

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR M.Sc. EDUCATION (COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION)

1. Awarding institution/body	University of Oxford
2. Teaching institution	University of Oxford
3. Programme accredited by	N/A
4. Final award	M.Sc.
5. Programme	Education (Comparative and International Education)
6. UCAS code	N/A
7. Relevant subject benchmark statement	N/A
8. Date of programme specification	June 2008

9. Educational aims of the programme

- To provide a continuing critical analysis of the purposes and methods of comparative inquiry in education;
- To ensure that as far as possible the habitual divide between studies in international education (typically involving 'developing countries') and those in 'comparative education' (typically involving the western industrialised world) should be breached by means of the integrated teaching and research effort exemplified by the Oxford MSc course in Comparative and International Education;
- To develop research in those areas in which members of the Oxford Department have particular expertise;
- To encourage co-operation (including collaborative research) with other universities in the UK and abroad where successful work in comparative and international education can be identified;
- To further the interests of the subject (a) by recruiting high quality graduate students to the taught MSc course and – largely through that course – to the Oxford doctoral programme, and (b) encouraging regular participation in international conferences and workshops.
- To enable students to define a research question and to carry out an appropriate research study to address this question.

10. Programme outcomes

A. Students will:

- have an understanding of the nature of comparative studies in education;
- have knowledge of some theories of comparative education and their exponents;
- be familiar with the education systems of a number of industrialised and developing countries and be able to describe those systems critically;

- be able to devise schemes to make basic comparisons of educational issues in any two or more countries;
- be familiar with several research studies in comparative and international education;
- have a particular knowledge of educational developments in key areas of western and eastern Europe, including familiarity with the education and training policy of the European Union;
- have detailed knowledge of major issues affecting education at all levels in developing countries;
- be familiar with the work of the various non-governmental agencies concerned with educational planning, research and development;
- through the paper common to all MSc courses in Education, Foundations of Educational Research, be familiar with a wide range of issues pertaining to research strategies in education.
- develop a knowledge and understanding of basic educational research approaches and methods.

Related teaching/learning methods and strategies

Tutor presentations, small group work, student-led presentations, visiting speakers (including 'open' thematic seminar series). Tutorials support students in identifying research questions, selecting areas for literature review, carrying out field work, and reviewing drafts of the dissertation. Supported ICT sessions and literature access skills (including electronic searches) are provided by library staff. Special seminars organised at OECD, UNESCO, Commonwealth Secretariat, DFID.

Assessment

Formative assessment is provided through a series of written assignments for each of the parts of the course, oral feedback on student presentations and extensive feedback on dissertation drafts from supervisors. Satisfactory completion is required for a student to be admitted to the examination.

Summative assessment consists of four components:

1. Comparative and International Education I: Theoretical, methodological and systemic studies is assessed by one three hour unseen written examination paper taken at the beginning of Trinity term
2. Comparative and International Education II: Education in Developing Countries is assessed by one three hour unseen written examination paper taken at the beginning of Trinity term
3. Foundations of Educational Research is assessed through two written coursework assignments, one submitted at the end of each of Michaelmas and Hilary terms.

4. A dissertation of 15,000-20,000 words.

B. Skills and other attributes

Students will have the opportunity to develop the following skills during the course:

I. Intellectual and Practical Skills

1. Critical analysis research in comparative and international education.
2. Understanding of how education systems operate in different contexts.
3. Ability to evaluate international surveys of student attainment.
4. Ability to assess work of international organizations in education.
5. Presentation of complex ideas and information.
6. Reporting in scholarly depth and at length on a topic of special interest.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

See under A above.

Assessment:

See under A above.

II. Transferable skills

Students will learn how to:

1. Communicate ideas effectively.
2. Operate as a member of a collaborative group.
3. Undertake individual research, using appropriate library and other data retrieval facilities.
4. Manage their time appropriately.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

See under A above

Assessment:

See under A above.

