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Policy paper

# Intensive training and practice (ITAP)

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**Applies to England**

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# Summary

This document provides additional detail to help accredited initial teacher training (ITT) providers and their partner schools to understand the intensive training and practice (ITAP) element of ITT, and to incorporate it into their ITT curricula in a way that maximises the potential benefits to, and impact on, trainees' practice and understanding. Accredited ITT providers should read and use this document as a supplement to the content on ITAP contained within [Initial teacher training: criteria and supporting advice – 2024 to 2025](#).

## Evidence base

The [Carter Review of ITT \(2015\)](#) advocated for the application of models of “research-informed...clinical practice” into teacher training. The Carter review found that the most effective programmes gave careful consideration as to how trainees' learning experiences were structured to ensure effective integration between the different types of knowledge and skills that trainees need to draw on in order to develop their own teaching. Programmes that privileged either ‘theory’ or ‘practice’ failed to take into account the necessity of such integration.

Models of ‘clinical practice’, where trainees have input from experts and can engage in a process where they were able to trial techniques and strategies and evaluate the outcomes, were found to be most effective. Importantly, by making explicit the reasoning and underlying evidence base used by expert teachers, trainees are supported to develop and extend their own decision-making capacities.

The [ITT market review report \(2021\)](#), informed by a range of literature and research on effective ITT<sup>[footnote 1]</sup>, subsequently recommended the implementation of an intensive training and practice element into ITT programmes, which would provide the opportunity for trainees to practise specific techniques for effective teaching outside of the more general classroom experience. Such an element would also consolidate trainees' understanding of how research and evidence inform and shape practice, whilst allowing them to receive highly targeted feedback from experts.

# Intensive training and practice

Intensive training and practice (ITAP) is a specific and focused element of the teacher training curriculum. It is intended to help consolidate trainees' knowledge of key evidence-based principles for effective teaching, and to enable them to practise their application and integration into their developing professional practice. It should therefore be designed to give trainees appropriate input, scaffolded practice and feedback in relation to selected foundational and specific aspects of the training curriculum where close attention to and control of content, critical analysis, application and feedback are required.

## Purpose of ITAP

The main aim of ITAP is to strengthen the link between evidence and classroom practice, therefore some elements of ITAP will need to take place in a school environment. ITAP may also include the use of approximations of practice [\[footnote 2\]](#) and elements delivered directly by the ITT institution or virtually, if helpful or necessary.

ITAP will need to be led and supported by an appropriate range of experts. By 'expert' the definition used in the [Core Content Framework](#) is applied - professional colleagues, including:

- experienced and effective teachers
- subject specialists
- mentors/lead mentors
- lecturers
- tutors

In some situations, lead mentors may well be best placed to identify appropriate expert input for school-based elements of ITAP. It is important to ensure that whoever takes on this role is appropriately prepared and that there is a means of quality assuring both the preparation and the impact of the expert input and feedback. The majority of ITAP experiences are likely to need more expert input and feedback than can realistically be expected of all general mentors.

# Key features

The key features of intensive training and practice involve:

- expert input – this would typically include:
  - an introduction to the aspect of practice (e.g. questioning, explanations, routine setting, specific behaviour strategies) with an examination and critical analysis of the evidence base underpinning it
  - observations of examples (and potentially selected non-examples) in practice via video or live practice
  - deconstruction of the preceding two areas of expert input with an attention to the detail that has positive (or sometimes negative) impact
- opportunities for trainees to plan and practise ITAP in a low stakes (possibly simulated) environment
- opportunities for trainees to practise in a live classroom context
- expert feedback on, and critical analysis of, the trainee practice, in both contexts - this should include deconstruction of both positive features and areas for further development (it should also include discussion about the implications of this for future individual trainee planning, teaching, focused feedback, and reflection)
- expert feedback that links coherently to the expert input at the beginning of the sequence (where trainees experience their live practice in a school where the expert is not present it may be necessary to video parts of this so that it can be deconstructed with the expert at a later point)
- opportunities to apply the aspect of practice in the near future and beyond – ideally in multiple contexts and practice situations (the improvement in practice should be something that trainees will continue to benefit from in the long term)

This final point is key in considering what good practice looks like. The purpose is to have a positive sustained impact on practice that is transferable to a range of contexts.

## How ITAP is different from the rest of the ITT curriculum and school placements

ITAP should focus tightly on specific, foundational, or pivotal areas of the ITT curriculum. It is an opportunity for careful sequencing of content, so that it is clear why each successive focus for ITAP has been chosen, including how it builds on content previously covered and prepares for the next stages in the training

programme.

Expert input and feedback on granular examples of this practice is crucial. It should demonstrate and build the interaction between evidence-based theory and practice, engaging trainees in critical analysis, application of what has been learned to classroom practice, and focused feedback on such practice.

Effective mentoring may well include many of these elements. However, standard placement experience is necessarily more immersive in character. It is unrealistic that it can facilitate all these requirements with the intensity of specific expert input, practice and feedback on the carefully selected and sequenced focus areas of ITAP.

The intensive training and practice element, in which trainees experience a minimum of 4 weeks (postgraduate ITT) or 6 weeks (undergraduate ITT) of ITAP, is additional to the 120 days spent on general school placements – though it does not need to be delivered in a single block. ITAP should be located at suitable points to ensure maximum impact on trainees' progress.

## **Selection of ITAP topics**

ITAP topics can be very varied – crucially, according to the point in the trainee curriculum and the specific needs of the contexts in which they are operating. Accredited ITT providers should therefore not feel constrained by the examples below. These have been selected from the videos that DfE has produced in collaboration with the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) but are not exhaustive.

Examples of topics that accredited ITT providers are currently planning include:

- effective modelling
- scaffolding
- transitions
- questioning for assessment and understanding
- explanations
- feedback
- behaviour – routines

## **Timings and other considerations**

For any chosen topic accredited ITT providers should consider:

- when it is likely to have most impact
- be most immediately implemented in practice
- be an area for a trainee's longer-term development

Considerations might include:

- how much prior experience and knowledge is needed for the topic to make sense to the trainee and have application to their practice
- whether the area of focus (e.g. behaviour and classroom routines) is likely to be a barrier to trainee progress until it is addressed
- whether it is an aspect where, historically, trainees have had difficulty and where improvement can make a step change in their progress
- how well this topic can be followed up in both centre- and school-based experience, so that it becomes consolidated and embedded in practice
- whether this topic can be returned to, experienced, critically analysed and compared and contrasted in a variety of situations and contexts (including simulated where appropriate and remote)
- whether the ITAP topic includes explicit explanation of its broader relevance and how to adapt it for different teaching contexts

## **Monitoring and evaluating the impact of ITAP**

For ITAP to be effective, it must be integral to the training curriculum and individual trainee progress in practice and understanding. It is important, therefore, that accredited ITT providers give careful consideration to how they will be able to monitor and evaluate the impact each ITAP experience has had, both on individual trainee practice, and on the coherence and progression of the trainee curriculum.

Considerations might include whether:

- trainees can articulate the impact of ITAP on their practice
- mentors can evidence this
- ITAP learning is to be revisited throughout the training curriculum
- it is possible to draw on ITAP experiences as part of assignments and other assessments

- placement guidance and reporting links appropriately to ITAP

1. See Initial teacher training (ITT) market review report (2021), pp. 15-18 [↔](#)
2. Approximations provide opportunities for trainees to rehearse and reflect on parts of teaching in lower-stakes, supportive settings where trainees can receive feedback from teacher educators and peers. [↔](#)

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