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Report of the Department for Education Consultation on the NQT Draft Early Career Framework

**The School of Education,
The University of Sunderland.**

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Background and Context

1. On 15th December 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) launched a consultation¹ on strengthening Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and improving career progression for teachers, which set out a range of proposals:

- ensuring teachers have the right support in place at the beginning of their careers, raising the baseline of support for all teachers
- improving access to high-quality professional development,
- improving progression opportunities for all teachers throughout their careers.

2. Around 2,000 responses received and strong sector engagement at several large consultation events held throughout the country. Reception to the proposals set out in the consultation was largely positive and on 4th May 2018, the government's response was published², which took on board the feedback and recommendations from the sector.

3. As part of the response published by the government, they committed to introduce:

“...an Early Career Framework (ECF) for the induction period. The ECF will ensure new teachers have more support in this crucial phase of their career and schools have more guidance about what they should be offering their new teachers”.

(DfE, 2018)

4. In recognising the amount of work which is necessary to ensure the success of this initiative the DfE believe that it is necessary to undertake intensive work with the profession to determine what should be included within the framework, and how this should be delivered through enhancing professional development opportunities for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs).

5. This commitment to seeking the view of the wider profession led to representatives from the DfE approaching the Head of School of Education at the University of Sunderland to host a consultation event, in mid-October 2018, with strategic partners to seek their opinions and feedback around key areas in relation to the ECF.

¹ https://consult.education.gov.uk/teaching-profession-unit/strengthening-qts-and-improving-career-progression/supporting_documents/Strengthening%20Qualified%20Teacher%20Status%20and%20improving%20career%20progression%20for%20teachers%20consultation.pdf

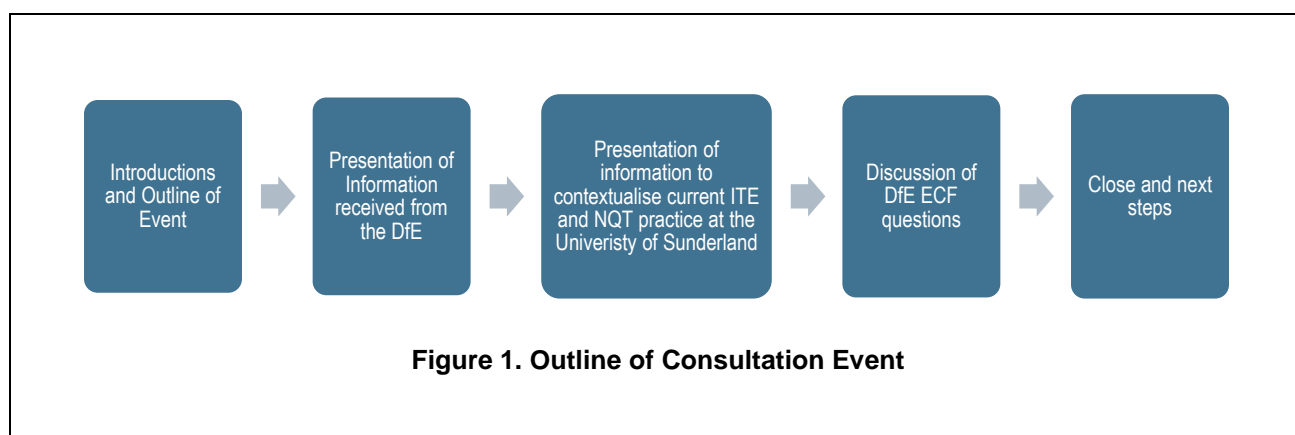
² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/704942/Government_consultation_response_-_QTS_and_career_progression.pdf

Outline of the Consultation Event

6. Following confirmation of the event, an invite to the consultation was extended from the Head of the School of Education at the University of Sunderland to strategic partners across all phases of education.

