



Policy paper

National professional qualifications (NPQs) reforms

Updated 1 July 2021

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National professional qualifications (NPQs) are a national, voluntary suite of qualifications, designed to support the professional development of teachers and leaders.

Anyone currently undertaking an NPQ under the existing contracts and frameworks will continue to benefit from the knowledge and skills gained from these courses. All current participants are required to complete these courses, including assessment and moderation, by August 2022.

For more information about the 2017 NPQs and current participants read [Professional development for school leaders](#).

Reformed national professional qualifications

From autumn 2021, a reformed suite of NPQs will be available for teachers and leaders who want to develop their knowledge and skills in school leadership and specialist areas of teaching practice. These reforms include:

- reforming the 3 existing NPQs in senior leadership, headship and executive leadership
- replacing the current NPQ in middle leadership with 3 new NPQs for teachers and leaders who want to develop their expertise in specialist areas of teaching practice

What's involved

The specialist and leadership NPQs provide training and support for teachers and school leaders at all levels, from those who want to develop expertise in high-quality teaching practice, such as behaviour management, to those leading multiple schools across trusts.

They are part of a wider set of [teacher development reforms](#) which together will create a 'golden thread' of high-quality evidence underpinning the support, training and development available through the entirety of a teacher's career.

NPQs have been designed with teachers and leaders in mind using the latest evidence and can be completed flexibly around existing commitments.

Study can last between 2 academic terms and 27 months, depending on your chosen NPQ and provider, who will also determine the course structure, content and method of delivery.

During this period of study you will:

- learn from the evidence-based curriculum of your chosen qualification, drawing on effective pedagogy, current research and international best practice. This will equip you with the knowledge and skills to either improve in your current role, or take the next step in your career
- partake in a mixture of face-to-face sessions, webinars, and self-directed study
- answer a short, assessed case study question (the summative assessment)

NPQs available from autumn 2021

The 3 new NPQs in specialist areas of teaching are:

- Leading Teacher Development: for teachers who have, or are aspiring to have, responsibilities for leading the development of other teachers in their school
- Leading Teaching: for teachers who have, or are aspiring to have, responsibilities for leading teaching in a subject, year group, key stage or phase
- Leading Behaviour and Culture: for teachers who have, or are aspiring to have, responsibilities for leading behaviour and/or supporting pupil wellbeing in their school

The reformed leadership NPQs are:

- Senior Leadership: for school leaders who are, or are aspiring to be, a senior leader with cross-school responsibilities
- Headship: for school leaders who are, or are aspiring to be, a headteacher or head of school with responsibility for leading a school
- Executive Leadership: for school leaders who are, or are aspiring to be, an executive headteacher or have a school trust CEO role with responsibility for leading several schools

Each NPQ is underpinned by a new content framework. These frameworks set out what participants should know and be able to do after completing an NPQ, and providers have used these to design their courses.

You can access the NPQ frameworks at [National professional qualification frameworks: from autumn 2021](#).

Apply for an NPQ

Teachers and leaders can now apply with 1 of 9 providers accredited to offer this qualification.

NPQ providers

Lead training providers will deliver the reformed suite of national professional qualifications from autumn 2021. They are:

- [Ambition Institute](#)
- [Best Practice Network \(home of Outstanding Leaders Partnership\)](#)
- [Church of England](#)
- [Education Development Trust](#)
- [LLSE](#)
- [SchoolLed Network](#)
- [Teacher Development Trust](#)
- [Teach First](#)
- [UCL Institute of Education](#)

These providers have been chosen by a fair and open procurement process by the Department for Education. Delivery partners, including teaching school hubs, will work with lead providers to deliver training.

Providers of the reformed suite of NPQs will be subject to a quality assurance (QA) mechanism through Ofsted inspection to ensure the best support for schools and teachers.

Funding and eligibility criteria

As part of the government's long-term education recovery plan, £184 million of new funding for NPQs was announced on 2 June 2021 to be spent over the course of this parliament.

