**All Party Parliamentary Group for the Teaching Profession**

**SIG Enquiry into Initial Teacher Education**

**Responses by 2nd April 2021**

**Introduction**

This call for evidence invites views on the provision of ITE in England, with particular regard to its strengths and areas for further development.

Written evidence, of no more than 2,000 words in total (plus annexes), should be submitted to: kate@waterman.education by 2nd April 2021.

An oral evidence session will be held, by invitation, later in April. A formal report will be published before the end of May 2021. Written evidence may be published as an Annex to the report, unless requested otherwise by the authors.

The review is being conducted under the auspices of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Teaching Profession and is being chaired by Lord Knight of Weymouth.

**Background**

OfSTED currently rate all ITE in England as being either good or outstanding and has reached similar conclusions under a succession of different inspection frameworks. However, the context has changed since the last inspections were carried out, notably in regards to: the impact of Covid 19; policy changes, including the introduction of the Core Content Framework (CCF), the Early Career Framework (ECF) and the establishment of 87 new teaching school hubs.

The Department for Education announced its intention to review the ‘shape of the ITE market’ in its January 2019 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy. The review did not, however, begin in earnest until the autumn of 2020 when an Expert Advisory Group was established. A formal statement about the review was made on 2 January 2021 alongside an announcement about the establishment of a new Institute of Teaching (IOT). Although technically separate from the market review, IOT documentation refers to it as being part of an ‘ambitious’ reform of ITE.

The initial training of teachers is core to the work of the APPG for the Teaching Profession. We are therefore carrying out this urgent review to inform the debate around any proposed changes to Initial Teacher Education.

*You do not have to answer every question but there is an overall limit of 2000 words.*

*The responses to each question will be collated by a different member of the SIG.*

*To help the administration, please put you name in the header.*

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| **1. Is there a quality problem with NQTs?**  |
| According to quality indicators such as evidence from OfSTED[[1]](#footnote-1) and surveys of NQTs[[2]](#footnote-2), the quality of ITE in this country is extremely good. OfSTED rate all ITE providers in England as being ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’. Similar conclusions were reached following inspections carried out under previous inspection frameworks, and reports from UCET members about the preparations they are making in regards the new inspection framework, and the ITE Core Content Framework, indicate that similar conclusions are likely to be reached when inspections begin again under the new inspection methodology.Until 2017, the DfE carried out annual surveys of NQTs about the extent to which their ITE equipped them to be good teachers. These regularly found that some 90% of NQTs considered their ITE to have been either ‘good’ or ‘very good’, consistent with OfSTED findings. Although responses to the NQT survey tailed off when DfE moved from print to on-line data collections (before being curtailed in 2017), the collective results going back many years clearly demonstrate how well NQTs have valued the quality and relevance of their ITE.More recent data confirm these results. In March 2021 a Teacher Tap survey[[3]](#footnote-3) commissioned by UCET found that:* 78% of teachers trained in the last two years would recommend their ITE route to a friend
* 81% of teachers trained in the last two years rate the quality of teaching and learning from their ITE highly
* 76% of teachers trained in the last two years say their ITE prepared them well for their first role

The evidence shows that the overall quality of ITE in this country, and by implication the quality of NQTs, is strong. The actual performance of NQTs once employed in a school is however to an extent determined by the context in which they are working, the level and quality of early career support they receive from schools and the culture and management practices of the school[[4]](#footnote-4). ITE is just one of a number of things that determine how well NQTs perform during their first teaching role. ITE does of course have an impact, and NQTs can feel overwhelmed during their first years of teaching. ITE programmes which allow for deep engagement with the complexity of teaching and with research are likely to produce teachers who are able to develop over time and adapt flexibly to changing circumstances, and are as a result likely to remain and develop in the profession. |

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| **2. Are there economies of scale in ITE provision?** |
| One of the strengths of the current system is its ability to provide ITE to scale. Each year, the sector provides ITE for some 30,000 prospective teachers who are recruited from a range of backgrounds for work in a wide variety of schools. The HE sector, in particular, is adept at providing ITE for large numbers of ITE students, including some 6,000 undergraduates each year and some 14,000 postgraduate (core and School Direct) students, often recruited from their own undergraduate cohorts. HEIs are involved in all forms of initial teacher education, including that provided through School Direct, School Direct Salaried, SCITTs, apprenticeships and Teach First. Much of the ITE provided through university is at master’s degree level, providing a platform for new teachers to progress towards full master’s qualifications, something that has been shown to have a positive impact on their performance[[5]](#footnote-5).We are not aware of any significant economies of scale in terms of cost and the number of student teachers recruited. ITE providers receive fee income of £9,250 per ITE student, although actual costs, particularly in some subjects, are likely to be higher. Both large and small providers are providing ITE for this amount of money while operating within budget. There is no evidence to suggest that subsuming some existing providers within larger partnerships would lead to more cost-effective delivery, although, particularly for secondary student teachers, the development of subject specific pedagogy might be facilitated through larger cohorts. The support that the HEI sector gives to some smaller scale provision, such as School Direct, allows it in many cases to be both financially and educationally sustainable. Despite the concerns we have about the way School Direct was originally introduced, it has in some cases been consistent with strong and effective ITE partnerships. A mixed market of different types and size of provider allows choice for both prospective teachers and for schools in terms of the kind of provider they choose to work with. The advantages of this should not be overlooked. |