7. In opening the event, the Head of the School of Education reported to those assembled that unfortunately information had been just received that there would no longer be representation from the DfE due to circumstances out of her control. She went on to explain that in light of this late notice, and given the significance of the ECF the University of Sunderland were keen to continue as scheduled and a report would be produced and sent to the DfE representing the views of those in attendance.

8. Following the opening and introductions, those attending were provided with an outline of the purpose of the meeting, in doing so a statement from the DfE was read out which emphasised that the slides provided by the DfE to facilitate the event are not in the public domain and therefore their content should not be circulated more widely. The structure of the event was then shared with participants and this is outlined in Fig 1.



9. In introducing the content from the DfE, those gathered were informed that there was a national need to train 30,000 teachers across all phases of education. In considering this metric a number of factors leading to teacher attrition rates were discussed, these included the expectations of NQTs in the classroom, recruitment of teachers into the profession, retention of teachers beyond three years and a variance in opportunities for early career development of NQTs.

10. Initial discussions led to the identification of two areas to be further discussed in the consultation event; Support for NQTs and also determination of what constitutes *effective* Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Both of which were identified as key areas within the consultation which would shape future national policy.

11. It was highlighted that the ECF framework was being developed in response to the consultation on strengthening QTS to ensure that the right level of support was available to NQTs at the beginning of their career; to provide high quality professional development and improve progression across all phases of teaching.

12. The meeting was informed that the government was committed to:

- Extending the NQT induction period to two years
- Introducing the ECF as a means of supporting new teachers at the beginning of their career
- Strengthening mentoring provision by providing additional support for NQT mentors, which in turn, would be supported by revised mentor standards
- Strengthen the quality assurance of induction arrangements across all phases
- Developing specialist qualifications to support new teachers which align with the ECF and align with Chartered Teacher Status (CTeach)
- Piloting work related sabbaticals for those who have been in the profession for in excess of ten years
- Improving access to high-quality CPD

13. An outline of the overarching structure of the ECF was shared with participants. It was highlighted that there are two content areas within the proposed framework one of which is called *core* (containing; Classroom Management, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) the other being termed *Additional Elements* (containing; Subject Specific Training and Career Progression). It was further commented that exactly how these two areas would operate together had yet to be determined.

14. Following the outline of the ECF, supported by slides from the DfE, the meeting moved on to hear about the current provision at the University of Sunderland in order to summarise and contextualise current practice which those assembled would likely be familiar with so as to ensure a common starting point for discussion.

15. The first presentation into existing practices for Initial Teacher Training at the University of Sunderland was given by the Initial Teacher Training lead for the University of Sunderland. The meeting was informed of the steps taken to prepare teachers in training as they transitioned into the role of an NQT. An outline was given to the meeting of the support provided to trainee teachers from the initial induction week through to the transfer document used to target set for NQTs. (Formerly referred to as the Career Entry Development Profile (CEDP)).

16. The penultimate presentation into existing practices for Initial Teacher Training at the University of Sunderland was given by the programme leader for the Masters in Education (MA) at the University of Sunderland. Outline information around the newly validated Postgraduate Certificate in Education Studies³ for Newly Qualified /Early Career Teachers was shared with the meeting. It was highlighted that this aligned early career support with the professional development needs of NQTs and it was developed in light of partner and graduate responses.

17. The meeting was also informed of an initiative currently run at the University of Sunderland to help support mentors in their role in supporting both trainee teachers and NQTs. This was outlined as being a twelve hour course (free to participants) which looked at theory and best practice in mentoring, which was delivered by a teaching and learning expert with a nationally recognised profile in that area. To further support mentors in their own professional development the meeting was informed about how this development opportunity could be used as part of a postgraduate qualification.

18. The final presentation into existing practices for Initial Teacher Training at the University of Sunderland was given by the Quality Assurance and External Engagement Lead at the University of Sunderland. It sought to raise questions about the potential impact of a two year NQT period as detailed in the ECF, in doing so it was highlighted that ongoing dialogue from partners would be essential to feed into the training process so as to ensure that qualifications which incorporate the award of QTS are fit for purpose in preparing those transitioning into their time as an NQT.

