

# **Plymouth University**

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Plymouth Institute of Education

## **Programme Specification**

Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD)

3960

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. C. Smith', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Approved by Minor Change 12/11/14

1. **EdD**

**Final award title**

Professional Doctorate in Education

**Level 7 Intermediate award title(s)**

**Certificate of Advanced Professional Studies**

**Post Graduate Certificate in Education**

**Post Graduate Diploma (Policy and Practice in Education)**

2. **Awarding Institution:** University of Plymouth

**Teaching institution(s):** Plymouth Institute of Education

3. **Accrediting body(ies)**

None

4. **Distinctive Features of the Programme and the Student Experience**

**Overview:**

The Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) is a doctoral level programme for anyone involved in an educative role within a professional discipline. Its focus is on the ways in which learning can be understood and might be developed in a professional context. In this respect the title 'Professional Doctorate' signals that it is both *for* professional people and *about* the nature of professional practice and its development. Indeed, exploring the meaning of 'professionalism' is central to the programme and, as such, the term should be interpreted in a wide sense throughout this document. Similarly, the word *Education* should be interpreted in a broad sense to include all aspects of what we do to support learning, development and participation of those we work with: children, young people and adults in their social/cultural worlds. The programme as a whole therefore encourages you to consider how professional practice is manifested in your working context, whatever this may be, and to use this as the starting point for developing new ideas about its development. Whilst it is likely to be attractive to those working in

mainstream education and schooling it is equally intended for anyone who has a role in leading learning and professional development in any professional practice.

The programme comprises a modular 'taught' element of 120 credits, followed by a thesis of 50000 words, equating to 420 credits (20 for the thesis proposal; 400 for the thesis itself). It therefore offers the benefits of a structured and collegiate approach in the early stages, with modules focused on the nature of professional practice, the implications of policy in the particular professional field, methods of research and the nature of professional communities. In the later stages you will work independently with a supervisory team developing your own research project which must make an original contribution to knowledge.

### **Distinctive features:**

- 1) Unlike many EdD programmes which are little more than modular methods courses followed by a thesis, this programme focuses attention on the nature of professional practice itself. This means it offers much more than being simply a 'modular PhD', providing you with an opportunity to really understand the nature of your professional work and its influence on practice.
- 2) Focused this way, it is open to anyone from a professional discipline that has an educational focus of some sort, including those from business and industry or third sector organisations involved in education and/or training. It draws its strength from this diversity by being able to compare the interrelationships between policy and practice across more than one area.
- 3) The programme is studied part-time and offers the support of working in a structured manner and with a cohort of peers from a range of professional practices. It is therefore ideal for those who are juggling study with a busy professional life.
- 4) The programme is carefully structured so that in the modular stages there is considerable support, but with the opportunity to develop this thinking in a range of directions at the thesis stages. You can begin at level 7 (M-level) and work towards Doctoral level in the first two years; potentially helpful if it is a little while since you last studied.
- 5) The way we assess your work is through a carefully constructed set of assignments which gradually and supportively induct you into a research community. You will give a conference presentation, write a paper for submission to a journal and undertake a pilot study in preparation for the larger thesis.

### **Conceptual framework for teaching and learning:**

It is envisaged that the majority of EdD students are public service professionals studying part-time and often at a distance. They may be in senior leadership positions, although this is not a requirement. Your cohort will therefore be cross-

professional, and organisation will need to suit part-time distance learners in full-time employment with teaching approaches that are discursive, research focused and include considerable independent study as is necessary at doctoral level.

Each module effectively provides a lens through which professional practice is viewed. You begin with the widest, the policy lens, where a stance informed by research and theory is adopted towards looking at policy in relation to professional practice. Your ideas develop in a collaborative and discursive manner. Academic and research approaches are used to consider differing policy discourses and perspectives, areas of consensus and of contention are critically examined, and the work that different discourses do in privileging and marginalising various groups is considered, as are issues of hegemony and resistance. The second module continues in a similar vein providing an individual professional and social lens for viewing professional practice. Alongside reading and discussion, writing is seen as being central to the development and transformation of your ideas and practice. It is therefore very important that you view writing not just as a way publicly to communicate 'finished' ideas, but as a personal tool for on-going development of these ideas.