NPQ in Leading Teacher Development

Full scholarship funding, with no cost to the participant, for the NPQ in Leading Teacher Development is available to all teachers who meet the following criteria:

- have, or are aspiring to have, responsibilities for leading the development of other teachers in their school
- work in a state-funded school in England

NPQ in Leading Behaviour and Culture

Full scholarship funding, with no cost to the participant, for the NPQ in Leading Behaviour and Culture is available to all teachers who meet the following criteria:

- have, or are aspiring to have, responsibilities for leading behaviour and/or supporting pupil wellbeing in their school
- work in a state-funded school in England that is within the top 30th percentile in relation to pupils on pupil premium as of the end of the previous academic year

NPQ in Leading Teaching

Full scholarship funding, with no cost to the participant, for the NPQ in Leading Teaching is available to all teachers who meet the following criteria:

- have, or are aspiring to have, responsibilities for leading teaching in a subject, year group, key stage or phase
- work in a state-funded school in England that is within the top 30th percentile in relation to pupils on pupil premium as of the end of the previous academic year

NPQ in Senior Leadership

Full scholarship funding, with no cost to the participant, for the NPQ in Senior Leadership is available to those who meet the following criteria:

- are, or are aspiring to be, a senior leader with cross-school responsibilities
- work in a state-funded school in England that is within the top 30th percentile in relation to pupils on Pupil Premium as of the end of the previous academic year

NPQ in Headship

Full scholarship funding, with no cost to the participant, for the NPQ in Headship is available for those who meet the following criteria:

- are, or are aspiring to be, a headteacher or head of school with responsibility for leading a school
- work in a state-funded school in England that is within the top 30th percentile in relation to pupils on Pupil Premium as of the end of the previous academic year

OR:

- are a headteacher or head of school with responsibility for leading a school
- are in the first 24 months of headship
- work in a state-funded school in England

Additional support offer for the NPQ in Headship

In addition to the reformed suite of NPQs, the department is introducing an additional support offer for new headteachers from autumn 2021. This is a targeted support package for teachers new to the role of headship.

You are eligible for this targeted support package if you meet the following criteria:

- are in your first 24 months of headship
- work in a state-funded school in England upon starting the training
- have either completed an NPQH before taking up your first headship post or are currently taking the NPQH
- have not withdrawn from the additional support programme previously

The offer provides structured, unassessed face-to-face support based on the best available evidence about what makes an effective headteacher. While the exact content of this support will depend on the provider chosen, activities could include a combination of group coaching, one-to-one support discussions and peer network support.

NPQ in Executive Leadership

Full scholarship funding, with no cost to the participant, for the NPQ in Executive Leadership is available to those who meet the following criteria:

- are, or are aspiring to be, an executive headteacher or have a school trust CEO role with responsibility for leading several schools
- work in a state-funded school in England that is within the top 30th percentile in relation to pupils on pupil premium as of the end of the previous academic year

We will shortly publish a list of schools that are within the top 30th percentile in relation to pupils on pupil premium as of the end of the previous academic year to enable people to check their eligibility.

Access to funding remains conditional on successful verification of participants' registration information against Teaching Regulation Agency records, so you must ensure that the information supplied to your NPQ provider matches your teacher record. You can check and update your record via the [Teaching Regulation Agency Teacher Self-Service Portal](#).

If you are not eligible for scholarship funding, participants are able to self-fund courses. Costs vary between providers. You should contact a provider for full details of their costs.

Next steps for potential applicants

If you are interested in a particular NPQ programme, your first step will be to sign up with a provider.

The easiest way to do this is to contact your local teaching school hub. To [find your local teaching school hub on GOV.UK](#). You can also contact Lead Providers, or other known delivery partners, directly.

Once you have selected your course and provider, you will need to register for your programme using the [DFE's Online service](#).

Expansion of the reformed suite

To ensure national professional qualifications continue to offer the best possible support to teachers and leaders wanting to expand their knowledge and skills, we are currently consulting with sector representatives and other experts on the value of developing additional qualifications in early years education and teaching literacy, among other potential areas.

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