Dear xxx,

On 16 July, you received a letter from Minister Gibb explaining that the Government is replacing the skills test at the end of the 2019/20 recruitment cycle with a new system of provider-led assurance.

I am writing to you now to share guidance on the fundamental English and mathematics proficiencies all teachers need and offer more information on how this approach will affect all training routes ahead of the start of the next recruitment cycle. The guidance has been developed with the support of UCET and NASBTT.

**The new approach**

Under this new approach Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers are expected to make an assessment of English and mathematics knowledge of a trainee before Qualified Teacher Status or Early Years Teacher Status is awarded. ITT providers must, as an accreditation requirement, assure that trainees have these skills either during the selection process, or later during the training programme.

Any work to address shortfalls in English and mathematics must be undertaken by the trainee teacher in addition to other aspects of their training. It is the trainee’s responsibility to secure these fundamental skills, whereas responsibility for assurance lies with the ITT provider. Fundamental English and mathematics may be implemented, supported and assured in different ways by different ITT providers.

**Fundamental English and mathematics**

All teachers are expected to be competent in Fundamental English and mathematics. By the end of ITT all trainees must be able to demonstrate competence in the following areas:

Speaking, listening and communicating are fundamental to a teacher’s role. Teachers should use standard English grammar, clear pronunciation and vocabulary relevant to the situation to convey instructions, questions, information, concepts and ideas with clarity. Teachers should read fluently and with good understanding.

Writing by teachers will be seen by colleagues, pupils and parents and, as such, it is important that a teacher’s writing reflects the high standards of accuracy their professional role demands. They should write clearly, accurately, legibly and coherently using correct spelling and punctuation.

Teachers should use data and graphs to interpret information, identify patterns and trends and draw appropriate conclusions. They need to interpret pupil data and understand statistics and graphs in the news, academic reports and relevant papers.

Teachers should be able to complete mathematical calculations fluently with whole numbers, fractions, decimals and percentages. They should be able to solve mathematical problems using a variety of methods and approaches including: estimating and rounding, sense checking answers, breaking down problems into simpler steps and explaining and justifying answers using appropriate language.

The guidance, and fundamental English and mathematics outlined above, will be incorporated into the ITT criteria and supporting advice at the end of the current recruitment cycle. As the removal of the skills test applies to all routes into teaching, we will also make corresponding changes to the Assessment Only criteria and Early Years criteria.

Over the course of the next recruitment cycle there will also be an opportunity to refine these fundamentals, working with you and your representative bodies to iterate and improve them before candidates start their training in 2020.

**Implementation**

This new approach will come into effect from the start of the next recruitment cycle and will affect all candidates starting ITT courses on or after the 1 April 2020. Those providers offering courses which start before this date should continue to require candidates to have passed the skills test.

Full service provision of the existing skills test will continue to be available until the end of October 2019 to support the busy clearing period of the 2019/20 recruitment cycle. From November 2019 until the end of March 2020 we will offer a reduced level of national provision to support providers offering courses, including Assessment Only and Apprenticeships, starting before 1 April 2020 and legacy cases. We will write to you with details of this reduced level of provision in October.

I would like to thank all providers for their contribution to this work and the wider work of the Department. If you have any queries, please contact us at: Skills.TESTS@education.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Hope

Deputy Director, Becoming a Teacher