

## Requirements for the provision of initial teacher training courses in Wales – literacy and numeracy issues

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Responses should be returned by **03 August 2012** to:

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**Question 1** – Do you agree with the proposal to change the minimum entry standard for initial teacher training (ITT) courses for all trainees from a GCSE grade C equivalent to one equivalent to a GCSE grade B in both English and mathematics (and additionally in a science subject for all primary or Key Stage 2/3 entrants)?

<b>Agree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Not sure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Comments:**

What makes an effective teacher? Barber and Mourshed<sup>1</sup> looked at the characteristics of the world's best performing education systems and outlined some definable characteristics that can help identify effective teachers:

“(The best systems) acknowledge that for a person to become an effective teacher they need to possess a certain set of characteristics that can be identified before they enter teaching: a high overall level of literacy and numeracy, strong interpersonal and communications skills, a willingness to learn, and the motivation to teach”.

We agree with the recommendation to raise the standard required in mathematics for entry to ITT courses. This would both increase the numbers of mathematically able students going into teaching (both primary and secondary) and likely act as a driver to raise mathematical standards.

Requiring a GCSE grade B in English and Mathematics is a step in the right direction towards higher levels of literacy and numeracy within the teaching profession. As Science is also a core subject at primary school, we agree that all trainees should be required to have a GCSE grade B or higher in a science subject.

However, due to the grade inflation which has occurred over a number of years it is important not to penalise candidates who may have sat their GCSEs or other qualifications years ago; therefore we strongly favour an independent assessment of literacy and numeracy.

**Question 2** – Do you agree with the inclusion of the proposed additional requirements in respect of the initial assessment of individual trainees' personal literacy and numeracy skills, the ongoing assessment throughout their training programme, and the requirement for ITT providers to satisfy themselves that the required standards are still met at the point trainees are assessed against the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) Standards?

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Not sure</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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<sup>1</sup> [How the World's Best Performing Schools Come Out on Top, 2007](#)

**Comments:**

We support the proposal to test the literacy and numeracy skills of trainees. However, if someone enters a course with standards comfortably above the required standards for literacy and numeracy, they are unlikely to lose them during teacher training. Therefore it would only waste students' time to be subject to constant reassessment. Where there is a question mark, there is clearly a need for further training and final assessment. However, when would the extra training and assessment occur? The PGCE course is already crowded and therefore there needs to be consideration of when to undertake this extra training. A possibility would be to provide training and assessment online prior to undertaking an ITT course, but this would need to be robust. We also suggest that the number of retakes that a candidate may sit is restricted.

We would also welcome an assessment of subject knowledge and subject pedagogical knowledge in the specialism, not as a tool to use for accepting or rejecting candidates, but for identifying the need for remedial work. Good subject knowledge is essential and graduates need to brush up basic ideas that they met at school but have not revisited during their degrees. The gaps in knowledge are not formally addressed on ITT courses; it is often incumbent upon the mentors in schools or ITT trainers to rectify misconceptions and fill the gaps. This process needs to be monitored and we would like to see some assessment of subject knowledge at the end of the training period. We have online assessment tools which we could share with the Welsh Government.

**Question 3** – With regard to the proposed additional requirements in respect of the assessment of individual trainees' personal literacy and numeracy skills, we have indicated that these would need to be at an academic standard equivalent to the minimum entry qualification requirement referred to in question 1; and that they would additionally need to be functional skills which would be applicable in a professional teaching context. Do you agree with this approach?

We would also welcome views on how the reference to functional skills could be practically described and applied in these requirements.

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Comments:**

We agree in the raising of the literacy and numeracy skills of the teaching workforce. We also agree that anyone teaching literacy and numeracy should have those as functional skills which would be applicable in a professional teaching context.

The relevant functional skills should be assessed within the subject context. For example, someone training to teach physics will need better maths than someone teaching history. Therefore the functional level of numeracy skills would be better assessed in the physics context than in some artificial construct.

**Question 4** – Do you agree with the inclusion of the proposed additional requirement in respect of the mandatory training of ITT students in the teaching of literacy and numeracy, appropriate to the phase and subject being studied and forming an integral part of training courses?

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Not sure</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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**Comments:**

We agree that any additional requirement should be appropriate to the phase and subject being studied. The teaching of numeracy and literacy is highly specialised and expertise cannot be achieved in a brief section of the course. Therefore it is important that teachers who will be teaching literacy and numeracy have enough time on the PGCE course to develop these skills. It is also important that all teachers have good literacy and numeracy skills so that these are demonstrated through their normal teaching.

However, not all teachers should be required to be trained in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Firstly, as mentioned above, the teaching of literacy and numeracy is highly specialised and therefore to train every ITT student to teach literacy and numeracy effectively would take an unjustifiably large proportion of the PGCE courses. All teachers should be trained to be able to recognise students who have problems in these areas and then obtain the correct support for them. Secondly, one should not take the time of teachers in shortage subjects in training them to teach something outside their specialism, however important.

The PGCE courses are already too short therefore there needs to be consideration before adding another requirement to training courses.

