

Programme Specification for Master's Degree in Professional Development

This document applies to Academic Year 2024/25 onwards

Table 1 Programme Specification for MA/ MSc Professional Development

1.	Awarding institution/body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching institution	University of Worcester
3.	Programme accredited by	N/A
4.	Final award or awards	MSc, MA, PG Dip, PG Cert
5.	Programme title	MA/ MSc Professional Development PG Dip Professional Development PG Cert Professional Development
6.	Pathways available	NA
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Flexible taught programme. The mode and site of delivery is subject to module selection and may be campus-based, blended and/ or online block delivery, distance learning, flexible and distributed learning, on-line learning
8.	Mode of attendance and duration	PG Cert: part time over a maximum of 3 years PG Dip: part time over a maximum of 6 years MA / MSc: part time over a maximum of 8 years
9.	UCAS Code	N/A
10.	Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement	QAA (2020) Masters Degree Characteristics QAA (2024) UK Quality Code for Higher Education
11.	Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision	Approved March 2025

12. Educational aims of the programme

This programme of Professional Development awards aims to equip students with practical, academic and research skills through a flexible, modular structure centred on work-based learning or sustained voluntary engagement. It enables individual students and employers to tailor a programme of study that aligns with their specific skills development needs. Whilst the programme facilitates the recognition of acquired skills for academic credit and promotes broader access to and participation in higher education, the course has been developed to satisfy the mechanisms of professional development: Build knowledge, motivate students, develop techniques, and embed practice (adapted from [Education Endowment Foundation \(2021\) Effective Professional Develop: Guidance Report](#)). The modular structure enables students to tailor their learning and professional development to effectively manage their cognitive load. Negotiated professional development modules support students to reflect on their prior knowledge and learning, setting their own learning outcomes to enhance motivation and sense of agency. Regular feedback and support enable students to take an evidence-based approach to new knowledge and skills development. Students are supported to apply their skills and knowledge within the context and requirements of their workplace or sustained voluntary engagement.

The programme aims to:

- Reflect on existing knowledge, skills and abilities to further enhance students' knowledge, skills, and competence enabling them to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, enhancing their practical skills and professional competence.

- Use feedback mechanisms to develop students' abilities to critically analyse and evaluate complex information, concepts, data, and theories in their field of study, equipping them with the skills to devise innovative solutions to complex problems in their professional practice.
- Recognise the value of lifelong learning and professional development, motivating students to continuously update their knowledge and skills, and take responsibility for their own learning, in response to a rapidly changing world.
- Instil a strong sense of leadership, professional ethics, responsibility, and accountability in students, preparing them for both independent and collaborative, ethical decision-making in their professional practice.
- Broaden students' global perspective and understanding of diversity, preparing them to work effectively in multicultural and multi-professional environments.

13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching, and assessment methods

Table 2 knowledge and understanding outcomes and which module/code they relate to

Knowledge and Understanding			
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s	Award
1	Derive a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of theoretical principles and practice, much of which is at, or informed by, latest trends and challenges of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Cert PG Dip MSc / MA
2	Demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline, modelling ethical considerations and responsibilities in professional practice.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Cert PG Dip MSc / MA
3.	Demonstrate self-awareness and a critical understanding of their own and others' perspectives and values within the professional field.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Cert PG Dip MSc / MA

Table 3 cognitive and intellectual skills outcomes for module code/s

Cognitive and Intellectual skills			
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s	Award
4	Manage complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound, ethical judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to different audiences.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Cert PG Dip MSc / MA

5	Demonstrate critical reflection and self-direction in tackling and solving problems, adaptability to manage change and uncertainty, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks in the professional field.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Cert PG Dip MSc / MA
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Table 4 learning skills and capabilities related to employability outcomes for module code/s

Skills and capabilities related to employability			
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s	Award
6	Enhance communication skills to effectively convey ideas and strategies in a professional setting.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Cert PG Dip MSc / MA
7	Demonstrate a conceptual understanding that enables the student to evaluate critically current research methodologies and develop critiques of these, and advanced scholarship in the discipline.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	MSc / MA
8	Develop proficiency in using modern tools and technologies relevant to the professional field.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Cert PG Dip MSc / MA

