

ASE Response to the ITT Market Review

The Association for Science Education (ASE) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Government's ITT Market Review consultation. This submission has been led by our ASE Futures committee of science teacher educators and professional learning and development specialists. The committee membership includes expertise and experience in both HE-led and school-led initial teacher education, and research.

We agree with the overall aims of the government in relation to teacher education: to ensure that we have great teachers in every classroom...*so that children and young people in every part of the country acquire the knowledge, skills and qualifications they need to progress...and that every teacher has access to world-class training and professional development opportunities throughout their career.*

We support in principle some of the intended outcomes of the ITT Market Review:

- consistently high-quality approaches to initial teacher education (ITE)
- ITE programmes which are evidence-informed
- well-supported and trained mentors

However, we are concerned about the following aspects of the market review:

The need for such widespread and potentially disruptive changes to the sector

Although there may be variability across the sector in provision, there are many examples of outstanding provision, as assessed by Ofsted. The review itself highlights how well the sector has coped during recent months. The Review does not provide a strong evidence base that system-wide change is needed and that these proposals will lead to improvements. This raises a question of whether the sector needs wholesale reform, and we would recommend consideration of alternative models of improvement, such as sharing examples of outstanding practice.

Timescale for implementation

Such massive wholesale change is expected to be carried out within a very short timescale. Limited information is provided within the proposals about the re-accreditation process. This combination of uncertainty and change is likely to lead to significant disruption within the sector and a consequent impact on staff workload and wellbeing. There are concerns that some providers and schools will not have the time and capacity to implement the changes and withdraw themselves from the system. The University of Cambridge have already confirmed that if these reforms are implemented they will no longer be able to offer initial teacher training courses¹. It is expected that this decision may also be mirrored by other highly regarded initial teacher training providers, who between them train thousands of new teachers each year.

The Core Content Framework (CCF) was introduced in November 2019 and the Early Career Framework (ECF) has just ended its two-year pilot with national rollout from September 2021. We would recommend that both initiatives are afforded time to embed and be evaluated prior to further radical changes to ITE and early career provision.

Potential impact on ITE provision

The model proposed for ITE is untested and lacks a secure evidence base that demonstrates how it will lead to improved teaching. Further, it is not clear whether there is

¹ For example '[Cambridge to end teacher training if government enacts overhaul](#)', The Guardian, 19 August 2021 and '[Cambridge University threatens to stop training new teachers](#)', The Times, 19 August 2021.

capacity within the proposed model to provide the suggested training following these changes. Specifically:

- the system already lacks time and capacity for high quality mentoring, and the review suggests, based on the minimum hours of mentoring training and the requirement to complete an NPQ, that this will be increased without consideration of the impact on other mentoring roles (such as for the Early Career Framework); high staff turnover can be problematic in maintaining expertise in the system and therefore a consistent supply of high quality mentors
- hosting of intensive placements is likely to place an increased burden on schools, potentially leading to a reduction in schools offering placements, at a time when placements can already be difficult to secure; there are likely to be locations where few placements are made available and a reduction in diversity within the schools offering placements, such as small primary schools. This may consequently reduce the supply of early career teachers in a locality.
- the model presents a potential threat to established school - HEI partnerships, which bring multiple benefits to the system such as engagement in research and sharing of innovative practice. This applies to the various training pathways, including university core and school direct PGCE.
- consistency of high-quality provision across partnerships is difficult because different schools take different approaches; there are no suggestions in the proposed reforms as to how providers should manage these inconsistencies.
- intensive placements may limit trainees' experiences of schools thereby reducing their exposure to a range of school contexts, curricula approaches etc; the development needs of teachers working in different subject areas will be different.
- It does not detail how it will be financed; payment for NPQ, time out of class for mentoring training and an extra payment to schools for increased time in school.

We would recommend a full impact analysis is carried out before future change takes place.

Potential impact on trainee teachers of science

The emphasis within the reforms is that subject specific support is provided through placements and mentor-led support. However, there are significant gaps in science subject expertise in both primary and secondary schools. There are specific challenges of learning to teach science as a practical subject. These include, but are not limited to, managing significant health and safety requirements and classroom management.

In primary schools, insufficient curriculum time is allocated to teaching science with an emphasis being placed on learning English and Maths. The majority of primary classroom teachers and science subject leads do not have post-GCSE qualifications in science and there is variability in science practice in schools across the country. As a consequence there are sometimes issues for trainees related to teaching sequences of lessons, observing high-quality science lessons and being mentored effectively in this subject.

Many secondary teachers navigate complex roles including teaching multiple disciplines within science, teaching outside their science specialisms and working with technicians. It is well-established that retention of science teachers is low, meaning that expertise is lost from the system. Trainee teachers of science are therefore often unable to access subject specific mentoring of an appropriate quality by specialist mentors with deep subject and pedagogical knowledge.

Our concern is that the proposed reforms will exacerbate the lack of capacity to effectively support trainee teachers of science with these complex issues. We recommend that there is a basic entitlement for teachers of science, including primary teachers, to observe and be supported to develop high quality science teaching, and that mentor training

raises expectations of subject specific expertise, through consideration of subject specific content and pedagogy. In addition, we request that additional funding is available to support subject specific mentors. The quality of provision and support that mentors are able to provide varies widely. We would advocate for more comprehensive mentor support for each core curriculum area, especially primary science, which has been a much lower priority over recent years in primary education.