

Cambridge DELTA Module 2 by numbers

The information below is a mix of things I have rewritten from the Cambridge DELTA Handbook as it was in August 2010 (from which all quotes below come) in an attempt to make it more accessible and memorable, and some personal opinions and advice. In neither case should any of this information be taken as definitive, and you should check everything with the latest version of the Handbook and your DELTA tutors, especially as Cambridge often sends out further information or updates the Handbook without prior notice. I nonetheless hope that this repackaging of the information is useful, because I could have done with something like this when answering candidate questions myself!

There is a brief guide to the DELTA jargon used in this article at the bottom of the page, and a fuller guide to the most common jargon is available elsewhere on UsingEnglish.com as part of the A to Z Guide to Cambridge DELTA Module Two

????- the number of LSSA essays and lessons you can fail and still pass. This seems to have been left intentionally ambiguous by Cambridge, but if you passed one Systems lesson and one Systems essay and then did an external Skills lesson and essay and passed that, it seems to be enough to get by as long as you get an overall pass as well (that being an overall grade which also depends on how bad your failed lessons are, etc).

Zero- the amount of material from your usual textbook that should be used in your observed LSSA lesson. The very unlikely exception is if the thing in the book turned out to be the best of all the teaching ideas that you mentioned in your essay and so you find it possible to justify that choice. Ditto for justifying things just by them being on the syllabus- after all, you might be observed for as little as 40 minutes with this class

Zero- the amount of involvement that your observer should have in your LSSA lesson. Getting observers involved is possible during peer observations and recommended by some teacher trainers, but is specifically banned in DELTA Module Two

Zero- the number of references to the class you will be teaching in your LSSA essay. These should be kept for the lesson plan, especially its commentary section

Zero- The number of modules that you have to take in addition to Module 2. The modules can stand alone and be put on your CV as such, although you'll obviously need to do all three for it to actually count as a Cambridge DELTA and just doing one is quite rare

Zero – The number of LSSAs you can fail if you want to get a Merit or Distinction

Zero – The number of drafts of your externally observed lesson that your DELTA tutor(s) can look at. You can show them an outline essay plan and ask them specific questions though

Zero – The number of times you should have experimented with the techniques etc that you will be trying for your EP. This means you should not try everything that takes your interest while you are doing your reading, or there might be nothing left to experiment with!

Zero- the number of acceptable footnotes

Zero- the number of references that you can put in an appendix to save space in the body of the text

Zero- the number of teaching suggestions that you can put in your LSSA essay even though they are not specific to the language or level that is in your essay title

Zero- the amount of help your DELTA tutors can give you when you write up the reflection on your externally assessed lesson

Zero- the number of words in an LSSA essay conclusion. Just finish with an evaluation of the teaching ideas (or of the last teaching idea if you have been evaluating them as you go along)

Zero or one – the number of peer observers in your EP lesson, of which the best is probably one as that gives you more to write about and a different perspective

Zero or one- The number of beliefs questionnaires you must complete before writing Part Two of your RA. Some course providers insist on this, and it certainly makes identifying and reflecting on your beliefs easier, but it doesn't actually seem to be a requirement of Cambridge

One – the number of words over the word limit for the essays that could affect your mark, e.g. making it impossible to get a Merit or Distinction. Meeting the word limit is the easiest mark in Module 2, so there really is no excuse for writing 2501 words rather than 2500

One – the number of LSSAs that you can do on each Skill or area of Systems i.e. no two lessons on grammar

One – The number of each kind of LSSA you will need to pass, i.e. at least one Skills and one Systems

One – The number of drafts of your LSSA essays that your tutor will usually read through and look at, although they can give you more support for LSSA and it's best to practice doing it with even less support before your externally observed lesson if you can

One- the number of unassessed diagnostic lessons that your tutor will sit in on. You can of course ask other people to sit in on your other lessons before or after that if you wish

One- the number of lessons observed by an external observer which you have to pass (out of one)

One – the number of LSSAs on productive skills (writing or speaking) and on receptive skills (reading or listening). In other words, you can't do two productive skills lessons or two receptive skills lessons

One – Definitely too few things to pick out as things to work on (i.e. weaknesses you identify) as part of your PDA or after an LSSA, but a possible number for the priorities that you choose (that being what priorities mean after all)



One – The number of lessons which must be a Merit to get a Merit overall. It doesn't matter how many essays are Merits if you don't get a Merit in at least one lesson. The external must be a Merit to get a Merit, so that is the one!