19. After considering the current provision for supporting NQTs at the University of Sunderland, those gathered were asked to then consider three questions in response to the ECF proposal which would be explored in a group discussion, these were:

- What key roles do wider school staff play in supporting induction for NQTs (e.g. SLT/subject leads)? What's the balance between support and assessment of NQTs?
- How could mentors be better supported to help NQTs to develop their teaching practice and build their confidence in the classroom? What can we learn from existing best practice?
- How do we ensure that we create coherence across ITT, ECF and the Teacher Standards? How can we ensure that the ECF continues to build on the skills developed during ITT?

³ <https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/study/education/postgraduate-education/>

Discussion Element 1 - Wider Roles

What key roles do wider school staff play in supporting induction for NQTs (e.g. SLT/subject leads)? What's the balance between support and assessment of NQTs?

20. Following some focus group discussion on this specific question all assembled were asked to provide feedback on this area. Given the level of debate prevailing at the meeting some responses were offered which were not focused on the main question, however these are included for completeness and the fact that it was felt that they contributed to the wider response sought by the consultation exercise. The discussion raised the following points, which are presented here in full and in no order of priority.

21. It was felt that those supporting NQTs had to get the balance between support and assessment right and that this would primarily be undertaken by an allocated mentor. Recognising that both were essential elements in supporting NQTs to become outstanding teachers. Further it was recognised that there may be tensions between supporting and assessing NQTs abilities and progress.

22. Debate took place around who settings selected be undertake the role of *mentor* and even if these individuals, and in the case of those in the secondary phase should they be aligned to the subject specialism of the NQT, or would they benefit from the experience of a mentor from outside of the NQTs own department? It was also felt that in considering mentors and mentoring there could be a mentor power relationship with the NQT depending upon the position with the school structure which was held by the mentor. (It was felt important to recognise and acknowledge this even if it was not of detriment to the NQT).

23. Variance in the ability of mentor support between settings was discussed and it was highlighted that this could be for a vast range of reasons.

24. It was felt that to ensure effective mentoring took place it was necessary to bringing experts together who should support NQTs from different perspectives. However it was also recognised that NQTs need to experience working with a wide range of people, and in order to successfully undertake this it would be important to establish the culture in the school (where it was not so well defined presently) and also essential to establish expectations of those tasked with offering that support.

25. Concern was expressed that will extending the time period make a positive difference to the NQT experience of simply prolong it? Also questions were raised regarding how would it be financed given that staff formally supporting NQTs would need more time and that NQTs would be entitled to time table reductions for two years rather than one as is currently experienced.

26. Another area which was raised was that of retention and it was questioned if extending the NQT year to two years would be an enabling factor to keep NQTs in the profession and reduce attrition rates? Leading on from this, there was further discussion around when does an NQT actually access a permanent contract? Concern was raised that an extended two year NQT period could lead to NQTs being employed on temporary, or fixed term, contracts which may have implications for mortgages. As such a two year NQT year may prove to be detrimental to recruitment.

27. With further regard to attrition rates, the status of being an NQT for two years was raised as an area of concern. It was felt that there would need to be a careful balance between two years of support and two years of assessment – the latter of which may be detrimental to the numbers actually entering the profession and also to the retention of NQTs before the end of the two year period.

28. Assurances were sought in determining how the employment of NQTs covering temporary positions (e.g. Maternity leave) would be incorporated into the ECF and the extended two year NQT period. This included an understanding of the implications for settings and NQTs if this period is extended beyond that originally advertised, or ended in accordance with the time frame originally specified in appointing the NQT.

