

REFORMED NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (NPQS)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Please note:

This is a live document, which we will continue to update as further information becomes available. Potential providers are advised to check periodically to ensure they do not miss any updates.

We will aim to update this document at least once a week, and additions/amendments will be highlighted in red for ease of reference.

(Last updated: Friday 10 February, 2017)

RATIONALE FOR REFORM

Q. Why are you reforming the NPQs?

A. We want to make sure that there are enough great leaders right across the country and, in particular, in our most challenging schools and areas. To support this, we want to ensure that prospective and serving school leaders can access high quality leadership development.

We have reformed the NPQs to better prepare leaders for the range of leadership roles in today's school system. Our new approach puts the best schools and leadership development organisations at the forefront of the design, delivery, and assessment of an enhanced suite of qualifications, but balances these freedoms with robust quality standards and assurance.

Q. What are the aims of the NPQ reform?

A. We want to ensure that the NPQs are high quality, reflect proven practice, and support the development of leaders working in today's school landscape.

HOW THE REFORMED NPQS WILL WORK

Q. Will it become compulsory for middle leaders, senior leaders, heads or executive leaders to take the reformed NPQs?

A. No. NPQs will remain voluntary.

Q. When will the new qualifications replace the existing ones? When will the reformed NPQs start to be delivered?

A. We worked closely with the expert group, existing providers, and the wider sector to determine the best timescales for the rollout of the new qualifications, in order to ensure a smooth transition from the existing provision. We are currently inviting

applications from schools and other organisations who wish to start delivering one or more of the new qualifications in the 2017 to 2018 academic year.

Q. How does this fit with your aspirations for career progression for teachers?

A. Both aspirant and current NPQ providers can apply for accreditation to provide the new NPQ courses. We have also added a new level of leadership – ‘Leading across several schools’ – and an accompanying qualification – the National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) – targeted at aspirant and serving executive heads and multi-academy trusts (MAT) CEOs. This addition reflects the changing range of leadership roles and skills required.

Q. How does this fit with HPML/SL?

A. These national qualifications complement the more targeted Higher Potential programmes, which are specifically focussed on the most challenging schools.

Q. Do the new qualifications subsume/replace the Headteacher Standards?

A: No, they do not, but the Content and Assessment Framework has been developed with reference to the Headteacher Standards. The Headteacher Standards themselves are going to be reviewed in due course, in line with the commitment made at their publication.

Q. Do the new qualifications subsume the Future Leaders/Ambition School Leadership MAT CEO course?

A: No. These courses will run in parallel, with the new NPQEL offering further choice for participants.

Q. Will there still be guided learning hours?

A. All NPQs must be delivered over a minimum of two academic terms. Providers will be required to publish details of their course, including the number of guided learning hours by each different type of study (face-to-face, online etc.).

Q. Is there an expectation that providers will/must offer online content to participants?

A: There’s no specific requirement to use online content, however, under Requirement J of the Quality Framework, providers will be required to use a range of study methods as outlined in the Quality Framework, including:

1. leadership training in the workplace, on the job, doing real work
2. challenge and support – through a coach and/or mentor
3. access to high quality resources, drawing on up-to-date research and evidence
4. professional development from and with credible peers
5. opportunities for structured reflection

Q. I am a current licensee. Do I need to reapply?

A: Yes. The new frameworks and accreditation processes represent a wholly new approach to the qualifications, and therefore require a new commercial process. As such, current licensees will need to apply for accreditation should they wish to continue upon the end of existing licences (September 2017).

Q. Is there a different application process for current licensees?

A: No. For commercial reasons, and to ensure a completely fair and transparent process, all providers looking to deliver the new qualifications will be subject to the same application processes.

Q. Aren't existing providers/licensees at an advantage in gaining accreditation given that they've been delivering the existing qualifications for five years?

A: No. The new process is open to all providers, whether incumbent or new. The new frameworks apply to all providers, and we want to see innovative applications that go beyond the current courses. Moreover, providers can choose when to deliver their courses within the 2017 to 2018 academic year, giving sufficient time for course development, and must specify this date on their application form.

Q. If a provider applies for accreditation to deliver one qualification, can they add another to their provision at a later date?

A: We have referred this question to our legal advisors, and will update this Q&A with the response as soon as we have this information.

Q. Will there be opportunities to apply for accreditation at a later date?

A: We do not have any additional application windows planned at the moment. However, as set out in the Invitation to Apply, "The Department reserves the right to run another application process upon conclusion of the above and will do so by way of a separate application process open to all interested parties and duly advertised."

