



## **Covid related and other ITE disruption: January 2022**

### The impact of Covid on staffing at provider level or on ITE colleagues in schools.

*Severe. Trainee teachers are having to take on extra classes. Lesson observation by colleagues is becoming impossible.*

*We are beginning to see this take hold but it is hard to measure this at the moment. This week we have 2 colleagues out with Covid.*

*Staff off with Covid and their teaching needs to be covered as we are worried about postponing or rescheduling.*

*At the moment we are ok in terms of university staff though we had several absences before Xmas. We know of partnership schools who have significant staff absences which will be likely to impact us*

*We are experiencing issues with colleagues self-isolating (as a result of positive tests etc. and also because of vulnerability due to medical conditions) and compassionate leave due to bereavements as a result of Covid infections. We are aware of similar issues in partner schools, although as not all schools have yet returned in our area it is not yet apparent the full impact of this. We do know that colleagues are having to take on additional workload to cover for colleagues as 'supply cover' is pretty much non-existent. Some F2F plans have had to remain in a virtual context, including school visits to ensure parity of experience for our ATs across provision and to manage staff resource. This week we have 3 colleagues absent/isolating and 4 others who are extremely vulnerable and have to be protected. This means that some specialist teaching sessions have had to be postponed and will need to be re-scheduled – somehow. Before Christmas some of our school partners took the (understandable) decision to cancel planned school immersion experiences due to the risks posed of moving ATs between school communities.*

*We have experienced minimal impact on provider level staffing, due in no small part to the measures put in place by the university. There have been a small number of Covid-related placement staff absences, but we have not noticed significant impact. In 2022, Covid is likely to cause challenges in the quality and consistency of mentoring trainees in school as it is highly likely that cover for staff absence will be internal – so the mentor for a trainee will be taken elsewhere to cover absence. Within university, we have the capacity to double up classes, reschedule or find cover, and in some cases, consider online learning. As such, this is less of an issue than the placement arrangements.*

*Schools - absence levels of staff has affected mentoring, but we are managing to ask schools to replace the missing mentor temporarily wherever possible or offering to mentor in the interim period until the mentor returns. ITE colleagues - several cases of Covid have already affected staff availability for ITT duties and caused "cover" arrangements to be put in place to ensure training continues - we've managed just!*

*Not too bad yet but it's very early to say (only went back to school yesterday).*

*Primary: Our School Direct students have had to do a lot of covering and as a result have missed out on their observations (not all of them). There are similar examples for provider-led students. Mentors were on their knees last term as they too had to cover. Secondary: Towards the end of term, we noticed year groups being sent home so student timetables were lighter. In late November and into December we were notified of more and more mentors testing positive and so the support that students received on placement was variable.*

*We currently have small numbers of staff off work with Covid/and or recovering, having had Covid during the Christmas break. Re. impact on schools, too early to say.*

*So far staffing absences within the institution are manageable. Staffing absences within schools are impacting on the quality of mentoring provision – e.g. time out of their own class for mentors to observe, provide expert input/feedback etc. Some trainees are exposed to a higher level of responsibility than would typically be expected at this point in the year.*

*No immediate impact of Covid in terms of ITE staffing at the moment in Secondary. One staff member from BA Primary off with Covid but we are managing to cover their workload, but this is impacting on other colleagues' workload. Primary PGCE - two tutors have had Covid, one was still able to work whilst self-isolating, the other had to take time off to recover and the team covered where possible. EYTT - one staff member out of 4 off with Covid. School partners – already a fair few absences of mentors, head teachers and support staff (along with students) off with Covid across phases. Concerned by impact on trainees- covering classes, lack of mentoring and disruption to weekly observations and mentor meetings.*

*Staffing remains a challenge due to Covid and absences linked to Covid (e.g. mental health, marriage breakdowns etc.). During November and December, for example, we had 9 primary ITE staff off work - from a team of 23! We currently still have 5 of this team off work. These absences have put a strain on the existing staff as they seek to help cover teaching/assessments/school visits for colleagues who are absent.*

*Things are generally ok at the moment as we are used to moving swiftly to online learning when staff are self-isolating and most staff with Covid are asymptomatic so are working online too. Schools seem to be hanging on.*

*We have some ITE colleagues who have been unwell with Covid over the Christmas / New Year break. We anticipate ongoing impact as schools return but the picture changes almost daily. We are experiencing issues with delivery of LFTs to university, too.*

