



The National Association of  
School-Based Teacher Trainers

# ***Subject Knowledge for Teaching (SKfT) Framework***

**A Fresh Look at the  
Subject Knowledge for Teaching (SKfT)  
Framework**

Laying the foundations for secure  
subject knowledge and pedagogy  
during Initial Teacher Training

Part of  
***NASBTT's Subject Knowledge  
and Curriculum Design Toolkit***

**Third Edition  
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# Developing Trainees' Subject Knowledge for Teaching (SKfT)

## Introduction

The Subject Knowledge for Teaching (SKfT) framework seeks to 'map out' how trainee teachers can best be supported in their acquisition of high-quality subject knowledge and pedagogy. It was developed by a team working for the then Training and Development Agency (TDA) and first appeared in 2007. The framework was well received by many in the sector and has enjoyed a currency which still resonates with many involved in ITE to this day. For example, several of the ITE Ofsted inspection reports (published in 2019) refer specifically to the concept of *Subject Knowledge for Teaching*.

The perceived need at the time of the framework's original publication was to encourage, mainly, school-based programme leaders (working in SCITT and GTP provision) to review and strengthen the quality of the subject training they offered to their trainee teachers.

NASBTT's Subject Knowledge working group has refreshed the SKfT framework to meet the current context in which providers of ITT are working. It is designed to underpin **NASBTT's Subject Knowledge and Curriculum Design Toolkit** which has been produced with the intention of supporting your provision to build a coherent conception of each curriculum area in order to recognise individual subjects as being distinct and specific. The overall intention of the *Toolkit* is to support and challenge provision through a range of potential starting points to develop specific content for teaching as well as negotiating the bigger picture of the debate in the subject.

This Subject Knowledge for Teaching (SKfT) framework documentation comprises the following sections:

- [Section One: NASBTT Rationale for SKfT](#)
- [Section Two: Revised Subject Knowledge for Teaching \(SKfT\) Frameworks](#)
- [Appendix A: How do trainees acquire high-quality subject knowledge and pedagogy?](#)
- [Appendix B: SKfT Review Questions and Planning Template \(for providers\)](#)
- [Appendix C: The TDA SKfT Framework in Context](#)
- [Acknowledgements](#)

## Section One: NASBTT Rationale for SKfT

In revisiting the Subject Knowledge for Teaching (SKfT) framework, we have taken account of the *ITT Core Content Framework* (DfE: November 2019) - particularly as it relates to Teaching Standard 3 - and sought to embed the key principles identified. We have also taken note of the draft ITE inspection framework and handbook and attempted to ensure that the language utilised is compatible throughout. We have also been mindful of the recommendations in *Addressing Teacher Workload in ITE* (DfE: November 2018).

We hope that ITE programme leaders and designers will welcome our refreshed advocacy for the framework and find it to be of value in helping them to:

- a) strengthen the **depth and coherence** of both the central and school-based subject knowledge and pedagogy training strands they offer;
- b) help to **promote trainees' self-determination** as they read about, experience, reflect upon and evaluate the widest range of approaches and strategies that are necessary to plan and teach their subject(s) well.

In refreshing the framework we have acknowledged the current shift in thinking away from the (some would say too narrow) focus on trainee outcomes (linked sometimes to an atomistic assessment against the Teachers' Standards).

