Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications Teaching with Digital Technologies

The Beaconhouse School System is a network of 200 private schools across Pakistan. Together they educate around 110 000 students, from pre-school to upper secondary, and employ over 8000 teachers. Since 2010, Beaconhouse School System has been a registered Cambridge Professional Development Centre. Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications (PDQs) are run by a number of their schools and are open to staff across the network.

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 in Teaching with Digital Technologies

This qualification encourages candidates to reflect critically on their own and colleagues' teaching, and to experiment with new techniques and technologies. Ultimately, they will improve their own practice, so that all their students learn more effectively.

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, co-ordinating mentors and monitoring progress. To become accredited, a Programme Leader completes an online course, delivered by Cambridge. They have access to a wealth of support.

We spoke to **Neelam Tariq** (left), Manager of Education Technology at Beaconhouse, and **Ayesha Siddiqi** (right), a school principal and Cambridge PDQ Programme Leader, about their experiences of the Cambridge PDQ in Teaching with Digital Technologies.

'We have offered Cambridge PDQs to schools within the Beaconhouse School System since 2010,' says Neelam Tariq, 'and in 2015 we expanded our portfolio with the Cambridge PDQ in Teaching with Digital Technologies. This is offered exclusively to teachers across our school network, across all grades, to enhance their proficiency when integrating technology into their teaching.'

As the Beaconhouse group employs over 8000 teachers, it is a significant undertaking to deliver Cambridge PDQ programmes. 'We have a highly competent team of 11 qualified Programme Leaders who oversee Cambridge PDQ implementation, together with three examining officers and a mentor for every candidate,' says Neelam.

Transforming teaching practice

The Teaching with Digital Technologies programme has a 'distinguished reputation' across the Beaconhouse group, says Cambridge PDQ Programme Leader Ayesha Siddiqi, who is also a Beaconhouse School head. 'It has significantly transformed teaching and learning practice by empowering teachers to effectively incorporate digital tools and innovations into their classroom practice. It has also inspired confidence among those initially hesitant to embrace technology-driven approaches, especially in early years and primary education.'

Course candidates come from schools across the Beaconhouse School System and are mainly experienced teachers, 'but we also encourage support staff working with technology to apply, as

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications: Teaching with Digital Technologies

our aim is to deliver PDQ programmes which are accessible and inclusive,' says Neelam. 'Candidates can apply at any point in their professional development journey – our only requirement is that they first successfully complete our in-house professional development course 'Developing Reflective Practitioners'.

Designing the programme

Cambridge PDQs are designed by individual Programme Leaders at Beaconhouse who first complete an online induction course run by Cambridge. 'Programme Leaders can access a wide range of Cambridge resources but we have also developed our own supplementary materials,' says Neelam. 'These include Programme Leader guides, to ensure consistent programme delivery, and mentor support, such as our face-to-face course 'Mentoring in Action'.

Programme Leaders carefully select the instruction methods and resources best placed to achieve the desired learning outcomes. 'For example, to meet the diverse contextual needs of my cohort, I had to consider how to make content interactive and engaging,' says Ayesha. 'As a result, I used presentations, case studies, group activities, reflection, access to relevant learning materials and online resources, as well as practical exercises using technology tools.'

Continuous programme review and improvement also underpins the Beaconhouse approach: 'We aim to identify challenges and explore ways of expanding a cohort, so more teachers can derive value from the Cambridge PDQ programme,' says Neelam. 'As part of this we diligently gather feedback on delivery, logistics and content as part of our quality assurance process.'

Portfolio development

Programme Leaders – together with mentors – also play a crucial role in helping candidates create their portfolios of evidence. 'When it comes to portfolio development, Cambridge guidelines are our compass and we strictly adhere to them,' says Ayesha, 'but we also offer a range of additional support. We demonstrate academic writing techniques (eg. share case studies and deliver constant feedback) so candidates know the standard expected.'

To maintain quality, Programme Leaders refer to Cambridge checklists, and encourage candidates to read Cambridge assessment criteria and then develop their own checklists as a means of self-reflection. 'Originality of work is always emphasised,' adds Ayesha, 'and we undertake plagiarism checks to ensure the integrity of submissions.'

Clear rewards

Although the Cambridge PDQ in Teaching with Digital Technologies requires detailed planning and skilful execution, for Ayesha the rewards are clear: 'One of the most significant changes is a growth mind-set. The programme broadens perspectives and enables candidates to recognise how simple technologies can facilitate blended learning which combines both interactive and hands-on methods.

'Above all, candidates know that a Cambridge PDQ Certificate or Diploma clearly indicates that teachers and leaders within our school have a higher intellectual understanding of digital technology.'

" One of the most significant changes [for candidates] is a growth mind-set. The programme broadens perspectives. "

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications: Teaching with Digital Technologies

A MENTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Sidra Jawwad, School Head,
Beaconhouse School System – Centre

Why did you decide to become a mentor for the Cambridge PDQ in Teaching with Digital Technologies?

Through my personal experience of completing the Cambridge PDQ programme, I recognised the important role played by mentors who had a comprehensive understanding of the programme and its requirements and expectations.

How did you prepare for the role?