*COVID has had a huge financial impact on the University (as it has on all HEIs) in terms of, for example, loss of student accommodation fees, international student fees, research, enterprise and hospitality/catering/services income etc. As a result, resource/staffing is being kept under close review across the institution and ITE colleagues are increasingly having to take on more and wider responsibilities, including leadership responsibilities, within and beyond ITE (i.e. having dual or more teaching-related roles at both UG and PG level) and alongside their research and enterprise activities. However, we continue to be relatively well supported with a bought in teaching budget (for example, to support school placement visits) and are fortunate to have a good team of colleagues who remain very committed and dedicated to ITE. We have very little data on ITE staffing in schools but again school staff work hard to make things work and cover absences as best they can.*

*We have had a number of staff absences at different times since the start of the pandemic, at times this has included a significant number of senior managers which would have left us in difficulty had we had been inspected by Ofsted at that point. Currently we have a small number of Covid cases within the staffing base.*

*The scope for schools to participate in ITE (e.g. in regards the offering of school placements, allowing external visits into schools).*

*We have had a number of school partners explain that they cannot support ITE this academic year due to increased staffing pressures as well as expressing a preference that we do not visit. Some of this is Covid related, some reduction in placement availability is related to the introduction of ECF and the increased demands on experienced mentors. ECF and Covid are combining to produce a perfect storm in some cases. This creates additional stress for colleagues and ATs. It was interesting to hear the Minister on BBC breakfast on Monday morning speak about how they were thankful for school colleagues' dedication and commitment and how they were trying to find supply cover to support high staff absences. Thus, while the DfE seem to recognise the direct pressure on schools there is an indirect pressure from engagement in ITE which further impacts on schools and in turn ITE providers yet there is no acknowledgment of this. This isn't just about putting on lectures and setting assignments it is about us interacting with and having high expectations of a sector under tremendous pressure. I would have liked to ask what help it was to add accreditation of ITE and the continuance of Ofsted inspections into that picture when we are all required to collaborate with our school partners and manage Ofsted visits. The thought of Ofsted is another factor that may influence school partner decisions to engage with ITE. In all, there are many reasons for schools to say no to us and we have seen this in the reduced number of placement offers for 21/22.*

*Many second school placements are refusing. The ability of primary teachers to move between classes and experience all the FOUNDATION SUBJECTS is becoming more limited (as it was last year but Ofsted still penalised us)*

*We have seen school placements pulled in large numbers before Christmas. This seems to be triggered by schools not being able to cope with everything that is going on and on occasions forgetting that they had promised places earlier in the academic year. There are definite capacity issues.*

*Have had to reschedule PE as this takes place in schools and schools are not happy with large groups going in.*

*Finding placements has been incredibly hard this year, we have a small number of primary placements still to find for this term. Tutor visits in the autumn term were in-person, this term we will be guided by our schools and their preference.*

*At present, the impact of C19 is being managed, although it's difficult to gauge how quickly things might escalate in terms of issues with placements over the next few weeks, as both PY and SY students are due to change from one placement to another and there's always the possibility that schools may choose to withdraw placements at short notice. It's too early to gauge the impacts of school circumstances on students' training experiences this term.*

*Okay so far, but it is strained and difficult in places. Placements have been okay so far but we do have a smaller year group this year than last. External visits - only start this term, we will see if there is an impact. If there is, we will resort to 2020-21 approach meeting mentor and trainee via Zoom/watching lessons remotely where possible. Our second placement commences just before Feb HT so we will see if there is any impact in the next month more acutely.*

*Overall, we were lucky with our placements in that they honoured them. Primary: Some staff were asked to wear masks in school the whole time they were there. Most staff were able to make their visit. Secondary: late November and into December some schools stopped visitors. This meant that some students were observed teaching were observed by mentors in school but not by university tutors. We had a strike in between so our answers may be skewed a little.*

*Schools have withdrawn a significant number of offers in the lead-up to the Christmas break, and we expect the impact of COVID cases on staffing levels in schools to have further impact on capacity to host trainees as we seek confirmation of offers for placements due to start in the next two weeks. External visits to schools from university tutors have been paused until the end of February in order to safeguard the health of staff, trainees, our school partner staff and young people.*

*This has been a real issue for EYITT and continues to be. The majority of EY providers are not allowing external visitors into their settings including university staff. Securing placements is becoming increasingly difficult as new EY providers are required in order to meet the placement needs of trainees but settings are reluctant to agree to new placements being undertaken in their settings. Some special schools are pulling out of hosting students due to expected/actual class closures. Some*

