

Programme Specification

Dissertation through Flexible Study (2019-20)

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

Awarding Institution	University of Southampton
Teaching Institution	University of Southampton
Mode of Study	Full-time
Duration in years	1
Accreditation details	None
Final award	Master of Arts in Education (MA (Ed))
Name of award	Dissertation through Flexible Study
Interim Exit awards	Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma
FHEQ level of final award	Level 7
UCAS code	
Programme code	4784
QAA Subject Benchmark or other external reference	
Programme Lead	John Schulz (jbs)

Programme Overview

Brief outline of the programme

Individual study

This innovative programme does not adopt a traditional classroom model of delivery, but enables you to develop specialist expertise through a combination of independent study and small-scale research, usually in your own work context, with tutor support and full access to University facilities. Specialist study is available across a wide range of areas of education and training, and we encourage you to contact us to discuss whether we could support you with your particular area of interest. For example, in recent years some generic areas have included:

- Investigating aspects of pedagogy
- Addressing curriculum-related issues in schools and colleges, for example through action research
- Enhancing professional development across a range of professional contexts
- Investigating issues of inclusion and widening participation
- Developing technology-based approaches to teaching and learning.

Group study

The programme is also ideal for groups working collaboratively, and can be tailored to address organisational needs, for example, colleagues working together within a single learning organisation/school or across a number of related workplaces. We can offer a bespoke pathway which complements a small taught component with group seminars and individual tutorials, emphasising collaboration and the role of constructive dialogue between peers as co-investigators. Workplace tutoring can be arranged where numbers permit.

Your contact hours will vary depending on your module/option choices. Full information about contact hours is provided in individual module profiles.

Learning and teaching

Mode of study

The programme may be followed part-time (24-36 months) or full-time (12-18 months). Your learning is structured around three assignments leading up to a dissertation, all of which must form a coherent portfolio. Topics are agreed with your tutor. Assignment lengths are 4,000, 8,000 and 12,000 words, and the dissertation 15-17,000 (or equivalent). Although featuring a common theme, each assessed piece of work must be distinctive and, while normally building on previous work, without replication.

As a 'Flex' student, you will work independently, in your workplace or from home, but with the support of tutorials and access to all library services for students, including electronic journals. Your studies are likely to include a balance of literature-based reading and writing, and independent research activity.

Tutor support

You will be allocated a tutor with expertise matched as far as possible with your area of interest, who will support you throughout the programme. There are no conventionally taught classes or set readings. Instead, you benefit from one-to-one/small group tutorial assistance from your specialist tutor. Tutorials are, where possible, tailored to your requirements and can take place outside normal university hours or in alternative locations. Where possible these are face-to-face, but where students live at a distance from the University, alternative approaches are used including email and video links.

There are no conventionally taught classes or set readings. You will work independently in your workplace or from home, with one-to-one/small group tutorial support. Your studies will include a balance of literature-based reading and writing, and independent research activity. You will have access to all library services, including online sources, and online study skills resources. In addition, you will have the opportunity to attend lectures and seminars taught as part of our MSc provision, and as part of the wider academic life of Southampton Education School, where your circumstances permit.

Assessment

Formative assessment provides feedback on your work in progress. Although your tutor will provide constructive critical commentary on your work, student-tutor dialogue also plays an essential role. Summative assessment is based on the three assignments and dissertation, and reflects your performance in relation to Master's level typical performance indicators.

You will be assessed through three assignments of 4,000 words, 8,000 words and 12,000 words (or equivalent), each relating to your dissertation topic. You will be required to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of a range of key educational concepts, in conjunction with an appreciation of how such concepts may be integrated with practice. If you have agreed accreditation of prior learning or experience, the assessment requirement is correspondingly reduced.

You will agree the titles and content of your assignments with your tutor. Your tutor will offer formative assessment through tutorials and feedback on work in progress. Your dissertation (15-17,000 words) will normally be submitted towards the end of March or mid-September, at the end of the study period. It will be summatively assessed following the criteria for Southampton Education School Masters programmes. Assignments deemed unsatisfactory can be resubmitted once (as a Referral) within a specified time limit, as indicated in the Advanced Programmes Handbook up to a maximum of 20 ECTS/40 CATS points.

