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Education and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Guidance

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

Updated 5 June 2020

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We are issuing the following guidance, based on current public health advice, to help initial teacher training (ITT) providers reduce the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on their ITT provision. You should note that the arrangements set out in this guidance are subject to secondary legislation. DfE has laid the necessary regulations and these are now in force as of 21 May 2020.

These are extraordinary measures which we are taking so that trainees are given a fair opportunity to qualify and to safeguard teacher supply, balanced against the need to ensure those awarded qualified teacher status (QTS) are of the highest possible quality. We are asking schools and providers to use their professional judgement and expertise in implementing this guidance.

We may amend or update this guidance as necessary.

General guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England have published general guidance for Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do. This is updated regularly to reflect the latest developments.

ITT guidance overview

As a general principle we would ask, where possible, that schools and providers continue to deliver their ITT courses. We recognise, however, that there will be significant disruption to ITT courses due to the closure of schools and other institutions. Therefore, DfE will enable ITT providers to make judgements on trainees based on assessments already completed and each trainee's current trajectory of progress towards meeting the teachers' standards.

Trainees making adequate progress towards the teachers' standards, where the ITT provider judges that the trainee would have completed their ITT course successfully if it was not for the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), should be recommended for QTS at the end of their course. Further guidance for schools and providers on arrangements for trainees not awarded QTS in summer 2020 is below. ITT providers must inform trainees of their trajectory and keep them informed for the remainder of their course. ITT providers should confirm at the end of a trainee's course whether that trainee is going to be recommended for QTS based on the progress. All trainees are expected to continue to engage with their course over this period.

These arrangements mean that current ITT trainees will remain on their ITT course until the point when it normally should have ended. As a result, bursary, scholarship, School Direct salaried and postgraduate teaching apprenticeship grant payments to schools and providers will continue as normal. Schools and providers should continue to follow the relevant funding guidance, including making payments to trainees where applicable. The regulation changes and accompanying temporary flexibilities in the ITT criteria and supporting advice apply only to graduate trainees, or trainees in their final year of undergraduate programmes.

ITT providers are encouraged to adapt undergraduate programmes where necessary in the remaining years available to ensure that trainees have the opportunity to demonstrate the standards across the full age and ability range of their training programme. Where ITT providers encounter difficulty in providing the placement opportunities that will enable trainees to demonstrate the standards across the full age and ability range, the department will permit them to redesignate their courses. For example, a 3 to 11 course may be redesignated to a 5 to 11, or 3 to 7, as long as training takes place across a minimum of 4 school years.

The guidance below includes further detail on appropriate actions providers may wish to consider in relation to their current ITT trainees and their recruitment to future courses. We will continue to develop guidance on any issues that are not covered within this document and publish further guidance in due course.

Current ITT trainees (2019 to 2020)

All providers are advised that ITT courses should continue where at all possible, even if the original programme of training cannot be followed. Providers may wish to make more content available online, conduct sessions via video conference, or involve trainees in the organisation of any online educational activities schools are organising.

Providers should make an initial judgement on progress towards meeting the teachers' standards based on assessments already completed. Providers should refine this judgement based on trainees' progress through the remainder of the course and confirm at the end of the course whether a trainee will be recommended for QTS.

Schools and providers are asked to advise their current trainees that they should remain on their ITT course. If a trainee decides to fully withdraw from a course, for any reason, this should be managed under the provider's withdrawal process.

Trainees who are currently undertaking a subject knowledge enhancement (SKE) course in parallel with their ITT course should be able to complete their SKE course. Where SKE was being delivered face-to-face prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, SKE training providers have the flexibility to change their delivery model, or in circumstances where this is not possible to identify alternative provision so that trainees can complete their training with another SKE provider. SKE courses must end before a trainee finishes their course.

Recommendations for qualified teacher status

Where trainees are identified as already meeting the teachers' standards or making adequate progress to meeting them, ITT providers should recommend them for QTS at the end of the course. Trainees in this position must continue to participate in their course to its end in order to be recommended for QTS.

ITT providers must inform trainees what trajectory they are on and whether they are likely to be recommended for QTS at the end of their course.

