The General Teaching Council for Scotland’s Response to the Education and Skills Committee of Scottish Parliament’s Call for Evidence about Initial Teacher Education

February 2020
Response to Call for Evidence about Initial Teacher Education

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1 Introduction

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland) supports education systems that help people become teachers, registers and regulates all teachers and supports the career long professional learning of teachers. We are interested in all aspects of teacher professionalism and supporting individuals in their journey to becoming, being and growing as teachers. GTC Scotland is therefore delighted to provide the Scottish Parliament’s Education and Skills Committee with evidence to support their inquiry into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Scotland. The purpose of this report is to summarise the progress made by GTC Scotland in relation to the relevant ITE recommendations from ‘Teacher Workforce Planning for Scotland’s Schools’, 10th Report 2017, Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee. As an organisation committed to continuous improvement through robust self-evaluation, GTC Scotland has also taken the opportunity to highlight further areas for improvement that have emerged from our regular engagement with ITE institutions, students and probationers.

2 Response to 2017 Recommendations

Following the Committee’s scrutiny of ITE as part of their exploration into teacher workforce planning in September 2017, GTC Scotland reviewed all 51 recommendations. An action plan was prepared and shared with the Committee outlining GTC Scotland’s response to those recommendations which included reference to GTC Scotland’s key objectives, an outline of progress made to date and the identification of next steps for improvement where appropriate.

The action plan was subject to scrutiny by GTC Scotland’s Council. The 37 members of GTC Scotland’s Council have a significant role to play in shaping the teaching profession of Scotland, maintaining and improving professional standards, and contributing to the development of teacher professionalism and Scottish education. Work around the GTC Scotland campaign, ‘So You want to Teach in Scotland’ progresses, supported by regular CEO columns, other articles in our Teaching Scotland magazine and through other communication channels to ‘Talk Up Teaching’, in an effort to address negative perception issues about the teaching profession. More recently, GTC Scotland has been working in partnership with the Teaching in a Diverse Scotland group to address the need to encourage more BME teachers into the profession.

At the time of the publication of the action plan in 2017, it was noted that some of the recommendations would require action which was not within the role and responsibilities of GTC Scotland. This was referenced within the body of the report and organisations were identified who currently had responsibility for these areas.

It is noted that the 2017 report referenced the Education Workforce Council for Scotland as the replacement for GTC Scotland. Following public consultation, it was determined to retain the role, functions and scope of the existing GTC Scotland. As such, any recommendations referencing the Education Workforce Council have been assumed to refer to GTC Scotland.

3 Response to 2020 Call for Evidence: Recruitment and Initial Teacher Education

GTC Scotland accredits all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Scotland. This work is supported by a strong and internationally recognised set of Professional Standards and Professional Code for Scotland’s teachers. These documents provide a framework that sets out the standards required to become a teacher and support the development of teachers from the start of their career and throughout their teaching experience. In order to provide detailed evidence to support the Committee’s enquiry, GTC Scotland has commented on each recommendation where there is a locus for our involvement.
3.1 Recommendation 13

The Committee commends the work of Moray House in constructing its MSc in Transformative Learning and Teaching course in a way that enables students to achieve the required Higher English qualification on completing the course. This is as opposed to having Higher English as an entry requirement. This approach ensures that eligible candidates are not overlooked by overly restrictive course entry thresholds. The Committee encourages other teacher training institutions to highlight to the GTCS (or its replacement the Education Workforce Council for Scotland) how an increased number of suitable candidates could gain entry to their courses.

GTC Scotland Response:
GTC Scotland has led a review of the entry requirements to ITE and continues to support universities to develop flexible arrangements that meets the needs of student teachers whilst ensuring that high standards are maintained.

Since 1965, the Scottish Government (under its various titles) has issued a Memorandum on Entry Requirements for Initial Teacher Education programmes in Scotland (Memorandum). The Memorandum sets the minimum entry requirements to students’ entry into ITE programmes in Scotland that lead to a recognised teaching qualification. The Memorandum on Entry Requirements to Programmes of ITE in Scotland was published in June 2013 with a commitment to undertake further review in 2018.

Draft changes to the Memorandum were proposed through partnership working with stakeholders. The review took account of the requirement for more flexible routes to teaching. The consultation on a revised draft Memorandum was conducted between 1 October 2018 and 21 December 2018 and received 109 responses.

The aims of the consultation were to ensure:

❖ the Memorandum is up to date, relevant and fit for purpose;
❖ the Memorandum is comprehensive and clear to all stakeholders;
❖ ITE applicants are confident they meet with minimum entry requirements when applying to join an ITE programme; and
❖ ITE providers can provide up to date information in their literature to guide potential applicants of the expectations of minimum entry requirements for ITE programmes.