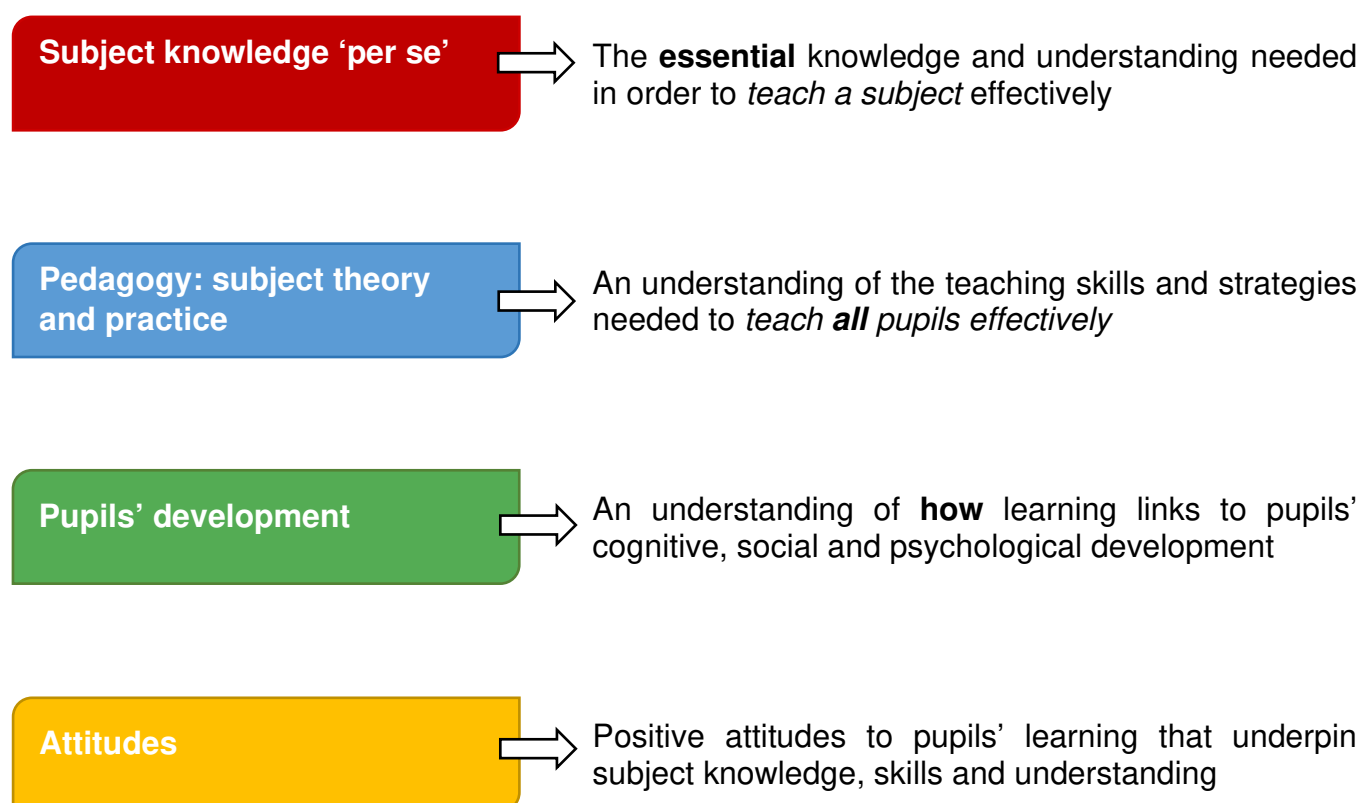
It is clear that the ITE curriculum and the intentions behind it are set to come under a renewed spotlight and, as a consequence, the rationale (curriculum intent) which lies behind ITE programmes, coupled with the implementation and impact of these on trainees' teaching and effectiveness, will be of significant importance going forward. It is clear that the acquisition and application of high-quality subject knowledge and pedagogy will lie at the heart of this.

We have also sought to enhance the original TDA framework by:

- placing a greater emphasis on the need for trainees to explore, critically reflect on and self-evaluate how successfully they apply key aspects of pedagogical development;
- widening the interpretation of child development to include a sound working knowledge of cognitive development – the science of learning;
- clarifying how the four strands inter-relate - as depicted in the Olympic Rings-style graphic.

## Section Two: Subject Knowledge for Teaching (SKfT) Framework

There are **four** key strands:



Two sections follow:

- **Key questions for providers** to address as they review their curriculum for subject knowledge and pedagogy;
- **Key questions for trainees** to ask of themselves at key points throughout their *initial* teacher training – leading to the identification of **naturally occurring** evidence of their progress and attainment.

**Note:** The 'Olympic Rings' graphic was chosen deliberately to reinforce the significant interaction between the four strands (which we have retained below).

