Department for Education

Initial Teacher Training (ITT): Apply for Accreditation

Applicant pack

March 2025

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Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) to support organisations seeking accreditation to deliver Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses leading to the award of qualified teacher status (QTS), from the academic year 2026 to 2027. Organisations who deliver ITT courses leading to QTS must be accredited by the DfE, and satisfy the requirements set out in the DfE's ITT criteria.

Please note that references to 'DfE' throughout this document refer to the Secretary of State for Education acting through their representatives in the Department for Education.

Introduction

DfE recognises the considerable investment that both accredited ITT providers and their lead partners have made in developing partnerships from September 2024. These partnerships ensure high-quality training is available, whilst retaining invaluable local connections, experience and expertise in the ITT sector. DfE is aware of calls from both lead partners and their representative organisations for another accreditation opportunity, for those high-quality delivery partners to become accredited bodies where it is more cost effective and beneficial for the trainee teacher to do so.

This targeted accreditation round for delivery in academic year 2026 to 2027 will provide an opportunity for these organisations to demonstrate their ability to meet the updated ITT criteria and facilitate a smooth transition from any existing partnership arrangements.

To be eligible to apply for accreditation to deliver from the academic year 2026 to 2027, organisations must meet all of the following criteria:

- have previously held accreditation to deliver ITT leading to qualified teacher status (QTS);
- be delivering as a lead partner during the 2024 to 2025 academic year; and
- not have received two consecutive requires improvement or inadequate judgements from Ofsted in the previous inspection cycle (2021 to 2024).

What does the application process involve?

The application process consists of two submissions, written and verbal, which will be reviewed by an assessment panel once both submissions are complete. Assessments will be made against the accreditation success criteria which are based on the updated quality requirements in the ITT criteria focusing on trainee curriculum, intensive training and practice (ITAP), and mentoring. The accreditation success criteria can be found later in this pack.

Assessment panels will consist of a DfE official and two DfE ITT market quality associates.

Written Submission

The first part of the application for accreditation is a written submission which requires applicants to submit a curriculum portfolio for one subject and/or phase that exemplifies the applicant's approach to initial teacher training.

To be assessed against the accreditation success criteria, the curriculum portfolio must include:

- An example trainee curriculum
- An example ITAP unit
- An example mentor curriculum
- A written submission of up to 1500 words to explain the applicant's approach, using the written application form.

The curriculum portfolio, comprising of the three attachments and a completed written submission application form, must be emailed to itt.accreditation@education.gov.uk. The subject heading must contain the application reference code received after completing the 'Apply for Initial Teacher Training Accreditation' form. Additional materials will not be accepted.

The written submission will be reviewed by the applicant's assessment panel ahead of the verbal submission. The written submission will not be assessed at this stage, but the contents of the curriculum portfolio will be reviewed against the success criteria to guide the verbal submission. An overall assessment will be made following the verbal submission and will be informed by both written and verbal submissions.

Verbal Submission

The second and final part of the application process is a verbal submission consisting of a presentation and interview which will both be reviewed against the accreditation success criteria. All verbal submissions will be conducted via Microsoft Teams and the date and time of the applicant's verbal submission will be communicated via email.

The verbal submission will last approximately 90 minutes in total. It will begin with the presentation of no longer than 15 minutes, followed by a short break of approximately 15 minutes before the interview which may last anywhere between 40 to 60 minutes.

Further details on the contents of both the presentation and interview are below.

Presentation

The verbal submission will begin with a presentation from the applicant.

For the subject of the presentation, applicants will be required to share their coherent approach to curriculum design by describing how a thread / key idea / theme that spans their trainee curriculum, mentor curriculum, and ITAP unit, leads to good outcomes for trainees.

Presentations should be no longer than 15 minutes and applicants may use visual guides such as a PowerPoint presentation.

The presentation will be followed by a short break of approximately 15 minutes before the interview. During the break the panel will review the presentation against the success criteria and the written submission to inform the questions asked at interview.

Interview

The final part of the verbal submission is an interview where applicants will be asked a series of questions by their assessment panel. To support applicants with the interview, the interview questions can be found below, although the panel may wish to ask supplementary questions which cannot be shared in advance. The questions asked by the panel will be guided by the applicant's written submission and presentation. The interview may last between 40 to 60 minutes.

In addition to the below, the panel will ask some partnership-related questions which will not be assessed against the success criteria but will be used to assure DfE of transition arrangements. These are listed below the general interview questions.

Interview questions

- How will you ensure that trainee curricula are coherent across all subjects and phases (as applicable), and that there is alignment between provider-led input and on-placement experiences?
- Please explain any difference, and the rationale for that difference, between the curriculum you are currently delivering as a lead partner and the one that you intend to deliver as an accredited provider. Or, if you intend to use the same curricula as your accredited provider, please explain why.
- The panel will select an ITAP, unit or taught session from either your trainee or mentor curriculum and ask why that content is taught at that point in the curriculum.
- How will quality assurance processes, assessment outcomes, self-evaluation and feedback be used to improve the curricula and ITAPs?
- Talk us through how you will use observations of examples (and non-examples) via video, modelling or classroom teaching, deconstruction of teaching by experts, and frequent opportunities for practice, including approximations of practice and critically reflective practice.
- How will the differing knowledge, understanding, skills and needs of mentors be addressed so that they understand the full trainee curriculum and are well positioned to deliver and assess the on-placement element of the trainee curriculum successfully?

