

CELTA CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS IN ROMANIA – WHAT ANY TEACHER SHOULD KNOW

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Abstract:

The CELTA certification is one of the most intensive, most prestigious, most widely recognized English Language Teacher Training courses there is in the whole world, and there are numerous reasons why people want the qualification. It is a course in which candidates learn an unbelievable amount in a relatively short time and receive an incredibly rewarding qualification at the end of it, which will surely open up 'secret' doors. Being authorized by Cambridge University the CELTA course provides the teachers of English with the practical experience and knowledge needed to develop their own skills as teachers. The present study aims to be a tool for those teachers in Romania who want to know more about this qualification, including definition, course aims, topics and components, as well as assessment.

Keywords: *assessment, certification, course, teaching, topics.*

Introduction

The term CELTA stands for *Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults* and is one of the most important, highly respected qualifications of this kind. CELTA gives candidates the skills they need to teach English and pursue rewarding careers in teaching English all over the world, with unlimited opportunities for travel, learning about different languages and cultures. It is run by Cambridge University, one of the most prestigious universities in the world, and is considered to be the gold standard of TESOL¹ programmes, as employers around the world keep looking to recruit teachers who have the CELTA.

Cambridge University also ensures the course tutors and the curriculum. CELTA teacher trainers are the best in the field of TESOL. They have years of teaching experience and have trained extensively to become a CELTA teacher trainer. Cambridge University prides itself on the quality of their approved trainers. On the CELTA course, no trainer is responsible for more than 6 trainees at any time. Therefore trainees always receive the individual attention and detailed feedback they need to learn and progress quickly as a teacher. Each CELTA course is externally moderated by an assessor from Cambridge University. The assessor visits the centre during the second half of the course and looks at trainees' portfolios and assignments and observes their teaching practice. Trainees are invited to meet the assessor if they want to discuss any matters.

A CELTA course can be taken either full-time or part-time. It is designed for candidates with little or no previous English language teaching (ELT) experience. It is also taken by

candidates with some teaching experience who have received little practical teacher training or who wish to gain internationally recognised qualification. Candidates should have English language skills equivalent to at least C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) or an IELTS score of 7.5.

CELTA gives equal emphasis to theory and practice. The strong practical element demonstrates to employers that successful candidates have the skills to succeed in the classroom. Courses can be taken full-time or part-time and either face-to-face or online. A full-time, face-to-face course typically lasts between four and five weeks. CELTA is a continuous assessment course (i.e. participants are assessed throughout the course) leading to a certificate qualification.

Candidates who successfully complete the course can start working in a variety of English language teaching contexts around the world. CELTA is regulated at Level 5 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and is suitable for teachers at Foundation and Developing level on the Cambridge English Teaching Framework.

The CELTA course

CELTA courses are designed by individual, approved centres, based on specifications produced by Cambridge English Language Assessment.² All courses have a minimum of 120 contact hours.

The CELTA course is designed to help candidates develop effective and principled teaching practice for both adults and older teenagers. During the course, candidates will receive input from their tutors about some key topic areas related to the teaching of English, and hands-on teaching practice and observation of experienced teachers, applying their learning in the classroom with English language learners.

The CELTA course is based around real classroom teaching experience working with genuine English language learners. Candidates not only learn about ESOL³ teaching methods, but they practise what they learn in a real-life classroom with guidance and feedback from their teacher trainers.

The CELTA course will provide trainees with the ability to take on teaching challenges with confidence; it will train trainees with the skills and knowledge of TESOL fundamentals and will give them the hands-on experience of working with real language learners so they leave the course with teaching experience not just TESOL theory; it will help trainees find the best employment opportunities with competitive pay and benefits.

When candidates finish the CELTA course, they will not just have a prestigious certificate to show for it (though they most definitely will have a prestigious certificate). They will have the confidence and the experience to handle any classroom situation and they will have the tools to continue developing their skills. Whether they go on to teach business professionals, undergraduates, adults or children, they will earn the respect of their students through their abilities as a teacher.