**Question 5** – Do you agree with the introduction of a requirement for all ITT providers to design training programmes so that they provide all trainees with at least 60 days of university-led and school-based dedicated training activity, separate from the teaching timetable per academic year (pro rata for part-time or modular courses)?

<b>Agree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Not sure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Comments:**

We welcome the stipulation for trainee teachers to have at least 60 days of training activities which are separate from the teaching timetable. It is important that the trainees have enough time to allow proper development of subject knowledge and pedagogy.

**Question 6** – Do you agree with the minimum time that trainee teachers on all primary postgraduate programmes spend being trained in schools being amended from at least 18 weeks to at least 24 weeks?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Comments:**

The SCORE<sup>2</sup> response to the Education Select Committee inquire on *Attracting, training and retaining the best teachers*<sup>3</sup> quotes Barber and Mourshed<sup>1</sup>: "... the best performing education systems use four techniques:

- a) Building practical skills during initial training (i.e. real classroom experience)
- b) Placing coaches in schools to support teachers
- c) Selecting and developing effective instructional leaders
- d) Enabling teachers to learn from each other.

The report cites England as a place where the first technique is already in play, in existing PGCE courses, where two thirds of the time is already spent in schools."

If the trainee teachers are provided "with at least 60 days of university-led and school-based dedicated training activity" and "at least 24 weeks" in school for primary postgraduate programme this will inevitably result in an increase in the length of the programme, which we would agree with.

Teachers who are asked to mentor trainees should receive formal training in how to observe and provide appropriate feedback, and how to support and mentor students generally. The skills required are quite different from those involved in teaching children and therefore teacher mentors require specific training. Although trainees are sent into schools and are given a subject mentor there is no guarantee that the mentor will be teaching the same subject as the trainee. For example a physics trainee may have a science mentor but that mentor might not be a specialist physics teacher. It is crucial that the mentors are given training and on-going support. There are cases of trainees being mentored by teachers who are teaching outside their specialism and/or the mentors not having undergone training to teach them how to mentor effectively. We need to look at ways to support fully and engage with in-school mentors and schools that, through taking trainee teachers, are helping develop the next generation of teachers.

Any changes to any of the ITT courses need to be fully thought through, in terms of content and the time spent on each aspect of the course. Also, these changes need to be fully funded. There is a cost associated with extra assessment and training and there is a significant cost to the school to release mentors so that they obtain the proper training and the time to work with trainee teachers. The latter point is especially true for employment-based teacher training schemes.

<sup>2</sup> [Science Community Representing Education](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Attracting, training and retaining the best teachers. SCORE, October 2011](#)

**Question 7** – Do you agree with the proposal to no longer include a requirement that all ITT trainees should meet requirements for health and physical capacity to teach, in the light of legislative developments, including the Equality Act 2010?

<b>Agree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Not sure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Comments:**

We agree that disability should not exclude someone from being a teacher and that any health and safety exclusions should be properly thought through and not based on arbitrary parameters. We hope that the new arrangements for literacy take suitable account of the problems faced by dyslexic students.

**Question 8** – Do you agree with similar changes to the ones covered in questions 1–3 and 6 being made to the Employment-based Teacher Training Scheme 2012?

<b>Agree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Not sure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Comments:**

For consistency and in the interests of achieving a robust common standard, the literacy and numeracy skills tests should be applicable to all those seeking entry to all teacher training programmes. Any changes to the initial teacher training courses with regard to qualifications and/or assessment of skills should also be made to all other teacher training courses, including the employment-based teacher training scheme. It is important that there is a common assessment standard across all providers and all routes into teaching.

**Question 9** – Do you agree with the proposed timetable for implementation?

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Not sure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Comment**

No Comment

**Question 10** – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

**Comments:**

Due to the crossover role of science between literacy and numeracy we would welcome a consideration given to the time that numeracy, literacy and science is taught at school. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) produces a document *Education at a Glance*<sup>4</sup> and it is worth ascertaining whether data for Wales could be collated. If this is possible it should be compared to the OECD average and high-performing countries within the OECD.

Also, because of the crossover role of science between literacy and numeracy it is a concern that there is a shortage of STEM graduates in primary school teaching. There is overwhelming research evidence showing that primary teachers lack confidence in teaching science and that this negatively affects pupils' attitude towards the subject and their attainment and progression in it during their secondary education.<sup>5,6</sup>

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is crucially important and is at its most effective when pedagogy, subject content and classroom management are considered together, and not dealt with as separate issues. To highlight the importance of CPD there needs to be a system of incentives and clear progression routes in education e.g. to become chartered teachers, expert teachers etc.

In Finland, which has consistently shown high achievement in international comparisons of numeracy, the standard teacher qualification is at Masters degree level and we would recommend that this should be introduced in Wales also. This is also likely to have a significant positive impact on the teaching of other subjects, particularly in science.

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick  here:

<sup>4</sup> [Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Royal Society 2010 Science and mathematics education, 5-14.](#)

<sup>6</sup> For a review, see: [Perspectives on education: Primary Science, Wellcome Trust](#)