29. As the meeting continued, debate around the grading, and how expectations of trainees transitioning into the role of an NQT would be managed was raised. Given that there was one set of criteria for the assessment of QTS it was felt important for trainees and NQTs to be able to attain the highest outcomes (i.e.: outstanding grading) relative to their own training journey. With this in mind clarity was sought around how this would apply across the NQT two year period to ensure that reasonable expectations of NQTs could be established.

30. In specific feedback to the statement : *‘CPD Materials: the materials supporting the framework will need to be high quality and rigorous but assessment will be loose. Delivery routes could include online courses, supported by a mentor to ensure knowledge developed is translated effectively into classroom practice’* on one of the DfE slides it was concern was raised that the word ‘loose’ could be interpreted in many ways and it may well be better to elaborate on this to ensure parity between individuals and settings as this appears open to interpretation.

Discussion Element 2 – Mentor Support

How could mentors be better supported to help NQTs to develop their teaching practice and build their confidence in the classroom? What can we learn from existing best practice?

31. As in responding to the previous question, there was much debate around this question area and that is included here, in no order of preference and although some comments are not in strict alignment with the question being considered they are included for completeness.

32. There was discussion around the need to ensure that all mentors were working to a defined set of standards so as to ensure a minimum threshold of standards across providers (similar to those used in supporting trainee teachers). These should be clear and explicit and enable all mentors in schools to understand their role in supporting NQTs in their career progression.

33. Alongside developing the careers of the NQTs it was felt that it was essential to develop the careers of mentors. This was felt to include working beyond the formalities of mentor training. In order to support this it was commented that there should be supervision in place so as to ensure that mentors were supervised, coordinated and supported in undertaking their roles. A further suggestion was offered that this could take the form of an Advanced Practitioner module for those supervising and/or coordinating teams of mentors.

34. It was recognised that funding is a significant barrier to effective mentoring provision and as such, there was concern that there needs to be formalised investment on the part of the DfE to ensure provision could exist in every setting. Concern was also expressed that the continued reduction in teaching time for a second year, beyond the current single NQT year, may lead to a direct reduction in full time staffing to fund this initiative.

35. It was agreed that a mentoring roll which works on development of the NQT is the most effective, irrespective of the phase of education. Discussion went on to highlight that it was felt that it was essential to provide a mechanism of Quality Assurance (QA) for mentors across different settings so as to ensure parity in support for NQTs irrespective of where they completed their time as an NQT. It was suggested that a formal qualification for NQT mentors could be used to provide the baseline for QA and it would serve to also increase the status and profile of mentors in their own settings and the wider education sector.

36. Where there were examples of best practice it was felt that there was often a lack of time to share this between mentors and across settings. Consequently it was acknowledged that schools and settings which do this really well '*do it out of the goodness of their heart*'. It was also commented that in many settings the time given to mentors to do an effective job was also done "*out of the goodness of their heart*".

37. In addition to the time given to the mentors by their school or the setting, it was acknowledged that under current provision there is a heavy reliance on the goodwill of mentors to ensure effective support for NQTs.

38. One risk which was highlighted was that which could manifest if the whole process become burdensome, with particular concern raised in respect to paperwork and reporting. (e.g. Assessment).

Discussion Element 3 - Coherence

How do we ensure that we create coherence across ITT, ECF and the Teacher Standards? How can we ensure that the ECF continues to build on the skills developed during ITT?

39. As in responding to the previous question, debate continued and all of that is included here, in no order of preference.

40. It was agreed that to ensure coherence across ITT, ECF and QTS it was essential that the focus was about progression and lack of repetition, with a clear mapping to the Teacher's Standards as this is the area which all teachers will be already familiar. This led to further discussion about ensuring that judgements about NQTs are made against the anticipated standard pertinent to NQTs and not to highly experienced teachers.

41. Those attending also highlighted that some ITT providers grade trainees with a numerical output (Grades 1 -4), whilst others use more descriptive phrases (for example; Exceeding Expectations, Meeting Expectations, Below Expectations). In doing so it was felt that this did prepare NQTs equally for any assessment undertaken in their NQT year.

