



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Criteria for accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales: integrated impact assessment 2022 to 2023

Assessment of the impact of refreshing the criteria for accreditation.

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What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

Proposal

Refreshed 'Criteria for the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education programmes in Wales' document (the 'Criteria') in readiness for the next phase of the long-term reforms for Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

Background

High-performing education systems build their human resource systems by focussing on attracting, educating, and supporting good teachers. Successful systems are distinctive in that any education reform is considered across the school system and the role and contribution of ITE is addressed as part of the change programme. Professor Furlong's report '**Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers**' (University of Oxford, 2015), made key recommendations to reform the ITE system in Wales with clear connections to Professor Donaldson's report '**Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales**' (Welsh Government, 2015), setting out the vision for developing the teachers that would be needed in Wales to deliver our aspirations.

Published in 2017, the **first iteration of the Criteria**, drafted by Professor Furlong and the Initial Teacher Education Expert forum, made clear the new requirements for ITE in Wales:

- A central role for schools.
- A clearer role for universities.
- Joint ownership of the ITE programme.

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- Structured opportunities to link school and university learning.
- The centrality of research and other forms of systematic evidence.

All programmes of ITE with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in Wales delivered from September 2019 have been accredited against the Criteria for a time limited period. The Criteria have set a high-level framework intended to ensure the quality of ITE in Wales for student teachers so that they, and the education sector more broadly, could be assured that ITE programmes are high quality, rigorous and professionally appropriate to fully prepare them to enter the teaching profession and teach in Wales schools.

Long term

The first accreditation period will soon be ending and ITE Partnerships will need to reaccredit their provision to continue delivering ITE in Wales. The ITE reform programme is a long-term endeavour, and this proposal is a step within that long term view. The refresh of the Criteria has provided an opportunity to reflect on the broader education reforms and the ITE reforms within that broader programme of change. Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic provided evidence of how the new ITE Partnerships were successfully working in partnership including the agility shown to mitigate the worse impacts of the pandemic on student teachers.

The Welsh Government continues to recognise the importance of our teaching profession as key to achieving our shared vision for education in Wales, with the reform of ITE in Wales influenced and benefiting from the wider education reforms of the past 5 years. The refreshed the Criteria have been drafted to enable the next set of accredited ITE Programmes in Wales to fully:

- reflect the maturing educational reforms in Wales, incorporating legislative changes and references to the most up to date guidance on related issues
- reflect the lessons learned from the first accreditation process, accredited

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provision, and the pandemic

- embed good practice from across the ITE sector to further strengthen provision and Partnerships
- raise our ambitions and expectations for ITE programmes and Partnerships to support our ambition for world leading ITE in Wales to continue to enable institutions and individuals to flourish and build the conditions to ensure inclusive classrooms for all learners

The refreshed Criteria will inform future programmes of ITE accredited by the EWC's Teacher Education Accreditation Board and represent the continued national commitment to the reforms and ongoing journey towards a high quality, well supported teaching profession.

Prevention

The ITE reforms have the aim to improve the quality of ITE for student teachers. Ensuring student teachers receive intellectually challenging and robustly practical programmes of ITE prepares them to enter the teaching profession, teach the new Curriculum, and support Wales' learners.

Longer term, it is intended that through improvements to ITE, either through enabling student teachers to flourish, or through the strong Partnership arrangements between schools and HEIs, the overall quality of teaching in Wales will improve. This will be reinforced by explicit requirements for schools and HEIs delivering ITE to be evidence and research engaged to embed a virtuous cycle of evaluation and improvement. Ensuring evidence engaged, inclusive classrooms focussed on teaching, learning and the wellbeing of learners in maintained schools will in turn will have a positive impact on learners' attainment and wellbeing in Wales maintained settings.

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Integration

The proposal has clear long term aims to continue to facilitate the introduction of the curriculum, ALN Reform and addressing equity in education with associated benefits for both learners and all practitioners. The refreshed Criteria will contribute to the delivery of the following Programme for Government objectives:

- continuing our long-term programme of education reform, and ensuring educational inequalities narrow and standards rise
- supporting schools and teachers to deliver our Curriculum for Wales
- expanding the proportion of the education workforce who can teach and work through the Welsh language
- implementing the new Additional Learning Needs Act

Collaboration

All key partners involved with delivering or supporting the ITE sector in Wales have been involved in refreshing the Criteria. Our key partners were ITE Partnerships (both HEIs and Partner schools), Estyn and EWC. They have been vital in reflecting on the ongoing development of the ITE sector and fully involved in co-constructing the refreshed Criteria.

