

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

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How do I devise a timetable?

Considerations: When devising a timetable, it is important to consider the phase of the teaching experience and the individual needs of the trainee teacher. Trainee teachers need to experience the full age range for which they are being trained. This means that whether they are in the first school or second school they should have experience of the full age range the school can offer. It is a myth to think that 6th form teaching is necessarily harder, for example, than year nine on a Friday afternoon. It is particularly important that trainees in the first placement in a 13 (12)-19, or 11-18, school should gain experience of teaching post 16 since their second placement may well be in an 11-16 school.

It is obviously best in the first school experience if trainee teachers mostly teach their main subjects. This particularly applies to design and technology, science and modern language trainees who need to gain confidence in their subject specialism before being helped in areas they have not themselves studied for some time.

At the start of the second term trainee teachers will arrive with a previous report and an action plan. These should be used to help devise the timetable. Please remember that they will have had limited teaching experience at this stage. First placements involve largely collaborative teaching with a partner. Those who have never taught before embarking on

the course will still be very inexperienced and probably lacking in confidence. They are also having to get to know an entirely new school – do not expect too much too soon.

Given the length of time the trainees are with you they do not necessarily have to maintain exactly the same timetable for the whole placement. Think creatively about other experiences the trainee teacher may still need and feel free to rearrange the classes significantly. Similarly, if problems occur during the placement it may be that temporarily swapping groups, or altering the collaborative arrangements, will be helpful- please include the subject tutor and the trainee teacher in such discussions.

What happens if I have concerns about pupils' progress?

Mentors are understandably concerned about the achievement of their pupils. Again we would urge you to consider the presence of a trainee teacher as an opportunity. Having another, hopefully, enthusiastic, qualified adult working with you in a group ought, for the most part, to be beneficial for pupils. The opportunity for collaborative work should be seized. Although trainee teachers need to be able to teach 'alone' and sustain this at any level for which they are trained, for much of the time the mentor will also be present, if only as an observer. This should provide opportunities for the mentor to work as a TA with small groups, to split classes by taking out the gifted, the most disruptive, or just a proportion to make things more manageable, to help both pupils and trainee teachers develop. With a positive and creative approach, the worries over pupil progression and achievement should disappear.

How do I manage a pair of trainee teachers?

Trainee teachers usually work in pairs during the autumn term. Schools may decide to allocate each trainee a mentor (preferable) or allocate one mentor for both trainees. If one mentor is managing the trainees, then time must be allocated to work which each trainee to ensure that they get their entitlement shown below.

- One subject mentor meeting focused on review and planning (one hour per week)
- Professional studies taught programme organised by the professional mentor
- Three formal written subject observations per week
- One joint observation by the professional mentor (or deputy) during the placement
- Access to policies and related documents required by the trainee

Working as a pair provides the opportunity to plan and review lessons and schemes of work together. Where trainee teachers are unable to be placed as a pair they should work with the mentor as the other pair member. In all cases it is important that the pair have agreed beforehand how they intend to work together.

Trainee teachers do not choose their partner - they are placed together often because of where they are living. Some pairs will work well together, but it is possible that some pairs will experience difficulties. They will certainly be different people and may well compare their previous experience and subject background as well as the progress they make in the school. The mentor can help by avoiding public comparisons and by valuing the strengths of each person. The mentor may sometimes have a difficult decision to make about when to move from pair work to individual responsibility for classes. Where pairs clash either in personal terms or in teaching style they may want to work separately from an earlier stage. Where they lack confidence they may want to delay individual responsibility. One may be straining at the leash, the other reluctant. However, experience shows that clashes are rare.

One of the things the course must develop in trainee teachers is the ability to work with others as a team. Teachers who can't do this are considerably less effective and may be devastating in the school as a whole. Trainee teachers therefore have to learn to work with others - both in a pair and as a member of a department. Conflicts need to be resolved rather than ignored. Tutors and mentors can work together to help trainee teachers in making these professional relationships work.

How do I help trainee teachers with class management?

It is vital that trainee teachers are able to establish their authority as a teacher in the classroom and manage learning in a purposeful and controlled way. The pupils will inevitably know that they are learners.

Confidence and good classroom presence are important factors in achieving authority. Trainee teachers can be very nervous without showing it. Most experienced teachers find themselves more inhibited when they are being observed and this applies to trainee teachers. If there is a good relationship with the mentor, it helps considerably. Sometimes trainee teachers find it difficult to balance the need to be firm with the need to make good relationships with pupils. They can be too strict or too friendly. They may need help in finding the right balance and they may also need convincing that pupils expect and want them to deal with misbehaviour. Trainee teachers can feel inhibited in intervening effectively, thinking that their mentor will disapprove (because they are looking for 'good relationships' and conflict doesn't seem naturally part of this). It is sometimes useful for trainee teachers to see a video of their own performance (agonising sometimes). There is nothing clearer than for them to observe what you, the observer, have seen.

