National Professional Qualification (NPQ) Quality Framework

A guide for NPQ participants

October 2017

Contents

Summary

This publication provides guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to help those applying for, or participating in, a National Professional Qualification (NPQ) to understand the standards of provision and quality of provision that the DfE requires from accredited providers of NPQs.

Expiry or review date

This guidance will be reviewed before September 2020.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- aspirant and serving school leaders applying for, or participating in, an NPQ.

Section 1: Overview

The DfE accredits a range of providers to design, deliver, and assess the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). The NPQs comprise the:

- National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML) for those that are, or are aspiring to be, a middle leader with responsibility for leading a team
- National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) for leaders that are, or are aspiring to be, a senior leader with cross-school responsibilities
- National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) for leaders that are, or are aspiring to be, a headteacher or head of school with responsibility for leading a school
- National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) for leaders that are, or are aspiring to be, an executive headteacher or MAT CEO role with responsibility for leading several schools

To ensure that a participant's NPQ is accessible, high quality, and nationally consistent, providers' provision must meet the requirements of the NPQ quality framework.

The quality framework sets out the requirements that all those accredited to deliver NPQs are required to meet and maintain. The quality framework, and quality assurance (QA) activities pursuant to it, support:

- consistently high quality leadership development for all NPQ participants
- high levels of participant satisfaction, recruitment, retention and achievement
- providers to continuously and systematically improve the quality of their delivery, with support from DfE and its QA agent where necessary
- continued confidence in the NPQ brand

The quality framework gives all providers a shared understanding of DfE quality requirements and a means of maintaining the standards of their NPQ programmes. Compliance with the quality framework means that NPQ provision and outcomes are comparable and consistent across England.

All NPQ providers are required to operate within the terms of the quality framework and co-operate with the quality assurance activities undertaken by DfE and its QA agent pursuant to the framework.

In total, there are 15 requirements and 7 accompanying metrics. Each provider must be able to demonstrate that they are delivering provision that meets all of the requirements and accompanying metrics in the framework.

Provider performance against the metrics in the framework must be made public by providers, so informed judgements can be made by the education sector and those applying for, or participating in, NPQ programmes, as to the quality of each Provider.

DfE and its QA agent will monitor performance and regularly conduct reviews of NPQ providers to ensure that they are meeting the requirements of the quality framework.

Where providers are not meeting all of the requirements and accompanying metrics in the quality framework, DfE and its QA Agent will assess the reasons for this, and, where necessary, require remedial action to be taken by the provider.

In the event of serious underperformance, providers will lose their accreditation and no longer be able to deliver provision that leads to the award of an NPQ.

This document sets out the key features of the NPQ quality framework for teachers and school leaders applying to, or participating in, an NPQ. There are four main elements to the framework, as set out in sections 2 to 5. These are:

- the quality requirements and metrics relating to providers' leadership and management
- the quality requirements and metric relating to providers' provision
- what happens when a provider fails to comply with the quality framework
- the quality assurance activities undertaken by the DfE and its QA agent within the context of the framework
- technical definition and reporting requirements for providers

Section 2: Quality requirements – providers' leadership and management

Providers' leadership and management must meet the requirements, and accompanying metrics, set out in requirements A to H below. Technical definitions of the metrics, and providers' reporting requirements against these metrics, can be found at Annex A.

Requirement A - general management

Providers operate clear governance, financial, risk management and administrative processes (including for the handling and protection of personal data), which adhere to statutory requirements, and effective mechanisms to ensure that these are understood and followed by all employees and partners.

Providers comply with any request for information made by the DfE/its QA Agent for the purposes of performing its functions under the framework. Any information provided must be accurate, complete and timely.

Requirement B - engagement strategy

Providers operate a coherent strategy to recruit additional schools (including teaching schools) and others with relevant expertise and resource, to ensure that their provision has sufficient reach and depth.

Requirement C - resourcing and contingency planning

Providers operate robust resourcing, recruitment, retention, contingency and succession planning strategies. These must ensure there are sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced personnel available to deliver provision, at least 50% of whom (except for NPQEL) must be serving school leaders.

Providers ensure that in the event of accreditation being removed, provision is made for participants on programmes to complete their study and final assessment with other providers. Where this is not possible, providers ensure participants are refunded for undelivered services.

Requirement D - Recruitment and admission of participants

Providers operate robust recruitment, selection, deferral and admission policies for participants. These must be transparent, reliable, inclusive and support social mobility and include a meaningful role for the lead school.

Providers recruit from schools throughout their specified area of operation.

Providers report recruitment data to DfE/its QA agent at least every 6 months.

Metric 1: Providers recruit at least 100% of their target number for each year and for each NPQ level offered[1].

Metric 2: Providers ensure that their allocated target of all those recruited are from schools where 30% or more pupils are known to be eligible for Free School Meals, for each NPQ level offered[2].