*student teachers may be expected to provide home schooling whilst classes are closed, but have not had experience of this during 2021-2022 (in comparison with 2019-2020 when the teaching profession worked through this learning together and mentors learned alongside student teachers. In terms of visits from externals, we are fitting in with school risk assessments so conducting visits remotely where required to do so by the school. We have processes in place for this as developed within 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 and it is preferable to schools not being willing to host placements. Some of our curriculum within the CCF is delivered in school through school-based tasks and expert input. There will need to be recognition of more limited opportunities as trainees move into their ECT induction.*

*For EYTT, there is deep concern that school visits might not be able to be conducted face to face. For Primary and Secondary trainees, most schools are still facilitating on site visits but we have had a few schools in the Secondary Partnership who have declined on site visits until the end of January. Where placements have needed to change/stop - it is very difficult to find placements mid-term/year and schools under so much pressure and reluctant to have new people in. Primary PGCE would like to see a return to the longer style placement as last year.*

*We have seen some schools withdraw their offers of placements, as Heads feel having a student will contribute to additional workload of their staff (when they are already under strain) but in other schools Heads have seen students as part of the solution to their staffing issues and so it is a mixed picture. Mixed picture with visits too, some are allow f2f but other visits have been moved online again.*

*We had a flurry of placement withdrawals the week before Christmas and still have a small number of students who should be starting placement next week who are not placed. A number of schools who usually take several students reduced this to one or two, so there is definitely a concern about footfall out there. Most of our visits in the autumn term were virtual, some schools requested f2f visits, others with struggling trainees didn't want visits from tutors*

*It is a bit early in the term to comment, but we would be surprised if there is not some impact on placements. We had some schools before Christmas who did not want ITE tutor visits to schools to observe trainees.*

*Hardly any are stating that Covid is the reason that they cannot participate in ITE. The bulk of the non-participation relates to the pressures of ECT mentoring and general staff shortages / uncertainty. The desire and interest to participate has not changed but the capacity has. Covid is but one factor in this, but by no means the only factor.*

*We have faced significant issues in securing sufficient placements. We typically place students within the North West which has continually suffered high rates of infection and this has led to a significant number of schools either withdrawing all placement offers, or making reductions in their usual placement offer. English, Science, Social Sciences and Maths have been particularly challenging this year in Secondary and KS1 has been our biggest challenge in Primary. We currently have 60+ students unplaced ahead of their second Secondary PGCE placement beginning late February. We have delayed our BA1 Primary placement in the hope*

*of securing more placements later in the year when the weather allows better classroom ventilation. A significant amount of additional time has been spent sourcing placements, student anxiety about placement has been high and students have had to travel much further to their placements as we have had to make more use of schools normally judged to be 'out of area'. In return this has significantly increased staff time on visits to placements and associated student / staff travel costs. External visits were planned for and initially delivered - as the Autumn term progressed we have been increasingly asked by our school partners to move to remote visits as their Covid cases rose and their concern of transmission of infection increased.*

### Student teacher absences and isolation issues.

*Again, it is a little early to say this term (not all ATs have been in today) but today we know that just over 10% of our Y2 ATs are absent (having tested positive). One class was down by approximately 1/3 (16/24 in attendance), another Y3 BA group was down 50%. Some of this is concern about a return to F2F and the risks of transmission and potential impact on them being able to go into school next week (and overall number of days on SBL). There is a particular concern emerging with Y3 BA students who have already lost a considerable number of school days due to the lockdowns in the last two years. They do not wish to risk not being able to go into school. We are aware that some schools have asked our ATs to limit social contacts before and during SBL (citing Part 2 of the standards) while some insist on 10 days self-isolation rather than then the reduced 7 days. It is not clear whether schools, are making the same demands of their staff. We understand the position but it is making ATs more anxious about attending F2F taught sessions on site. As the PGs return next week we anticipate more absences.*

*We are seeing rising numbers of cases but also of the worried well who are concerned about travel, placements and attendance at University sessions.*

*50% absent from onsite sessions. About 8% off with Covid related reasons we know of. Others are not happy in travelling (and some are probably assignment writing).*

*We had a large number of student absences in the final weeks of last term, we haven't got data yet for this week.*

