

Cambridge CELTA Course FAQs



What is CELTA?

CELTA is a Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. It is an initial qualification which enables people with little or no teaching experience to learn how to teach English and is the most widely taken qualification of its kind. The CELTA meets the minimum level of teaching qualification required by the vast majority of language schools in the UK and worldwide.

Who is CELTA for?

The CELTA course is an excellent opportunity for people of all ages and backgrounds who are considering a career in English language teaching. Many people are attracted by the chance to live and work overseas.

The course is also suitable for applicants with some, or a lot, of experience in education, but little formal training in the field of English language teaching. For candidates with some informal teaching experience, the course offers the opportunity to increase their theoretical understanding of the field and develop their teaching skills under the guidance of experienced tutors. For teachers who are experienced and qualified in a different discipline (e.g. a science, musical instruction etc.), it can be a chance to re-package their skills and open up further employment opportunities. However, teaching experience is definitely not an entry requirement for the course.

Increasingly, CELTA candidates are professionals either looking for a new career or wanting a short break in their existing career.

How long does it take to complete the course?

The course runs for 4 weeks and is a full-time commitment.

Who runs the course?

There are 2 tutors on each course, both of whom are approved by Cambridge CELTA and have wide-ranging experience of both teaching English and training and assessing teachers.

What are the entry requirements?

It is recommended that applicants should have formal qualifications which would allow entry into higher education in their own country, but it is not necessary to be a university graduate. If you are a non-native speaker of English you will need to be able to demonstrate that you have a suitable level of English. Acceptable qualifications include passing the CPE exam, passing the CAE exam with an A or B, or getting 7.5 in the IELTS exam. Applicants should normally be at least 20 years old, but Basil Paterson will consider applicants of 18 or 19 in certain circumstances.

What will I learn?

You will learn the principles of effective teaching, gain a range of practical skills for teaching English language and get valuable hands-on experience.

The course is designed around 5 topic areas:

- Learners and teachers and the learning context
- Language analysis and awareness
- Language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing
- Planning and resources for different teaching contexts
- Developing teaching skills and professionalism

What does a typical day of the course look like?

0900 – 1000 Lesson preparation and guidance
1000 – 1010 Break
1010 – 1120 Input 1
1120 – 1135 Break
1135 – 1245 Input 2
1245 – 1400 Lunch
1400 – 1615 Teaching Practice
1615 – 1630 Break
1630 – 1710 Lesson feedback

Input 1 and 2 are interactive sessions led by the trainers on topics such as classroom management, analysing language, lesson frameworks (methodology), phonology (pronunciation), teaching reading and listening skills, using technology in the classroom etc.

How intensive is the course?

You will be in the college from at least 9am to 5.10pm, Monday to Friday, for four weeks. You will also have various lesson plans and assignments to prepare at home, so should prepare to do at least 2–4 hours of self-study each evening and potentially more at weekends. You must, therefore, be prepared to fully commit to the course for the 4 weeks it runs; we strongly advise that you do not have any other commitments during the period of the course so that you can give it the necessary time and attention. We will only enrol people onto the course who we feel have the best chance of passing it.

You will be required to absorb new information from the first day onwards and be ready to start applying it in the classroom by the second day. For this reason, the training does not suit everyone. It is an extremely interesting course and trainees get a lot out of it, but you need to be ready to focus entirely on the expectations of the course. Being organised and able to cope with a demanding workload is very important if you want to make the most of the course.

How many participants are there in each group?

There are a maximum of 12 trainee teachers on the course and 2 tutors.

When will I start teaching?

Teaching practice (TP) begins in your first week. The volunteer English learners who we teach come from a variety of different countries, language groups and learning and work backgrounds. The exact schedule will change from course to course, depending upon the total number of trainees, but you will normally meet the learners on day 2 of the course and be teaching them by day 3. Your first lessons will be shorter (20 or 30 minutes) and you will build up to teaching 60 minute lessons. TP is a 2 hour block from 2pm to 4.15pm, and any trainees who are not teaching on that day will still be present, observing their colleagues.

Will I get feedback on my lessons?