The assessment and recommendation for the award of QTS will remain solely at the ITT provider's discretion, and providers should undertake such assessments based on their professional judgement and expertise. These allowances do not, under any circumstances, give trainees a 'free pass', and ITT providers should not make any recommendation for QTS without giving full consideration to a trainee's progress and available evidence.

Any trainees going on planned leave for any reason should be handled in the usual way, as the absence is not related to coronavirus (COVID-19) and they will be leaving the course rather than continuing it at a distance (or by other means arranged by the provider). They should already have agreed to defer completion of their course until next year or made other arrangements. Such trainees must still finish their course and providers cannot simply recommend them for QTS based on their current trajectory.

Any returning trainees, who would in usual circumstances be resuming their studies (from last year) through a placement, can be counted in this year's data return for QTS trajectory. This only applies if their completion date is at the end of this academic year, and they have been detrimentally affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

Recommendations for QTS must still be made at the end of the ITT course and can only be made by accredited ITT providers. In line with the amended regulations issued by the department, we would expect accredited providers to make QTS recommendations of successful newly qualified teachers before 1 September 2020. This will protect the supply of new teachers into schools.

Trainees not recommended for QTS in 2019 to 2020

Courses for trainees identified by their ITT provider as not meeting or not on a trajectory to meet the teachers' standards should be extended beyond their original planned end date. This is to allow these trainees a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate in the autumn term 2020 that they meet the teachers' standards.

It is the responsibility of ITT providers to determine the nature, content and duration of training required by trainees whose courses extend into the autumn term, in line with current arrangements.

Funding is available for trainees and providers where courses extend owing to coronavirus (COVID-19). Full details are in Funding: ITT coronavirus (COVID-19) course extensions 2019 to 2020.

Compliance with the ITT criteria

We have temporarily relaxed C1.1 and amended the accompanying advice to allow candidates who are not able to provide evidence of meeting the required GCSE equivalent standard before starting a course as a consequence of coronavirus (COVID-19), to start the course. In order to continue on and complete the course, they must provide evidence by 30 November 2020.

We have temporarily removed the requirement within C2.2 that previously required all programmes to cover a minimum of 4 school years.

We have temporarily removed C2.4 of the ITT criteria to enable recommendations to go ahead without the requirement for trainees to have taught in at least 2 schools.

We have temporarily relaxed C2.1 and amended its supporting advice to indicate that, where possible, trainees should demonstrate that they meet the standards across the full age and ability range of training. We have also relaxed the expectation that trainees fully demonstrate fundamental mathematics and English skills before they can be recommended for the award.

We have temporarily removed the requirement within C2.3 for trainees affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) to train wholly or mainly in England. A corresponding amendment has been made to the regulations.

You can read the ITT criteria and supporting advice.

Legal requirements

The associated regulations came into force on 21 May 2020.

Any trainee or sponsor requiring extension to an existing visa, should consult the Home Office guidance.

Assessment only

The requirement for the assessment process to be completed within 12 consecutive weeks has been relaxed. However, 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 experience, such that the person is assessed by the accredited institution as meeting the specified standards. Any providers managing prospective candidates should be mindful of this expectation.

Candidates cannot be given any additional allowance in terms of reduced assessments as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). This is because assessment only courses include no training and therefore candidates cannot be deemed to be making adequate progress to meeting the standards. Please also regularly check the assessment only criteria.

Academic qualifications

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

Postgraduate teaching apprenticeship

The above guidance applies to awarding QTS within the postgraduate teaching apprenticeship. ITT providers should confirm at the normal point whether each trainee is going to be recommended for QTS based on their trajectory.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) have also agreed an amendment to the end point assessment (EPA) for those with EPAs planned before the end of this academic year. For further details, see the teacher apprenticeship standards.

Undergraduate ITT

Providers delivering undergraduate ITT programmes will similarly be able to judge trainees in their final year of study based on assessments already completed and each trainee's current trajectory of progress towards meeting the teachers' standards.

Early years ITT

The above guidance applies to the assessment of early years ITT trainees (courses leading to early years teacher status) as for ITT trainees (courses leading to QTS).

Where early years ITT trainees are identified as already meeting the early years standards or on a trajectory to meet the standards, ITT providers should recommend them for early years teacher status (EYTS) at the end of the course.

Further guidance will be provided as soon as possible for those trainees not already meeting the early years teachers' standards or who are not on a trajectory to meet the standards at the end of their course.