The public consultation was the final step in the review process which also involved the following:

❖ commissioning a literature review;
❖ convening a working group to consider feedback from the data gathering and produce the consultation document;
❖ comparing of the entry requirements from sister Teaching Councils;
❖ an information gathering exercise; and
❖ developing and disseminating a consultation paper.

The majority of respondents agreed with each of the suggested changes with additional qualitative comments offering further suggestions. The results of the consultation determined that there would be no change to the entry requirements of SCQF level 6 English and SCQF level 5 Mathematics. It was established that these qualifications would remain entry requirements at a time when the literacy and numeracy skills of the nation are of some concern. The rationale for this requirement is outlined below.

❖ As a result of the influence that teachers have on both the life skills and life chances of children and young people, it is important at they themselves reflect high standards in literacy and numeracy.
❖ As professionals, there is a requirement that teachers engage critically with policy and research. Therefore, it is essential that they have sufficient levels of literacy and numeracy
skills to access, understand and use their reading of policy and literature to underpin their thinking and practice.

- It is vital that teachers can communicate effectively both orally and in written form, with a range of stakeholders and on multiple levels.
- Literacy permeates the curriculum and is the means by which all other areas of the curriculum are accessed. It is therefore essential that all teachers have a benchmark level of literacy irrespective of subject or sectors.

It was reinforced that ITE providers could give potential candidates conditional offers based on the successful attainment of these awards prior to the commencement of the ITE programme and direct the candidate to the online programmes offered through University of Aberdeen.

A further consultation outcome determined that the requirements for Primary ITE would change from National Qualifications at SCQF Level 6 (Higher Grade), in at least three subjects (one of which must be in English), along with SCQF level 5 mathematics to a minimum of four SCQF level 6 (Higher) qualifications (one of which must be English), along with SCQF level 5 Mathematics. This change was explored and agreed with Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) partners and Scottish Government and it was established that this did not disadvantage any individuals.

In addition, as a result of the consultation there have been minimal changes to the requirements for the following subjects:

- Art and Design;
- Business Education;
- English;
- Gaelic;
- Home Economics;
- Modern Studies;
- Music;
- Physical Education.

In order to bring Computing into line with current SQA nomenclature, the name was changed to Computing Science. History was added to the list of subjects with specific requirements. Both Dance and Psychology were added to the list of secondary subjects and the equality and diversity statement was enhanced. The full Memorandum can be found here: http://www.gtcsc.org.uk/web/FILES/about-gtcs/memorandum-on-entry-requirements.pdf

The Memorandum was shared with ITE providers and a workshop was offered in June 2019, prior to the launch of the Memorandum on 1 September 2019.

It is ultimately the responsibility of universities to determine whether to accept or reject an applicant in line with their general admissions policy. For example, because some programmes are very popular, universities may require applicants to have exceeded the minimum entry requirements as set out by GTC Scotland. Several programmes, e.g. at Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Dundee Universities, provide an opportunity for participants to undertake minimum entry qualifications in English and Mathematics (including equivalence) concurrently with the ITE programme using online facilities. This more flexible approach allows for minimum entry requirements to be met at the point of exit and prior to the awarding of a teaching qualification thus enhancing potential access to ITE programmes to an increased number of applicants.

Three follow up Memorandum drop-in sessions will be offered by GTC Scotland in 2020 (Glasgow on 24 February, Edinburgh on 6 March, Dundee on 12 March) to support university admission teams to share good practice and to offer support with interpretation of the Memorandum in practice.
GTC Scotland is committed to support the further operation of this flexibility in practice whilst safeguarding the high expectations Scotland places on the quality of teachers. Where flexibility regarding entry requirements is in operational practice, it is essential that university systems respond to the need to support student teachers to achieve minimum standards during the course of the programme and retain the integrity of ITE.

**Proposed Improvement Action:**

- GTC Scotland will develop a system that requires universities to guarantee that all graduates meet minimum entry requirements. This aims to support the flexibility for student teachers to acquire the minimum entry standards as an integral part of an ITE programme and to negate a situation where a student teacher expects to achieve Standard for Provisional Registration but does not meet minimum entry requirements.

### 3.2 Recommendation 14

*The Committee also recommends that the GTCS, or its proposed replacement the Education Workforce Council for Scotland, reviews all of its entry requirements to ensure that innovative solutions such as these are being implemented wherever possible but without compromising on the ability of the individuals coming into teaching.*

**GTC Scotland Response:**

*Entry requirements for ITE have been reviewed, agreed and published. Where innovative ITE is being developed, GTC Scotland is working to ensure the connections between qualifications, registration and employment are considered.*

Further to our response with respect to recommendation 13, GTC Scotland’s position remains that to enter the teaching profession an individual continues to meet the following criteria.

- SCQF level 5 Mathematics and SCQF level 6 English;
- an appropriate degree or equivalent; and
- a GTCS recognised teaching qualification.