*So far this year we have been able to undertake physical visits and observations in the majority of cases, with unseen observations as a back-up. Placement capacity has been reduced and some providers have withdrawn from offering placements at all this year, although it is unclear whether this is directly related to Covid, but almost certainly due to capacity issues in schools. This will continue to be a huge challenge with schools lacking in confidence about offering placements when they know they are likely to be disrupted, but also pulling out at the last minute when staff absences occur. As yet we don't know if schools are going to be turning us away, but we have made use of online meetings and unseen observations to support trainees and schools over recent months, so while far from ideal, we can manage. Another issue we will face is the on campus support we receive from school partners – so for interviews and when they join us to teach/support in sessions is likely to be disrupted*

*as we will have to wait and see whether they will actually attend or need to cancel due to staff absences at their own schools.*

*This is significant, particularly where students have not been vaccinated so are having repeated periods of 10-day self-isolation in line with the school risk assessment if it deems them to be a close contact. Where students have someone in their household who is positive, they are conflicted between following Government guidance that they don't need to isolate, and their sense of a wider responsibility to avoid being a carrier into their setting or their peers at university. We are providing links to sessions for students to attend from home where appropriate. Pressure from the DfE for universities to maintain face to face teaching impacts on our decision to make locally informed decisions, so we are less able to ensure a good-quality provision for all trainees by having the flexibility to put in place online teaching where we have a significant number of absences. We would like the option of funded extension placements to be in place again this year for those who are not failing but have had significant impact of Covid and are not yet ready to be recommended for QTS*

*We have had some students requiring 2 weeks out of their placements and, perhaps more difficult to cope with, had some students last term isolating on 3 different occasions awaiting test results (all negative, but in total missing perhaps 6 days over 3 different weeks making their planning and impact on the progress of children very patchy).*

*Growing in number - currently have student absence in the double digits for: Covid19 positive cases; Covid19 awaiting PCR test results; Covid19 household cases causing self-isolation/testing. This has suddenly snowballed over Christmas from a handful of cases in December to an awful lot this week!*

*We did not keep statistics, but we had many cases of isolation and absences which has impacted on their progress and raised levels of anxiety. They were very frustrated at being in isolation at home or in halls not able to do much and then 'falling behind'. Increasing absences late November early December, coupled with year groups sent home meant variable experiences for student teachers (Secondary).*

*There are a good number of trainees across all phases that are currently absent due to Covid and isolation. We anticipate that things will get worse before they get better.*

*These are on the increase and are now beginning to impact of continuity of placements. We are having to reschedule teaching sessions to allow students extra time in school to ensure that they can fulfil the ITT requirements and, for completing students, demonstrate they have met the T standards.*

*Not a problem at the moment but it is early days! One issue will be the patience schools will have with students self-isolating. Potentially this would depend on if the school was making an online offer to children. We have a good suite of CPD for those not in school or involved in virtual delivery.*

*Again, a little early in the term to tell. We'll have a clearer picture next week when students return for school placements.*

*There have been very few (about 5) students affected this academic year to date. The University is keeping a central record of all cases through its Connect and Protect service/system.*

*Understandably we have seen an increase in student absence / isolation - this has led to slower and more disrupted placement experiences and, as a result, inconsistency in students' progress on placement. Some schools have withdrawn their placement offers mid-placement where student absences and isolation has led to too much disruption to the school timetable / pupils' experiences.*

*Your ability to submit accreditation applications by 7 February.*

*There is no doubt that our capacity is compromised with the current uncertainty and operational issues causing an additional layer of complexity but we feel we have no choice but to try and put an application together. We will do our best but essentially I think colleagues are operating on fumes rather than fuel. We have a number of meetings planned with school colleagues in the next couple of weeks (in addition to those held just before Christmas) and while we know school colleagues would like to contribute we cannot be certain that they have capacity either.*

*We will try to make the deadline but the timing is terrible with everything that is going on.*

*This is to be discussed at a strategic ITE meeting on Monday next week; there are concerns about future staff absences and our ability to meet the 7th February deadline especially with an impending Ofsted inspection.*

*We are currently writing our submission for accreditation and have a timeline to be ready to submit for the 7<sup>th</sup> Feb deadline.*

*Difficult! We are expecting a re-inspection, have staff off with Covid who need sessions covering. The university want us to apply in February, and I do feel with only two rounds we need to put something in.*

*The timescale for this is completely inappropriate in the current context given what providers are dealing with.*

*We are preparing our submission. A concern has been seeking engagement and feedback from partnership representatives. We are seeking to do this through online meetings.*

