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[Department  
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Guidance

# National professional qualifications (NPQs)

Updated 25 April 2023

**Applies to England**

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National professional qualifications (NPQs) are designed to support the professional development of teachers and leaders.

A reformed suite of NPQs is now available which have been developed in collaboration with the sector and are informed by the best available research and evidence. NPQs are designed to provide training and support for teachers and school leaders at all levels and deliver improved outcomes for young people.

## National professional qualifications

NPQs are available for teachers and leaders who want to develop their knowledge and skills in specialist areas of teaching practice. There are:

- 4 leadership NPQs in senior leadership, headship, executive leadership and early years leadership
- 4 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. This includes those who want to develop expertise in high-quality teaching practices, such as behaviour management, and 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 a teacher's entire 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 12 and 18 months, depending on your chosen NPQ. Your provider will 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
- take part 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

The 4 NPQs in specialist areas of teaching have been designed with both classroom teachers and leaders in mind. They are:

- [Leading teacher development](#) – learn how to become a teacher educator and successfully support teachers in your school to expand their skills
- [Leading teaching](#) – learn how to lead the teaching and learning of a subject, year group or phase

- [Leading behaviour and culture](#) – learn how to create a culture of good behaviour and high expectations in which staff and pupils can thrive
- [Leading literacy](#) – learn how to effectively teach and promote literacy across the whole school, year group, key stage or phase

The leadership NPQs are:

- [Senior leadership](#) – develop your leadership knowledge and expertise to improve outcomes for teachers and pupils in your school
- [Headship](#) – develop the knowledge that underpins expert school leadership and apply it to become an outstanding headteacher
- [Executive leadership](#) – develop the expertise you need to become an outstanding executive leader, leading change and improvement across your group of schools or multi-academy trust
- [Early years leadership](#) – develop expertise in leading high-quality early years education and care, as well as effective staff and organisational management

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. Providers have used these to design their courses.

As well as the reformed NPQs, we have introduced an early headship coaching offer for new headteachers. This is a package of structured support and networking opportunities for teachers early on in their headship role.

## Early headship coaching offer

You are eligible for this package of structured support and networking opportunities if you meet all of these criteria:

- you are in your first 5 years of headship
- you are employed in England in a state-funded school or state-funded 16 to 19 organisation on starting the training
- you have either completed a National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) before taking up your first headship post or are currently taking one
- you have not withdrawn from the additional support programme previously

The offer provides structured unassessed 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.

You can contact your local [teaching school hub](#), lead provider or other delivery partner to find out more.

## NPQ providers

[Professional development for teachers and leaders](#) has information on who provides each NPQ.

Providers are chosen by a fair and open procurement process by the Department for Education.

They are also subject to quality assurance through Ofsted inspection.

# Apply for an NPQ

Once you've chosen an NPQ and provider, you need to:

- register with the DfE
- apply directly with your chosen provider (they will send you an application form once you've registered with DfE)

[Professional development for teachers and leaders](#) has advice on how to apply for each NPQ.

## Funding

As part of the government's long-term education recovery plan, it was announced in May 2022 that funding for fully funded NPQ training scholarships will be available in academic years 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024.

## Eligibility

From autumn 2022, the organisations eligible to access scholarships are:

- state-funded schools
- state-funded 16 to 19 organisations
- independent special schools
- virtual schools (local-authority-run organisations that support the education of children in care)
- hospital schools not already included in other categories of eligible organisations
- young offender institutions

Practising teachers employed by local authorities, such as supply teachers, will also be able to access scholarships.

Teachers and leaders who are employed as above are eligible for training scholarships for all 8 NPQs.

Lead mentors for providers accredited to deliver initial teacher training from 2024 will also be able to access scholarships for the NPQ in leading teacher development, once successfully accredited providers have been announced.

## NPQ for Early Years Leadership (NPQEYL)

Training scholarships for the NPQ for Early Years Leadership are available to those leaders qualified to at least level 3 with a full and relevant qualification<sup>[footnote 1]</sup> who are, or are aspiring to be:

- managers of private, voluntary and independent nurseries
- headteachers or leaders of school-based or maintained nurseries
- childminders with leadership responsibilities

And are employed:

- in a maintained nursery school in England
- in a pre-school class or nursery that's part of a maintained school in England
- in a pre-school class or nursery that's part of an independent school in England providing free early years entitlements places
- in a nursery that is registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register
- as a childminder and registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register, or with a registered Childminder Agency

## Additional eligibility criteria

Participants will be eligible for funding for each NPQ only once.

Participants who receive scholarship funding for a reformed NPQ available from November 2021 and who then subsequently withdraw from, or fail, their programme will not be eligible for scholarship funding for the same NPQ in the future. If a participant is unable to continue with their NPQ, providers are expected to support them to defer their programme and restart at a later date if appropriate.

Participants who received scholarship funding for a legacy NPQ (prior to November 2021) and who withdraw from their programme will be eligible for scholarship funding for the new reformed NPQs.

If you are not eligible for scholarship funding, you can still undertake an NPQ and should contact your [local teaching school hub](#), lead provider or other delivery partners directly for more information.

## Targeted support funding

The Department has updated the Targeted Support Fund offer for the 2023 to 2024 academic year to further incentivise state-funded schools and state-funded 16 to 19 educational settings in England to participate in NPQs.

For each teacher or leader they employ who takes an NPQ in the 2023 to 2024 academic year:

- state-funded primary schools with one to 150 pupils will receive a grant payment of £800
- state-funded primary schools with more than 150 pupils will receive a grant payment of £200
- state-funded secondary schools and state-funded 16 to 19 educational settings with one to 600 pupils will receive a grant payment of £200

Targeted support funding is not available for participants taking the early headship coaching offer unless they're also taking another NPQ course.

If you work in a school, you can search the [Get Information About Schools \(GIAS\) database](#) to check how many pupils are recorded for your school.

If you work in a 16 to 19 education setting, you can check the [list of 16 to 19 organisations eligible for targeted support funding](#) in the academic year 2023 to 2024.

Payments will be grant funded in arrears via existing Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) channels the summer after NPQ participants begin their course. Eligibility for targeted support funding will be determined automatically as participants

complete the registration process, and there is no need to apply for this funding separately.

Find out more about [targeted support funding in the grant conditions](#). These will be updated for 2023 to 2024.

Contact [continuing-professional-development@digital.education.gov.uk](mailto:continuing-professional-development@digital.education.gov.uk) with any questions.

## Expansion of the reformed suite

We're working to expand the suite of reformed NPQs to include a leadership level NPQ for special educational needs co-ordinators and a specialist NPQ focused on leading mathematics in a primary school.

1. 'Full and relevant qualifications' are defined as qualifications that demonstrate depth and level of learning appropriate to specified outcomes of full early years, childcare or playwork qualifications. The qualification should have valid, reliable assessment and awarding procedures and must include an element of assessed performance evidence. [↩](#)

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