



QTS skills tests in numeracy, literacy and information and communications technology (ICT)

Report on national results data

Academic year 2003/04

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The 2003/04 cohort

During the academic year 2003/04¹, 34,064 trainees in their final year of initial teacher training attempted the QTS skills tests. This figure represents 14 per cent more trainees than in 2002/03 and 44 per cent more than in 2001 when the first set of national results data was collected.

Almost 27 per cent of the trainees were men, maintaining a steady trend that has resulted in 60 per cent more men training to teach in 2003/04 than in 2001. However, due to increased trainee numbers, 40 per cent more women trained to teach in 2003/04 than in 2001.

Trainees who were 'over 25' when completing training made up 62 per cent of the 2003/04 cohort, compared with only about 50 per cent of the 2001 cohort.

The number of undergraduate trainees has remained largely unchanged over the past four years. However, in 2003/04 less than 19 per cent of all newly trained teachers were undergraduates: a drop of nearly 30 per cent since 2001. In contrast, the number and percentage of postgraduate trainees have increased steadily in the same period. In 2003/04, employment-based routes accounted for about one in 20 of those training to teach – more than double the number in the previous year.

Trainees requiring special arrangements (including those for whom English is not their first language) were given the opportunity to take an adapted test rather than the standard test. In total, special arrangements were requested by 3.5 per cent of trainees, which is a similar percentage to those making similar requests in 2002/03.

The numbers of minority ethnic trainees in almost all categories have increased since 2002/03. There was a small increase in the number of trainees for whom English is not the first language, comprising 5.3 per cent of the cohort (approximately 1,800 trainees).

Trainees who did not pass the QTS skills tests during the academic year 2003/04 have unlimited opportunities to continue to take and pass the skills tests.

¹ In order to draw together a set of data for this report, a cut-off date of 31 August 2004 was set.

Analysis of the test results data

The numbers of trainees attempting each of the separate QTS skills tests and achieving passes before the 2003/04 cut-off date are shown in Table 1. Although pass rates in the numeracy test were slightly lower than in 2002/03, the other results were generally better. For example, a larger percentage of trainees achieved passes in the literacy and ICT tests at the first or second attempts than in 2002/03. See Table 2 for data on the mean number of attempts needed to pass each of the tests.

Table 1: Numbers attempting each of the separate QTS skills tests and achieving passes before the cut-off date, 2003/04

	Number making first attempt	% of those attempting at least one of the skills tests	Attempt 1		Attempts 1 and 2		All attempts	
			Pass	%	Pass	%	Pass	%
Numeracy	33,516	98.4%	27,341	81.6	30,155	90.0	31,306	93.4
Literacy	33,838	99.3%	28,864	85.3	31,867	94.2	32,723	96.7
ICT	33,639	98.8%	29,002	86.2	32,283	96.0	32,961	98.0

Table 2: The mean number of attempts needed to pass each of the QTS skills tests, 2003/04

	Overall mean number of attempts needed to pass		
	Numeracy	Literacy	ICT
<i>All trainees</i>	1.36	1.23	1.17
Gender			
Female	1.42	1.21	1.17
Male	1.19	1.27	1.16
Course type			
Undergraduate	1.45	1.31	1.15
Postgraduate	1.33	1.20	1.17
Overseas trained teachers	1.37	1.20	1.32
Employment-based routes	1.32	1.21	1.25
Trainee age group			
Under 25 years	1.41	1.27	1.13
25–34 years	1.33	1.21	1.15
35–44 years	1.33	1.18	1.25
45 years and above	1.29	1.19	1.35
English as first language			
First language	1.34	1.21	1.16
Not first language	1.70	1.49	1.38

Numeracy test results

Across the board, numeracy test pass rates in 2003/04 are slightly lower than in 2002/03. Men achieved a consistently higher pass rate than women, though the gap narrowed a little when all attempts are taken into account (see Table 3).

Table 3: Numeracy test results 2003/04 – by gender

	First attempt only			Second attempt only			First and second attempts together		All attempts	
	Total	Pass	%	Total	Pass	%	Total passes	%	Total passes	%
<i>All trainees</i>	33,516	27,341	81.6	5,828	2,814	48.3	30,155	90.0	31,306	93.4
Female	24,485	19,301	78.8	4,905	2,341	47.7	21,642	88.4	22,615	92.4
Male	9,031	8,040	89.0	923	473	51.3	8,513	94.3	8,691	96.2

Apart from the 'under 25s', who achieved a lower pass rate on the first attempt at the numeracy test than older trainees, there was very little difference between the results of the different age groups after the various test attempts.

