**Further Education ITE updated advice for providers.**

The Department is keen to ensure that the focus of all of those involved in the FE ITE system remains on assuring the quality of provision and access to good learning experiences whilst continuing to ensure safety and adherence with published guidance.

To that end we have recently updated our advice to the [FE sector](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957109/2021_Further_Education_guidance_for_operation_during_the_national_lockdown.pdf) including specific advice relating to initial teacher education provision. (See page 38 of the document).

This confirms that FE teachers, alongside all other teachers, continue to have critical worker status.

FE ITE trainees are also deemed to be critical workers – this is consistent with [current guidance for HE providers,](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home#universities) and applies the same definition as is used in [advice to schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak#school-workforce). The Department considers it essential that we maintain the supply of teachers to the sector throughout the current period. This means that ITE students should have returned to learning this term. They can continue to access face to face teaching if it is appropriate, make full use of provider resources and attend practice placement where possible.

**What does this mean for FE ITE?**

As part of the group of HE students who are being prioritised for face-to-face teaching, since the start of the current lockdown ITE trainees have been able to return to campus or placement where it is safe to do so. Returning students should be tested twice upon their return to study, or they should self-isolate for ten days instead before they return to placement.

ITE courses should continue to be timetabled for trainees and be delivered using the most appropriate methods, this can include face to face contact due to the prioritisation outlined above alongside online or remote delivery. A full curriculum should continue to be made available to them, with the intention of completing their qualification on time. We continue to fully support the guidance provided by the Education and Training Foundation’s ‘Additional guidance for qualifications in Education and Training’ which was updated on 29 January 2021. It is essential that there remains a consistent approach to ITE across all providers ensuring quality outcomes for all trainees.

As part of this commitment practice placement and teaching opportunities should continue to be supported by FE placement providers wherever possible. Placement providers should view ITE trainees as critical workers in the same way that their own teaching staff are[[1]](#footnote-2).

Risk assessments and related guidance should be in place for trainees in the same way they are for teaching staff within a provider. Trainees should be offered the same protections as employed staff.

**Is there a difference for pre and in-service trainees?**

**In-service trainees** should continue to work unless there is a reason for them not to, for example if they are [critically extremely vulnerable](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19) and have been advised to shield. They may deliver face to face or online teaching and learning as appropriate and in line with their employer’s overall approach to continuing to provide suitable education for their learners.

ITE providers supporting in-service trainees should continue to provide relevant teaching input, observations and assessments of practice as appropriate. They can decide with the trainee, their mentor and their employer what constitutes ‘appropriate practice’ in line with the advice already issued by ETF. Observation of practice may be undertaken remotely. We would expect most in-service trainees to be able to complete their ITE qualification in the expected time.

**Pre-service trainees** should continue to access their qualification through this period. They are considered part of the critical worker pipeline and able to travel to their place of study and/or placement on that basis. Their ITE provider, mentor and placement organisation may want to take account of the advice provided to schools in terms of hosting trainees on pages 40 and 41 of the [advice to schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak#school-workforce).

This is not an exhaustive list and decisions are ultimately for hosting organisations in line with their risk assessments. We do expect that where possible, trainees can continue to play an active role in their organisation and be provided with opportunities to be assessed in practice in line with the ETFs published guidance. This will inevitably include more online or remote observation of teaching than previously to reflect the change in delivery methods for both FE and HE providers.

For trainees where there is no **practice placement opportunity** available due to Covid restrictions their training provider should continue to work with their partners to find suitable teaching practice. We would encourage all FE organisations to continue to support placements where possible. If no placement opportunity is available for a trainee then it may be appropriate for them to defer their studies until next academic year. This is a decision for the provider and student based upon the learning opportunities that are available.

ENDS

1. To note under schools’ advice ITT mentors and tutors are considered visitors to a school and are not critical workers, the same would apply to FE placements. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)