*I am having to be taken off operational duties as DITT to enable me to focus solely on getting this ready in the next four weeks/meet with partners etc. Am fortunate to have a supportive department, HOD and Faculty who are helping alleviate operational duties for me. We are still aiming for Feb 7th, Ofsted permitting.*

*I don't think this is being made much worse because of Covid - it was a ridiculously short turnaround in the first place.*

*Trying to meet this has meant core staff working up to and including the Christmas break. Trying to juggle all the demands of BAU is difficult and is going to mean extended working hours for managers. We will need to see what happens in schools over the coming weeks. We may be needed to manage situations, provide additional input for students if schools shut etc. Delaying for a year would be ideal and release a lot of pressure on staff. What would happen to the work that we have started already? Would it still current one year on?*

*We have decided to opt for the second application window in order to focus on a quality application whilst meeting the needs of our current settings and students.*

*This is a huge challenge. For example we have both our Partnership Development Managers currently off work! As staff are covering absences on all ITE programmes, capacity is an issue. It really does come down to whether we put members of staff in front of students or cancel their session to allow staff to focus on reaccreditation. Clearly we can't cancel teaching sessions for this reason and so we have staff working longer days to support the reaccreditation process. My concern is that they will become exhausted/ill. Given the pressure of the deadlines and the DfE's reluctance to confirm additional dates to consider applications, we feel we have no choice but to submit an application by the 7th February.*

*This will remain a challenge, but we'll do our best.*

*With other pressures, commitments and deadlines that have been agreed and in the diary for some time, alongside the University closure and staff taking a break over the Christmas period, meeting the deadline is a real challenge but we are working hard to try to meet it and submit a solid application. Having to rush the process and put colleagues under such added pressure at this difficult time is, however, frustrating and less than satisfactory.*

*We have created a small team of staff to work on accreditation - these staff have had to drop other key work in order to complete the accreditation application by 7<sup>th</sup> Feb. There have also been cost implications where we have had to bring in cover to ensure time sensitive work is still delivered. We will aim to meet the deadline, but Ofsted preparation and placement shortages are also impacting on our ability to bring together the resource needed to complete this.*

*The extent to which disruption might make it difficult to meet the ITE requirements and the terms of the OfSTED inspection framework, for example in relation to two-school placements, and consecutive age phases (noting the days in school rules relate to programme design rather than the experiences of individual student teachers).*

*So far we are able to meet the two-setting criterion, however this takes significant investment of time and relationships. Age range coverage is more problematic. Schools are often reluctant for trainees to observe within other year groups, and keen to have trainees build and sustain a relationship with a particular class. They*

*have less flexibility in the class/year groups they can offer for placements, and some placement offers are being withdrawn so that we have less scope and flexibility.*

*One example is A PG Secondary AT who lost 10 days of SBL last term due to testing positive and has just tested positive again meaning that they will lose another 7 days (minimum), despite being fully vaccinated; Y3s have already lost 20-25 days SBL time across the last two years as a result of lockdown. There is concern that a higher than usual number of ATs may not be able to be recommended for QTS this year as we will run out of time for those who have to isolate/be absent. We have alternative phase placement planned for next week and already know that a number of these will have to be delayed. As a 'border' HEI we do make use of Welsh placement (although this will change in the future as the curricula divides further) opportunities. There is a risk that some ATs might not meet the tipped balance of days in English based SBL if another lockdown is introduced, isolation issues or if English schools retract offers of SBL due to their own staffing issues – is there any guidance on this? Our programmes are designed to fulfil the compliance requirements but it is a concern that the quality of experience and preparedness of ATs could be compromised. School capacity to support SBL is still unclear for this first half term of 2022. Again this might impact on two school placements.*

*Some schools are withdrawing offers for Summer term because of uncertainty. This is having the effect of making planning for 2 key stages etc. very difficult.*

*Finding placements is incredibly hard again this year. We are trying to meet the ITE Criteria but this is another year of vast strain on resources.*

*From a Secondary perspective this is a little bit too early to say, but we should have a much clearer picture by the end of next week with regard to second placements. Our Primary second placements do not happen until after Easter so there are no concerns as yet but preference for a longer style placement as last year. Need to talk to school partners. EYTT would welcome the return of last year's disapplication - Enhancing Placements are starting in 3 weeks' time and the Course Lead expects this to be a major concern at next week's mentor training.*

*Trainees due to go out in two weeks. If schools pull placements it will be extremely difficult. If we can get them out (and again in the summer term) we should be okay.*