Q. We are a current licensee, working in partnership with a number of schools/teaching schools/teaching school alliances (TSAs). Should we/can we continue with these arrangements?

A: As long as applicants meet the evaluation criteria set out in the Application Form, it is up to applicants to determine the best delivery arrangements for their proposed provision.

Q. Are you expecting similar arrangements to the current licensee arrangements, with a limited number of regional-based providers?

A: When providers apply for accreditation, they will have the freedom to specify the range of qualifications they wish to deliver, the geographical areas within which they want to deliver qualifications, and the minimum recruitment targets for this proposed provision. We do not have a limit on the number of regional-based providers.

Q. I am a current licensee still delivering the current qualifications. Should we stop this provision and advise participants to wait and undertake one of the new

qualifications?

A: Current licensees and their participants will need to make a judgement on the best course of action, taking account of the particular needs of each individual participant.

Q. Will there be training available for facilitators or assessors?

A: No, we want to give providers the freedom to determine how they meet the requirements set out in the frameworks – they are the ones with the relevant experience and expertise and will be able to tailor their provision to the specific area(s) in which they are operating.

Q. There are still people working through current qualifications. Will these qualifications have the same status as the new ones?

A: Whilst the changes we are making are a necessary response to changes in the education system, they are a continuation and expansion of current provision. The current qualifications will have the same status.

Q. Will there be any quality assurance prior to delivery?

A: No, but the application process will ensure providers are of sufficient quality to commence delivery.

Q. Will the existing licensed learning materials become available for others to use?

A: The current licenses expire in September 2017, and we are exploring the possibility of making the licensed learning materials openly available after this time.

Q. Will the Department/NCTL be providing pre-written course content?

A: No. Providers will use the Content and Assessment Framework to design and develop content.

Q. Are the new qualifications Masters' accredited?

A: No, but providers have the freedom to work with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to design their courses in a way that offers participants opportunities for Masters-level accreditation.

Q. Without guided learning hours how will you ensure that courses are long enough to teach all the requirements of the course?

A. All providers will be required to deliver all of the content framework over a period of at least 2 terms. Within that timeframe, providers will have the freedom to respond to the specific needs of participants.

Q. Will there be any subscription fees or charges if we successfully achieve accreditation as a provider of the NPQs?

A. No, there will be no such fees.

Q. Do providers have the expertise to assess courses?

A. Yes. We believe that the sector has the required expertise, and the Quality Assurance Framework will ensure that standards are the same across the country.

Q. Will some of the reforms (e.g. provider-led content development and final assessment) place an excessive logistical/financial burden on providers?

A. Provider-led content development and final assessment puts the professional development of school leaders firmly in the hands of those that are best placed to deliver it – school leaders themselves. We believe that this is an important part of ensuring NPQs are gold standards. If providers do not feel they have the necessary expertise on their own, then we would encourage them to form partnerships with other potential providers.

Q. Will the lack of a single central assessment provider act as a perverse incentive to providers and subsequently lower standards?

A. No. All providers will be subject to rigorous quality assurance, including a robust final assessment moderation process. This will be supported by a new quality assurance body/function. Providers who consistently fail to meet these standards will have their accreditation removed.

Q. How will you ensure national consistency?

A. National consistency will be ensured through the Quality Assurance framework.

Q. Why isn't there a qualification for non-educational roles, such as School Business Managers?

A. We recognise the vital role played by School Business Managers in schools. This is why we have placed a much greater emphasis on business-related knowledge and skills in the new content framework. Moreover, providers are welcome to use the content framework as a basis for developing bespoke programmes for school business roles.

Q. Without regional delivery areas some areas of the country won't have access to NPQs. How will you ensure that NPQs are delivered in the areas that need them most?

A. By removing regional delivery, we are freeing up providers to deliver nationally or through distance-learning methods, making NPQs more accessible to all.

Q. How are you ensuring delivery to disadvantaged schools / areas?

A. We have a specific metric on the percentage of Free School Meals (FSM) pupils, and we will be closely monitoring take-up in the most disadvantaged areas.

Q. Why are we removing the interview from NPQH? Won't this lower standards?

A. No – redesigned assessment means participants will be assessed against clear national standards, which will ensure leaders have both the practical skills and depth of knowledge required to be a successful leader. Interviews are not always the best method for assessing a participant's progress.

