UCET symposium Tuesday 3rd March

Capture document

How do we successfully help students transition to a successful outcome, whatever that may be?

This document has been produced from the UCET Symposia (March 2026).

Focus groups from the UCET membership of university-based teacher educators explored how best to support teacher trainees from application through to completion. The document considers how, as a collective body we can effectively but realistically accommodate the adaptive needs of individual trainees to ensure an inclusive and supportive training experience for all.

The table below has been collated across the five themes discussed. We include the provocation questions used to stimulate discussion.

Provocation theme/question	**Provocation Questions**	**Notes/feedback from Discussion Group**	**UCET Action/Follow up**
• What can be done at pre-registration and admissions/recruitment stage to support students to openly share with HEI tutors their needs?	What are the current barriers preventing students from openly sharing their needs during pre-registration and admissions processes? What information and reassurance should be provided in pre-application materials to encourage disclosure? What are you doing already? Admissions and Recruitment Stage How are open days and recruitment events being used to support disclosure	**Tension** Pressure to recruit and over promising adaptations that would either be non-compliant, not practical in school or not achievable. This is a particular source of tension between placement and academic team. • Use marketing materials to create a list of 'real life' expectations of what daily classroom experiences will look like across the programme and into employment. Have these displayed at Open Day events/ online and offer holding days.	

	What mechanisms can prevent students from having to repeatedly re-disclose their needs? How are we using the health checks and then the disability disclosure?	• Encouraging applicants to gain school experience (even though we are not able to say that formally). • Pre-programme opportunities for discussion of needs (drop-in sessions etc, involving relevant colleagues) to support students in preparation for authentic experiences. • Students speaking about their experiences of support (e.g. short videos) to encourage others to share their needs openly. • Explain to applicants and recruits why it is in their interest to provide such information and the kinds of adjustments that might be made. • Prompt applicants at regular stages to think about the kinds of support they might require. • Reach agreement about the respective role of the ITE provider, the placement school the mentor and the student teacher. • Make it clear that there is no leeway in students having to be able to demonstrate meeting the teacher standards. • It is not always understood that ILP and OH assessments have different purposes and are not always helpful or relevant. • Schools are not always in a position to make adjustments in response to ILPs or OH assessments. Liaison between academic tutors becomes essential and time heavy here. • Sometimes candidates don't think that they need to tell us of a need because of previous Uni experience where this was handled just fine – but they forget the competence	

		judgement involved in ITE which is different to the academic judgement needed in most other /previous degrees. • Key to this is balance between being realistic about career at admissions stage verses not bursting the idealism bubble – so not sugar coating the reality but still enthusing about the upsides. • Some context and culturally specific aspects of need – e.g. students not allowed to use public transport due to religious reasons or are scared of doing long walks in the dark due to safety. • Placement action plans common across providers but these need to be on an accessible platform where all relevant stakeholders can view them. • Having school colleagues as part of interview process. • Being able to talk to the DS team at the university. • A mix of online and face-to-face interviews as part of admissions processes to support accessibility.	
• What can be done upon arrival and in early stages to support students with declared needs? How do HEIs empower their students to feel settled, open to discussions about their needs and ready to	What can be done prior to arrival to support learners, to have a clear sense of what they need to do on arrival, where to go, what is expected, and how to ensure that they are confident when they arrive on campus or their new academic context? What information do tutors need to enable them to prepare well for learners' arrival, and to ensure that	• Start induction before students arrive (once they have enrolled). • Offer holders days become part of the formal induction in the summer before they arrive. • Look at placement ready tools	UCET could do some work on creating guidance for universities to understand the safeguarding needs of pupils and schools and why information must be shared across teams, what the PSRB requirements of ITE are and what OH/disability teams need to understand about

