

ELT



Ireland bulletin

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form in April 2015 and agreed an inspection date for the following August. We were sent two inspectors and the inspection of our two schools was carried out over two days. The inspectors were both very experienced in the field of English language education, as both teachers and school directors, and as such their feedback was invaluable. Indeed, the whole inspection process was remarkably constructive and a very positive experience.

Passing our inspection and becoming an accredited member of EAQUALS was very rewarding and has benefits far beyond the obvious promotional advantages of having its logo on our website and being listed on theirs. To date it has encouraged us to reflect and to develop. It has shown us how to keep quality at the core of what we do. It has helped us to set appropriate goals for further, ongoing development. Being a member has given us access to a wealth of resources and an international community of practitioners with a shared understanding of quality and best practice.

I would recommend membership to those who are looking to develop their organisations within a framework that clearly promotes quality and excellence. I would encourage those who are considering an application for inspection to firstly consider carrying out a self-assessment and to follow it up with an advisory visit. They are costly (fees can be requested online from the EAQUALS Secretariat) but we certainly found them worthwhile. A good starting point, and an overview of the process, is the free handbook: An Introduction to EAQUALS Accreditation, which can be downloaded from the website.

Finally, I would stress the importance of not underestimating the time and resources necessary to undertake such an extensive appraisal of your organisation. A dedicated person or team is crucial and support from the top is paramount.

References

EAQUALS (2016). EAQUALS.org (Accessed 9 March 2016).

When going through Delta...keep going

by **Damian Cunniffe** (Atlantic Language)

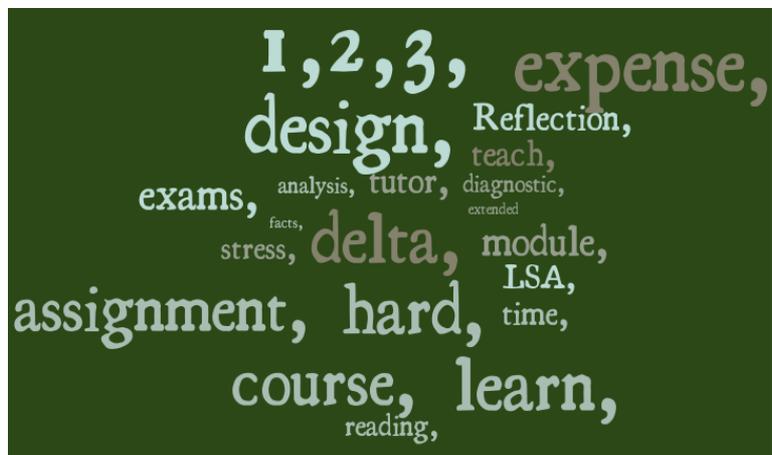
The Delta comes with a formidable reputation. Having taken the course in 2015 I can confirm that it is indeed a daunting prospect but intimidating as it can be, the rewards are significant even though it may take some time to realise these, often after the course is completed. There is no getting away from it though, as having a diploma like the Cambridge Delta has become the essential requirement for anyone who want to develop a career in English language teaching.

In this article I have some advice for those who may be considering doing Delta gleaned my own experience of doing the course itself and from the experience of other Delta survivors whom I contacted to get their opinions of the Delta, from its construction and its support structure to the actual course content itself.

Many referred to how isolated they felt while doing the course with some stating that they were often overwhelmed and felt the workload was excessive. However, when asked whether they were glad they did the Delta the majority answered in the affirmative. True, the Delta can be hellish. There are seemingly interminable lows tempered with only occasional highs. The key is to keep going, to organise before and during the course and to always keep your goals and objectives to the forefront.

The Delta modular course is run over the 9 months from March to December and September to June. The course consists of three modules which all run concurrently. There is an option to do each module separately which I initially considered and then rejected.

Module one deals with understanding language, methodology and resources for Teaching and is examined through a formal written exam at the end of the course. Module two consists of developing professional practice and focuses on



Word associations

Pic by the author

lesson planning and teaching. Module three involves extending practice and ELT Specialism and is examined by an extended essay focusing on course design at the end of the course.

From the very beginning I was made starkly aware that there was only one way to describe the three Delta modules, hard, hard, and hard. I wondered if it were just me; if in fact, there were aficionados of English throughout the world who were breezing through the material, dolefully viewing my desperate pleas for advice on the forums with distaste and derision. Only now after having received so many replies from my erstwhile colleagues do I realise that I had been far from alone and that in fact if there had been any nonchalant participants on the course, they were indeed few and far between.

The course begins with an orientation of two weeks to help acclimatise participants to the workload. All the prior preparation comes into perspective and you realise very quickly that what is expected is not at all straightforward. The course provider expects that you present your material in a prescribed fashion. Any deviation from the model is not tolerated and will result in a bad mark or worse. Throughout the course half the battle was trying to work out what the actual format was. Advice was often cryptic and frequently contradictory. I can freely admit that it took me until the end of Module 2 to realise the rationale behind the whole thing.

After the orientation in which you teach several classes before being given an evaluation of your approach, from the planning of your lessons to their execution, you are cut loose with the assurance that you will be given support throughout the course via your local tutor, online forums and remotely through a course adviser. If I were to be critical of anything on the course itself then it would have to be how this element seemed to fall rather flat.