Special Features of the programme

Bespoke programme

If a school, college or other workplace has a development project involving a group of staff which would benefit from the rigour and research-based approach provided by a Master's programme, they are invited to contact the Programme Tutor to discuss how the MA Ed. by Dissertation through Flexible Study may be tailored to meet the needs of both the institution and the participants.

Please note: As a research-led University, we undertake a continuous review of our programmes to ensure quality enhancement and to manage our resources. As a result, this programme may be revised during a student's period of registration; however, any revision will be balanced against the requirement that the student should receive the educational service expected. Please read our [Disclaimer](#) to see why, when and how changes may be made to a student's programme.

Programmes and major changes to programmes are approved through the University's [programme validation process](#) which is described in the University's [Quality handbook](#).

Educational Aims of the Programme

The aims of the programme are to:

- Enable you to develop a rigorous and thorough knowledge and understanding of research and theory appropriate to your dissertation area, and to engage with debates within that area;
- Enable you to examine critically the nature of education, learning, teaching and educational policy, practice and values within that context;
- Provide you with a range of opportunities for studying and assessing the relationship between learning theory and practice in educational and training settings;
- Offer you opportunities to study the nature of and issues related to educational research methodology and for you to develop methods and techniques for data collection, analysis and interpretation appropriate to the area of your dissertation;
- Enable you to consider the nature and influence of evidence and its scope to support effective teaching and learning;
- Enable you to develop knowledge, skills and abilities that will contribute to your effectiveness as a professional educator, and to implement or contribute to change in your own working environment;
- Develop your skills and abilities in critical and independent thinking and capacity for managing your own learning, development and employment.

Programme Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

On successful completion of this programme you will have knowledge and understanding of:

- A1. The central concepts of: educational values; theory; policy and practice, as they relate to your dissertation topic;
- A2. Alternative perspectives on the purposes of education, training, teaching and current or emerging educational matters;
- A3. Educational research and the nature of research evidence and its application;

- A4. Learning, teaching and curricula;
- A5. A comprehensive range of educational research;
- A6. The relationship between research, theory and practice in the development of a specific area of education.

Subject Specific Intellectual and Research Skills

On successful completion of this programme you will be able to:

- B1. Abstract the essential features of complex educational literature and research and provide a usable framework for its analysis;
- B2. Analyse educational topics both critically and logically;
- B3. Identify and recognise principal sources of educational information and data;
- B4. Organise and present educational information and data in an informative, reasoned and coherent manner;
- B5. Synthesise and utilise library and a range of other educational resources effectively;
- B6. Design and implement appropriate independent research strategies;
- B7. Suggest appropriate approaches to the evaluation of educational practice, as appropriate in relation to your dissertation topic.

Transferable and Generic Skills

On successful completion of this programme you will be able to:

- C1. A range of communication and presentational skills, including both verbal and written;
- C2. Use of a range of library and other electronic resources;
- C3. The application of information and communication technology skills;
- C4. The application of different data skills typically: collecting, recording, analysing, evaluating and dissemination;
- C5. Problem-solving including the evaluation of educational needs, planning, design and implementation of strategies to impact positively on learning;
- C6. An ability to work with others, as appropriate within the context of your studies;
- C7. An ability to work and research independently, including personal initiative, critical reflection and self-management.

Programme Structure

The programme structure table is below:

Information about pre and co-requisites is included in individual module profiles.

Where optional modules have been specified, the following is an indicative list of available optional modules, which are subject to change each academic year. Please note in some instances modules have limited spaces available.

Part I

Typical programme content

By definition, there are no compulsory taught modules for this programme. This programme does not adopt a traditional classroom model of delivery, but enables you to develop specialist expertise through a combination of independent study and small-scale research, usually in your own work context, with tutor support and full access to University facilities. You will be expected to develop your understanding of research methods, either through reading and tutorial support, and/or use of video resources made available to Masters Students.

Because of the personalised nature of the MA Ed Flex, the difference between the learning outcomes of the different modules is most likely to be one of degree; only those directly related to designing and conducting research will necessarily feature in the later modules. The table below summarises which learning outcomes are expected to be demonstrated in each module assessment, and which are more likely to feature in some modules rather than others, where appropriate to the topic.

