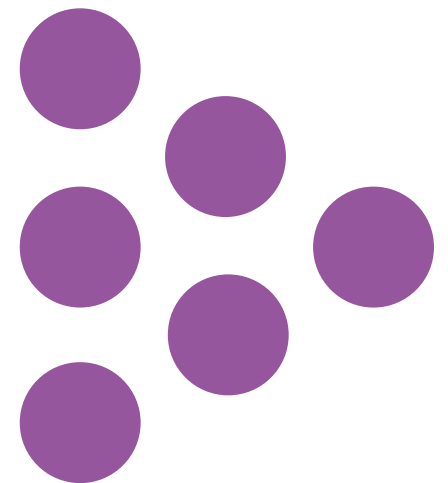

Report

The Impact of Covid-19 on Initial Teacher Training

Implications for Teacher Supply in England

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)



The Impact of Covid-19 on Initial Teacher Training. Implications for Teacher Supply in England.

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Executive Summary

The Covid-19 recession has led to a surge in initial teacher training (ITT) applications

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, England's school system was facing an increasingly severe challenge of recruiting enough trainees to ITT to meet growing teacher demand. The 2020 recession has led to the number of new applicants to postgraduate teacher training in England and Wales increasing sharply, because teaching is seen as offering secure employment when unemployment is high.

- **The overall number of teacher training applicants is 16 per cent higher than the same time in 2019.**
- The number of accepted offers to primary and secondary courses is 14 and 20 per cent higher, respectively, in 2020 compared to 2019
- There is considerable regional variation in the number of accepted offers: the largest increases in are in the West Midlands, London and the North West, which are the regions with the largest increases in unemployment benefit claims in 2020

Covid-19 has led some schools to reduce or withdraw training placement offers and an overall reduction in placement capacity

More trainees in 2020/21 means that more school-based placements were needed to train them to teach in schools. Further, due to disrupted training in 2019/20, some trainees need to complete another placement in the autumn term to demonstrate that they meet the Teachers' Standards. However, NFER's nationally-representative senior leader

survey in July 2020 shows that some schools reduced or withdrew placement offers due to Covid-19.

- **Overall, primary placement capacity was 20 per cent lower due to Covid-19 and seven per cent lower for secondaries.**
- Eleven per cent of primary schools and six per cent of secondary schools planned to withdraw from offering placements due to Covid-19, and seven and 11 per cent, respectively, planned to reduce placements.
- Schools with the most disadvantaged pupils reported the largest average reductions in placement capacity due to Covid-19

Teacher retention is likely to increase due to the recession, which has implications for how many trainee teachers the system needs

NFER's nationally-representative teacher survey in July 2020 shows that the proportion of teachers that were considering leaving in the next 12 months in July 2020 was substantially lower than in June 2019. Such a substantial fall in the proportion considering leaving is unlikely to be fully reflected in actual leaving rates, but nonetheless indicates that retention is likely to improve in 2020/21.

- The proportion of teachers considering leaving is 15 percentage points lower for primary and secondary teachers
- The proportion of teachers considering leaving with a destination in mind is also substantially lower this year, by six percentage points for primary and secondary teachers.

Despite the surge in applications to ITT and an increase in retention, teacher supply gaps are unlikely to close fully this year

An increase in accepted offers for training in 2020/21 is welcome for the education system in the context of a teacher supply challenge. Some shortage subjects, such as mathematics, modern foreign languages (MFL) and chemistry, have seen substantial increases in the number of accepted offers in August 2020, compared to the level in August 2019. However, the number of accepted offers in physics is only six per cent higher than the same time in 2019.

Accounting for increased recruitment and an increase in teacher retention rates, it is likely that trainee numbers in almost all subjects will meet the school system's need for teachers in September 2021, as estimated by the Department for Education's (DfE) Teacher Supply Model (TSM) (DfE, 2019). This includes closing under-recruitment gaps in shortage subjects such as mathematics, MFL and chemistry, relative to teacher need. The exceptions are physics and design & technology. Recruitment in a range of subjects including history, geography, English and physical education, as well as primary, is likely to be substantially higher than estimated teacher need.

These estimates assume that the number of teachers leaving teaching in 2020/21 will be 25 per cent lower than in 2019/20. This, in turn, assumes that teachers' career plans will not change substantially over the next year. More generally, while it is likely that recruitment and retention will remain higher for at least next year, it remains important to ensure that teacher supply issues do not re-emerge once the economy recovers. The Government should remain focussed on ensuring that the teaching profession remains an attractive profession.

Recommendations

School and trust leaders should consider what additional trainee placement offers they could make in 2021/22

Schools have faced unprecedented disruption in 2019/20 due to Covid-19 and school and trust leaders have risen to the challenge of continuing to deliver education during this most profound of crises. However, the long-term benefit of the education system depends on training the next generation of teachers. Schools and trusts should be encouraged and supported to play their part in providing placement capacity, particularly over the next few years when trainee numbers are likely to be higher.

The Government needs to continue working with school leaders and ITT providers to tackle the placement bottleneck

The Government should consider further communication campaigns aimed at school leaders to reassure and encourage them to offer training placements, reinforcing the flexibilities within the school opening guidance and revisions to the ITT requirements that have been introduced to ease schools' concerns.

While long-term planning is challenging during the uncertainty of a pandemic, this communication should be as timely as possible, giving schools and ITT providers the ability to plan effectively for recruitment during the 2021 cycle and ITT delivery in 2021/22. For example, ITT providers and schools will need to know which flexibilities to the ITT requirements will continue in 2021 in plenty of time.

England's school system was facing a teacher supply challenge before Covid-19

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, England's school system was facing an increasingly severe challenge of recruiting enough trainees to ITT to meet growing demand (Worth, 2020). While primary ITT entry has generally been meeting the numbers needed, entry to secondary ITT in England had been consistently below target for seven years in a row.

A number of policy initiatives had been targeted at increasing recruitment, particularly in shortage subjects. These included bursaries and early-career payments, removing the skills tests and increasing the teaching starting salary. While the overall number of secondary trainees has risen over the last few years, the numbers recruited have not been enough to meet rising demand due to increasing pupil numbers and high teacher leaving rates. As shown in the chart, trainee numbers have been below target in physics, maths, MFL and chemistry.