42. It was thought that it would be necessary to outline career stage expectations so as to bench mark progress and highlight opportunities that could be considered as part of the ECF. This may go some way to mitigate pressure and expectations on NQTs, but it also suggested that this (along with extending the NQT period from one year to two) could increase pressure on NQTs rather than ameliorate it.

43. Concern was expressed that by using terminology like: 'Nationally accredited framework' it would encourage some to view this as a *tick box exercise* focused on the collecting of evidence rather than offering real support to NQTs. Those present acknowledged that they did not want NQTs burdened with generating files which no one would look at beyond the completion of their NQT period, and the focus must be on developing a system which considered NQTs holistically in order for them to become better teachers.

44. It was highlighted that NQTs are frequently relieved to get their additional year of assessment out of the way following the completion of their ITT course so that they could '*get on with teaching*' and how would they feel if this was two years?

Conclusions and Summary

45. In conclusion it was agreed that although some detail surrounding the proposals of the ECF had been shared, much more information about how this would be rolled out and the implications it had for all stakeholders would be needed in order to fully determine the impact it would have.

46. Those participating in the consultation welcomed the opportunity to have an input into the process but expressed disappointment that there was no formal representation from the DfE present to hear their views and opinions first hand.

47. The consultation concluded with the Head of the School of Education thanking everyone for participating and it was agreed that the report generated from the minutes of the meeting would be circulated to all attendees.

Addendum

Following the meeting, and allowing time for further reflection the following comments and questions were received with respect to the proposals considered:

- Currently there are three periods of assessment for NQTs equating to one in each academic term. In implementing the ECF and the proposed two year NQT year would this be extended to six and in so doing effectively double the assessment commitment from schools and settings?
- If an NQT had a brilliant first year then started to flounder during their second NQT year could they be in danger of not being awarded QTS following two years in post?
- If an NQT is employed on a temporary contract and is part way through their two years of NQT training /time if they are unable to find another position within the time frame necessary to from NQT to being qualified with the award of QTS what would happen?
- With regard to the financial impact on settings, the question was raised that if an NQT was highly competent and not in need of additional teaching time for the entire two years of the proposal would there be provision to accommodate this?

It was also reemphasised that until the fine detail of the proposals was available, and widely circulated, it would be hard to determine how the proposals would support specific individuals and that until this point they would be open to interpretation.

Appendix

List of Participants and affiliations:

Shah Amin	University of Sunderland
Julia Belshaw	Barnes Infant Academy
Richard Benstead	North Yorkshire Coast Opportunity
Terry Coatham	University of Sunderland
Simone Collpitts	East Durham College
Dave Cookson	Northumberland Council
Kiera Dixon	Harton Academy
Susan Edgar	University of Sunderland
Kim Gilligan	University of Sunderland
Nick Grieveson	King James Academy
Clare Kerr	University of Sunderland
Leona Kelly	Burnside Academy
Danny Kilkenny	Kepier
Jackie Le Roy	Thornhill Academy
Andrea Luke	OLASS Manager, Her Majesty's Prison Service
Mhairi McGowan	North Tyneside SCITT
Mikeala Morgans	University of Sunderland
Nicola Parker	George Washington Primary School
Hazel Rounthwaite	University of Sunderland
Helen Saddler	University of Sunderland
Kath Shepherd	St Robert of Newminster
Samantha Tate	University of Sunderland
Gordon Todd	Churchill Community College
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The views expressed in this report are drawn from the consultation exercise undertaken at the request of the Department For Education (DfE) on the Draft Early Career Framework (ECF) for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and hosted by The School of Education at the University of Sunderland. As such, the views contained in this report emerged from that event and they do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education or The University of Sunderland.

Minutes taken by Clare Kerr and Report Prepared by David Wooff