*At the moment it looks like we will be ok but it is very much dependent on what happens when students get into schools.*

*We do not currently envisage any issues with meeting ITE requirements. As in 2020, a relaxation of the criteria to allow us where necessary, and only in the worst cases, to recommend trainees for QTS who haven't been in two schools or their age phases haven't worked out would be helpful.*

*Not an issue yet, but watch this space as we see the Omicron effect hitting schools further.*

*We are hoping that schools will honour the placements for the Provider-led final practice; if they do, we will meet the requirements. We managed last year even at the height of the pandemic. We do need to see what will happen in terms of school placements over the next few weeks, it may impact on students' experiences. (Secondary students and School Direct are the two groups who are in)*

*We have a number of trainees who are temporarily continuing to train in their autumn school until a suitable second setting is sourced. There may be a significant challenge in arranging for all trainees to be provided with two schools, and the second school experience may be shorter than desired. Similarly, ensuring consecutive age phases presents a challenge in the context of a shortage of placement offers.*

*Most pressing issue for us is or UG Final Year students. More than usual are struggling on their final placement as a consequence of missing out on previous school experience due to Covid, over the last 2 years. They are being unfairly treated. The regulations are now back in place – they are not entitled to be “on track” but have to achieve/demonstrate, yet their experience has been just as much disrupted as the previous 2 year's cohorts who were allowed this flexibility. Much harder to offer them further time in school if they need it – they have degrees to complete & shorter academic years than PGs. I think it's a case of UGs being forgotten again by DfE.*

*This is a real worry – currently we have schools with offers and students needing placements but they offers don't match the needs of the students. Hopefully we can manage to source these over the next few days.*

*At the moment, we hope to meet ITE requirements as usual, but will need to be flexible as schools face challenges over the coming months.*

*We are committed to meeting the requirements and are fortunate to have such dedicated colleagues who go above and beyond and seem to work miracles to ensure this. We will meet the requirements as we have to.*

*We continue to source placements every day, but also every day we have some schools withdrawing their offers due to staff shortages in their settings - at this stage we remain concerned about meeting the requirement for two school placements. We are also finding coverage of Primary age phases challenging for the same reasons.*

Your ability to host OfSTED inspections.

*The honest response is 0 capacity but if it happens we will make it work no matter the cost. If we get a call this week I would ask for a deferral though as my Director of Partnership is on bereavement leave. I can imagine the response of schools if we were subjected to an inspection this term. I have no doubt the outcome would be compromised. The new programmes introduced to address CCF etc. have not had a 'clear run' of delivery and there is a feeling amongst colleagues that any inspection would not be equitable given the context in which we have all operated for the last two years compared to a provider inspected in two years' time. We are still operating in an environment which is constantly shifting and we are required to*

*respond to emerging situations with (it is felt) no real understanding by the DfE or Ofsted about the reality of the situation. This seems to contrast with the approach taken by Estyn who have continued with their work but in a more achievable way.*

*In the current circumstances OfSTED inspection would be problematic: schools are unwilling to accept additional visitors; programme directors need to focus their capacity on problem solving to ensure we mitigate against Covid and ensure trainees still receive high-quality experience and input. This is phenomenally time consuming; partnership colleagues, key to any inspection (e.g. mentors, ITTCos, Steering committee members), are completely focussed on keeping their schools open and safe, not attending OfSTED inspection meetings; trainees are focused on Covid issues – isolation, attendance, managing risks in school. Inevitably this will impact on their engagement with and appreciation of nuances of the ITE curriculum; and teaching sessions are sometimes hybrid, or with last minute changes, to follow the current local situation and risk assessment*

*I think this would actually tip many of my team over the edge. They have worked relentlessly for months, without proper breaks and are worn out. This is not just due to working in ITE but being part of an HEI where many new systems and changes have also been implemented due to the ongoing crisis. Levels of stress are currently amplified due to the work required to complete the reaccreditation process. With the number of staff absences, including programme leaders, partnership managers and other key staff who would be involved, I am concerned about an inspection taking place at this current time. I also feel that as we have had so many changes and challenges to contend with, we have not progressed some aspects of our provision as we had hoped and know that Ofsted will not consider that Covid may have served to mitigate some of our planned actions. Finding rooms to put the inspectors in will also be a challenge. Many office spaces have been converted to classrooms which are in use to help reduce student numbers in a classroom at any one time. Many support staff are also working remotely again or are currently isolating.*

