National College for Teaching & Leadership

Mandatory qualifications

For specialist teachers of children and young people with vision impairment, hearing impairment and multi-sensory impairment

Government consultation response

March 2015

Contents

Introduction

In 2014 the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) undertook a light touch review of the 2009 Mandatory Qualification (MQ) specification to ensure that it took account of the SEN reforms and changes to policy since 2009. This formed phase 1 of the project. To do this we worked in partnership with the DfE SEN and Disability division and a national stakeholder group comprising the national sensory impairment partnership (NatSIP), provider representatives and experts. In addition, the current provider approval period (which ended in August 2014) was extended for a further cohort. This was to ensure on-going delivery of the qualification from September 2014 whilst activity was undertaken to develop options for identifying and approving future providers to deliver the Mandatory Qualification, the implementation of which would form phase 2 of the project.

Following feedback from stakeholders in phase 1, we identified that planning for phase 2 offered a timely opportunity to undertake a wider review of the Mandatory Qualification to ensure that it:

- reflects the changing landscape;
- is sufficiently flexible to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the profession and children and young people with sensory impairment;
- aligns with DfE priorities, to ensure that schools, Higher Education Institutions and others across the sector work collaboratively on the design and delivery of training.

The aim was to ensure that the MQ remains a high quality qualification that is sufficiently flexible in its content and its model of delivery to meet the needs of the sector within a changing landscape.

As a result, we carried out a consultation in November/December 2014.

The consultation was underpinned by the following assumptions:

- there is, and will continue to be, no central funding attached to delivery of the qualification; and
- the specification that underpins the MQ is, and will continue to be, recognised as, the minimum requirement for teachers of children and young people with vision impairment (VI), multi-sensory impairment (MSI) and hearing impairment (HI). It will continue to be an expectation that those approved to deliver the qualification will draw on their own expertise and that of partners and the wider sector to ensure that their programme is based on cutting edge research, latest scientific and technological advances and best practice. This will enable the detailed programme content to develop and maintain currency as the landscape continue s to change and knowledge/expertise within the system evolves.

The consultation focused on the:

- structure of the qualification;
- broad content of the specification in the context of it as a minimum requirement; and
- delivery approaches.

The following issues did not form part of the consultation:

- the equivalence of international qualifications; and
- continuous professional development.

It asked for views on the following two questions:

1. What is working well in the current provision of the Mandatory Qualification?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities for improvement in the Mandatory Qualification in the context of a changing educational landscape?

Summary of responses received and the Government's response

The consultation launched on GOV.UK on 10 November 2014 and closed on 10 December 2014. In addition, 4 consultation events were hosted across the country, with a fifth event cancelled due to low numbers.

147 responses were received online, and 29 delegates attended the 4 consultation events.

Online responses represented a range of stakeholders across VI, HI and MSI, with both individual and group submissions received.

A list of organisations that responded to the consultation can be found in Annex A.

A breakdown of the online responses is shown below:

Which of the following best describes your role/context? If you wish to provide more detail about your role, please do so in the text box below.		
Options	**Responses**	
Local Authority:	64	*44%
School:	26	18%
Charity/not for profit:	19	13%
Service Provider:	14	10%
Other:	14	10%
HEI/MQ training provider:	6	4%
National association/groups/partnership:	4	3%
Total:	**147**	

*Individual values are rounded and may not total 100%.

Main findings from the consultation

The two questions were intentionally broad and generated a wide range of responses. There were recurring themes across many responses, and also some conflicting and

divergent views, likely reflecting the complexity of the subject and the range of stakeholders. The following is a summary of the main themes that emerged.

There was:

- Strong endorsement of the MQ and the need for teachers with accredited specialist skills and knowledge.
- Strong support for the current provider model; with benefits seen as HEIs offering rigour, credibility, quality assurance, a strong research base, experienced practitioners, flexibility, placements and a community of practice.
- Support from some stakeholders for increasing the opportunities for schools, local authorities, HEIs and others to collaborate in the design and/or delivery of training, with opportunities suggested around specialist modules, placements and training frameworks. The cost implication of such collaboration was flagged, and a lack of funding was seen as a potential blocker to the engagement of new groups.
- There were also challenges raised in terms of:
    - accessibility of the current provision (location of the training, the small number of providers, time commitment required to undertake the training and cost)
    - small numbers of eligible teachers and the potential threat to viability for providers
    - teacher supply/succession challenges and barriers to undertaking the MQ
    - shortage of placements offering range/quality of experience
    - lack of central evaluation or quality assurance of the MQ.
- Feedback about the content of the specification included:
    - views that the specifications were embedding low aspirations for children and young people with sensory impairment
    - strong feedback (whilst recognising the challenges) of the need to maintain currency of the qualification and respond to the ongoing technical/scientific advances and policy developments in the field. A number of respondents reinforced the need for a strong research and evidence base, and the opportunity for greater internation perspective
    - a view that much of the specification outlines the generic skills of a good teacher and instead should focus on the additionality of the specialist role
    - detailed feedback relating to specific subject areas (technical knowledge/skills) considered to be lacking from the specification
    - divergent views as to preferred approaches to teaching and learning within certain specialisms.

- In terms of the challenges and opportunities presented by the changing landscape, there was:
    - a widely held view that the MQ should be mandatory for those working in an advisory/peripatetic role or that the MQ should include a greater focus on the advisory/peripatetic role
    - feedback about the increasingly broad nature of the role of teachers working in the field of sensory impairment in the context of 0 - 25 and some concern about the lack of opportunity on the MQ to focus on a specialism or specific context in greater depth. The opportunity to consider a different model for the qualification, for example core content with elective/specialist modules was suggested by a small number of stakeholders
    - concern of a lack of awareness or understanding in mainstream of the specialist skills required or offered by teachers with the MQ
    - strong feedback on the need for wider, ongoing professional development opportunities, including for teaching assistants.

