Part of
Education, universities and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19): initial teacher training (ITT)

Updated 23 April 2021

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The guidance is for initial teacher training (ITT) providers. It includes actions you may wish to consider for ITT courses disrupted by coronavirus (COVID-19). It is based on current public health advice.

These actions will help:

- reduce the impact on COVID-19 on your ITT provision
- give trainees a fair opportunity to qualify
- support their health and safety
- ensure those awarded qualified teacher status (QTS) are of the highest possible quality

We may amend or update this guidance as necessary.

April 2021 updates

We have:

- removed content relating to ITT 2020 recruitment
- removed the section on Qualified Teacher Status for 2019/20 trainees
- added a section on funded course extensions for 2020/21 trainees
- updated the exit book assessment section
- updated information on the immigration permission for trainees from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland
- added information on how trainees should be recommended for early years teacher status to the early years ITT section

Recommendation for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) – progress assessments for 2020/21 trainees

We recognise there has been disruption to initial teacher training throughout the academic year 2020 to 2021 for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are aware that due to the varying restrictions imposed regionally, and the national lockdown from January, some trainees will have had very limited or no access to experiences in ITT schools during the academic year 2020/21.

Therefore, subject to approval by Parliament, ITT providers will be able to recommend trainees for QTS if they are satisfied that the trainee:

- has demonstrated adequate progress towards meeting the Teachers' Standards during their course
- would have met the Teachers' Standards, were it not for disruption relating to COVID-19

ITT providers must continue to ensure ITT courses are as comprehensive as possible. Providers should only recommend trainees for QTS in this way when appropriate and necessary.

While we recognise that delivering remote education is a valuable and valid form of practical teaching experience, to be recommended for QTS, including on the basis of disruption to ITT because of COVID-19, trainees must have met the standards (or would need to have) had some in-person practical teaching experience in a classroom.

ITT providers should not recommend for QTS those trainees that they deem have not yet been able to demonstrate adequate progress towards meeting the Teachers' Standards. This may include trainees who will have had their time available to undertake practical teaching experience in schools significantly curtailed.

We will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on initial teacher training courses throughout the academic year 2021 to 2022 and beyond, including for those trainees who have had to make adequate progress towards meeting the Teachers' Standards by the end of their course, will be provided in due course.

Course extensions for 2020/21 trainees

Some trainees may not have had sufficient opportunity to evidence adequate progress due to the level of disruption they experienced during their course. Schools and ITT providers have worked hard to enable trainees to continue their training for up to and including the autumn 2020.

It is for the ITT provider to determine the duration and content of training that takes place in this period that will enable the trainee to meet the Teachers' Standards in full.

Course extension funding will be available to support these trainees and their ITT providers to cover costs for employment based trainees.

Trainee funding of £1,300 per trainee will be available to support such trainees during the extension period of their courses, up to a maximum of 9 months and £6,500.

Provider funding of £500 per trainee per month will also be available to support the delivery of course extensions up to a maximum of 4 months and £2,000.

Guidance on course extension funding is available for:

- 2020/21 courses
- 2019/20 courses

Changes to the ITT criteria for 2020/21

For ITT courses starting from September 2020, we have suspended the:

- expectation that trainees train for teach in at least 2 schools
- requirement for a trainee to have met the standards across the full age and ability range of training
- expectation that training programmes cover no fewer than 4 school years

Trainees should receive training that is as complete as possible. You should only use these flexibilities when necessary. We expect you to assess trainees as fully meeting the Teachers' Standards.

Sufficient time in school to demonstrate the Teachers' Standards

C2.3 of the ITT criteria requires programmes to be designed to provide trainees with enough time in school to demonstrate that they have achieved all the Teachers' Standards. It outlines the typical periods of time for training in schools, early years, or a combination of both. We have suspended the requirement for these typical periods, and set out in the ITT criteria and supporting notes:

You should consider the impact any further disruption would have on placements, such as the introduction of your area of the national COVID-19 restrictions or local restrictions on education settings. You should have plans in place to introduce or reintroduce remote learning, including for those trainees who are self-isolating or shielding, and be able to provide support to support remote education, through the use of video conferencing software, should pupils need to remain at home. You should facilitate and support trainees to undertake remote school-based training as you would in-school training.

