Applying to the CPD Doctorate in Educational Psychology

Frequently asked questions

Answers to many DEdPsy applicant queries we have received are below. You can also find extensive information about the programme and application process on our website:
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/educational-psychology/dedpsy/index.html

What kind of applicant are UCL looking for?

We are interested in supporting any qualified and practising educational psychologist who is committed to developing their research skills through the programme, who meets our application criteria and who shows the ability in interview to be able to engage with a relevant and important topic in educational psychology through critical thinking related to their reading.

There is no age restriction – we have course members who are in their second year of professional practice and we have supported course members who are nearing retirement and who see completing the Doctorate as the pinnacle of their career.

Our course members work in a variety of contexts, from those working in Local Authority services across a wide geographical range to those working in independent practice – as sole practitioners as well as psychologists working for private organisations. We also support course members who work in clinical settings, e.g. those who are also qualified as neuropsychologists working in hospital settings or working within multidisciplinary and clinic settings (in Ireland and further afield).

You do not need to have completed either the MSc or an undergraduate degree at a particular university, or to only be interested in carrying out a particular type of research or work on a particular topic. What is key for us at UCL is that through the course, you are able to identify a research question and a relevant methodology to address that question in a rigorous, critical and creative way.

Why should I choose this course and not a PhD?

Our professional doctorate programme is carefully designed and structured to facilitate exploration of questions and issues from everyday practice through the development of research skills. You will have the opportunity to carry out a focused piece of research culminating in a 40,000 word research thesis, as well as four professional practice assignments which will relate to a range of topics relevant to professional practice. The course is therefore structured around these two main curricular –elements - the first focuses on research methods and the second on reflections around professional issues. Practically, the structure of the course is also designed to enable course members to work whilst they are studying.

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/educational-psychology/dedpsy/

You therefore have the opportunity to explore a wider range of topics than you would on a traditional PhD, to work as part of a supportive group of peers, and to have access to a carefully structured taught programme with regular timetabled opportunities for supervision.

On the DEdPsy, you will not have a supervisor who is necessarily a specialist or expert in your particular topic area as you would studying for a PhD. However, you will have access to support from a wider tutor team with a breadth of knowledge and experience (alongside years of experience in supporting practising EPs to complete professional doctorates). This includes support from your professional tutor and from a Research Adviser.

I haven't studied for many years – what support is there to help me?

Our tutor team has a wealth of experience in supporting course members who have not studied for some time and we understand the anxiety that this can bring, particularly in relation to academic writing, statistics and the use of technology to support research. Our curriculum is designed to offer introductory sessions followed by opportunities to seek further advice from tutors or to revisit topics in taught sessions. We are also open to exploring the possibility of providing additional workshops or support where a need is identified.

Academic writing, for example, is introduced in a session in the first few days of the course. Later sessions, still within the first few months of the course, focus on reference management, systematic literature reviews and on literature searching. Additional opportunities for support are available through parallel sessions (available whilst tutorials are held) and a half day optional workshop on literature review methods. You will receive detailed feedback on a first draft of your first assignment in May, before you submit a second version in August, again for detailed feedback in September before preparing a final version for examination in December. By the time you write your thesis, you will have received feedback and support with your academic writing skills on many occasions through work towards your assignments and developing a literature review for your thesis.

I'm worried about statistics as I've always found this hard – how is this taught on the course?

The teaching of statistics and research methods on the course has been carefully designed and has been described by course members as 'brilliant'. Our research methods tutor has a good understanding of the needs of our course members and has a relaxed and informal approach. Real life examples are used from EP practice wherever possible as a basis for teaching and there are lots of opportunities for hands-on, practical work around real data.

Who would my tutor be?

There are four professional tutors who work with course members – Dr Susan Birch, Dr Phil Stringer, Dr Roger Booker and Dr Tony Cline. Their profiles can be found at:
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/educational-psychology/people/index.html
You will be assigned a professional tutor for the four years of the programme.

What does a typical day at UCL look like for course members on the DEdPsy?

The day generally begins at 9.30am with a teaching session. After a coffee break, teaching continues until 12.00pm when there is a group review – a chance for the whole group to meet with members of the tutor team to share programme updates and to explore and problem solve issues raised by course members. Most afternoons consist of individual tutorials alongside opportunities to seek support from our research methods tutor, or on occasions to receive support with literature searching from one of our library colleagues. The timetabled day ends at 4.30pm. You can view our timetable at:
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/educational-psychology/resources/dedpsy_timetable.pdf

What happens if I miss a day?

If you are unable to attend we ask that you notify your tutor and the office. All session handouts are available on our virtual learning environment (Moodle) and you are welcome to follow-up with the tutor leading a missed session with any questions that you have. Individual tutorials can often be rearranged and can be held by phone or Skype if you are unable to come into college.