Covid-19 caused extensive disruption to ITT providers and schools

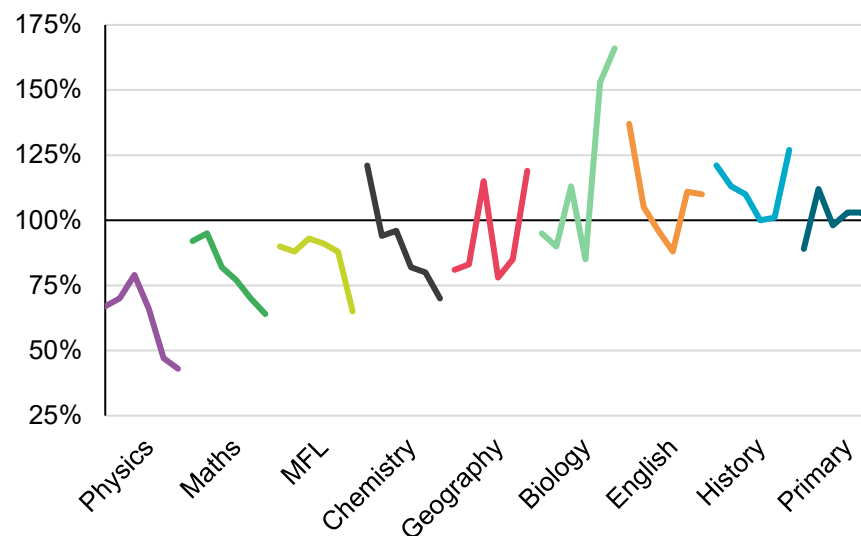
The Covid-19 lockdown caused extensive disruption to all aspects of the education system, including for the ITT sector and schools. When schools closed to all but children of keyworkers and vulnerable pupils, trainee teachers in 2019/20 had their school-based placements curtailed.

DfE enabled ITT providers to make judgements on trainees based on assessments already completed and trainees' trajectory of progress towards meeting the Teachers' Standards. This enabled qualified teacher status (QTS) to be awarded to trainees despite them not having completed their courses. Trainees who were assessed as not being on a trajectory towards meeting the Teachers' Standards were not awarded QTS, and ITT providers have been asked to extend courses and

placements in the autumn term to give trainees an opportunity to show they meet the Teachers' Standards.

The impact of the pandemic on schools has also had knock-on impacts on newly-qualified teachers (NQTs). Fewer teachers moving jobs in 2020 and schools' reluctance to interview teachers remotely is likely to have been the main factors contributing to the fall in advertised teacher vacancies (Allen *et al.*, 2020). This is likely to have led to NQTs struggling to find first jobs.

Postgraduate ITT entry vs target in England 2014/15-2019/20



Source: ITT Census 2019 to 2020.

The recession induced by Covid-19 has led to a surge in applications to ITT

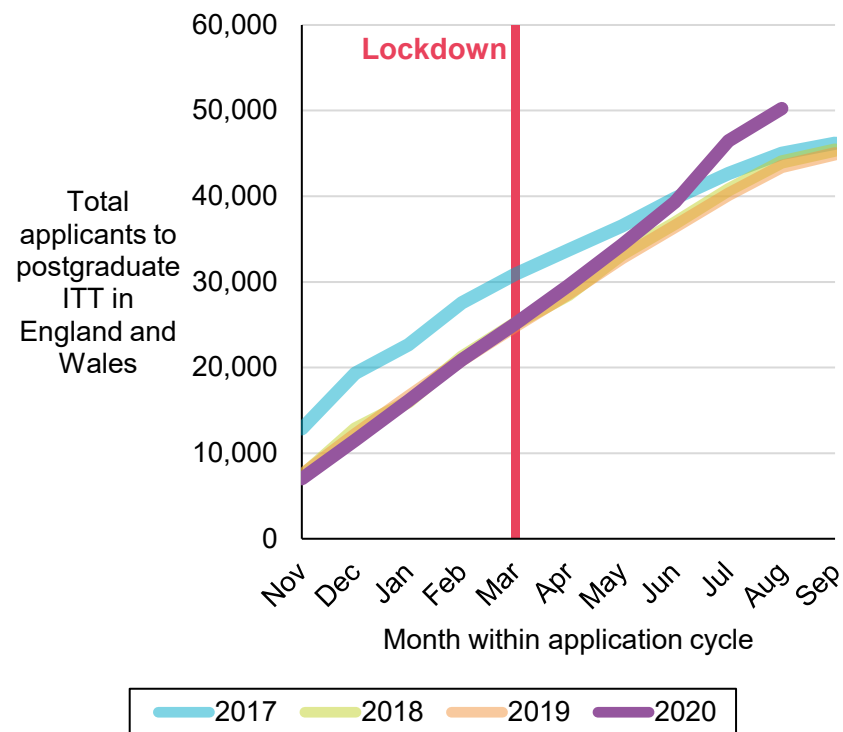
The Covid-19 lockdown has led to a deep economic recession in the UK, with GDP falling by an unprecedented 22 per cent between Q4 2019 and Q2 2020. Unemployment had not increased in Q2 2020, but is expected to substantially increase after the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) ends in October 2020 (OBR, 2020). During previous recessions, such as the 2008 recession in the UK, interest in entering teaching has tended to increase. A review of the literature on the impact of the wider economy on teachers' career decisions found that 'applications rise during a recession because teaching is seen as offering secure employment at a time of rising unemployment' (Hutchings, 2011).

Data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) shows that the number of applicants to postgraduate teacher training in England and Wales in 2020 was very similar to the two previous years, up until mid-March. Following the lockdown, the number of new applicants increased sharply. The latest data, up to mid-August 2020, shows that the overall number of applicants is 16 per cent higher than at the same time in 2019 and 14 per cent higher than the 2017-19 average.

Considering just the period between mid-March and mid-August 2020, the increase in the number of applicants to teacher training was 35 per cent higher than the increase during the same period in 2019, and 46 per cent higher than the average increase in 2017-2019.

A plausible alternative explanation for the increase in new applicants is the substantial increase in teachers' starting salary from September 2020. A government proposal for three years of pay uplifts, increasing the starting salary to £30,000 by 2022, was announced in September

2019, and the policy was a high-profile election pledge for all the major political parties in the December 2019 election. However, the timing of the increase in applicants, from mid-May onwards, strongly suggests that the recession is the main explanation for the applicant surge.



Source: NFER analysis of UCAS Teacher Training Statistical Releases.