Government response

On the evidence gathered from the consultation and in the context of current policy, we are not proposing to make wholesale structural or content changes to the Mandatory Qualification at this time.

We have considered whether the MQ should be mandatory for those working in an advisory/peripatetic role. Whilst this view has been expressed there is not compelling evidence for a change to regulations. It is a matter for the deploying local authority to judge the level of training required by its workforce. The financial burden of such a change could have a significant impact on already overstretched budgets and given the varied roles undertaken by advisory/peripatetic staff, deciding which staff had to be trained could be challenging. Our view is that the special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 - 25 years provides a sufficiently strong expectation that teachers working in an advisory role also hold the appropriate qualification. Paragraph 6.6.1 states that:

> '*Those teaching classes of children with sensory impairment **must** hold an appropriate qualification approved by the Secretary of State. Teachers working in an advisory role to support such pupils should also hold the appropriate qualification**.'***

We will however keep this under review as part of our ongoing Mandatory Qualification work with representative group of stakeholders. In response to the consultation, we intend to amend the current specification and will ensure that it includes a greater focus on the advisory/peripatetic role.

We will undertake the following activity to ensure that the Mandatory Qualification continues to be recognised as a high quality qualification that is available to the profession from September 2015:

- Offer an additional extension to current providers to deliver the Mandatory Qualification for one further cohort starting in September 2015. Participants accessing this provision will be assessed against the current specification.
- Amend the current specification (maintaining the principle of a minimum requirement) to respond to a number of the themes arising through the consultation. This includes (but is not limited to)
    - Raising aspirations for children and young people with VI, HI and MSI.
    - Focusing on the additional knowledge and skills required to be a specialist teacher instead of re-stating the more generic knowledge and skills of good teaching.

- Ensuring that the MQ specification includes a greater focus on the advisory/peripatetic role

The updated specification will underpin the qualification delivered from September 2016.

- Enable new provider groups to deliver the Mandatory Qualification from September 2016, by implementing a new provider approval process to deliver against the updated specification.

  Interested parties will be invited to submit an application to an assessment panel consisting of officials and sector/school representatives, against criteria which builds in (but is not limited to):

  a. An expectation of evidence of collaboration and partnership with schools and local services, for example in relation to programme design and delivery, organisation of placements and mentoring opportunities.
  b. A requirement to detail their approach to and use of national and international research and evidence to maintain currency of programme content.
  c. An approval period of 3 years initially with:
     i. A review of provision at end of the 3 year period.
     ii. An option to automatically extend approved providers for a further 3 year period subject to outcomes of the review.
     iii. The opportunity for further interested provider groups to apply for approval after each 3 year cycle.

Next steps

We will engage with a small representative group of stakeholders to complete the activity outlined above. The following are indicative timelines for activity.

Key activity	Date
Confirm extensions to current provider approval period	Spring term 2015
Update specification	Summer term 2015
Confirm process and detailed criteria for approval of new MQ providers	Summer term 2015
Implement process to approve providers to deliver from September 2016	Autumn term 2015

We will work with stakeholders to explore opportunities for further development activity to ensure that the Mandatory Qualification continues to meet the needs of the profession and children and young people with sensory impairment.

Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation

Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
Bidwell Brook School
British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)
Broomhill Bank School
Buckinghamshire County Council
Chailey Heritage Foundation
Cheshire East LA
Cheshire West and Chester LA
CSIT
Cued Speech Association UK
Dearby Deaf Church
Derby City Council
Dudley Service for Hearing Impaired
Essex County Council
Ewing Foundation
Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education
Firbeck Academy
Focus Learning Trust
Granta Special School
Hampshire County Council
Harlow Fields School and College
Hearing Impairment Unit. Borras Park Juniors, Wrexham
Independent Teacher / Wigan Council
Kirklees Specialist Provisions
Lancashire County Council
Lancashire Local Authority
Leicestershire County Council
Leicester City SEND Support Service Vision Support Team
Lincolnshire Sensory Education Team
London Borough of Newham Sensory Service
Manchester (Lancasterian) Sensory Support Service
Mary Hare Courses
Milton Keynes Council
National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS)
National Deaf Children's Society
Nether Hall School
New College Worcester
Norfolk County Council
Northumberland Sensory Support Service
Nottinghamshire County Council
Ofsted
Oxfordshire County Council (SEN Support Services)

Oxfordshire LA
Park View Infant School
QTMSI
RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)
RNIB Cymru
RNIB Three Spires Academy
Royal Cross Primary School (for deaf children)
Seashell Trust
Selwyn Primary School
Sense CSS
Sense, The National Deafblind Charity
Sensory & Physical Impairment Team (Herts)
Sensory Inclusion Service Wolverhampton
Sensory Support Service Cornwall
Sidestrand Hall Complex Needs School
South Tyneside hearing impaired service
South Tyneside Sensory Services
St Thomas' Hearing Implant Centre
St. Vincent’s. A specialist school for sensory impairment and other needs
Tameside Sensory Support Service
The Ear Foundation
The Makaton Charity
The Visual Impairment Service
Trafford Council
University of Birmingham School of Education
University of Manchester
Valence School
Victoria School and Specialist Arts College
VIEW (Professional Association for QTVIs and other education specialists)
Virtual School Sensory Support
Vision Support Team Leicester City LA
Voice
Wallisdean Junior School
Wandsworth HSS
Warwickshire IDS
Whitehall Primary School
Woodfield school
Ysgol Hendre special school

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Reference: NCTL-00121-2015

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