Q. Is there still a placement at NPQH?

A. Yes – there will still be a placement.

Q. There is no longer a presentation/interview for NPQH; can we still do this?

A: The content and assessment framework sets out the tasks within which all NPQ participants must be assessed. For NPQH and NPQEL, this include presentations to governing boards. Providers may supplement the mandatory assessment tasks with additional activities (such as an interview), however these must be on a formative basis only and must not impact on a participant's final mark, to ensure all participants are assessed using a nationally consistent approach.

Q. Assessment Task 2 for the NPQH is very demanding, with only 9 days allocated for placement. Is this enough time?

A: Whilst the NPQH placement must last at least 9 days, there is no requirement that the task must be submitted for assessment to the same timeframe. Therefore, participants may choose to commence their project work prior to undertaking the placement, and complete it once they have had time to reflect on their findings.

Q. Does the new approach create competition between schools?

A: We encourage schools to work in partnership and applicants will need to demonstrate sufficient demand in their proposed areas of operation.

Q. Is there a cap on the number of providers?

A: There is no cap on the number of providers in a given area as we want to see increased choice for participants across the country. We encourage schools to work in partnership and applicants will need to demonstrate sufficient demand in their proposed areas of operation.

Q. With no cap on the number of providers, and likely competition from other providers in the future, how can applicants accurately and sufficiently evaluate demand in their areas before the application deadline?

A: We encourage applicants to get in touch with schools in their planned area(s) of operation to assess, and collect evidence on, the demand for their proposed provision.

Q. Do providers have to meet a minimum recruitment target?

A: Yes, but these will be set by providers as part of the application process.

Q. Is there a quota for the number of people who should pass the qualifications?

A: There is no quota for the number of participants who should pass the qualifications, however there are metrics designed to ensure there is no significant difference between the achievement and retention rates of different groups (for example, those with protected characteristics).

Q. Will Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) be able to undertake the NPQs?

A: Providers have the freedom to determine their own entry requirements, but we recommend setting any such requirements in a way that ensures that the quality requirements and metrics set out in the Quality Framework can be fully met.

Q. Can someone who doesn't hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) take an NPQ?

A: Yes. It will be for the participant and provider to decide whether the qualification is right for them.

Q. Will there be graduation boards? Who will award the NPQ certificate?

A: As per the current system, awards/certificates will be issued in the name of the Department.

Q. Will there be pass, merit, and distinction grades for successful candidates?

A: No. Participants will be subject to a pass/fail marking scheme.

Q. What are the 'cyber essentials' criteria set out in the Invitation to Apply?

A: These are standard requirements in all government contracts. To mitigate the risk of common internet-based threats, all potential providers who will be handling personal data and using ICT systems to store or process potentially sensitive data need to ensure they meet these criteria.

NEW QUALITY FRAMEWORK & DEVELOPMENT OF NPQ CONTENT

Q. Who will pay for the quality assurance/evaluation activities in the Quality Framework?

A: Providers will have to meet the costs of their own quality assurance of their courses. The activities listed in the quality framework as being undertaken by the DfE or its quality assurance agent, will be met by the DfE.

Q. How long will it take to accredit providers?

A: We anticipate notifying applicants in the week commencing Monday 24 April, but will inform applicants if there are any changes to this timeline (which may be subject to the number of applications received).

Q. Will priority be given to large school partnerships or those looking to deliver in 'cold spots' (areas of greatest need)?

A: No. The evaluation criteria used to assess applications do not score large school partnerships more favourably than smaller entities. All applicants will need to demonstrate what demand for NPQs there is in their chosen geographical area(s) of operation.

Q. Can I structure my course around a leadership course we run in our Teaching School Alliance (TSA)?

A: So long as providers meet the requirements set out in the Content and Assessment Framework for the qualification(s) they are delivering, alongside the quality requirements and metrics set out in the Quality Framework, then they are free to structure the course how they wish.

Q. Is every provider expected to provide their own version of any online tools and resources? Or can these be shared?

A: We will not be providing any online tools or resources, but will be happy for providers to collaborate and share any such tools/resources.

Q. How will quality assurance work?

A: All providers will be required to meet the quality requirements and metrics set out in the Quality Framework, which will be monitored by the Department or its Quality Assurance Agent.

Q. Who will carry out the quality assurance activities detailed in the Quality Framework?

A: Decisions on who will fulfil the Quality Assurance Agent (QAA) role set out in the Quality Framework are still pending. This information will be made public when it is available.

Q. Are the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) involved?

A: No. References to the QAA in the supporting documentation refer to the Quality Assurance Agent that will undertake the quality assurance activities detailed in the Quality Framework.