Mathematics and science trainees gained good results at all stages – after two attempts almost 97 per cent had passed. In contrast, the pass rates in art, drama, food technology, religious education and social sciences were more than 5 per cent below the mean after two attempts and also after all attempts taken together. Secondary trainees in art and drama achieved lower pass rates than primary trainees.

Undergraduates performed relatively poorly at their first attempt. However, this group achieved results close to the mean when all attempts are taken together – maintaining a trend evident in previous years. The results of teachers trained overseas were close to the mean and better than in 2002/03.

Trainees from minority ethnic groups

Table 4: Numeracy tests 2003/04 – overall pass rates for clusters of ethnic groups

	First attempt only			First and second attempts together		All attempts together	
	Total	Pass	%	Total passes	%	Total passes	%
<i>All trainees</i>	33,516	27,341	81.6	30,155	90.0	31,306	93.4
Ethnicity other than white – not mixed	2,488	1,576	63.3	1,891	76.0	2,059	82.8
Ethnicity other than white – mixed background	431	326	75.6	362	84.0	387	89.8
Ethnicity: white	28,944	24,057	83.1	26,412	91.3	27,323	94.4

While the pass rates for 'all trainees' in the numeracy test fell slightly at all stages between 2002/03 and 2003/04, the results of the non-white trainees (see Table 4) did not follow the same pattern. Although below the mean for 'all trainees', the pass rate of non-white trainees after the first two attempts showed a relative improvement compared with previous years. However, when all attempts were taken into account, the overall pass rate was lower.

Table 5: Numeracy test results 2003/04 – by ethnic group and gender

	% passing after first two attempts		% passing after all attempts	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>All trainees</i>	94.3	88.4	96.2	92.4
Black ethnic groups	74.7	65.3	84.0	74.4
Asian ethnic groups	87.9	75.5	91.4	81.9
Mixed ethnic background	91.2	81.1	96.0	87.3
Chinese	96.4	90.3	96.4	95.2
Other ethnic background	84.9	73.9	90.9	80.7
White ethnic groups	95.4	89.8	97.0	93.5

Overall, men achieved a higher pass rate and needed fewer attempts to pass the numeracy test than women. When pass rates of the various ethnic groups are linked with gender (see Table 5), the gap in the results of male and female trainees at all stages was generally larger than that for ‘all trainees’. However, Chinese trainees achieved very good results throughout.

Trainees for whom English is/is not their first language

For trainees whose first language is not English, the mean number of attempts needed to pass was 1.70, compared with the mean of 1.36 recorded for ‘all trainees’. Furthermore, about one in seven had not passed by the cut-off date, compared with one in 15 for ‘all trainees’ (see Table 6).

Table 6: Numeracy test results 2003/04 – by ethnic group and first language

	% passing after one attempt		% passing after first two attempts		% passing after all attempts	
	English is first language	English is <i>not</i> first language	English is first language	English is <i>not</i> first language	English is first language	English is <i>not</i> first language
<i>All trainees</i>	82.4	67.6	90.5	79.7	93.9	85.4
Black ethnic groups	55.6	53.4	69.4	67.3	78.2	77.4
Asian ethnic groups	68.6	62.0	81.0	73.9	86.1	80.8
Mixed ethnic groups	77.6	48.3	84.8	72.4	90.6	79.3
Chinese	85.0	86.7	93.3	90.0	96.7	93.3
Other ethnic background	64.4	58.3	79.5	72.9	82.2	85.4
White ethnic groups	83.4	74.5	91.4	86.8	94.5	90.3

Although the results for ‘all trainees’ showed quite large differences between those for whom English is or is not their first language, this was not always reflected within the various ethnic groups. For example, there is very little difference in these pass rates at the various stages for the black ethnic groups. However, it was generally women for whom English is not their first language in the various minority ethnic groups that achieved low pass rates in the numeracy test.

Literacy test results

Overall, the 2003/04 literacy test results were broadly comparable with those achieved in 2002/03, but with a slightly lower percentage passing after all attempts. By the end of the year, the overall pass rate for women remained slightly better than that for men (see Table 7). There was very little difference in the pass rates across the different age groups of trainees.

