Summary

This paper provides an overview of the role of literacy and numeracy coordinators in Northern Ireland, and discusses the qualifications required here and for comparable roles in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

In Northern Ireland literacy and numeracy coordinators are not required to have specific qualifications beyond the required teaching qualifications. In regard to literacy and numeracy, all entrants to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) must have achieved a Grade C or higher in GCSE English and mathematics (or equivalent).

These requirements are broadly in line with those in the other jurisdictions considered in this Briefing Note. In England and Wales no specific literacy and numeracy qualifications are required for coordinators beyond those needed for entry into ITE.

The Scottish curriculum states that improving literacy and numeracy is a role for all teachers, and in Ireland, guidance places much emphasis on the role of school leaders.
in improving standards in these areas. As such, there is no clear role for literacy and numeracy coordinators in these jurisdictions, although there is evidence of coordinators working in some schools. Table 1 provides an overview of literacy and numeracy qualification requirements in each of the jurisdictions.

**Table 1: Overview of literacy and numeracy qualification requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Initial Teacher Education admission requirements</th>
<th>Literacy/ Numeracy coordinator qualifications requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>• Grade C or higher in GCSE English and maths or equivalent</td>
<td>• No further qualifications required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>• Grade C or higher in GCSE English and maths or equivalent</td>
<td>• No further qualifications required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>• Grade C or above in English at Higher Level or equivalent (primary and post-primary) and Credit, Grade 1 or 2 in maths (primary)</td>
<td>• No specific role: literacy and numeracy are deemed to be the responsibility of all teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>• Grade C or higher in GCSE English and maths or equivalent</td>
<td>• No further qualifications required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>• Minimum specified grades in English and maths</td>
<td>• No specific role: emphasis is on school leaders to lead improvement in literacy and numeracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 **Introduction**

This paper provides an overview of the role of literacy and numeracy coordinators here, and discusses the qualifications required for similar roles in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

2 **Northern Ireland context**

The Department of Education’s (the Department) *Count, Read: Succeed* strategy includes literacy and numeracy coordinators under the category of ‘school leaders’. There is no standardised job description for the role, which may vary according to the size of the school, existing job descriptions and taking into account the role of the Head of English or Maths. However, the responsibilities the role is likely to include are outlined in Table 2.
Table 2: Likely areas of responsibility for literacy and numeracy coordinators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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</table>
| Planning and supporting the effective use of data   | • Leading planning, target-setting and monitoring of pupils’ progress in literacy and numeracy  
• Embedding a culture where monitoring and analysing pupil progress data is an integral part of accountability processes  
• Having a key input to the school development planning process to include setting priorities and targets for raising standards in literacy and numeracy |
| Supporting teachers                                  | • Providing support to teachers in meeting the needs of pupils who are underachieving (with the support of the SENCO and others in the school)  
• Providing support to teachers in the development of classroom practice and decisions on pedagogy |
| Professional development                             | • Sharing approaches and solutions in relation to teaching and learning in order to improve practice  
• Identifying effective practice; monitoring, evaluating and providing feedback in a way that leads to improvement  
• Identifying the training needs of staff and ensuring these needs are met |
| Encouraging reading                                  | • Ensuring effective use is made of the school library and, where appropriate, the public library service |

Source: Adapted from information provided by the Department of Education, March 2012

Qualification requirements

In Northern Ireland, literacy or numeracy coordinators in primary or post-primary schools are not required to have specific qualifications beyond the required teaching qualifications. The Minister for Education, John O’Dowd MLA, has stated that he has no plans to change this approach.¹

The appointment of coordinators is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, who may choose to appoint a candidate with particular attributes and skills. The Minister has stated that this might include proven leadership or communication skills, effective

¹ Minister for Education response to an Assembly Question by Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA, 21st February 2012
motivational skills or a specific interest or competence in literacy and numeracy. The recent report by the Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce 2010/11 stated:

“It is essential that literacy and numeracy co-ordinators in primary schools demonstrate a strong background in maths and English respectively and ideally are specialists in the respective areas.”

Initial Teacher Education admission requirements

In regard to literacy and numeracy, all entrants to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) are required to have achieved a standard equivalent to a Grade C or higher in GCSE English and mathematics.

Training

Training is provided to newly appointed literacy and numeracy coordinators by the Education and Library Boards (ELBs). Training courses, cluster group meetings and school-based support from CASS officers are also available to coordinators, and professional development and support materials are available on ELB websites.

The remainder of this briefing note examines the qualification requirements for equivalent posts in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

3 England

ITE Admission requirements

In regard to literacy and numeracy, all entrants to ITE must have achieved a standard equivalent to a grade C in GCSE English and mathematics.

