

**Education Select Committee**

**Call for Evidence: Teacher recruitment, training & retention.**

**Introduction**

The Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) is, as the membership body for higher education institutions engaged in teacher education and educational research, pleased to submit the following evidence to this important enquiry. We stand ready to supplement this at an oral evidence session.

We have structured the evidence under the main headings in the call for evidence There is however inevitably a degree of overlap and points made in one section might also apply to others.

**The current system regarding teacher recruitment & retention**

There are a range of factors that make recruitment to the profession difficult, and they apply to both the primary and secondary sectors. DfE is now starting to miss its ITE recruitment target for primary programmes (something that was unthinkable in the past) and is forecast to miss its targets in 9 out of 17 secondary subjects by 20% or more in 2023/24. While recruitment has sometimes been challenging over the past 20 years, these difficulties now seem to represent a worrying trend. There was an overall 40% shortfall in ITE recruitment for the 2022/23 academic year according to DfE’s own measure and the prognoses for the forthcoming academic year are at least as worrying. Howson (2022) refers to this as a ‘period of unprecedented turmoil’ <https://www.teachvac.co.uk/misc_public/Labour%20Market%20Report%20-%20January%20to%20July%202022.pdf>.

There are many interlinked reasons for this: median pay for teachers is 12% lower in real terms than it was in 2010/11; the workload of teachers remains greater than that for comparable professions; teachers spend too much time on non-teaching activities; and teachers have less autonomy than those working in other professions. Our evidence, because of our remit, concentrates on the recruitment and retention of student teachers and the structure, content and delivery of teacher education. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1148571/Working_lives_of_teachers_and_leaders_-_wave_1_-_core_report.pdf>

Financial pressures are making it difficult to recruit people to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes and to retain those that are recruited. Those recruited to postgraduate programmes will be faced with an additional year of student debt and will in most cases be required to pay £9,250 tuition fees. Bursaries are inconsistently available for a limited range of subjects at secondary level (presently only available for 9 out of the 17 secondary subjects), and not at all for primary, despite recruitment being problematic in most subjects and phases. Students on undergraduate ITE programmes often have to rely entirely on student loan support. Student teachers are faced with significant on-programme costs, including travel (and sometimes accommodation) costs relating to their school placements. It is difficult for student teachers to alleviate these costs through part-time working because of the demands of the ITE programmes.

The way teaching is presented in the media, as a stressful job with limited rewards, the perceived lack of validity of OfSTED inspections, difficult pupils, frequent government policy changes and limited professional agency also act as deterrents. DfE marketing campaigns, despite being well-intentioned, depict teachers as heroic, utterly confident and capable of handling every situation alone. This is an inauthentic depiction which is eclipsed by the ongoing barrage of (equally unrealistic) negative media hype and is largely unpersuasive. Prospective teachers should be shown that they will be part of a supportive team, with an emphasis on the guidance and nurturing they will receive through outstanding ITE programmes and during their early ears in the profession. Marketing should also seek to ensure that the teaching profession is representative of the general population.

The availability of school placements for ITE students threatens recruitment, as ITE providers are restricted by the limited capacity of schools to host student teachers. The distribution of placements across the country is being impacted by students having to study closer to home for financial reasons. The pressures on mentor capacity imposed on schools by the Early Career Framework (ECF) is leading some schools to either withdraw from ITE partnerships or to reduce the number of places they offer. UCET members have reported some schools either choosing to employ Early Career Teachers (with attendant ECF responsibilities) or to engage in ITE, but not both. These pressures are set to increase with the introduction of the new ITE Quality Requirements in 2024/25 which will require: lead ITE mentors to have 30 hours initial training and 12 hours refresher training each year; general school mentors to have a minimum of 20 hours initial training and 6 hours a year refresher training; a minimum of 15 hours pe-week for student teachers in classrooms during their placements; 2 hours mentoring support per student teacher per week; and a minimum ratio of mentors to student teachers of 1:50. As with other aspects of the new Quality Requirements, the original mentoring and placement guidance bore such limited resemblance to what was practical in schools that they have since had to be clarified in the form of multiple FAQs and iterations. This lack of strategic thinking has exacerbated schools’ reluctance to participate in ITE partnerships. Although some of these changes are, in principle, to be welcomed they will place additional pressures on schools and we are concerned that they will further reduce placement opportunities. These pressures could be alleviated by: DfE allowing ITE providers to take account of mentor training undertaken prior to the introduction of the new requirements; synergising mentor training and mentoring activities between the ITE and the ECF; extending funding for mentoring beyond 2024/25; and allowing mentoring funding to be drawn down prior to the introduction of the new Quality Requirements.