How do I help trainees to observe lessons?

Crucial to the development as a teacher is the ability to observe teaching with an analytical eye and to evaluate its effectiveness. Trainee teachers need all the practice they can get. When working in pairs, they should be encouraged to analyse each other's performance and to do so in a constructive and positive way. It is particularly useful if the focus of

observations is on pupils' progress. Trainees will be guided on key questions to address when observing a lesson that focuses on pupil progress. These questions include: -

1. How well does the structure of the lesson, as evident in both planning and teaching, promote learning?
2. Are pupils sufficiently challenged and engaged given their prior skills, knowledge and understanding?
3. Do pupils understand what they are being asked to do in every stage of the lesson?
4. Do pupils have opportunities and means to indicate their understanding (or lack) of the concepts being introduced?
5. Do pupils improve their understanding as a result of detailed and accurate feedback on their learning?
6. Are pupils who are having difficulty supported to help them understand?
7. How well is the pupil's subject knowledge developed in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding?
8. Is the management of pupils' behaviour effective to ensure that they make progress in a safe and secure environment?

Mentor feedback on their ability to analyse each other's teaching is important. Mentor feedback, written reviews and development SHARP targets which focus on trainees' self-evaluations of lessons are essential for professional progress. **It is an expectation that during the autumn term trainee teachers will complete three detailed lesson evaluations per week. This requirement stops at Christmas as evaluations become part of the weekly review process.**

What sorts of ways can I work collaboratively with trainees?

Modes of Collaborative Work (based on Arthur, Davison & Moss 1997). In all the modes described below the notion of careful debrief and evaluation is essential. Without time given to reviewing, the learning outcomes will be limited.

Observation

One partner watches the other. This can be a focused observation to analyse a particular approach, or may be for the observer to raise questions as feedback. It could be used for the observer to give feedback, although this is more likely if the pairs are of equal status. With a mentor this is always used pre-teaching, but there is no reason why it could not be used later for more specific purposes.

Teacher + Teaching Assistant

In this mode one partner leads and the other acts as a teaching assistant. In this model the TA can work with an individual, a group with learning difficulties, or the high achievers to stretch them. Having a clear lead teacher can allow for modelling a particular approach and can help pupils by ensuring where the centre of authority sits.

Linear Sequence Mode

Here the partners compartmentalise the lesson into prearranged sections and take separate responsibility for them. This can help individuals by allowing them to focus on particular skills e.g. settling the class; conducting a demonstration; summarising; questioning; managing group work or returning and commenting on written work etc. This can run into problems if people overrun their section and may leave pupils confused as to who is in charge.

Planning/teaching Split Mode

One partner plans the lesson and the other teaches it. This is only effective if the debrief is carried out sensitively but thoroughly. One especially effective use of this is where a mentor taught the lesson to one group, the trainee teacher then tried to use the same lesson plan to another group and finally the trainee teacher developed his/her own way with a third group in the light of that experience

Class Division Mode

In this version the class is split into two and each partner teaches one half the same content. This gives more individual attention and allows clear responsibility. It can also be used to teach each half different things on rotation thus playing to subject knowledge strengths of individual partners. It still requires shared planning and a detailed debrief. It has been used to great effect with exam classes, especially when in revision periods.

Whichever pattern is used it is important: -

- (i) to discuss beforehand and agree the role to be taken by each partner during the lesson. The problem of shared leadership needs to be explicitly resolved to vary the trainee teacher's part in a lesson so they can practise a range of skills over a period of time.
- to discuss and evaluate the experience

How do I give feedback?

Trainee teachers can receive too little or too much feedback. How much feedback to give at a particular point in a trainee teacher's development is a matter of professional judgement on the part of the mentor.

Oral Feedback

When a lesson has been observed some oral feedback should be given. Oral comments should not be given when pupils are present; ideally it should be given in private. When written feedback only is possible it should be followed up later with a quick oral check on how it was received and whether it was understood. All feedback should lead to a potential dialogue.