Metric 3: Providers ensure that their allocated target of all those recruited are from a non-white British background, for each NPQ level offered[3].

Requirement E - Transparency

Providers make publicly available a clear, up to date, description of their programmes and outcomes, including (but not limited to):

- cost of participation, including assessment
- duration of programme, including number of guided learning hours for each type of study, for example face-to-face, peer, online, individual and work-based
- performance against the metrics in the framework

Providers comply with DfE guidance regarding the use of DfE and NPQ branding.

Requirement F - Continuous improvement

Providers operate a robust strategy for continuous quality improvement, so that every participant, regardless of their individual needs, is enabled to develop to the best of their ability. This must include a meaningful role for the lead school and the regular evaluation of their provision, leadership and management, through:

- self-assessment
- seeking and acting on feedback from personnel, participants and partners
- taking account of new evidence and research

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[1] Providers were required to submit minimum recruitment targets as part of their accreditation application.

[2] The target percentage is adjusted for each accredited provider to reflect the nature of the school population in their area of operation and providers have been notified of their organisation's target by DfE.

[3] The target percentage is adjusted for each accredited provider to reflect the nature of the relevant teaching population in their specified area of operation and providers have been notified of their organisation's target by DfE.

- working with DfE/its QA agent on any additional measures to improve quality, where applicable

Requirement G - Complaints and appeals procedures

Providers operate fair, accessible and timely procedures for handling participants' complaints

Providers co-operate with DfE/its QA agent in the event of a participant launching an appeal against a complaint outcome.

Requirement H – Preventing and dealing with malpractice and maladministration

Providers operate reliable and transparent procedures for preventing, investigating and mitigating the impact of malpractice or maladministration. This must include the reporting of any investigations into, and confirmed instances of, malpractice or maladministration to DfE/its QA agent immediately.

Section 3: Quality requirements – providers' provision

Providers' leadership and management must meet the requirements, and accompanying metrics, set out in requirements I to O below. Technical definitions of the metrics, and providers' reporting requirements against these metrics, can be found at Annex A.

Requirement I - Design of content

Providers operate effective processes for the design, development, improvement and approval of NPQ provision, which must include a meaningful role for the lead school.

Providers adhere to the latest NPQ content and assessment framework set by DfE.

Requirement J - Types of study

Providers ensure that there is a range of different types of study, for example face-to-face, peer, online, individual and work-based. Providers ensure that their provision includes:

- leadership training in the workplace, on the job, doing real work
- challenge and support – through a coach and/or mentor
- access to high quality resources, drawing on up-to-date research and evidence
- professional development from and with credible peers
- opportunities for structured reflection

Providers ensure that content is designed to be delivered over a period of at least two academic terms.

Requirement K - Availability of venues

Providers have a sufficient number of appropriately-located, fit-for-purpose and value for money venues. This includes placement schools for those providers offering NPQH provision.

Requirement L - Support for participants

Providers make available to participants a strong ongoing network of support, including from coaches, peers and external experts.

Requirement M - Accurate assessment of participants

Providers operate transparent and reliable processes for participant assessment which enable every participant to demonstrate accurately the extent of their ability and

performance in achieving their NPQ. This must include a meaningful role for the lead school, the use of trained assessors and peer moderation of results (including borderline cases).

Providers comply with procedures for tracking participant attendance and progress to ensure that completion is based on secure evidence.

Providers comply with the assessment framework and accompanying guidance set by DfE.

Providers report participant assessment outcomes to DfE/its QA agent at least every 6 months.

Metric 4: Providers ensure that at least 90% of participants present for final assessment within 18 months of formally commencing the programme.

Metric 5: Providers achieve 95% accuracy level for all their final assessments[4].

Requirement N – Use of participant feedback

Providers engage with all participants throughout the course of their provision, enabling participants to comment on the quality of the provider and the provision. Equally, providers ensure that all feedback to participants is transparent, valid and fair. This includes supporting participants to complete a DfE feedback questionnaire.

Metric 6: Providers ensure that the aggregated mean rating across all participant feedback received is at least 6 out of 10[5].

Requirement O - Participant retention and achievement

Providers ensure that all participants, in accordance with their level of performance and ability, show similar patterns of retention and achievement.

Metric 7: Providers ensure that there is no significant difference in retention and achievement rates between different groups, for example groups with protected characteristics or leaders from schools with different levels of performance.

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[4] A sample of participants' assessment scripts will be subject to national moderation by DfE/its QA agent.
[5] Feedback will be collected using a standardised feedback form issued by DfE.

Section 4: When a provider fails to comply with the quality framework

Where a provider fails to comply with the requirements and accompanying metrics within the framework DfE reserves its right to terminate the providers' accreditation agreement and revoke a provider's accreditation. However, where DfE/its QA agent considers that remedial action is possible it will instead give notice to the provider of all required remedial action that the provider must take in order to improve their performance and retain their accreditation.