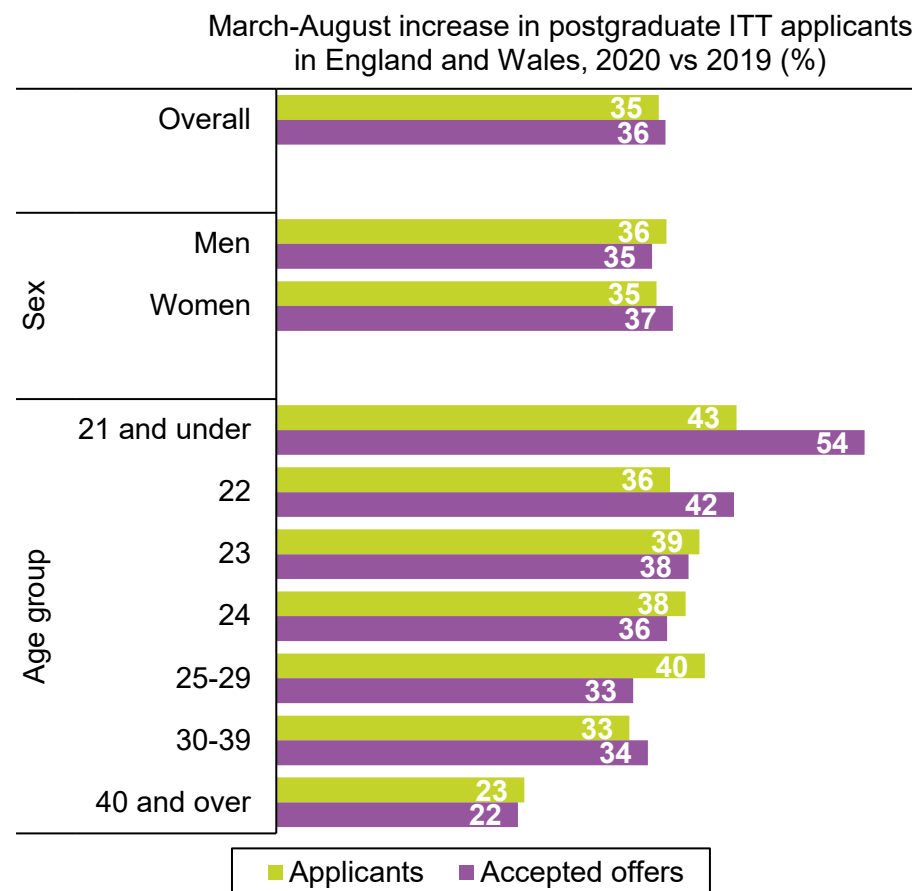
The surge since March was strongest among younger applicants, likely to be recent graduates

The UCAS data includes breakdowns of the number of applicants by their characteristics, which measures the level of *interest* in entering teaching. We also present data on the number of applicants who have been offered a place and accepted the offer (either conditionally or unconditionally). The second measure is a better indication of how many more are likely to enrol in ITT in 2020/21 due to Covid-19.

The data shows that there was a similar-sized increase in the number of applicants between March and August in 2020, over and above the same period in 2019, for men and women. Likewise there is no difference between men and women in terms of accepted offers.

There is some variation in the increase in numbers of applicants by age, with a larger increase in applicants in their twenties compared to those in their thirties and forties. The number of vacancies in the economy fell dramatically during the lockdown, so teaching is likely to be particularly attractive to those who are first entering the job market, such as new graduates (ONS, 2020a). There is also evidence that the impact of Covid-19 on the labour market has been greater for younger workers (Gustafsson, 2020). Older applicants to teacher training are more likely to be career changers, who may be less exposed to labour market uncertainty, particularly while the CJRS remains in operation.

The variation in the increase in applicants by age groups is even larger in terms of accepted offers. The number of new accepted offers between March and August 2020 is 54 per cent higher than in 2019 for those aged 21 and under, compared to only 22 per cent higher for those aged 40 and over.



Source: NFER analysis of UCAS Teacher Training Statistical Releases.

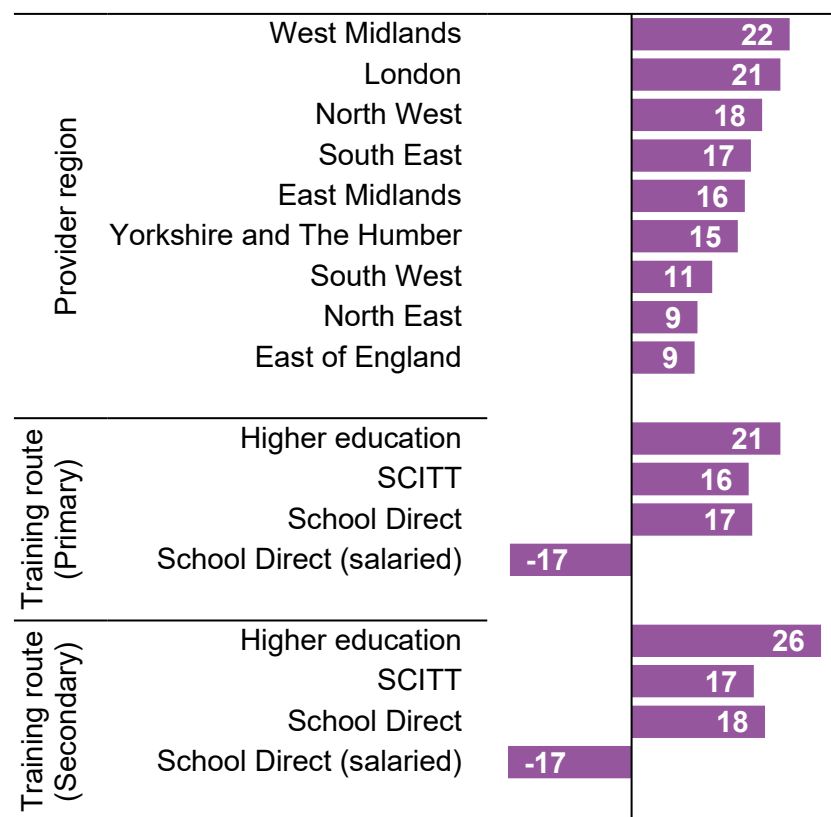
The increase in accepted offers is higher in regions with more weakened labour markets

The UCAS data also shows what impact the applications increase has had on ITT providers. The provider data is in terms of applications rather than applicants, because applicants can make multiple applications, to different providers. The average number of applications per applicant in 2020/21 is very similar to previous years, and has not changed since March. This means that the number of applications is likely to be a reliable proxy for how many trainees may enrol in 2020/21. We compare the total number of accepted offers (placed and conditional placed) in August 2020, compared to the level in August 2019.

The data shows considerable regional variation in the number of accepted offers, with the largest increases in the West Midlands, London and the North West, and smaller increases in the East of England, North East and South West. This may reflect local variation in economic conditions: London, West Midlands and North West are the regions with the largest increases in unemployment benefit claims in the year to July, and the East of England, South West and North East the smallest increases (ONS, 2020b).

Higher education providers have seen the largest increase in accepted offers, slightly higher than for school-centred ITT (SCITT) and unsalaried School Direct routes. In contrast, the number of accepted offers for salaried School Direct routes is considerably lower in August 2020 compared to August 2019. This is likely to be due to schools reducing their recruitment of new teachers: more existing teachers stayed in post and schools had no additional budget to be able to hire new teachers anyway (Allen *et al.*, 2020). Teach First – another school-based salaried route, which is not covered by the UCAS data – reported having to turn placed applicants away because not enough schools were willing to employ them (Whittaker, 2020).