Table 5 transferable/key skills outcomes for module code/s

Transferable/key skills			
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s	Award
9	Demonstrate the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Dip MSc / MA
10	Display the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring proactive action, individual accountability, and decision-making in intricate, sometimes unforeseeable circumstances.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Cert PG Dip MSc / MA
11	Enhance self-direction and originality in solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Cert PG Dip MSc / MA
12	Develop strong interpersonal skills for effective collaboration in diverse professional environments.	Refer to Individual Learning Map	PG Dip MSc / MA

Learning, teaching, and assessment

The programme recognises students' diversity in relation to learning preferences and rates, and acknowledges that consistent and timely guidance, accompanied by a variety of learning and teaching methods, subject to the students' module selection, will facilitate effective learning.

Teaching and learning are student centred, reflecting the philosophy of constructivism whereby students are active participants in their learning experience, and learn with and from each other. This enables students to meet the learning outcomes of the programme by becoming critically thinking and critically reflective, independent learners whilst managing their cognitive loading. Critical thinking is based on academic research and methodologies informed by scholarship and professional practice. Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and integrate new insights and skills into their professional practice.

Students are encouraged to negotiate the content and duration of their studies at interview and throughout their studies. With the support of the course leader and/or academic tutor, students select from a portfolio of available modules to meet their learning needs, and develop a learning map to guide their progression. This enables their programme to be customised so that students can meet their specific needs and those of their employers. Emphasis is placed on real-world application, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge and skills in their professional environments.

Not all modules will run every year, dependent upon staffing and demand. A timetable of modules will be published each summer indicating the modules available in the coming year.

Subject to the modules selected, learning, teaching and assessment methods are inclusive and varied and provide different opportunities to learn, with a range of delivery modes including on campus face-to-face, online synchronous, and online asynchronous learning and teaching. A combination of online and face-to-face learning activities and regular feedback provide flexibility and accessibility.

Teaching

Subject to module selection, students are taught through a combination of interactive workshops, lectures, seminars, work-based learning, practical activities, and the virtual learning environment. Interactive workshops take a variety of formats and are intended to enable the application of learning through discussion and small group activities. Seminars enable the discussion and development of understanding of topics covered in lectures, and laboratory practical sessions are focused on developing subject specific skills and applied individual and group project work. Students may undertake learning in their workplace, enhancing their learning through the application of theory to practice.

Students will commence their course with a mandatory first module – MCPD4001 Introduction to Professional Development. Synchronous and asynchronous on-line sessions introduce them to Level 7 study, including academic skills development through reflection and exploration of their professional development within their own workplace or sustained voluntary engagement setting. Online interaction including formative and summative feedback on assignments, blogs, and discussion fora can facilitate students' confidence development in their academic skills and abilities and enables them to establish their community of practice. Reading Lists, including direct links to many of the required / recommended sources, are available online through Online Resource Lists (Talis Aspire). Assessment grades and written feedback are made available via module VLEs.

In addition, postgraduate students will have a minimum of two meetings per year with their Personal Academic Tutor, timed to coincide with key points such as induction or assessment.

The University places emphasis on enabling students to develop their independent learning capabilities that will equip them for lifelong learning and future employment, as well as academic achievement. A mixture of independent study, teaching and academic support from Student Services and Library Services, and the Personal Academic

Tutoring system enables students to reflect on progress and build up a profile of skills, achievements and experiences that will help them to flourish and be successful.

Contact time

In a typical week, subject to the modules selected, part-time students will have around two to three contact hours of teaching. The precise contact hours will depend on the optional modules selected with this information communicated via the specific module specification. When studying Negotiated Professional Development modules students will negotiate their contact time and mode of delivery with their module tutor. Thus, there is no typical class contact time. During completion of the independent project / dissertation, students are supported through supervision, which includes six hours of one-to-one support.

Independent self-study

In addition to the contact time, students are expected to undertake around 6-10 hours of personal self-directed study per week. Typically, this will involve searching for evidence, reading, making notes, practising academic writing in preparation for assessments, reflecting on development.

Independent learning is supported by a range of excellent learning facilities, including the Hive and library resources, the virtual learning environment, and extensive electronic learning resources.

Teaching staff

Students will be taught by a teaching team whose expertise and knowledge are closely matched to the content of the modules on the course. Teaching is informed by research and consultancy. The core team will be supplemented on occasion by Visiting Lecturers and guest speakers with specific expertise to enhance provision.

