**UCET – the intellectual base of teacher education**

UCET recognises that teaching is a challenging, complex, intellectual and ethical endeavour which is key in improving student learning and in enabling the positive, transformational contribution that education can have to communities and to the development of more socially just and sustainable societies. It is these unique qualities that make teaching such an appealing profession.

This document sets out UCET’s vision for high quality teacher education that values teachers as intellectuals who take an enquiring stance to their work and make meaningful contributions to the professional knowledge base. To achieve this, it is imperative that all teacher education provision builds on the already substantial evidence base about both the quality of teaching and high-quality teacher education. High quality teacher education draws on a wide body of knowledge embedded in ethical practice, including robust evidence from research, while accepting that knowledge is both contested and contestable. It both encourages a lifelong commitment to the education profession and pays careful attention to the factors that promote a healthy learning environment for teachers and learners.

It is also important to recognise that high quality teaching flourishes within particular contexts that allow for mutually empowering professional relationships and collegiality. Teacher education can cultivate such collegiality through strong professional collaboration among all institutional partners. Such collaboration is characterised by shared intellectual responsibility bringing together complementary forms of knowledge and experience. Thus, teacher education is a collective, co-produced endeavour to which each partner brings unique forms of expertise and perspectives that are subject to change in an ongoing collaborative and dynamic process.

UCET values teacher education that works within a model of professional collaboration to produce teachers who are:

* **competent and confident professionals** who recognise and understand that educating is a professional, thoughtful and intellectual endeavour and who are able to learn from research, direct experience, as well as other sources of knowledge.
* **epistemic agents**, acting as independent thinkers who recognise that knowledge is contestable, provisional and contingent and thus search for theories and research that can underpin, challenge or illuminate their practice. They are able to analyse and interrogate evidence and arguments, drawing critically and self-critically from a wide range of evidence to make informed decisions in the course of their practice.
* **able to** **engage in enquiry rich practice** and have a predisposition to be continually intellectually curious about their work with the capacity to be innovative, creative and receptive to new ideas emerging from their individual or collaborative practitioner enquiries.
* **responsible professionals** who embody high standards of professional ethics. They recognise the social responsibilities of education, such as working towards a socially just and sustainable world and understand the responsibilities of educators and education as a whole. Teachers are self-aware and aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of others, always acting with integrity.

Universities are well placed to support the realisation of these characteristics as they offer space(s) to come together in order to think and reflect, to critique, analyse and test ideas, to explore existing research and create new research that can inform and illuminate practice. They provide a safe environment in which to explore new ideas, ask challenging and open questions, provide reasoned solutions based on robust evidence, as well as to test the authenticity of their own claims and of those made by others. Furthermore, they have a civic duty to extend and develop the knowledge base, without the constraints or limitations of imposed agendas or motives. It is precisely these responsibilities that give universities an inimitable role in teacher education that goes beyond the ‘training’ of teachers but sees teacher education as a multidisciplinary and collaborative field of inquiry, and a source of knowledge generation and testing that fulfils a pressing and fundamental need in society: the development of a profession made up of the best quality teachers who are able to shape the best quality education for us all.