The reality is that the Delta is a very solitary pursuit, sometimes fascinating, often interesting, frequently frustrating and occasionally horrible. The hours are long, the reading is interminable. If you enjoy a social life or if you have a family or children it can be extremely difficult as you have to get used to excluding yourself from the normal run of life and become isolated in a way that many people may find difficult. All of this may well put prospective candidates off thinking about the Delta but it shouldn't. In other ways, the course itself is brilliant. Whether the Delta makes you a better teacher or not is too subjective a question to answer but it certainly makes you more knowledgeable.

“Whether the Delta makes you a better teacher or not is too subjective a question to answer, but it certainly makes you more knowledgeable”

In Delta Module 2 you begin to realise that there are so many different ways that you can approach teaching and that the PPP format of your lessons which you probably learned on teacher training is rather restrictive. What you discover in this Module especially is that there are a wide range of techniques and formats to lesson planning which, if implemented, will result in more dynamic and productive lessons.

In module 3, learning how to design a course for your students is very beneficial to your overall professional development and is the module I most enjoyed.

Of the three modules, Module 1 still poses the biggest question in terms of practicality. It would appear on the surface to award memory and speed of production rather than examining teaching acumen which I would suggest diminishes its worth in the eyes of some participants. However the knowledge one acquires from studying for the exam does come in useful in the classroom in the long run.

I took on Delta due to a love of teaching and of the English language; the nuances of it and because of how I believe that it, in itself, is a thing of beauty. I also genuinely get great satisfaction from watching students improve. I wanted to make sure that in my teaching I was giving my learners the best possible information in which to enable them to learn. I also took on Delta because I was not always sure of 'what' I was teaching in any given lesson. I have always been a very intuitive teacher, willing,

indeed insisting, on changing things if they were not working. This has worked well for me and I believe for my students but I always felt that I required more discipline. My students seemed to like what I was teaching but at the end of a given day, I could not always say that I taught them A, B or C. The Delta definitely enhances your discipline and I believe that after course completion you do reap the rewards, in that, it may not completely change your teaching style but it will certainly invigorate and complement it.

Whether or not the Delta is worth taking on is also a very subjective question to answer. On a professional level, the addition of the Delta to your C.V. will probably enhance your job prospects in the long run. From a personal perspective, the gratification of having Delta is immense especially after you realise what you have to do to attain it. However there is the fact that the time element and the stress and strain of actually doing the course can impact adversely on your personal and professional life and you must be prepared for that. Financially, doing the Delta will not see you rolling in cash and you will find that it will take a long time to retrieve the cost of the course itself - if at all. Outside of the course fees there are

books that need to be purchased and this can be expensive. I would definitely advise getting in touch with former participants who may be willing to sell books or to pass on notes. There are also websites which can give you access to a lot of the documents you need (see resources below) and if you are doing the Distance Delta there is an online library which is good for articles but is rather limited for books.

The Delta does sort the men from the boys. It examines whether you are committed to a career in ELT. Love of teaching and the intricacies of language are huge pluses when doing this course. It can be done without them but I have no idea what circle of hell that would resemble. The course is tough but if you start, make your way through it, and keep going, it will be worth it in the end. The key is to do it for you. If your goal is personal achievement, it is certainly worth the price. Finally, there is some invaluable advice as passed on to me by former participants.

Be sure to choose your local tutor wisely. The preference would be for someone from your school, i.e. Director of studies or someone who has previously completed the Delta. There is always the option of getting someone from outside but from my experience internal is best. There are strict rules on what the local tutor can do for you but having them close at hand can be good for morale if nothing else.

Do not and this is worth repeating 'Do Not' ignore the Delta guidelines and believe that you can do things your own way. This will just lead to frustration and heartache. The first rule of Delta is to obey Delta guidelines, the second rule of Delta is to obey delta guidelines and remember there is no such thing as 'but'. If the format is not Delta, it is wrong. Make a timetable and stick to it. All other options will lead to misery.

If you genuinely cannot make a deadline, inform your course advisor. They are always willing to help.

Read, annotate, label. There is so much material to get through that you should have a system where you can record what you have read so that you can retrieve and use it without having to trawl through reams of paper to find what you need. This I learned to my cost early on.

Use the forum. The advice you receive on there could mean the difference between a pass and a fail.

Remember, the course is hard for everyone. There are no participants who find it easy, at least none I have ever met, so keep going. The end will come and when it does, the rewards will be worth it.

Further Reading

thedistancedelta.com

cambridgeenglish.org

tefl.net/tefl-courses/faq-cambridge-delta.htm

sandymillin.wordpress.com/delta/

scribd.com

The Delta exam rollercoaster

by James Duggan (Atlas Language School)

It's a cold but dry December morning at the exam centre. Six of us sit on the floor outside a classroom frantically looking over notes and flashcards. But we are not ELT students; we are, in fact, ELT teachers! Teachers, that have performed a dual role for the last few months studying for our own professional development and teaching to develop our students' potential. Each of us has been preparing to take the Cambridge Delta module one exam which begins in about half an hour. The cohort are representative of the ELT world in Dublin. We are all in our 20s and 30s, and divided 50/50 in terms of gender, three men and three women. We work in some of the many ELT schools in Dublin. Three of us have studied online and three did the course face to face. Soon, our phones are taken from us, the exam rules are read out and paper one begins!

Paper one begins with the task which focuses on terminology. We are given six descriptions of ELT terminology and we must say what they are e.g. A noun form of a verb formed by adding -ing to the stem. The trick



Hang on tight!

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