Table 7: Literacy test results 2003/04 – by gender

	First attempt only			Second attempt only			First and second attempts together		All attempts	
	Total	Pass	%	Total	Pass	%	Total passes	%	Total passes	%
<i>All trainees</i>	33,838	28,864	85.3	4,726	3,003	63.5	31,867	94.2	32,723	96.7
Female	24,788	21,347	86.1	3,279	2,142	65.3	23,489	94.8	24,078	97.1
Male	9,050	7,517	83.1	1,447	861	59.5	8,378	92.6	8,645	95.5

The pattern of results achieved by trainees according to their special subjects was very similar to that of previous years. This year, modern foreign languages trainees joined English and classics trainees in gaining the highest overall pass rates. However, those focusing on the secondary age range and studying art, design technology, food technology and physical education achieved lower pass rates at each stage in the literacy test than the mean for 'all trainees'.

The results of primary trainees showed very little variation across the subjects and, overall, they achieved slightly higher pass rates than secondary trainees. Those training to teach at Key Stage 2 recorded some of the best results.

Postgraduates achieved a higher pass rate at each attempt at the literacy tests than the mean for 'all trainees' – in contrast to undergraduates, who achieved a relatively low pass rate at the first attempt. However, overseas trained teachers recorded much improved pass rates and needed fewer attempts to pass the literacy test than in previous years: these results were close to the mean for 'all trainees'.

Trainees from minority ethnic groups

Table 8: Literacy tests 2003/04 – overall pass rates for clusters of ethnic groups

	First attempt only			First and second attempts together		All attempts together	
	Total	Pass	%	Total passes	%	Total passes	%
<i>All trainees</i>	33,838	28,864	85.3	31,867	94.2	32,723	96.7
Ethnicity other than white – not mixed	2,534	1,810	71.4	2,143	84.6	2,289	90.3
Ethnicity other than white – mixed background	440	368	83.6	404	91.8	419	95.2
Ethnicity: white	29,190	25,244	86.5	27,733	95.0	28,389	97.3

While trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds often achieved pass rates below the mean for 'all trainees' (see Table 8), and needed more attempts to pass the literacy test, many of their results have improved since 2002/03. This was particularly evident in the percentages passing at an early stage. However, an above average proportion of minority ethnic trainees did not retake the literacy test after not meeting the required standard at the first attempt.

Table 9: Literacy test results 2003/04 – by ethnic group and gender

	% passing after first two attempts		% passing after all attempts	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>All trainees</i>	92.6	94.8	95.5	97.1
Black ethnic groups	80.4	86.0	87.6	91.7
Asian ethnic groups	79.7	86.0	86.7	91.3
Mixed ethnic background	88.0	93.3	92.0	96.5
Chinese	92.6	95.2	96.3	96.8
Other ethnic background	75.8	92.0	87.9	94.9
White ethnic groups	93.7	95.5	96.3	97.6

For all the ethnic groups, female trainees achieved a better final pass rate than male trainees (see Table 9). Overall, the pass rates of women in the minority ethnic groups were generally closer than those of men to the mean for 'all trainees'.

Trainees for whom English is/is not their first language

As in previous years, trainees for whom English is not their first language had greater difficulty than 'all trainees' in passing the literacy test. The mean number of attempts needed to pass was 1.49, compared with 1.23 for 'all trainees'. By the cut-off date, about one in 10 of those for whom English is not their first language had yet to pass, compared with one in 30 for 'all trainees' (see Table 10).

Table 10: Literacy test results 2003/04 – by ethnic group and first language

	% passing after one attempt		% passing after first two attempts		% passing after all attempts	
	English is first language	English is <i>not</i> first language	English is first language	English is <i>not</i> first language	English is first language	English is <i>not</i> first language
<i>All trainees</i>	86.1	71.5	94.7	85.7	97.1	90.6
Black ethnic groups	74.5	61.0	84.9	85.9	91.6	85.9
Asian ethnic groups	75.8	61.0	87.4	77.6	92.3	84.9
Mixed ethnic groups	85.1	65.6	93.1	75.0	95.6	90.6
Chinese	89.8	74.2	96.3	87.1	100	90.3
Other ethnic background	76.7	52.0	93.2	70.0	97.3	80.0
White ethnic groups	86.7	80.6	95.1	92.3	97.3	95.3

In general, trainees with English as a first language achieved better pass rates in the literacy test than those for whom it is not their first language. For some of the groups identified in Table 10, poor results arose from a combination of low pass rates at the first attempt, 'dropping out' from the test on a second occasion and (sometimes) multiple attempts before success. Trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds for whom English is not their first language were among those most likely not to retake the literacy test after an unsuccessful first attempt.

ICT test results

Overall, trainees took fewer attempts to pass the ICT test in 2003/04 than in 2002/03 because they achieved much higher pass rates in the early stages of the test. Table 11 shows that the results for men and women were similar.

