



Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications Educational Leadership

Mayar International Schools in Amman, Jordan has been a Cambridge International School for 12 years. Around 2000 students attend the school, which offers education from age 3 to 18. Mayar employs over 230 teachers and has offered Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications (PDQs) since 2020. Currently Mayar runs two Cambridge PDQ programmes, in Teaching & Learning and Educational Leadership.

About Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications

Designed to support school-based professional development, Cambridge PDQs are based on latest research and best practice in teaching, learning and leadership and combine innovative and reflective practice with critical engagement.

Working with Cambridge, schools design their Cambridge PDQ programme to suit the context and needs of their candidates. Each Cambridge PDQ programme is comprised of Units or Modules, depending on the level. Candidates submit a portfolio of evidence to Cambridge for assessment. Successful completion leads to the candidate being awarded the Certificate or the Diploma.

The Cambridge PDQ Programme Leader

The Programme Leader, usually a senior member of staff at a school, is key to the success of a Cambridge PDQ course, overseeing programme design and delivery, coordinating mentors and monitoring progress. To become accredited, a Programme Leader completes an online course, delivered by Cambridge. They have continuous access to a wealth of resources and support.

Cambridge PDQ in Educational Leadership

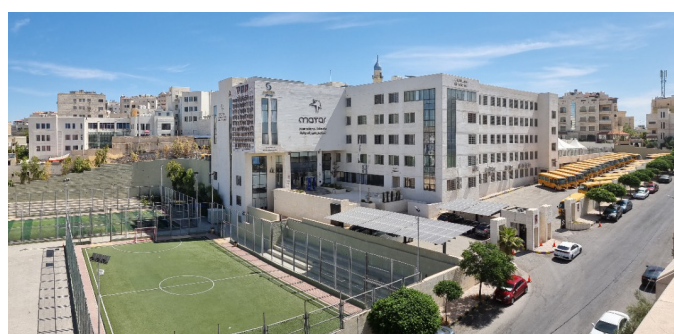
Designed to increase leaders' knowledge and understanding of successful leadership, this Cambridge PDQ will improve both quality of learning and teaching, and the development of their school. The programme covers key leadership theories, concepts and challenges with a focus on effective and reflective leadership practice.



Dr Nadia Kharbat is General Director of Mayar International Schools and Cambridge PDQ Programme Leader. She describes her experiences of the Cambridge PDQ in Educational Leadership.

'The Cambridge PDQ in Educational Leadership is an innovative qualification which enables school leaders to become more confident, responsible, reflective and engaged,' says Dr Nadia Kharbat. 'The quality of the course has stretched and challenged our candidates' leadership abilities. This, without a doubt, is the most important benefit of the programme.'

Ten candidates enrolled on the most recent Educational Leadership PDQ at Mayar International Schools, seven taking the course in English and three in Arabic. As the school's leadership and teaching staff are already well qualified (most hold PhDs or Master's degrees), candidate selection is based 'on their interest and vision for the future of our school,' explains Dr Kharbat. 'Successful candidates want to become leaders with exceptional qualifications and so their aim is not just to enrol on the programme but also to gain the highest possible score. As a result, all candidates for our most recent course came from our senior management team, including heads of department and even the school principal.'





Designing the programme

Underpinning the success of a Cambridge PDQ is a well-designed programme, which is developed by the Programme Leader with support from Cambridge.

Dr Kharbat began her programme with a series of weekly guided learning sessions, using Cambridge materials: 'In these sessions we talked in more detail about the concept of educational leadership, discussed key theories and how to put these into practice, and also looked at leadership in specific contexts. I prepared presentations to support these discussions, and provided lists of recommended resources such as case studies, articles in journals and books, and academic papers.'

Throughout a Cambridge PDQ programme, which takes around four months to complete, all candidates are supported by a personal mentor, trained by the Programme Leader: 'At Mayar International Schools our mentors are members of staff with experience in educational leadership,' explains Dr Kharbat. 'My role was to introduce them to the programme and its goals, and to explain the expected outcomes for their mentees.'

Preparing for the assessment

A key element of the Cambridge PDQ is the portfolio. Candidates gather a portfolio of evidence throughout the programme which is submitted to Cambridge for final assessment. When finished, the portfolio comprises a collection of documents which demonstrate the candidate's learning, practice and reflection.

'The portfolio is not a task which can be completed overnight,' says Dr Kharbat, who oversees portfolio development with guidance from Cambridge. 'The guidance not only helped me, but also helped candidates undertake their research in the most advantageous way, so they could generate the best evidence for their portfolio. In fact, helping candidates submit exceptional portfolios was one of my chief goals, and I designed a timeframe to make sure all requirements were tracked and followed up regularly to ensure quality remained high.'

Generating evidence which met Cambridge standards was definitely challenging, she adds, 'but as we progressed through the course I could see that candidates were improving their research abilities, and therefore their leadership confidence, by widening their range of resources – for example, by watching videos of some of the world's most prominent leaders.'

Subject to Cambridge approval, Cambridge PDQs can be delivered in multiple languages. This allowed Dr Kharbat to offer the programme in both English and Arabic: 'All our candidates have a very good command of English, but three of them felt more comfortable submitting their portfolio in Arabic. I consulted with the Cambridge PDQ team to get the necessary permission to deliver the programme in Arabic, and this was not a problem.'

Transforming teaching

A Cambridge PDQ Certificate typically takes around 150 hours to complete, spread over four months, which represents a significant commitment of time, especially for candidates already working in senior positions.