We continue to recognise that flexibility is crucial when trying to attract a wider and more diverse range of individuals into the teaching profession and to address the issue of teacher shortages. GTC Scotland has promoted a range of new and innovative routes into teaching for those wishing to join the profession in Scotland. As the accrediting body for ITE programmes in Scotland, GTC Scotland has the important role in ensuring that these new routes maintain and enhance the high standards of teaching and teacher education expected within our graduate teaching profession.

It is therefore important that a balance continues to be struck. Too much flexibility in the system will stretch the integrity of the creation of a quality teacher workforce, whereas, too much rigidity may compromise the flow of teachers in our schools. In determining this balance, it is necessary to consider the connections between teacher qualifications, registration and employment.

GTC Scotland is concerned with the registration of teaching professionals. Teaching professionals are registered by GTC Scotland in a category or categories which align with their qualifications. Employers have responsibility for ensuring that teaching professionals are employed in a context that reflects their GTC Scotland registration.
These connections require careful consideration in the development of alternative routes to teaching. The need for these connections to be clearly understood can be illustrated in the example of the creation of two new ITE programmes: the MSc in Transformative Learning and Teaching and the MEd Enhanced Practice (now named MEd Middle Years).

Both programmes provide student teachers with an experience in primary and secondary sectors. The first probationer teachers from these programmes joined the education system in August 2019. Consideration was given to whether the creation of a new registration category would be appropriate to reflect the qualification experience of teachers undertaking this ITE route. A possible category under the term ‘Broad General Education’ was considered. Following significant discussion and debate, GTC Scotland’s Council (the body that can determine changes and additions to registration categories) did not support the creation of this particular new category.

It was recognised and agreed that a better descriptor for these teachers was ‘primary or secondary teacher with transition’. This decision was reached following consideration of established registration categories where registered primary teachers teach the full primary curriculum and literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the broad general education and where registered secondary teachers teach their subject curriculum across the broad general education and the senior phase as well as interdisciplinary learning within the secondary context. There was also a need to consider the implications for teachers working in a different sector for which they are registered for a specific remit such as digital learning or transition as well as consequences for teachers qualified out of Scotland who have cross-sector experience.

In addition, it is important to note that existing primary teachers may well have queried whether they too were eligible for a broad general education category of registration. There was also the need to consider the implications of this category on the two distinct groups within the MSc TLT cohort: those in a ‘generalist’ path who receive teaching qualifications in primary and those on the specialist route who receive teaching qualifications in secondary.

The lack of clarity in relation to the connection between teaching qualification and registration has impacted on probationary issues. Individual intervention has been required in a small number of cases in order to ensure that probation experience will lead to full registration. For example, a probationary teacher with a primary teaching qualification must spend at least 55% of their probationary year within the primary sector. For those MScTLT graduates with a primary teaching qualification placed in the secondary sector there was an expectation that some proportion of their time would be spent teaching in the primary sector. In practice, this did not happen for any of these probationers resulting in GTC Scotland undertaking action to alter probationary placements. Whilst this caused concern and the need for change for a small number of
individuals, it has ensured that all probationary teachers will be in a position to achieve full registration in the category that relates to their teaching qualification at the end of the probationary experience.

GTC Scotland Council will further debate this issue at their March 2020 Council in order to reconsider the appropriateness or otherwise of a move away from ‘primary with transition’ or ‘secondary (subject) with transition’ categories following ongoing concern from the individuals impacted. GTC Scotland has sought feedback from the range of stakeholders involved in order to support an informed debate.

It is important that alternative ITE routes are developed by universities with partnership working in mind and GTC Scotland stands ready to prioritise their accreditation as part of our work to enhance teacher professionalism that will benefit children and young people across the country. This is evident in our ongoing work with universities to offer a range of more flexible entry options to teaching and this work will continue. Presently, GTC Scotland is exploring with the University of the Highlands and Islands further opportunities to create additional innovative routes particularly in terms of a pathway for HND and HNC college Hospitality qualifications leading to a teaching qualification in Home Economics. We are also in early discussion with an island Council and an ITE university on how best to offer a programme that will allow teaching support assistants the opportunity to become qualified as teachers.

Being appropriately qualified to teach in Scotland will remain the benchmark for aspiring teachers along with the principle of meeting GTC Scotland’s Standards for Registration. GTC Scotland is however supportive and receptive to new and innovative delivery models across Scotland which are developed in partnership to ensure a clear understanding of the connections between qualifications, registration and employment.

Proposed Improvement Actions:

❖ GTC Scotland will strengthen processes in relation to the development of new ITE programmes and their relationship with registration.
❖ GTC Scotland will improve transparency in relation to existing registration requirements.
❖ A discussion with key partners across the qualification, registration and employment spectrum is necessary to determine the scale of the changing needs of the education system in relation to teacher skills and experience and the impact this has in the development of alternative routes of ITE.