Written Feedback

What is written down can be referred to later and reflected on - so it is helpful for trainee teachers to have some written feedback to go back to when they evaluate their teaching. Such feedback can be brief and might only pick out two points to work on. Although short feedback of this sort need not use the normal observation form there is no reason why it

could not. **Trainees upload feedback to their PebblePad Portfolio and tutors review this frequently.**

Giving Feedback

The following advice about the feedback process is drawn from a number of sources and provides a useful checklist: -

1. Arrange a quiet room, free from interruption and away from pupils and other trainee teachers
2. Be clear about what you want to say
3. Feedback (oral and written) should also include comments on planning and subject knowledge as well as the lesson
4. Do not give the trainees the answers. Use questions to help guide the trainee towards possible strategies for development.
5. Start with the trainee teacher's evaluation, allowing all points to be made without comment. However, try to encourage them to make some positive comments first! Questions such as "what did you enjoy about the lesson" may be useful. Then move into your evaluation by building on the trainee teacher's evaluation
6. Give due emphasis to strengths. Trainees will often only hear negative points
7. Avoid vague or generalised praise or criticism. Be specific – comments such as 'that was brilliant' or 'that was great' are not helpful on their own and need to be qualified. Often trainees will comment 'I'm getting lots of positive (or negative) feedback but nothing else'
8. Allow time for setting SHARP targets and discussing how they can be achieved. Select priority areas. If there are lots of negative points, select a couple of points for the trainee to work on and then gradually deal with the others
9. Deal positively with areas that need improvement. Set SHARP targets. Most importantly suggest strategies for achieving the targets set
10. Own the feedback. Rather than starting with 'you are...' use phrases such as 'I wonder if...', 'I thought...' or 'in my view...'
11. Check the trainee teacher's perception of what has been said and of how they are progressing. Let them know how you think they are progressing

The questions below may help you in your feedback to develop a mentoring conversation.

Developing a mentoring conversation.

The mentoring conversation can guide trainee teachers towards being reflective and support them in improving their practice and taking responsibility for identifying and meeting their developing professional needs. To enrich this mentoring conversation tutors have devised a list of questions mentors may use as prompts during feedback.

Mentoring Questions

It is useful to focus on the pupils during the mentoring conversations. Questioning is used to tease out the responses from trainees so that they develop the solutions rather than the mentor.

Frequency: Trainee teachers should be given: -

1. some feedback after every lesson that is observed, even if it is brief and oral
2. formal written feedback on at least 3 lessons per week

Using the Observation Form

The observation form highlights Standards at the top. These can be identified by the trainee or selected by the observer, or both. It helps if the focus is discussed beforehand and links to previous SHARP targets set through observation or weekly reviews. The largest section can be used as a free account of the lesson or a summary whichever the writer finds most convenient. The focus should be on pupil progress rather than the actions of the trainee. However, the form should not need taking away to be written up neatly. It is intended as an immediate record. Increasingly you should be considering the impact trainee's teaching is having on pupil learning over time. Targets should offer strategies for achievement and may be identified by the trainee or observer.

It is not necessary to comment on all of the Teachers' Standards at one viewing and irrespective of the focus comments should be made on any significant area observed. It is important to recognise that over a number of observations comments should refer to all Standard areas and that comments on more than just class management should appear. As trainee teachers get better we should move the focus to teaching and learning and issues such as formative assessment.

Responsibility for giving Feedback

Trainees work with class teachers, subject mentors and professional mentors. All are expected to give feedback. Class teachers gain from having a trainee teaching their class by relief from preparation and marking. They can reasonably be asked to observe and give feedback, following the guidelines on their role set out below. Feedback should, at least in part, focus on the SHARP targets set in the weekly review.

It is for each school to decide who carries out formal observations; it is likely that the subject and professional mentors will do most of them.

Guidance for Non-mentors

The major responsibility for supervising a trainee teacher rests with the subject mentor who handles most of the organisation of their workload, observes them teach, gives feedback and conducts a weekly session reviewing progress and setting SHARP targets. In many cases the majority of the classes taught by the trainee teacher will be those normally taught by the mentor but, for example, where mentors have a trainee teacher for each practice, this may not be the case. It is extremely valuable for trainee teachers to work with different teachers so that they can observe a range of teaching styles. Partner schools have asked for some guidance for teachers, who have trainee teachers in their classes but who have not been trained as mentors, about how they can support the mentor and the trainee teacher.

The following points reflect the good practice that already exists in many schools.

Trainee teachers need clear guidance from class teachers about what they have to teach, what resources are available to support them and how much freedom they have to vary their approach so that they can prepare efficiently.

The class teacher remains responsible for the learning and the management of the pupils and will therefore normally observe the lessons taught by the trainee teacher. Trainee teachers cannot assume full legal responsibility until they have qualified.

