IOP Scotland response to the General Teaching Council for Scotland's review of the memorandum on entry requirements to programmes of initial teacher education

November 2023

Introduction

This response was submitted using the MS Form set up by the GTCS to gather responses to this consultation which had a deadline of 17 November 2023.

Responses to consultation questions

Which aspects of the entry requirements do you wish to be kept and why?

IOP does not wish to see a diminishing of the minimum entry requirements for entry to any ITE course of SCQF level 6 in English and SCQF level 5 in mathematics. IOP also does not wish a diminishing of the requirement of a minimum of 80 SCQF credit points at level 7 including a minimum of 40 SCQF credit points at level 8 for entry into PGDE routes, although it supports greater flexibility with regard to how these could be split across qualifications, see question 5.

Which aspects of the entry requirements do you wish to be added and why?

1. IOP would like to see a change to paragraph 5 (iii) on the minimum academic entry requirements. We would like to see the words "which must be" replaced with "which will normally be". This change would be consistent with the proposed change vi regarding Masters degrees. This change also gives greater consistency with the terminology used in the first bullet point of the section of PGDE (Secondary) Programmes on p8 of the memorandum. In addition to increasing the flexibility for including credits from post-graduate degrees this could also allow greater flexibility regarding top-up courses as referred to in section 2 of the memorandum.

2. Related to 1 above, physics, together with biology and chemistry, does not have any specific requirements in section 6 of the memorandum. Potential entrants to the PGDE Physics with Science route can have a wide range of degree qualifications including engineering disciplines as well as a wide range of physical science courses. There should be some leniency in how we ascribe content of engineering (and other science) degrees to physics. Compared to applicants to ITE, it is relatively easy for practising teachers with other subject degrees to then gain the required academic credits for an additional teaching qualification in physics through top-up courses, such as those provided by the Open University. Given that physics ITE routes have consistently missed Scottish Government recruitment targets for many years, IOP considers that it would be advantageous to allow those wishing to pursue a PGDE Physics with Science but who have a related degree but do not quite have the required credits to undertake suitable top-up courses to gain the necessary credits in physics alongside a PGDE or as part of extended or two-year programmes. This might require such students to begin courses slightly earlier in the year or extend their study slightly longer. We recognise that such top-up courses would require funding for them to be viable, but currently the wording of the memorandum reduces the likelihood of such courses being developed. An advantage of developing such top-up courses would allow them to also be used for career-long professional learning purposes to allow those who already meet the ITE entrance criteria but nevertheless have gaps in their subject knowledge, such as engineers who have not studied particle physics or astrophysics, and for those wishing to gain an additional teaching qualification in physics.

3. In section 4(iii) of the memorandum there is a statement which encourages universities to expect at least one SCQF level 5 qualification in either a modern language and/or a science subject. Prior to CfE, thanks to the curriculum guidelines in place, it was likely that applicants would have SCQF level 5 qualifications in both a modern language and a science. However, due to the increased flexibility allowed within CfE and the reduced number of SCQF level 5 qualifications taken by many candidates this is no longer so likely. IOP supports the requirement rather than encouragement that applicants should have an SCQF level 5 qualification in a science subject. We recognise that such a minor change to ITE entrance qualifications for primary teaching is in itself unlikely to address the well documented and long-standing lack of knowledge and confidence many primary teachers have in respect to teaching science and technology subjects and the continuing high demand for CLPL in pedagogy, skills development and curriculum-making in the STEM subjects (Education Scotland, 2021, 2022; Holroyd & Harlen, 1996).

4. This statement is not one asking for a change to the memorandum but raises our concerns about the lack of appropriate provision to help address those issues discussed in the three points above. Few would argue that those exiting ITE are fully formed expert teachers (Berliner, 2004; Kraft & Papay, 2014). This is of course why we have continuing support through the Teacher Induction Scheme during the probationary period and a requirement for CLPL. There is a need for high-quality subject-specific career-long professional learning. IOP has commissioned and published reports on this, see https://www.iop.org/about/publications/subjects-matter and https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356459829_Subjects_Matter_for_Scotland_An_Evidence_Paper.