Q. Are there any mandatory entry assessment requirements?

A: No. Providers have the freedom to determine their own entry requirements, but we recommend setting any such requirements in a way that ensures that the quality requirements and metrics set out in the Quality Framework can be fully met.

Q. Do providers have to assess participants at all levels of qualification?

A: Yes. For each qualification, providers must assess candidates using the tasks and criteria set out in the Content and Assessment Framework.

Q. On the application form, you ask for ‘experience’- does initial teacher training count?

A: Yes. While applicants will need to demonstrate their capacity, capability and commitment to delivering their proposed provision in a number of areas, there is no requirement that applicants’ experience and expertise in delivering continuing professional development is leadership-based’

Q. Will providers have to provide the Department/NCTL with applicant registration data?

A: Yes. We will inform successful applicants on the details of this process in due course.

Q. Does the Quality Framework provider read across to any quality assurance activities undertaken by a university/Higher Education Institution (HEI) that is working in partnership with a provider?

A: No, all providers will be expected to meet the requirements and metrics set out in the Quality Framework. However, if these requirements are met, the increased flexibility of the new suite of NPQs will enable providers to work with universities should they think it will enhance the quality of their provision.

Q. Is there an expectation that providers work with HEIs?

A: No. Providers are free to do so, should they wish, but providers are only required to meet the requirements and metrics set out in the Quality Framework to ensure consistent standards are maintained.

Q. So providers essentially have a blank canvas to develop their courses?

A: No. Providers must meet the requirements set out in Content and Assessment Framework and the Quality Framework to ensure national consistency and high quality.

LEAD SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Q. Does the ‘Lead School’ have to be a teaching school?

A: There is no requirement that the ‘Lead School’ has to be a teaching school.

Q. I’m a local authority looking to apply. Does the ‘Lead School’ need to come from within the local authority?

A: While the 'Lead School' must be 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for 'Overall Effectiveness', there are no geography-based requirements.

Q. What do you mean by 'other organisations'? Can they be private sector organisations?

A: Provided that an applying organisation meets the criteria set out, they are welcome to apply for accreditation.

METRICS

Q. Could you explain the metrics to which providers will be held to account?

A: The Quality Framework demonstrates how the metrics operate, and uses some worked examples.

Q. Why have you chosen metrics on Free School Meals and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) recruitment?

A. We want to make sure that NPQs are taken up by the widest possible range of people. Current recruitment trends demonstrate there is plenty of positive recruitment activity, but now is the time to formalise this good work into an expectation.

Q. Is value for money a metric?

A: No, but this will be considered as part of application evaluation process, and the transparency requirements for providers will ensure that potential participants can make an informed/value for money choice.

Q. How did you calculate the targets for the Free School Meals and BME recruitment metrics?

A. We looked at both the regional NPQ recruitment trends to date and the current make-up of the teaching workforce/nature of schools. That means the metrics are proportionate to the region in question and achievable.

Q. How do we know these are achievable? How do they compare to what we are currently doing?

A. We looked at current recruitment trends and the make-up of the teaching workforce at the target population for each level. The targets have been set proportionately to that, and designed to put providers on the right trajectory to recruit the widest possible range of people.

Q. What happens if we are in more than one region?

A. You will have the aggregated mean of the regions you are operating in.

Q. What will the targets be for the Free School Meals and BME recruitment metrics if our area of operation covers more than one region?

A. Your targets will be the aggregated mean of the relevant regions and, as part of other quality requirements, you will be expected to recruit from throughout your region of operation. Indicative targets are in the Quality Framework.

Q. Are there targets for provider coverage in the Northern Powerhouse region?

A: There are no regionally based targets. Providers must meet the application criteria and meet the quality requirements and metrics outlined in the Quality Framework.

Q. Are there targets for provider coverage in Opportunity Areas?

A: There are no targets for Opportunity Areas. Providers that meet the application criteria and quality requirements and metrics outlined in the Quality Framework are welcome to deliver in these areas.

Q. What targets will we have for Free School Meals and BME recruitment if we are a national provider?

A. You will be held to account against national targets and, as part of other quality requirements, be expected to recruit from throughout your region(s) of operation.

Q. How will the metric relating to Free School Meals be calculated?

A: All target percentages will be adjusted for each accredited provider to reflect the nature of the school population in their area of operation, with the provider subsequently informed of their allocated target by the DfE. Further details, including indicative targets for regional-level providers, can be found in the Quality Framework.

Q. Is it possible to develop separate qualifications for aspirant and serving school leaders?

A: Yes. As long as requirements set out in the Quality Framework and Content and Assessment Framework are met.

