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Guidance

Special educational needs co-ordinator's national professional qualification

The mandatory course for special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) to learn how to effectively perform the SENCO role.

From: [Department for Education](#)

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Applies to England

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Who this course is for

This course is for:

- special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs)
- teachers interested in developing expertise in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or undertaking a SENCO role in future
- school leaders

Overview

This 18-month course will enable you to:

- co-ordinate special educational needs (SEN) provision throughout your school
- work alongside other leaders to build a school culture in which pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can participate meaningfully in the full life of the school, achieve ambitious outcomes and make successful transitions to their next steps

This course will:

- take between 18 and 22 months to complete (18 months taught and 3 to 4 months assessment window)
- involve an average of 1 to 2 hours of study each week
- be a mix of self-study and group sessions
- have a written assessment
- start in autumn 2024

Mandatory qualification for SENCOs

All mainstream schools (including academies and free schools) must have a SENCO. The SENCO must be a qualified teacher, or the headteacher, working at the school.

This NPQ will be the mandatory qualification for SENCOs from September 2024, with teaching beginning in autumn 2024. The 3-year window to complete the mandatory qualification on taking up a SENCO post will remain following the introduction of the NPQ for SENCOs. Refer to [transition to national professional qualification for special educational needs co-ordinators](#) for further information.

SENCOs meet their statutory requirement on receiving the outcome of their NPQ. Participants should allow up to 4 months on top of the 18 months of study to receive their outcome.

Course content and structure

The course includes 8 topics:

- school culture
- statutory framework
- identification of need
- teaching

- behaviour
- leading and managing provision
- professional development
- implementation

Details of these topics are outlined in the [SENCO NPQ framework](#). Providers use this framework to design their course.

The course includes:

- independent study
- group coaching
- face-to-face sessions with other participants

Providers

You can train for this NPQ with one of the following providers:

- [Ambition Institute](#)
- [Best Practice Network \(Outstanding Leaders Partnership\)](#)
- [Church of England](#)
- [National Institute of Teaching](#)
- [Teach First](#)
- [University College London \(UCL\) Institute of Education](#)

Providers work with delivery partners, such as teaching school hubs, to provide training.

Assessment

To get your NPQ accreditation, you'll need to complete the course and pass a written assessment (between 1,500 and 2,500 words).

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