

## Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: 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), designed for education professionals working with young children, grounds students 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 cognitive development (eg language, literacy, reasoning, 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/practice-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 professional practice, 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

An overview of the course structure is provided below. Details of the compulsory and optional elements of the course are provided in the *Course components* section of this page.

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

With the exception of the residential induction week and the independent study, all modules are delivered online through Canvas, the University's online learning platform. Sessions will be pre-recorded and 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 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, to an appropriate professional context (eg early years setting, school). 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 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, as well as [guidance on what technology to bring with you as a new student](https://www.it.ox.ac.uk/what-to-bring) (<https://www.it.ox.ac.uk/what-to-bring>) at Oxford.

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 dissertation report.

## 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.

The Department of Education will undertake a comprehensive review of its assessment methods during the 2025–26 academic year, taking into account recent developments in Artificial Intelligence. As a result, some assessment methods may be subject to change. Applicants and offer-holders will be informed of the revised approach to assessment prior to starting the course.

## Course components

### Compulsory study

#### 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). 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 then apply the principles of research-informed practice to consider children's foundational development and wellbeing and how to support it. The module covers four key areas:

- play-based, child-centred approaches and environments;
- social, emotional and behavioural development;
- adult-child relationships and interactions in ECE contexts; *and*
- supporting children's 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 children's cognitive development through research informed practice**

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

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 children's thinking skills, reasoning, executive functions and self-regulation, and how these can be supported by early educators. Finally, you will consider how to support children's thinking and reasoning skills.

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.

### **Options**

You will have the opportunity to take a non-assessed module on research skills. 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.

### **Changes to this course**

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description set out in this course page. 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 registration. The safety of students, staff and visitors is paramount and major changes to delivery or services may have to be made if a pandemic, epidemic or local health emergency occurs. In addition, in certain circumstances, for example due to visa difficulties or because the health needs of students cannot be met, it may be necessary to make adjustments to course requirements for international study.

Where possible your academic supervisor will not change for the duration of your course. However, it may be necessary to assign a new academic supervisor during the course of study or before registration for reasons which might include illness, sabbatical leave, parental leave or change in employment.

For further information please see our page on [changes to courses](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses>), and the [provisions of the student contract](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/your-offer-and-contract) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/your-offer-and-contract>) regarding changes to courses.

## Costs

### Annual course fees

The fees for this course are charged on an annual basis.

### Fees for the 2026-27 academic year at the University of Oxford

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£6,450
Overseas	£10,550

### What do course fees cover?

Course fees cover your teaching as well as other academic services and facilities provided to support your studies. Unless specified in the additional information section 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 costs information below.

### How long do I need to pay 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 fees will usually increase annually, as explained in the University's [Terms and Conditions \(//www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract).

Our [fees and other charges \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges) pages provide further information, including details about:

- [course fees and fee liability \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/courses-fees-and-liability\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/courses-fees-and-liability);
- [how your fee status is determined \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/fee-status\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/fee-status); and
- [changes to fees and other charges \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/changes-to-fees-and-charges\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/changes-to-fees-and-charges).

Information about how much fees and other costs will usually increase each academic year is set out in the University's [Terms and Conditions \(//www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract).

### Additional costs

Please note that this course requires that you attend in Oxford for induction week, and you may incur additional travel and accommodation expenses for this. The average cost of a hotel room in Oxford is around £150 per night, although the price will vary depending on the type of accommodation, time of year and day of the week. You should also factor in costs for meals during your stay. In addition, as part of your course requirements, you will need to choose a project topic. This element of the course is mandatory and forms part of the assessment for the course. Depending on your choice of topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur additional expenses (transport, accommodation, meals), such as travel expenses, research expenses, equipment, materials and field trips. These costs will vary according to the location and length of the fieldwork. You will need to meet these additional costs yourself. Many students complete their projects in their regular places of work and so incur no extra costs. There are no other compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees and living costs.

### 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.

### Living costs for part-time study

Your living costs may vary depending on your personal circumstances but you will still need to cover your cost of living on a full-time basis for the duration of your course, even if you will not be based in Oxford throughout your studies. While the range of likely living costs for a single, full-time student living in Oxford in the 2026-27 academic year is between £1,405 and £2,105 per month, living costs outside Oxford may be different.

Part-time students who are not based in Oxford will need to calculate travel and accommodation costs carefully. Depending on your circumstances and study plans, this may include the [cost of a visitor visa to attend for short blocks of time](#)

(<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs>), (if [visitor visa eligibility criteria](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/visitor-visa-eligibility-criteria) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before/visitors>) are met).

### Further information about living costs

The current economic climate and periods of high national inflation in recent years make it harder to estimate potential changes to the cost of living over the next few years. For study in Oxford beyond the 2026-27 academic year, it is suggested that you budget for potential increases in living expenses of around 4% each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

A breakdown of likely living costs for one month during the 2026-27 academic year are shown below. These costs are based on a single, full-time graduate student, with no dependants, living in Oxford.

### Likely living costs for one month in Oxford during the 2026-27 academic year

	Lower range	Upper range
<b>Food</b>	£315	£545
<b>Accommodation</b>	£825	£990
<b>Personal items</b>	£160	£310
<b>Social activities</b>	£50	£130
<b>Study costs</b>	£35	£90
<b>Other</b>	£20	£40
<b>Total</b>	£1,405	£2,105

For information about how these figures have been calculated as well as tables showing the likely living costs for nine and twelve months, please refer to the [living costs](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs>) page of our website.

### Document accessibility

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