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
   N/A

4. Final award
   M.Sc.

5. Programme *
   M.Sc. Education (Comparative and International Education)

6. UCAS code
   N/A

7. Relevant subject benchmark statement
   N/A

8. Date of programme specification
   September 2014

9. Educational aims of the programme

   To provide students with research skills needed to understand and critically evaluate the policies, politics, histories, and practices that shape education around the world

   To steward and advance knowledge regarding the theoretical, historical and philosophical underpinnings of the field of Comparative and International Education

   To develop in students a capacity to engage imaginatively and in a disciplined way with education broadly defined to include governance, policy, curriculum, and socialization

   To cultivate in students a sense of professional collaboration and collective expertise that they carry with them upon graduation

   To enable students to define a research question and to carry out an appropriate research study to address this question

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* This programme constitutes one of five pathways of the MSc Education: Child Development and Education; Comparative and International Education; Higher Education; Learning and Technology; Research Design and Methodology. Section 11 of each specification indicates opportunities available to students for taking course options from other pathways, whilst sections 12-16 specify generic aspects of the MSc Education.
To encourage students to identify, analyze, and critically reflect on possible needs to revise or reform the application of research to education policy and practice

10. Programme outcomes

A. Students will develop the ability to understand and critically analyze:
   - the theoretical, historical and philosophical underpinnings of Comparative and International Education
   - key education policy positions at institutional, national, regional and international levels
   - some of the operating principles and practices of various governmental and non-governmental agencies concerned with education planning, research and development
   - educational developments in key regions of the world, including how these regions are networked globally
   - diverse historical perspectives and cultural practices that inform education locally and globally
   - methodological approaches to the comparative and international study of education
   - a wide range of issues pertaining to research strategies in education

B. Skills and other attributes

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

I. Intellectual and Practical Skills

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

II. Transferable skills

   - Students will learn how to communicate ideas effectively.
   - Operate as a member of a collaborative group.
• Undertake individual research, using appropriate library and other data retrieval facilities.

11. Programme structures and features

Part 1 of the programme consists of six courses, three taken in Michaelmas term and three in Hilary term. Below are overviews of the four compulsory courses:

Comparative and International Education I: Culture, History, Pedagogy
• Historical development of comparative and international education
• Theories of social change and education
• Ethnography and the localization of education policy
• Global policy and policy-making in education
• Critical directions in the study of global education policy
• Historical origins of education

Comparative and International Education II: Policy, Politics, Education
• Critical understanding of paradigms that inform international education policies;
• Examination of rights- and market-based orientations to education;
• The role of international assessment practices
• Approaches to understanding student experience and transnational mobility
• Policy representations and expectations of education; UN organizations, the World Bank, regional and trans-regional organizations, and philanthropic and corporate entities.

Foundations of Educational Research 1: Research design
• Understanding the key concepts and basic principles of research design and methodology in the social sciences;
• Awareness of the processes and relationships involved in planning, conducting, reporting and following up a research project;
• Appreciation of the role of well-developed research questions in educational research;
• Ability to critically assess research literature;
• Appreciation of the importance of ethical issues in educational research, and understand the procedures for gaining ethical consent and research clearance;
• Development of students’ own dissertation research ideas.

Foundations of Educational Research 2: Methods and strategies
• Advances students understanding of the key concepts and basic principles of research design and methodology in educational research and other social sciences;
• Ability to critically assess research literature;
• Awareness of the range of research methods and techniques;
• Gaining ‘hands-on’ experience in conducting interviews and designing surveys;
• Understanding how different forms of qualitative and quantitative data are generated and can be analysed;
• Further development of students’ dissertation research project.
Students also choose one course option each term from the following list:

**Michaelmas Term**
- Ethnographies of Youth and Childhood
- Theories and Methods for 21st Century Learning
- Conceptualising Educational Research
- Higher Education and the Economy

**Hilary Term**
- Policy, Politics and Education
- Education in Africa
- Qualitative Research
- Intermediate Quantitative Research
- Learning, Technology and Society
- Engagements with Educational Technology Research
- Skills Policy and Vocational Education and Training

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

Each course lasts one term and involves at least 8 classes of between 2-3 hours. These usually combine tutor presentations, small group work, student-led presentations. There are also a series of visiting speakers and attendance at relevant research seminars is recommended. In addition, students regularly attend one-on-one supervision meetings to support them in identifying research questions, selecting areas for literature review, carrying out fieldwork, and reviewing drafts of the dissertation. Supported ICT sessions and literature access skills (including electronic searches) are provided by library staff. Special seminars are also organised at OECD and UNESCO in Paris.