To provide coherence across the portfolio, each piece of work must relate to a common theme, while remaining distinctive and without replication. The dissertation builds on work undertaken across prior modules, and provides you with an opportunity to undertake a piece of independent research in the study area.

You will work independently, in your workplace or from home. You will be allocated a tutor with expertise matched as far as possible with your area of interest, who will support you throughout the programme. There are no conventionally taught classes or set readings. Instead, you benefit from one-to-one tutorial assistance from your specialist tutor. Tutorials are, where possible, tailored to your requirements and can take place, by negotiation, outside normal university hours or in alternative locations. Where possible tutorials are face-to-face, but where students live at a distance from the University, alternative approaches are used including email and video links.

Part I Core

Code	Module Title	ECTS	Type
EDUC6281	MA (Ed) Flex Assignment 1	10	Core
EDUC6282	MA (Ed) Flex Assignment 2	20	Core
EDUC6283	MA (Ed) Flex Assignment 3	30	Core

Part II

Part II Core

Code	Module Title	ECTS	Type
EDUC6342	Dissertation	30	Core

Progression Requirements

The programme follows the University's regulations for [*Progression, Determination and Classification of Results : Undergraduate and Integrated Masters Programmes*](#) and [*Progression, Determination and Classification of Results: Postgraduate Master's Programmes*](#) as set out in the University Calendar: <http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/sectIV-index.html>

Support for student learning

There are facilities and services to support your learning some of which are accessible to students across the University and some of which will be geared more particularly to students in your particular Faculty or discipline area.

The University provides:

- library resources, including e-books, on-line journals and databases, which are comprehensive and up-to-date; together with assistance from Library staff to enable you to make the best use of these resources
- high speed access to online electronic learning resources on the Internet from dedicated PC Workstations onsite and from your own devices; laptops, smartphones and tablet PCs via the Eduroam wireless network. There is a wide range of application software available from the Student Public Workstations.
- computer accounts which will connect you to a number of learning technologies for example, the Blackboard virtual learning environment (which facilitates online learning and access to specific learning resources)
- standard ICT tools such as Email, secure filestore and calendars.
- access to key information through the MySouthampton Student Mobile Portal which delivers timetables, Module information, Locations, Tutor details, Library account, bus timetables etc. while you are on the move.
- IT support through a comprehensive website, telephone and online ticketed support and a dedicated helpdesk in the Hartley Library.
- Enabling Services offering support services and resources via a triage model to access crisis management, mental health support and counselling. Support includes daily Drop In at Highfield campus at 13.00 – 15.00 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday out of term-time) or via on-line chat on weekdays from 14.00 – 16.00. Arrangements can also be made for meetings via Skype.
- assessment and support (including specialist IT support) facilities if you have a disability, long term health problem or Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. dyslexia).
- the Student Services Centre (SSC) to assist you with a range of general enquiries including financial matters, accommodation, exams, graduation, student visas, ID cards
- Career and Employability services, advising on job search, applications, interviews, paid work, volunteering and internship opportunities and getting the most out of your extra-curricular activities alongside your degree programme when writing your CV
- Other support that includes health services (GPs), chaplaincy (for all faiths) and 'out of hours' support for students in Halls and in the local community, (18.00-08.00)
- A Centre for Language Study, providing assistance in the development of English language and study skills for non-native speakers.

The Students' Union provides

- an academic student representation system, consisting of Course Representatives, Academic Presidents, Faculty Officers and the Vice-President Education; SUSU provides training and support for all these representatives, whose role is to represent students' views to the University.
- opportunities for extracurricular activities and volunteering
- an Advice Centre offering free and confidential advice including support if you need to make an academic appeal
- Support for student peer-to-peer groups, such as Nightline.

Associated with your programme you will be able to access:

- Academic/personal tutor. As soon as you register on this programme, you will be allocated a personal tutor. S/he is a member of the academic team and will be available to discuss your topic, general academic issues related to the programme as well as offer advice and support on any personal issues which may affect your studies.
- Module handbooks/outlines. These will be available at the start of each module (often in online format). The handbook includes the aims and learning outcomes of the module, the methods of assessment, relevant background material to the module and a session-by-session breakdown of the module together with appropriate reading lists.
- Within the faculty, administrative support is provided by your student office which deals with student records and related issues and with queries related to your specific degree programme.

