

Promoting Quality in Teacher Education



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9 December 2021

Robin Walker MP
Minister of State for School Standards
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you about the pressures that are being faced by the ITE sector and to ask that steps be taken to mitigate the impact these are having on ITE providers and, potentially, on teacher supply. Our concerns particularly relate to the ITE Market Review, the availability of school placements and OfSTED inspections.

On the Market Review, we very much welcome the Government's confirmation that: there will be no artificial rationing of the number of ITE providers to be accredited under the new arrangements; that ITE providers will have autonomy in the design of their curricula; and that there will be a place for providers of all types and size in the new market. We are, however, concerned that parts of the draft ITE criteria for 2024/25 and the application documentation imply a level of prescription that goes further than what is set out in the Quality Requirements and has not been subject to consultation. We look forward to discussing these issues with your officials. For the purposes of this letter, however, it is the pressure that is being placed on ITE providers by the unrealistic deadline of 7 February for the submission of round 1 applications for accreditation that is causing us concern. We can see no rationale for the tight deadline, especially as implementation of the reforms has now been put back to September 2024. Neither can we understand why it will take DfE three months to provide feedback on unsuccessful round 1 applications, by when it might be too late for providers to use that feedback to inform their round 2 applications.

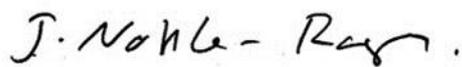
Preparing round 1 applications is, clearly, extremely important for ITE providers and yet they will, allowing for Christmas, only have a matter of weeks to complete them. At the same time they are having to face unprecedented pressure in tackling placement and other difficulties associated with significant increases in Covid cases. Some will also be faced with short-notice OfSTED inspections.

We have been providing your officials with regular updates on the availability of school placements for ITE students. The impact of ever increasing Covid cases, ECF related demands on mentor capacity and school concerns about OfSTED inspections is having a significant impact on placement availability and therefore on the ability of ITE providers to recruit student teachers. Further disruption to placement availability can be expected in the New Year with the spread of the Omicron variant. We realise that the situation is under review, but we would ask that you be ready to announce any relaxations to the ITE criteria as soon as it becomes apparent that they are needed. Delays in announcements during the first lockdown because of protocols on the timing of Government announcements caused significant difficulties and we hope that this can be avoided in the future.

I have worked in teacher education, with some breaks, for Government and the sector since 1987. I have never seen my colleagues or ITE providers faced with such pressure. Things are at breaking point. Steps must be taken to alleviate the situation.

We would be happy to discuss these issues with you in more detail if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Noble-Rogers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

James Noble-Rogers
Executive Director