



Being an External Moderator

Thursday, 21st September 2023

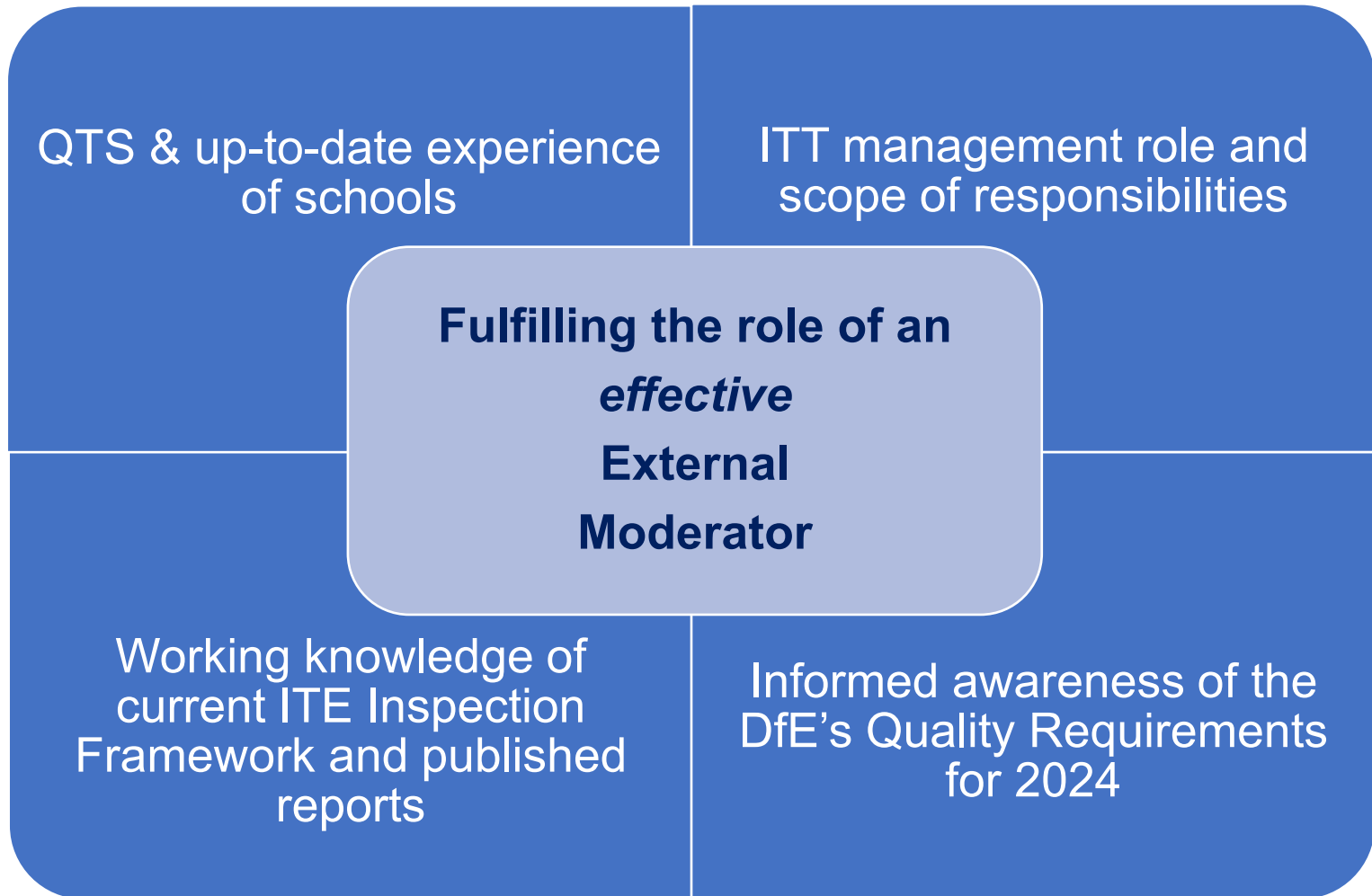
Kim Francis (NASBTT Trustee and ITT Consultant)
Jo Anderson (SCITT Director, Wildern Partnership SCITT)