There are systems for the support of student learning in the Faculty as well as available from central University facilities.

Within the programme you will have access to:

- Support from your supervising tutor. As soon as you register on this programme, you will be allocated a supervising tutor who will also be able to offer advice and support on any personal issues which may affect your studies.
- Support as appropriate from the Programme Lead Tutor.

- Programme Handbooks. These are made available at the start of the academic year. The Handbooks includes the aims and learning outcomes of the programme, methods of assessment and other relevant material.

Within the Faculty, administrative support is provided by the Student Office based in Building 44, which deals with student records and related issues and with queries related to your specific degree programme.

There are facilities and services to support your learning some of which are accessible to students across the University and some of which will be geared more particularly to students in your particular Faculty or discipline area.

Methods for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning

You will have the opportunity to have your say on the quality of the programme in the following ways:

- Completing student surveys for each module of the programme
- Acting as a student representative on various committees, e.g. Student-Staff Liaison Committees, Faculty Programmes Committee OR providing comments to your student representative to feedback on your behalf.
- Serving as a student representative on Faculty Scrutiny Groups for programme validation
- Taking part in programme validation meetings by joining a panel of students to meet with the Faculty Scrutiny Group

The ways in which the quality of your programme is checked, both inside and outside the University, are:

- Regular module and programme reports which are monitored by the Faculty
- Programme validation, normally every five years.
- External examiners, who produce an annual report
- A national Research Excellence Framework (our research activity contributes directly to the quality of your learning experience)
- Institutional Review by the Quality Assurance Agency

Further details on the University's quality assurance processes are given in the [Quality Handbook](#).

Career Opportunities

The MA Ed by Dissertation through Flexible Study provides a route by which education professionals can develop an in-depth expertise of an area of their professional practice, which may involve the implementation or evaluation of changes in their own workplaces. Their degree acknowledges that expertise, and enhances career prospects; many graduates from this programme have positively developed their careers or gained promotion as a direct consequence of their studies. It also provides an excellent foundation for those wishing to pursue doctoral study.

External Examiner(s) for the programme

Name: Dr Phil Wood - Bishop Grosseteste University

Name: Dr Paul Armstrong - University of Manchester

Name: Dr Martin Myers - University of Portsmouth

Students must not contact External Examiner(s) directly, and external examiners have been advised to refer any such communications back to the University. Students should raise any general queries about the assessment and examination process for the programme with their Course Representative, for consideration through Staff:

Student Liaison Committee in the first instance, and Student representatives on Staff: Student Liaison Committees will have the opportunity to consider external examiners' reports as part of the University's quality assurance process.

External examiners do not have a direct role in determining results for individual students, and students wishing to discuss their own performance in assessment should contact their Personal Academic Tutor in the first instance.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information can be found in the programme handbook.

Appendix 1:

Students are responsible for meeting the cost of essential textbooks, and of producing such essays, assignments, laboratory reports and dissertations as are required to fulfil the academic requirements for each programme of study. In addition to this, students registered for this programme also have to pay for:

Additional Costs

Type	Details
Stationery	You will be expected to provide your own day-to-day stationary items, e.g. pens, pencils, notebooks, etc.). Any specialist stationery items will be specified under the Additional Costs tab of the relevant module profile.
Textbooks	Where a module specifies core texts these should generally be available on the reserve list in the library. However due to demand, students may prefer to buy their own copies. These can be purchased from any source. Some modules suggest reading texts as optional background reading. The library may hold copies of such texts, or alternatively you may wish to purchase your own copies. Although not essential reading, you may benefit from the additional reading materials for the module.
Approved Calculators	Candidates may use calculators in the examination room only as specified by the University and as permitted by the rubric of individual examination papers. The University approved model is Casio FX-570 This may be purchased from any source and no longer needs to carry the University logo.

In some cases you'll be able to choose modules (which may have different costs associated with that module) which will change the overall cost of a programme to you. Details of such costs will be listed in the Module Profile. Please also ensure you read the section on additional costs in the University's Fees, Charges and Expenses Regulations in the University Calendar available at www.calendar.soton.ac.uk.