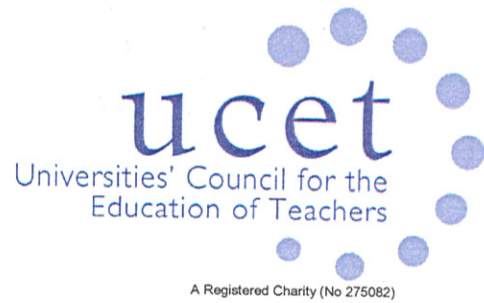


*Promoting Quality in Teacher
Education*



9 February 2018

Derek Baker
Permanent Secretary
Department of Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Rathgill
Belfast
BT19 7PR

Dear Mr Baker,

ITE allocations and budgetary outlook statement

I am writing on behalf of UCET NI to express concern about the suggestion in the budgetary outlook statement that allocations to ITE programmes be reduced by as much as 34%.

We are concerned that such an important proposal was buried amongst the detail of an extremely long document without being brought to the explicit attention of teacher education institutions and to UCET NI as their representative body. Although the issue was discussed at January's meeting of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Liaison Group, this was after the proposals had been spotted by HEI colleagues. We do not hold officials from the Department of Education to account for this – they have always been helpful, open and constructive colleagues – but a more effective communication mechanism from the Finance Department should have been in place.

As far as the suggested cuts themselves are concerned, we do not as a matter of principle believe that a decision that would have such serious consequences for the teacher supply base on which Northern Ireland schools depend should be made in the absence of ministers.

Initial teacher education and the recruitment of new teachers is one of Northern Ireland's great success stories, and stands well in comparison with other parts of the UK, particularly England where the destabilisation of the teacher supply base following actions of the kind now proposed in Northern Ireland have contributed to a teacher supply crisis.

UCET 9-11 Endsleigh Gardens London WC1H 0EH

T: 020 7388 2388

F: 020 7388 6988

E: info@ucet.ac.uk

W: www.ucet.ac.uk

The achievement of broader government objectives, notably those relating to the professional learning strategy for teachers, the development of a professional learning framework and the undertaking of essential research would all be threatened if the teacher education infrastructure underpinned by ITE programmes was threatened. We have worked extremely closely with colleagues from the Education Authority and the Department for Education on the Learning Leaders Framework and on a number of other areas. UCET NI has also been asked by your Department to lead on a number of research projects. We very much hope that such collaboration will continue. It would however be undermined if cuts to ITE of this magnitude were made.

We also have strong doubts about the assumptions on which the projections are made. Predicting the number of new student teachers that are needed in any particular year not an exact science. That is one of the reasons why the English government has moved away from an allocations based methodology and allowed ITE providers to, in most cases, recruit as many student teachers as they like in order to meet demand from schools. Suggestions that we are recruiting too many student teachers are not borne out by experience on the ground. ITE providers are regularly inundated with calls from school principals for new staff. These principals would find it difficult to accept cuts that would put them in an even worse position in terms of teacher recruitment than they are already.

I have written in similar terms to Hugh Widdis.

Yours sincerely



James Noble-Rogers
Executive Director