

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: PGDip in Early Childhood Education



Course facts

Mode of study	Part Time Only
Expected length	12 months

About the course

The PGDip in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is designed for education professionals working with young children in the national and international sectors. This part-time course, taken over three terms, grounds participants in research evidence on child development and early childhood education to help inform policy and practice.

Delivery of this course is mostly online, with a one-week residential component.

You will receive a grounding in core knowledge and skills across three key domains of child development and pedagogy, and be supported in using this knowledge to implement evidence-based classroom practice:

- play-based, child-centred approaches and environments;
- supporting social-emotional development and wellbeing; *and*
- supporting language, literacy and executive function.

The core aims of the course are to promote:

- understanding of theory and research relating to child development and effective early childhood pedagogy across the cognitive, social and emotional domains, including analysis of their robustness and the information they provide for informing practice
- a practical understanding of how to engage in research-informed practice, including seeking and critically engaging with available evidence and designing and conducting ones' own classroom-based research
- an understanding of cross-cutting themes relevant to research-informed ECE practice and of current issues/debates in the ECE field
- the application of research and theory to practice through reflection on ones' own teaching, in order to enhance professional performance
- the skills of independent critical thought, rational inquiry, and self-directed learning
- critical engagement with, and reflection on, current issues and debates in the field of ECE research and practice through the lens of research and theory.

On completing your studies, you should feel confident to implement evidence-based practice in the domains covered, and to extend your learning about the process of becoming research-informed to other domains.

Threaded throughout the course are central concepts such as: cultural sensitivity; individual differences; inclusion and diversity; working with families; pedagogical leadership; and developing communities of practice.

Course structure

The course consists of three summatively assessed modules, and a one-week residential which will be formatively assessed. An optional research methods module will be available for the duration of the course and can be studied independently at your own pace.

You will have the opportunity to take a non-assessed module on research methods. This self-paced, eight-session module provides deeper information about the methods by which research is conducted in the field, and will help to prepare you for your independent study and to interpret reports of research that you read.

Residential week

Prior to the formal start of the course, you will attend a one-week residential module in August in the Department of Education in Oxford. At the residential week you will meet your fellow students and course leaders. The week will help to prepare you for the course by introducing key themes around research and evidence in ECE, exploring the principles of conducting and interpreting ECE research, introducing you to the University's IT and library systems, and providing guidance on engaging with research literature and writing for an academic audience.

Module 1: Building the foundations of research-informed practice

This module will be taken in the first term (Michaelmas term) and will explore in depth the broader picture of ECE research and practice. You will explore ECE from a range of perspectives and cover key theories of early childhood development and learning.

You will explore what it means to be a research-informed practitioner, and the types of research that help us understand children's learning and development and how to support it.

You will apply the principles of research-informed practice in four key areas:

- play-based, child-centred approaches and environments;
- social-emotional development and children's understanding of the other;
- adult-child relationships and interactions in ECE contexts; *and*
- supporting children's mental health and wellbeing.

In each area you will explore research evidence on effective practice, and interpret that evidence to reflect on and guide your own professional practice.

Module 2: Supporting language, literacy and executive function through research informed practice

This module will be taken in the second term (Hilary term) and focuses on language, literacy and executive function and how to support it through activities, interactions, play and developmentally appropriate intervention.

You will cover theory and empirical research relating to the development of oral language and literacy and how to support it (including for children with delayed language). You will explore bilingualism and biculturalism in the early years context, and research evidence on how to support the development of multilingual learners. You will also explore theory and research on the development of executive functions, and how early educators can support young children's executive functions.

The module will prepare you to reflect on what has been shown to be effective in a variety of contexts and encourage you to interpret that evidence for policy and practice in your own school/setting.

Module 3: Independent study – practice-based research project

You will build on your learning in Modules 1 and 2, to plan, conduct and write up an independent study/project relating to early years practice.

Supported by your academic supervisor, you will formulate a research question to be addressed through research in your own professional context, or through a literature-based enquiry. You will conduct the study and write it up in a dissertation of between 10- and 15,000 words. The focus of your study will be unique to your professional development goals and circumstances, and will provide you with the opportunity to address real-world questions about working in early childhood contexts.

Preparation for Module 3 will begin in the first term through meetings with your academic supervisor. The bulk of the work will be conducted in the third term (Trinity term) and the long vacation.

Teaching and learning

With the exception of the residential induction week and the independent study, all modules are delivered asynchronously online through Canvas, the University's online learning platform. Sessions will be posted weekly, and you will engage with them at your own pace over the week. Typically, each session will consist of a pre-recorded lecture, accompanied by a mix of pre- and post-lecture readings, forum discussions, quizzes and activities. You should expect to spend about ten hours per week engaging directly with the module materials. Module leads will convene a live Q&A session on Microsoft Teams at least once per term.