The DfE/its QA agent will treat providers fairly and consider any extenuating circumstances when establishing the reasons for underperformance, and the need for, or nature of, remedial action. It will take into account a provider's:

- self-assessments against the framework
- metrics (including the outcome of the national moderation of final assessments)
- participant feedback
- previous performance reviews, where applicable

In addition, providers will have an opportunity to supply additional evidence or information to inform the DfE/QA agent's assessment of the reasons for underperformance, and the need for, or nature of, remedial action.

In the event of serious underperformance, DfE/its QA agent will terminate the Accreditation Agreement and revoke the provider's accreditation. Seriously underperforming providers are those who:

- without compelling evidence, fail to take the remedial action identified by DfE/its QA agent as necessary to meet and maintain the quality required by the framework; **OR**
- fail to take reasonable steps to prevent malpractice or maladministration that leads to the incorrect award of an NPQ; **OR**
- fail to report any investigations into, or confirmed instances of, malpractice or maladministration to DfE/its QA agent immediately.

Where accreditation is revoked, the provider will no longer be able to deliver provision that leads to the award of an NPQ.

Providers will have the right to appeal the removal of their accreditation. The appeal will be heard by an independent panel convened by DfE. The panel will examine evidence from both the provider and the QA agent on the provider's quality and reasons for removal of their accreditation. The independent panel will make the final decision regarding removal of accreditation and no further right of appeal exists.

Section 5: The quality assurance activities undertaken by the DfE and its QA agent

Providers and DfE and its QA agent will undertake the following activity within the context of the QA framework:

Stage	Provider activities	DfE/QA agent activities
Application for accreditation	• Aspirant provider submits accreditation application	• Assesses capacity, capability and commitment of aspirant providers; awards accreditation to successful applicants
Years 1 and 2	• Submits six-monthly (mid-year and end-year) self-assessment against the requirements in sections 2 and 3. • Returns six-monthly (mid-year and end-year) data on achievement of metrics and supporting evidence to substantiate the achievement of metrics • Publishes performance against the metrics in this framework • Where necessary, implements remedial action identified by DfE/its QA agent to mitigate underperformance	• Reviews the self-assessment against sections 2 and 3. • Monitors metric returns and reviews supporting evidence to substantiate the achievement of the metrics • Assesses six-monthly participant feedback (mid-year and end-year) • National moderation of final assessments, against DfE standards • Provides feedback and support (including outcome of moderation of final assessments) • Where necessary, identifies remedial action that providers who are underperforming must take
Year 3 onwards	• Returns annual data on achievement of metrics and supporting data to substantiate the achievement of metrics • Publishes performance against the metrics in the framework • Where necessary, implements remedial action identified by DfE/its QA agent to mitigate underperformance	• Monitors metrics returns and reviews supporting evidence to substantiate the achievement of the metrics • Assesses annual participant feedback • National moderation of final assessments, against DfE standards • Undertakes periodic performance reviews of all providers • Undertakes immediate performance reviews of any providers that are underperforming • Provides feedback and support (including outcome of moderation of final assessments) and • Where necessary, identifies remedial action that providers who are underperforming must take

Table 1: DfE/QA agent and provider QA activities

Annex A: Metrics - technical definitions and reporting requirements

Providers must report the data below to DfE/its QA agent to assess the provider's performance against the metric. This must be submitted in the format specified by DfE/its QA agent. Only the data in **bold italics** must be published by the provider as part of 'Requirement E – Transparency'.

Metric 1: Providers recruit at least 100% of their target number of participants for each year and for each NPQ offered

Technical definition	Reporting requirements
Definition of 'recruited': To be deemed recruited, participants must: - have been enrolled by their provider to undertake the required provision - not be facilitators, administrators or provider team members involved in delivery of the programme - be counted only once if they have previously been withdrawn from, deferred, or failed the same qualification **Setting the target number:** - providers will be required to submit annual recruitment targets for each NPQ level	For each participant: - name - NPQ level recruited to - Teacher Reference Number (where applicable) - current job role/post - name of participant's school - Unique Reference Number of participant's school - the Local Authority Area of the participant's school and, where different, the Local Authority District - government region in which participant's school is located - phase and type of participant's school - latest OFSTED inspection rating of participant's school Accompanying analysis: - ***Total number of participants recruited, for each NPQ level offered*** - ***Total number of participants recruited, expressed as a percentage of target number***

Table 2: Technical definition and reporting requirements for metric 1

Metric 2: Providers ensure that their allocated target of all those recruited are from schools where 30% or more pupils are known to be eligible for Free School Meals, for each NPQ level offered