Moreover, the most rewarding part of the CELTA course is knowing that all the hard work a trainee puts into the most respected and rigorous TESOL course in the world will result in smiling students who are motivated and inspired to work hard in his/her lessons, in positive feedback from the school director and having the confidence to walk into any classroom in any country and teach a great lesson.

Armed with your CELTA certificate and a passion for adventure, candidates have a lifetime of adventure ahead of them.

Course aims

The CELTA course enables candidates to: acquire essential subject knowledge and familiarity with the principles of effective teaching; acquire a range of practical skills for teaching English to adult learners; and demonstrate their ability to apply their learning in a real teaching context.

CELTA course topics

As part of the CELTA course trainees will cover five main topics:

1. Learners and teachers, and the teaching and learning context: cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds; motivations for learning English as an adult; learning and teaching styles; context for learning and teaching English; varieties of English; multilingualism and the role of first languages.
2. Language analysis and awareness: basic concepts and terminology used in ELT for describing form and meaning in language and language use; grammar – grammatical frameworks: rules and conventions relating to words, sentences, paragraphs and texts; lexis: word formation, meaning and use in context; phonology: the formation and description of English phonemes; features of connected speech; the practical significance of similarities and differences between languages; reference materials for language awareness; key strategies and approaches for developing learners' language knowledge.
3. Language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing: reading; basic concepts and terminology used for describing reading skills; purposes of reading; decoding meaning; potential barriers to reading; listening; basic concepts and terminology used for describing listening skills; purposes of listening; features of listening texts; potential barriers to listening; speaking; basic concepts and terminology used for describing speaking skills; features of spoken English; language functions; paralinguistic features; phonemic systems; writing; basic concepts and terminology used for describing writing skills; sub-skills and features of written texts; stages of teaching writing; beginner literacy; English spelling and punctuation; key strategies and approaches for developing learners' receptive and productive skills.
4. Planning and resources for different contexts: principles of planning for effective teaching of adult learners of English; lesson planning for effective teaching of adult learners of English; evaluation of lesson planning; the selection, adaptation and evaluation of materials and resources in planning (including computer and other technology based resources); knowledge of commercially produced resources and non-published materials and classroom resources for teaching English to adults.
5. Developing teaching skills and professionalism: the effective organisation of the classroom; classroom presence and control; teacher and learner language; the use of teaching materials and resources; practical skills for teaching at a range of levels; the monitoring and evaluation of adult learners; evaluation of the teaching/learning process; professional development: responsibilities; professional development: support systems.

Course programmes

Certificate course programmes are designed by individual centres using the syllabus and course objectives. Courses will have a minimum of 120 contact hours including: input, supervised lesson planning; teaching practice (six assessed hours); feedback on teaching; peer observation; observation of experienced teachers (minimum six hours); and consultation time. Candidates will need to dedicate a minimum of 80 hours for the required reading, research, pre- and post-session tasks, assignments and lesson preparation.

Course components

The main component of the CELTA course is controlled, in-classroom teaching practice working with real language learners. When they start their CELTA course, trainees will be in the classroom from Day 1, working with real students from a range of non-English-speaking countries. By the time the course ends, they will have spent about 40 hours in the classroom teaching, observing their colleagues teach and evaluating students' English skills.

Each lesson taught by a trainee will follow a cycle: he/she works one-on-one with his/her teacher trainer to design the lesson and select activities to do with the class; while teaching, the trainer is present throughout the lesson to support him/her and to write a report on the lesson; after the lesson the trainee, his/her trainer and the small group of fellow trainees (maximum group size of six) discuss that day's lessons and evaluate them – what worked, what did not and what steps can be taken to improve; then the trainee gets a detailed written report on the lesson to take away and read through. Any trainee is now ready to prepare his/her next lesson with his/her CELTA trainer, building on his/her previous lesson and incorporating everything new that he/she has learnt.

The benefits from the real classroom teaching component are numerous. Once a trainee has graduated from the CELTA course, wherever he/she might be, when standing before a new class of students he/she will not feel lost. He/she will have the confidence to meet his/her new students and their expectations and he/she will be able to teach quality lessons and enjoy doing it. The trainee will have earned his/her CELTA and he/she will already have English teaching experience. Having a CELTA certificate in hand is the mark of a teacher who is prepared and knows what they are doing.