Feedback to trainee teachers on their performance is crucial to morale and development. After every lesson observed some oral feedback from the class teacher, however brief, is important.

Written feedback is particularly valuable also because it is available to reflect on later when the emotional pressure of teaching has subsided. We hope that class teachers will be able to offer this support using the proforma provided or by providing brief notes on a sheet of paper.

Class teachers should liaise closely with the subject mentor, reporting progress and helping to set targets for the weekly review session.

It is particularly important that class teachers signal at an early stage to the mentor and trainee teacher any concerns they may have about a trainee teacher's progress.

How do I mentor different 'types' of trainees?

Mentors shared their experiences of mentoring different types of students...

Stereotype of Trainee	Strategies for Mentoring
The over familiar casual trainee	The Professional Mentor in school should explain code within the school and refer to staff handbook. Mention dress code to trainee during weekly review. Child protection issues (professional mentor). Explain that an over familiar manner means lack of respect from pupils; need to keep their distance.
The brain picker trainee	Confidence boost when the student has a good idea and point in the right direction. Fix a definite time to answer questions. Suggest that they share ideas with their peer group.
The last-minute trainee	Breakdown tasks – very structured approach, see daily to check planning & targets.
The "Little Miss Perfect" trainee	Look at good examples within school. Give a very challenging activity. Extend the challenges. Feedback from outside of the department. Examples of excellent plans/evaluations. Be firm; discuss the realities of full time teaching. Cover a teacher for the day.
The having time off trainee	Find out why they're having time off informally. Keep the subject tutor informed. Adapt timetable, set short-term achievable targets. Make a note of all absences – all absences should be recorded on the school reports.
The mechanical trainee	Small activities/tasks. Targeted teacher observation, follow up with observation of student implementing strategies.
The 25% lazy trainee	Use time more usefully, go to other lessons, not just lessons within the department. Shadow other members of staff to find out jobs other than teaching. Give target of "come up with 10

	good starter activities". Fill their time till they feel pressured to "get going".
The 'lots of problems' trainee	Tell them the realities. Ask them "Is this going to be the job for you?" Short term support, give them strategies to solve potential problems (child minders, support networks)
The "it's not my fault" trainee	Target set. Be firm, specific. Put the ownership back on them.
The trainee student	Fix definite time to answer questions & defer all queries to that time. Explain clearly what you expect them to come up with before you give them all your ideas.

How do I support my trainee with assignments and tasks?

Assignment work is often thought to be 'university work'. However, the work has been designed to support the trainee teacher to develop a better understanding of schools, learning and teaching and ultimately pupil progress. NQT feedback shows that they have valued the insights gained from their study and that they found the assignments useful.

Trainee teachers will be considering learning in the first part of the course and seeing how learning theory applies in the classroom by completing an induction booklet. They will be completing a series of tasks during the induction period and focussed observations on different teaching styles will assist their understanding. Mentors can help by directing them to colleagues with very different (but good) approaches to teaching and learning.

Mentors will also want to consider the need to support trainee teachers in planning their assignment A that is completed during the autumn. This is the critical analysis of a quality resource and this may well affect the choice of classes on the timetable so that they can evaluate the impact the resource has on pupils' progress.

The third assignment (assignment B) is a literature review and presentation completed in the summer term. The topic for this literature review should be negotiated with mentors, and subject tutors, and carried out during the final part of the course. The assignment is assessed orally and via a literature review.

Assessment for QTS (Meeting the Teachers' Standards) runs throughout the year and requires trainees to produce a series of action plans supported by literature and evidence addressing the Teachers' Standards. Trainees will set SHARP targets at Christmas, Easter and at the end of the course as part of their continuous professional development. They must also submit an electronic portfolio (PebblePad). At the end of the course this work is verified during a Viva Voce (tutorial) in University.

Further details about assignments can be found in the Assessment Guidance booklet available on the Inspiring Partnerships website -

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/education-collaboration.html>

Supporting Trainees with the Digital Portfolio (PebblePad)

All teachers will find it helpful to keep a form of portfolio record of their professional development. The PGCE portfolio has a similar purpose, to chart development, progress

and good practice. It is helpful for mentors to remind trainee teachers to be thinking about the portfolio and in particular the evidence to support the action plans. This can be done formally during weekly reviews. When a trainee has done something that is noteworthy and exemplifies good practice s/he should be encouraged to put a record on PebblePad. This makes it easier for them to complete the evidence required for the Teachers' Standards.