One or more- The number of categories which are not (fully) met in a way that “demonstrate that the candidate lacks depth and/or breadth of background knowledge and/or convincing application to classroom practice” for the essay or “have a negative impact on the candidate's classroom practice and the learning that takes place” for the lesson (page 60) that can lead to a fail

Two- The number of grades for each LSSA, being one for the lesson and one for the essay. You will also be given an overall grade, but the lesson grades are also important as they have more influence on your overall grade than the written work

Two- The number of grades that are available for the PDA, being just Pass or Fail. This is unlike the LSSAs, which also have Pass with Merit and Pass with Distinction available. You can pass Module Two without passing the PDA, but you must get a Pass to get a Merit or Distinction.

Two – the number of LSSAs that you do before writing Part Three of your RA (Reflection and Action, half of your PDA)

At least two- The number of tutors who will check your work, for example a local DELTA tutor and online tutor if you are doing a distance course

Three- The possible marks you can be given for each category and sub-category of assessment criteria for your lesson and essay, being Met, Partially Met, Not Met

Three- the section headings recommended by Cambridge for LSSA post-lesson written reflections: “*Planning and outcomes, Strengths and weaknesses and Consolidation and follow up*” (page 65)

At least three - the number of different sources you have to quote in the essays for the LSSAs. Although it is not stated, this is also a good minimum number of references in the essay for the RA part of the PDA. For the LSSAs, three meets the criteria but at least 8 to 10 is probably better

At least three or four days – The length of time you should probably give your tutor to get back to you on each thing you need feedback on, usually meaning the essay title, outline of essay or first draft, further feedback on essay, lesson plan, and reflection. That adds up to at least two weeks before your observed lesson that you should let your tutor know what essay title you are thinking about

Four – Almost certainly too many things to pick as priorities as things to work on in your LSSA and PDA reflections. This is a good number of weaknesses to mention, but you'll need to narrow the number of priorities down with reference to their effect on student learning before you decide on an action plan

Four- Number of LSSAs

Four- The number of LSSAs you will to pass (i.e. all of them) if you want to be in with the chance

of a Merit or Distinction

Four- The number of things that count as language systems that you should choose two from- grammar, lexis, phonology and discourse. You cannot do both Systems LSSAs on the same system, i.e. two lexis lessons is not allowed

Four- The number of grades that are available for the LSSAs and the Module Two overall grade, being Fail, Pass, Pass with Merit and Pass with Distinction. A grade is given separately for the essay and lesson (including lesson plan and post lesson reflection) and an overall mark is then given.

Four – the number of parts of the RA part of the PDA, three parts of which is written and submitted separately to be commented on by your DELTA tutors, but which can be polished up for the final version to be submitted. Part One is the diagnostic lesson, for which you submit a lesson plan as an appendix and reflect on for Part Two of the RA

Four- the number of Merit and Distinctions you need for individual lessons to get a Distinction overall, i.e. a Merit or Distinction for all the LSSAs

Four- the number of assessment categories for the LSSA essays. All categories must be fully met for a Distinction.

Four- the things that need to be covered in the LSSA essays, and so also the suggested organisation: (short) introduction, analysis (of the topic area), issues (mainly potential problems) for learners, and suggestions for teaching (with evaluation of those ideas)

Five- Almost certainly too few words for an LSSA essay title

Five- The total number of assignments to be completed to pass Module 2 (four LSSAs and the PDA), although you could see it as six as the PDA has two separate parts

Five- Minimum number of students in observed lesson. There is no maximum. There must be that number of students for the observer to start observing, and you can delay the observation for up to 15 minutes if you are waiting for a late student to make up that number or are desperately searching for a replacement from another class

Five- the number of things which must be on the LSSA essay cover pages- “the title of the essay, number of words used, date of submission, candidate name and centre number” (page 62)

Six- the number of things you need to remember to include in the LSSA essay: cover page, contents page, running footer with your name and essay title, page numbers, bibliography, and appendices (the last being optional but usual)

Six- the number of assessment categories for the LSSA lessons. All categories must be fully met for a Distinction.