   Subject-specific CLPL can include aspects building subject content knowledge, the associated pedagogical content knowledge, as well as the use of more generic pedagogical knowledge set in a subject context. A coherent national provision of CLPL could also be used to provide some of the top-up support required for applicants not quite meeting the requirements for entry to ITE as well as those who meet the minimum requirements but may still have significant gaps in their subject knowledge for teaching. This situation could be viewed the other way around, the top-up courses for entrants to ITE could also be used for CLPL and allow participants to accumulate credits counting towards a Masters degree in subject-specific pedagogy for example. This applies equally as well in the primary sector as in secondary and a programme of high-quality CLPL would enhance the knowledge, skills and confidence of primary teachers in the STEM subjects regardless of ITE entrance qualifications or the content included during the limited time available in ITE courses. IOP would support and encourage the development of a range of accredited courses and programmes which could be used to widen access into teaching and enhance the teaching and learning of those already in the profession. The provision of high-quality subject-specific CLPL is likely to enhance the retention of teachers complementing any work to address recruitment in shortage subjects (Allen & Sims, 2017).

References:

Allen, R., & Sims, S. (2017). *Improving Science Teacher Retention: do National STEM Learning Network professional development courses keep science teachers in the classroom?*

Berliner, D. C. (2004). Describing the Behavior and Documenting the Accomplishments of Expert Teachers. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, *24*(3), 200–212.

Education Scotland. (2021). *Professional Learning in STEM: Findings from the Annual STEM Practitioner Survey 2018/19*.

Education Scotland. (2022). *Professional Learning in STEM: Findings from the Annual STEM Practitioner Survey 2020/21 - Early learning and childcare, primary, secondary and ASN*.

Holroyd, C., & Harlen, W. (1996). Primary teachers' confidence about teaching science and technology. *Research Papers in Education*, *11*(3), 323–335.

Kraft, M. A., & Papay, J. P. (2014). Can Professional Environments in Schools Promote Teacher Development? Explaining Heterogeneity in Returns to Teaching Experience. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *36*(4), 476–500.

Which aspects of the entry requirements do you wish to be removed and why?

None.

What are your views about the initial considerations gathered so far?

Initial Suggestions Arising from Informal Feedback	
THEME	RATIONALE
i. Rename the document "The Standard for Entry to Initial Teacher Education"	This name better describes the nature of the document and its relationship with the Standard for Provisional Registration.
ii. Give a better balance of the values, ethics and qualifications needed to be a trusted teacher.	This will underline the professionalism required of teachers and recognise the importance of values and ethics as well as qualifications.
iii. Accept ESOL as an equivalent to English for both primary and secondary ITE programmes. (Currently this is only the case for secondary).	Aligns entry requirements between primary and secondary. Increases opportunities to diversify the teaching profession.
iv. Use the terms 'SCQF Level 5, Level 6' and 'Level 7' instead of 'National 5', 'Higher' and 'Advanced Higher'. The current Memorandum uses these terms interchangeably.	This will achieve more consistency and clarity when describing qualifications, and better reflects the SCQF framework, which is inclusive of a range of qualifications. Using the SCQF Levels also ensures that future renaming of qualifications need not lead to lack of clarity.
v. Use the term 'Modern Languages' instead of 'Modern Foreign Languages'.	'Modern Languages' is the best understood and most frequently used term in the Scottish context.
vi. Change emphasis from 'credit from a Masters degree **may** be considered as meeting subject requirements' to '**can** be accepted' (where Higher Education Institutions assure themselves of the direct relevance of the credit to the teaching of the subject for which application is being made).	Use of more proactive language provides better clarity that relevant post-graduate subject credits meet entry requirements.

Theme i

IOP has no particular view on this issue but generally supports moves towards consistency and clarity.

Theme ii

IOP has no particular view on this issue but generally supports the recognition of the importance of both qualifications and professional values in becoming a teacher.

Theme iii

IOP supports moves towards consistency and clarity.

Theme iv

IOP supports moves towards consistency and clarity.

Theme v

IOP has no particular view on this issue but generally supports moves towards consistency and clarity.

Theme vi

IOP supports this change. Relevant and appropriate credits should be recognised and accepted whether they be part of an undergraduate, a post-graduate degree, or a relevant 'top-up' course. See our response to question 5 above.

Questions and comments

If you have any questions about the survey or the IOP's advice on responses, please contact:

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