

# Strengthening QTS & improving career progression for teachers

**Royal  
Geographical  
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography  
and geographical learning

- **Consultation Response from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)**

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is the UK learned society and professional body for geography and geographers. The Society maintains a strong overview of the discipline, its standing and practice in schools, higher education, and the workplace, including professional accreditation. We advise on, and support the advancement of, geography; the dissemination of geographical knowledge to the public, policy makers and other specialist audiences including teachers, scholars, and those involved in expeditions and fieldwork; and training and professional development for practising geographers. We have 16,000 members and Fellows and our work currently reaches more than three million people per year.

The Society awards the professional accreditation Chartered Geographer, which is awarded to teachers through the Chartered Geographer (Teacher) designation.

Each year the Society works with teachers and pupils from about half of all English secondary schools which includes work with academies and their respective MATs, free, independent and maintained schools. Our annual programme of CPD reaches about 1,500 teachers and the Society's online resources [www.rgs.org/schools](http://www.rgs.org/schools) receive 1.3 million+ views annually.

The Society provides a significant programme of activities to support teachers during their training year and entry into the profession. We work regularly with Schools Direct, Teach First and HEI ITT providers to provide subject specialist input into their secondary programmes and since 2016 the Society has been supported by the DfE to run the Geography ITT Scholarship programme.

The consultation response, set out on the following pages, is not confidential.

Please contact the Society if you would like any further details about our views and work.

We are responding to the consultation as the Director of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) and the Head of Education and Outdoor Learning on behalf of the Society.

Dr Rita Gardner CBE  
Director

Steve Brace  
Head of Education and Outdoor Learning

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)  
1 Kensington Gore  
London  
SW7 2AR  
[Director@rgs.org](mailto:Director@rgs.org)  
020 7591 3010

8.3.2018



## General comments

The Society welcomes this review and in particular the importance it attaches to:

- The support necessary for teachers to enter and progress within the profession
- The ongoing need for professional development beyond the initial training year
- The vital importance of subject specialism and the need for teachers to maintain their subject knowledge, subject skills and subject pedagogy throughout their careers
- The need to promote a positive culture about and commitment to CPD amongst teachers and their Senior Leadership colleagues
- The recognition that disadvantaged pupils are less likely to have access to high quality teaching and the greater CPD needs of teachers working in such schools
- The important role of subject specialist bodies. These organisations promote subject specialist knowledge and expertise, connect teachers with their wider disciplinary community and networks of practice, contribute directly to teachers' professional development and accredit their good practice.

### **Q1: Do you think that QTS should be awarded after a period of sustained professional practice rather than the end of ITT?**

Yes.

There is benefit in the recognition of an individual's successful completion of their ITT training being separated from the award of "QTS".

This is broadly reflective of practice in other professions which are identified in the consultation overview.

It also provides the opportunity to separate individuals who have been 'trained' from those with more established practice.

The Society supports the proposal on the proviso that the qualifying period of classroom practice is properly supported, mentored and resourced.

### **Q2: Do you agree that a core early career content framework and CPD offer for new teachers should be fundamental to a strengthened QTS?**

Yes.

The Society strongly supports this proposal.

We welcome the outline framework and particularly the inclusion of Subject and Curriculum Knowledge and Evidence-based pedagogy, including subject-specific pedagogy.

The Society's experience of assessing and then awarding Geography ITT Scholarships to 100+ trainees in 2017 illustrates the high levels of subject knowledge and geographical understanding that trainees can hold before entering their training. 35% of Scholars hold a first class degree, 31% carry a Masters level qualification and 12% a PhD.

However, there were 177 unsuccessful applications to the Scholarships programme and these individuals were largely rejected because of a weaker understanding of geographical subject knowledge.

.....

The requirement for a new teacher's practice to be reviewed against subject specific criteria would provide a valuable framework to support their professional development, further promote their professional knowledge and, where necessary, identify weaker practice. This is particularly needed in a subject such as geography which requires teachers to keep up-to-date with a developing body of subject knowledge.

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department, and others, to define an appropriate subject content framework for geography teachers that can reflect best practice in relation to geographical subject knowledge, skills and pedagogy.

**Q3: What core competencies, knowledge areas or particular skills do you think should be developed in a structured way during the induction period?**

The Society would be delighted to offer its expert knowledge to support the development of such a framework for geography teachers.

The core competencies should include, but not be limited to:

- Subject specific geographical knowledge relevant to the KS3 National Curriculum, GCSE, A Level and other relevant qualifications
- Subject specific skills relevant to the requirements of the National Curriculum, GCSE and A Level including fieldwork, cartographic and graphical skills, data skills in geography and the use of Geographical Information Systems
- Subject specific pedagogy including geographical enquiry, field research and the collection, handling and use of geographical data
- Knowledge of the wider geographical subject community in relation to the support that teachers can draw on from their subject body/ies, Higher Education colleagues and others
- The demonstration of a personal commitment to enhance and build on their geographical knowledge, skills and understanding throughout their career
- The ability to reflection on their CPD and how they have applied it to their practice.