Postgraduate ITT applications with accepted offers in England, August 2020 vs August 2019 (%)



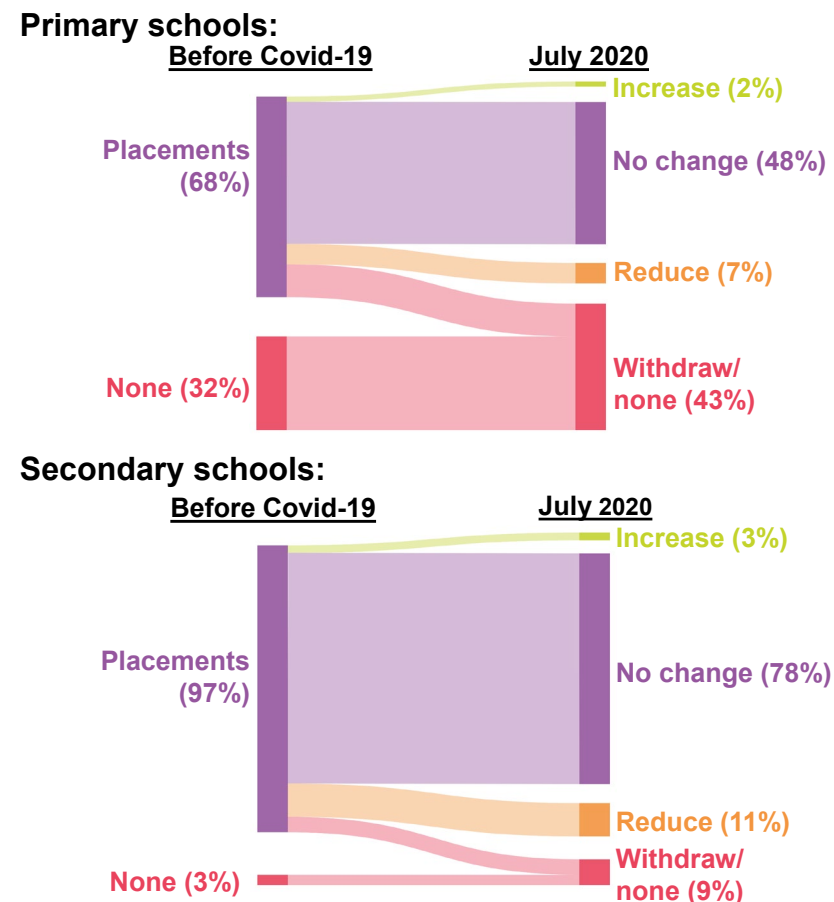
Source: NFER analysis of UCAS Teacher Training Statistical Releases

Since Covid-19 there has been a reduction in school placements on offer to ITT providers

The UCAS data suggests there are likely to be more trainees in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20, which means more school placements are required for them to complete their training. Further, disruption to training in 2019/20 means that some trainees need to complete another placement in the autumn term to demonstrate that they have met the Teachers' Standard, having not been on track to be awarded QTS. However, Covid-19 has caused some schools to reduce their provision of ITT placements in 2020/21. A NASBTT survey of school-based ITT providers in June 2020 indicated that half had reported partner schools withdrawing from offering placements (NASBTT, 2020).

We estimated the impact of Covid-19 on school placements by asking a representative sample of senior leaders how many placements they were planning to offer in 2020/21 before Covid-19, and how many they planned to offer in July 2020, when the survey was conducted. These estimates may be subject to a degree of bias: relying on senior leaders accurately recalling what they were planning before Covid-19 (recall bias) and schools that offer placements perhaps being more likely to complete surveys (response bias). However, the data nonetheless indicates the perceived impact of Covid-19 on placement capacity.

Before Covid-19, around two-thirds of primary schools and almost all secondary schools were planning to offer at least some ITT placements. In July, around half of primaries and four out of five secondaries expected to offer the same placements as they had planned to offer before Covid-19. However, 11 per cent of primary schools were planning to withdraw from offering placements due to Covid-19, and 7 per cent to reduce the number of placements offered. Six per cent of secondary schools were planning to withdraw placements and 11 per cent to reduce their placements. Two and three per cent of primary and secondary schools, respectively, planned to increase placements.



Source: July 2020 NFER survey of 1176 senior leaders; 804 responded. Excludes 40 'Don't know' responses.

Note: percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

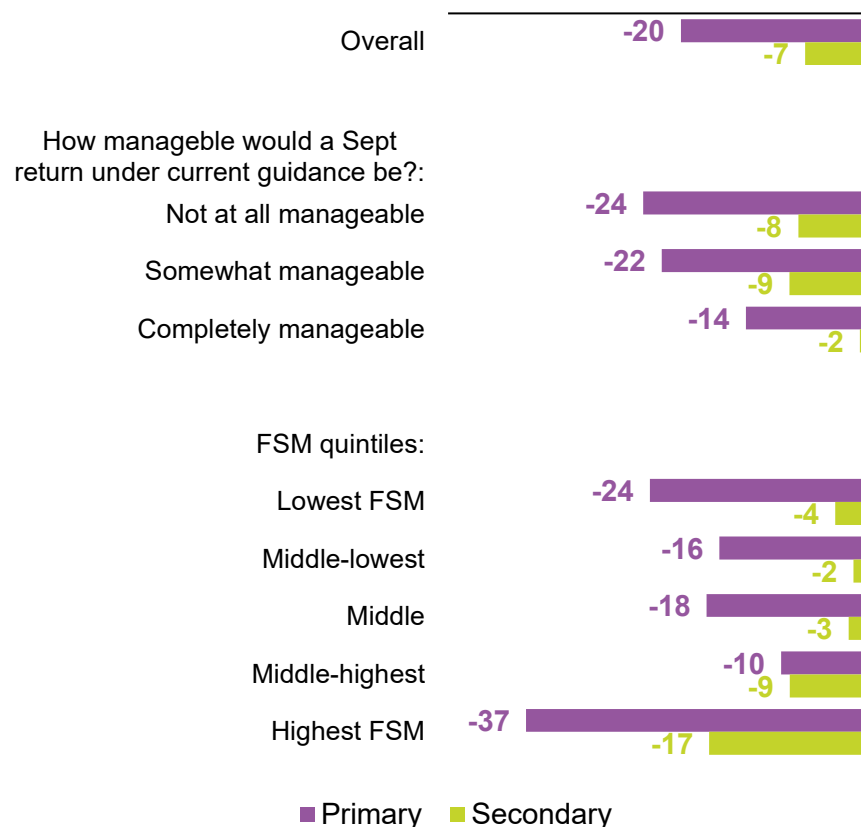
Covid-19 has led to an overall reduction in school trainee placement capacity in 2020/21

We estimate the net impact of Covid-19 on overall ITT placement capacity by averaging the number of placements offered by each school before Covid-19 and in July 2020. For primary schools, the total number of placements was 20 per cent lower due to Covid-19, the average dropping from 2.8 to 2.2 per school (excluding schools not offering placements). For secondary schools, the total number of placements was seven per cent lower due to Covid-19, dropping from 6.7 to 6.2 per school, among schools offering placements.

