



NASBTT Response to the Consultation on Strengthening qualified teacher status and career progression

Introduction

NASBTT, The National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers, is a membership organisation which contributes to the raising of standards and the development of high quality learning and teaching for pupils/children in schools. We aim to do this by promoting high quality in programmes of initial training, education and professional development of teachers, which are devised, delivered, managed and assessed by a school or partnership of schools. NASBTT currently has 187 members, representing some 90% of the schools-led institutions undertaking postgraduate school-led Initial Teacher Training.

NASBTT widely welcomes the proposals set out in the QTS Consultation and feels very positive about the way the Department is engaging with all stakeholders and is genuinely listening to what the profession wants. We are grateful for the explicit recognition of the excellent work already being carried out by the ITE sector and would endorse the view that the 'work' to be done is in the induction space rather than during the ITT year.

We have some concerns about the semantics within the proposal as, having recognised that the mechanism which leads to QTS is in an excellent place, it seems anomalous to then suggest that QTS needs improving. In fact, we would argue that QTS should remain where it is, with all the prestige and recognition that it, rightly, holds, and that Endorsed QTS should be awarded at the end of an extended induction period. Rather than "Strengthened QTS", we would argue that what we are, in fact consulting on is "Strengthened Induction".

In all of our responses below, we make the assumption that central funding will be provided to schools to allow these changes to take place. What is absolutely clear is that schools do not currently have the finances to support additional CPD for staff nor the reduction in timetables proposed for the extended induction period. For any of these proposals to be successful, funding must be committed which allows schools to commit time and resource into developing their staff. If left unfunded, the strain on schools would be too great and these proposals will have no chance of success.

Continuing Professional Development

Q1: Do you think that QTS should be awarded after a period of sustained professional practice rather than the end of ITT?

No. We strongly believe that QTS should remain where it is, at the end of the ITT year, and that 'Endorsed QTS' should be awarded after a period of sustained professional practice.

Q2: Do you agree that a core early career content framework and CPD offer for new teachers should be fundamental to a strengthened QTS?

We agree that a core early career content framework and CPD offer for new teachers should be fundamental to a strengthened **induction** but maintain that it is the induction period that needs to be strengthened, not QTS.

Q3: What core competencies, knowledge areas or particular skills do you think should be developed in a structured way during the induction period?

We are keen that the strengthened induction does not seek to cram **more** into a teacher's early career development but rather that careful consideration is given to what is **initial** and what should come later. There is a genuine opportunity to phase the professional learning for early career teachers and the temptation to squeeze more **content** in should be avoided. We should be aiming for greater depth over a sustained period of time. NASBTT's vision for a three-year period of training, which was first set out some two years ago, envisions the following:

Year 1: School-based practice. Focuses on pedagogy and relationship building. The realities of the classroom. Professionalism. Practical advice on class management, curriculum planning, time management, marking and feedback, subject knowledge *for teaching*, etc. Ready to 'hit the ground running' in their NQT year which is what Heads need from their staff.

Year 2: During the NQT year, time is set aside for academic study with a focus on 'Reflection on Practice'. At this point, they have some 'practice' to reflect on and can assimilate the theory behind many of the practical techniques they will already be aware of. For example, they will have been exposed to positive behaviour management techniques during Year 1 in a practical sense ... now they can contextualise the research which informed this practice, understanding why it is successful and giving them knowledge of a breadth of alternative strategies to consider in a range of circumstances and for different children. NQTs will, in this year, be exposed to ways of thinking that might differ from those they have been exposed to in school and will widen perspectives from a place of practical knowledge.

Year 3: By now, teachers will have a sense of what interests them, what type of teacher they are/would like to become. They use this year to focus on a research area which either meets their personal interests or a need within their school. Funded time is given (we would suggest a half term) to write a dissertation exploring this area of interest. This dissertation **could** finalise a journey to Master's Level qualification and thus feed back into the system research carried out by a practising teacher based on real-life examples which support their hypotheses.

Q4: To achieve these objectives, do you think we should extend the induction period?

Yes.

Q5: We have used the names QTS(P) and QTS throughout this document. Do you think that these terms are appropriate?

No. We recommend QTS and Endorsed QTS as an alternative. We believe that parents and the public at large expect that those teaching children are appropriately qualified and that any teacher holding QTS should be able to give an unequivocal affirmative answer to the question 'are you qualified?' We all expect our doctors to be qualified but few would find the information about the exact nature of the qualification important. The use of the term 'provisional' may be relevant internally within the profession but extremely unhelpful in the wider public context.

Mentoring

Q6: Which of these proposals do you think would help improve the quality and quantity of mentoring for all new teachers?

