



The National Association of
School-Based Teacher Trainers

NASBTT Response to Curriculum and Assessment Review Call for Evidence

About NASBTT

NASBTT is a registered charity which represents the interests of schools-led teacher training provision in relation to the development and implementation of national policy developments. Our members include School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) providers, Teaching School Hubs, Higher Education Institutions involved in schools-led teacher training and a range of other organisations engaged in the education and professional development of teachers. We currently have more than 177 members, including 100% of the SCITT sector, representing over 10,000 individual trainees and their mentors.

Context for response

NASBTT is seeking to provide an informed response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review Call for Evidence. We have decided to focus our response on implementation and to draw attention to the support and resources needed for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers should there be a significant change in the curriculum. To inform our response, we issued a survey to our members from 21st October to 15th November 2024. The following sections present our summary findings for each question.

Key findings and suggestions

Q1: What contribution could you, as a provider of ITT, make to inform the Curriculum and Assessment Review with regards to the 5-19 curriculum, assessment and qualifications pathways?

Key Finding: There is a strong appetite from ITT providers to support the review panel. Providers are keen to share their knowledge and expertise and are open to offering support across a range of areas, including:

Curriculum design and development: There is a shared interest in improving curriculum design, particularly in primary education, where the challenge of covering a broad curriculum in one year is presented. The need for a more joined-up approach to teaching and supporting subject knowledge across the primary curriculum is noted.

Curriculum and subject expertise: Providers emphasise their expertise in specific subjects, particularly MFL, history, English, science, as well as primary generally. Many highlight their role in developing curriculum and supporting trainees, especially in designing subject-specific courses and understanding the challenges trainees face.

Assessment and teacher workload: The impact of assessment practices on teacher workload and student learning is a key concern, with some providers offering to support to explore ways to ensure a more balanced approach between formative and summative assessments. There is also mention of the potential impact of changes to national qualifications and assessments, especially in secondary education.

Teacher development and ITT support: There is a call for the curriculum review panel to consider the need for early thinking around support for trainees (and in-service teachers) in areas like curriculum design, assessment, and subject knowledge, in light of any changes which may be made to the curriculum. Providers are willing to offer their expertise to help shape such programmes of CPD.

In summary, responses highlight a diverse range of ways in which they can support the review, with a strong focus on improving curriculum design, supporting subject knowledge, and ensuring the alignment of assessment practices with teaching strategies. There is also an emphasis on the need for ongoing development in teacher training, particularly in response to changing policies and curriculum expectations.

Q2: In relation to the existing school curriculum, what challenges do you as a provider of ITT and your trainee teachers currently encounter? How are you dealing with these?

The Voice of School-Based Teacher Training

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Key Finding: ITT providers face a range of challenges, many of which are outside of the scope of this review. However, there were a number of challenges raised that this review could usefully address, most notably by slimming down curriculum content to allow more room in the curriculum for exploration of ideas at depth.

Curriculum overload: The sheer volume of curriculum content, especially at primary level, is overwhelming for both trainees and pupils, limiting the time available for meaningful teaching and assessment. **The review panel is asked to consider where the curriculum content can be reduced**, for example by taking into account advice from the NCETM on reducing curriculum content in mathematics as KS1 and 2 (<https://www.ncetm.org.uk/features/aligning-curriculum-reform-and-assessment-with-teaching-for-mastery-in-primary-maths/>)

Subject knowledge gaps: Trainee teachers often face gaps in their subject knowledge, particularly in complex subjects like science, maths, MFL, and DT which cannot always be met by school colleagues who may be teaching outside of their subject, and have similar gaps in their curriculum content knowledge. **The review should consider publishing**, alongside any new curriculum content, **a comprehensive suite of CPD resources** which upskill new and in-service teachers, including those teaching outside of their subject, to acquire a deep knowledge of the content to be taught.

Primary curriculum issues: ITT providers note that there is a significant decline in arts education in primary schools in favour of an over-emphasis on core subjects – this means that many trainees lack consistent experience in non-core subjects, exacerbating the issue as they are under-prepared to teach these subjects once qualified. The review should ensure that the new curriculum guidance redresses the balance, **giving The Arts more prominence in the primary curriculum**.

Curriculum design and inclusivity: There is a lack of clear guidance on inclusive curriculum design from the government and other national bodies, leaving schools to develop their own models for inclusive teaching. The review should **clearly define what inclusive teaching means in terms of curriculum design** and provide exemplars of what this looks like in practice to ensure consistency of approach across schools.