### Important Note:

In Paragraph 170 of the recently published draft ***ITE Inspection Framework and Handbook*** Ofsted identifies **three** key components which partnerships will be expected to successfully integrate into their ITE programmes:

- general principles for learning **to teach** (such as the application of up-to-date research in the *science of learning* or in *classroom management*)
- learning to **teach a subject** (subject *knowledge*, subject *pedagogy* and subject *curriculum*)
- learning to **be** a teacher (professional behaviours and values)

## Subject Knowledge per se

How does **subject training** ensure trainees' knowledge and understanding of:

- the essential concepts, knowledge, skills and principles of the subject - the subject's *big ideas*
- learning progression as defined by the National Curriculum/other relevant specifications and agreed curriculum rationales
- the relevance of the subject and why aspects are taught
- the place of specific knowledge/learning within the wider context of the subject curriculum
- the links and connections within the subject and across the broader curriculum (including the shared responsibility in developing literacy (*and numeracy*) skills)?

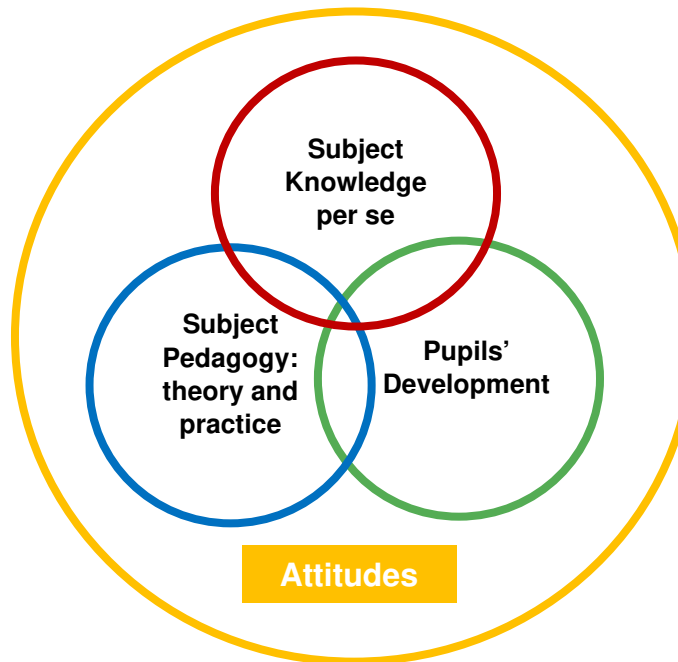
## Pupils' Development

How does **subject training** ensure trainees' knowledge and understanding of:

- how pupils develop as learners in the subject including their development as critical thinkers
- how pupils' learning is affected by cognitive, social and psychological development, taking into account religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic influences as necessary
- the range of ways in which pupils learn
- how subject teaching needs to be adapted to meet pupils' individual needs and contexts
- how parents and carers contribute to their children's learning and development?

## A Subject Knowledge for Teaching Curriculum:

Questions for **Providers**



## Pedagogy

How does **subject training** ensure trainees have:

- a *range* of teaching skills and strategies to promote pupils' learning and progress, including effective behaviour management
- the ability to plan sequences of lessons and *engage* with curriculum design which provides the opportunity for all pupils to learn and master critical components
- skills in the assessment of pupils' learning and progress and the ability to plan teaching which meets pupils' *emerging needs*
- the ability to make a subject fully accessible to pupils at different stages in their learning and ensure a stimulating and supportive climate for learning
- high expectations of all pupils and the skill to adapt their teaching to overcome any barriers by anticipating common misconceptions and acquiring strategies to address these successfully
- the ability to reflect on and improve the quality of teaching and learning
- the knack of managing time and resources efficiently and to best effect?

## Attitudes

How does **subject training** ensure trainees' commitment to and enthusiasm for:

- the inclusion, achievement and well-being of all pupils
- adopting creative approaches to teaching the subject and engaging all learners
- working *with*, contributing *to* and learning *from* colleagues
- the *value* of continuing professional development?