Other partners with a shared interest in this proposal include, inter alia, the education workforce unions, school improvement organisations, organisations responsible for the induction of NQTs, professional associations and learner advocacy groups, CYDAG, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and others. These partners were approached early in the work to provide feedback and evidence on the delivery of the ITE programmes and how in their view we could refresh the Criteria to meet our aims. This evidence directly impacted on the discussions held with our key partners and refreshing the Criteria document put forward to public consultation.

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All responses to the public consultation have been analysed and considered in the preparation of the final Criteria document.

Involvement

The refreshed Criteria were co-drafted with our key partners via a steering group. Members were key to evaluating evidence, define the issues as reported from other partners and identify potential solutions, alongside identifying areas for development. The close working with our key delivery and support partners ensure the refreshed Criteria reflect the needs and ambitions of the ITE sector, student teachers and schools in Wales and are achievable requirements for this next phase in the ITE reforms.

In addition to the five ways of working above, we considered the following areas:

Impact

The broader ITE reforms, including the development of the original Criteria were undertaken based on clear evidence and subjected to impact assessments as the reforms were developed and implemented.

In relation to this proposal there is a clear need to develop the Criteria to ensure we continue to meet our aims for high quality ITE. Student teachers are entitled to high quality programmes that enable them to become true professionals and the intellectual framework requires and balances innovative, evidence informed approaches, for high quality, consistent provision.

New legislation, Ministerial commitments, and research into the Welsh education system and ITE system highlighted areas for development however there is

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limited evidence on the quality of the new ITE programmes. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has impacted on delivery since the new programmes came into operation in September 2019. Additionally Welsh Government introduced a range of temporary amendments to the Criteria to ensure that ITE Partnerships were able to continue to deliver their programmes.

Under normal circumstances ITE Partnerships would be subject to Estyn inspection and EWC monitoring but due to the pandemic these were suspended. Estyn and EWC have now recommenced inspection and monitoring of ITE Partnerships. One inspection report is available to date including effective practice improvement resources from the provider inspected. This report was broadly positive on the provision reporting good progress made by students and the valuable understanding of the Curriculum for Wales provided via the provision. Estyn include ITE within their **annual report** and **summarised** that:

- the Partnerships supported students personal and professional development during the pandemic and have continued to do so effectively
- in all partnerships, school and HEIs have co-constructed programmes of ITE that offer a valuable range of learning experiences for students
- schools and HEIs are working well together to develop joint leadership and the partnerships

The OECD have reported on various aspects of Wales' ITE system including 'A Flying Start: Improving Initial Teacher Preparation Systems' (2019). While the study was conducted prior to the new programmes beginning the OECD researchers reviewed the proposed reforms and the report references throughout 'Promising Practices', examples identified as strengths of Initial Teacher Preparation in the study's participating countries. These can be found on the **TeacherReady! web platform** for other countries to learn from. The Welsh 'Promising Practices' are:

- professional learning based on systematic enquiry observed in a group of schools

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- towards a research-informed, evidence-based reform agenda in initial teacher education in Wales
- ITE programme accreditation in Wales as a means to strengthen research-informed initial teacher education programmes

The OECD report (2021) 'Teachers' professional learning study: Diagnostic report for Wales' covers some of the period NQTs would have been entering the system from the new ITE programmes and covers aspects of ITE related to the themes of the report. The report indicated positive signs that the ITE programmes were preparing student teachers to enter the profession, ambitious and capable of supporting the wider education reforms.

Welsh Government had planned to undertake a formative assessment of the accredited programmes under the prior Criteria for accreditation, but this was also impacted by the pandemic. Welsh Government will explore the opportunities to recommence this work which will also be informed by the emerging Estyn and EWC monitoring and inspection reports. In the meantime, existing programmes will need to re-accredited for delivery from September 2024 onwards and the refresh of the Criteria is designed to enable this.

Inviting feedback and evidence from the wider system during the development of the refreshed criteria was one approach utilised to mitigate the lack of independent evidence and we have received anecdotal feedback from stakeholders in the system that indicates an increased confidence in and satisfaction with NQTs that have been trained under the new programmes. Welsh Government also contracted with experts in ITE including author of 'Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers', Professor Furlong OBE, Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Oxford and Emeritus Fellow of Green Templeton College, and two international ITE experts, Professor Dr. Bernhard, University College of Teacher education, Vienna/Krems and Dr. Groundwater-Smith AM, Honorary Professor, Sydney School of Education & Social Work, University of Sydney, to provide intellectual expertise from the UK and internationally to deepen the evidence informed discourse over the course of the project.