It can sometimes be possible to join taught sessions by Skype if course members are unable to get to UCL.

What is it like studying on the programme as an EU or overseas student?

We have a significant number of course members from Ireland, as well as a smaller number of students based around the world (e.g. the U.S, Dubai and France). We encourage course members from overseas to attend the first few days of the course if at all possible, to support their inclusion and participation within the group, as we know how valuable this group support is for all course members. We offer access to tutorial support and teaching sessions (where appropriate) through Skype and wherever possible, are happy to meet with course members from overseas outside of the usual timetabled days if they are in the UK. Comments from current students about studying for the DEdPsy outside of the UK include:

> *"The group getting in touch between teaching days and the facility to Skype in for Irish students is very useful"*
> *"The facility to be able to stay in university accommodation during taught days which fall outside of university term-time is very convenient"*
> *"In addition to the taught days, UCL is flexible about seeing people outside of the UK"*

What support is available for students experiencing difficulties?

The professional tutor is the main support for course members, although course members are also welcome to speak to either of the course co-Directors if they feel that would be helpful. Tutors may signpost individual course members to UCL Doctoral School short courses where further support with learning or research skills is needed or to UCL's support services (e.g. the student psychological services or student disability services) if personal support or adjustments to the learning environment are needed.

I started a CPD Doctorate in educational psychology at another university – is there any way my prior work can be accredited towards the DEdPsy?

No, UCL does not have a route for the accreditation of prior learning. You will need to fulfil all of the requirements laid out for the DEdPsy.

What happens if something arises which means I can't study during the course (e.g. pregnancy, adoption, illness, illness of a relative)

We will work flexibly with you to support you to make decisions regarding your ability to study. Where a difficulty is relatively short-lived, we will be happy to explore 'in course' options with you, extending deadlines for the submission of work.

UCL also enables all students to interrupt their studies if needed, up to a maximum of two years and fees are held over until the student then returns. Due to the demands of juggling study with work and complex life contexts, we generally have a small number of course members interrupting their studies at any one time. When course members return, they may re-join their original course group or can explore choosing another year group. We encourage course members to join any teaching sessions of other year groups that they may have missed.

If I am unable to complete the course, is there a step-off award such as an MPhil?
No, unfortunately this is not offered at UCL

How long does it take most students to complete the course?
The minimum length of the course is four years (with a viva in February of the fifth year and then time needed to complete any outstanding corrections). It is quite common for our course members to need longer than the minimum period and a significant proportion will take 5-6 years to complete. The length of time you will need does depend on your working style/speed and familiarity with the requirements of an academic course, the time you are able to make available for work on the course, the time needed for your particular research project (e.g. the design of the research project, time needed to access participants and obtain consent in a timely manner), alongside 'real life' situations that may arise, e.g. pregnancy, illness, house moves, changes in professional role and employment situation etc.

Who can I talk to if I want to find out more about the programme?
You can talk to our Programme Directors – Dr Susan Birch (s.birch@ucl.ac.uk) and Dr Phil Stringer (p.stringer@ucl.ac.uk). Email them to arrange a mutually convenient date for a telephone or Skype discussion. Alternatively you can speak to a colleague who has completed the programme or attend a Leading Edge day:
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/educational-psychology/leading_edge_days

When submitting an account of a possible area of interest for my research as part of my application, what level of detail do I need to include?
The draft 'research proposal' should be approximately one side of A4. You need to outline an appropriate proposal for an area for research:
- identifying an appropriate and relevant question arising from research or practice
- describing the basis of your personal interest in the topic
- explaining why this might be an important focus for research within educational psychology
- exploring possible ideas for how research in this area might be carried out, in light of any reading completed, referring to any possibilities and/or challenges already identified.

How many places are there on the course each year?
There are usually 12 places per year. In the last few years we have had to hold a reserve list and offer places for the following year to those who apply after the 12 places have been filled and to those who apply after the formal application deadline. A small number of applicants in this position may be offered a place on a reserve list. In the past a psychologist on the reserve list has occasionally been able to join the course when a change in personal circumstances has forced one of those offered a place to drop out.

Q: Is there a reading list for the course?
See below for a list of suggestions for preliminary reading which you may find helpful to consider before starting the course.
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/educational-psychology/resources/dedpsy_reading_list.pdf
Refreshing your understanding around research principles and design is likely to be helpful, as well as following up reading around your particular area of interest.

Q: Do you know what the implications of Brexit are for EU student fees at UCL?
Please see the most up to date guidance from UCL about fee implications for our EU students/ applicants at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/eu-referendum