Assessment

The course provides opportunities to test understanding and learning informally through the completion of practice or 'formative' assignments. Each module has one or more formal or 'summative' assessment which is graded and counts towards the overall module grade. At master's level, students are required to demonstrate ability to recall and comprehend complex concepts but also to apply this knowledge in novel and sophisticated ways. Students are expected to analyse intricate problems, evaluate diverse perspectives and methodologies, and create original research or projects that contribute to their field. Assessments ensure that students are capable of critical thinking, advanced problem-solving, and innovative contributions, supporting their professional development goals, and preparing them for further academic pursuits.

The nature and format of assessments is dependent on the modules selected, and for the Negotiated Professional Development modules, students will negotiate their formative and summative assessment with their module/ course leaders.

The precise assessment requirements for an individual part-time student in an academic year will vary according to the mandatory and optional modules taken.

14. Assessment strategy

The assessment strategy meets the requirements of the [University's Assessment Policy](#). Students and teaching teams are partners in the learning, assessment and feedback process and engagement in a dialogue about these processes is essential. Completion of the Individual Learning Map which requires the mapping of modules selected by the student to programme learning outcomes has been designed to help ensure that students meet the programme aims and course-level Learning Outcomes, thereby fulfilling the requirements of the appropriate award.

A full outline of assessment methods and weightings, mapped against Learning Outcomes, grade descriptors, and assessment dates is published in the course handbook with further, specific details included in module guides. This course applies the [University's Assessment Policy](#) to ensure timely and consistent feedback and utilises the [Generic Masters Grade descriptors](#) for assessment of assessments.

Module assessment items are marked, and a sample moderated according to the University's Assessment Policy, a range of assessments being forwarded to the external examiner for this award. Dissertations are double marked; a range of marked pieces being sent on to external examiners prior to each exam board. There is an annual postgraduate moderation event to ensure levels of consistency of judgement across colleagues' work and disparate module deliveries.

15. Programme structures and requirements

The Master's degree in Professional development requires the successful completion of 180 credits at level 7. The emphasis is for students from a diversity of professional backgrounds and employment/ volunteering experience to apply skills, knowledge and behaviours developed within their professional arena and to interrogate their own methods within this context.

There is no single, definitive award map for this programme. During recruitment, students will be supported by the course leader to develop an individual learning map (ILM). This ILM will articulate the student's award map relevant to the professional development award on which they have registered. Modules selection will be drawn from an approved list of existing credited modules.

Table 6 award map for each level of the course

		Status Mandatory (M) or Optional (O)			
Module Code	Module Title	Credits (Number)	PG Cert	PG Dip	MA/MSc
MCPD4001	Introduction to Professional Development	30	M	M	M
MCPD4002	Extended Negotiated Professional Development 1	30	O	O	O
MCPD4003	Extended Negotiated Professional Development 2	30		O	O
MCPD4004	Extended Negotiated Professional Development 3	30		O	O
MCPD4005	Negotiated Professional Development 1	15	O	O	O
MCPD4006	Negotiated Professional Development 2	15	O	O	O
MCPD4007	Negotiated Professional Development 3	15		O	O
MCPD4010	Independent Project / Dissertation (45 credits)	45			M*
MCPD4011	Independent Project / Dissertation (60 credits)	60			M*
Additional optional modules drawn from an identified list of Continuing Professional Development modules available at: https://www.worcester.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-professional-development . At the discretion of the Course leader, students may request to change their module selection choice and similarly, the university may withdraw modules.					
*Students may only select one Independent Project / Dissertation module					
Total Credits		180			

PG Certificate To be awarded the PG Cert Professional Development students must successfully complete 60 credits at Level 7 (MCPD4001, plus an additional 30 credits taken from optional modules).
PG Diploma To be awarded the PG Dip Professional Development students must successfully complete the PG Certificate plus an additional 60 credits taken from optional modules to a total minimum of 120 credits at Level 7.
Masters (MA/MSc) To be awarded the Masters, students must complete a total of 180 credits at Level 7 including at least 45 credits from MCPD4010 or MCPD4011, and 30 credits from MCPD 4001.