11. Programme structures and features

The MSc in Comparative and International Education is a 12 month course. The course consists of three main compulsory parts:

1. Comparative and International Education I: Theoretical, methodological and systemic studies

2. Comparative and International Education II: Education in Developing Countries

3. Foundations of Educational Research

Comparative and International Education I: Theoretical, methodological and systemic studies

- Historical development of Comparative Education
- Theories and research methods
- Use and misuse of comparative data
- Selected educational issues in comparative context
- Levels of enrolment and attainment in comparative context
- Methods of large-scale international data collection
- The IEA and OECD studies
- The role of international organizations in education
- Systemic and thematic studies, including UK, USA, Japan, Germany, France
- EU education and training policy
- Historical origins of education systems

Comparative and International Education II: Education in Developing Countries

- Development theories and the educational dimension
- Colonialism and education – legacies and links
- Education and national development
- International aid and educational development
- Education for all – the post-Jomtien era
- Urbanisation, migration and education
- Gender, development and education
- Selected issues, trends and cases from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the tropical island zones

Foundations of Educational Research:

- a. Truth and verification; positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory; types of educational research questions in relation to diverse purposes of educational research; a brief history of educational research; the politics of educational research.
- b. Formulating research problems and questions, and hypotheses; issues in framing of research questions.
- c. Philosophical and conceptual analysis; the links between educational research and epistemology, philosophy of mind, ethics, and the philosophy of the social sciences.
- d. Introduction to experimental and quasi-experimental research, surveys, action research, ethnographic and case study research strategies, life history research; focus groups; strategies for educational evaluation studies; historical, cross-sectional, longitudinal, and comparative research in education.
- e. Assumptions, rationales and purposes disciplines and political, ethnical and technical problems of various research strategies.
- f. Relation of research strategies to philosophical traditions, socio-political positions and economic constraints; understands the significance of alternative epistemological positions for theory construction, research design and the selection of appropriate analytical techniques.
- g. Introduction to a range of interviewing and to observational strategies.
- h. Generalizability, validity, reliability, and replicability of research.

- i. Frameworks for evaluating research reports.
- j. Ethics and access.

These parts take place during the first two terms. In their third term, students undertake work towards the production of a dissertation of between 15,000 and 20,000 words. This syllabus is covered by seminars which are not necessarily devoted at any given time to one discrete part of it. This means that any seminar might have relevance for more than one part of the syllabus.

12. Support for students and their learning

All students will have access to a wide range of resources and facilities both within the Department of Education and in the University Computing Services. The Department of Education is able to offer excellent teaching accommodation, study and social provision, a common room, workspace in the resources unit which includes IT stations, complete access to the library, and two IT suites. Wireless internet access is available across the whole Department.

Students are encouraged to attend the programme of research seminars given by visiting researchers throughout each term, as well as all other seminars in the Department of Education and across the University. There are excellent opportunities for contact and work with academic staff and other graduate students. The Departmental library is open until 7 p.m., and the computer room and common room facilities are available around the clock. All course materials are posted on WebLearn, the University Virtual Learning Environment, which also provides comprehensive facilities for online communications and social networking, as well as for the online storage of electronic data.

In addition to departmental provision, students have access to the first-rate library resources of the University including the Bodleian libraries. All students are able to use the extensive IT facilities at Oxford University Computing Services (OUCS) where the Learning Technologies Group is based. This includes free attendance on the IT training courses, access to computers 8.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m., free email and web accounts, free advisory service, and a shop selling hardware and software.

The course director has overall responsibility for the course, co-ordinating teaching, and arranging specialist supervision for dissertation writing, in collaboration with the Department's Director of Graduate Studies. In addition, each student will have a University supervisor who provides academic guidance and oversees their progress. Within their college, each student has a college advisor who is responsible for their general welfare and is available to assist in any problems on the academic side. There is also a general Tutor for Graduates or Senior Tutor (in graduate colleges).

There are a number of schemes at college or university level offering financial support in cases of hardship.

The University runs a counselling service offering advice and support to all students.

13. Criteria for Admission

Candidates for admission should normally have a good upper second class degree, or its equivalent. Candidates for whom English is a second language are required to obtain an overall score of 7.5, with at least 7.0 in each component in IELTS, or an overall score of 630 in TOEFL

(plus a score of 5 in TWE); an overall score of 109 in the Internet-based TOEFL or Grade B in the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English.