Ten - the number of hours of peer observations that you must do. Most people do this as 10 one-hour observations, but other combinations are possible. You can also observe people’s lessons

through videos instead

Ten – almost certainly too much observation to do before writing RA Part Three, as although it feels good to get the peer observations out of the way, you have to write about how you are going to continue and improve your development and more focussed peer observations is an obvious way of doing this. If you aren't going to do more peer observations, you'll have to think of or find out about some other ways of working on your weaknesses at that point

Fourteen- the average number of words of the LSSA essay titles given as good examples in the Handbook (page 63)

Fifteen minutes – The maximum extra time that an observer will stay to see the rest of your lesson if you haven't managed to complete what is written on your lesson plan in the amount of time you asked them to come for

Fifteen minutes – The maximum you can delay the start of the observed lesson if you don't have the required five students when the observer was meant to enter the classroom

Forty to sixty minutes (previously 45 to 60) - the length of all the lessons that you teach as part of the course. It is the length of time the observer will sit in your lesson (you can choose exactly how long you want them to stay and when they should enter and leave the class). You obviously teach the rest of your lesson as you usually would if it is a different length, and whether that will be related to the observed part or not is up to you. You can briefly mention the other parts of the lesson on your lesson plan, but anything that you want to be judged on should be in the observed period. 40 to 60 minutes is also the length of the EP lesson plan and the diagnostic lesson observation

Sixty minutes - the time before your observed lesson when your essay and lesson plan must be ready and given to your observer (and/or uploaded for a distance course), but obviously much earlier is much better!

150 – the recommended number of words to write about current weaknesses in RA Part Three

No more than 200- the strongly recommended maximum length for an LSSA essay introductory paragraph

200 – the recommended number of words to write an evaluation of the PDA process in RA Part Four

250 – the recommended number of words to write about future actions in RA Stage 4

300- the recommended number of words to write about future actions/ action plan in RA Stage 3

300- the recommended number of words for reflection on developments/ evaluation in RA Part Three

300- the recommended number of words for reflection on developments in RA Part Four



300 to 500- the recommended number of words for the LSSA post lesson evaluations (previously 300)

400 to 500- the recommended number of words for each of the two sections of the RA Part Two, the first 500 being used to write about reflection/ beliefs/ strengths/ weaknesses, and the second 500 to write an action plan

500 words- the recommended number of words in the EP essay used to evaluate how the experimental lesson went and why

500 to 700 words- the required length of the commentary for the LSSA lessons, which forms part of the lesson plan and justifies it while linking it to the essay. Note that for the EP this forms part of the essay rather than the lesson plan

600 to 750 – the recommended number of words for RA Parts Three and Four

750 – the recommended maximum number of words in RA Part Four

750 to 1000- the recommended number of words for the first two parts of the EP essay (leaving 500 words for the post lesson evaluation). The first section should consist of more theoretical things like “reading and research, own professional interest in the topic” and the second part of things more connected to the actual lesson such as “objectives for teacher and learners, how to evaluate the lesson, commentary on lesson” (Handbook page 58)

Around 800 words- the recommended length of the Suggestions for Teaching section of the LSSA essays

800 to 1000- the recommended number of words for RA Part Two

Around 1200 words –the recommended length of the Analysis and Issues section(s) of the LSSA essays

2000 – the minimum number of words for each and every essay in Module Two, and for the EP essay and the RA (the two parts of the PDA)

2500- the absolute maximum number of words that you should write for the LSSA essays (not including the lesson plan or the commentary in it). The number of words needs to be written on the cover page. Use of footnotes and appendices to include things that should have been in the body of the text or left out will lead to you being judged to have gone over the word limit. Ditto for the EP essay and the RA (the two parts of the PDA)

As few as possible- the number of ideas in your essays which you give with no indication where they came from (a possible sign of plagiarism). Space permitting, try to say something, even if it is just to say when the idea occurred to you or to explain how/ why you can't remember the source

As few as possible- Number of words spent explaining an area which is wider than that given in the LSSA essay title, e.g. something about listening in general rather than gist listening

No limit- The number of deviations from your lesson plan that are acceptable, as long as they can be justified and are not things that you should have been able to predict and so write into the lesson plan, e.g. as optional stages

As many as possible – the number of quotes that are commented on rather than just quoted

As many as possible- Phrases showing the links between the various sections and ideas in different parts of the LSSA essays

As many as possible- the links that you should make and show between your PDA and the LSSAs, especially the first three