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Costs and Savings

The refreshed Criteria do not fundamentally amend the current ITE system but rather strengthen and promote quality expectations. The costs associated with the development and consultation of refreshed criteria document have been minimal and have been met from within existing budgets.

The refresh of the Criteria is intended to support the development of ITE programmes in Wales which are funded via student fees. HEIs and their Partner schools are autonomous and have funding arrangements in place to deliver the Programmes.

Funding continues to be allocated to our middle tier partners to support the system to:

- inspect the quality of ITE Programmes in Wales
- monitor the ITE Programmes against the requirements of the Criteria
- collaborate with the sector to embed emerging good practice and intellectual discourse to further the quality of ITE in Wales

Mechanism

No additional legislation will be required to deliver this proposal.

Conclusion

How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

Collaboration and co-construction have been vital to the development of the proposal prior to and after the consultation. Officials have engaged with the following stakeholders:

- ITE Partnerships (including HEIs, ITE Lead Partner Schools and Partner Schools)
- USCET
- Education Workforce Council
- Estyn
- Education unions
- school improvement organisations including induction leads
- Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
- various networks and groups representing specific cohorts of teachers and schools
- FE Colleges
- aligned professions representative bodies and groups
- Welsh Language Commissioner

All stakeholders approached to provide evidence were also invited to share this invitation with their own networks and wider stakeholders to expand the reach and therefore range of evidence collected. A steering group for the work, consisting of representatives from our key partners for ITE in Wales was also established and included representation from:

- ITE Partnerships: HEIs
- ITE Partnership: schools

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- Education Workforce Council (EWC)
- Estyn

The approach taken ensured that the initial proposal for consultation was informed from evidence from the sector and that stakeholders had the opportunity to influence the amendments made to the Criteria for accreditation of Initial teacher education in Wales (the 'Criteria').

We will continue to work with stakeholders including ITE Partnerships, EWC, Estyn, USCET, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and school improvement organisations to ensure that ITE in Wales provides high quality and professional appropriate qualifications for student teachers, enabling them to enter the workforce and provide excellent learning and teaching to Wales children and young people.

What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

Developing a high-quality education profession from the very start of their professional learning journey is central to the realisation of our vision for education in Wales and is 1 of 4 enabling objectives in 'Education in Wales: Our national mission'.

The amendments to the Criteria will support the realisation of our national priorities including implementation of Curriculum for Wales, supporting learners with additional learning needs, and embedding equity, well-being, and the Welsh language. The strengthened requirements and duties for ITE Partnerships in relation to anti-racist practise, equity, and wellbeing, will ensure aspiring teachers contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people in their settings as they enter the workforce. The strengthened requirements will also support the realisation of Cymraeg 2050 and reflect the Welsh Government's commitments under the Welsh in education workforce plan.

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The amended Criteria will strengthen ITE qualifications in Wales to ensure they meet the needs of aspiring teachers to deliver high standards and aspirations for all.

In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

- maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals?
- avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

Ensuring a high quality, research engaged, and collaborative teaching profession contributes to several of the well-being goals, including a more prosperous, equal, cohesive Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

The Criteria explicitly set out the requirements, roles, and responsibilities of those in education to the training of aspiring teachers, ensuring learning environments that are inclusive, collaborative and research engaged for the benefit of both student teachers and children and young people. The amendments also further support the teaching workforce's responsibility to the Welsh language under the professional teaching standards. These changes will continue to support and strengthen a culture of mutual responsibility in relation to professional learning of the individual and support the professional learning of others in the profession.

This in turn will aid the realisation of national priorities such as the implementation of Curriculum for Wales, supporting learners with additional learning needs and embedding equity, well-being, and the Welsh language across our ITE Partnerships including our ITE Partner Schools' communities. We will continue to work closely with our partners and stakeholders to avoid, reduce or mitigate any risks that develop as we move forward.

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How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

As our ITE Partner schools and HEIs implement their revised ITE qualification against the criteria we will continue to work with our education partners to ensure our vision for ITE in Wales is realised, student teachers receive rigorous practical and robustly intellectual ITE, and the education system is supported through engagement with the delivery of high quality ITE programmes.

Accreditation of ITE qualifications is time limited and we will continue to work with our partners, experts in ITE, our school communities and teachers, to evaluate the impact of the revised ITE programmes to support the next iteration of the Criteria for accreditation of ITE in Wales.

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