**It is recommended that:**

* **DfE considers writing off some or all of the student debt of new teachers who remain in the profession for a given number of years.**
* **DfE allows the recognition of all forms of mentor training in regards the new ITE Quality Requirements.**
* **DfE extends and makes more flexible central DfE funding for mentor support.**

**What action should the Department take to address the challenges in teacher recruitment & retention?**

National Foundation for educational research (NFER) data suggests that bursaries do have a positive impact on recruitment to ITE and we believe that they should be retained (<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/teacher-labour-market-in-england-annual-report-2023/>). We also however think that the extremely high bursaries of up to £27,000 might only have a limited long-term impact. We think it unlikely that anyone who will train to teach with a £27,000 bursary but who would not do so for, say, £20,000 is particularly committed to the profession. UCET members report significant numbers of ‘bursary tourists’ only applying for the financial rewards which, once tax has been taken into account, will exceed the amounts paid to those teaching them and those supporting them in schools. The high level of some bursaries also encourages some genuine applicants to apply for subjects other than the one they might be most appropriately qualified for, which can increase the pressures they feel while undertaking their ITE and so impact on retention. Changing bursaries on an annual basis also makes marketing and planning difficult. We would advocate levelling out bursary payments across all subjects and phases and setting bursary levels for a three-year period. We would also suggest allocating funding (possibly part-funded using unspent bursary monies) to ITE providers to operate hardship funds for ITE students while on programme. Such funds could be given to ITE providers on the basis of all-year student numbers for them to allocate in response to local needs and costs of living. The funding would be ring-fenced for student hardship, with unspent money being returned at the year end.

**It is recommended that:**

* **DfE restructures ITE bursaries so that all student teachers receive a standard level of financial support.**
* **DfE fixes bursary levels for three-year periods.**
* **DfE allocates funding is to ITE providers to provide hardship support to student teachers in need.**

**How well does the current teacher training framework work to prepare new teachers and how could it be improved?**

UCET believes that teaching is a challenging, complex, intellectual and professional endeavour and ITE programmes should reflect this. The programmes should draw upon a broad evidence and research base and should equip new teachers to apply, interpret and contextualise research according to the needs of the schools they are working in and of the pupils that they teach. This necessitates programmes which involve a flexible, personalised and innovative curriculum that is responsive to both the needs of student teachers and schools, and the best research from an ever-evolving evidence base. They should be founded on the principle that there is no single ‘right’ way to train teachers to work in diverse and unpredictable settings or to support pupils with different needs. This is understandably difficult to absorb at policy level but is what the evidence tells us. As such, the programmes should develop teachers who are: competent and confident professionals; epistemic agents; and responsible professionals who are able to engage in enquiry rich practice. The teachers they develop should have a sense of pride in their profession and have the agency to take decisions for themselves. Such programmes will be attractive to high calibre people and so will aid recruitment to the profession. These features are covered in greater detail in UCET’s Intellectual Base of Techer Education report (<https://www.ucet.ac.uk/11675/ibte-position-statement-updated-february-2020>).

We are concerned that aspects of the new ITE Quality Requirements will encourage a one size fits all approach will make it difficult for ITE programmes to fulfil these objectives in response to local circumstances, and might produce ‘identikit’ teachers, or ‘executive technicians’ rather than fully rounded professionals, undermining quality rather than enhancing it. Such teachers are less likely to remain in the profession. This is confirmed in the recent NFER report, which shows that teachers have had less autonomy in their careers than similar graduates, and that greater autonomy leads to higher job satisfaction and retention.

There is now clear and extensive evidence that, as those in the sector predicted, the ITE Market Review has de-stabilised the country’s teacher supply base and has left parts of the country without any accredited ITE provider. This is because of what was, in our view, a totally unnecessary reaccreditation process which resulted in some 20% of existing providers failing to secure reaccreditation, with a significant number of others choosing to voluntarily withdraw because they saw themselves as having no place in the reconfigured market. The results of the reaccreditation exercise, which was entirely desk-based and (as noted above) demonstrated little cognisance of the reality experienced by providers on the ground, have no apparent relation to quality. Notably, a number of providers with very positive existing OfSTED judgements were unsuccessful in their applications. Reducing the number of accredited providers will mean that prospective teachers will have less choice about where to train at a time when, again as noted above, many are (for cost reasons) having to train closer to where they live. This adds to the ever-expanding range of deterrents for high-quality graduates who are considering teaching but could easily opt for other professions. Removing some providers from the market also carries attendant risks of losing the schools they work in partnership with, further reducing placement capacity. The withdrawal of accreditation from university ITE providers also imperils the supply chain that exists between undergraduates at a university and recruitment to postgraduate ITE programmes at the same institution. Although these risks have been alleviated to an extent by the willingness of some de-accredited providers to work as delivery partners with those that did secure accreditation, the risks to teacher supply are real. It should be noted that the government could have introduced its Market Review reforms without undertaking the high-risk reaccreditation exercise.