Workshop Objectives

- To equip delegates with the essential knowledge required to provide confident and effective external moderation of ITT provision
- To present models/examples to support the planning and delivery of effective external moderation – including report structures
- To identify common misconceptions, pitfalls and possible dilemmas and offer solutions and strategies via case studies and peer-to-peer discussions



Meeting the Job Specification



Starting Points



DfE statutory guidance: [Initial teacher training \(ITT\): criteria and supporting advice](#) (Updated 16 June 2023*)

C3.4 Quality Assurance:

- “External moderators should have **no direct involvement with the work of the partnership** . . . should offer **an external perspective** on the **attainment of other providers’ trainees** being assessed for the award of QTS . . . to [help] verify the accuracy of the provider assessments. Providers should consider how to use external moderators to **corroborate** and **standardise** their assessments of trainees.”
- “Providers should ensure that external moderators have **relevant expertise and experience** to enable them to carry out their roles competently**. They should also **ensure the views of external moderators are taken into account fully** when reaching decisions about trainees’ achievement of the Teachers’ Standards.”
- “Producing a report that includes an **evaluation of the “strengths and weaknesses of the provision observed**, clearly linked to the Teachers’ Standards and ITT criteria and including **an evaluation of the accuracy of the assessments of trainees’ attainment against the Teachers’ Standards.**”

* *The criteria for 2024 relating to external moderation is identically worded*

** *appropriate subject, curriculum or age-phase expertise to enable them to provide specialist feedback*

Starting Points

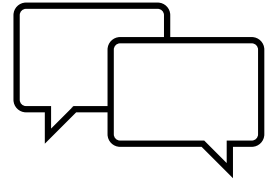


NASBTT [Management Handbook for Schools-led Initial Teacher Training \(ITT\)](#) (Fourth Edition, June 2020)

Chapter 5, Pages 1-4:

- “The **basic requirement** is that the **moderator** is able to **verify that the partnership’s final assessment of trainees *prior to the award of QTS* is consistent and compatible with the standards seen regionally and nationally.**”
- “Agreement should be reached regarding **any particular foci** for the moderator’s work to **enable appropriate feedback regarding strengths and areas for further development.**”
- “**Careful consideration** should be **given to the timing** of the external moderator’s visits so that **their validation is *available*** to support final assessments ***leading to the recommendation for the award of QTS.***”

Talking point



From your perspective as an ITE programme leader:

- How have external moderators been selected for your provision?
Have there been any challenges?
- How have you ensured that external moderation visits have been planned to provide opportunities to:
 - a) validate (“corroborate and standardise”) your internal assessment processes prior to the award of QTS?
 - b) identify strengths and aspects for further improvement (“of the provision observed”)?
- Can you identify examples from the external moderator’s work that has directly informed improvement of your provision?

Negotiating for Maximum Engagement

Plan in advance with Programme Leaders to secure **sufficient** opportunities to enable you to validate the accuracy and consistency of assessment processes at key stages leading up to recommendation for QTS - likely activities will include:

- undertaking a “**detailed scrutiny of a sample of trainees**, including a representative cross-section of trainees, together with any trainees that internal moderators regard as being close to the pass/fail borderline, or possible failures”
- **observing the teaching of trainees in a designated sample**, especially any assessed as being borderline pass/fail (establishing clarity as to why trainees’ teaching is being observed is useful for all parties)
- undertaking “**discussion[s] with internal assessors and/or moderators of all the evidence available** to provide confidence that individual trainees have achieved the Teachers’ Standards ...”
- “**scrutinising internal moderation arrangements**, drawing on some of the evidence gained from the activities above.”

*All of the above are identified in the ITT criteria and supporting advice – “The responsibilities of external moderators **might** include ...”*



Ensuring Rigour and Challenge - 1

Negotiate in advance with Programme Leaders **a contract** to ensure appropriate rigour and challenge. This is a paid and vital role; you want to offer value for money.

