery education
- professional training in educational psychology
- educational psychology
- religious education
- research methods in education
- rural education and development
- school effectiveness and improvement
- science education
- secondary education
- special education
- teaching and learning
- urban education
- vocational education
- women's studies
- youth and community studies.

In many places it is also possible to specialise in a particular school curriculum area not listed above, such as modern foreign languages, business education, citizenship education or mathematics education.

The best guide to what is available is published by UCET – *University Courses in Education in the UK Open to Students from Overseas*. This is revised annually and is normally published in May of the year preceding the academic year to which it applies. A reference copy should be available in your nearest British Council library. Copies are available direct from UCET.

You can look for courses on the following websites:

Education UK [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org)  
 Prospects [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)  
 Hobsons [www.postgrad.hobsons.com](http://www.postgrad.hobsons.com).

### Checklist: choosing the right course for you

- There are so many courses on offer that it is vital that you do careful research in advance to ensure you find the right one for you. Start your search on [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org) or [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) or [www.postgrad.hobsons.com](http://www.postgrad.hobsons.com).
- Obtain prospectuses from all the institutions you are considering. Look at the institutions' websites and talk to staff if possible.
- Universities and higher education colleges offer a wide variety of courses and it is difficult to compare institutions. There are many sources to consult about the quality of teaching and research. Look at the independent reviews conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency ([www.qaa.ac.uk/students](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/students)) and the information available on the Teaching Quality Information site ([www.tqi.ac.uk](http://www.tqi.ac.uk)). For the latest research assessment ratings, see [www.hero.ac.uk/rae](http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae).
- Some newspapers such as the *Times* and the *Guardian* publish unofficial league tables, and the *Times Higher Education* publishes annual world rankings. The tables vary enormously depending on the factors assessed and the weightings used. Read the tables critically and do not base your final decision on the ratings alone.
- Unistats ([www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com)) is the official website to help you compare subjects at universities and colleges in the UK.
- Bear in mind other factors, such as cost, location and size of the institution, international mix of students on the programmes, provision of supervision for dissertations and available facilities.

## 3 Modes of study and assessment

Some courses can be studied part-time. Many Master's degrees, for example, can be taken over a period of four years. However, you should note that under visa regulations students from outside the European Economic Area are not permitted to study part-time and can only study full-time.



Distance learning is possible in two ways:

- Many universities offer distance learning courses making extensive use of online materials, supervision and assessment. In some cases this is supported by in-country teaching where universities have established 'offshore' programmes in particular countries.
- The Open University's Faculty of Education and Language Studies provides material, assessment and tutorial support for students in Western Europe, and several modules for their MA in education are now available throughout the world. The following website allows you to find out what Open University courses are available in your country: [www3.open.ac.uk/contact](http://www3.open.ac.uk/contact).

Assessed coursework (rather than assessment by examinations) is the almost universal method of assessment. This can embrace a variety of specific approaches, ranging from traditional essays to portfolios of tasks or investigations completed against specified guidelines and assessment criteria, in which there is often considerable scope for students to include reports and analyses of action research projects and presentations based on personal professional experience.

Taught classes, group seminars and workshops as well as formal lectures are typical modes of teaching and learning. In most courses, class sizes are small – perhaps ten to 25 or so – though there may be larger groups in some courses, particularly where a programme of study includes core units or modules that all students are required to follow (such as an introduction to research methods).

A central feature of UK postgraduate teaching is individual or small group tutorial supervision, where you will have the opportunity to consult with academic tutors about your progress in general and specific aspects of your studies as you work on them.

## 4 Entry qualifications

You should check with the institutions you are interested in for the exact nature of the qualifications or experience that they require. In general, for entry to postgraduate programmes all institutions will expect you to hold a university degree or the equivalent qualification from your home country. For further information see *Choosing your postgraduate programme* in this series.

There are no national guidelines about the equivalence of international qualifications to UK ones. You should contact the institutions you are interested in to check the acceptability of your particular qualifications. Some information can be obtained from the National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (NARIC). For further information see [www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk).

## 5 How do I apply?

### Checklist: your next steps

- Before you apply for a UK course in education, do some thorough research at home (or in the countries where you would like to study) about the programmes and qualifications that best suit your interests and ambitions.
- A good first source of information is the UCET handbook, which lists all the UK universities offering postgraduate degrees in education and other awards (see 'Where can I find more information?'). You can also search the British Council website ([www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org)), ([www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)) and ([www.postgrad.hobsons.com](http://www.postgrad.hobsons.com)).
- Always obtain the course prospectus or study the online version. Find out whether you have the required entry qualifications. This includes the English language ability required by the institutions you intend to apply to. For an undergraduate course this may be an IELTS score of 5.5 to 6.5, but a postgraduate course may require an IELTS score of 6.0 to 7.0. Ask your local British Council office where and when you can take the test.
- Institutions have their own application procedures and guidelines. Check what these are and then stick to the deadlines.



