

High quality Initial Teacher Education in secondary geography

Introduction

This guidance is for everyone involved in the training of secondary geography teachers. It has three main purposes. Firstly, it is intended as a prompt for discussions between trainees, mentors and providers about high quality provision in geography Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Secondly, it is designed to inform the role of a geography ITE subject lead and thirdly, it can be used as a quality checklist or audit tool for geography trainers to review their provision. The content has been derived from a range of sources including Ofsted publications, the Teacher Standards, Carter reviewⁱ, Munday frameworkⁱⁱ and from widespread consultation with experienced geography teacher educators. It reflects the commitment of the Geographical Association to ensure that high quality Initial Teacher Education in geography is available through all the routes into teaching in England.ⁱⁱⁱ

Overview

The profession needs new teachers with a clearly-developed view of the purposes and nature of geography and good pedagogical content knowledge for the subject. This means more than technical mastery of teaching strategies. New geography teachers need to know how young people learn the subject and about the effectiveness of specific teaching approaches such as fieldwork, and the use of maps and geographical information. The most effective geography teachers have 'deep knowledge' of the subject and an understanding of the theory behind good geography teaching. Secure subject knowledge equips them to plan so that pupils progress in their learning. It also enables them to evaluate pupils' thinking and identify and respond to common misconceptions. A significant element of effective ITE training is therefore the development of the subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills required for geography teaching.

Trainees with good geography qualifications should be selected, although a geography degree does not, by itself, guarantee all the subject knowledge needed to teach. Good geography ITE further develops subject knowledge, by helping trainees to identify their knowledge gaps, inculcating a scholarly approach to reading widely about the subject, the curriculum, resources and good practice and by arranging additional geography expert input. Effective providers promote access to the geography education community through professional networks and the subject associations, so that new teachers see their subject discipline and subject community as a resource to sustain them throughout their career and provide a moral and intellectual basis for their practice. Analytical professional dialogue between trainees, subject mentors and subject experts about geography teaching and learning underpins quality and develops the professional criticality needed for teachers to become *"high-level knowledge workers who constantly advance their own professional knowledge as well as that of their profession"*^{iv}.

Effective ITE partnerships achieve a careful balance between training in geography specific and generic pedagogies. They appoint an ITE geography expert to lead the subject training across the partnership and to teach about the theory that underpins effective geography teaching, informed by research. Geography mentors are carefully selected for their good geography teaching and their up-to-date subject and curriculum knowledge. They are given sufficient time and carefully prepared for their important subject role to work with geography trainees to provide high quality training. Focused tasks within school help trainees to explore the application of theory to classroom practice. Good geography training also provides breadth. This is achieved through school experiences in different socio-economic and curriculum contexts, by learning alongside other geography trainees and by ensuring trainees explore geography in post-16, special educational and primary contexts.

The quality of geography training should be regularly monitored, drawing on external geography expertise. ITE quality is also dependent upon the school setting in which it takes place. Effective geography ITE subject leaders ensure that partner departments have the capacity to provide high quality mentoring and expert teaching. Effective partner schools support and challenge trainee teachers through frequent lesson observations, post-lesson discussions and professional dialogue which prompts self-reflection by trainees and is focused on the geographical learning of both trainees and pupils. Achieving consistently good quality subject mentoring across a partnership is a challenge for all ITE providers. High quality subject partnerships are built upon relationships of trust and collaboration, cemented by regular mentor meetings and ITE subject leader visits to partner schools. These provide opportunities to share and develop practice, review provision, induct and support new mentors and moderate subject expectations.

Based on this definition of high quality ITE practice in secondary geography, the quality criteria set out below can be used to review and evaluate a geography ITE partnership's practice.

Quality criteria for secondary geography ITE

1. Good management of geography initial teacher education involves:

1.1 Staffing

- Appointing a geographer with appropriate experience and expertise to lead the geography training across the partnership.
- Providing dedicated time for this ITE subject leader to offer bespoke subject training and individual support to geography trainees.
- Selecting geography mentors who are good subject teachers and have up-to-date subject knowledge, ensuring these mentors have sufficient time to work with trainees to provide high quality training.
- Providing subject-specific training for geography mentors to ensure they engage trainees in high-quality subject dialogue, provide effective feedback on performance and set clear targets to improve their trainees' teaching of geography.
- Ensuring that subject mentors keep in touch with emerging knowledge about geography teaching through links to the subject association and other sources of subject expertise, and through access to subject-specific professional development.

1.2 School placements

- Ensuring that judgements about the suitability of placements are made by geography specialists.
- Placing geography trainees in high quality, supportive and enthusiastic geography departments (e.g. in Geography Quality Mark schools), which provide them with a variety of settings and a wide range of teaching and learning opportunities in the subject,
- Ensuring that trainees' lessons are observed frequently by specialist geographers who provide constructive oral and written feedback on the teaching and learning of geography.
- Providing opportunities for trainees to observe good geography teaching at all key stages appropriate to their course.