Progression from PG Cert to PG Diploma or PG Diploma to MA / MSc

Students registering for the PG Cert. or PG Diploma can request a Transfer of Studies onto the PG Diploma or MA / MSc through Academic Registry, this must be actioned before the final Exam Board at the end of Semester 2. If this is not requested before the PG Cert or PG Diploma is awarded, students will need to reapply and will use Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the credits into the PG Diploma or MA / MSc. This will affect the classification of the subsequent award as grades are not transferred, only the credits.

16. QAA and professional academic standards and quality

This award is located at Level 7 of the [OfS sector recognised standards](#). The course has been developed with reference to the [QAA \(2024\) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) ensuring that the qualification represents appropriately the level of achievement required for Master's courses. The course considers the [QAA \(2020\) Master's Degree Characteristics Statement](#) and the [QAA \(2024\) UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) documents that specify the key characteristics in relation to purpose, content, structure and delivery, teaching, learning and assessment methods and relationship to further study or employment for Master's degree programmes.

17. Support for students

A full range of support for students is available within the University and further information can be found at:

<https://www2.worc.ac.uk/firstpoint/>

<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/life/help-and-support/services-for-students/home.aspx>

<https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/>

Programme specific support:

Induction:

Students are invited to attend a virtual induction day that will familiarise them with the University and the course. They meet representatives from Student Services, Registry Services, Library Services, and ICT and hear more about their services as well as meeting the programme team.

Individual Learning Map:

Students will develop their Individuals Learning Map (ILM) with the support of their course leader. The ILM provides the structure for the students' individual learning journey during their course. It facilitates the identification of personal career goals and articulates previous and current study and how this may contribute to a claim for [Recognition of Prior Learning](#). The ILM details the mandatory and optional modules selected by the student and which form their planned award map for their course. Selected module learning outcomes are mapped to evidence how the student's learning journey enables achievement of the programme learning outcomes

Professional Development Award Board:

The Professional Development Award Board (PDAB) is chaired by the Course Leader and includes representation from Registry services, student advisor, and discipline specific academics relevant to the student's individual learning journey. The PDAB conducts an annual progress review to ensure each student remains engaged to complete their award within their period of registration, monitors students through periods of temporary withdrawal and ensures module selection, as detailed in the ILM, remains current and viable.

Personal Academic Tutors:

Informed, intellectual discussion with academic staff lies at the heart of the learning experience. Developing effective study skills is an essential element in achieving academic success. All students are allocated a Personal Academic Tutors (PAT) for the duration of the course and are encouraged to meet with them at least once each semester to discuss their Individual Learning Map, feedback on assignments, discuss module choice and dissertation plans. The Personal Academic Tutor will also be responsible for writing the student's academic reference on completion of the course.

Independent Project / Dissertation supervision:

All dissertation students have a supervisor allocated from first contact and throughout the proposal writing and dissertation process. Students are entitled to 8 hours with their dissertation supervisor.

18. Admissions

Admissions policy

The programme is open to part-time students seeking to continue their professional development in a range of contexts and for varied purposes. The professional development and applied ethos of the programme does not preclude those who are not currently in employment. The programme has been designed to be of interest to those engaged in volunteering in charity contexts and are looking to use this to step up to employment.

The University aims to provide fair and equal access to university education to all those who have the potential to succeed or benefit from it. The programme fosters an inclusive and global ethos and welcomes candidates from a wide range of backgrounds and encourage applications from international students.

Entry requirements

General admission requirements for entry to the programme are:

- A good honours degree (2.2 or above) and / or equivalent professional qualifications, experience, and evidence of continuing professional development.
- Applicants must be in employment or volunteering for a recognised charity / organisation on regular basis.
- Students whose first language is not English will be expected to have reached a sufficient standard on admission to the programme; usually a minimum IELTS of 6.5 (with no less than 5.5 in any component). Other equivalent English qualifications will also be considered.
- Students being sponsored by their employer must provide evidence of employer approval and payment agreement.

See [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework](#) (Section 2).

See [Admissions Policy](#) for other acceptable qualifications.