A modern language lesson is an interactive process that requires experimentation, a willingness to make mistakes, immersion into real-life situations, a genuine need to use language and a great deal of student talking (instead of time spent listening to the teacher). A TESOL classroom is one where teachers will not find clearly delineated rows of silent students writing in notebooks and looking at their teacher, the only speaker in the room. Instead, the TESOL classroom has students with moveable desks facing each other, or groups of students moving around the classroom with a paper and pen in hand talking to other students while consulting the board for a word they might need, or grabbing the teacher to ask a question.

A good TESOL classroom will be alive with students' voices as they verbally play with the language they are learning. The teacher in these scenarios is very much a resource and a facilitator. They control when one activity ends and another begins and they insert language and meaning when students are struggling to find the language they need to express themselves. This is what active learning looks like.

A CELTA teacher will not be lectured at or expected to memorize tomes of information. The tutors will teach them about how to effectively teach grammar, for example, by demonstrating

techniques on them and asking them to work in groups or pairs to analyze and discuss the tools used and how these could apply to their own TESOL classroom.

Although the idea of teaching grammar often evokes fear in the hearts of first-time teachers, the trainers will demonstrate how a grammar lesson may start with something as simple as a game. There will be no grammar trees and no lectures using sentence diagrams. The key is engagement and practical application.

Trainees will also attend a TESOL session on how to create their own authentic materials for the classroom (which is also an assignment they will complete on the course). Their tutor is not going to lecture them on the different types of authentic lessons available, expecting them to take notes and understand the theory without the practice. They are going to engage them in learning from an authentic materials lesson they have created. And as trainees are doing the exercises as students, they will also be exposed to the methods used and asked to analyze in groups and pairs the different types of techniques they found effective for learning.

CELTA trainers are not lecturers. They are expert educators and have had years of experience with language learners and in training teachers. They know how to engage trainees in the process of becoming experts in their own right.

All CELTA sessions are practical in nature, with some foundation in theory, and demonstrate techniques that trainees can use immediately in the language lessons they teach. The following areas are among those that will be covered: how to teach grammar and vocabulary effectively; how to motivate students; how to help students get the most out of a reading text; how to order the stages of a lesson; how to influence the dynamics of a classroom for the best results; how to use teaching books and materials effectively; How to bring authentic materials (articles, songs, stories, etc.) into the classroom.

The CELTA course also provides sessions on a range of topics to help trainees find the best teaching jobs at the best schools. These sessions might include, for instance: where to find the best TESOL jobs; how to write an effective resume and cover letter; what kind of questions to expect in an interview; what to expect from a TESOL contract (including housing, travelling and medical care).

CELTA assessment

The assessment on the CELTA course is continuous (throughout the course) and integrated (all components count towards the final grade). The CELTA qualification does not require a final examination. Assessment is based on evaluation of the candidate according to Cambridge criteria in the following two areas: real classroom experience and written assignments.

For each lesson that trainees teach they will have to create a Lesson Plan, which includes a breakdown of the lesson, showing how they will manage their materials and handouts to achieve the aim or focus of the lesson. Trainees will also have to prepare analysis sheets on grammar, language, and vocabulary, which help them prepare and guide them throughout the lesson. These analysis sheets will also help trainees anticipate students' questions and problems. Working with the lesson plans and language analysis sheets will give trainees thorough training and a good understanding of preparing for future classes.

During the course, all trainees will maintain a portfolio of their work, which will contain their lesson materials, including handouts, lesson plans and the individual written feedback their tutor gives them.

Four written assignments are to be completed during the CELTA course. They are about 1,000 words each and are spread out over the length of the course. They are very practical in nature and focus on a variety of aspects, including a trainee's strengths and weaknesses, the students they teach, and their ability to teach language systems (grammar and vocabulary) and language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking).

Moreover, individual tutorials are held with trainees to monitor and discuss progress. Trainees will be informed regularly of their progress through feedback on their teaching practice and written assignments.

Assessment requirements

To meet the assessment requirements, candidates are required to attend a course and to: practice-teach classes of the relevant age group and size for a total of six hours; observe experienced teachers teaching classes of language learners for a total of six hours, three of which may be on video; maintain and submit a portfolio of all coursework including all written assignments and materials related to teaching practice.