	share/advocate with stakeholders involved in their learning early on in a programme?	their needs are met and to make them feel welcome? What can be done upon arrival to ensure that learners feel safe, welcome, and that they belong? What information and how much information needs to be shared with learners on arrival? What support needs to be provided via mentorship (academic, pastoral and peer)? How can learners' needs be evaluated, and undisclosed needs be identified upon arrival through academic mentoring and other interventions? What immediate support will help to make a difference to help learners to find their feet and make a difference to start their course with confidence, for example, enrolment, finding rooms, guidance regarding finance? What continuous support needs to be put in place to enable learners to transition into their new academic context?	• Easy access to student disability services in first weeks (or prior to commencement of course if eligible for DSA). • Share process of applying for wider support and work through this with them at induction • Academic coaching with PT once a week 'contact point'. This can head off issues before they can develop and grow. • Create a space in the introduction to school email / contact with school placement for the student to write a (very short) statement about themselves. • Give each student named one point of contact with whom to discuss their needs. • International students require practical information about living and working in the UK (e.g. on how to open a bank account). Many providers have created short videos. • Optional networking lunches or informal support spaces. • Those who apply late in the cycle often need more individual and bespoke support. • Information sent direct to students by schools or central admissions teams often needs careful liaison and review to ensure messages are consistent and in line with academic staff • PSRB programmes in universities developing communities, with shared expectations and make arguments to the institution. One university shared there is now a regulation	ITE and the Teachers' Standards.

		written into student code of conduct that has come out of this community that says if needs aren't shared this can't be a reason to appeal if things go wrong. • Some problems around definition of professionalism by individuals, especially where this clashes with the identity of a student. • At what point are we legally allowed to ask about a need? GDPR can be problematic here at interview stage or just after the offer. We then uncover needs at point of fitness to teach (i.e. a more serious stage) and through other pre- or mid-course checks. • Examples of videos from PGCE students who have been successful and who come with needs • Affinity systems or peer networks (e.g. neurodivergent students, career changers, mature students), run on university contact days and supported by tutors and trainees with similar experiences.	
• How can needs be best taken into placement allocation decisions? In course tutor knowledge levels? How do we decide what to share/not share with stakeholders?	How is disability information considered when allocating placements? Do trainees/students make recommendations/selections of placements to support their needs? How do course teams use occupational health reports?	• Close relationship between academic tutors and school placements team to ensure student needs are met but allocations are optimal. Knowing students and knowing your schools. • Agreement at induction to share information via any VLE's. • Students being aware of where their placement is as early as possible so plans can be put in place.	

	Whose responsibility is it to share disability information with placement? If trainees/students share their own disability information with placements, how much support is given to them? At what point in the placement arrangements should information be shared? Is there any information that providers should not share? Are there any examples of disabilities where reasonable adjustment could not be made? How would we manage discussions with a placement partner who had concerns about accommodating a trainee's/student's needs? Are there any examples of lessons learnt?	• Where possible have one point of contact for students at their provider (who is aware of academic adaptive needs but also what is realistically possible to be adapted for school). This is advised to be a senior member of the team. • Aberhart ruling has improved the decision making and ethical dilemma for providers about what can and should be disclosed to schools. • Students can have university support plans + placement action plans – in one example, both of these go to course leaders to look at/vet and have conversation with the student about, but all within managing expectations around what is an RA within teaching as a profession. Talk about making adjustments to support to do the job and not change the job through 1:1 conversation. • Make sure that students understand what it is and is not reasonable to expect (e.g. not being able to leave when pupils do or not being faced with noisy children). • Identify which schools can meet the needs of students with different particular needs. • Make it a professional expectation on students that they be open about their needs. • Consideration of long-term or chronic health conditions which students may feel are well managed but could present differently in placement contexts. • Supporting students to understand why disclosure matters, including professional responsibility and potential insurance	