When assessing a non-standard applicant's suitability for entry onto the programme applicants will need to demonstrate their potential to achieve the aims and outcomes of

the programme. The applicant will also need to demonstrate that their experiences are equivalent to having achieved a 2.2 at undergraduate level. The following criteria may be taken into consideration:

- Evidence of successful academic study at level 6 or equivalent.
- Experience of relevant employment / voluntary work, the roles undertaken and the level of decision making undertaken.
- Awareness of the demands of studying at postgraduate level.
- Interest and motivation for successful study on the course.
- Support from employer/ manager to undertake course.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements

The Postgraduate Awards in Professional Development do not require students to undertake placements, but modules may use work-based learning in areas where students are already employed / self-employed /volunteering.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Students with relevant previous study at postgraduate level or with extensive experience may be considered eligible for recognition of prior learning. Please contact the Registry Admissions Office for further information or guidance on 01905 855111.

Further information on Recognition of Prior Learning can be found at <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/941.htm>

Admissions procedures

All applications received are scrutinised to establish if admissions criteria have been met. Additionally, applicants are required to obtain two satisfactory references and provide confirmation of their identity. If students are international, language qualifications are also scrutinised.

Admissions/selection criteria

All offers to study on this course are conditional on completion of the student's individual learning map.

19. Regulation of assessment

The course operates under the University's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework

Requirements to pass modules

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in the module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is D- for each module.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items

- Students who submit course work late but within 7 days (one week) of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 7 days (one week) will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- For full details of submission regulations please see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

Retrieval of failure

- A student is entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade.
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped at D-.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module (or, in some circumstances, take an alternative module); the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.
- A student who fails 60 credits or more after exhausting all reassessment opportunities may be required to withdraw from the University.
- A student will be notified of the reassessment opportunities in the results notification issued via the secure student portal (SOLE). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and comply with any reassessments.

Requirements for Awards

Table 7 requirements for awards

Award	Requirement
PG Cert Professional Development	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map. Must include MCPD4001.
PG Dip Professional Development	Passed a minimum of 120 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map. Must include MCPD4001.
Masters (MA /MSc)	Passed a minimum of 180 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map. Must include MCPD4010 or MCPD4011, and MCPD4001

PG Cert and PG Dip awards are unclassified. The award of Masters (either MA or MSc) may be made with Pass, Merit or Distinction.

The award of MA or MSc will be determined based on the modules achieved. If 50% (or above) of credit is achieved from modules taken from MSc courses, the award will be MSc. If 50% (or above) of credit is achieved from modules taken from MA courses, the award will be MA. Where 50% (or above) of credit is achieved from Negotiated Professional Development modules, the award will be MSc. If 50% is from MSc courses and 50% is from MA courses, the award is MSc.

Classification of Masters

The classification will be determined by whichever of the following two methods results in the higher classification.

Method 1

- Candidates will be awarded a Distinction where they have attained an average of A- (PD) or higher from the credit achieved with the University for the award.
- Candidates will be awarded a Merit where they have attained an average of C+ (PM) or higher from the credit achieved with the University for the award.

Method 2

- Candidates will be awarded a Distinction, irrespective of their other module results, where they have attained 90 credits at grade A- (PD) or higher
- Candidates will be awarded a Merit, irrespective of their other module results, where they have attained 90 credits at grade C+ (PM) or higher

Candidates will be awarded a Pass where they have not fulfilled the rules for Method 1 or Method 2 but are eligible for the award of a Masters.

For further information on honours degree classification, see the [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework](#).

20. Graduate destinations, employability, and links with employers

Graduate destinations

It is likely that all students are already in employment, or self-employed, therefore their aim in following the course, is usually to focus on developing and enhancing their role within their employing / volunteering organisations. The course aims to support the professional development of participants and improve their career profiles. This award content and the flexibility of study is intended to prepare students to deepen their engagement with issues in the workplace, fostering transformative personal and organisational learning for those involved. The programme additionally offers preparation to continue study for some participants wishing to go on to the professional doctorate (EdD) award or to an MPhil / PhD.

Student employability

The University maintains close links with employers and providers locally and regionally and meeting workforce skills' need is the ethos of several modules. The student's individual learning journey through this programme is developed in partnership with the student, employer, and university staff and as such is closely mapped to both the needs of the student and the needs of the employer. To that end, students exiting have specific, focused skills desirable to their employers, but also in their wider discipline / profession.

Links with employers

The Course team are drawn from across the University to ensure their academic and research expertise and employment experience are aligned to the learning needs of students. The Course team maintain strong relationships with employers and organisations relevant to the discipline and area of practice.

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 on the learning outcomes, content, and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in associated course documentation e.g. course handbooks, module outlines and module specifications.