

Dear colleague,

On 12 September, I wrote to you with details of the new approach to assuring the fundamental English and mathematics skills of trainee teachers.

I am now writing to you with further information about the transition from the skills test to provider-led assurance and to answer questions raised in the last few weeks.

### **Which candidates still need to pass the skills test?**

Trainees starting courses before 1 April 2020 (including those doing Assessment Only courses, apprenticeships or Early Years ITT) will still need to pass the skills test.

Candidates starting their courses from 1 April 2020 do not need to book a skills test. This means that candidates starting their undergraduate and postgraduate courses in September 2020 do not need to take the skills test.

### **Where can candidates take the skills test?**

Test centres will continue to be available across the UK until 14 June 2020. Full details of locations can be found on the skills test website:  
<http://sta.education.gov.uk/>.

### **What about trainees who are ‘deferred for skills test’?**

Trainees who entered teacher training prior to 1 July 2013 and completed their teacher training courses, but still need to pass skills test to be recommended for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) are defined as ‘deferred for skills test’.

If these trainees wish to gain QTS, they should book tests via the skills test website at their earliest convenience. There is no longer a lock out period for those who have previously failed tests and test centres will be open until 14 June 2020, so please encourage trainees to book tests.

After June 2020, ‘deferred for skills test’ trainees who still wish to achieve QTS may need to comply with new requirements or processes to ensure they have the fundamental English and mathematics to be recommended for QTS. We will share further details next year.

### **How should ITT providers assure fundamental English and mathematics skills?**

Since September, we have continued to work with MillionPlus, UCET, NASBTT, Teaching Schools Council and ITT providers. We have mapped their current recruitment and course content against the required fundamental skills.

The vast majority of ITT providers are covering the fundamental skills already. Providers do not need to cover a topic at interview if candidates already demonstrate the required skills or will be able to develop this skill during the course. There is no expectation to introduce tests or assessments.

Some ITT providers have very innovative approaches to assessing and developing candidates and trainees. These ideas are being shared by providers and representative bodies.

<https://www.ucet.ac.uk/11286/fundamental-english-mathematics-proficiencies-faqs>

<https://www.ucet.ac.uk/11288/fundamental-english-and-mathematics-proficiencies-examples-from-itt-providers>

<https://www.nasbtt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Fundamental-English-and-Mathematics-Proficiencies-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>

If you have any feedback or ideas, please contact us at:  
[Skills.TESTS@education.gov.uk](mailto:Skills.TESTS@education.gov.uk)

### **How will Ofsted inspect fundamental skills?**

Ofsted will expect providers to comply with the requirements set out in the ITT criteria:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-criteria/initial-teacher-training-itt-criteria-and-supporting-advice>

Ofsted will simply continue to inspect ITT providers' recruitment and selection of trainees. Inspectors will continue to ask:

1. providers about the processes and procedures in place to recruit and select trainees who are ready to begin training to teach.
2. leaders how they are responding to the needs of individuals and groups of trainees. In particular, how they are adapting the training programme or pastoral arrangements for each new cohort of trainees.

Going forward, inspectors are likely to ask ITT providers how they:

- identify any gaps in prospective trainees' fundamental English and mathematics skills, which will not be covered in the course content.
- support trainees admitted to the training programme(s) who have identified gaps.
- ensure any identified gaps are filled before course completion.

Ofsted will **not** expect ITT providers to have any particular recruitment and selection process. Ofsted will **not** expect evidence about recruitment to be presented in any particular manner.

I would like to thank you for your continuing contribution to this work and the wider work of the Department.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Hope

Deputy Director, Teacher Services