A key factor associated with schools reducing placements was schools reporting that, when surveyed in July, opening in September under the DfE guidance would be ‘not at all manageable’ or ‘somewhat manageable’. However, even school leaders who regarded reopening in September as ‘completely manageable’ were, on average, planning to reduce their schools’ placement offers by 14 per cent for primaries and two per cent for secondaries. This suggests that even if schools considered reopening to be manageable, staff capacity was still being drawn away from hosting trainee placements, just to a lesser degree. One senior leader we surveyed said that ‘no students are being taken on to allow staff to manage what will already be an increased workload’.

There were no significant differences by academy status, region, Ofsted rating or the distance to the school’s nearest ITT provider. However, schools with the most disadvantaged pupils reported a larger average reduction in capacity due to Covid-19, compared to other schools. This could be a cause for concern, as offering ITT placements can be a good way for schools to recruit teachers and schools serving disadvantaged communities tend to struggle most with recruiting suitable teachers (Allen and McInerney, 2019).

Change in placements offered in 2020/21 between pre-Covid and July 2020



Source: NFER survey of 1176 senior leaders in July 2020; 544 responded
Note: filtered by schools offering at least one placement before Covid-19.

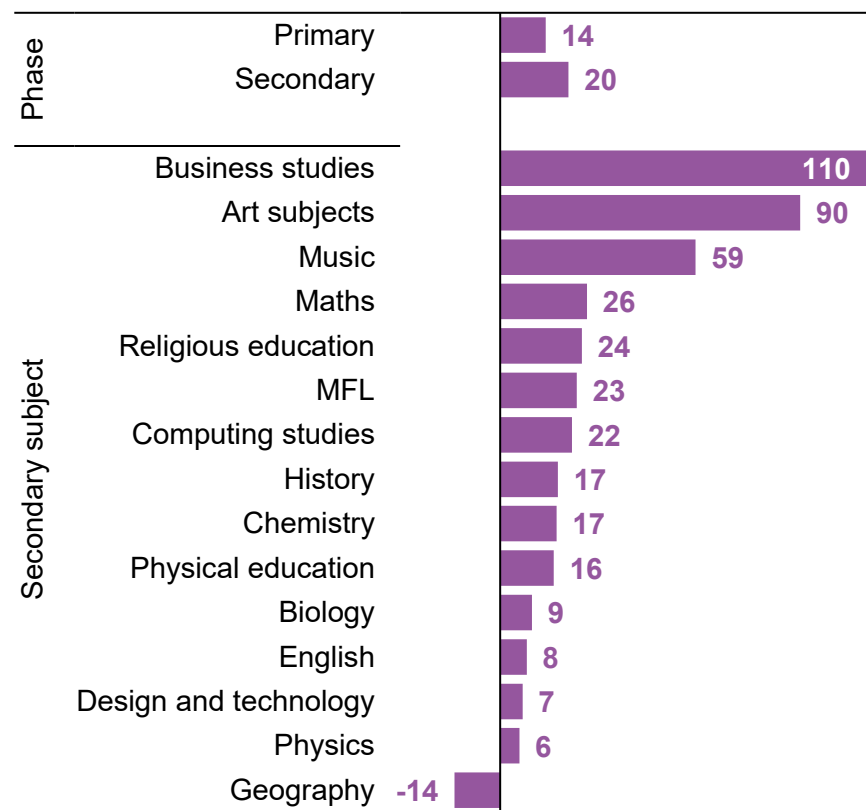
Some, but not all, shortage subjects have seen healthy increases in accepted offer numbers

The UCAS data also shows considerable variation in the change in accepted offers by phase and subject. Accepted offers to primary and secondary ITT courses have both increased, with secondary increasing by more than primary. The figures on subjects should be interpreted with some caution due to applications to courses with a combination of subjects being double-counted. Subject combinations are double-counted in both 2020 and 2019, so is not necessarily an issue when comparing the two. However, comparisons could be challenging where application patterns to combination-subject courses changes between years – see appendix for more details.

The wide variation in the change in accepted offers by secondary subjects has little relationship with the level of under-recruitment in those subjects. Some shortage subjects, such as mathematics, MFL and chemistry, have seen healthy increases in the number of accepted offers in August 2020, compared to the level in August 2019. However, the number of accepted offers in physics is only six per cent higher in 2020 than in 2019. This could be due to physics graduates having good career options in spite of the labour market uncertainty. The small size of the overall pool of physics graduates relative to the recruitment numbers needed is also likely to be an important factor (Worth and Van den Brande, 2019).

Similarly, there is considerable variation among non-shortage subjects. The increases in accepted offers for history and PE are higher than for English and biology. The number of accepted places for Geography in 2020 is 14 per cent below the level in 2019, most likely due to the reduction in the 2020 bursary value, from £26,000 in 2019 to £15,000.

Postgraduate ITT applications with accepted offers in England, August 2020 vs August 2019 (%)



Source: NFER analysis of UCAS Teacher Training Statistical Releases

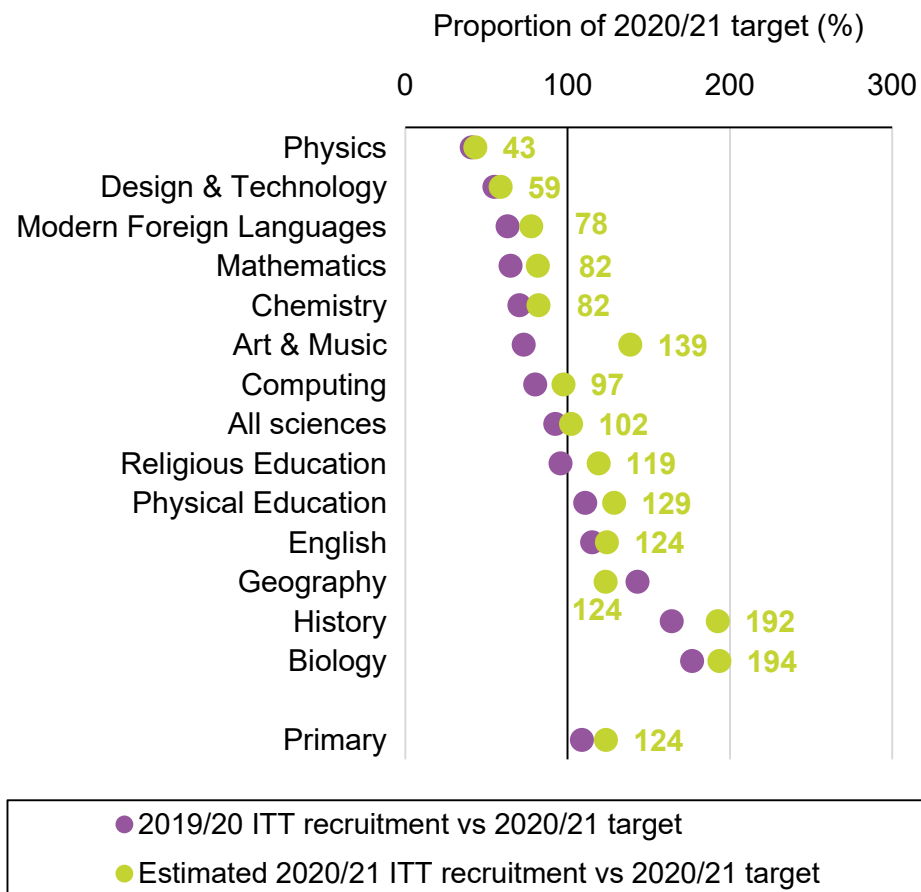
These increases will likely help to close recruitment gaps, but not fully for shortage subjects