1.3 Marketing to and selection of trainees

- Giving clear information about the geography specialist provision within the training in all recruitment materials.
- Identifying geography candidates with strengths in geographical subject knowledge and good geography qualifications.

- Ensuring that selection interviews probe the candidate's interest and enthusiasm for geography, finding out about their subject knowledge strengths and areas for further development.

1.4 Quality assurance

- Monitoring regularly the quality of geography training as provided by subject leaders, tutors and mentors and canvassing the views of geography trainees about the subject training they receive.
- Implementing a quality assurance programme that draws on external specialist expertise to evaluate the effectiveness of the geography training.

2. The programme of geography initial teacher education should include:

2.1 Subject knowledge

- Help for trainees to identify and improve gaps in their geographical knowledge and make full use of their own geographical expertise.
- A clear geography focus with subject rigour and reference to up-to-date research that helps trainees to understand and explore the links between research and classroom practice.
- A scholarly approach to reading widely about the subject, the curriculum, resources and good practice in geography, drawing on additional inputs of geography expertise, as appropriate.
- Ongoing critical dialogue on geography and geography teaching that encourages trainees to be reflective and prepares them for a future role as part of a professional geography community.

2.2 Curriculum and pedagogic knowledge

- Discussion of the purposes and aims of geography teaching, geography curriculum planning and public examination specifications.
- Opportunities for trainees to develop and teach sequences of geography lessons using their own resources and activities and to devise related assessment and homework activities.
- Opportunities to plan and carry out fieldwork and make good use of the outside environment to support learning.
- Investigation and experience of geography in the primary phase.
- Regular evaluation by trainees on the teaching and learning of geography in their own lessons and on the impact of their teaching on pupils' geographical learning.
- The formative and summative assessment of pupils by trainees and their appropriate use of geography assessment data.
- Use of feedback and discussion by mentors and trainers to develop trainees' curriculum and pedagogic knowledge in geography and their development as critically reflective practitioners.
- Trainee geography teachers working together, sharing resources, resolving queries and trying out teaching methods on one other.
- Access to geography community expertise through professional networks, the subject association and other geographical organisations.

3. The programme should develop the subject knowledge for geography teaching throughout the training and ensure that trainee teachers demonstrate that they:

3.1 Have a clearly-developed view of the purposes and nature of geography in education

- Have strong and secure core geographical knowledge and a clear view of the purposes and nature of geography teaching.
- Know how to teach geographical content, including tackling pupils' common misconceptions, recognising the importance of 'place' and 'topicality', and ensuring that pupils understand how human, physical and environmental geographies are interrelated.

- Are committed reflective practitioners who regularly review and evaluate their own teaching and engage in critical dialogue about geography teaching.

3.2 Know how young people learn the subject and about the effectiveness of specific teaching approaches

- Communicate a sense of passion and commitment to geography and teach engaging lessons which inspire pupils with a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people.
- Teach effective lessons, in which they explain key geographical content clearly and ensure pupils are engaged in geographical learning activities.
- Can manage different geographical learning activities, including classroom talk and discussion and learning outside of the classroom.
- Have a sound grasp of the geography curriculum and can use a range of frameworks to plan units of work and lessons that optimise geographical learning outcomes in all key stages for which they are being trained.

3.3 Plan and teach so that pupils progress in their learning

- Understand progression in geography and plan their teaching carefully to ensure that pupils make progress.
- Use a wide variety of engaging and imaginative teaching strategies, learning activities and thoughtfully selected resources to challenge pupils and advance geographical learning.
- Consistently provide pupils with opportunities to develop and consolidate key geographical skills such as enquiry, graphicacy and communication.
- Have high expectations for the geographical learning of all pupils in their lessons, differentiating geographical teaching materials to stretch high attaining geographers and provide support for pupils where it is needed.
- Use multi-media resources effectively to explore a wide range of geographical issues at a range of scales and make effective use of data and information sources, including maps and GIS, to promote geographical learning.
- Know what success in geography looks like for pupils at different ages and of different abilities and show they can use both formative and summative assessments effectively.
- Use geographical questioning and interventions effectively in assessment for learning.
- Can prepare and facilitate effective learning outside of the classroom and understand the importance of fieldwork safety and how to undertake risk assessments.
- Collaborate with other geography teachers, and learning assistants, in geographical planning, teaching and assessment and are willing to contribute to the geographical community.

ⁱ Carter, Sir Andrew (2015) *Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training (ITT)*. Department for Education. This report notes the importance of subject knowledge development and subject-specific pedagogy in ITE.

ⁱⁱ Munday, S. (2016) *A framework of core content for initial teacher training (ITT)*. Department for Education. This framework addresses the Carter recommendation for generic ITE criteria.

ⁱⁱⁱ Geographical Association (2015) *Geography initial education and teacher supply in England. A national research report by the Geographical Association*.

^{iv} Schleicher, A. (2011) *Building a High-Quality Teaching Profession: Lessons from around the World*, OECD Publishing.