Partnership questions

- Tell us about your arrangements for trainees who may defer or pause their training.
- How will you approach provider transition arrangements for your trainees?
- Will you need to create new curriculum material ahead of your delivery date?

What are the success criteria?

The accreditation success criteria are derived from requirements published in the ITT criteria and ITTECF. These guidance documents have recently been updated to include a greater emphasis on quality of provision and improving trainee outcomes. The accreditation success criteria have been developed and tested with sector experts from a variety of settings across the Initial Teacher Training landscape.

See below for the accreditation success criteria.

Accreditation Success Criteria
A. Horizontal sequencing in the curricula leads to the accumulation and application of knowledge over time.
B. Coherence is evident in the form of key ideas or themes being revisited and built on throughout the curricula.
C. Common principles underpin curriculum design that leads to coherent curricula across provision.
D. ITAP foci are specific, foundational, or pivotal areas, meaningfully selected and positioned within the trainee curriculum to provide intensive training and practice when appropriate as part of a coherent trainee curriculum.
E. Mentor curricula are designed flexibly to respond to the specific needs of the mentor cohort as a group and as individuals.
F. There is a coherent trainee journey across provider-led input and on-placement experiences.
G. Mentor curricula ensures that mentors understand the full trainee curriculum and can successfully deliver and assess the placement-led parts and fulfil the wider expectations of the role.
H. Curriculum content in the curricula is informed by the ITTECF and evidence-informed phase and subject specific approaches where available and appropriate.
I. Underpinning the curricula is a robust evidence base for high-quality teaching, training and mentoring including that specific to phase and subject where available and appropriate.
J. Focussed, structured input and critical analysis are explicit key features of the trainee curricula and include observations of examples (and non-examples) via video, modelling or classroom teaching, deconstruction of teaching by experts, and frequent opportunities for practice including approximations of practice and critically reflective practice.
K. Mentor curricula improve mentor knowledge, understanding and skills of high-quality teaching, including that which is specific to subject and phase, and the ITTECF, whilst minimising mentor workload.
L. Trainees are supported to plan for, practice, and implement classroom teaching building in variety, complexity and length over time which improves through receiving and actioning expert feedback.
M. Assessment is used regularly and effectively to check that trainees and mentors know, remember, understand and can apply what they have learned, and to inform summative judgements against the Teachers' Standards.
N. Quality assurance processes are planned to measure the impact and effectiveness of the curricula, and outcomes will be used to self-evaluate and improve the curricula.

Timeline

Date	Activity
26 February 2025	‘Apply for Initial Teacher Training Accreditation’ form opens
7 March 2025	Written submission window opens
12 March 2025	Applicant information session
16 March 2025	‘Apply for Initial Teacher Training Accreditation’ form closes
19 March 2025	Applicant drop-in session
26 March 2025	Applicant drop-in session
2 April 2025	Applicant drop-in session
6 April 2025	Written submission window closes
28 April 2025	Verbal submission window opens
9 May 2025	Verbal submission window closes
By 30 June 2025	Outcomes of the accreditation round for academic year 2026 to 2027 delivery published
September 2025	Phase 2 engagement begins

What happens next?

Applicants will be notified of their outcome in writing by 30 June 2025.

Phase 2 will focus on joint working between DfE and those organisations that are successfully accredited, to ensure that all ITT courses are fully developed in line with the ITT criteria and are of the highest possible quality ahead of delivery. Accredited providers will be required to engage with Phase 2 as a condition of delivery. Further information regarding Phase 2 will be communicated to successfully accredited providers later in the process.

Where applicants are unsuccessful, they are encouraged to continue working in partnership with an accredited provider.

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Assessment

How should we submit our curriculum portfolio?

Any documents submitted as part of the curriculum portfolio should be emailed to itt.accreditaton@education.gov.uk in PDF format, and should contain the applicant reference code.

Please note that applicants are not required to submit any documentation as part of the verbal submission.

How many people can attend the verbal submission?

There is no limit to the number of attendees. However, applicants are advised to consider carefully how efficiently they can deliver their presentation to the panel and engage with the interview when they consider the number of representatives who will attend. Attendees are free to swap around when presenting however they best see fit.

Who will be on our assessment panel?

Assessment panels will consist of a DfE official from the ITT accreditation team and two DfE ITT market quality associates. Applicants will be notified of the names of their assessment panel in advance of the verbal submission. This will allow applicants to raise any concerns regarding potential conflicts of interest and allow the DfE ITT accreditation team to consider adjustments to the panel, where necessary.