		implications for medical disclosures. Meeting with Mentor in school, personal tutor and student before placement • Anticipatory absence – a phenomenon where students with severe mental health challenges anticipate absence ahead of time ("I'll be planning time off next Mon/Tues due to my mental health state"). This is not manageable and possibly could be alleviated if addressed in marketing and in pre course expectation events. • Some providers are focusing on students 'leading' the conversation and gaining independence in managing their needs in a professional context. • Find schools who model adaptive practice for their staff and ask those HTs to come and speak to students about what 'reasonable adjustments'	
• Once on placement/in programme, how does the level of support change over the training year/s? When should HEIs/ITE units remove the stabilisers to enable a successful transition into employment (whether teaching or not)?	How are roles and responsibilities for providing support clearly identified and communicated between the HEI, Lead Mentor, and placement setting or the facilitator of the CPD programme? How are the level and types of support adapted over time to reflect individual trainee progress, and to what extent are Lead Mentors empowered to use professional judgement to vary support?	**Tension** Can we **over** support students? Tension between providing reasonable adjustments (can only go so far in context of teaching) and attitude of the beginning teacher. • ITaP is a good mechanism for keeping in touch and identifying or heading off emerging issues. Alternatively, have recall days to support development and integration. • Need to distinguish between issues associated with work in school (e.g. expected levels of stress) and issues (e.g. depression) that do need attention. • Identify times at which issues can emerge (e.g. when assignments are due) and mitigate for these.	

	What indicators are used to evidence that a trainee/employee is becoming increasingly self-directed or developing self-advocacy? How is risk managed during this process to ensure trainee and pupil safety while maintaining developmental challenge? How does the final phase of placement support successful transition into employment and or professional development for ECTs?	• Monitor progress with a clear set of parameters to support gradual development. • In progress documentation use language that is explicit about the amount of scaffolding being provided and the level of independence being increased in order for the student to demonstrate they are meeting the TS. • Some providers have a separate member of school staff who is an overall ITT lead (in addition to LM and academic team). They liaise with class teachers and school-based mentors to support adaptive needs • Share anonymised case studies with students to demonstrate where reasonable adjustments have been possible and successful but also where students have not progressed successfully due to non-disclosure or s failure to recongise that minimum expectations have to be set and met. • Relationships between university and schools really crucial – need right people around a beginning teacher who understand the journey, want can flex and what can't, what are the non-negotiables, etc. • Overt signposting where to go when the wheels come off is helpful. • Inclusive mentoring programme idea (LTU), pairing outside the subject or age phase including school mentors (e.g. of global majority) to act as role models and supporters – building the relationships with teachers who can and are willing to do this. Onus on supportive conversations. Support mechanisms of Link tutors PLUS personal tutor PLUS subject/age phase tutor. • Rainbow Club – drop ins with a Diversity/Inclusion lead. Calendared in meetings which students' book into.	

		• Change the 80% to be part of P1 and part of P2. Avoid the DfE bootcamp. Using the time at the end of the course differently to become curriculum designers, being ready to be ECTs in a different way i.e. setting them up to become a reflective practitioner doesn't mean teaching 24-7. Lifts the cloud from their head to see education careers more widely. • Training with trainees about what their role is in this relationship. • Support stepping off the course with an outcome **Short term interventions** • reduced teaching hours • time off timetable • one-to-one time management support with a course tutor • signposting to wider support services • support from colleagues within the placement to reduce pressure on mentors. **However, the challenge remains between balancing the reduced time and also the ability to meet the needs and expectations.**	
• What are the integrations needed between academic adjustments and practice adjustments for ITE students/practising	In what ways does the central system of Student Support in your institution differentiate in Student Support Plan details between practice-based	**Tension –** Balancing preparedness for practice and academic study at level 7. • Timings of assignments – spot the patterns with other patterns e.g. do deadlines clash with times when lots of students tend to withdraw/take a leave of absence/suspend study?	

