

**Initial Teacher Education in England**

**A briefing note for MATs, Teaching School Hubs and individual schools**

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to:

* Explain the current organisational and regulatory structures of initial teacher education (ITE) in England
* Consider the implications of the DfE’s Market Review of ITT.
* Articulate the particular contribution that the higher-education (HE) sector makes to teacher education
* Identifies ways in which higher education institutions can support MATs, teaching school hubs in regard to teacher education.

Background

Each year, some 25,000 new teachers supplied to state-funded schools by the 240 accredited ITE[[1]](#footnote-1) providers in England, working in partnership with schools. The number of new teachers each year represents some 5.7% of the total number of teachers working in state-funded schools, and 59% of those taking up new teaching posts[[2]](#footnote-2). Anyone successfully completing the programme is recommended for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), which is formally awarded by the DFE and is a condition of employment[[3]](#footnote-3) in state funded schools other than Academies and Free Schools, although most Academies and Free Schools do nonetheless tend to employ only teachers with QTS.

Accredited ITE providers are either universities working in partnership with schools, or School Centered (SCITT) providers, some of which also work in partnership with a university.

Routes into teaching

There are, technically, many different routes to achieving QTS in England. But in essence they can all be subsumed into the following categories:

* Undergraduate: three-year or four-year programmes leading to a degree and the award of QTS, delivered by universities working in partnership with schools. Most undergraduate programmes are for prospective primary school teachers, although there are a small number for secondary an there might be scope to increase these in order to, for example, address shortages in particular subject areas.
* Postgraduate fee-paying for those with a degree level qualification. These are delivered by universities or SCITTs working in partnership with schools. Most, but not all, postgraduate programmes lead to a postgraduate academic award such as a PGCE as well as to QTS. Most PGCEs are delivered at Master’s degree level and carry with them 60 M Level credits, equivalent to one-third of a full Master’s degree. Postgraduate fee-paying programmes can be sub-divided into:
  + Core provision, where the accredited university or SCITT provider ‘owns’ the trainee place and is responsible for recruiting the student teacher
  + School Direct (fee-paying), where a school technically is allocated the trainee place and is responsible for recruitment, although in practice responsibilities are shared with the accredited ITE provider and in many cases there ae no significant differences between core and School Direct (fee-paying) programmes.
* Postgraduate salaried programmes for graduates who are employed by a school and receiving a salary while training to teach. These programmes are delivered in partnership by the employing school and an accredited university or SCITT provider. Some programmes lead to an academic award such as a PGCE although most lead to QTS without an academic award. Salaried programmes can be sub-divided as followed:
  + School Direct (salaried), by far the largest salaried route
  + Apprenticeship, which falls under the government’s overall apprenticeship policy, although the QTS apprenticeship has so far only attracted a small number of participants, partly because of its inherent complexity.
  + Teach First, which provides school-based programmes in partnership with universities that lead to Postgraduate Diplomas in Education which have 120 M level credits.

There is also an Assessment Only (AO) route to QTS for experienced teachers in, for example, the independent sector or overseas, although this not an ITE programme as such. AO is however managed through accredited ITE providers.

Funding for ITT students

Students on undergraduate and postgraduate fee-paying routes are subject to general regulations covering tuition fees and loans. They are liable to pay fees of up to £9,250 per-year, and are entitled to loans for fees and support on the same basis as undergraduate students generally. Some of those on postgraduate fee-paying routes for secondary schools are also, depending on the subject they are training to tach, eligible for tax free bursaries of up to £23,000 (although many receive no bursaries at all). Further information about bursary and other financial support for student teachers can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-initial-teacher-training-itt/funding-initial-teacher-training-itt-academic-year-2021-to-2022>.

Accredited ITE providers are responsible for administering the payments of bursaries and loans.

The employing schools are responsible for funding the salaries of trainees on the School Direct (salaried) and apprenticeship routes. For the latter, funding for training can be drawn from the employing school’s apprenticeship levy. Salaries have to be paid by the schools themselves, although there might be some central funding provided for some of this depending on the subject and phase concerned.

