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Guidance

# Transition to national professional qualification for special educational needs co-ordinators

Updated 25 August 2023

## Applies to England

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# Mandatory qualification for special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs)

In September 2009 it became law for every new SENCO in a mainstream school to gain the Master's level national award for special educational needs co-ordinator (NASENCO) within 3 years of starting the job.

A new leadership level national professional qualification for SENCOs will replace the existing qualification. The Department for Education announced this in the [SEND and alternative provision improvement plan](#), published in March 2023.

The national professional qualification will become the mandatory qualification for SENCOs from September 2024. Teaching of the national professional qualification for SENCOs will begin in autumn 2024.

The requirement to complete training within 3 years of appointment will continue to apply.

## National professional qualifications

[National professional qualifications](#) are designed to:

- support teachers and leaders to develop expertise in specialist areas of teaching practice and school leadership
- deliver improved outcomes for schools and young people

They are designed using the latest evidence. They can be completed around

professionals' existing commitments.

The [NPQ for SENCOs content framework](#) sets out what participants should know and be able to do after completing the qualification.

Leadership national professional qualification courses last between 12 and 18 months. Providers approved to deliver the national professional qualification will determine the course structure, content, and method of delivery.

Details of the lead training providers accredited to deliver this new national professional qualification will be published once they have been chosen.

## Appropriate qualification for a new SENCO

The existing NASENCO will remain the mandatory qualification until autumn 2024. SENCOs should continue to sign up for the NASENCO qualification until the end of the 2023 to 2024 academic year.

SENCOs that enrol on a NASENCO course commencing in the 2023 to 2024 academic year will be recognised as fulfilling the mandatory training requirement so long as this is completed within 3 years after starting a SENCO post.

The national professional qualification for SENCOs will be available from autumn 2024. From September 2024, SENCOs wishing to meet the mandatory training requirement will need to complete the national professional qualification for SENCOs.

The requirement to complete training within 3 years of appointment will continue to apply. Schools and SENCOs need to ensure that, where necessary, they are enrolled on training that will allow them to meet this requirement.

SENCOs who have successfully completed the NASENCO will not be required to complete the new national professional qualification.

We will update this page as further detail on the transition from the NASENCO to the national professional qualification for SENCOs becomes available. We will also update the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014](#) before September 2024 to reflect the change to the mandatory qualification.

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