All- The number of teaching ideas that should be evaluated rather than just listed in the final part of the LSSA essays



action plan – a part of the reflection after an LSSA or in each part of the PDA that says how you aim to go about working on the priorities you have chosen from your weaknesses, preferably with concrete actions and a time given

appendices – things that are put at the back of essays. This should really be limited to things that would not fit into the body of the text, most especially samples of materials used in the EP or mentioned in the final part of the LSSA essays. Abuse of appendices to avoid word limits will be penalised

beliefs questionnaire – a form that is meant to help you work out what you believe about learning and teaching, where those beliefs come from, how you do and do not act on those beliefs, and how all those things could change. This is specifically mentioned as something you could do before starting the PDA by Cambridge, although it doesn't seem to be a requirement

centre – the place or organisation through which you are doing your DELTA Module 2, who will deal with Cambridge for you by sending your portfolio etc

commentary – the part of the lesson plans in which you link what you have planned with the theory and teaching ideas in your essay

DELTA tutor – the people who mark your internally assessed lessons and essays and PDA, and give you advice on all those things. If you are doing a distance course, this may consist of one local tutor who observes your lessons and sees your work first, and an online tutor who double checks all of that and adds further advice

diagnostic lesson – the time you are observed by a tutor at the beginning of Module Two, so that you can write RA Part Two and know what to work on before LSSA1

Distinction – the highest possible mark in the DELTA, both for individual pieces of work and for the whole Module

draft – an unfinished piece of writing that you give to or send to your tutors for their feedback before you write the final version that will be marked. You cannot show drafts for the externally observed lesson to your tutors

EP – experimental practice, the half of your PDA in which you research and try out something from language teaching that is totally new to you

essay – one of the two parts of the LSSA which are marked separately before a total grade is decided on. The other half is the lesson, consisting of the lesson plan, observed lesson, and reflection

external – see externally observed lesson.

externally observed lesson – also known as LSSA4, as the externally observed lesson is always the last of the four LSSAs. Someone who you do not know will come to observe and mark this lesson and its accompanying essay etc. Unlike the other three LSSAs, there is no feedback session. This is

by far the most important of the LSSAs, and the other three are partly a preparation for this.

grade – Fail, Pass, Pass with Merit or Pass with Distinction

lesson – see Essay

Handbook – the official information from Cambridge on how the DELTA is organised and marked, available as a PDF from the Cambridge site. It is worth keeping a copy of the Module Two part of this booklet with you at all times, e.g. when writing an essay or lesson plan. Note that it can be updated at any time

local DELTA tutor – see DELTA tutor. Also called a Regional DELTA Tutor

LSSA – Language Systems/ Skills Assessment. The four lessons which are observed and marked, along with all connected written work: essay, lesson plan and reflection.

Merit – the second highest mark in the DELTA, lower than a Distinction. Properly called a Pass with Merit

Module Two – The part of the DELTA described here, consisting of four LSSAs and the PDA. Module One is the exam, and Module Three is an extended writing assignment. All three must be passed to get a DELTA, but you can also theoretically take one or any combination as standalone qualifications.

online DELTA tutor –see DELTA tutor

PDA – Professional Development Assignment. The part of Module Two that you must complete, along with the four LSSAs, in order to pass. It consists of the RA and EP, and is meant to show that you can take charge of your own professional development and train you how to do so in the future

Peer observation – being observed or observing a fellow teacher (rather than a tutor or external observer)

productive skills – speaking and writing. You must do one of your four LSSAs on one of these skills (you can't do both, nor two lessons on one of these skills)

RA – Reflection and Action. The main part of your PDA, in which you reflect upon your weaknesses and how to improve on them and write the process up in three stages. The other part of the PDA is the Experimental Lesson

RA Part Four- reflection on your development during the whole PDA as compared to your plan, and planning future professional development

RA Part Three – Reflection and plans for future action after your first two LSSAs

RA Part Two- reflections on your diagnostic observation and planning your development over the course of Module 2. Strangely, Part Two is the very beginning of your RA essay, as Part One is your

diagnostic observation plus reflection on beliefs, e.g. a beliefs questionnaire, which can go in appendices and are written about in Part Two

receptive skills – Listening and Reading, one of which you must do a lesson of for one of the LSSAs

reflection – thinking about and writing about how your lessons and professional development have gone

requirement – something that you must do for the course and so will definitely have an impact on your marks. For example, 2500 words max for an LSSA essay is a requirement and you will be marked down if you go over, whereas the suggestions for how long the section of teaching ideas should be is just advice

Skills – receptive skills and productive skills. One of each must be chosen for two of the four LSSAs

Systems – Grammar, lexis (i.e. vocabulary), discourse (anything based on texts that are longer than a sentence), or phonology. Two from this list must be chosen for LSSA lessons

Tutor – see DELTA tutor