*Arranging placement visits may be more tricky than usual.*

*We are gearing up for inspection as we have not been seen since XXX however, with everything else that is going on hosting an inspection will be challenging. With all these elements it is the fact that everything is happening at once.*

*Currently we are onsite- so should be able to host. Schools will not be so well receiving though.*

*It will be a challenge!*

*Carrying out inspections in the first half of this term (at least) seems highly inappropriate. It will be very difficult to manage and potentially damaging to relationships with partnership schools who have enough to deal with at the moment. It will not be possible to give a true reflection of our work.*

*The greatest challenge at present is trying to manage the overall workload, with preparation for Ofsted and applying for re-accreditation on top of everything else we*

*need to do. It's all a bit overwhelming and difficult to keep on top of all the associated communication, required action and to feel as though anything is being done well. We are concerned about the potential of an Ofsted inspection in the short term, although we continue to prepare.*

*We are currently preparing to host Ofsted in the event of a call. As we are currently working remotely for meetings and delivering face-to-face teaching it would be useful to receive any feedback on inspections carried out in 2022 relating to expectations and flexibility of face-to-face versus online from Ofsted teams.*

*We have on campus rules for visitors ready for Ofsted to see/adhere by. We warned all partner schools at the last partnership forum that inspections were due to go ahead from Jan-June and that we may well be rung during this period of time. My main worry is Ofsted visits to schools, which under the current Omicron wave, may be met with a stern "no" from our Heads not wanting more visitors in school than necessary. However, so far all our F2F formal placements visits are continuing this half term. We are about to send out to partner schools our usual Ofsted prep docs. Should the situation with Omicron grow worse, we may again send out a Google Survey to schools (as we did last year) to check on visitor policies.*

*Hosting an Ofsted inspection would not be viable if we want to meet the deadlines imposed by this market review. Schools would probably not want to be under scrutiny even though the inspection will be about us not them. The schools on our steering group and management group would support us but we have no choice which schools. They would find a way for it to work. However, Covid challenges mean the capacity to take on extra would not be reasonable. In addition, if university staff themselves become unwell especially e.g., Secondary single staff subjects would put an added strain on those left behind. We endorse your request [for delays to inspections] and hope that Ofsted listen. Are Ofsted really going to visit school placements and expect mentors be able to have time to discuss students in the middle of this pandemic when infections rates are high.*

*We have a directive from the university that we should be working from home apart from teaching activities where we are largely teaching on campus. Schools would find it very difficult to have additional visitors on site due to Covid restrictions and we have a number of mentors off due to self-isolation. It is therefore quite challenging to showcase what we are doing both at the centre base and in schools with the disruption that Covid is causing. Ofsted may not be able to visit school.*

*Any Ofsted visit would be a challenge in the current climate, not just in terms of managing university-based aspects, but also the additional and unwelcome pressure an inspection would place on our school partners, who are also experiencing the challenges of colleagues who are unwell / required to isolate. Additionally, any ITE inspection ahead of 7th February would pose a challenge with meeting the DfE's accreditation deadline.*

*If we receive notification of an inspection, this will divert much valuable resource away from managing and delivering other key HEI activities, not least ensuring the smooth day to running of our ITT provision and providing effective support to our trainees, but also other important teaching and research commitments at a time of*

*great uncertainty and constant change (due to COVID). The idea of hosting an inspection and submitting the accreditation application simultaneously when we are still in the throw of a Pandemic seems unreasonable, and the outcomes of either are arguably going to be affected.*

*We have prepared and continue to prepare for Ofsted. We would support any delay to inspections as we remain concerned about the fairness of inspecting in the current circumstances and the consistent application of the framework when the circumstances in school are changing on a daily basis.*

*Strategies and measures you are adopting to mitigate the impact of the current challenges.*

*As mentioned in 6 we are working to respond to changes and anticipate what might arise but the landscape is shifting constantly in schools as well as within our own context and we need to accommodate what we can control and work around what is beyond our direct remit to be respectful to our relationships with schools and to ensure authentic partnership. One clear message from schools is the ECF burden on mentors that add complexity to already challenging circumstances. The 'business as usual' approach from the Government is unrealistic. It is nothing like business as usual for schools or ourselves. We have no DfE support to the continued demands on us to react quickly and suddenly. We are essentially out of resource to adapt further. Our supply cover has been used up. Schools can't release colleagues to support, At anxiety is increasing and we have had a number tell us that while mentors are doing their best they do not feel as well supported as in previous years (UG BA programme). We try and fill gaps and support school colleagues but a more realistic view from DfE as to the position ITE finds itself in would be welcome. As mentioned above, we will make it all work because there is a will to do so and a pride in what we do but there is a human cost to this that is yet to be counted.*

