

30th April 2021

Dear ECF Team

**Re: ECF webinar presentation by DfE 28th April 2021**

Thank you for providing the presentation on the Early Career Framework (ECF) on 28th April.

A number of members of UCET’s CPD Forum attended the webinar; as CPD Chair, I have been asked to share their reflections with you.

Overall, members found the webinar informative and, despite some technical difficulties, were grateful for the opportunity to have further details of the ECF presented by the Department. That said, colleagues in schools and institutions who are anxious to be prepared for September had a number of pressing concerns that were not addressed adequately at the event. These are critical issues and we raise them in the spirit of ensuring that the Department is best placed to implement the ECF effectively in September. The points are numbered for ease of reference:

1. *Impact on initial teacher education (ITE)*

As part of the ECF, financial support is being offered to support mentoring of early career teachers (ECTs); while this is welcome, it appears that there are no plans to support mentoring for ITE in this way. This will inevitably create conflicts where mentors who normally support ITE are paid for ECT work but not for their ITE mentoring. Why is there not the same statutory support within the Core Content Framework (CCF)? Arguably this is where mentoring is most essential.
There is an opportunity here to build seamless support for the recruitment and retention of teachers throughout the three-year journey of the Core Content Framework and ECF. As currently configured, however, mentors will be pulled from ITE in schools that have ECTs meaning that far fewer placements will be available for ITE.

1. *Communication to schools*The ECF is still not widely known or understood; we are even aware of primary headteachers who are trying *not* to recruit NQTs/ECTs because of the perceived disruption this may bring. Very clear and precise communication is required for all schools, ITE providers and those students who will be completing shortly so that they all have a good understanding of ECF.
2. *Transferability for NCTs*It is not clear what happens to if ECTs have to move schools and find that the school they have moved to is with a different provider. Is there an expectation that all evidence and related paperwork will be in place and fully transferable?
3. *Existing NCTs*What are the expectations for current NCTs who are in their first and second years of teaching?
4. *Special schools*What are the expectation for special schools and the implications for those that wish to tailor their own route through the ECF requirements?
5. *Impacts of the ‘closed shop’*There are clear incentives (in terms of mentor funding and timescales for preparation) for schools to choose to work with one of the big six national ECF providers; meanwhile, excellent practitioners who may wish to design their own materials will receive no funding for their efforts. This is not a free market and there are concerns about the impacts of schools being tied to one of the six providers, particularly if they have different long-term visions of how the ECF could best serve their specific context.
6. *The Role of Higher Education Institutions*
The role HEIs is hard to locate in the ECF and other reforms; this has serious implications for schools. Simply rolling out ‘what works’ is appealing in its simplicity but pays little heed to the complexity and changing nature of the context of schools, teachers and learners. By working collaboratively with schools, HEIs not only offer high quality teacher education (as evidenced by the *#TeachBest* campaign and recognised by DfE yesterday during the webinar), embedded in practice they generate new knowledge, including *why* things work, and they share this globally for the benefit of all. Limiting the role of HEIs will put education in England at a huge disadvantage relative to our competitors, hence the need to confirm and clarify their role in relation to the ECF and wider reforms as a matter of urgency.
7. Lastly, when will the link to the recorded presentation be available and where is will this be located?

We share your concern for the supply of excellent teachers and ultimately for the well-being and achievement of the pupils. We do hope that you will address these concerns in the very near future, possibly though a more interactive presentation starting with the points above. We appreciate that an intervention on the scale of ECF is a complex issue and we are keen to fully explore its implications with the Department for the sake of all of our children and young people.

Yours faithfully

Dr Paul Vare
Chair UCET CPD Forum