All assessed TP is observed by a tutor and by up to 5 of your fellow trainees. You will be given feedback on your lesson from both the tutor and your colleagues and are expected to participate in the feedback process, evaluating your own lesson and giving feedback on the lessons you observe.

What support will I receive during teaching practice?

You will spend time with a tutor the day before you teach, looking at the lesson materials, discussing the best procedure for your class and making sure you understand the particular language point you are teaching. You will also have an opportunity to talk to a tutor on the day of your lesson. Ideally, as you grow in confidence you will become more independent in your lesson planning, choosing appropriate language points and even designing your own materials. The feedback sessions and observations of experienced teachers should also help guide and inform your teaching.

How will I be assessed on the course?

The course is assessed on the basis of the teaching practice and assignments which you complete over the duration of the course; there is no final examination. An external assessor, appointed by Cambridge ESOL Examinations, moderates each course to ensure that the quality of your teaching and the quality of the course meet the CELTA standard.

There are 2 components of assessment:

Teaching Practice

You will teach a total of 6 hours, working with 2 different groups of students, normally one at a higher and one at a lower level. You are given a grade for each lesson you teach and assessment is based on your overall performance at the end of the 6 hours.

Written Assignments

There are 4 written assignments to complete over the period of the course of a length of 750 – 1000 words each. Each is on a different aspect of English language teaching.

To be awarded the certificate you must pass both components of the course. There are three possible grades: pass, pass B, pass A.

Will I receive a certificate at the end of the course?

Successful candidates will receive a certificate from University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. This will be posted out approximately 4 to 6 weeks after the course has ended. In the interim period you will be given a course report which will detail your grade and a general interpretation of that grade in relation to teaching ability. This can be used as a reference to allow you to start applying for teaching jobs.

Does Basil Paterson provide resources / books?

Basil Paterson has a comprehensive resource library of teaching materials for use in and out of the classroom. The building also has a computer suite, full wi-fi access, photocopiers, printers and other resources available for trainees' use. Trainees will be asked to buy a general teaching textbook and grammar book for their own personal use (from those given in a pre-course reading list).

How do I apply for the CELTA course?

Download the application form from our website then complete and return it along with the handwritten application essay. You will then be contacted to arrange a time for a face to face interview. If you are not based in Edinburgh, it is possible to conduct the interview using Skype.

What does the interview consist of?

The interview consists of:

- Detailed information about the CELTA course and a chance to discuss any questions you may have.
- A series of tasks focussing on language and teaching. You will be given a pre-course task to complete before the interview, but this is not a 'test', so you are encouraged to use a dictionary, grammar book or any other useful tool.
- A five minute lesson from you on any topic you choose. This could be on anything from drawing a cartoon or using a digital camera, to the essentials of the structure of DNA. It should not be a language lesson and you should try to make it as interactive and engaging as possible. You will be given feedback and a chance to reflect on your lesson.
- A spelling test.

The interview lasts around an hour.

Is there anything I need to do to prepare for the course?

We will give you a comprehensive pre-course task which we encourage you to do as much of as possible. Although it is not assessed or marked, it is very useful as initial preparation for the course, particularly the sections on Language Awareness and Phonology.

How do I pay my fees?

Basil Paterson will e-mail you confirmation of your acceptance onto the course and confirm the due dates of your deposit payment and the balance of your fees. The balance must be paid four weeks prior to the commencement of the course. Fees can be paid in cash, by debit or credit card, cheque or bank transfer.

Testimonials

The CELTA course at Basil Paterson was an excellent course delivered by very experienced tutors.

I couldn't recommend it more. Practical and well organised, the course shows you how to build, evaluate, improve and develop your teaching skills. Hard work, but a positive atmosphere and great team-work. Thank you so much for your excellent teaching and professionalism! (Haridina, Greece)

I strongly recommend the CELTA course at Basil Paterson. The tutors were amongst the best teachers that I have ever met - experienced, professional and friendly. Thanks to them I felt prepared to start working as an English teacher. (Katarzyna, Poland)

I recommend the CELTA course at Basil Paterson. The tutors are pleasant to work with and there are enormous resources to draw upon. The course helped me to gain a deeper insight into practical teaching. It was a stimulating and rewarding experience. (Ruozhu, China)