In the third and fourth modules it is research itself which is put under the lens. By now you will have considerable knowledge of research in many areas of professionalism. In these modules you look at approaches to research bringing ideas together initially through considerations of ontology, epistemology and ethics, and leading to an examination of individual research methods as appropriate tools for different studies.

Underpinning all of these modules is the assumption that by bringing academic and research skills to bear on professional practice we can improve it. Two particular theoretical positions provide a backbone to the modular programme: pragmatism and social theory. Pragmatism is emphasised at all levels: knowledge is considered in relation to its usefulness rather than its truth; the relation between what is known and how it is known is emphasised; and the usefulness and limits of various claims to knowledge are evaluated throughout. Thus, although each module has a social theory core, other philosophical, social and psychological perspectives are also considered for their contribution to a wider understanding.

An emphasis on the dissemination of your research is a key component of the programme. Programme assessments feature the production of research papers and presentation at conferences, but the emphasis on writing encompasses many genres and not just traditional research accounts and reports. For example, prominence is also given to narrative approaches such as professional journal writing which may be more helpful in supporting critical reflection.

## **5. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Group(s)**

# QAA Doctoral Degree Characteristics and Annex 3: Doctoral Qualification Descriptors

## 6. Programme Structure

	Stage	Programme of study		Assessment	Notes	
Modular stages 120 credits	1	Module 1 Policy and professional practice. (30 credits)		Assignment 1 Traditional essay exploring a relevant aspect of policy and practice through a sound understanding of research principles. (5000 words)		
		Module 2 Professional learning (30 credits)		Assignment 2 'Conference paper' exploring professional learning in the student's own context. (5000 words)	To be presented at the PGR research conference (June)	
	1 - 2			Reflective summary 1 (2000 words)	This forms agenda for identifying a supervisory team	
	2	Module 3 Researching Education Practice (30 credits)		Assignment 3 'Journal article' relating to own professional context with reflective commentary (5000 words total)		
		Module 4 Social Research (30 credits)		Assignment 4 Assignment focused on proposed thesis topic to explore methodological issues. (5000 words)		
Thesis Stages 420 credits	3	Thesis Proposal Module (20 credits)	Doctoral training events	Submission of thesis proposal	The Thesis Proposal Module forms 'gateway' to thesis.  Students in years 3 and 4 have access to doctoral training events which provide input and continuity.	
		Thesis module (400 credits)	Conference			
	4		Doctoral training events	<<< Submission of thesis (50k words)	Students are expected to attend conferences and to participate as appropriate, through presentations and or posters.	
			Conference			
	5		Ongoing study			
	6	Writing up period (as required)				
	7	Writing up period (as required)				

## **7. Programme Aims**

The Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) aims to support the further development of experienced professionals, who will normally already have completed studies at masters level or equivalent.

To do this, the programme will develop conceptual knowledge and research capacity that will enable you to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And you will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary to lead professional thinking in complex and unpredictable situations.

## **8. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the Professional Doctorate in Education, you will be able to demonstrate the following.

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research and other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline in relation to professional practice, and merit publication;
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice;
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge and its relationship with practice in a professional field, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry leading to professional change.

## 9. Admissions Criteria, including APCL, APEL and DAS arrangements

Selection for the programme will be undertaken in line with the guidance laid out in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B2<sup>1</sup>.

All candidates will be interviewed in addition to evaluation of any documentary submissions made in support of their application.

Successful applicants will need to be able to demonstrate the following.

- The potential to study at D level. This would normally be indicated by successful completion of a masters degree, but candidates with strong professional experience may be considered. Places may be offered with a probationary period for the first year (during which assessment can be at L7).
- An ability to work collaboratively in exploring and developing experience and ideas.
- That they are working in a professional context where they are responsible for supporting learning. Candidates not currently working in a professional context, but with appropriate and sufficiently extensive experience, may be considered at the discretion of the admissions tutor(s). Similarly, those in professional practice but who, in the opinion of the admissions team do not yet have sufficient or appropriate experience to draw on, may be deemed ineligible.
- A strong commitment to educational enquiry and critical reflection on practice as a means of professional learning.

The following points will also be taken into account in selecting candidates.

Accreditation for prior certificated learning (APCL) will be considered up to 120 credits and normally only for work completed at M/D level within the last seven years.

Accreditation for prior experiential learning (APEL) may, exceptionally, be considered. This will be done in the line with the guidance in the programme and University regulations.