teacher students studying part time?	learning/ employment and academic learning? How do we ensure that students with needs can balance the academic demands of assignments whilst undertaking placements/ employment and meeting practice/ employment requirements in schools/colleges? What factors within university systems of support would better support part time students with specific needs who simultaneously work as teachers/ educators? Do extensions for academic assignments necessarily support students with needs who are concurrently on placement? What can we do as Teacher Educators within our programme designs to ensure there is adequate space for students with needs to think, draft and write academically?	• Presentations instead of assignments - can enable students to critique others' presentations/ ask questions with the right timing e.g. across the themes of professional studies and leadership – students choose a barrier to learning in their subject but present to others across subjects/phases. • Consider formative assessments also at an earlier stage. • Some providers finding their feet with less assignments than before to enable the students with adjustments to focus on tutorials around academic work. • Watch for the pinch points in your programme, taking on more responsibility, going full time in placement. Embed the assignments into their practice fully to lessen the load. • Attach assessments with ITaPs. This provides a keeping in touch but also an authentic use of assessment and combination of professional expectation. • Many providers have similar themes of assessment across level 7 and this can be combined with ITaP (granular) study well. • Review the workload of other tasks and timings of other work when on placement • Some providers use holiday for assessment completion others emphasise holiday as need of for a break and re set. • Time assignment submission with delivering teaching in school to smaller groups.	

		Assessment approaches that allow trainees to justify their teaching decisions through engagement with literature, for example: • narrated digital presentations • face-to-face professional discussion assessments. These approaches more closely mirror professional dialogue expected in teaching.	
• What should HEIs/providers do when a need becomes emergent for a trainee/student that hadn't been declared?		• Sometimes it is necessary to give both the mentor and the student a break and get them to talk to a central service. Does the student need some time out of school? • All depends on when it happens in a year – this can affect when someone can return, so less of a strict system, but identifying more of a what's in scope situation given the stage of the course they are in. • Inclusion passport – meet the need, not the diagnosis – so no screening for things like ADHD etc at some universities. Watch the appropriateness of the mentor, are they following what's in the passport? Should there be a different form of mentoring? • Give the student options for the future sections of the course also, so "down the line if this continues, then this and this may happen, so your choices then would be…." etc. • Fitness to Practise processes, as Occupational Health rarely prevents students from continuing but may inform support planning. • Delaying or pausing the start of training may support the student more effectively, though this has implications for programme planning and partnerships • Essential for staff to be aware of alternative routes. Phrase this as 'replanning' the journey.	UCET website could house some case studies and possible approaches?

		• Work with schools and heads to ensure student feels all stakeholders are supporting decisions. • Be realistic. **General** • Referral straight to central systems of support • Navigating the relationship with mentor and student, but helping the student to self-advocate, rehearsing the conversation they will have with school staff with them. Maintaining the relationship with the school is important, but we cannot overstep so that we are doing the work for the trainee. • Important to share stories of successful teachers with diagnoses. Relationships with partnership schools are crucial.	

Overarching principles:

1. Creating an early culture of openness and education

HEIs should actively educate prospective and new trainees about the realities of teaching and the importance of early disclosure of needs. Clear communication helps trainees understand what support is available, why disclosure matters for professional practice, and encourages honest reflection about whether teaching is the right career path for them.

2. Coordinated communication between HEIs, placement providers and support services

Supporting trainees effectively requires strong communication across partners. This may include designated roles (e.g. a single point of contact or SENCo-type role for trainees) and clear processes for sharing appropriate information with placement settings.

3. Structured support that gradually develops independence
Support systems such as inclusion plans, intervention plans and reasonable adjustments should help trainees succeed while also preparing them for professional autonomy. Support may be adjusted over time so that trainees can transition confidently into employment.

The needs and challenges are complex; the following came up in most as a pattern:

- Early and full knowledge helps both students and staff
- Ongoing conversation to ensure what is in place is working and that there are no changes needed
- Review of support with a realistic lens of what they are getting ready for is important

Open lines of communication between school, university and student is key with management of the reasonableness of the adjustments.