So what benefits has it delivered at Mayar International Schools? 'Although leadership is a quality ingrained in the philosophy of our school,' says Dr Kharbat, 'the impact of the programme was immediately obvious as it changed the mindset of many candidates and helped them to align their practice with widely accepted ideologies in the field of educational leadership. As a result, every time we encounter a different situation, we are able to view it through a leadership lens.'

'We intend to continue running the Cambridge PDQ in Educational Leadership, and as we are committed to extending our professional development capacity, we hope to offer Cambridge PDQ opportunities both to our staff and to external candidates.'

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A MENTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Manal Al-Masri, member of the Professional Development Department, Mayar International Schools

Why did you decide to become a mentor for the Cambridge PDQ in Educational Leadership?

'To be a mentor for a Cambridge PDQ is an extraordinary opportunity. It is challenging and intriguing at the same time, as it requires candidates (and their mentors) to examine both critical and philosophical questions.'

How did you prepare for the role?

'I have already been a mentor for candidates on a Cambridge PDQ in Teaching & Learning, delivered at Mayar International Schools. That experience was very useful as I felt as if I was living through the programme with the candidate. To prepare, I read the mentor guide provided by Cambridge and closely analysed the learning objectives. In fact, I found Cambridge resources provided everything I needed as they were very comprehensive and instructive.'

Tell us more about your role as a mentor

'I have to understand the essential principles behind the programme and draw on my own knowledge and experience in order to give my candidate helpful advice, all while maintaining a focus on learning goals and objectives. Above all, I have to create a positive environment which helps the candidate meet the programme requirements. Being a mentor has helped develop my understanding of

how to deliver feedback effectively. The feedback I give can have a significant impact as insightful comments can enrich a candidate's experience.'

What specific support did you give your mentee?

'Online and face-to-face discussions were among the most beneficial tools I used to support my mentee. I also used videos to explain my points of view, and contributed my own experiences when talking about evidence of practice, and whether our daily decision-making matched a specific leadership style or approach.'

As a mentor what was your biggest challenge, and biggest success?

'Helping my mentee manage the programme timeframe was certainly challenging, as she was also a member of Mayar's senior leadership team. When my mentee gained a 'Distinction' that was a great success for me, as was the knowledge that the candidate continued to read about and research leadership after the programme ended.'

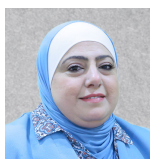
How has being a mentor supported your own professional development?

'Reading and discussing the latest theories in educational leadership has refined my own expertise and understanding. I have also gained a number of transferable skills, such as active listening and analytical reasoning, as I had to communicate constantly with my mentee while understanding all the requirements of every course unit.'

What is your advice for new mentors?

'Good preparation is key. I'd recommend creating an action plan which covers all the study and practical goals required to achieve the programme learning outcomes.'

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A CANDIDATE'S PERSPECTIVE

Dr Al'a Hitryeh, Principal
Mayar International Schools

Why did you take part in the Cambridge PDQ in Educational Leadership?

'Although I already have a PhD in Educational Leadership from the University of Jordan, I decided to take the Cambridge PDQ as it was an international qualification which met the requirements of my specific field.'

How did you approach the Cambridge PDQ and manage your time?

'I reviewed the scheme of work, analysed the learning objectives, then immediately started to collect evidence for my portfolio. I also had regular face-to-face sessions with my mentor, where I received feedback. As the programme covers leadership – the heart of my role as school principal – it wasn't a problem to combine the course with my work and in fact it supported and improved my regular decision-making. Given the size of our school it was a challenge to read, reflect and analyse everything covered on the course, but even so I still gained a 'Distinction'.'

What impact has the Cambridge PDQ made on your own leadership practice?

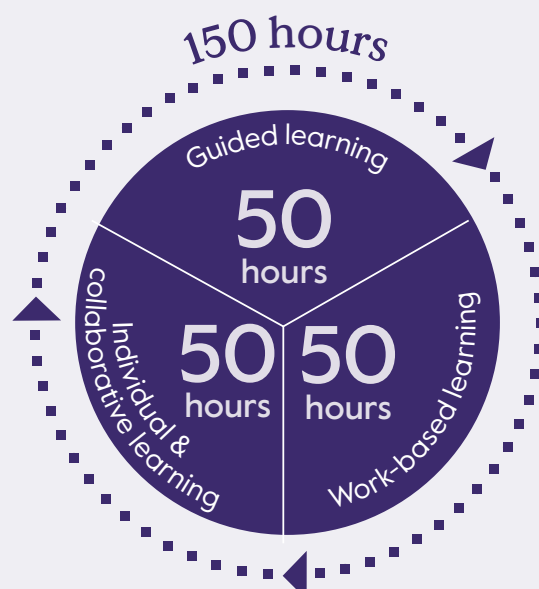
'The programme is unlike any other professional development experience I have had as it allowed me to immediately integrate theory with practice in my everyday work. As a result, it gave me the opportunity to improve my leadership, and to reflect on the work and development of those that I lead.'

What is your advice for other candidates considering the Cambridge PDQ in Educational Leadership?

'Prepare well in advance, make good use of any opportunity to discuss the different theories presented, and then make time to properly reflect on theory and contexts. In addition, it is very important to thoroughly analyse the learning outcomes as these play a significant role in the preparation of your portfolio.'

Do you plan to continue your professional development journey?

'Now that I have completed the first module, and gained a 'Distinction' in my Cambridge PDQ Certificate, I plan to progress towards a Diploma and become a trainer, supporting Programme Leaders delivering the Educational Leadership qualification.'



A Cambridge Professional Development Qualification consists of a broad balance of activities sequenced over time, and designed according to the needs of teachers and their school.

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For more details about Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications go to: cambridgeinternational.org/pdq