## Subject Knowledge per se

How does my **subject knowledge development and practice** evidence my knowledge and understanding of:

- the essential concepts, knowledge, skills and principles of the subject - the subject's *big ideas*
- learning progression as defined by the National Curriculum/other relevant specifications and/or agreed curriculum rationales
- the relevance of the subject and why aspects are taught
- the place of specific knowledge/learning within the wider context of the subject
- the links and connections within the subject and across the broader curriculum (including the shared responsibility in developing literacy (*and numeracy*) skills)?

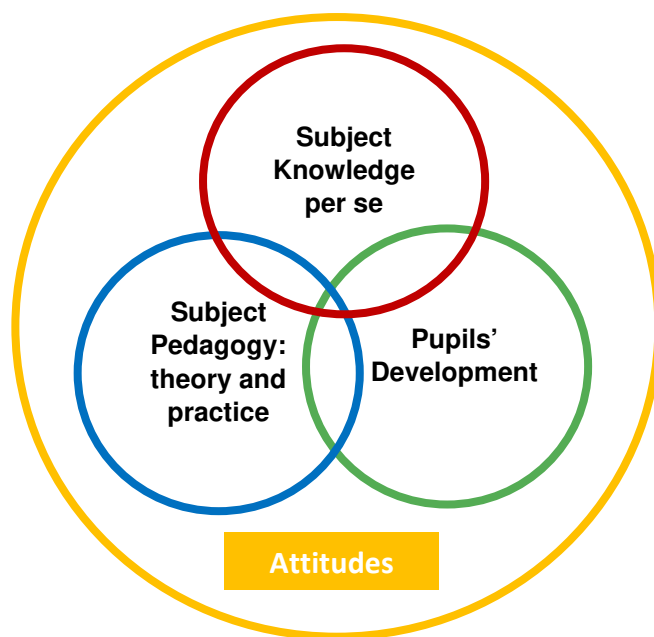
## Pupils' Development

How does my **subject knowledge development and practice** evidence my knowledge and understanding of:

- how pupils develop as learners in the subject including their development as critical thinkers
- common misconceptions and potential barriers to learning and ways of addressing these
- how pupils' learning is affected by cognitive, social and psychological development taking into account religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic influences as necessary
- the range of ways in which pupils learn
- how subject teaching needs to be adapted to meet pupils' individual needs and contexts
- how parents and carers contribute to their children's learning and development?

## A Subject Knowledge for Teaching Curriculum:

### Questions for *Trainees*



## Pedagogy

How does my **subject knowledge development and practice** show:

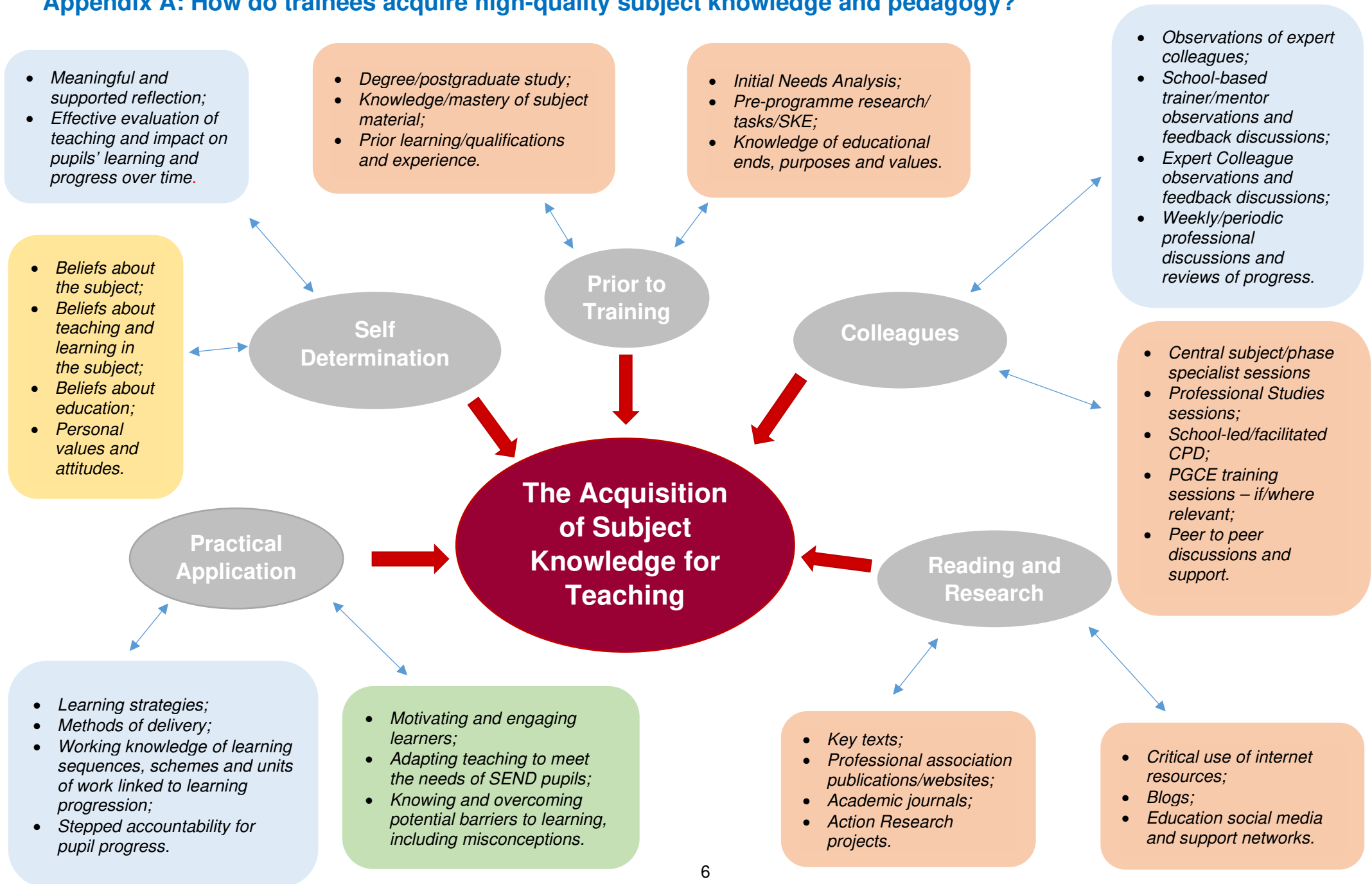
- *the range* of teaching skills and strategies I use to promote pupils' learning and progress (including effective behaviour management)
- my understanding of relevant learning theories and their relationship with pupils' learning and my own practice
- my ability to plan sequences of lessons (and begin to contribute to curriculum design) which provides the opportunity for all pupils to learn and master critical components
- my skills in the assessment of pupils' learning and progress and my ability to plan teaching which meets all pupils' *emerging needs*
- my ability to make the subject fully accessible to pupils at different stages in their learning and ensure a stimulating and supportive climate for learning
- my high expectations of all pupils and ability to adapt my teaching to overcome barriers to their learning by anticipating common misconceptions and acquiring strategies to address these successfully
- my ability to reflect on and improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning I am responsible for
- that I can manage my time and resources efficiently and to best effect?

## Attitudes

How does my **subject knowledge development and practice** evidence my commitment to and enthusiasm for:

- the inclusion, achievement and well-being of all pupils
- adopting creative approaches to teaching the subject and engaging all learners
- supporting all pupils to develop a positive attitude towards the subject and countering any negative attitudes
- working *with*, contributing *to* and learning *from* the work of my colleagues
- the *value* of continuing professional development?

## Appendix A: How do trainees acquire high-quality subject knowledge and pedagogy?





## Appendix B: SKfT Review Questions and Planning Template (for providers)

Prompt	Provider comments
<b>Review logistics</b>	
Are relevant members of the strategic management group and subject/phase leaders familiar with the Subject Knowledge for Teaching (SKfT) framework? If not, how will this be addressed?	
Have you agreed a 'vision' ( <b>curriculum intent</b> ), at strategic level, which will underpin your SKfT curriculum?	
How will the framework be used to contribute to a thorough review of the quality of your current curriculum for SKfT?	
Who will be involved in the review? How?	