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department, and others, to define an appropriate subject content framework for geography teachers that can reflects best practice in relation to geographical subject knowledge, skills and pedagogy.

**Q4: To achieve these objectives, do you think we should extend the induction period?**

Yes.

The Society feels that a two year induction period, if properly supported and resourced, could be beneficial in the following ways:

- It would provide a new teacher with the opportunity to have taught a 'full cycle' of a GCSE and/or A Level specification. The current one-year induction does not allow enough time for a new teacher to take pupils through an entire course, support the requirements for fieldwork and their pupils' preparations for the final examinations and the non-examined (A Level) assessment.

The Society would welcome further discussion to explore whether a requirement of a two year induction could/should include teaching a full examination course over the two year period.

- Provide an extended period through which a new teacher can focus on developing their classroom practice.



It is the Society's experience that some new geography teachers experience subject specific promotion very early in their careers. The Society would never wish to limit teachers' abilities or career aspirations. However, we do have some developing concerns that some schools may be placing significant subject leadership expectations on their new entrants at a very (perhaps overly) early stage in their careers. This can be particularly pronounced in schools facing difficulties in recruiting geographers and/or where a new entrant is the sole geography specialist. We would welcome a position where a new teacher's classroom practice has become more firmly established before they are given subject specific leadership responsibilities and feel that a two year induction period would help to support this.

- The award of QTS after a two year period takes individuals further towards a future application for a subject specific Chartered accreditation, which should be considered as a career aspiration for new teachers. The Society's Chartered Geographer (Teacher) requires six years' experience following a first (relevant) degree. This qualifying period includes professional practice and also, where relevant, post graduate study.
- A two year period also allows for new teachers to have deeper and more sustained engagement with their subject specialist body/ies.

We do not feel that a flexible induction period has merit.

**Q5: We have used the names QTS(P) and QTS throughout this document. Do you think that these terms are appropriate?**

The term 'provision' may have an unwelcome downplaying of a new entrants role – echoing how Initial Teacher Trainee can be downgraded when called a 'student teacher' (and also the 'provisional' driving licence.)

"QTS" should be the full award at the end of a successful induction period.

**Q6: Which of these proposals do you think would help improve the quality and quantity of mentoring for all new teachers? And Q7: How else can we improve the quality and quantity of mentoring for all new teachers?**

Mentoring, especially within a new teacher's subject specific context, is a vital element of the support that new entrants should receive.

However, the Society recognises that not all mentors currently hold a comparable subject specialist background to their NQT. This situation is particularly unwelcome if an NQT is the sole geographer in a school.

In such cases a new entrant must be given systematic opportunities to engage with their wider subject community including geography teachers in others schools, their subject body/ies and subject experts from across the community.

**Q8: How should we ensure that new teachers get sufficient time to focus on their professional development?**

The 10% reduction in teaching time should be expanded across a two year induction period.

Schools should be strongly encouraged to use a small proportion of the CPD funds pay for the membership fees of their NQT's respective subject body/ies. This can provide an individual, and their colleagues, with annual access to expert support at a significantly lower cost and is typically paid for external CPD.

For example, annual Fellowship of the RGS-IBG costs ~£100pa. This provides a teacher with the opportunity to attend (or view online – with access to a back catalogue) weekly quality lectures from renowned geographical experts, unlimited downloads of articles and research papers from our leading research journals, receive discounts on the Society’s CPD programme and access to over 2,000 pages of online resources. Further it inducts a new colleague into their disciplinary community, connects them with likeminded colleagues locally and nationally and further reinforces their subject identity and professional standing.

The Society’s experience of providing Fellowship to our first cohort of 100 Geography ITT Scholars is already reaping benefits during their training year.

This review of QTS should provide the opportunity for a step-change in how new teachers, their mentors, colleagues and senior leaders view the support that can be gain from membership of their subject bodies.

**Q9: Do you agree that the QTS assessment should be conducted internally and be independently verified by an appropriate body? And Q10: How do you think we should strengthen the independent verification of QTS accreditation?**

There is the case to be further explored concerning whether the QTS should be assessed internally and/or externally and how appropriate an external assessment/s might complement in-school judgement.

The Society feels there is no single external body which has the necessary expertise to provide a universal assessment for all NQTs across all the subject specialisms. External assessment in this singular way might likely lead to a lowest common denominator approach which unhelpfully drew on a generic, rather than a subject specialist, assessment of an NQT.

There may be a potential role for subject bodies to externally assess a NQTs subject expertise and for this assessment to be fed into an in-school review.

The Society has extensive experience of assessing individuals’ professional abilities and practice, through the accreditation of Chartered Geographers and the selection of Geography ITT Scholars. In addition, the Society has recently developed an accreditation programme for Higher Education geography courses and over the last two years has accredited courses in 35 British universities.