Applications will normally be considered in the light of a candidate's ability to meet the following criteria:

1. The applicant has provided appropriate indications of proven and potential academic excellence. Appropriate indicators may include two or more highly positive references, academic transcripts or their equivalent showing excellent achievement, samples of work produced by the student showing high levels of academic or scholarly ability, and good performance at interview.
2. The applicant has provided sufficient evidence, in the view of the assessors, to suggest that they have the academic ability and commitment to pursue the chosen programme to a successful conclusion within the required time limits.
3. The programme of study that the applicant wishes to pursue is well suited to the academic interests and abilities to which they have drawn attention in their application, and (where appropriate) the applicant has undertaken any preliminary work or course which is normally considered indispensable to acceptance on the proposed programme of study.
4. The Department is able to provide appropriate supervision and facilities for the candidate's programme of work.

14. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of learning

- There is annual evaluation of the course and performance of students in assessments and the dissertation by a board of examiners. Examiners' reports (both internal and external) are required each year for submission to the Department of Education Departmental Board, the Social Sciences Board, and the Educational Policy and Standards Committee (EPSC) of the University. The department is required to report steps that will be taken to address any particular issues identified. In addition, there are periodic major reviews of courses and departmental provision including a review after five years of all new graduate courses by the University's EPSC and the Social Sciences Board.
- Any changes to the programme agreed by the department have to be reviewed and approved by the Social Sciences Board and the EPSC.
- Annual staff appraisal, and reports on staff in their initial period of office, includes assessment of teaching. Training courses in e.g. supervision are offered by the University's Learning Institute.
- Student feedback on the course will take the form of written evaluations of taught sessions and other provision by all students, and by regular meetings between a student liaison committee of student representatives and the course development committee (consisting of the course director and other key academic staff).

15. Regulation of assessment

The examinations are under the supervision of the Departmental Board of the Department of Education, which, with the concurrence of the Social Sciences Board, is responsible for approving examining conventions. A Nominating Committee proposes the names of examiners for approval by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors. It is the examiners' responsibility to appoint appropriate assessors for any component of the examination requiring specialist expertise outwith that of the internal examiners.

The two three-hour unseen examinations, the two essay assignments and the dissertation will be subjected initially to blind double marking. Examiners will then compare their respective marks and come to an agreed mark for each examination and dissertation. When a disagreement between the two examiners cannot be resolved, it is the responsibility of the external examiner to mark a third time to resolve the differences. The examiners may award a distinction for excellence in the whole examination.

Candidates may also be examined orally. The oral examination may be on the candidate's written papers, dissertation, or both.

Internal and external examiners will be required to produce reports after the examinations for consideration by the department's Departmental Board, the Social Sciences Board, and the EPSC.

External examiners act as moderators, providing informed comment on two major issues:

1. to verify that standards are appropriate to the award, in part by comparison with the standards of comparable institutions, and to ensure that the assessment procedures and the regulations governing them are fair and otherwise appropriate.
2. To ensure that the conduct of the examination and the determination of awards have been fairly conducted, and that individual student performance has been judged in accordance with the regulations and conventions of the Examining Board.

External examiners are expected to report to the Vice-Chancellor in each year in which they act. Their reports are expected to cover the following points:

- the standards demonstrated by the students
- the extent to which standards are appropriate for the award
- the design, structure, and marking of assignments
- the procedures for assessment
- whether or not external examiners have had sufficient access to, and the power to call upon, any material necessary to make the required judgments
- students' performance in relation to their peers in comparable courses
- the coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and their consonance with the explicit roles required of them
- the basis and rationale for any comparisons made
- the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort
- the quality of teaching and learning which may be indicated by student performance

The report is addressed to the Vice-Chancellor, and will be considered by the Social Sciences Board and the Educational Policy and Standards Committee of the University. The report will

also be scrutinised by the Departmental Board of the Department of Education, by the Board of Examiners, and more widely within the department.