We recognise that disruption due to COVID-19 may lead to discrepancies in the length and consistency of trainees' school placement experience this year. Providers should make sure that trainees have had a fair opportunity to demonstrate the standards in individual trainees, through their school-based training, leading to evidence the Teachers' Standards.

As ITT setting and school placements booked, developed by sector experts with input from UCET, NASBTT and WorldReach, are published in December 2020. The aim of the guidance is to support providers, schools and trainees, to ensure school placements booked are approaching and delivering placements in the current COVID-19 context. The toolkit can be found on the UCET, NASBTT and WorldReach websites.

Remote observations, moderation and assessment

It is for ITT providers to agree with schools in their partnership if it is appropriate to remotely observe, assess and moderate trainees' teaching in school.

They will need to come to an agreement that:

- respects the school's policies
- is consistent with the partnership agreement
- meets safeguarding and data protection requirements

It is also acceptable for ITT tutors to observe trainees in person, subject to agreement by their host school, and provided all relevant safety measures are observed.

It is acceptable for candidates on the assessment only route to be assessed remotely, provided that the assessment is rigorous and robust, supporting consistent and accurate judgements.

The Department for Education (DfE) resources that may be helpful to providers in their discussions with schools, include:

- keeping children safe in education guidance which is statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children (annex C of the document has information related to online safety)
- safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19) which explains how schools and other providers should safeguard children and maintain effective pastoral and teaching relationships, including advice on use of live lessons and live streaming and the data protection toolkit for schools
- exit book with remote education guidance which provides information and support for teachers and leaders on educating children during the COVID-19 pandemic

The following resources may also be useful:

- National Cyber Security Centre guidance on choosing video conferencing services and using video conferencing securely
- guidance on safe remote learning published by the UK Safer Internet Centre (a not-for-profit charitable body)

Practical teaching experience wholly or mainly in England

Subject to approving Parliament, ITT providers are permitted to allow trainees to undertake their practical teaching experience wholly or mainly outside England in the 2020/21 academic year, if, for a reason related to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are unable to do so wholly or mainly in England. Advice accompanying ITT criterion C2.3 will be amended once the amendment comes into force.

ITT funding and bursaries

Bursary, scholarship, School Direct salaried and postgraduate teaching apprenticeship grant payments will continue as normal.

You should continue to follow the relevant funding guidance. This includes making payments to trainees where applicable.

ITT trainee consumer protection advice

ITT courses may include a blend of online teaching and in-person tuition as appropriate to minimise risk.

To help you make informed decisions about your provision, read:

- Office for Students' guidance for providers on student consumer rights during the pandemic
- guidance for providers on postponing campuses and university buildings

Universities should make sure continuing and prospective students receive clear, accurate and timely information needed to make informed decisions. This includes making them aware of any potential for changes at the earliest opportunity.

You will need to seek your own legal advice on whether the information you are providing is sufficient for them to do that.

Support for ITT in 2020/21

We are offering support ITT providers support for the 2020/21 training year. This is to help you develop and deliver your courses considering partner school placement pressures and ITT criteria relaxations.

You can get support in areas such as:

- implementing the core content framework from September 2020
- using the ITT curriculum framework
- security assessments
- mentoring
- recruitment for 2021

Accredited ITT providers wishing to access this support should email ITT.enrichment@education.gov.uk.

While associate capacity is limited, we will try to provide support for as many accredited ITT providers as possible.

Recruitment and selection 2021/22

Recruitment to the 2021/22 cohort will continue. You should consider how you can adapt your recruitment and selection process to minimise disruption.

Consider which parts of the process candidates can complete:

- online
- over the phone
- using written tasks
- via video calling (for example, for individual interviews or group sessions)

Observing a candidate interacting with children is not an entry requirement. Instead, consider getting additional evidence of suitability, such as references.