Are applicants who offer multi-phase courses required to submit curriculum material for all their subjects and phases for the written submission?

Applicants should submit a curriculum portfolio for one subject and/or phase for the written submission.

As a lead partner, does the material submitted for the written submission need to be different to what we are already delivering in partnership with our accredited provider?

Applicants are asked to submit a curriculum portfolio for one subject and/or phase that exemplifies the applicant's approach to initial teacher training. Where the applicant is using materials from their partnership with an accredited provider, applicants must consider the intellectual property agreement within their partnership and whether they have the accredited provider's permission to use this material.

Application process

Is the application process different depending on which routes, phases and subjects we want to deliver?

Applicants are not required to submit multiple applications if they intend to offer multiple routes, phases, and subjects. The Secretary of State accredits providers of courses or programmes of ITT as opposed to accrediting individual courses.

Please note that successfully accredited ITT providers may be required to request additional permissions if they are offering select routes to obtaining QTS, such as assessment only, the postgraduate teaching apprenticeship and early years ITT.

Will there be any DfE support available to help us with our application?

An initial information session for interested organisations was held on 21 January 2025. DfE will hold an information session for applicants on Wednesday 12 March at 1500 to answer questions and ensure that applicants fully understand the process. There will also be three weekly 45 minute ‘drop-in’ sessions held every Wednesday afternoon on 19 March, 26 March and 2 April to answer questions, respond to any concerns and offer support as needed. Applicants have received notice of this via email from itt.accreditation@education.gov.uk and/or via UCET/NASBTT representatives. Please note that these information and drop-in sessions are for 2026/27 applicants only.

Whilst applicants should refer to this FAQ document in the first instance, for any questions which are not covered, they should email itt.accreditation@education.gov.uk.

Who will be involved in assessing applications for accreditation?

This accreditation round is being delivered in collaboration with sector experts to allow for rigorous assessment and professional dialogue between applicants and assessors. Panel members for the verbal submission will include officials from the ITT Accreditation team and DfE ITT Market Quality Associates.

Timing

Can I change my verbal submission date?

The ITT accreditation team is keen to limit inconvenience to applicants where possible and ensure the various stages of the process occur at times which work for all involved, although it may not always be possible to cater to individual needs. Nevertheless, if applicants are unable to attend the verbal submission date and time they are allocated, they should inform the accreditation team immediately so that it can offer an alternative slot.

Can we request an extension to the application closing date?

There will be no extension to the application closing date. Applicants should refer to the timeline for this accreditation process published on GOV.UK which contains the deadlines.

If we have expressed our intention to deliver from AY26/27, but are now unable to deliver until AY 27/28, can we change our intended delivery timescale?

The application process is robust and rigorous, with a lot of work required of applicants in a short space of time. The department reiterates the importance of organisations being ready to deliver, especially those looking to start in 2026/27.

We previously expressed our desire to deliver from AY 26/27. Can we decide to defer our delivery date to AY27/28?

No.

When will I receive notice of the outcome of application?

Both the written and verbal submissions will be assessed together. Applicants can expect to receive the outcome of their application no later than Monday 30 June 2025**.**

General questions

Will there be funding available for providers during the application process and for the preparation for delivery phase?

No, there is no allocation of funding for this accreditation process, and this applies to applicants for both accreditation rounds.

Will there be another accreditation round like this one next year?

It is currently planned that Accreditation Round 2, for organisations that intend to deliver from the academic year 2027 to 2028, will open in October 2025, with outcomes communicated by February 2026.

Will Ofsted be involved with assessment in this accreditation process?

No.

Will Ofsted visit applicants for their thematic monitoring visits (TMV) during this accreditation process?

Ofsted will undertake thematic monitoring visits (TMVs) in the spring and summer term. Some accredited providers will receive a TMV, and this may involve a visit to some (but not all) of a provider's lead partners. A TMV is a type of assurance activity that involves teams of inspectors visiting providers to gather evidence in relation to specific themes with respect to inspection of initial teacher training. The lead inspector will plan the TMV in collaboration with the accredited provider, this will include identifying which lead partners would be the most suitable to visit. Inspectors will be considerate of providers and their lead partners during this accreditation window.

What is the distinction between our legal entity and operating name upon successfully gaining accreditation?

Operating name is the name under which your organisation is known and may be changed after seeking approval from DfE.

The legal entity is the organisation that is accredited by the Secretary of State to deliver teacher training that leads to QTS, in accordance with The Education (School Teachers' Qualifications) (England) Regulations 2003.

The accredited ITT provider has been awarded accreditation and has full and final accountability for all aspects of training design, delivery, and quality across the partnership. The accredited ITT provider is liable for the quality of provision, governance,

internal controls, and will be accountable and responsible for public funds spent for the purposes intended across its ITT partnership.

Changes to the legal entity can only be considered in a limited set of circumstances, so applicants should ensure at application stage that the legal entity reflects the organisation that holds responsibility for all aspects of the provision.

Department for Education

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