Course and examination requirements

Every candidate will be required to satisfy the examiners in the following:

- i. Satisfactory attendance at the appropriate classroom-based courses.
- ii. Satisfactory performance in Part 1 of the examination.
- iii. Satisfactory performance in formative assignments.
- iv. A dissertation of between 15,000 and 20,000 words (including appendices, endnotes and a reference section) on a subject selected by the candidate in consultation with the supervisor, which must be closely related to one or more of the themes of the course. The subject selected by the candidate must be approved by the supervisor on behalf of the Director of Graduate Studies and Departmental Board of the Department.
- v. Two word processed or printed copies of the dissertation must be delivered to the M.Sc. examiners, c/o Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY, no later than noon on the last Friday in September of the year in which the examination has been taken. Candidates wishing to submit dissertations later than this date must obtain the approval of the Departmental Board by the last day of the preceding Trinity Full Term. Such approval will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. One bound copy of the dissertation of each candidate who is successful at examination shall be retained by the Department for deposit in the departmental library.
- vi. Each candidate, with the approval of the Departmental Board, may retake the entire Part 1 of the examination one further time on the next occasion they are examined (usually the next year).
- vii. Each candidate may, with the approval of the Departmental Board, re-submit their dissertation undertaken whilst registered for the M.Sc. if the original dissertation is deemed unsatisfactory. This shall normally be within one year of the initial failure.
- viii. Candidates must give notice to the Secretary of Faculties concerning the subjects which they intend to offer, together with the subject of their dissertation by the first day of the fifth week of Hilary Term.
- ix. Fees for examining will be the standard fee for M.Sc. (by coursework) as set out in the schedule of examining fees in Examination Decrees and Regulations.

Marking Scale and Grade Descriptors

1. Distinction
 - i) upper level: 80 > 100
 - substantial and in-depth reading of wide range of appropriate literature; strong evidence of critical analysis;
 - strong and critical exploration of theoretical perspectives; strong understanding of relevance to topic;
 - compelling line of argument that provides strong structure to essay;
 - Offers original and illuminating perspectives on topic set;
 - perfect referencing and bibliography;
 - compelling and cogent style of written English; pleasing presentation.
 - ii) lower level: 70 > 79

- wide and appropriate scope of literature showing strong understanding; high degree of original choice; some evidence of critical analysis;
- confident exploration and application of theoretical perspectives; clear understanding of relevance to topic;
- coherent and engaging line of argument supported by strong structure to essay;
- Strong and illuminating engagement with topic set;
- detailed and accurate referencing and bibliography;
- clear, accurate and engaging use of written English; attractive presentation.

2. High pass: 60 > 69

- refers intelligently to wide & appropriate range of relevant literature; some evidence of original choice;
- evidence of sound understanding and relevance of theoretical perspectives;
- clear and appropriate structure; explicit and coherent line of argument;
- Relevant and responsive to the topic set;
- reliable and consistent referencing and bibliography;
- clear and accurate use of written and good presentation.

3. Lower pass: 50 > 59

- unoriginal and/or limited choice of literature; over-dependence on secondary sources;
- superficial reference to or exploration of theoretical perspectives; little evidence of relevance to topic;
- some degree of essay structure; lack of coherent argument;
- superficial engagement with topic set; some degree of space-filling;
- inconsistent and incomplete referencing & bibliography;
- mostly adequate written English and acceptable presentation.

4. Fail: <49

- insufficient & inappropriate reference to literature;
- lack of engagement with theoretical perspectives;
- lack of clear essay structure and/or coherent argument;
- fails to explore topic set in any depth;
- inaccurate and inadequate bibliographical information; lack of transparency;
- poor written English and shoddy presentation.

16. Indicators of quality and standards

External examiners' reports have been consistently encouraging over the thirteen years during which the MSc course in Comparative and International Education has run. In addition, class reports submitted by course members have been positive, while making good suggestions for change from year to year.

The course will be under the *aegis* of the Department of Education, which achieved a rating of 5 in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise. The department also has ESRC postgraduate

training (1+3) recognition for both full-time and part-time modes, and its teacher training was considered 'very good with several outstanding features' in the report of OfSTED in 2001.