**USCET: Update briefing paper: An Integrated Accountability System**

**October 2021**

In this short paper, the members of USCET would like to express their concern about the accountability and inspection process presented to ITE partnerships by Estyn and the EWC.

Our aim is to influence and shape an integrated accountability and monitoring system that supports the enactment of the National Mission, and contributes to the development of Teacher Education in Wales.

For decades, the education system in Wales has fallen prey to an excessively burdensome and centralised and zealous accountability system which has led to a culture of performativity; reducing the agency and autonomy of the profession. The inclusion of both Estyn and the EWC in inspecting and monitoring needs to be carefully considered in light of any behaviours that promote a performativity culture.

As accredited partnerships, we have a new opportunity to move away from the historic culture of ticking boxes towards a better understanding of measuring quality in ITE – one which motivates the different players towards the shared purpose of educating high-quality teachers.

At a recent USCET meeting, both the EWC and Estyn stated that they were committed to developing a ‘single’ process for accreditations, monitoring and inspection. It was recognised that there is congestion in the system but were confident that this would ‘grow out’. Both organisations asked for patience as they work towards the single system.

However whilst this is a welcome development, pilot inspections are live and USCET considers that this to be inappropriate given that a new single process will come into play; partnerships should have an equitable experience from the outset and pilot inspections should be paused.

Following recent discussions and the sharing of the EWC Monitoring document (October 2021), this paper now goes on to highlight some specific points of concern which, we believe, would be helpful when discussing the single process.

**Covid Context**

No partnership provider has been immune from contingency planning which has affected the roll out of the intended accredited programmes. The current year is not business as usual and further challenges and disruption are happening at a pace.

With this in mind, the wellbeing of teacher educators, student-teachers and the needs of schools needs to be at the centre of our practice – in our view, this is not the time for inspection.

Also, reflecting on the lived experience of the try-out visits, the time given to organising the schedule and collating documentation for the VIR felt as demanding as real inspections. Partnerships cannot manage this workload given the ongoing challenges of running the programmes.

Furthermore, partnership schools will not benefit from the pause in inspections. The rationale for Estyn extending their pause of inspections into the autumn term should apply to all schools and ITE partnerships: in our view, this is not the time for inspection.

**Standard v Compliance**

From the documentation shared, the requirements of the different bodies overlap and whilst Estyn should be broadly concerned with standards, and the EWC with compliance – this is not clear in the processes. For example, the EWC documentation refers to development and continuous improvement of ITE programmes (standards), whilst Estyn refer to the accreditation criteria (compliance).

Furthermore, the language and tone detailed in the approaches are different with the EWC document reflecting a more collaborative and supportive philosophy. A helpful way to address this might be to identify the functions that each organisation are *required* (as opposed to permitted) to perform under legislation and take that as the starting point for review. Where overlaps still exist, agreement could be negotiated about the sharing of information, and the scope for one organisation to piggy-back on the work of the other in order to fulfil its legislative functions.

In order to support the work towards the single system, USCET have requested a comparative document in which distinct roles and responsibilities are made clear.

**Knowledge Exchange**

There is a significant risk of knowledge being exchanged between EWC and Estyn. For example, an EWC member will be present at the Estyn inspection feedback sessions and will refer to the latest Estyn reports, and accreditation outcomes and documentation will be sent by the EWC to Estyn.

USCET would like to know how this exchange of knowledge will inform the judgements of each organisation. A single process would help to maintain objectivity and avoid the potentially damaging situation of each organisation reaching conflicting judgements.

**Sustainability**

 Going forward, the sustainability of school and partnership inspection/monitoring should be carefully considered as we move towards a new professionalism and away from performativity cultures. At all costs, the risk of schools being inspected twice in one year ( as part of an ITE inspection and as a school inspection) should be removed.

In order to demonstrate an holistic view, reference should also be made to university processes for measuring quality including QAA visits and faculty reviews.

**Length of Inspection**

The extended period of the Estyn inspection (approximately 20 days within one academic year) is unreasonable and will have the unintended consequence of limiting opportunities for peer inspectors to gain experience.

To conclude, USCET remains open and committed to any dialogue or collaboration that would help move forward the single process of accountability and monitoring.