- Contracts should include: terms and conditions, set out agreements for expenses, travel and accommodation arrangements, clear roles and responsibilities centered around ITT criteria compliance and strategic priorities. Example would be three years plus a grace year. This enables you to be 'part of the journey' and follow through on recommendations;
- Ultimately, you are contracted to moderate assessment judgements. Consider observing trainees teach *with little background information* in order to make an informed and accurate judgement on the evidence you gather. (Exceptions would be for sensitive or personal issues affecting trainees or mentors/staff). For second visits, consider whether you see some of the same trainees;
- Agree if your visit will be a solo visit or whether you will be accompanied by leaders. Consider advantages and disadvantages of either scenario.



Ensuring Rigour and Challenge - 2

- Ascertain whether trainees, mentors and staff fully understand your role and what information has been provided to them (the schedule, for example);
- Request a reporting template with key priorities outlined in order to focus your questions and report writing. Consider internal QA of your draft report prior to sending to the provider in order to check for ambiguity, judgmental language, objectivity/subjectivity;
- Be mindful of the changes that providers might be piloting in readiness for the 2024 requirements and opportunities to discuss and observe these, e.g. ITaP;
- Where appropriate, make plans within your own provision so that you are 'not disturbed' during your visit.



Becoming informed ...

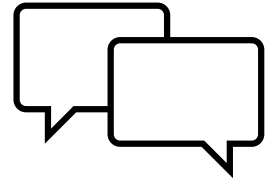
2. Ensure that you have **sufficient** information together with a suitable range of opportunities to enable you to accurately identify strengths and areas for further improvement:

Key considerations

- Identifying the number of days, including preparation and report writing time, to ensure you can deliver suitably insightful, and objective, external perspectives;
- Being clear about which documents you will ask to see so that you can rapidly develop a working knowledge of the provision and, especially, assessment and moderation processes;
- Clarity around who you will meet, what you will see (virtual and face-to-face) to help you deepen your knowledge and understanding – discussion around proposed schedules and timings can often help to maximise the benefits of this engagement.



Talking point



1. What do you consider to be an appropriate amount of days/time to ensure you can effectively undertake successful external moderation?
2. Which key documents do you consider it appropriate to have access to in advance of your visit?
3. What is your view in relation to **observing** trainees and mentors in action as part of external moderation? What constitutes a reasonable 'sample' of trainees?
4. What part can you play in ensuring that your scrutiny and perceptions feed into the QA arrangements for final recommendations for QTS?

External Moderation Role - 1



Practical points – quick checklist:

- *Proof of identity*
- *Proof that the moderator has undergone all relevant safeguarding checks*
- *Insurance cover: Public Liability/Professional Indemnity?*
- *Agreement around the ‘non-negotiables’, e.g. no solo observations of trainees; no leading on lesson ‘feedback’ to trainees; no definitive decisions ‘on the spot’, no ‘free to wander’ scenarios ...*
- Agreement around process/timeline for submitting, checking and finalising the moderation report
- Agreement of professional fees (plus or including expenses?)

External Moderation Role - 2



Keeping the *essentials* in focus:

Primary:

- Knowledge, skills and confidence in teaching phonics and early reading – regardless of ‘main’ year group teaching experiences
- Opportunities to teach planned sequences across the full primary curriculum over time
- Breadth and rationale of the ITE curriculum on offer

Secondary:

- Knowledge, skills and confidence to teach subject effectively
- Breadth, depth and consistency of the ITE curriculum on offer – especially the subject training offered and its impact on trainees

Both:

- A working knowledge of curriculum design – linked to pupil learning and progress which is informed by relevant and up-to-date research
- A working knowledge of national mentoring priorities and evidence base

An External Moderation ‘Model’

Agree, in principle, to making a **three**-year appointment

Adopt a minimum **three-day** moderation process (especially for Year One):