3.3 Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that, where a teacher training institution is not able to provide a place to a student because the student does not meet the institution’s specific standards, the institution should direct the individual to the GTCS. The GTCS should then provide advice on which institutions the candidate would be eligible to apply to.

GTC Scotland Response:
GTC Scotland continues to use a number of routes to provide support and advice to individuals considering a career in Teaching in Scotland.

All students make their applications to colleges and universities via the 0TUniversities and Colleges Admissions Service (0TUCAS). This is the organisation which has the responsibility for managing applications to higher education courses in the UK. ‘Clearing’ is the term used for students to secure a university place. This is also how universities and colleges fill any unallocated places on their programmes.

The ‘Teach in Scotland’ website provides all the necessary guidance and information on the application process. As the manager of ‘Teach in Scotland’ enquiries (previously undertaken by Scottish Government), GTC Scotland holds information about what is required to register and
support individuals with their next steps in becoming a teacher. Since August 2018, we have received 1471 emails to Teach in Scotland (91 emails per month on average) and since August 2019 we have received over 420 phone calls to Teach in Scotland.

GTC Scotland also has a dedicated website (‘In2Teaching’) which offers a range of advice and support to those who are considering or are at the early stages of their teaching career. GTC Scotland ensures that our website, social media and communications signpost potential ITE applicants to the ‘Teach in Scotland’ and UCAS websites.

3.4 Recommendation 16

Having teachers that understand, and are able to teach, the core skills of literacy and numeracy to children in their formative years is an absolutely fundamental requirement in improving attainment in literacy and numeracy. The Committee notes the evidence from teacher training institutions explaining the complexities of ITE course content and that counting hours is too simplistic as a stand-alone approach to assessing ITE. The Committee is concerned that the baseline of quality in relation to course content, and student ability, may be lacking in some instances.

GTC Scotland Response:
GTC Scotland has developed ITE accreditation criteria that provides clarity about required programme content and entry criteria. Further work is required to develop partnership approaches to quality assurance to determine the effective delivery of and outcomes from ITE programmes.

GTC Scotland notes the view of the Committee and endorses the position regarding the role of all teachers, irrespective of subject or sector, in supporting the development of literacy and numeracy skills in all children and young people. The role and responsibility of ITE is to lay the foundations upon which a beginning teacher will base the remainder of their professional career. Learning on the job and professional learning is part of all employment. Students who successfully graduate from ITE have demonstrated that they have met the requirements of GTC Scotland’s Standard for Provisional Registration only at this stage.

The Standard for Provisional Registration (SPR) (http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/the-standards/standards-for-registration-1212.pdf) specifies what is expected of a student teacher at the end of ITE who is seeking provisional registration with GTC Scotland. It also acts as one of the set of subject benchmark statements for professional qualifications in Scotland developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. GTC Scotland does acknowledge, however, that there is a disconnect between the accreditation of an ITE programme and the quality assurance of its delivery.

In September 2019, GTC Scotland published the Evaluation Framework for the Accreditation of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education in Scotland (http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/education-in-scotland/policy-statement-accreditation-of-programmes-of-ITE-in-scotland.pdf). This framework is designed to assist the process of internal review of ITE and external accreditation and approval. The format for the evaluation framework is centred on ‘key aspects’ to which ITE institutions are expected to respond. The headings within the framework give a sense of the ‘teacher journey’ and support the principles of the developing professional. The evaluation criteria are for use by all stakeholders with a key interest in evaluating the quality of ITE.

Student teachers should be exposed to national priorities and pedagogies to develop their understanding and practice in key areas such as:

❖ inclusion;
❖ additional support needs including; – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD); – Autism; – Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia) (DCD); – Dyslexia; and – Tourette syndrome;
❖ parental involvement;
❖ involvement of young people;
❖ the curriculum with emphasis on areas that are Responsibilities of All - literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing;
❖ digital and data literacy;
❖ skills for learning, life and work; and
❖ Learning for Sustainability.

The Standard for Provisional Registration (SPR) specifies what is expected of a student teacher at the end of ITE who is seeking provisional registration with GTCS. Having gained the SPR, all provisionally registered teachers continue their professional learning journey by moving towards the attainment of the Standard for Full Registration (SFR).

The SFR is the gateway to the profession and the benchmark of teacher competence for all teachers. The accepted mechanism by which the majority of beginning teachers journey towards the SFR is that of the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS). It is the SFR therefore that constitutes standards of capability in relation to teaching (with such reasonable adjustments as may be required under Equalities Legislation) in which learners, parents, the profession itself and the wider community can have confidence.

The SFR is:
❖ a clear and concise description of the professional qualities and capabilities probationer teachers are expected to attain;
❖ a professional standard against which reliable and consistent recommendations and decisions can be made on the fitness of new teachers for full registration with GTC Scotland;
❖ a clear and concise description of the professional qualities and capabilities fully registered teachers are expected to maintain and enhance throughout their careers; and
❖ a baseline standard of professional competence which applies to teachers throughout their careers.