In regards to the Early Career Framework (ECF), UCET has long called for new teachers to have an entitlement to fully funded structured early professional development that builds on and complements their ITE. That is why we gave ‘in-principle’ support to the ECF when it was originally announced in the DfE’s Teacher Recruitment & Retention Strategy (2019). We do, however, have concerns about the way in which the ECF has been implemented on the ground. There is insufficient scope to tailor the ECF to the specific contexts that new teachers are working in. This can lead to early career teachers (ECTs) repeating things they have already covered during their ITE and are already confident in, something which might, in part, reflect the fact that both are underpinned by the same set of Teachers’ Standards. This in turn can lead to disillusionment and unnecessary workload. A way should be found to tailor the ECF to each new teacher’s specific professional needs, beginning with an assessment of their strengths and areas for development, carried out on completion of their ITE. This would be facilitated if ITE providers, who will have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each ECT, together with a knowledge of the contexts they are working within, were involved in ECF delivery. The content of the ECF also needs to be reviewed. As well as avoiding duplication and overlap, it should draw on a broader research base, recognising the value of different types of educational research, and should provide more explicit support in respect of key areas including SEND and equalities issues. Other suggestions in relation to the ECF are set out in the UCET paper ‘*golden thread or gilded cage*’, which can be found at: <https://www.ucet.ac.uk/14587/golden-thread-or-gilded-cage-an-analysis-of-department-for-education-support-for-the-continuing-professional-development-of-teachers>.

Professional development opportunities for teachers should not be restricted to the ECF or NPQs. Evidence from the evaluation of the Master’s level programmes funded through the Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) programme which was abolished in 2011 showed that Master’s level CPD could help to improve the subject knowledge, research and behaviour management skills of teachers and improve their confidence, which in turn would boost retention. We think that increasing the opportunities for teachers to undertake CPD at Master’s level would increase still further the quality of teaching in schools, enhance the status of the profession and be attractive to ambitious and high-flying graduates. We recommend that DfE provides scholarships to allow teachers to undertake Master’s level CPD. If this is not immediately possible, a quick-win for the DfE would be to remove the inexplicable rule that means teachers can only access postgraduate loans if they want to study for a full master’s qualification, preventing them from drawing down on the 60 master’s level credits most carry with them from their PGCE qualifications.

Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE courses) have for many years been an effective way of recruiting students to ITE programmes in shortage subject areas. They allow a graduate in one subject area (e.g. biology) to develop subject knowledge in another (e.g. Physics) to equip them to train in a priority subject area. SKE could however be improved. We believe that, for example, there should be a general science SKE to equip people to train to teach in more than one science subject, which would better reflect what happens in schools. In terms of SKE course structure and length, we believe that there is the scope to pilot an approach for SKE in a limited number of subjects whereby individuals could take a SKE before applying for ITE, rather than the current requirement of SKE being a condition of an ITE offer. This would, we believe, provide a potentially important confidence boost for those who are uncertain as to whether they have the knowledge to apply for ITE. There is also a long history of short (2 week) SKE/booster courses which were in the past used effectively by providers to develop key subject skills and, again, boost confidence for those who are about to commence their ITE programme. These could, as in the past, be developed through inviting bids from providers (such as with the Biology for Physical Scientists booster course that was available under NCTL)

