

Initial teacher education inspection framework and handbook 2020: inspecting the quality of teacher education

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

A. Introduction

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents over 19,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million young people in more than 90 per cent of the secondary and tertiary phases, and in an increasing proportion of the primary phase. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
2. ASCL welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.

B. Key points

3. The alignment of the ITE framework with the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) is a welcome step, although it is hoped the experience of rolling out the EIF will be used to ensure implementation of the ITE framework is as smooth as possible.

C. Answers to specific questions

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to introduce two key judgement areas only?

- Strongly agree
 - **Agree**
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't know
4. ASCL agrees that focusing on quality of education brings the ITE inspection framework in line with the research, methodology and intent of the Education Inspection Framework and the Core Content Framework. This is helpful.
 5. However, there are lessons to be learned from the implementation of the education inspection framework, particularly regarding the risk that particular curriculum approaches become viewed by inspectors as de facto positive or negative, thus undermining the principle that “Ofsted does not advocate that any particular teaching approach should be used exclusively with trainees.” There is risk in the ITT framework that concepts such as ‘sequencing’ become defined too generically in terms of an

expectation of a linear progression, when in some subjects and phases it may be appropriate for trainees to learn content in a different order or to reconsider previous content in new contexts.

6. It is encouraging that the descriptors for 'good' and 'outstanding' point towards an ITE curriculum that is phase/subject specific as appropriate. We hope inspector training supports this nuanced understanding of teacher training, particularly regarding the discipline-specific elements of secondary subjects. As the ITT Core Content Framework states, "The ITT Core Content Framework does not set out the full ITT curriculum for trainee teachers. The complexity of the process for becoming a teacher cannot be overestimated and it remains for individual providers to design curricula appropriate for the subject, phase and age range that the trainees will be teaching." This is crucial as it establishes that ITE curricula should encompass more than the Core Content alone. The proposed ITE inspection framework relies heavily on the Core Content as a benchmark and it must not become the case that, as a result of inspection practice, other aspects of teacher development (such as subject pedagogy) are deemed to lack importance.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to change the evidence-gathering approach for inspection evidence?

- Strongly agree
 - **Agree**
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't know
7. The proposed evidence-gathering approach seems reasonable and in keeping with the approach being used in schools and colleges. However, it is worth noting that feedback on 'deep dives' in school and college contexts indicates this type of methodology is intensive and requires adequate inspector time and skilled inspectors. Accordingly, Ofsted should ensure the similar approach proposed for ITE inspections is matched by sufficient inspector capacity and capability, underpinned by high quality training.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed new inspection model of a one-stage inspection process for ITE inspections?

- Strongly agree
 - **Agree**
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't know
8. A simpler one-stage inspection process should be less onerous for providers and help to free them up to focus on what matters most: high quality teacher education. Also, we recognise the conclusion that "other factors have an impact on how well trainees settle into their first substantive post", and that the previous model did not perhaps take this into account.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to introduce a short and longer telephone call with the ITE partnership representative, prior to the inspection?

- Strongly agree
 - **Agree**
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't know
9. Feedback from ASCL members about the pre-inspection phone call outlined in the education inspection framework has been, on balance, positive. It is, therefore, welcomed that a similar approach is being proposed for ITE inspections. This should give partnerships the opportunity to set out in more detail their context and progress since the last inspection. However, one point to keep in mind is that the efficacy of such conversations is built on mutual trust and respect. This should be established in this early conversation and maintained throughout the inspection. Some feedback on the tone of inspectors undertaking the education inspection framework since September 2019 has been concerning. We strongly urge Ofsted to emphasise through training and quality assurance processes that the tone of inspectors, in the pre-inspection phone call and throughout the inspection, must be respectful and professional if the process is to maintain the trust of the profession.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that Ofsted will inspect ITE partnerships at any point within the spring and summer terms only (excluding autumn term) of any given academic year?

- Strongly agree
 - **Agree**
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't know
10. We welcome Ofsted's acknowledgement that inspection early in the academic year is problematic for partnerships and inspectors. The decision to move towards inspections in spring and summer only is, therefore, desirable. Inspecting later in the year will ensure that inspectors are able to collate richer bodies of evidence and boost the validity of judgements.
11. ASCL notes this proposal in relation to ITE inspections and would welcome consideration by Ofsted of whether such principles might also apply in relation to school and college inspections.

Do you have any additional comments about our proposed new framework for ITE inspections?

12. No further comments.

D. Conclusion

13. I hope that this response is of value to your consultation. ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

Stephen Rollett
Curriculum and Inspection Specialist
Association of School and College Leaders
31 March 2020