Candidates will need to identify a proposed field of research within the broad field of education at the application stage. Acceptance onto the programme will depend on support for the proposed field of research being available within the faculty.

All applicants must have GCSE (or equivalent) Maths and English at Grade C or above.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality-Code-Chapter-B2.pdf>

## 10. Progression criteria for Final and Intermediate Awards

The routes through the different available awards are shown in the following table:

Stage and credit combinations:	Optional routes:	
End of Year 1	Option 1	Option 2
30 credits at L7 or L8	Take CAPS or transfer credit to IMP	
60 credits at L8	Assume progress to year 2	Take PGCert or transfer credit to IMP
30 at L7 + 30 at L8	Assume progress to year 2	Take PGCert or transfer credit to IMP
60 credits at L7	Progress to year 2 (with mandatory advisory meeting with PL to discuss progress)	Take PGCert or transfer credit to IMP
End of Year 2	Option 1	Option 2
60-120 credits at L8 + remainder at L7	Progress to Thesis Proposal module	Take PGDip and/or transfer into IMP MA
Less than 120 credits at L7 or L8	Take PGCert	Transfer credit into IMP and continue study at M-level

As shown, as an alternative to taking a PGDip, you would normally be eligible to enrol on the Faculty's International Masters Programme (IMP) in order to undertake a thesis at M-level for the award of MA: Education. The learning outcomes for this, are as follows. Students would be able to:

- identify, select, critically analyse and evaluate ideas, perspectives, theories or data relevant to an appropriate area of study; undertake a critical, imaginative and ethical investigation; relate theory to practice; formulate a coherent set of aims and objectives for a study which effectively utilise available resources; organise and manage their study.
- locate their work within a broader context, usually through ideas, perspectives and theories from appropriate literature.
- adopt a questioning, reflective and critically aware stance to their work.
- choose and implement appropriate media and processes in relation to ideas, aims, intentions and context; select and apply appropriate methodologies to stated objectives and utilise them competently and methodically.
- show clarity and coherence in structure, writing conventions, style, presentation of evidence and argument and ensure the work is readable, accessible to its intended audience and effectively communicates the intended meaning.
- generate 'new' ideas and connections, apply existing material to new contexts or reappraise or critique familiar material; further, combine or resolve uncertainties, identify similarity, difference and interconnection, take risks and use rational and intuitive thinking.

Students who undertake the EdD thesis and are assessed by means of a *viva voce* examination but who are considered not sufficiently strong to be awarded a doctorate may be awarded an MPhil by the examiners.

### **Progression**

Progression from the first to second and from the second to third year of the programme is dependent on having passed both of the modules in that year at the appropriate levels and having satisfactorily engaged in the activities they involve. Module leaders will be responsible for judging the level of this engagement. We would expect that, normally, students would be fully engaged in their studies, having chosen to undertake them, however were there to be a concern, the module leader would signal this clearly in writing to you, making clear what the concerns were and how they should be addressed.

In the unlikely case that, having been warned in writing *a priori* by the module leader and having understood what was required of them, a student's engagement with the programme was insufficient, the student might be asked to retake the

module and would not be allowed to progress into the next stage of the programme until this was completed.

Were you to fail an assignment you would normally be offered a second opportunity to submit. Students would normally only be allowed two attempts at any assignment and would be required to leave the programme if they failed for a second time.

Students who pass any of the stage 1 modules but only at level 7 would not normally be offered a second attempt in order to achieve level 8. Similarly, students who fail a stage 1 module and resubmit can only pass at level 7.

Progression into the thesis stages is dependent on successfully passing the thesis proposal module. During the thesis stages, progression from year to year is dependent on an annual progress review undertaken by your supervising director of studies, in consultation with you. You will have to demonstrate that you are making satisfactory progress in your research, but it should be emphasised that the primary aim of this review is to be supportive in helping you remain focused and on track.

#### **11. Exceptions to Regulations**

**None**

#### **12. Transitional Arrangements**

**None**

#### **13. Mapping and Appendices:**

As this is a doctoral research degree, outcomes and aims are not specific to modules, since students' learning is largely dictated by their own choices of assessment topic and academic development. All the aims and outcomes are embedded in all modules, though at stages 1-3 we would expect them to be 'developing' and only finally assessed at the thesis stage.