The MQiITE project seeks to involve stakeholders in the development of an agreed way of measuring quality in ITE in Scotland. The MQiITE project is now entering its fourth year of a six-year study that involves all ITE institutes in Scotland, as well as GTCS. The project provides insight into what is perceived as quality in ITE and a framework has been created to ensure alignment across the various routes into teaching that now exist in Scotland. This dynamic framework is under constant review as more data is collected from students as they become teachers and will contribute significantly to the development of quality teacher education in Scotland. One of the issues from this work is summarised in the MQiITE literature review, “Teacher educators, particularly as an attribute of quality ITE programmes, are much less frequently examined, if at all, in the current literature on quality ITE frameworks (Snoek, Swennen and van der Klink, 2010)”, (p24). The review states that, “This seems to be an ironic oversight given that, as high-quality teachers are the most critical factors in student achievement, high-quality teacher educators would (by extension) be most important factor in creating effective teachers.”

Proposed Improvement Action:
❖ GTC Scotland will initiate a discussion with university colleagues to consider requirements of teacher educators.
3.5 Recommendation 17

The Committee welcomes the Government’s acknowledgement of the issues raised in evidence. The Committee recommends that the actions to be undertaken in response include an investigation into the extent of the problems raised in relation to literacy and numeracy. This should include assessing baseline standards on all courses for student primary teachers. It should also include an assessment of the entry requirements for these courses and the standards achieved on qualification. The Committee notes that certain issues, including in relation to primary school courses and student entry levels, have been raised previously by the 2011 Donaldson Report and the 2016 STEMEC Report.

GTC Scotland Response:
GTC Scotland has developed ITE accreditation criteria that provides clarity about required programme content and entry criteria.

Please refer to our response to Recommendation 16.

GTC Scotland as an independent body and as the organisation with the responsibility for the accreditation of ITE programmes across Scotland has worked with, and continues to work with, a range of national groups who are progressing a number of agendas related to the delivery of aspects of Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence and Equity. The impact of these partnerships has informed most recent iterations of our suite of documentation in relation to ITE.

3.6 Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the cycle of revisiting existing courses to renew accreditation should be shorter to ensure course content is responsive to the changing needs of Scottish education. The Committee recommends that the Government considers the benefits of making one organisation responsible for the accreditation of ITE courses and the assessment of the delivery of these courses.

GTC Scotland Response
GTC Scotland accredits all ITE programmes on a six-year cycle and has introduced an interim evaluation and enhancement process. GTC Scotland requires programmes with conditions to develop action plans with clear timelines for conditions to be met. While GTC Scotland has the responsibility for accrediting all ITE programmes, it currently has no role in the quality assurance of those ITE programmes.

The cycle for the accreditation and reaccreditation of any ITE programme remains a maximum period of six years. In setting this time limit the view was that this period was a fair reflection of the requirements of education planning and review cycles. It was also felt that should the time period for review be too short that there was the potential to create a feeling of instability in the system. Importantly however, there has always been the opportunity to undertake a reaccreditation at an earlier point should there be a significant material change in the original programme design or that there was major failings or the need to redesign in order to respond to an external agenda.

Whilst GTC Scotland has a critical role in the accreditation of ITE programmes, there is no such role for us in the ongoing quality assurance of programme delivery. However, in the development of The Accreditation of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education in Scotland guidance in September 2019 (http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/education-in-scotland/policy-statement-accreditation-of-programmes-of-ITE-in-scotland.pdf) a process for Interim Evaluation and Enhancement was introduced in order to support ITE providers to engage with GTC Scotland to provide a brief update on the action plan, and to plan partnership working and support towards reaccreditation. When a programme has been accredited on an unconditional basis, it is entitled to run for a period of up to six years with an interim visit by GTC Scotland staff and, where possible, the peer ITE member of the accreditation panel. Where a programme has been
accredited conditionally, an Action Plan with timescale is required indicating how the programme plans to overtake the conditions and the submission of a final report on completion. Once the conditions are met then the programme will be entitled to run for a period of up to six years with an interim visit.

The interim visit will occur during year 3 of the accreditation cycle and will be agreed as part of the action plan. This visit will include GTC Scotland staff and, where possible, the peer ITE member of the accreditation panel. The interim visit will facilitate professional dialogue between the ITE provider and GTC Scotland staff and the peer ITE member of the accreditation panel. The discussion will focus on the following areas.

- For accreditation with conditions the responses to the Action Plan and a discussion of how conditions have been overtaken.
- Any major changes in the nature, content or structure of the individual programme(s) and/or overall provision.
- Progress of the programme(s) as described in the internal quality assurance report.
- Enhancement of the ITE provision.
- Professional profiles of new staff involved in the delivery of the programme(s).