An increase in applications to, and accepted offers for, training in 2020/21 is welcome for the education system, in the context of a teacher supply challenge. However, the challenge will only be met if increases in shortage subjects make it more likely that the number of trainees will match the future need for teachers in those subjects. We estimate the impact on teacher supply in 2021 (when the trainees will enter the teaching workforce), multiplying the number of recruited trainees in 2019/20 (from the ITT census) by the subject-specific increases between August 2019 and August 2020 reported on the previous page.

The purple dots represent the number of trainees recruited to ITT in each subject in 2019/20, as a proportion of the 2020/21 target for the same subject (from the TSM – see DfE, 2019). The green dots represent an estimate of the number of trainees recruited in each subject in 2020/21, as a proportion of the target.

The estimates suggest that despite the increase in applications in 2020/21, the under-recruitment gaps in shortage subjects are unlikely to fully close. We estimate that while some gaps may close to some extent, recruitment to ITT is likely to remain below target in five subjects, including physics, chemistry, mathematics and MFL, and just below target for computing. Combining estimates for physics, chemistry and biology suggests that overall science teacher recruitment may reach the target, although recruits will remain dominated by biology trainees.

In contrast, subjects that met or exceeded their targets in 2019/20 are likely to increase further above the target, including history, geography, English, and PE.



Source: NFER analysis of ITT Census, Teacher Supply Model and UCAS data.

Teacher retention is likely to increase in the short-term due to the Covid-19 recession

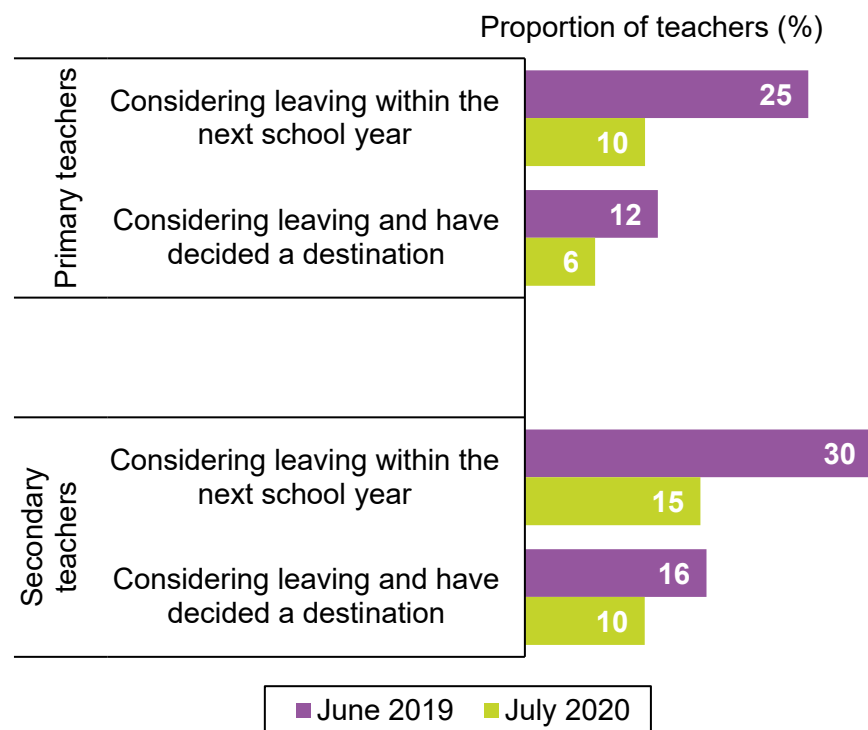
Teacher retention is also influenced by the economic cycle, with higher retention during recessions due to uncertainty in the wider labour market. However, the literature suggests that the links between the economic cycle and teachers leaving the profession tend to be 'less strong than the patterns relating to entry' (Hutchings, 2011).

We estimated the likely impact of the recession on teacher retention in 2020/21 by drawing on survey data. NFER conducted a nationally-representative survey of 1782 teachers in July 2020, asking whether they were considering leaving teaching in the next 12 months. To assess what impact Covid-19 and the recession is likely to have had, we compare these estimates with data from an NFER survey in June 2019. Importantly, both surveys used exactly the same question and response options, and were conducted after the May half term deadline for resigning from their school and leaving at the end of the year.

The data shows that the proportion of teachers that are considering leaving in July 2020 is substantially lower than in June 2019, by 15 percentage points for primary and secondary teachers (58 and 50 per cent, respectively, of the 2019 proportion).

Intentions are not the same as actions: many teachers who are considering leaving may not actually do so. Both surveys asked a follow-up question to those who were considering leaving about what they planned to do next. The most cited option in both surveys was 'undecided', suggesting some are not strongly committed to leaving. However, the proportion of teachers considering leaving with a destination in mind is also substantially lower this year, by six

percentage points (47 and 35 per cent, respectively). Such substantial falls in the proportions considering leaving are unlikely to be fully reflected in actual leaving rates, but nonetheless indicate that retention is likely to be higher in 2020/21.



Source: NFER survey of 1121 teachers in June 2019 (OME, 2019); NFER survey of 1782 teachers in July 2020.