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| **3. How could schools be better incentivised to be more involved in ITE?** |
| Schools engage with ITE partnerships for a number of reasons, including: as part of a social commitment to educate and train the next generation of teachers; the benefits that student teachers bring in terms of contributing to the work and culture of the school; access to the new, innovative practice and research knowledge that students often provide; because it contributes to the professional development of existing teachers, including those working as mentors; and the access it provides to a steady supply of new NQTs. Partner schools receive a proportion of the £9,250 fee income providers receive for each student teacher. The precise amount will depend on how responsibilities are shared between schools and the ITE provider(s) they work with. This balance of responsibilities will vary according to the needs and contexts of each partnership. The prescription of a uniform or ring-fenced amount across the sector would prevent this flexible and contextual approach, and could have the perverse impact of pushing some schools out of ITE altogether.Different schools have different levels of engagement with ITE. In some models, schools form an integral part of the partnership and have significant engagement in governance, decision taking, planning and delivery. In others, providers and schools have distinct but complementary roles that sometimes result in schools providing placement opportunities and mentoring support. While it would be worthwhile for a review to consider how a level of consistency and minimum expectations might be ensured, we do not think that it would be appropriate to apply one uniform model across the whole sector. We would welcome schools being given a greater incentive to engage in both teacher education and in early and ongoing professional development. However, a blanket requirement on schools to participate in ITE would be counter-productive. A former Chief Executive of the Training & Development Agency for schools once told the Education Select Committee that ‘*pressed men rarely make the best recruits’*’. Engaging in ITE simply to meet a statutory obligation could lead to at best a half-hearted engagement with ITE and a poor quality experience for student teachers. An option that could however work, combining both a ‘carrot’ and a ‘stick’ approach, would be for OfSTED to look at the extent to which schools engage in teacher education when they carry out school inspections. To be awarded an ‘outstanding’ grade, schools would have to demonstrate a deep, continuing and effective commitment to the initial and ongoing development of the profession. That would give a clear encouragement to the best schools to participate. |

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| **4. How can ITE be improved?** |
| Despite its clear strengths, there will always be scope to improve the quality of ITE. We would suggest that the starting point for this should be a thorough and open review of ITE that allows time for a range of evidence to be invited, discussed and interrogated, including international evidence about what constitutes effective ITE. The process should involve school leaders, teachers, student teachers, professional associations, the research community and ITE providers themselves. It should also be timed to allow evidence from the new OfSTED inspection framework, particularly in regards to the Core Content Framework, to be analysed and reflected upon. A review should focus on the needs of the teaching profession and schools. Specifics it might cover in the first instance include:* How well ITE is at developing thinking, critical, research literate and adaptable professionals. Teaching is a challenging, complex, intellectual and ethical endeavour and it is important that this is reflected in how ITE is structured and delivered[[6]](#footnote-6).
* The length of ITE programmes. For example, how long do ITE programmes need to be to enable undergraduate and postgraduate student teachers to become effective and professional classroom teachers? What proportion of programmes should be spent in school? Should the time spent in schools be adaptive to allow for the needs of particular student teachers and contexts to be taken into account?
* The well-being of student teachers and the impact that assessment procedures and performativity mechanisms can have.
* Mentoring, including the expectations laced on mentors and the support and training they receive.
* The way in which the ITE curriculum allows for the integration of both theoretical and practical considerations across the whole partnership.
* The Teacher Standards, which were introduced in 2012, might now usefully be reviewed. Consideration might be given to the development of a set of progressive standards for teachers at different stages of their careers, while avoiding a return to the more atomised and tick-box approaches experienced in the past.
* The relationship between accredited ITE providers and schools, and the different models of effective partnership and management that should be encouraged.
* The link between ITE and early and ongoing professional development across the course of a teacher’s professional career. How each stage of professional learning should build on what has come before, keep teachers up to date with emerging research and ensure up to date subject and pedagogic knowledge.
* The appropriate balance between consistency of provision and scope for contextualisation. As teachers will become part of a profession that will allow them to teach in a variety of schools it is reasonable to expect that ITE is delivered through agreed frameworks and provides new teachers with a common professional base of knowledge and understanding. It is however also important that their ITE reflects the particular contexts and needs of the schools and communities in which they undertake their ITE. Schools involved in teacher education should be equipped to balance their needs and priorities with those of the profession as a whole.
* The lessons learned from the Covid 19 pandemic, for example how new approaches to teaching and programme delivery might be carried forward into the post-pandemic world.
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| **5. If it is decided to implement significant change to the provision of ITE, what would be the best timing for any change?** |
| There is no need to rush. We know that ITE is generally fit for purpose. The review of ITE suggested above should take place over a 12-18 month period. The timescale for the introduction of any reforms will depend on what is recommended. But any change should be evolutionary and should build on existing strengths and ensure that recruitment in areas of teacher shortage, and in subjects that are already difficult to recruit to, are protected. It is extremely unlikely that a wholly new system will have to be introduced and the existing system dismantled. A period of 2-3 years should, depending on what is recommended, give the sector time to adjust, trail and embed any required changes.  |

1. OfSTED annual report, 1 December 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. NQT annual survey 2017, DfE 5 September 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UCET, 22 March 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hagger H, Mutton T & Burn K (2011): *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41 (4) & Burn K, Mutton T & Hagger H, ‘Strengthening and sustaining professional learning in the second year of teaching’, *Oxford Review of Education* 36(6) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A longitudinal review of the postgraduate professional development of teachers, TDA 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Intellectual Base of Teacher Education, UCET January 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)