I am an experienced trainer and mentor novice teachers, so I could seamlessly transfer these skills to my role as mentor for the Cambridge PDQ programme. I also attended a mentoring workshop and took part in selected guided sessions with candidates. These sessions were designed to foster collaboration and teamwork between candidates and mentors, but also provided first-hand insights into a candidate's learning journey, allowing me to better understand their perspectives and tailor my mentoring approach.

What specific support do you give your mentees?

Regular communication is key. My mentees use me as a constant sounding board, discussing their guided sessions and individual and collaborative learning. We also discuss challenges and goals, and they express their concerns and seek guidance. Through my feedback I aim to highlight their strengths, and areas for improvement, and help them develop their skills and knowledge.

As a mentor what is your biggest challenge?

Time management, as I have to balance my mentoring responsibilities with my professional and personal commitments, which can be a juggling act at times.

And what was your biggest success?

When one of my mentees successfully developed her approach to technology integration. Together, we identified small, manageable steps to incorporate technology into her daily lessons, gradually building her confidence and honing her skills. Throughout the process, I shared practical tips, demonstrated the use of specific tools, and offered constructive feedback on her lesson plans and implementation. Over time, I observed remarkable progress in my mentee's abilities. She grew more comfortable and adept at using digital technologies in her teaching, leading to a profound impact on student engagement and learning outcomes.

Witnessing my mentee's increased confidence was truly inspiring, as she began to explore more innovative ways to leverage technology and enhance her instructional practice. She not only mastered technology integration but also demonstrated exceptional growth and excellence in her overall performance. I am proud to say she achieved a Distinction.

How has being a mentor supported your own professional development?

It has been incredibly enriching and enabled me to develop a range of transferable skills which have had a positive impact on my own professional growth. I have enhanced my ability to foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment, where mentees feel comfortable about sharing their challenges and successes. My critical thinking skills have been sharpened as I analyse and assess my mentee's assignments and portfolios in order to provide targeted and effective feedback.

What is your advice for new mentors?

Prioritise active listening and empathy. Take time to truly understand your mentee's needs, challenges, and goals by listening attentively and providing a supportive environment where they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns. Be open to learning from your mentees and together you can create a meaningful and impactful experience.

> " Being a mentor has been incredibly enriching and enabled me to develop transferable skills. "

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications: Teaching with Digital Technologies

A CANDIDATE'S PERSPECTIVE

Ayesha Inam, Teacher, Beaconhouse School System – Centre

Why did you take part in the Cambridge PDQ in Teaching with Digital Technologies?

I am a former computer software engineer and have always been excited to explore how digital technologies can enhance learning and teaching in my classroom. This course seemed like the perfect opportunity to learn how to maximise classroom productivity by using different digital technologies.

How did you work with your mentor during the programme?

It was a daily process of sharing my findings so we could continue to implement best practice in our school. In addition, before submitting every assignment, we had a detailed discussion covering the most important points and issues to consider. I then made sure, every day, that I applied my newly acquired knowledge when gathering the resources I needed for my portfolio, such as photos, videos, survey results, and research reports.

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

The Covid-19 pandemic began just after I started the Cambridge PDQ programme, which meant that learning immediately moved online and as a result I could apply this learning directly to my own online lessons. However, dealing with the uncertainties of Covid-19, making sure I got the most benefit out of the course, and balancing family responsibilities, together represented the biggest challenge I've faced during my teaching career. What kept me motivated was the way in which Programme Leaders managed the pace of the programme, and the fact that the course immediately helped me to deliver online lessons which were more active and engaging.

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

It taught me how to make active learning happen in online lessons, and how to use digital technologies for a clear and focused purpose, not just how to include IT in my lessons. The course boosted my confidence and made me more interested in teaching, since I finally felt I was using my computer software engineering degree to the fullest. Now I have ideas for creating my own ed-tech products.

What is your advice for other candidates considering the Cambridge PDQ in Teaching with Digital Technologies?

Firstly, I have to say that this was one of the best professional development programmes I've ever taken part in. It has given me exactly what I needed, as an educator working in a student-centred and technologically advanced institution.

I would highly recommend this programme to any aspiring educator who wants to make a difference in their classroom and increase the engagement and self-direction of their students. For future candidates, I also recommend a 'can do' attitude when starting the programme, as then you may see your teaching practice magically transform.

Holistic learning, based on global best practice, has enhanced my confidence, raised my teaching profile, and brought much-needed fresh ideas into my classroom.
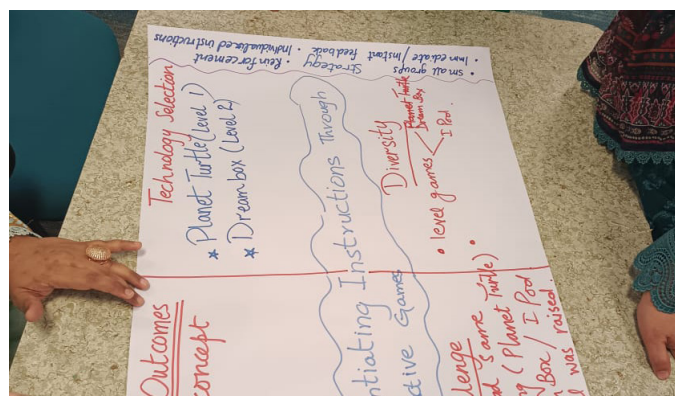
> ❝ I would highly recommend this programme to any aspiring educator who wants to make a difference in their classroom. ❞

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