



19th June 2020

Kirsty Williams MA  
Minister for Education and Skills  
Welsh Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff CF10 3NQ

Dear Minister

### **ITE recruitment and criteria**

The purpose of this letter is to seek your agreement in principle to the possibility of making some pragmatic adjustments to the ITE requirements and accreditation criteria that will give ITE partnerships some flexibility in the context of Covid 19. The proposals are entirely consistent with the principles and values of the recent reforms and providers are committed to the joint-ownership of ITE programmes between higher education institutions and schools. Indeed, the bringing together of experiential and intellectual forms of knowledge remain at the heart of ITE in Wales and we remain focused on supporting students to be effective teachers of Curriculum for Wales. The content of this letter has been agreed by the full USCET membership, including HEI, school and consortia colleagues.

We have discussed these adjustments in advance with your officials who continue to adopt an open and collegiate approach in negotiating ways through this challenging period – we are grateful for this sense of collaboration.

The ITE sector has always had a valuable contribution to make to schools. Next year's cohort of students, as well as next year's NQTs, will have had unique experiences of developing and delivering online and blended learning that will equip them with the skills needed to be the 'digital teacher'. This could be invaluable to schools at the current time. Therefore, we suggest that student teachers, and those from ITE partnerships who support them, should be considered as being integral to the work of schools. It is important that they are not classified as 'visitors,' and should if at all possible be granted key-worker status.

School experience will look very different and as the traditional model of teaching experience will prove to be impractical, partnerships will have to provide innovative solutions. The ability to secure placements would be helped if requirements on the amount of school experience student teachers require could be temporarily relaxed. Currently, the accreditation criteria stipulates 120 days and we

would like to suggest adjusting this to a minimum threshold of 90 days. It would also help if school experience can be defined as including all activities related to the work of schools, for example the delivery of on-line and blended learning, lesson preparation and curriculum design. Partnerships should focus on the quality and relevance of the student teacher experience rather than the precise amount of time physically spent in school settings. Some flexibility will also be needed around the graduated introduction to teaching given that students will most likely be working with smaller groups of learners.

The welcome flexibilities made to the ITE criteria for 2019/20 in respect of, for example, the number of placement experiences, school involvement in the recruitment processes, GCSE equivalencies and consecutive age phases should remain in place in 2020/21, albeit with the possible proviso that partnerships should seek to meet these requirements wherever possible. Some of the detailed accreditation criteria might also need to be relaxed.

As the representative body for ITE partnerships, USCET will ensure that as far as possible ITE partnerships use these new and retained flexibilities in a consistent and equitable way. We are committed to working in partnership across the sector, and with colleagues from the Welsh Government, Estyn, EWC and local authorities to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Rogers', with a small red mark at the end.

James Noble-Rogers  
Executive Director