- **Day One** - familiarisation and introductory discussions with key personnel* (autumn or spring) with possibility to visit a partner school and observe some of the SCITT's processes in action – culminating in a Record of Visit document (or similar summary) which feeds into the final report
- **Days Two and Three** – visits to a range of partnership schools to ‘shadow’ mentors observing trainees and providing feedback (summer) and review assessment processes in action (these activities can be adapted and some carried out virtually or ‘blended’ as necessary)
- Additional option for the moderator to attend the assessment board meeting to observe process and provide a verbal report – subject to moderator availability, the provider's budget and QA processes for final recommendation for QTS

** In subsequent years, Day One could be retained to enable the moderator to monitor progress with planned improvements and/or to see trainees/mentors ‘in action’ during earlier stages of their training. Alternatively, external moderation activity might be reduced to two days (summer term only).*

Suggested Schedule for School Visits

Activity	Details
Lesson observations – ('single' or part lessons) <i>and/or</i> weekly mentor meeting between trainee and school based trainer/mentor <i>and/or</i> periodic review meeting (or part of)	Aim is to observe typicality of practice, processes and monitoring/support linked to trainee progress and assessment
Interview with trainee (up to 30 minutes)	Ideally, separately from school-based trainer/mentor and SCITT personnel
Interview with school-based trainer/mentor (up to 30 minutes)	Ideally, separately from trainee
Access to trainee's working file* for the term in question (*this might be known as the evidence portfolio)	This is likely to include planning, assessment of pupils' progress, lesson observations and evaluations – with access to relevant professional reflections (especially in relation to SK development and arising from the provider's ITE curriculum), periodic reviews as appropriate
Contextual conversation with ITT line manager in school – relevant SLT member	If possible – to gain insights into the nature and strengths in partnership working
Potential to meet with groups of trainees and/or ECTs or school-based trainers/mentors based in the school	Forum-style discussion to gather 'customer' perceptions – these might focus on particular subjects or themes
Access to sample of evidence folders/portfolios	May need logins, etc., to access online portals
Access to significant other documents	These might include Subject Knowledge Audits/Trackers, training schedules/ITE Curriculum Programmes, school-based trainer/mentor meeting records, school-based tasks, PGCE assignments (as appropriate)

Reporting Protocols - 1

Points to consider:

- Be clear about your audience – course leaders, strategic/assessment boards, inspectors – in order to tailor your language and level of detail
- Consider how your report should be structured – key ingredients:
 - Introductory paragraph(s) outlining the key characteristics of the provision – size, age phases and numbers, schools/hubs involved, history (including most recent inspection outcome) *and* briefly, the scope/foci of your moderation work;
 - Description of your moderation activities which provides an overview of: visits to schools; perusal of evidence and other key documents; meetings with focus groups/key individuals together with essential data, e.g. percentage of trainees, mentors seen, etc.;
 - Clear indication of the moderation outcome which **unambiguously states that assessment processes are accurate, consistently applied and compatible with other provision you have seen** (hopefully!);

Reporting Protocols - 2

Structuring your report (continued):

➤ Strengths and Areas for Improvement

– aim to support all statements with examples from your observations/discussions, etc. – triangulated whenever possible – consider whether your report *at least* balances between the two – this is usually easily managed!

- aim to reference the most recent external moderator's report so that you can comment about how previously identified aspects for improvement have been addressed

➤ Concluding paragraph(s) providing courtesies and thanks.



Reporting Protocols - 3

Other considerations:

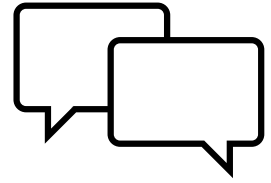
- Try to ensure that you adopt the language and terminologies used by the provider, e.g. what do they call their trainees, mentors, visiting tutors, assessment points, etc.?
- Present your report as a draft – to enable the programme leader(s) to check for factual accuracy and possible shifts of emphasis to support their ability to drive improvement forward.
- Finalise, submit - and don't forget to send in your bill!