Recruitment and applications

Students applying to universities for undergraduate programmes apply through UCAS on the same basis as students applying for places on undergraduate courses generally.

Those applying to postgraduate (fee-paying) programmes apply through either the UCAS Teacher Training portal or through the Department for Education’s new Apply application service. From September 2021, all applications will be made through the new Apply service. The accredited university or SCITT ITT provider has responsibility for processing and considering the applications, involving partner schools as necessary. Lead schools technically have responsibility for processing applications made for School Direct (fee-paying) programmes, although in practice this is either shared or devolved to the accredited ITE provider.

Applications for School Direct (salaried) and apprenticeship programmes are made to the school concerned through either the UCS or Apply systems. Schools frequently seek the support of accredited providers in the processing of such applications.

Content, structure and regulatory requirements

ITE providers are subject to regulation in terms of the structure and content of programmes and to regular inspection by OfSTED. For school-based providers, these are in addition to the standard OfSTED inspections they face. Failure to meet the statutory requirements, or delivering what OfSTED judge to be poor quality training despite meeting the requirements, can result in a provider being de-accredited from being able to deliver ITE. Further details of the requirements and regulatory processes are attached as an Annex.

The implications of the DFE review of the ITE Market

The Government is currently part-way through a review of what it calls the ITT Market, which is due to be completed in the summer of 2021.This might lead to increased requirements in terms of ITE programme content and structure, and a new relationship between accredited ITE providers and other organisations, including MATs and Teaching School Hubs.

In terms of Government policy in this area the direction of travel appears to be towards a restructured system of teacher education despite the evident advantages of schools and universities working together closely for the benefit of the profession. UCET and the university sector will be able to provide updates on the implications of the review as more detail become available. Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-itt-market-review/initial-teacher-training-itt-market-review-overview>

The contribution of higher-education institutions to teacher education

High quality ITT exists across all routes into teaching, and both Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and SCITTs (who often work in partnership) provide schools with excellent teachers. The university sector makes a particular contribution in terms of developing new teachers who are:

* **competent and confident professionals** who recognise and understand that educating is a professional, thoughtful and intellectual endeavour and who are able to learn from research, direct experience, as well as other sources of knowledge.
* **epistemic agents, acting as independent thinkers** who recognise that knowledge is contestable, provisional and contingent and thus search for theories and research that can underpin, challenge or illuminate their practice. They are able to analyse and interrogate evidence and arguments, drawing critically and self-critically from a wide range of evidence to make informed decisions in the course of their practice.
* **able to engage in enquiry-rich practice** and have a predisposition to be continually intellectually curious about their work with the capacity to be innovative, creative and receptive to new ideas emerging from their individual or collaborative practitioner enquiries.
* **responsible professionals** who embody high standards of professional ethics. They recognise the social responsibilities of education, such as working towards a socially just and sustainable world and understand the responsibilities of educators and education as a whole. Teachers are self-aware and aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of others, always acting with integrity.

Universities are well placed to support the realisation of these characteristics as they offer space(s) to come together in order to think and reflect, to critique, analyse and test ideas, to explore existing research and create new research that can inform and illuminate practice. They provide a safe environment in which to explore new ideas, ask challenging and open questions, provide reasoned solutions based on robust evidence, as well as to test the authenticity of their own claims and of those made by others. Furthermore, they have a civic duty to extend and develop the knowledge base, without the constraints or limitations of imposed agendas or motives. It is precisely these responsibilities that give universities an inimitable role in teacher education that goes beyond the ‘training’ of teachers but sees teacher education as a multidisciplinary and collaborative field of inquiry, and a source of knowledge generation and testing that fulfils a pressing and fundamental need in society: the development of a profession made up of the best quality teachers who are able to shape the best quality education for us all.