**It is recommended that:**

* **The ITE Quality Requirements be redrafted to ensure that programmes can be tailored and contextualised to equip teachers to be competent and confident professionals; epistemic agents; responsible professionals; and are able to engage in enquiry rich practice, in line with the characteristics and markers of quality identified in the UCET IBTE report.**
* **De-accredited ITE providers be given the opportunity to submit evidence to re-secure their accreditation to deliver ITE programmes preferably from 2023/24, and definitely from 2024/25 onwards.**
* **The CCF and the ECF be amended so that duplication and repetition are avoided, gaps in terms of SEND and equalities issues filled, and to draw upon a broader range of robust qualitative and quantitative research evidence.**
* **Scholarships are made available to allow teachers to undertake CPD at Master’s degree level.**
* **Eligibility for postgraduate loans be amended to allow teachers to borrow enough money to allow them to build on existing Master’s credits to secure a full Master’s degree.**
* **SKE policy be amended to allow general science SKE’s and the ability to undertake a SKE in a second science discipline (as already is the case for modern languages) and the reintroduction of short (2 unit) SKE booster courses.**
* **SKE policy to be amended to allow for a pilot in a limited number of subjects so that a SKE can be undertaken prior to applying for an ITE course.**

**What particular challenges exist in teacher recruitment, training & retention for teachers from different demographic backgrounds?**

The pupil population is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity. Yet the teacher population is predominantly White and senior school leaders even more so. The NFER report on Race Equality in the Teacher workforce indicated that Black and Global Majority candidates are interested in entering the profession and yet when they do the attrition rate is high [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/racial-equality-in-the-teacher-workforce/](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nfer.ac.uk%2Fracial-equality-in-the-teacher-workforce%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cvini.lander%40leedsbeckett.ac.uk%7Caa383656cd9a4c37bc6808daf55c476c%7Cd79a81124fbe417aa112cd0fb490d85c%7C0%7C0%7C638092073945354827%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=vgU1WwS7tVdUWd3ZUMhbZluNS%2BujjNQ5%2BK0bcDxVRX4%3D&reserved=0).The DfE needs to address the recruitment and retention of this group of students teachers through its marketing activities and, possibly, introducing bursaries to attract Black and Global Majority candidates onto ITE programmes as is being done in Wales:

<https://www.gov.wales/ethnic-minority-initial-teacher-education-ite-incentive-guidance-students#:~:text=The%20Ethnic%20Minority%20Initial%20Teacher%20Education%20%28ITE%29%20incentive,a%20legal%20scheme%20made%20by%20the%20Welsh%20Ministers>.

The collection of data on recruitment into teaching also needs to be improved. The DfE’s recent decision to provide ITE providers with data on the applications they receive is an overdue but helpful development but this needs to be supplemented by providing regional level information for comparative purposes. The UCET Equalities Group has been carrying out a census to build a picture of the demographics of ITE students across England, and the preliminary results suggest under-representation of ITE students from ethnically diverse backgrounds. The reason for collecting this data is to develop a transparent understanding of the profile of those undertaking ITE courses and specifically where there is underrepresentation. This will enable the sector to target its response in an informed manner to ensure that we have a teaching community that is representative of our wider communities. Such census work should be carried out by Government, but Government should also draw upon the wealth of expertise across the sector, including from universities, who can recommend evidence-based strategies.

Omissions of references to race, racism, cultural or linguistic diversity in the CCF and ECF is also an issue as it means that the ITE and ECF curricula don’t meet the needs of newly qualified teachers who will be teaching within increasingly ethnically diverse classrooms. This in turn means they may not be able to meet the needs of the pupils. At the very least, the list of research appended to CCF and ECF documentation could be extended to include references to key research in this area.

An extensive range of research has shown that teachers and pupils from Black and Global Majority groups suffer institutional and structural barriers in education which, despite the selected evidence within the Sewell Report, still exist and need to be addressed through teacher education.

Members of the UCET Equalities Group have, with generous support from the NEU, developed an Anti-racism Framework for ITT which is underpinned by research and written to address the policy, curriculum and practice gap in ITE provision. A copy of the framework can be found at: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/social-science/research/anti-racism-framework/>.

**It is recommended that:**

* **DfE takes active steps to increase recruitment to ITE from Black and Global Majority candidates, and to retain them in the profession.**
* **DfE collect and disseminate comprehensive data on the recruitment of Black and Global Majority candidates in the teaching profession and their career progression once qualified.**
* **The CCF and the ECF are amended to reflect the importance of equipping teachers to teach pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds.**

**Conclusion**

This evidence outlines some of the issues the country faces in respect of the recruitment and retention of teachers. The recommendations we make would go some way to addressing these serious issues. But they will be far from sufficient. They should form part of a more coherent and sustained strategy by DfE, developed in a coordinated fashion in partnership with representatives from across the sector, which supports innovation, quality and recruitment in ITE, and also teacher pay, workload, agency and career progression.

JNR

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