Workload and mental health: Increasing workload pressures, coupled with mental health concerns among trainees, exacerbate the already demanding teacher training experience. Any decisions taken by the review must recognise the impact that change can have on workload and take careful steps to ensure that **implementation of any planned change is well-planned, carefully sequenced and fully supported**.

In summary, responses highlight the complexities of teacher training in the context of curriculum pressure, subject knowledge, and increased workload. Whilst the curriculum review cannot solve these issues in their entirety, there are some positive steps it can take to help alleviate many of these challenges.

Q3: What impact would a change of curriculum have on (a) you as a provider of ITT and (b) on your trainees? Can you see any constructive solutions?

Key Finding: The Curriculum Review, whilst widely welcomed by the sector, could have unintended consequences for the recruitment and retention of teachers. We hope the following prompts will support the panel in taking a holistic approach to any decision-making by flagging some possible consequences which, if considered as part of the whole, may be anticipated and avoided/mitigated.

Demand for trainees: Changes in curriculum content and/or focus could alter the need for trainees in various subjects. For example, arts subjects (like music, drama, and art) are currently severely understaffed. If they were to take a higher prominence in any new curriculum plans, consideration should be given to the **limited number of experienced mentors in those subjects** currently able to support new entrants to the profession in those fields.

Curriculum adjustments: Changes in the curriculum would likely require significant adjustments to ITT programmes. These could include rewriting parts of the training, particularly for subject-specific content. The review must allow **sufficient lead-in time for providers to engage with any new materials and incorporate this into ITT programmes** to ensure that trainees are well-prepared to teach.

Impact on trainees and mentors: Curriculum changes could create confusion and uncertainty for mentors and trainees, especially if the changes are not clearly communicated or understood. This could affect assessment requirements and the quality of mentorship, particularly in secondary schools. **Clear guidance, CPD and support for in-service teachers is vital in ensuring a shared understanding of any new curriculum expectations**.

Resource and capacity concerns: The need for additional resources and expertise, such as hiring specialists or adjusting placements, could strain training providers. Providers also express concerns about the impact on school placements, as schools may be too busy with curriculum changes to support trainees. **As with our other**

recommendations, careful consideration should be given to implementation and roll out to minimise the impact on capacity in schools and providers.

In summary, the key concerns being raised here are the capacity to adjust to curriculum changes, the impact on trainees and mentors, and the need for adequate time and resources to ensure smooth transitions.

Q4: What support do you think you would need for any subject and curriculum knowledge changes?

Key Finding: ITT Providers are in support of the review and want to make its implementation successful – in order to do this, they ask for clear guidance, training, support and (crucially) sufficient time to implement changes.

Clear framework and support: Providers seek a clear, structured framework for curriculum content, skills, and sequencing, along with support for designing lesson delivery. This includes clear messaging and documentation on curriculum changes, evidence-based rationale, and easier access to key resources and CPD materials.

Training and development: There is a need for subject-specific training for mentors and trainees to keep their knowledge and teaching practices up-to-date.

Time and resources: Providers stress the importance of allowing sufficient time for training, planning, and implementing curriculum changes. They highlight the difficulty in managing these changes within already stretched resources, suggesting the creation of central planning teams to streamline efforts. More funding for SKE courses is also recommended, particularly for trainees from diverse or non-traditional backgrounds.

Collaboration with experts: Providers recommend ongoing collaboration with subject associations, exam boards, and other education experts to ensure the curriculum is up-to-date and well-implemented. Subject leaders and experienced teachers should be involved in these efforts.

Curriculum implementation: Clear timelines and structured approaches for implementing changes, along with support for schools, are crucial for ensuring the changes are meaningful and manageable.

Capacity and workload: Providers express concern about workload and capacity, suggesting that more funding and joint planning between schools, ITT providers, and other stakeholders are needed to successfully integrate changes.

In summary, responses highlight a need for clearer communication, more resources, and time for both ITT Providers and schools to adapt to curriculum changes.

Contact

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Further reading

“The Future of Initial Teacher Training: How can we attract more people to the teaching profession, and support school-based ITT providers to deliver high-quality training?”

<https://www.nasbtt.org.uk/the-future-of-initial-teacher-training-nasbtt-launches-manifesto-for-change>.