**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 two parts:

**Part 1 (six papers)**

1. Comparative and International Education 1 is assessed by a 3,000 (max.) word written assignment due at the beginning of Hilary Term.
2. Comparative and International Education 2 is assessed by a 3,000 (max.) word written assignment due at the beginning of Trinity Term.
3. Foundations of Educational Research 1 is assessed through a 3,000 (max.) written coursework assignment submitted at the end of Michaelmas Term.

4. Foundations of Educational Research 2 is assessed through a 3,000 (max.) written coursework assignment submitted at the end of Hilary Term.

5. Each of the two course options selected by students are assessed by a written assignment of up to 3,000 (max.) words due at the start of the following Term.

Part 2
A research-based dissertation of 15,000-20,000 words.

12. Support for students and their learning

All students have access to a wide range of resources and facilities both within the Department of Education and through the University Computing Services. The Department of Education has excellent teaching accommodation, study and social provision, a common room, complete access to the library, and two IT suites. Wireless Internet access is available across the whole Department.

Students are encouraged to attend a wide ranging programme of research seminars given by visiting researchers throughout each term, both 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 during term-time until 8.30 p.m. Monday to Thursday, until 7 p.m. on Friday and in the afternoons of the weekend. 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). 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 dissertation supervision, in collaboration with the Department’s Director of Graduate Studies. Each student has a supervisor who provides academic guidance, oversees their progress and supervises work for the dissertation. 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**

Within equal opportunities principles and legislation, applications will be assessed in the light of a candidate’s proven and potential academic excellence. Applicants will normally meet the following criteria:

1. All applicants are normally expected to be predicted or to have achieved a good Honours degree (normally 2.1 or equivalent international qualifications, such as a GPA of at least 3.6/4.0) in a relevant subject, preferably in the social sciences. Relevant work experience may be desirable. Applicants must submit full details of qualifications (transcripts, certificates or diplomas).

2. Whilst entry is highly competitive, each application is considered on an individual basis, ensuring that candidates are well-matched to their chosen course, and have the ability and potential to benefit from the course.

3. Three highly positive academic references, supporting the applicant’s intellectual ability, academic achievement, motivation and ability to work in a group.

4. Two pieces of written work, which demonstrate the applicant’s understanding of the subject area, your ability to construct and defend an argument, and proficiency in academic English.

5. A convincing personal statement, explaining the reasons for applying to the programme and highlighting relevant academic and professional experience.

6. Performance at interview(s) that are normally held as part of the admissions process.

8. Applicants whose first language is not English are usually required to provide evidence of proficiency in English at the higher level required by the University;

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

- There is an annual examination of the course and performance of students in assessments and the dissertation by a board of examiners. Examiners’ reports (both internal and external) are submitted to the Department of Education Departmental Board, the Social Sciences Board, and the Education Committee 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 by the University’s Education Committee and the Social Sciences Board.

- Each course director convenes a termly meeting of their course committee, and submits oral and written reports to the Department’s Graduate Studies Committee, where teaching and assessment methods are compared and improvements are identified. Any changes to the programme agreed by the department are reviewed and approved by the Social Sciences Board and the Education Committee.
• Annual staff appraisal, and reports on staff in their initial period of office, includes a
discussion of teaching. Training courses in e.g. supervision are offered by the University’s
Oxford Learning Institute (OLI).

• Student feedback on the course is provided by written evaluations of the modules by all
students, and by student representation on the termly meetings of the course committee.
The department also has a Joint Consultative Committee where student representatives can
bring suggestions and concerns to the Head of Department and other key 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 examiners.

All written assignments and the dissertation are subjected initially to blind double marking.

Examiners and assessors then compare their respective marks and the written reports and come to an
agreed mark for each assignment and dissertation. When a disagreement between the two examiners
cannot be resolved, a third marker will be asked to make a judgement. In certain cases, the external
examiner will act as a third marker to resolve the differences. The examiners may award a distinction
for excellence in the whole examination.

Internal and external examiners will be required to produce reports after the examinations for
consideration by the Departmental Board, the Social Sciences Board, and the Education Committee.

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 Education 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.

16. Indicators of quality and standards

The course is offered under the aegis of the Department of Education, which achieved a rating of 5 in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise and was rated joint first nationally in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise. As part of the University’s Doctoral Training Centre, the department has ESRC recognition for its postgraduate training (1+3 in both full-time and part-time modes, and its teacher training was considered ‘Outstanding’ by OfSTED in 2011.