Universities also:

* Recruit student teachers to scale, with HEIs either directly or indirectly involved in ITE programmes for some 70% of the new teachers undertaking ITT every year.
* Can award qualifications such as a PGCE, most of which are at Master’s degree level, which gives teachers an understanding of both theory and practice and is a recognised qualification and a requirement to teach in many schools and countries.
* Provide a link between ITE and early professional development with CPD courses, often at Master’s degree level
* Provide student teachers with access to experts in terms of subject knowledge and pedagogy, and proving ITE in a research rich environment, equipping new teachers with the skills to carry out research themselves, and to be informed and discriminating users of research.
* Give trainees access to the full range of university resources and support, including access to pastoral care and support in respect of mental health and well-being
* Provide a rigorous and robust structure (which can be accessed by partner schools) for the recruitment, development and assessment of student teachers.

How universities can support MATs, Teaching School Hubs and others in the provision of ITE

As the new structure of ITE changes, universities are well-placed to continue to support the education of new teachers by working in partnership with MATs, Teaching School Hubs, other groups of schools and individual schools. HEIs can take lead responsibility for ITE that MATs, Hubs and others are involved with or support MATs and Hubs in other ways. The expertise of teacher-education universities cover in particular programme design and development, subject and pedagogic knowledge, the recruitment and selection of student teachers, the assessment of student teachers, financial management, provider access of students to support and advice; quality assurance and shouldering responsibility for OfSTED and other accountability measures.

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UCET

May 2021

**Annex**

**Summary of ITE requirements and regulatory processes**

In terms of content, all ITE providers must:

* Deliver programmes that allow student to demonstrate that they reach the minimum standards that teachers must be able to meet in order to be recommended for QTS. Details of the Teachers Standards can be found at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/665522/Teachers_standard_information.pdf>
* Ensure that ITE programmes deliver a curriculum that encompasses the DfE’s Core Content Framework (CCF) for ITT published in November 2019. The CCF is a 40-page document that sets out specific things that student teachers must learn about and learn how to do grouped under each of the Teachers Standards. It is likely that further requirements in terms of the content and structure of ITE programmes will be introduced as a result of the government’s current review of the ITT Market.

These and other content requirements are set out in the Secretary of State’s criteria (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-criteria/initial-teacher-training-itt-criteria-and-supporting-advicefor ITE). As well as the content requirements set out above, it sets out mandatory criteria covering:

* Recruitment to ITE programmes, including the minimum entry qualifications needed by applicants, the procedures for selecting and interviewing candidates and safeguarding and DBS requirements
* The structure of programmes, including the amount of time student teachers should spend in school, the need for contrasting school placement experiences and the age-phases to be covered in particular programmes
* Management and quality assurance expectations, including details of partnership agreements with schools.

All ITE providers are inspected on a regular inspection cycle (currently 6 years) under an inspection framework, supplemented by a detailed guidance handbook for inspectors. The latest ITE inspection framework came into effect in September 2020. Four working days is given over to ITE inspections and providers are expected to have a range of information to hand to guide the process. Providers are notified on a Wednesday morning that they are to be inspected, with inspections beginning the following Monday. Further details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-education-ite-inspection-framework-and-handbook>.

The four day inspection period includes interviews with staff, trainee teachers, mentors and other school staff. Providers are graded on the following scale:

Grade 1: Outstanding

Grade 2: Good

Grade 3: Requires improvement

Grade 4: Inadequate

Those receiving a grade 3 are subject to re-inspection after which, if they do not improve, they are subject to de-accreditation. Those receiving a grade 4 are subject to immediate de-accreditation. Those failing to comply with the CCF and other expectations are also subject to de-accreditation.

1. Although DfE refer to ‘initial teacher training (ITT)’, the HE sector uses ‘initial teacher education (ITE)’, as do OfSTED [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fexplore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk%2Ffind-statistics%2Fschool-workforce-in-england&data=04%7C01%7CKevin.Mattinson%40bcu.ac.uk%7Cb00010dbe12749617bde08d911582a8b%7C7e2be055828a4523b5e5b77ad9939785%7C0%7C0%7C637559892645453118%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=eDnWs9Cw8S3I6zvdkhXLScbl2x6cgmbedyIgfdf%2BwqM%3D&reserved=0) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Those holding QTLS for the FE and skills sector can also be employed as qualified teachers on the same basis as those with QTS. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)