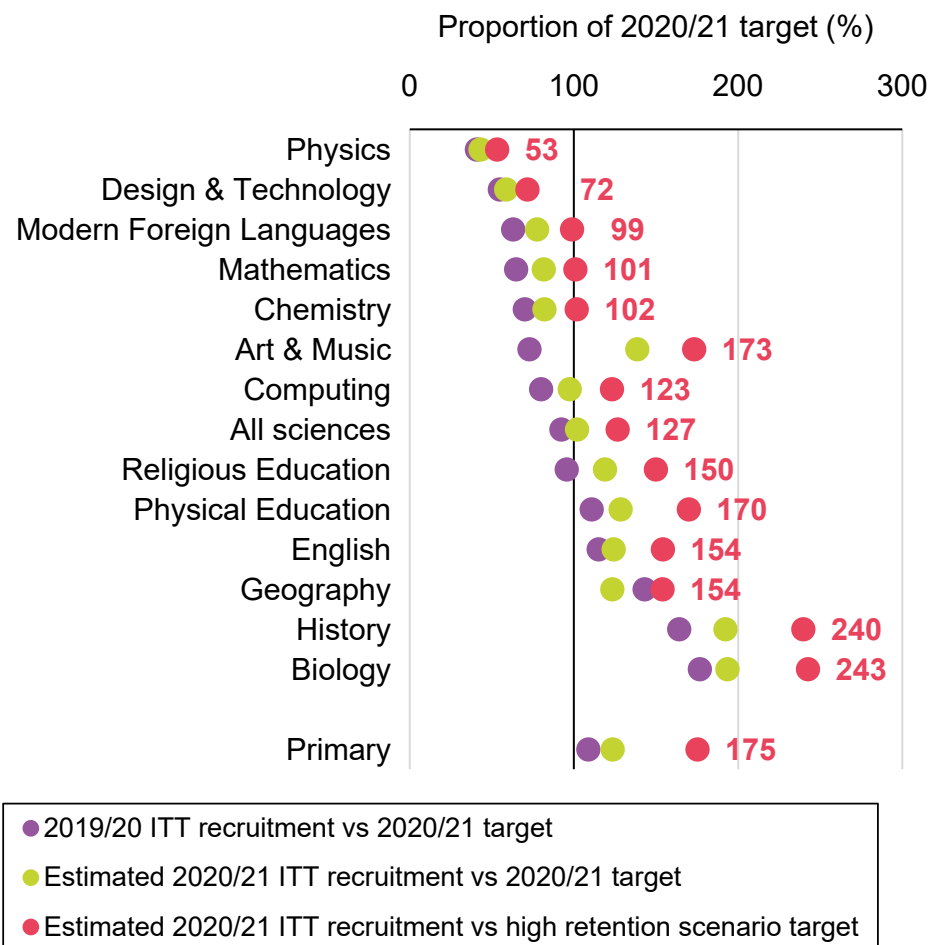
Combined impact of higher recruitment and retention is likely to further close recruitment gaps

The 2020/21 ITT targets, estimated using the TSM, are what the ITT census statistics will be reported against when the data is published later in autumn 2020. However, a crucial component of these estimates of how many new teachers the system will need, is how many teachers were expected to leave teaching in 2020/21.

The TSM predicted the teacher leaving rate in 2020/21 with the information that was available in summer 2019. However, our data suggests that this is likely to be an over-estimate. We estimate what proportion of *teacher need* in September 2021 is likely to be met in each subject from recruitment in 2020/21. We conservatively assume a 25 per cent reduction in the leaving rate, compared to what was assumed in the 2020/21 TSM. These estimates are shown as red dots in the chart – the purple and green dots are as defined above.

Our estimates predict that many under-recruitment gaps in shortage subjects are likely to reduce, relative to teacher need. However, the estimates suggest that recruitment gaps in physics and design & technology are unlikely to fully close. Our estimates predict that recruitment in mathematics, MFL and chemistry may meet need, while recruitment in a range of subjects, as well as primary, is likely to be substantially higher than the system needs in September 2021.

This analysis should be treated as indicative of the possible effects, not as an accurate prediction of likely outcomes. The estimates are subject to a high degree of uncertainty due to the predictions and assumptions they are based on. Circumstances (particularly teachers' career plans) may also change further before September 2021.



Source: NFER analysis of ITT Census, Teacher Supply Model, UCAS data.

Conclusions and recommendations

Placement capacity

UCAS data shows a clear increase in interest in applying for postgraduate teacher training in 2020/21. This is most likely to be an increase in the attractiveness of teaching against the backdrop of labour market uncertainty caused by the recession. The increase in applications has been driven by recent graduates, who are entering the graduate labour market for the first time, and is strongest in regions with labour markets that have weakened most in the last year.

The increase in applications has been followed through with an increase in accepted offers for training in 2020/21, which means there are very likely to be more trainees in the ITT system next year.

The increase in applications since April 2020 meant that ITT providers needed more school-based placements to provide trainees with the opportunity to train in school. However, due to Covid-19, schools were reducing the number of placements they were willing to offer for trainees, by 20 per cent in primary schools and seven per cent in secondary schools. This created a bottleneck in the system, squeezing ITT providers' ability to make offers to all the additional suitable applicants that they received.

The DfE issued several pieces of guidance aimed at easing the bottleneck. The guidance on full September school opening 'strongly encourage[d] schools to consider hosting ITT trainees' and encouraged schools and ITT providers to consider flexible trainee deployment (DfE, 2020a). The DfE also defined trainee teachers as 'critical workers' and

therefore not as visitors to their placement school. This may have helped ease schools' concerns about the practicalities of hosting trainees. The latter measure was announced after our survey data was collected, so any impact is not captured in our data.

The DfE also relaxed the requirements that trainees spend 120 days physically in schools, train in at least two schools and cover the full age and ability range of training (DfE, 2020b). These relaxations seem to have allowed ITT providers additional flexibility to make the placement capacity that schools are offering cover more trainees.

Thanks to both these flexibilities and ITT providers' careful approach of only making offers where placements were arranged, the system looks likely to be able to train the increased number of trainees in 2020/21. While risks remain that schools may withdraw from placement offers they have made, there was also optimism expressed by some senior leaders we surveyed that they would consider offering placements later in the school year if they could successfully navigate the autumn term.

However, the squeeze on placement capacity has highlighted a vulnerability that could continue to impact the ITT sector. Uncertainty in the wider labour market is likely to continue next year, so applications to teacher training are likely to be high again for training in 2021/22. Mentor capacity in schools is likely to be a key potential limiting factor, particularly as 2021/22 is also the year of the national roll-out of the Early Career Framework (ECF) and the second year of the ECF early roll-out, when additional mentor capacity will be needed to support second-year teachers in eligible areas.

Recommendations

School and trust leaders should consider what additional trainee placement offers they could make in 2021/22

Schools have faced unprecedented disruption in 2019/20 due to Covid-19 and school and trust leaders have risen to the challenge of continuing to deliver education during this most profound of crises.

However, the long-term benefit of the education system depends on training the next generation of teachers. Schools and trusts should be encouraged and supported to play their part in providing placement capacity, particularly over the next few years when trainee numbers are likely to be higher.

The Government needs to continue working with school leaders and ITT providers to tackle the placement bottleneck

The Government should consider further communication campaigns aimed at school leaders to reassure and encourage them to offer training placements, reinforcing the flexibilities within the school opening guidance and revisions to the ITT requirements that have been introduced to ease schools' concerns.