Within two weeks of the visit GTC Scotland provides a report to the ITE provider outlining good practice and recommendations to support the ITE provider in their preparation for re-accreditation.

If any significant issues are noted during the interim visit, GTC Scotland will convene an additional meeting with the ITE provider to discuss these. It is noted that the action open to GTC Scotland should conditions remain without any redress on the part of a university is for course accreditation to be withdrawn. Although highly unlikely that a situation would reach this point, there is the potential for individuals undertaking the programme to be disadvantaged. It is necessary to consider the relationship between this action and ongoing quality assurance arrangements of the programme.

Proposed Improvement Actions:

- Consider whether the six-year accreditation continues to meet needs in response to more regular ITE staff changes which can cause a lack of knowledge and consistency causing reaccreditations to not be sought after a change.
- There may be merit in considering the alignment of ITE programme re-accreditation with the internal QAA approaches which would mean the timeframe would reduce from a maximum of six years to a four-year cycle.
- There is the potential for the three-year interim meeting to develop into a partnership evaluation meeting, which would include feedback from students, to support further quality assurance of programme implementation.

3.7 Recommendation 19

The Committee welcomes the evidence received from student teachers highlighting the variation across different teacher training institutions and placements regarding training on supporting pupils with additional support needs, including that education on additional support needs is not guaranteed in some courses, which has left some student teachers unprepared to support those pupils with additional needs.

GTC Scotland Response:
All ITE programmes require to deliver content in relation to additional support needs.

Please refer to GTC Scotland’s response to recommendation 16.
It is a requirement for all accredited ITE programmes to include content in relation to meeting the needs of all learners. Self-evaluation processes and quality assurance assess how well this has been achieved and determine next steps for improvement.

GTC Scotland supported discussion at the Strategic Board for Teacher Education and Early Career Group in relation to assessing the professional learning needs of early career teachers. Phase one of this work was to conduct a survey with early career teachers to assess their preparedness for teaching and their professional learning needs (Hulme & Haines, 2019). The next phase of this work has begun with the development of action to address the outcomes of the survey.

Local Authorities recognise the variety of experience in this area when students start their probation period. In response to this ASN features as part of the core professional learning programme offered Local Authorities. ASN is also an area that probation managers will be discussing at the next seminar in March 2020 to share best practice.

GTC Scotland is also in the process of determining what resources can be made available freely and easily to all teachers to support their professional learning in relation to a range of additional support needs.

Potential Improvement Action:

❖ There is currently no ITE focused on achieving a first teaching qualification in ASN. Registered teachers of ASN have first registration in primary or secondary education. There may be potential for this to be explored by ITE providers.

3.8 Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government works with the GTCS to address the inconsistency in additional support needs education during Initial Teacher Education, with the aim of ensuring that all teachers receive high quality baseline training which prepares them to assist pupils with a range of additional needs, regardless of which institution and course they receive their initial teacher education in.

GTC Scotland Response:

Please refer also to our response to recommendation 16 in terms of expectations of GTC Scotland’s Professional Standard for Provisional Registration.

All ITE programmes accredited by GTC Scotland have content relating to meeting the needs of all children and young people. The suite of GTC Scotland Professional Standards makes it clear that inclusive approaches to teaching and learning are core business for all who teach in Scottish schools. GTC Scotland acknowledges that meeting the needs of all pupils within a class can be complex and can require input from other professionals in addition to the class teacher. For this reason, when many teachers continue to self-evaluate against the Standards for the purpose of Professional Update, it is often meeting the needs of all pupils which informs next steps in Professional Learning. Professional Learning is a career-long commitment for our profession, and ITE is only the very beginning of this commitment.

GTC Scotland continues to work in partnership with others to support teacher professional learning in additional support needs. Our ongoing positive relationship with the Salvesen Mindroom has allowed us to share meaningful information and guidance in relation to meeting needs with our 76,000 registrants. GTC Scotland has issued three sets of booklets to all registrants in partnership with the Salvesen Mindroom, [https://www.gtcs.org.uk/News/teaching-scotland/exclusive-the-salvesen-mindroom-centre-guide-to-understanding-learning-difficulties.aspx](https://www.gtcs.org.uk/News/teaching-scotland/exclusive-the-salvesen-mindroom-centre-guide-to-understanding-learning-difficulties.aspx), which have been positively received by the profession.
Our partnership with Dyslexia Scotland saw the first teachers achieve individual Professional Recognition in dyslexia at the end of January 2020 whilst work is underway to support the programme itself to be professionally recognised. This model of professional learning delivery, developed in conjunction with the Open University has the potential to be extended to other aspects of additional support needs, inclusion and wellbeing.