Table 11: ICT test results 2003/04 – by gender

	First attempt only			Second attempt only			First and second attempts together		All attempts	
	Total	Pass	%	Total	Pass	%	Total passes	%	Total passes	%
<i>All trainees</i>	33,639	29,002	86.2	4,346	3,281	75.5	32,283	96.0	32,961	98.0
Female	24,596	21,140	85.9	3,254	2,473	76.0	23,613	96.0	24,122	98.0
Male	9,043	7,862	86.9	1,092	808	74.0	8,670	95.9	8,839	97.7

Pass rates in the ICT test, unlike those in the numeracy and literacy tests, declined with the increasing age of trainees. For example, 89 per cent of 'under 25s' passed at the first attempt compared with 74 per cent of 'over 45s'. Also, older trainees (almost one in 10 of those aged over 45 years) did not attempt the ICT test again after being unsuccessful at the first attempt.

Although at the first attempt trainees studying art, food technology and social science achieved ICT test pass rates about 10 per cent below the mean for 'all trainees', by the end of the academic year the overall results showed little variation across the different specialist subjects. There were also only small differences in the results of those preparing to be primary or secondary teachers.

Undergraduate and postgraduate trainees recorded pass rates in the ICT test that were equal to or better than the mean for 'all trainees'. By contrast, those following employment-based training achieved lower pass rates than in previous years. Although overseas trained teachers again seemed to have difficulty in achieving the standard need to pass initially, their results improved with successive attempts.

Trainees from minority ethnic groups

Table 12: ICT tests 2003/04 – overall pass rates for clusters of ethnic groups

	First attempt only			First and second attempts together		All attempts together	
	Total	Pass	%	Total passes	%	Total passes	%
<i>All trainees</i>	33,639	29,002	86.2	32,283	96.0	32,961	98.0
Ethnicity other than white – not mixed	2,509	1,844	73.5	2,233	89.0	2,349	93.6
Ethnicity other than white – mixed background	432	357	82.6	406	94.0	416	96.3
Ethnicity: white	29,041	25,365	87.3	28,053	96.6	28,573	98.4

In comparison with 2002/03, the ICT test results for most ethnic groups showed general improvements in line with the better results for 'all trainees'. However, several ethnic groups other than white had a significant percentage of trainees who did not attempt the ICT test again after being unsuccessful at the first attempt (see Table 12).

Table 13: ICT test results 2003/04 – by ethnic group and gender

	% passing after first two attempts		% passing after all attempts	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>All trainees</i>	95.9	96.0	97.7	98.1
Black ethnic groups	77.0	81.9	86.0	89.1
Asian ethnic groups	92.7	93.3	95.9	96.4
Mixed ethnic background	95.1	93.5	97.6	95.8
Chinese	86.6	90.0	96.3	98.4
Other ethnic background	93.8	90.1	93.8	96.7
White ethnic groups	96.8	96.5	98.3	98.4

When analysed according to gender, there was little difference between the ICT test results for men and women, though there was a slight overall advantage for women (see Table 13).

Trainees for whom English is/is not their first language

Although trainees whose first language is not English needed more attempts to pass the ICT test than the mean for ‘all trainees’, the 2003/04 results showed much improved on those from 2002/03. Women for whom English is not their first language achieved a much better pass rate than men – particularly in their early attempts at the ICT test. More than 8 per cent of trainees for whom English is not their first language made no further attempt at the ICT test after being unsuccessful on the first occasion.

Table 14: ICT tests 2003/04 – by ethnic group and first language

	% passing after one attempt		% passing after first two attempts		% passing after all attempts	
	English is first language	English is <i>not</i> first language	English is first language	English is <i>not</i> first language	English is first language	English is <i>not</i> first language
<i>All trainees</i>	87.0	71.7	96.4	88.6	98.2	93.4
Black ethnic groups	67.0	44.8	83.7	70.0	90.7	80.0
Asian ethnic groups	80.7	75.8	94.1	90.8	97.0	94.5
Mixed ethnic groups	84.1	63.3	95.3	76.7	96.8	90.0
Chinese	86.0	90.3	96.5	100	96.5	100
Other ethnic background	78.1	70.0	95.9	84.0	98.6	92.0
White ethnic groups	87.7	76.0	96.7	92.2	98.5	96.2

The ICT test results of most ethnic groups, regardless of their language backgrounds, showed an improvement on those of 2002/03. Generally, trainees without English as a first language needed more attempts to pass when compared with trainees for whom English is their first language from the same ethnic group (see Table 14) – though this difference was smaller than last year and also less than in the numeracy and literacy tests.

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