Prompt	Provider comments
<p>How will you review all aspects of your current curriculum for SKfT in relation to the four strands, taking into consideration the following aspects? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• roles and responsibilities for training</li> <li>• selection</li> <li>• initial Needs Analysis and follow-up action plans</li> <li>• individualised training</li> <li>• scoping central and school-based training programmes</li> <li>• assessment of trainees' progress and achievements</li> <li>• training the trainers</li> <li>• resources to support training</li> <li>• quality assurance</li> <li>• cross-referencing to relevant guidance, e.g. <i>ITT Core Content Framework</i> (DfE: November 2019); <i>Addressing Teacher Workload in ITE</i> (DfE: November 2018) and referencing the draft ITE inspection framework and handbook (Ofsted: January 2020)?</li> </ul>	

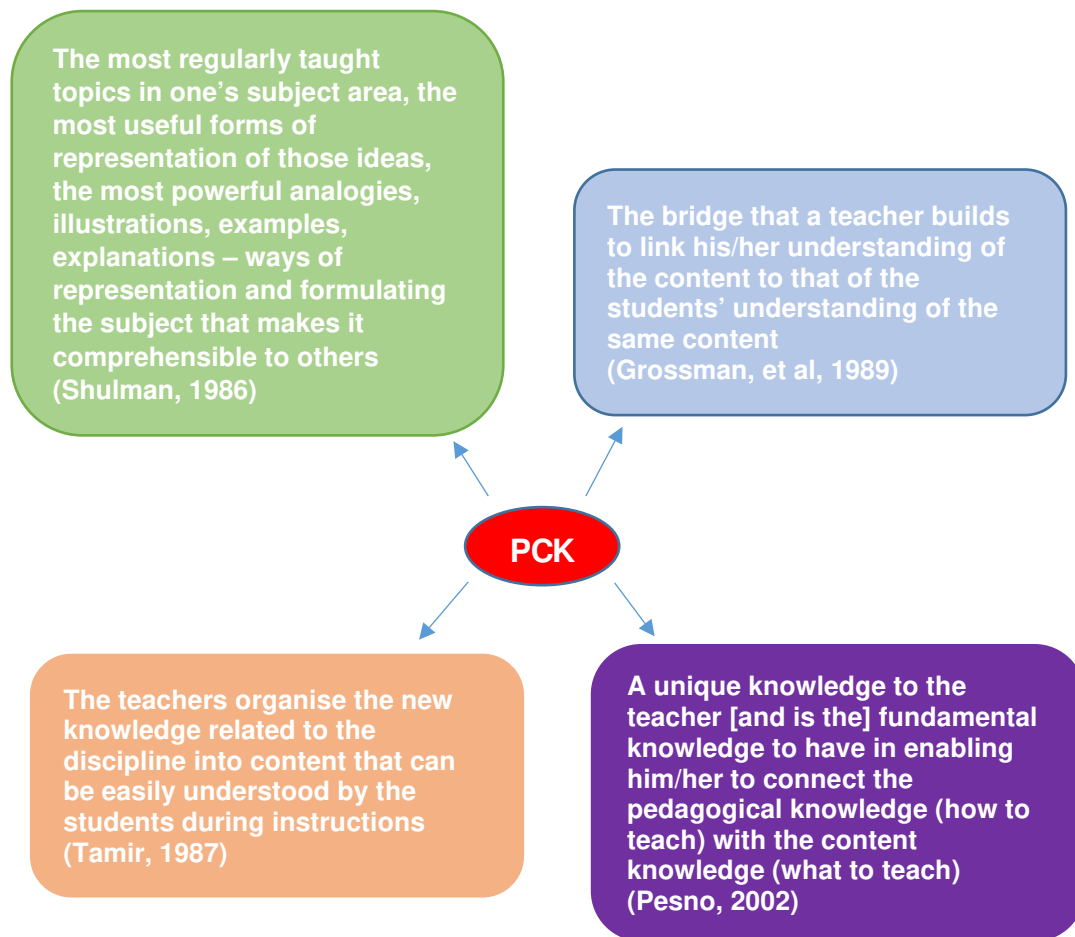
Prompt	Provider comments
<p>* If not all aspects, which do you plan (as part of the distinctive nature and context of your provision) to prioritise as part of your review, and why?</p>	
<p>How will subject leaders and others undertaking reviews work to a common set of criteria?</p>	
<p>What evidence and recommendations for development and improvement will be required from subject leaders and others?</p>	
<p>What is the timescale for the review?</p>	

Prompt	Provider comments
How will the outcomes of the review be reported to your strategic management group and all subject leaders, with recommendations for development and improvement?	