Note: an example of a potential reporting template is included in your delegate pack (Appendix A).

Talking point

Case Study A: Westshire ITTP

External Moderation Report



Reading time and then points to discuss:

1. Logistics, structure and parameters

Prompts: Provider requirements/expectations; report structure; any limitations/restrictions affecting the work of the moderator?

2. Identified strengths and areas for improvement

Prompts: What do these tell you about the 'health' of the SCITT?

3. How effective is the report overall?

*Prompts: Are messages clear? Is the report sufficiently detailed? Is it objective?
How useful do you think it will be to the provider in helping them move their provision forward?*

Lessons from the Pandemic

- Experience of ITT moderation in 2019-2021 showed that many aspects of the external moderation process can be undertaken on a ‘virtual’ basis;
- The loss of opportunities to observe trainees teaching and mentors in ‘live action’ was mitigated by surprisingly useful ‘virtual’ alternatives;
- We learned that a blended approach certainly brings efficiencies and economies.

Things that work well - virtually:

- 1:1s with trainees;
- trainee presentations to mentors/tutors;
- focused reviews of subject training and impact on trainees via discussions with focus groups;
- final progress reviews between tutor, trainee and, usually, mentors
- attendance at assessment boards.

Note of caution:

- Virtual meetings with groups of randomly (or otherwise) selected trainees call for particular “class management skills”.

Promoting the Improvement Continuum

It is really beneficial to encourage programme leaders to reflect on the key messages (especially relating to aspects for suggested improvement) in either interim reports/visit summaries and/or final reports and **formulate an actions/response document** which:

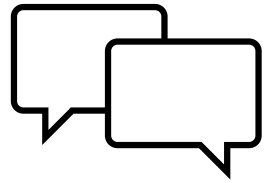
- should be shared with the external moderator to help them continue to provide the most effective external perspective on how provision is improving;
- serves to cement an open and transparent relationship based on mutual respect and suitable levels of confidentiality;
- links directly to the self-evaluation and improvement planning process;
- can serve to demonstrate evidence of excellent leadership and management.

Reality check: The day job can 'get in the way' of allowing this to happen!



Talking point

Example of Interim Record of Visit



Read and reflect on *Case Study B: William Wilberforce Academy SCITT*

Discussion prompts:

- How valuable do you consider this record of visit to be for the provider?
- Do you consider that the moderator's findings/suggestions are compatible with the role of the external moderator? Are there any issues around this?
- Any other thoughts?



Penultimate Thoughts ...

- A sharper focus on the robustness of arrangements for **internal** moderation is implicit in the Quality Requirements for 2024 and brings clear implications for the work of external moderators in terms of scrutinising key aspects of the internal moderation process;
- The concept of viable sampling will require careful thought as partnerships merge and train larger numbers across their ‘hubs’;
- Being clear about the relationship between:
 - the **formative** assessment of how trainees learn and apply what they have learned from the intended ITE curriculum;
 - how the above links to **summative** assessment in relation to the Teachers’ Standards – leading to the recommendation for the award of QTS;
- Strategic use of ‘**focused reviews**’ in key aspects of provision to support development and improvement – subject, of course, to the external moderator’s own expertise.

Keeping relevant and up-to-date



- Resources and support documentation;
- Workshops, newsletters, espresso events and member forums/



- ITE Inspection Framework (2020);
- Published reports;
- Senior HMI feedback at sector events.



- Policy statements and guidance;
- ITTAG meetings;
- Regional provider networks and associated benchmarking.

External Moderator Directory



External Moderator Directory

If you would like to be added to the External Moderator Directory, please send your CV, along with a list of the areas/regions you are willing to work in, to info@nasbtt.org.uk.

And finally ...



You ask ...

we'll try to answer ...

NASBTT training



[Quality Assurance – Growing quality from the core](#)

Thursday, 9th November 2023

[Effective ITT Leadership and Management](#)

4th and 5th March 2024 **and** 20th and 21st May 2024

See the [events calendar](#) for all upcoming events