Department for Education

Initial Teacher Training (ITT): Apply for Accreditation

Applicant pack

January 2026

Not for wider sharing

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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 2027 to 2028. 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. Since September 2024, all accredited ITT providers have been delivering courses that incorporate the new quality requirements, which are embedded into the current 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

In November 2024, the Department for Education announced an accreditation window, with two rounds for delivery beginning academic year 2026/27 and academic year 2027/28 respectively. The application process for the first round was undertaken during Spring 2025 and concluded in Summer 2025. The published outcomes can be found here: List of providers accredited to deliver ITT from September 2026.

To ensure ongoing coverage and efficient delivery of ITT where it is needed, DfE is now running the second accreditation round for eligible organisations to deliver ITT leading to QTS from academic year 2027/28.

This targeted accreditation round will provide an opportunity for eligible organisations to demonstrate their ability to meet the new quality requirements and provide a smooth transition from any existing partnership arrangements.

To be eligible for this round, organisations must have met all the following criteria:

- have previously held accreditation to deliver ITT leading to qualified teacher status (QTS);
- be a training (lead) partner or have been delivering ITT that leads to QTS in the last 12 months
- 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), mentoring and evaluation. 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. This portfolio should exemplify the applicant's approach to ITT.

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.
- A completed Accreditation Success Criteria Checklist

The curriculum portfolio comprising of the attachments listed above, must be emailed to itt.accreditation@education.gov.uk. The subject heading must contain the application reference code received after completing 'Initial Teacher Training Accreditation Registration Form for 2027 to 2028 Delivery'. Additional materials will not be accepted.

The Success Criteria Checklist must clearly indicate in which submission each criterion is – or will be – referenced. It is not required that each success criterion is referenced in both the written submission and the verbal submission. Applicants should focus on the strength and quality of articulating the evidence for each criterion.

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 and delivery related questions, if applicable, 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 training/lead partner or through other recent delivery) 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 or current delivery model, 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 and delivery 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.

1. CURRICULUM	
A.	Horizontal sequencing in the curricula leads to the accumulation and application of knowledge over time.
B.	Coherent curriculum design is underpinned by common principles across provision and is evident in the form of key ideas or themes being revisited and built on throughout the curricula.
C.	Curriculum content in the curricula is informed by i. the ITTECF and ii. evidence-informed phase and subject specific approaches, where available and appropriate.
D.	Curricula are underpinned by a robust evidence base for high-quality teaching, training and mentoring that includes phase- and subject-specific elements where available and appropriate.
2. ITAP	
A.	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.
B.	There is a coherent trainee journey across provider-led input and on-placement experiences.
C.	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.
D.	Focussed, structured input and critical analysis are explicit key features of the trainee curricula. These should include i. observations of examples (and non-examples) via video, modelling or classroom teaching, ii. deconstruction of teaching by experts, and iii. frequent opportunities for practice including approximations of practice and critically reflective practice.

3. MENTORING
A. 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
B. Mentor curricula have been designed flexibly to respond to the specific needs of the mentor cohort as a group and as individuals.
C. Assessment is used regularly and effectively to: i. check that trainees and mentors know, remember, understand and can apply what they have learned, and ii. inform summative judgements against the Teachers' Standards.
D. Mentor curricula ensures that mentors: i. understand the full trainee curriculum ii. can successfully deliver and assess the placement-led parts and iii. fulfil the wider expectations of the role.
4. REVIEW AND EVALUATE
A. 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
17 December 2025	'Initial Teacher Training Accreditation Registration Form for 2027 to 2028 Delivery' opens
5 January 2026	'Initial Teacher Training Accreditation Registration Form for 2027 to 2028 Delivery' closes
19 January 2026	Applicant packs issued and written submission window opens
W/C 26th January	Applicants issued with verbal submission date
27 January 2026	Applicant information session (3pm)
10 February 2026	Applicant drop-in session (3pm)
2 March 2026	Written submission window closes (11:55pm)
9 March – 27 March 2026	Verbal Submission Window
By 1 June 2026	Outcomes of the accreditation round published
September 2026	Phase 2 engagement begins

What happens next?

Applicants will be notified of their verbal submission date W/C 26 January 2026.

Applicants will be notified of their outcome in writing by 1 June 2026.

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

Phase 2

Upon successful completion of phase 1 (written and verbal application for accreditation) organisations will receive provisional accredited status to deliver ITT courses leading to QTS from September 2027.

Confirmed accredited status for September 2027 is subject to successful completion of phase 2 (accreditation to deliver) which will ensure providers are prepared for delivery.

Phase 2 will focus on joint working between DfE and provisionally accredited providers, 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. Each provider will be assigned a DfE ITT Market Quality Associate who will arrange meetings throughout the 26/27 academic year to go through feedback from phase 1, and ensure the provider is ready to deliver.

When all meetings have been held, the associate will provide a recommendation to DfE on if the provider meets the quality standard for being fully accredited. Providers will be required to engage with Phase 2 in order to achieve full accredited status.

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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.

Who should attend the verbal submission?

There is no limit to the number of attendees. However, applicants are strongly advised to consider 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.

When deciding on which members of staff will represent the applicant for the verbal submission, applicants are strongly advised to limit this to attendees who can confidently demonstrate knowledge and expertise linked to the Accreditation Success Criteria. This could include a curriculum expert, an operations expert, and a partnerships expert.

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.

If we are 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 will exemplify their approach to ITT.

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.

How should we use our written and verbal submission effectively?

Applicants should use the majority of the written submission 1,500-word count and the verbal submission time to explain practically and specifically what the approach to ITT and training curriculum is, and how this meets the assessment criteria. Brief context is acceptable when it directly helps clarify applicants' approach, but extended sections on demographics, organisational background, or general narrative should be avoided in both stages. Every part of the written and verbal submissions should focus on demonstrating how the criteria is met, and not on describing wider context.

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?

DfE will hold an information session for applicants on Tuesday 27 January at 1500 to answer questions and ensure that applicants fully understand the process. Applicants are encouraged to send in questions to itt.accreditation@education.gov.uk prior to the information session to help cater the session to the needs of the applicants.

There will also be a ‘drop-in’ session held on Tuesday 10 February at 1500 to answer questions, respond to any concerns and offer support as needed.

Applicants will receive notice of these meetings via email from itt.accreditation@education.gov.uk and/or via UCET/NASBTT representatives.

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 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 or in this guidance pack which contains the deadlines.

When will I receive my verbal submission date?

Verbal submission dates will be issued to applicants in the W/C 26 January.

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.

If we apply to deliver from AY27/28, but are now unable to deliver until AY28/29, 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 from September 2027. There will not be an option to defer.

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 1 June 2026**.**

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.

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

There is no other accreditation round planned as currently, there is good coverage of ITT courses across the regions, subjects and phases. The Department will continue to monitor market data and insights closely, to assess when and where future rounds of accreditation for new entrants to the market might be needed.

Will Ofsted be involved with assessment in this accreditation process?

No.

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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