## 6 What else do I need to know?

The regulations for entry into the UK are constantly changing and it is vital that you check the Home Office Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) website ([www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk)) on a regular basis and check locally with your British Mission so you are aware of how UK immigration procedures will affect you.

With the introduction of the new Australian-style points-based-system you will need to keep even more up to date with the new immigration system changes when applying for a visa or work permit. For information on the points-based-system go to [www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/managingborders/pbsdocs](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/managingborders/pbsdocs).

For advice on working in the UK: [www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk).

For advice about visas: [www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk).

For practical advice on living in the UK download *Studying and living in the UK* from: [www.educationuk.org/bc\\_img/body/articles/pdfs/stud\\_live\\_uk.pdf](http://www.educationuk.org/bc_img/body/articles/pdfs/stud_live_uk.pdf).

## 8 Where can I find more information?

The British Council has produced the Education UK portfolio to provide international students with a wide range of information and guidance that will help them find out more about studying a UK course and other important issues, such as applying to study, entry clearance and living in the UK. The portfolio includes:

- The Education UK website and a number of country websites containing locally relevant information – [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org)
- *The essential guides to education in the UK: Undergraduate and pre-university; Postgraduate and MBA\**
- *Universities, Colleges and Schools Handbook\**
- *Club UK magazine\**, also available online at [www.educationuk.org/clubuk](http://www.educationuk.org/clubuk)
- *Postgraduate UK magazine\**

\* The publications are available at a selected number of British Council offices for students to use.

The Education UK websites are a valuable source of information, with a database of over 450,000 courses and profiles of institutions which contain details of entry requirements, course fees and some offer a virtual tour of their campus.

### Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET)

Whittington House  
19–30 Alfred Place  
London WC1E 7EA

Telephone +44 (0)20 7580 8000  
Fax +44 (0)20 7323 0577  
E-mail [info@ucet.ac.uk](mailto:info@ucet.ac.uk)  
[www.ucet.ac.uk](http://www.ucet.ac.uk)

### Universities UK

Woburn House  
20 Tavistock Square  
London WC1H 9HQ

Telephone +44 (0)20 7419 4111  
Fax +44 (0)20 7388 8649  
E-mail [info@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:info@universitiesuk.ac.uk)  
[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)

### Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

PO Box 38  
Cheltenham GL52 3LZ

Telephone +44 (0)87 0112 2211  
Fax +44 (0)12 4254 4961  
E-mail [enquiries@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ucas.ac.uk)  
[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

### UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)

9–17 St Albans Place  
London N1 ONX

Telephone +44 (0)20 7107 9922  
Fax +44 (0)20 7288 4360  
[www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk)



**National Academic Recognition Information  
Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARI)**

Oriel House  
Oriel Road  
Cheltenham GL50 1XP

Telephone +44 (0)87 0990 4088  
Fax +44 (0)12 4228 8611  
E-mail [info@naric.org.uk](mailto:info@naric.org.uk)  
[www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk)

**The Open University**

Customer Contact Centre  
PO Box 197  
Milton Keynes MK7 6ZS

Telephone +44 (0)84 5300 6090  
E-mail [general-enquiries@open.ac.uk](mailto:general-enquiries@open.ac.uk)  
[www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

Check website for possible contact details in your home country

**Unistats**

Lists courses and has student comments for specific courses at universities and colleges.

[www.unistats.ac.uk](http://www.unistats.ac.uk)

## Other useful resources

*University Courses in Education in the UK Open to Students from Overseas* UCET, published annually in May – comprehensive handbook of initial, postgraduate and short courses available to students from overseas.

**Note:** this publication may not be available in your local British Council office.

### Note about undergraduate study of education

This information sheet is about studying education at postgraduate level, but there are also many opportunities for the study of education at undergraduate level, as part of a Bachelor's degree or other academic award.

Many of these undergraduate awards also include professional qualification as a teacher (Qualified Teacher Status, or QTS). See the *Teacher training* information sheet for more details.

There are also many universities and other higher education institutions offering undergraduate degrees in what is usually called education studies, which do not involve training to teach and assessment for Qualified Teacher Status.

For information about education studies and related degrees, refer to the Universities and Colleges Admission Service website at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and follow the links to do a course search for education studies.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness.

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