Options for the award of QTS in 2020

# Progression towards QTS

## The COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably had an impact upon the way in which students can progress with their university studies and achieve their final degree awards. We fully recognise the need to adapt programmes in light of the current national emergency and welcome the opportunity to work with DfE as we respond to the challenges this presents.

## At this stage in the academic year, the majority of trainees are on a trajectory towards meeting the standards required for QTS. Although some trainees will have evidence demonstrating they have met the required standards, at this point within the programme, it is unlikely that sufficient evidence will exist, or be consistent across their practice.

## We therefore welcome recent guidance from DfE that has confirmed that QTS will be awarded to students at the end of their programmes. Critically, this provides students with the time to engage with online provision and tailored support, enabling them to further embed their knowledge, understanding and preparation for a career in teaching.

# Support for trainees not on track towards QTS

## At this point in the programme, there are a small minority of trainees who are not judged by their provider to be on a trajectory towards achieving QTS. In accordance with our usual monitoring practices, these trainees have already been identified through processes which are both rigorous and transparent to trainees and those working in partnership settings.

## With additional and targeted support, many of these trainees would typically meet the standards for QTS by the end of their year-long programme. It is vital that these students are not disadvantaged by the unique circumstances we are now facing, and we are committed to supporting these students in the coming months as they work towards satisfying the appropriate thresholds. However, while we recognise the need to adapt programmes in light of the current national emergency, it is important that any such changes do not compromise the academic and professional standards we require of any student, including those on PGCE programmes.

## In the interests of student welfare, a number of university-based programmes suspended their school placements earlier this month. We recognise the impact this will have on students and have worked to ensure that appropriate support and provision continues to be delivered through alternative mechanisms including through online platforms, in order to minimise the impact this has on both their progress and final outcomes.

## It is important to recognise however, that the trainees who are not on track to meet QTS are not a homogenous group and will require different forms of support depending on their needs and current progress. While some will have these needs met by the supplementary support delivered through our online materials, others will require additional experience in the classroom through an extended placement. It is vital that we accommodate these needs accordingly in order to protect the interests of students and safeguard standards.

## **Given these nuances, we propose that providers review the needs of each trainee on a case-by-case basis and develop a tailored set of support which broadly fit under two categories;**

## Access to bespoke online materials, offering trainees support in the areas that have been identified for development. If sufficient progress is made by the end of the programme, providers can then recommend these trainees for QTS.

## Opportunities to extend the programme for those requiring additional classroom experience, with placements resuming at a future point when schools reopen. In these cases, there may need to be an extension of bursary payments.

# The need for ongoing support

## We should remain mindful of the disruption that the current cohort of PGCE students will have experienced and the implications this may have had on their professional learning. It is vital that we address this by providing the entire cohort of PCGE students with an enhanced CPD programme during their Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year.

## Universities are well placed and willing to offer this support and should be encouraged and supported to design bespoke programmes to assist trainees as they enter their NQT year. However, it is important that this essential provision is underpinned by additional resources from DfE, particularly as these providers will face ongoing challenges with their incoming cohort in the next academic year and schools are likely to need to focus their resources on pupils.

## One approach could be to pause the ITT Core Content Framework (ITT CCF) and the Early Career Framework (ECF) and divert funds allocated to these initiatives, which we do not consider are well equipped to respond to the extraordinary challenges faced by the current cohort of trainee teachers. We also recommend that the consultation and roll out of the new Ofsted framework for ITT is paused.

## We would encourage DfE to alert schools to the fact that newly qualified teachers may need substantial support, particularly during their first term in schools. They will have substantially less classroom experience than previous cohorts and it is vital that they are provided with the necessary support in future to ensure that these extraordinary circumstances do not have a long-term detrimental impact on these individuals.

## In the coming months, we will also need well-organised regional planning so that where students take up teaching posts at a distance from their provider, they are able to access the high-quality support they will need. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department to consider how these challenges can be accounted for and responded to. The Department might also consider extending the NQT period to ensure that this cohort can meet the demands of ‘sign off’ from the NQT assessment processes securely.

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