Literacy and numeracy coordinators

In England there are no specific qualifications required for literacy coordinators, although desirable attributes include a ‘love of language’, outstanding literacy skills and the ability to work with a range of colleagues. Job advertisements for literacy and numeracy coordinator posts tend not to state any specific qualification requirements

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2 As above
3 Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce (2011) Report of the Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce 2010/11
5 Correspondence from the Department of Education, 14th February 2012
other than Qualified Teaching Status, although some advertisements state that mathematics or English specialisms would be an asset.\(^8\)

A recent report by Ofsted found that many English coordinators in primary schools are not subject specialists. The report suggests that few English coordinators in primary schools have studied English at degree level and that most will not have studied the subject beyond advanced level.\(^9\)

4 Scotland

**ITE Admission requirements**

At primary level, entrants to ITE must have passes in English at Higher level (Grade C or above) and in mathematics at Standard Grade (Credit, Grade 1 or 2) or Intermediate 2, or equivalent qualifications. At post-primary, a pass in English at Scottish Qualifications Certificate Higher level (Grade C or above) or equivalent is necessary.\(^10\)

**Literacy and numeracy coordinators**

The Scottish Curriculum emphasises that literacy and numeracy are the responsibility of all teachers in schools, and does not outline a role for coordinators.\(^11\) As such, no additional qualifications are required for teachers supporting these areas.

However, there is evidence that some local authorities support the use of literacy and numeracy coordinators. For example, the Highland Council has set out a strategy to up-skill literacy coordinators by providing additional training and modelling best practice by existing coordinators.\(^12\)

A recent Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) review highlighted a need to improve many primary teachers’ basic numeracy and called for the implementation of a national numeracy action plan.\(^13\)

5 Wales

**ITE Admission requirements**

Among the minimum requirements for entry to ITE in Wales is that all entrants must have achieved a standard equivalent to a grade C in the GCSE examination in English and in mathematics.\(^14\)

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\(^8\) For example: Numeracy Coordinator Advertisement [http://www.academicsltd.co.uk/academics-JobDetails.asp?academics-job=42125](http://www.academicsltd.co.uk/academics-JobDetails.asp?academics-job=42125); and Literacy Coordinator Advertisement [http://www.academicsltd.co.uk/academics-JobDetails.asp?academics-job=41976](http://www.academicsltd.co.uk/academics-JobDetails.asp?academics-job=41976)


\(^12\) Highland Council Highland Literacy Project Literacy Strategy 2008 – 2011


**Literacy coordinators**

The Welsh Government views the role of the literacy coordinator as ‘crucially important’ in supporting all teachers in improving literacy skills. The guidance does not set out particular qualifications required by coordinators, rather, requiring that the person appointed has ‘sufficient status, experience and resources’ to discharge their duties.\(^{15}\)

In regard to professional development, the newly launched National Literacy Programme (NLP) includes support for teachers’ professional development and the sharing and consistent use of best practice. Teachers may avail of opportunities to undertake additional study in the teaching of literacy; learn from teachers demonstrating best practice and take part in Professional Learning Communities.\(^{16}\)

**6 Ireland**

**ITE Admission requirements**

Entrants to colleges for ITE must have achieved the specified minimum grades in Irish, English and Mathematics. Eurypedia reports that the academic status of candidates remains high and that there is much competition for places.\(^{17}\)

**Literacy and numeracy coordinators**

The Department of Education and Skills' literacy and numeracy strategy places an emphasis on school leaders to lead improvement in literacy and numeracy. The strategy states that government will seek to build the capacity of school leaders to lead improvement in literacy and numeracy, and also sets out plans to improve the professional skills of teachers in literacy and numeracy.\(^{18}\)

In particular, the strategy states that professional development in regard to teaching literacy and numeracy could be improved, and highlights the ‘low mathematical ability among a number of students’ in initial teacher education. There have been calls for the appointment of literacy and numeracy coordinators in schools in Ireland.\(^{19}\)

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\(^{15}\) Welsh Government (2010) Developing higher-order literacy skills across the curriculum

\(^{16}\) Welsh Government May 2012: Programme of actions to raise literacy standards launched by Minister [online] Available at http://wales.gov.uk/press/fourth/educationskills/2012/120517nlp/120517nlp/sessionid=Y6yqP1FTLazpmnVhndUnRw5vQnr2XvTfdNWx1IINvth5IOyLx6VI-856040559?lang=en

\(^{17}\) Eurypedia: Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education [online] Available at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Ireland:Initial_Education_for_Teachers_Working_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education

\(^{18}\) Department of Education and Skills (2011) Literacy and numeracy for learning and life Dublin: Department of Education and Skills

\(^{19}\) For example: Association of Teacher Centres of Ireland (2011) A response from the Association of Teacher Centres of Ireland to the Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools
Nonetheless, there is evidence that some schools do have literacy and numeracy coordinators. For example, a pilot programme has been carried out involving fortnightly teacher training from a literacy lecturer and funding for hundreds of new books.  

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