Work on your independent study will begin with discussions with your supervisor in at the start of the course, and will be your sole focus of the third term (Trinity term) and the long vacation. Typically, this will involve engaging in background reading, collecting data (in your school or setting), and writing up.

You will need to be employed, or have regular and practical access as a volunteer, consultant, etc, in an appropriate professional context (e.g. school, early years setting). Many of the activities will ask you to reflect on the relationship between your learning and a relevant context. Your independent study may focus on your professional context and/or the learners in them.

You will be entitled to attend the department's regular child development and learning seminars and weekly public lectures (the latter are streamed live and recorded for viewing later).

Attendance

This course is part-time and teaching is delivered virtually with one residential period in Oxford. You must attend the residential teaching week at the start of the course.

You will receive full access to the virtual learning environment (Canvas) where lectures, seminars and tutorials will occur.

Resources to support your study

As a graduate student, you will have access to the University's wide range of world-class resources including libraries, museums, galleries, digital resources and IT services.

The Bodleian Libraries is the largest library system in the UK. It includes the main Bodleian Library and libraries across Oxford, including major research libraries and faculty, department and institute libraries. Together, the Libraries hold more than 13 million printed items, provide access to e-journals, and contain outstanding special collections including rare books and manuscripts, classical papyri, maps, music, art and printed ephemera.

The University's IT Services is available to all students to support with core university IT systems and tools, as well as many other services and facilities. IT Services also offers a range of IT learning courses for students, to support with learning and research.

You will have access to the education collections at the Department of Education library.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department of Education and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Under exceptional circumstances a supervisor may be found outside the Department of Education.

Typically, you will have the opportunity to meet with your academic supervisor twice in both Michaelmas and Hilary terms and three times in Trinity term. In these meetings you may review module content, and plan and discuss your independent study. Your supervisor will guide your independent study and provide feedback as you prepare your manuscript.

Assessment

During the residential week, you will write a short academic essay, on which the course leads will provide formative feedback.

Modules 1 and 2 are assessed by submitted assignments, usually taking the form of a 2,500-word essay.

The independent study will be assessed through a 10- to 15,000-word dissertation on a topic selected by you and approved by your supervisor

Changes to this course

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description set out above. However, there may be situations in which it is desirable or necessary for the University to make changes in course provision, either before or after you commence your course. These might include significant changes made necessary by any pandemic, epidemic or local health emergency. For further information, please see the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>) and our page on changes to courses (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges>).

Costs

Annual fees for entry in 2025-26

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£6,085
Overseas	£9,955

Information about course fees

Course fees are payable each year, for the duration of your fee liability (your fee liability is the length of time for which you are required to pay course fees). For courses lasting longer than one year, please be aware that fees will usually increase annually. Information about how much fees and other costs may increase is set out in the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>).

Course fees cover your teaching as well as other academic services and facilities provided to support your studies. Unless specified in the additional cost information (below), course fees do not cover your accommodation, residential costs or other living costs. They also don't cover any additional costs and charges that are outlined in the additional cost information.

Additional cost information

You will be required to cover your own accommodation costs in Oxford the induction week. The department estimates that accommodation costs can start at around £70 per night in a college or around £150 in a hotel (single rate). Students should also factor in costs for meals during your stay.

Living costs

In addition to your course fees and any additional course-specific costs, you will need to ensure that you have adequate funds to support your living costs for the duration of your course.

If you are studying part-time your living costs may vary depending on your personal circumstances but you must still ensure that you will have sufficient funding to meet these costs for the duration of your course.

The likely living costs for the 2025-26 academic year are published below. These costs are based on a single, full-time graduate student, with no dependants, living in Oxford. We provide the cost per month so you can multiply up by the number of months you expect to live in Oxford.

Likely living costs for one month

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£330	£515
Accommodation	£790	£955
Personal items	£200	£335
Social activities	£45	£100
Study costs	£40	£90
Other	£20	£40
Total	£1,425	£2,035

Likely living costs for nine months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£2,970	£4,635
Accommodation	£7,110	£8,595
Personal items	£1,800	£3,015
Social activities	£405	£900
Study costs	£360	£810
Other	£180	£360
Total	£12,825	£18,315

Likely living costs for twelve months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£3,960	£6,180
Accommodation	£9,480	£11,460
Personal items	£2,400	£4,020
Social activities	£540	£1,200
Study costs	£480	£1,080
Other	£240	£480
Total	£17,100	£24,420

When planning your finances for any future years of study at Oxford beyond the 2025-26 academic year, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of 4% each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

More information about how these figures have been calculated is available at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/livingcosts.

Document accessibility

If you require a more accessible version of this document please contact Graduate Admissions and Recruitment by email (graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk) or via the online form (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/ask/form>).