While long-term planning is challenging during the uncertainty of a pandemic, this communication should be as timely as possible, giving schools and ITT providers the ability to plan effectively for recruitment during the 2021 cycle and ITT delivery in 2021/22. For example, ITT providers and schools will need to know which flexibilities to the ITT requirements will continue in 2021 in plenty of time.

Teacher supply

The increase in applications to ITT in 2020/21 looks likely to make considerable in-roads in closing the recruitment gaps that have widened in recent years. Coupled with increased teacher retention, a significant portion of the gap in teacher need for September 2021 is likely to be closed. Our analysis suggests that not all recruitment gaps will close, as a notable gap for physics is likely to remain.

Our analysis also highlights that there is likely to be considerably more recruitment in several subjects than the TSM targets suggest is required, most notably in history. The Government should give consideration to how to manage potential over-supply in future, but should do so cautiously to ensure that teacher supply issues do not re-emerge once the economy recovers.

The 2020 recession has blown a fair wind that promises to ease supply concerns in the short-term, but it is also important to recognise that the fair wind will not blow forever. Therefore, the Government should remain focussed on delivering the teacher recruitment and retention strategy, ensuring that the teaching profession remains an attractive profession in ways that go beyond relatively good job security. Measures aimed at reducing teacher workload and improving retention appeared to be bearing fruit before Covid-19 (Worth, 2020). Ensuring the teacher starting salary is competitive with other professions will also remain important, especially once the wider labour market recovers. The Government should therefore press ahead with its plans to raise the teacher starting salary to £30,000. Continuing to strengthen teaching's underlying attractiveness is likely to make it more resilient to future periods when recruitment and retention are more challenging than today.

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Appendix A: Methodology

UCAS data

Data

The analysis of applications and accepted offers to postgraduate initial teacher training is based on the monthly Teacher Training Statistical Releases. Data on the number of applicants and applications is published once a month between November and the following September in PDFs on the UCAS website. We gathered data from each PDFs to enable our analysis.

The data covers applications to postgraduate ITT providers in England and Wales. Data on applications to undergraduate teacher training in England and Wales, and all forms of teacher training in Scotland and Northern Ireland, are covered in separate statistical releases. The data includes applications to higher education, SCITT, School Direct and postgraduate teaching apprenticeship training routes, but does not include direct applications to other routes, such as Teach First or Now Teach.

The UCAS data does not cover applications that go directly through the DfE's new 'Find postgraduate teacher training courses' admissions service. This was launched in November 2019 with a small-scale pilot, which is not large enough to significantly affect the comparisons with previous years.

URL: <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/ucas-teacher-training-statistical-releases>

Analysis

We explore two different measures within the data. The first is the number of applicants/ applications to postgraduate teacher training. This is a good measure of any change in the interest in entering teaching: if more people become attracted to teaching then the numbers of applicants and applications are likely to increase. The second measure is the number of accepted offers – the sum of 'placed' (i.e. applicant has received and accepted an *unconditional* offer) and 'conditional placed' (i.e. applicant has received and accepted a *conditional* offer) applicants. This is a good measure of how many trainees are likely to enrol in teacher training in the following year. Not all applicants are offered and accept places, either due to ITT providers turning down applicants who are unsuitable or for whom there is no capacity to train them, or applicants not accepting offers they have been made.

However, accepted places is only a proxy for enrolments in teacher training next year. Some places may not be taken up because applicants subsequently decide not to enrol and some conditional accepted places will not be taken up because the conditions are not met. However, we assume that the rate of drop-out and conditions being met is likely to be similar across years. We therefore assume that any differences between years are likely to be good approximations of the change in enrolments. However, there may be differences if, for example, a disproportionate number of places need to be rejected or deferred by providers in 2020 compared to previous years.

We explore the 2020 data using two sets of comparisons. First, we compare the number of applicants/ applications and accepted places in the August 2020 data to the August 2019 data. This analysis gives an impression of what the overall situation at the end of the recruitment cycle is likely to look like compared to last year. Second, we compare the number of *new* applicants/ applications between March and August in 2020 to the same in March-August 2019. This analysis gives an impression of the *impact* that Covid-19 has had on applicants/ applications, by taking into account any differences in the overall state of recruitment when lockdown began in mid-March.

UCAS data is reported separately for the numbers of applicants and applications, respectively. We analyse breakdowns of the sex and age of applicants. We analyse breakdowns of the provider region, training route, course phase and subject of applications. Because applicants can make more than one application and can only take up one place, we rely on some assumptions when interpreting the number of *applications* as being informative about numbers of eventual enrolments. First, we assume that

The data on applications by subject is reported in a way that adds additional complexity. Applications are reported where a particular subject is either the single subject or part of a combination. Where applications are part of a combination of subjects, they are counted more than once. For example, an application for teacher training in French and German would be counted once for French and once for German. This means it is impossible to determine the exact numbers of applications with accepted offers. However, under the assumption that the proportion of courses that are single or combination does not change much from year to year, changes in the total number of

applications can be interpreted as indicative of the overall underlying change.

Further complexity was added in the 2020 cycle as some changes were made to the way subject codes were defined, and also to how some subject combinations were coded. First, changes were made to the languages code set, but these were not likely to affect the way individual language codes were used. We therefore focus on the change in French, German, Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, Russian and Japanese as reflecting the overall change in MFL applications. Second, the use of the 'science' code has changed. However, we focus our analysis on changes in physics, chemistry and biology, which were not likely to be affected by this change. However, we believe that our analysis approach has minimised the chance of changes having any detrimental impact on our interpretation.

Schools' responses to Covid-19 surveys

About the survey

From 8 to 15 July 2020, NFER collected data via a survey sent to all 20,553 state-funded mainstream primary and secondary schools in England. We asked senior leaders (head teachers, principals, deputy head teachers and business managers) to complete the survey themselves and pass it on to up to nine teachers of different key stages (primary schools), or different subject areas (secondary schools).

We received responses from 1176 senior leaders and 1782 teachers in 1305 primary schools (including middle deemed primary) and 898 secondary schools (including middle deemed secondary and all-through schools), representing 7.6 per cent of the 17,169 primary schools and 26.5 per cent of the 3384 secondary schools in England.

We weighted the data to ensure that our findings are representative of mainstream schools in England, using the distribution of the achieved sample relative to the national population of school phase and FSM quintile. A few schools provided more than the requested number of responses, which was also addressed by weighting the data.

Analysis

The analysis in this report focuses on two sets of survey questions relating to staffing issues: senior leaders were asked about their plans for ITT placements in 2020/21 and teachers (as well as senior leaders) were asked about their intentions to leave teaching in the next year. School characteristic information from DfE's Get Information About Schools database was matched in to the survey data for further sub-group analysis. See Sharp *et al.*, (2020) for more details on the survey.

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