UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Programme Specification for M.Sc. Education

(Learning and Technology)
PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR
M.Sc. Education: Learning and Technology

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 (Learning and Technology)
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

The field of Learning and Technology is defined for the purposes of this programme as the application of digital technologies to enhance face-to-face and distance learning in all sectors of education and across the lifecourse. The term “Learning and Technology” encompasses a number of similar terms, such as educational technologies, technology enhanced learning, computer assisted learning, learning with ICTs, and eLearning.

- To develop skills of critical analysis of research, policy and practice in the field of Learning and Technology;

- To explore and evaluate educational theory in terms of its relevance and practical application to the field of Learning and Technology;

- To develop a broad range of methodological perspectives and practical strategies appropriate to educational research generally and the study of Learning and Technology in particular.

10. Programme outcomes

A. Students will develop a knowledge and understanding of:

- both UK and global perspectives on the development and impact of educational technologies

* 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.
• key theories in the field of Learning and Technology, and of learning generally, in a range of educational settings across the lifecourse
• practices and technologies relevant to the field of Learning and Technology in different phases of education
• theories and techniques of educational research, and of research into educational technologies in particular
• the relationships between policy, current professional educational practice and technological developments

**Related teaching/learning methods and strategies**

The central teaching methods of the course comprise taught sessions in the context of seminars and workshops, combining tutor presentation with extensive structured opportunities for discussion, practical activities, and student presentation.

All course content is explicitly examined in relation to educational theory, practical application, and research-based evidence and perspectives.

Opportunities are provided for the exploration and application of digital technologies to support teaching and learning, as well as for observation of these technologies in use in real settings.

Digital technologies are used as part of the students’ learning process, including a range of Virtual Learning Environment resources, other online social communication resources, and video conferencing.

**Assessment**

Summative assessment will be by coursework and production of a dissertation. The coursework assignments will give students the opportunity to demonstrate the capacity to explore theoretical and practical issues of Learning and Technology, including the critical evaluation of project and development work undertaken during the course.

The dissertation will examine a particular instance of educational technology innovation or policy in relation to relevant theoretical and practical perspectives in a UK or international context. The process and production of the dissertation which will test the students’ ability to work independently, to provide a rationale for their study, reflect on multiple sources of evidence, use appropriate research techniques, analyse data, and carry through a logical and coherent argument from formulation of research question(s) to conclusion.

Formative assessment opportunities in the form of short essays and participation in group projects are provided in each of the three terms of the course.
B. Skills and other attributes

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

I. Intellectual and Practical Skills

1. The ability to critique, and to undertake critical appraisals of, the outputs of research in the field.
2. The ability to explore and engage in theoretical discourses within the field.
3. The ability to plan, carry out and report educational research both systematically and ethically.
4. Research skills such as survey design, observation, interview and e-research techniques.
5. The ability to relate research findings and theoretical perspectives to the demands of policy and/or practice.
6. The ability to plan, carry out and evaluate the implementation of innovative educational technology.

II. Transferable skills

Students will learn:

1. Critical analysis.
2. Communication, presentation and report writing skills.
3. Use of Information and Communication Technologies for purposes of research and learning.
4. Resource and time management skills.
6. Ability to work and learn collaboratively.

11. Programme Structure and Features

The programme includes papers that cover a range of perspectives on Learning and Technology, as well as options that address current issues in educational research more broadly. 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 papers:

Introduction to Learning and Technology
This paper provides students with a strong understanding of the relationship between theory and practice in Learning and Technology. It introduces a range of technological tools and consider how these can be used in different learning contexts such as the home, school, university and the workplace. It involves practical exercises and small-scale projects to critically examine how and when technologies can best be used to facilitate learning.

The course covers the following topics: is learning synonymous with education?; history of technologies in education; tools for education; embedding technology in schools; educational technologies in higher education; assessment in the digital age; current trends in innovative teaching; innovative uses of tools for teaching.
Theories and Methods for 21st Century Learning & Research
The aim of this course is to critically examine how networked technologies may be changing (or reinforcing) how we conceptualize the process of learning and the ways in which we go about researching how learning happens. Each week a particular theoretical approach or methodological perspective will be explored, highlighting the historical underpinnings as well as assessing the future trajectory and possibilities of the topic covered. At the end of the course students will have a critical understanding of the theoretical debates, key concepts and appropriate methodologies that can be employed to investigate and conceptualize learning in the 21st century.

The course covers the following topics: conceptualizing learning, technology and research; psychological theories of learning; socio-cultural theories 1 & 2; neuroscience and education; using the Internet as a social science lab; using the Internet as a data gathering tool; using technology to research across spaces and contexts.

Learning, Technology and Society
The Internet and related technologies have significant implications for learning within and outside the classroom. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have the potential to transform how, what and where people learn, facilitate or inhibit people’s access to educational opportunities, challenge existing ideas of what the purpose and nature of formal education is and what the future of education should be. This paper explores the changing nature of society and technology and the implications this has for learning from a range of theoretical, empirical and policy perspectives.

The course covers the following topics: theories of the Internet and society, digital inclusion and ICT4D, assistive learning technologies, technological drivers, digital youth, digital literacies, social media and learning, future trends in the role of technology in learning.

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 may also choose at least one course option each term from the following list:

**Michaelmas Term (non-assessed only)**

- Ethnographies of Youth and Childhood
- Conceptualising Educational Research
- Higher Education and the Economy

**Hilary Term (one assessed and one non-assessed possible)**

- Policy, Politics and Education
- Education in Africa
- Researching Students’ Lives
- Qualitative Research
- Intermediate Quantitative Research
- Engagements with educational technology research
- Skills Policy and Vocational Education and Training

**Assessment**

Formative assessment is provided through a series of written assignments for each of the parts of the programme, 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 assignments)**

1. Foundations of Educational Research 1 is assessed through a 3,000 (max.) words written coursework assignment submitted at the end of Michaelmas Term.
2. Introduction to Learning and Technology is assessed by a 3,000 (max.) word written coursework assignment due at the beginning of Hilary Term.
3. Theories and Methods for 21st Century Learning and Research is assessed by a 3,000 (max.) word written coursework assignment due at the beginning of Hilary Term.
4. Foundations of Educational Research 2 is assessed through a 3,000 (max.) word written coursework assignment submitted at the end of Hilary Term.
5. Learning, Technology and Society is assessed through a 3,000 (max.) word written coursework assignment submitted at the beginning of Trinity Term.
6. The sixth course option is assessed by a 3,000 (max.) word written coursework assignment words due at the beginning of Trinity 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, 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 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. Opening hours are slightly shorter outside term-time. 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 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.

7. 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 prepares an Annual Review report for the Department’s Teaching Committee, where teaching and assessment methods are compared and improvements are identified. Any changes to the programme agreed by the department have to be 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 assessment 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.