We agree that all of the proposals would help to improve the quality and quantity of training but would caution that in order to be effective, the role must be supported with funding which allows financial recognition for the role to be made and to allow sufficient release time to carry out the role effectively. NASBTT continues to support the professional development of Teacher Educators including creating a suite of qualifications which encompass focused training for mentors in school, as we have recognised there is a need to formalise the training and recognise the importance of this role within schools.

Q7: How else can we improve the quality and quantity of mentoring for all new teachers?

One of the main barriers to effective mentoring is that it is seen as an additional 'burden' rather than a natural step in a teacher's career. Often mentors are pushed into the role by a headteacher seeking to make timetables work rather than being a self-selecting role which is recognised with higher status, financial recompense and increased release time. In many cases, training and development are not offered and skills are assumed rather than explicitly taught. Excellent mentoring takes great skill and should be given the recognition that it deserves. It should be, for example, one of the career pathways identified for those who seek to extend their career within the classroom context.

Development Time

Q8: How should we ensure that new teachers get sufficient time to focus on their professional development?

We recognise that this is a complex issue which will be approached by schools in different ways. Some of the suggestions in the consultation, such as extending the reduced timetable into the second year, are very positive in principle but come with the obvious question around how it can be funded. Reducing expectations for non-classroom related tasks in a teacher's early career seems sensible but schools must be careful not to overload more senior colleagues to compensate this as this simply moves the problem elsewhere. Much of the work being carried out by the Workload Review Group is already tackling this issue but it will take time to change cultures. One big step change which would have a real impact would be for guarantees from government to refrain from significant changes to, for example, the curriculum as this has an enormous impact on workload for everyone within the school. We would recommend that ensuring adequate time is given for CPD becomes a focus of the new Ofsted Framework as this will quickly ensure compliance by schools.

Assessment and Accreditation

Q9: Do you agree that the QTS assessment should be conducted internally and be independently verified by an appropriate body?

No. As has already been recognised, an internal assessment which is independently verified is the system we already have, and this has resulted in inconsistencies in approach and variability in the quality of training and support. We would recommend greater involvement of ITE partnerships in the induction process, with assessment being carried out by ITE providers who have extensive skills and knowledge when it comes to assessing progress against the Teachers' Standards.

Q10: How do you think we should strengthen the independent verification of QTS accreditation?

If, as per our recommendation, QTS accreditation is carried out by Accredited Providers, extensive quality assurance measures are already in place through the Ofsted inspection compliance with the ITT criteria. The QA process is “ready-made” and Ofsted inspections could be extended to incorporate the assessment for Endorsed QTS at the end of the second year of induction.

Q11: What role do you think ITT providers could play in the assessment and accreditation of QTS?

We believe ITT providers should be the main mechanism through which Endorsed QTS is achieved.

Additional Considerations

Q12: Do you think we should maintain the limitation on how long a teacher can teach on a supply basis without completing QTS?

Whilst we maintain that QTS should remain at the end of the ITT year, we agree that there should be a limitation on how long a teacher can teach on a supply basis without being awarded Endorsed QTS.

Q13: Considering all of the above, what impact would this model of a strengthened QTS have on post-ITT teachers in terms of teaching practice, retention, and morale?

If the semantics are changed so that QTS remains where it is and is not devalued for those already holding this status, and instead the discourse is around “entitlement” to ongoing support and training during the **induction** process, then we believe the impact on teaching practice, retention and morale will be widely positive. In setting out our own three-year vision, we identified the following positive outcomes which we expect to result from a more structured entitlement to support:

1. Teachers will be more well-rounded and evidence-informed;
2. Research and practice will become more naturally dovetailed;
3. NQTs will be better prepared to face the realities of life as a teacher – giving schools what they need from their staff;
4. Retention will be improved with this clearly mapped out early career development;
5. The profession will benefit from the building body of evidence from action research projects exploring real situations in real schools;
6. Close partnerships between schools, SCITTs and HEIs;
7. Freer movement of people from the classroom into teacher education roles and back;
8. Opens pathways for career development which are not purely focused on senior leadership.

Q14: What impact would this model of a strengthened QTS have on the wider school system?

The obvious hurdle which schools will face will be a financial one. The consultation represents an incredibly positive step towards raising the status of teaching and teachers but unless properly funded, it could be disastrous for schools, adding immense pressure to already shrinking budgets and leading to ‘cutting corners’ to ‘tick the boxes’ rather than entering into the changes in the spirit with which they are intended.

Q15: Are there any other implications that we should consider, and what are your suggestions for addressing them?