GTC Scotland has recently concluded a public consultation on a refreshed set of Professional standards and revised Professional Code. Both give greater emphasis to additional support needs than previously was the case. Final versions of this important supporting framework for teachers will be issued in advance of next academic year. These will be supported over time by a range of professional guidance documents which are planned to cover additional support needs topics such as neurodiversity, dyslexia, autism and trauma.

**Proposed Improvement Action:**

❖ Following the publication of the forthcoming national review of ASN, GTC Scotland will further consider mechanisms for supporting all teachers (with a particular focus on early career teachers) with supporting the needs of their learners.

### 3.9 Recommendation 21

_The Committee is also concerned at evidence from student teachers reflecting a lack of content in their courses on online safety for children. The Committee welcomes the Government’s acknowledgement of this issue and recommends that the Government works with the GTCS to ensure high quality baseline training is received by all student teachers._

**GTC Scotland Response:**

GTC Scotland requires ITE programmes to include content in relation to online safety for children and are in the process of developing guidance for teachers about their online engagement.

Please refer to our response to Recommendation 16.

Content in relation to online safety is a requirement for an ITE programme to achieve GTC Scotland accreditation. Online safety is also a suggested core element of the Professional Learning programme on the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS) and when student and probationer teachers are on school placement they have access to the appropriate local authority guidance on online safety. Key messages regarding online safety are featured in student and school handbooks and professional responsibility in terms of online safety for children is also referred to within GTC Scotland’s Professional Code. GTC Scotland is developing advice regarding engaging online for teaching professionals as part of our work to engage with the revised Professional Code and refreshed Professional Standards and we continue to highlight aspects of online safety through our magazine to all registrants, Teaching Scotland.

### 3.10 Recommendation 22

_The Committee recommends that there should be service level agreements between teacher training institutions and education authorities as standard for student placements. These should set out the requirements on each body and also establish a means for students to feedback their experiences. Any deficiencies with the quality of work placements should then be reported to the GTCS, or its replacement the Education Workforce Council for Scotland, for mediation and resolution._

**GTC Scotland Response:**

GTC Scotland currently has no locus in partnership agreements between universities and local authorities. GTC Scotland hosts the Student Placement System on behalf of universities, local authorities and schools.
GTC Scotland as an organisation continues to have no locus in the creation of service level agreements between ITE institutions and local authorities. Arrangements currently exist at local level to resolve any difficulties within an agreed partnership model. Professional Advisory Groups (or similar) representing stakeholders in these partnerships are in place and these would be the forums by which to identify solutions to address problems specific to the local partnership.

GTC Scotland’s ITE accreditation criteria does look at the sustainability of programmes and their compatibility with the current student placement system but the quality assurance of ITE programmes currently sits with Education Scotland through Ministers requesting them to conduct a review into an aspect of ITE.

An Aspect Review of these ITE partnership arrangements was conducted by Education Scotland (beginning in 2015/15) which outlined key strengths and next steps. GTC Scotland contributed to a stakeholder event in October 2019, hosted by Education Scotland and universities, which facilitated the sharing of practice in relation to numeracy across ITE providers. It is understood by GTC Scotland that a self-evaluation framework for ITE has since been developed by Education Scotland and universities. GTC Scotland has had no engagement in this process to date.

GTC Scotland hosts the Student Placement System (SPS) on behalf of the partners involved in determining and arranging student placements for which there is a protocol, which is reviewed annually, and outlines the role and responsibilities of universities, local authorities and schools.

**Proposed Improvement Action:**

- There is scope to further consider the partnership arrangements in place between universities’ self-evaluation, Education Scotland’s reviews of ITE provision and GTC Scotland’s accreditation role in order to ensure a validated self-evaluation process that informs continuous improvement in the delivery of ITE and best supports student teachers.

3.11 Recommendation 23

The Committee also recommends that, in moving to the opt-out system, there should be a system for schools to highlight to education authorities instances where a school is stopping short of opting-out but has real concerns in relation to its ability to support student placements due to limited resources including teacher time. This information should be used to assist education authorities in performing their duty of care role. It should also be used to inform the GTCS, and its replacement, the EWCS, in its role overseeing how the Student Placement System is functioning. This information should also be collated and made publicly available as a means of assessing the number of schools that consider themselves to be under significant pressure.

**GTCS Response:**

There are established arrangements in place between partners to address issues with SPS and training sessions continue to be offered. Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the processes results in system improvements.