Advise partner schools to:

- exercise greater vigilance during the early stages of school-based training
- act immediately on any safeguarding concerns that might arise by following the process set out in their partnership agreement

Ratifying ITT providers already have scope to intervene on behalf of School Direct partnerships, subject to this being agreed across the wider partnership.

Supporting documentation (for example, examination certification) can be submitted in conditional format pending the opportunity for originals to be supplied. You must undertake to comply with statutory guidance set out in Keeping children safe in education.

Continue using the apply for postgraduate teacher training service and UCAS to manage applications.

UCAS has extended all UCAS teacher training decision-making deadlines, decline by default and offers by default (PBDs). See the UCAS guidance for the latest information.

All upcoming Train To Teach events have been set up as online question and answer sessions. For more information and to register for these events visit Get into Teaching.

School experience

School experience is not an entry requirement for ITT. Lack of school experience should not be a reason for the rejection of an otherwise suitable applicant. However, school experience may be helpful for those considering training to teach.

Using the get school experience service

The get school experience service is live and you can highlight whether you offer an in-school or virtual experience. A virtual offer could include:

- videos of lessons
- digital conferences
- online training materials for candidates to use

Email enquiries.schoolexperience@education.gov.uk if you would like your organisation to be added to the get school experience service.

ITT trainees from overseas

International travel

Although global travel may be affected by COVID-19, we still encourage overseas nationals to pursue becoming a teacher in England. Candidates should check:

- their country's advice on travel restrictions and self-isolation requirements
- the UK's advice on entering the UK
- the UK's advice on travel restrictions and self-isolation requirements
- the guidance about what to do if you need a visa to travel to the UK

Further information is available for those affected by changes to UK immigration and families due to COVID-19.

Immigration permission for trainees from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland

The new points-based immigration system applies to trainee teachers from overseas arriving in the UK from 1 January 2021.

These trainees, including those from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland, need to apply for a visa. In most cases, this will be a student visa or undertaking a salaried course, a skilled worker visa. These visa routes require the sponsorship of a school or provider. Trainees who are already in the country will need to have a settled status or pre-settled status. Skilled Worker visa cannot sponsor individuals on student visas.

EEA and Swiss trainees who were living in the UK by 31 December 2020 can apply for the EU Settlement Scheme by 30 June 2021 to continue living, working and studying in the UK without applying through the points-based immigration system.

Critical workers

ITT trainees, and students whose course contains an education studies element and who are in a placement, fall under the definition of 'teaching and support staff' and are critical workers.

Higher education teaching staff are critical workers where they are required to support students who are continuing their placements in person and cannot be supported remotely. This includes ITT tutors supporting trainees on placement.

Assessment only

We have relaxed the requirement for the assessment process to be completed within 12 consecutive weeks. The aggregate time spent on the route, discounting periods of interruption, should not exceed 12 weeks.

The regulations state a candidate should have undertaken a period of practical teaching in a school, or in a school and a college, in order to demonstrate the standards in the specified standards. Any providers recognising prospective candidates should be mindful of this expectation.

Candidates cannot be given any additional allowance in terms of reduced assessments because of COVID-19. This is because assessment only courses include no training so candidates cannot be deemed to be making adequate progress to meeting the standards.

See the assessment only criteria for more information.

Academic qualifications

Provision and assessment for the award of academic qualifications will be at the discretion of individual awarding bodies through existing arrangements.

Undergraduate ITT

Try to adapt undergraduate programmes in the remaining years of the course. This will help give trainees the opportunity to demonstrate the standards across the full age and ability range of their training programme.

If you're struggling to provide placement opportunities across the full age and ability range, consider postponing your course. For example, a 3 to 7 course may be reorganised to a 5 to 11 or 3 to 11. The trainee would still take place across a minimum of 4 school years.

Early years ITT

We recognise that there has been disruption to EYITT throughout the academic year 2020/21 for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, ITT providers are able to recommend trainees for the award of EYTS if they are satisfied that the trainee:

- has demonstrated adequate progress towards meeting the Teachers' Standards (Early Years and their course
- would have met the Teachers' Standards (Early Years), were it not for disruption relating to COVID-19

See the early years ITT requirements and supporting advice for the full requirements relating to EYTS courses.

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