Providers should make an initial judgement on trajectory towards meeting the early years standards based on assessments already completed. Providers should refine this judgement based on trainees' progress through the remainder of the course and confirm at the end of the course whether a trainee will be recommended for EYTS.

Teach First

The above guidance applies to the assessment of Teach First trainees as for other ITT trainees (courses leading to QTS).

Recruitment and selection (2020 to 2021)

Recruitment to the 2020 to 2021 cohort will continue to ensure continuity of provision. ITT partnerships should consider how they may adapt their recruitment and selection process to minimise disruption.

They should consider what can be completed online, over the phone, using written tasks or via video calling (for example, for individual interviews or group sessions). Observing a candidate interacting with children is not an entry requirement. However, where ITT providers prefer to do so, but where it proves not possible, they might wish to obtain additional evidence of suitability, such as references.

They may also wish to advise partner schools to exercise greater vigilance during the early stages of school-based training, and to act immediately on any safeguarding concerns that might arise in accordance with the process set out in their partnership agreement.

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

Supporting documentation (for example, examination certificates) can be submitted in electronic format pending the opportunity for originals to be supplied. Schools and ITT providers must continue to comply with statutory guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

ITT providers and schools should continue to use Apply for Postgraduate Teacher Training (DfE's service) and UCAS as usual to manage their applications.

All rolling UCAS Teacher Training decision making deadlines, decline by default (DBDs) and reject by default (RBDs), have been suspended until 20 April at the earliest. Please refer to the guidance published on the UCAS website for the latest information and guidance.

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.

Subject knowledge enhancement training courses continue to be available to support recruitment and can be completed as usual before or alongside ITT.

GCSE standard equivalent entry criteria (2020 to 2021)

ITT providers should continue to offer every opportunity for candidates to provide evidence that they can demonstrate a standard equivalent to GCSE grade 4 in English, maths, and a science subject for primary, before they start their ITT courses in September 2020.

As a reminder, ITT providers are permitted to take account of other evidence of attainment where the provider judges this to be of at least equal level and breadth to GCSE grade 4 in the relevant subject. This can include an equivalence test.

We have amended the entry criteria so that entrants to courses who are not able to demonstrate the required standard as a consequence of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak are permitted alternatively to demonstrate the standard by 30 November 2020.

ITT providers should make careful judgements about the likelihood of a candidate achieving the required standard in the permitted timeframe before admitting them to a QTS course. No trainee should be permitted to continue the course without demonstrating evidence of having met the required standard by 30 November 2020.

Trainees who begin courses with evidence of their GCSE standard equivalence pending will not be eligible for financial incentives (bursaries or grants). On providing evidence, any financial incentive will be backdated to the start of the course. Further guidance on this will follow in the funding manuals.

School experience

We have marked schools on the Get School Experience service as inactive. You may wish to consider offering a virtual experience for candidates, such as videos of lessons, digital conferences or online training materials for candidates to use. Should you plan to offer these or similar in the weeks to come, please get in touch with us via organise.school-experience@education.gov.uk and we will happily make your school active again.

School experience is not an entry requirement for ITT and therefore lack of school experience must not be a reason for rejection of an otherwise suitable applicant.

However, school experience may be helpful for those considering training to teach.

ITT funding and bursaries

Bursary, scholarship, School Direct salaried and postgraduate teaching apprenticeship grant payments will continue as normal. Schools and providers should continue to follow the relevant funding guidance, including making payments to trainees where applicable.

Student number controls will only apply to domestic and EU domiciled full-time undergraduate students in the 2020 to 2021 academic year as published on 4 May.

Next steps

We will publish updates to this guidance as necessary. We ask that ITT providers advise us of any further issues that arise during this period so that further guidance can be issued. Providers should raise issues on behalf of their lead schools and wider partnerships to help us manage emails and respond quicker.

The dedicated email address is dfe.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk.

> **DfE coronavirus helpline**
> Telephone
> 0800 046 8687
>
> If you have a query about coronavirus (COVID-19) relating to schools and other educational establishments, and children's social care, in England contact our helpline.
>
> Lines are open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, and 10am to 4pm at weekends.
>
> If you work in a school, please have your unique reference number (URN or UK PRN) available when calling the helpline.

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