*To be honest it has meant working over the Christmas break and ongoing long hours.*

*Keeping communication with staff and students as strong as possible.  
Falling back on the strategies and experience from the last lockdown.  
Working with other providers to share ideas about the Market Review response.  
We have written some guidelines/ways of working this morning that are going to Partnership Management and Development Boards for approval this week. Things we have talked about include: how to ensure student entitlements are met, how students can play a supportive role if schools have significant staff absences, etc.*

*Development of new partnership engagement opportunities. Flexible use of unseen observations and remote meetings.*

*Good communication with partners and staff.*

*Mainly individual mitigation where a trainee tests positive/needs to self-isolate. We are making use of our alternative provision area to keep students developing in these cases. So it isn't training as normal for this time of year, but as much training as possible whether in school or through us if they are forced off school. We have*

*good systems in place from the previous two years to make use of. F2F centre based teaching continues on campus for now as there is no national guidance indicating it cannot do so currently. It's trickier addressing the "rufuseniks" who don't like the idea of coming onto campus/going into school with Omicron so prevalent. I think this will impact on the number of LOAs and withdrawals we will have this year for sure.*

*Adapting tasks and teaching expectations. University staff being more heavily involved in school support – almost acting like the mentors. We are moving teaching online before the students go in. Our university have agreed. This will hopefully assuage the fears of schools about the students catching Covid at university. We have had many emails coming in from students saying they have tested positive or a relative and are self-isolating. This means the students will all get access to the taught material.*

*We have made a decision today to carry out all school visits virtually to be reviewed in February to agree our approach for after half term. We have organised a Partnership dissemination and discussion event for the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in Feb (10<sup>th</sup>) with a view to share our curriculum planning for 2022-23 and to share the headlines of our accreditation submission. This date was arranged before the accreditation 7<sup>th</sup> Feb announcement. Given the short timeframe we have decided to leave as arranged to keep partners informed of the content of our submission.*

*Online meetings and training for mentors, ITTCos etc. which can go ahead despite local Covid outbreaks; greater use of digital technology including e-portfolios to monitor evidence, online group tutorials between supervising tutors, students and school mentors, innovative lesson observation solutions,*

*We are monitoring trainee attendance closely, we are considering procedures for remote school visits if needed, holding additional drop-ins for students. We are working closely with school partners and monitoring feedback from students. There has been an increase in workload due to MH - reassurance, guidance and pastoral care. We have also been continuing professional development around online teaching and learning throughout the year to mitigate against any potential disruption to schooling in the near future. We are looking at adapting our courses in response to trainee needs across the phases. We are further monitoring particular situations that have occurred where trainees have been taken for supply. Primary PGCE have moved to online university sessions to protect schools, following DfE guidance (again will explore further with professional tutors) - this can feel more isolating for trainees and results in more conversations and reassurance from tutors. EYTT considering moving the training online, primary online, secondary continuing to teach face to face for the time being.*

*We are having to draw on the use of Associate Lecturers to cover sessions/undertake school visits given the levels of staff absenteeism as well as the reaccreditation process. We would currently need to use ALs to cover staff pulled into Ofsted meetings. The use of ALs brings its own challenges and can impact on survey results/student feedback. We are extending some placements for those students most impacted by high levels of absence due to needing to isolate/having Covid. Where possible, students are undertaking 'virtual placements' again.*

*Currently all students are on paired placements unless the school would only accept one student.*

*We are planning to offer hybrid university-based teaching - face-to-face, but also online for any trainees who are isolating / unwell.*

*We are supporting our schools and trainees by reviewing and streamlining paperwork / documentation / expectations and have shifted our training, selection and recruitment, and some meetings (with school staff and trainees) online. We are providing regular 'bitsize' comms/updates to support all in performing/undertaking their roles and meeting the course requirements. We are also seeking placements from a number of new schools in order to try to grow the partnership.*

*We work closely with other local providers - especially other HEI providers. We share any placement capacity. We have aligned some practice and processes to assist schools in supporting placements across different providers. We are also looking at potentially aligning some of our mentoring plans ahead of the accreditation submission.*

UCET  
January 2022