Technical definition	Reporting requirements
Setting the target number: • the target percentage will be adjusted for each accredited provider to take account of the nature of schools in their area of operation, based on the data collected in the 2016 School Census. • the target will be introduced from year 2 onwards and increase incrementally from year 2 to year 3. **Definition of '30% or more pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals':** • this will be based on the data collected in the **2016 School Census: Underlying Data (Spreadsheet 'SFR20_2016-Schools-Pupils_UD', column EE)**, which lists individual schools and the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals within them	For each participant: • whether 30% or more of the pupils in the participant's school are known to be eligible for Free School Meals, based on the **2016 School Census: Underlying Data (Spreadsheet 'SFR20_2016-Schools-Pupils_UD', column EE)** Accompanying analysis: • total number of participants recruited from schools where 30% or more of the pupils are known to be eligible for Free School Meals, for each NPQ level offered • *the total number of participants recruited from school where 30% or more of the pupils are known to be eligible for Free school Meals, for each NPQ level offered, expressed as a percentage of the total number of participants recruited*

Table 3: Technical definition and reporting requirements for metric 2

Metric 3: Providers ensure that their allocated target of all those recruited are from non-white British groups, for each NPQ level offered

Technical definition	Reporting requirements
Setting the target number: • the target percentage will be adjusted for each accredited provider to take account of the nature of the relevant teaching population in their area of operation, based on the data collected in the 2015 School Workforce Census. • the target will increase incrementally between years 1 and 3.	For each participant: • participant's ethnicity, including whether they identify as white-British Accompanying analysis: • total number of participants recruited that do not identify as white-British, for each qualification offered • *total number of participants recruited that do not identify as white-British, for each NPQ level offered*

Table 4: Technical definition and reporting requirements for metric 3

Metric 4: Providers ensure that at least 90% of participants present for final assessment within 18 months of formally commencing the programme

Technical definition	Reporting requirements
Definition of 'present for final assessment': • participants are deemed as having presented for final assessment when they have formally submitted their written assessment task(s) to their provider for assessment. **Definition of 'formally commencing':** • participants are deemed to have formally commenced the programme when they have both enrolled and started actively participating in the provider's professional development activities.	For each participant: • participant's formal commencement date and date presented for final assessment Accompanying analysis: • *proportion of participants that present for final assessment within 18 months of formally commencing their programme, expressed as a percentage, for each NPQ level offered*

Table 5: Technical definition and reporting requirements for metric 4

Metric 5: Providers ensure a 95% accuracy level for all their final assessments

Technical definition	Reporting requirements
Verification of final assessment accuracy: • a random 10% sample of a provider's assessment scripts will be subject to national moderation. • to achieve this metric, no more than 5% of overturns must occur.	For each participant: • participant's final assessment script (a sample will be requested) • the final mark awarded to the participant and whether this constitutes a pass or fail • whether the participant's final mark was a) subject to peer moderation b) changed as a result of peer moderation Accompanying analysis: • *this information will be supplied by DfE/its QA agent and must be published*

Table 6: Technical definition and reporting requirements for metric 5

Metric 6: Providers ensure that the aggregated mean rating across all participant feedback received is at least 6 out of 10

Technical definition	Reporting requirements
Definition of rating: • participants are required to provide feedback on to what extent their provider has met requirements in this framework. • the feedback form will be standardised and issued centrally by DfE or its QA agent. • successful participants will only receive their qualification once they have completed the feedback form. • providers are expected to give participants time and access to complete these.	For each participant: • N/A – this information will be gathered by DfE/its QA agent Accompanying analysis: • ***the aggregated mean rating will be supplied by DfE/its QA agent and then must be published***

Table 7: Technical definition and reporting requirements for metric 6

Metric 7: Providers ensure that there is no significant difference in retention and achievement rates between different groups, for example, groups with protected characteristics or leaders from schools with different levels of performance

Technical definition	Reporting requirements
Definition of 'no significant difference': • whether the retention or achievement rate of a particular group varies more than 10% from the provider's overall mean retention or achievement rate for the NPQ level offered. **Definition of 'retention rate':** • the percentage of participants who present for final assessment, as a proportion of those who formally commence the programme **Definition of 'achievement rate':** • the percentage of participants who achieve a pass, as a proportion of those who present for final assessment **Definition of 'different groups':** • particular groups of participants, include (but are not limited to), the following definitions: • sex, ethnicity, disability, phase and type of school, OFSTED rating of school, Whether the participant's school has 30% or more of its pupil eligible for Free School Meals • Providers should also consider other protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.	For each participant: • participant's sex • whether the participant has a disability • whether the participant has withdrawn or deferred from the qualification, and where applicable, the reasons for this Accompanying analysis: • *the overall retention rate for each NPQ level offered* • *the retention rate for different groups* • *the overall achievement rate, for each NPQ level offered* • *the achievement rate for different groups*

Table 8: Technical definition and reporting requirements for metric 7

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