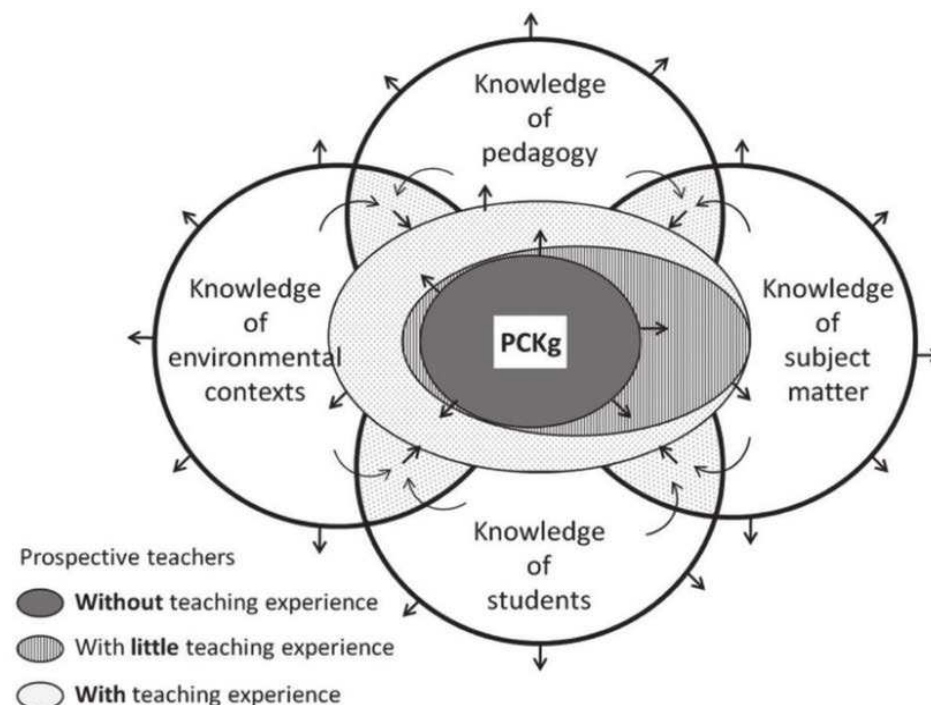
## Appendix C: The TDA SKfT Framework in Context

The SKfT framework was evidently influenced by research undertaken by a number of academics in the eighties and nineties who were looking at how teachers acquire Pedagogical Content Knowledge (often referred to in the literature as PCK); most notable of these are Shulman (1986), Grossman (1990), Cochran et al (1993) and Turner-Bisset (1997). We include the visual representations below to demonstrate how this process developed:

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2** (Cochran et al 1993)



As can be seen, the SKfT framework synthesises key elements of the above.

The framework was, originally, linked to the Every Child Matters agenda which underpinned the QTS Standards of the time.

## Acknowledgements

1. The work of the original TDA team led by Linda Rowe – this included Andrew Taylor and Norman Blackett
2. Figure 1 has proved to be difficult to attribute but has been reproduced from <https://slideplayer.com/slide/7544991/> (published by Cornelia Griffin)
3. Figure 2. 'Pedagogical content knowing: an integrative model for teacher preparation' - Journal of Teacher Education 44 - Cochran, K, Deruiter, J and King, R. (1993)
4. Lee Shulman's pioneering paper on Subject Content and Pedagogical Content 'Those who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching' can be accessed here: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f29d/a5d8c806102b060e7669f67b5f9a55d8f7c4.pdf>