The Society would be happy to share our experience as part of discussion about how appropriate judgements can be made about an individual’s professional knowledge and practice in relation to the award of QTS; and to engage in the further development of this area.

**Q11: What role do you think ITT providers could play in the assessment and accreditation of QTS?**

Given the range of different types of providers, for example school or HE based, this question requires further discussion and exploration.

**Q12: Do you think we should maintain the limitation on how long a teacher can teach on a supply basis without completing QTS?**

Yes

**Q13: Considering all of the above, what impact would this model of a strengthened QTS have on post-ITT teachers in terms of teaching practice, retention, and morale?**

.....

The Society believes that a longer QTS period, allied to a stronger commitment to subject specific CPD, would better support teachers' practice, their retention and morale.

**Q14: What impact would this model of a strengthened QTS have on the wider school system?**

The Society hopes that this model would improve standards of teaching and the retention of teachers across schools.

**Q15: Are there any other implications that we should consider, and what are your suggestions for addressing them?**

No answer given

**Q16: Do you think that there is a market for specialist NPQs – or similar – for teachers who aspire to other forms of leadership within the school system?**

Yes

**Q17: What specialisms should be prioritised?**

The Society would argue strongly for a focus on the core academic subjects – including geography - to ensure that more pupils are taught by teachers with a secure understanding of their subject specialism.

The Society notes that, of all the EBac subjects, geography has one of the lowest levels of subject expertise, with only two thirds of geography teachers holding a relevant degree. In addition, since 2010 this situation has exacerbated with a *decline* in the proportion of geography teachers holding a relevant post 18 subject specific qualification - falling from 67.5% to 66.2%.

**Q18: Do you think there is a market for non-leadership NPQs – or similar – aimed at further developing subject expertise? How should they differ between primary and secondary phases?**

Yes.

The Society strongly supports this proposal for secondary subject specialists.

The reform of the National Curriculum, GCSE and A Level geography has demonstrated the need for additional CPD. Increasing numbers of teachers have turned to the resources and training provided by Society, and other geographical bodies, to support their professional development and understand the knowledge and skills required in the new specifications.

There is the opportunity to consider how pathways might be further developed to provide the formal recognition of a teacher's' subject specialism. These should include existing subject specialist opportunities – such as the Geography ITT Scholarship programme and the Chartered Geographer (Teacher) accreditation.

**Q19: What additional support should be offered for teachers who work in more challenging schools to undertake further professional qualifications?**

**Q20: Do you agree that a CPD badging scheme is something that should be developed? What organisations might be best placed to deliver this service?**

There may be value in this.

However, there is a relatively narrow range of quality CPD providers within some subject communities. These typically include subject bodies and relevant providers (for example those who provide field work training), alongside the CPD provided by Awarding Organisations and internally by MATs.

The Society would not wish to see a situation where those involved in accrediting courses were also providers.

The Society does not believe that a CPD badge provided by an organisation with a generic mandate, and which therefore cannot demonstrate a direct expertise in geography, would secure support from the geographical community.

**Q21: How should government incentivise effective professional development for teachers, particularly in the areas and schools where it is most needed? And Q22: How can government best support the development of a genuine culture of mentoring in schools?**

The Society welcomes the inclusion within the second round of the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund of the potential to support subject specialist programmes for EBac subjects and also support for NQTs and early career teachers in Ofsted category 3 and 4 schools.

The Society would also welcome further advocacy from the department, and other agencies such as Ofsted, to teachers and school leaders to reinforce the benefits that are gained through engagement with and membership of subject specialist bodies.

**Q23: Do you think that a fund to pilot sabbaticals would be a positive step for the profession? And Q24: What would the impact be for teachers and schools of enabling more teachers to take sabbaticals, providing they are related to their teaching practice?**

Sabbaticals have the potential to have a positive contribution towards teachers' professional development. The Society would argue that any sabbaticals should only be provided on the basis of a strong proposal which can demonstrate how the experience would lead to a teacher's own enhanced professional development and how they will apply their newfound experience more broadly.

Rather than the proposed seven year qualifying period an alternative requirement would be for a teacher to have demonstrated their commitment to their profession through the award of a relevant Chartered accreditation, such as Chartered Geographer (Teacher).

An alternative model would be for termly placements, possibly linked to an assignment working with their subject body or other relevant partner. This could ensure that a teacher then focused on enhancing their professional knowledge and skills within their subject context. It would also allow them to draw on their subject body's wider networks to ensure that the lessons learnt would be shared within their own school and the wider schools network.

If sabbaticals are to be pursued, we would be interested to explore a pilot programme to support an initial cohort of teachers to work alongside the Society and its key subject partners.

That said, the Society feels that the development of sabbaticals is of lower importance than the work needed to support and retain new entrants.