There are two components of assessment. During component one - planning and teaching - candidates are required to practice-teach for a total of six assessed hours, working with adult learners at a minimum of two levels in classes of the required size. By the end of the six hours of assessed teaching practice, candidates should have demonstrated successful achievement of all the teaching practice assessment criteria.

Component two - classroom-related written assignments - consists of four written assignments: adult learners and learning contexts; the language system of English; language skills; classroom teaching and the identification of action points.

The assignments are internally assessed and externally moderated. Two assignments may be conflated into one larger assignment provided that all the assessment criteria are met.

The CELTA Certificate will be awarded to candidates who meet the course requirements and whose performance meets, or exceeds, the criteria in both assessment components.

Candidates are ineligible for the award in cases where dishonesty or plagiarism is brought to the attention of Cambridge English.

CELTA online

In response to an increasing need for more flexible course delivery, Cambridge University have created the CELTA online as a way for candidates to get the benefits of both online learning and face to face practice. As long as the syllabus and the outcomes are the same as the purely face to face CELTA course, the certificate the trainees receive is the same standard certificate from University of Cambridge CELTA as the other course types.

The CELTA online is a combination of online content, delivered by an approved online CELTA tutor, and the same lesson preparation and teaching practice component as the regular face-to-face.

There are 13 weeks of online instruction in total. Lead by specialist online CELTA tutors, this online instruction is highly interactive and includes videos to watch as well as tasks to complete – both on trainees' own and in pairs and groups. In addition, there are 7 live (synchronous) recorded sessions (so that trainees can go back to them as required) where the group 'meets' online to provide additional support for the online content. The assessment on the online portion of the course is continuous and measured in participation in forums, completion of the

weekly tasks and completion of assignments. Trainees should expect to work 8-10 hours a week during “online” weeks.

The face-to-face component starts on a Sunday and finishes on a Saturday (there are two 6-day weeks, with 2 days off in the middle). In this time trainees will complete written assignments and live teaching practice with real students. This is a highly intensive two week session, and trainees will be observed and assessed teaching almost every day. It is important that trainees are able to be both mentally and logically well prepared for the face-to-face component. The lessons delivered and the assignments completed during the face to face component form the bulk of the formal assessment on the course.

While it is difficult to match the effectiveness of a 100% face-to-face CELTA course, the CELTA Online tends to suit people that need more flexibility and time to work on the course materials. In addition the CELTA online including the 2 week face-to-face option appeals to those who have reduced vacation time, or who are looking to save money on room and board while they are doing the CELTA. Because the certificate from Cambridge is exactly the same, trainees are not at a disadvantage in the recruitment pool once they are qualified.

Conclusion

Teaching has a lot to do with confidence. The longer you teach, the more confidence you gain, and the better teacher you become (in theory). A CELTA will give you the confidence to become a TEFL teacher. After learning different methodologies to teach and being grilled by examiners and other students on the course then your confidence will grow.

The CELTA training course aims at improving the method used by teachers in the classroom, using a practical approach that caters to the real needs of both teachers and their students. Throughout the course, trainees receive guidance and feedback from accredited Cambridge CELTA tutors on a multitude of challenging yet useful tasks. They also are involved in discussion sessions on both their perceptions as well as personal approach to teaching, learning to be more effective in providing their students with quality courses.

Trainee evaluation is continuous throughout each course and is based on three criteria: their performance at demonstration classes, written assignments and their degree of involvement during the training.

Notes

¹ TESOL stands for *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. It encompasses what used to be called TEFL (*Teaching English as a Foreign Language*) and TESL (*Teaching English as a Second Language*) and has been running for four decades.

² Cambridge English Language Assessment is part of the University of Cambridge and has been providing English language assessments and qualifications for over 100 years. The first Cambridge English examination, the Certificate of Proficiency in English was launched in 1913.

³ ESOL stands for *English for Speakers of Other Languages*, that is English taught to people whose first language is not English, but who live in an English-speaking country and need English to communicate in daily life. This term is used especially in the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand.

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