Trainees will be given guidance on how to share their digital portfolio (PebblePad) with you. You should get an email invite from the trainee that allows you access. If there are any issues please contact the university subject tutor.

How do I organise and manage weekly reviews?

Trainees have been provided with an electronic version of the weekly review template. This can be completed by hand or electronically (electronic is preferred). Tutors will check the weekly reviews periodically via PebblePad.

Induction Period: Initially trainees will be observing and helping. Just before the autumn half term (in the induction period) an initial review should occur to set priorities for the school based development that follows.

Weekly Reviews: Every trainee is entitled to one session a week of 'quality' mentoring time devoted to their professional development. This time must be given high priority by the school and should be free from interruption. In the absence of a subject mentor, the professional mentor, or other suitably trained mentor, would need to conduct the session. Trainees will prepare for the weekly meeting by thinking about their performance over the week, and re-reading their own evaluations of the lessons they taught and any feedback from their mentor and other teachers. This should enable them to collate SHARP targets ready to draft ones for the coming week. Trainees should complete the first part of the review sheet (this does not prevent mentors from adding things). Mentors will have observed the trainee teaching and will have received feedback from other teachers who have also observed the trainee. Trainees may select evidence of their achievements to bring to the meeting and they should identify areas that they need to work on.

During the session the mentor and the trainee should: -

- review the progress/achievements that has been made on the SHARP targets set the previous week
- discuss the evidence which highlights any achievements
- set SHARP targets for the coming week
- discuss how these targets will be met
- complete the record of the review session
- check that evaluations have been completed
- check the progress of assignments, the portfolio and research project

The focus for development will clearly depend on the performance of the trainee. The mentor will prioritise targets and focus on what is essential to achieve improvement. SHARP targets set each week should be the focus of some formal observation.

In order to ensure that trainees are familiar with and make use of the Teachers' Standards each weekly review should involve a quick look at a section of the Teachers' Standards in the 'Meeting the Teachers' Standards' booklets with brief comments on any progress made towards achieving them. The agenda for a weekly review might be: -

- Review of progress on last week's targets (5 mins)
- Focus on key standards area to review progress and set SHARP targets (10 mins)
- Review of week's performance (including other standards areas) and setting SHARP targets for next week (25 mins)
- Checking evaluations, progress with assignments, the portfolio and the research project (5 mins)

Weekly reviews are completed on PebblePad and are checked by tutors weekly.

How and when do I assess the attainment of trainees?

The following guidance provides support and exemplification for mentors when writing school reports and assessing trainee outcomes. The Partnership website <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/education-collaboration.html> provides exemplar reports.

When will they be assessed?

It is important that we (the trainee, mentors and tutor(s)) track progress at interim points. As a minimum this occurs ten times during the course. This is in addition to the tracking that is completed as part of the weekly review process. Tracking is always on-going and a negotiated support plan (between the trainee, mentor and tutor) can be put into place at any point to offer additional support.

The ten points are:

1. At interview
2. Using the '*Meeting the Teachers' Standards*' Term booklet which links to the first school report
3. **First report** (December)
4. Action planning and first progress review (December) (part of PSEC3000 – Meeting the Teachers' Standards)
5. Using the '*Meeting the Teachers' Standards*' (*Spring/Summer*) booklet that links to the second school report
6. **Second report** – (end of March)
7. Action planning and second progress review (Easter) (part of PSEC3000 – Meeting the Teachers' Standards)
8. Using the '*Meeting the Teachers' Standards*' (*Spring/Summer*)' booklet
9. **Final report** – June
10. University of Worcester Career Entry Profile (UWCEP) (part of PSEC3000 – Meeting the Teachers' Standards)

Mentors should use their professional judgement and common sense to assess the trainee at a level that is consistent with what should reasonably be expected given the trainee's level of experience. Progress is tracked periodically using the 'Meeting the Teachers' Standards' booklet in addition to the weekly review meetings. Standards are presented as separate headings, each of which is accompanied by a number of bullet points. The bullets

are an integral part of the Standards, designed to illustrate the scope of each heading. They should not be interpreted as separate standards in their own right but used by trainees, mentors and tutors to track progress against the Standard, to determine areas where additional experience development might need to be observed, or to identify areas where trainees are already demonstrating excellent skills.

If I have any further questions who do I contact?

There is no such thing as a silly question so please ask if you want any further information. The best person is the subject tutor (for subject mentors) or the course leader (for professional mentors). The course administrator (Claire Rowlands) usually knows the answers as well! The 'Partnership website' <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/education-collaboration.html> is also regularly updated with guidance and support.