Arrangements continue to be in place within local authorities for schools to raise any concerns they may have regarding capacity to support students on placement. Each local authority has a designated Student Placement System (SPS) Coordinator. The coordinator is usually a senior officer within Educational Services, and they may also be the local authority representative on the SPS Partnership Advisory Group. This senior officer also has the pastoral role for schools in terms of student placements with the ability to authorise withdrawal of specific offers, or a whole school opt-out if this was deemed appropriate. Each local authority coordinator has the facility within SPS to produce a report showing schools where authorisation has been given for offers to be withdrawn (with reasons specified) at specific stages, departments or faculties. It also indicates any whole school opt-out, again with reasons specified. Schools have the facility to state the maximum number of students they will have capacity to support during the academic session.
GTC Scotland continues to have strong reservations regarding the collation and publishing of this information given the sensitive nature of the reasons which would normally prompt withdrawal of an offer or a school opt out. It is likely also to be in breach of Data Protection Act. Relevant information is however shared with the Student Placement Management Group who can amend SPS protocols as required in response to identified need. The following table provides some statistics in relation to the volume of activity managed by SPS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018/19</th>
<th>2019/20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students entered in SPS</td>
<td>6,299</td>
<td>6,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of student placements required</td>
<td>16,977</td>
<td>15,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of offers by schools</td>
<td>34,241</td>
<td>34,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students given specific placements due to special circumstances</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average travel time for a student to their placement school</td>
<td>25.02 mins</td>
<td>24.07 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number on-campus SPS training sessions provided by GTCS</td>
<td>Uni – 10 LA – 8 Other (inc Scot Gov) - 3</td>
<td>Uni – 12 LA – 23 Other (inc Scot Gov) - 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of secondary subjects offered by SPS</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of ITE institutions supported by SPS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Training by GTC Scotland staff on the use of the SPS now includes joint sessions with universities and local authorities and new twilight sessions have been developed to include local authorities and teachers. This training programme was very successful last year and is being rolled out this year again through an annual training plan. GTC Scotland has requested that institutions provide early notification when new courses are being developed in order that we can ensure that new programmes are compatible with the Student Placement System. This has also been included within the ITE accreditation requirements. A review with each institution commenced early 2019 and was successful in identifying placement model changes. Following that, planning is underway for future annual meetings with universities to ensure that any new courses and placement requirements are discussed with each organisation and how the system and GTCS can best assist. This is planned for February 2020.

**Proposed Improvement Action:**

- The Student Placement Management Working group will consider creating teacher super-users, where SPS-trained teachers within a local authority can provide assistance to other teachers on the best use of SPS.

### 3.12 Recommendation 25

*In relation to the logic of which student is placed where, the system does not seem very sophisticated to the Committee, with students reporting a lack of recognition of childcare and other practical considerations. The Committee welcomes the efforts to improve the placement system, including longer lead in times for students and schools planning placements. The Committee requests a progress report from the Education Workforce Council for Scotland (EWCS) at the end of the next academic year on how the system is being tailored to individual circumstances (including feedback from student teachers). This is to ensure the "lottery" reported by some students is not a common experience in the future.*
GTC Scotland Response:

In designing the system to ensure fairness, openness and transparency a number of parameters have been included:

❖ travel time;
❖ disability;
❖ Gaelic;
❖ private transport options;
❖ denomination/non-denomination; and
❖ special circumstances.

There is therefore the facility within SPS for students to tick the box that says they have special circumstances and this triggers the need to manually match placements to take account of their needs. Students with special circumstances receive first prioritisation. The SPS can and has, accommodated carers and those students with special circumstances. Students with special circumstances can be manually matched through the controlled manual matching phase, prior to automated matching, allowing local authorities to provide reasonable adjustments where required. The system determines placement from the address provided by the student and does not currently take childcare as a key indicator for placement unless an individual has expressed this factor as a special circumstance. When a student declares a disability, it may be that the disability does not impact on their location of placement but may relate instead to reasonable adjustments that may be considered once they are in the classroom on placement.

The SPS requires effective partnership working where all partners understand their role and undertake their responsibilities effectively. It is a source of pride for Scotland that the system generally operates efficiently as a result of effective partnership working with a continual focus on system improvement. ITE student handbooks outline the roles and responsibilities of the various partners who support the system: universities, schools, local authorities and GTC Scotland.

There are other processes that interact with the SPS which are worthy of consideration given their impact. Firstly, all teachers require to have enhanced disclosure with Disclosure Scotland. Timescales for this process can be protracted and are out with the control of the partners engaged in SPS. GTC Scotland has previously raised significant concern about the impact a delay in this process can have. It is our understanding that Disclosure Scotland is working towards a digital application process, but this is some way off, requiring us to issue and administer thousands of paper ePVG copies to student teachers. Secondly, SPS requires each individual school and then the local authority to sign off placements. There can be delays in receiving both sign offs. Whilst we understand that this remains the preferred position for education authorities, in a developing culture of headteacher empowerment, there is perhaps scope to revisit this arrangement.

Proposed Improvement Action:

❖ Work with the Student Placement Management Group to reconsider the implications of the inclusion of childcare within special circumstances being mindful of the potential for precedents in other areas such as the teacher induction scheme.
❖ Highlight concern that the impact of the speed of the PVG process can have on placement.
❖ Further consider the requirement for dual sign off with schools and education authorities.

4 References