The language used around these proposals needs to be carefully considered so that unintended consequences are avoided. If prospective entrants to the profession see what was a one-year process suddenly appearing to be a three year 'marathon', we may lose applicants which would be disastrous. It is for this reason that we are so strongly advocating for QTS to remain where it is. It is well understood and widely recognised and moving this may well result in confusion and discomfort. It may also devalue those that already hold QTS and lead to greater negative messages about and within the profession at a time where, more than ever, we need positive messages to be disseminated.

There may also be confusion around the term 'Provisional QTS' (if this were to be introduced) in terms of international recognition of our ITE provision. You have rightly pointed out that this is currently well respected on the international stage and to change the award given at the end of this year may lead to a devaluing of our provision in international circles.

Whilst we agree with many of these proposals to strengthen the 'foundation', there is a danger in doing so without a clearer idea of the 'building' such foundations are intended to support. A review of the Standards themselves, or at the very least, a clear set of statements which exemplify what is to be expected at different stages in a career, would go a long way to helping with a clearly mapped out pathway for progression.

Professional Qualifications

Q16: Do you think that there is a market for specialist NPQs – or similar – for teachers who aspire to other forms of leadership within the school system?

Yes – we welcome this proposal.

Q17: What specialisms should be prioritised?

Our particular interest is in Teacher Education and we would actively encourage that this is one of the career pathways which is prioritised. NASBTT are already making headway with a suite of qualifications addressing this need and the appetite for this professional development is healthy. Other specialisms might include SEND, Classroom Practice and Pedagogy, Subject Specialisms, EAL, Curriculum Design, Assessment, Research and Wellbeing.

Q18: Do you think there is a market for non-leadership NPQs – or similar – aimed at further developing subject expertise? How should they differ between primary and secondary phases?

Yes – we would welcome this proposal.

Q19: What additional support should be offered for teachers who work in more challenging schools to undertake further professional qualifications?

Grants/bursaries which fund these qualifications. Rewards (financial or otherwise) for schools who are seen to be promoting professional qualifications among their staff. Opportunities for secondments to other schools as an integral part of these qualifications. Access to networks and peer mentoring opportunities.

Q20: Do you agree that a CPD badging scheme is something that should be developed? What organisations might be best placed to deliver this service?

Yes – we would welcome this proposal. AATEP, the newly formed joint organisation representing a collaboration between NASBTT (The National Association for School-Based Teacher Trainers) and UCET (The Universities Council for the Education of Teachers) would be well placed to undertake this role.

Q21: How should government incentivise effective professional development for teachers, particularly in the areas and schools where it is most needed?

The proposed incentives are positive but could easily become an exercise in ‘box-ticking’ if not managed appropriately.

We feel there is a mismatch between the scrutiny and accountability placed on ITE providers who offer training for the first year of professional development comparative to the complete lack of quality assurance, accountability and inspection for providers of CPD. We would recommend that, should the entitlements be set out as per the consultation (and we would agree that they should be), providers of this CPD should be subject to the same levels of compliance and accountability as ITE provision.

We further recommend that existing ITE providers are encouraged, through financial incentives and support from the Department, to expand their offering into career development throughout a teacher’s career as there could be few organisations better placed to do so.

Schools’ should be required to evidence involvement with high quality CPD provision as part of their own inspections and high levels of genuine engagement with training providers should be a pre-requisite for an outstanding inspection grade.

Mentoring

Q22: How can government best support the development of a genuine culture of mentoring in schools?

We welcome the focus on the mentoring role and the proposals around ‘train the trainer’ style CPD as this reflects the work we are already undertaking with our suite of qualifications for Teacher Educators. As we have mentioned elsewhere in this consultation, mentoring must be seen as a valued and valuable role and should be recognised as such. Sharper focus on the development of high quality mentoring through inspection foci, messages from central government and a greater expectation that CPD provision is quality assured and monitored will all help to change the culture around mentoring in schools.

Sabbaticals

Q23: Do you think that a fund to pilot sabbaticals would be a positive step for the profession?

Yes, in principle, although if funding is limited, we feel that other proposals in this consultation should take precedence. We should not underestimate the effect of a short break for those individuals for whom the stress and workload associated has caused exhaustion to return to the profession in which they are experienced suitably refreshed. Enabling a teacher to continue would be more cost effective than recruiting and training a replacement.

Q24: What would the impact be for teachers and schools of enabling more teachers to take sabbaticals, providing they are related to their teaching practice?

Possible outcomes might include improved long-term retention, a dovetailing of research and practice, improved attractiveness of the profession, improvements in quality of teaching resulting from lessons learned whilst on sabbatical.