Q. Does the Quality Framework contain a requirement or metric around retention?

A: Yes. The Quality Framework contains the following metrics related to retention:

- Providers ensure that at least 90% of participants present for final assessment within 18 months of formally commencing the programme
- Providers ensure that there is no significant difference between the achievement and retention rates of different groups

Q. What are Category 5 and 6 areas?

A: Category 5 and 6 areas are those described in the 2016 White Paper¹ as having the weakest performance and least capacity to improve. A map of the category 5 and 6 areas is available via this link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508392/Methodology_guidance_note_-_defining_achieving_excellence_areas.pdf

NPQ COSTS & FUNDING

Q. Is there any funding available to develop NPQs?

A. There is no funding attached at the moment, but this is something we are looking at.

Q. Is there a pricing structure/RRP?

A: No, there is no RRP. Providers have the freedom to set their own prices, but they must be transparent by publishing what they're offering for this price – thus ensuring participants can make an informed choice on the value of money of their courses.

Q. Do providers have to state what the costs of their qualifications will be in the application form? And if so, will providers be held to account on this?

A: Applicants will have to outline in their application what delivery methods will be used and how these will be costed as well as provide a financial plan for the length of the contract, including a detailed breakdown of costs as a proportion of a participant's course fee. This should include costs such as venues, staff and administration.

Q. How will the quality assurance of the courses work in light of (potentially) wildly different prices?

A: All providers will be required to meet the quality requirements and metrics set out in the Quality Framework. Providers have the freedom to set their own prices, but they must be transparent by publishing what they are offering for this price – thus ensuring participants can make an informed choice on the value for money of their courses.

Q. Can participants from a disadvantaged school use Pupil Premium funding to fund the costs in undertaking a qualification?

A: It is for schools to decide on the most effective way to use their pupil premium in order to raise the attainment of eligible pupils. Funding professional development for staff can be an extremely valuable use of the funding. Schools considering using their pupil premium to fund NPQs should have a clear rationale for why they have used the funding in this way and have robust plans in place to evaluate its impact on eligible pupils.

¹ 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' – March 2016:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/educational-excellence-everywhere>

Q. Where there is a consortium, can different participants in different areas be charged different prices?

A: Yes. Costs are to be determined by providers, but there is a requirement in the Quality Framework that providers publish data on their courses so that potential participants can make an informed/value for money choice.

Q. Do you have to be part of consortium to apply?

A: No, but providers are free to set up consortia if they wish.

Q. Will it be possible to use Apprenticeship Levy funding for the reformed NPQs?

A. This will depend on the individual circumstances. For guidance on the Apprenticeship Levy, and also contact details to raise specific queries on the Apprenticeship Levy, please visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work>

NEW NPQs FOR EXECUTIVE HEADS AND CEOs

Q. Have you designed a specific NPQ for MAT CEOs / Executive Heads?

A. We have added a new level of leadership – ‘Leading across several schools’ – and an accompanying qualification – the National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) – targeted at aspirant and serving executive heads and MAT CEOs. This addition reflects the changing range of leadership roles, and skills required.

Q. How does this fit with the MAT CEO courses?

A. It complements them, giving the participant more choice and an opportunity to gain a DfE-recognised qualification.

Q. Is the NPQEL designed for both executive headteachers and the multi-academy trust CEOs?

A: Yes. We have designed the NPQEL to be appropriate for all types of executive leaders working across multiple schools.

Q. Can the NPQEL be undertaken by participants from ‘non-traditional’ (business) programmes?

A: Yes. As long as providers meet the NPQEL requirements set out in the Content and Assessment Framework, and the requirements and metrics set out in the Quality Framework, they are free to tailor their courses to meet the needs of different groups.

Q. Can the NPQEL be tailored to different types of multi-academy trust leader?

A: Yes. As long as providers meet the NPQEL requirements set out in the Content and

Assessment Framework, and the requirements and metrics set out in the Quality Framework, they are free to tailor their courses to meet the needs of different groups.

INTERNATIONAL PROVIDERS

Q. Can international organisations (e.g. British schools overseas) apply for accreditation?

A: We have raised this question with commercial/legal advisors, and will provide the answer in our comprehensive Q&A, which will be published on Contracts Finder.

Q. How would the metric relating to FSM operate for international organisations (e.g. British schools overseas) delivering the qualifications?

A: We have raised this question with commercial/legal advisors, and will provide the answer in our comprehensive Q&A, which will be published on Contracts Finder.

CONTACT/NETWORKING FOR POTENTIAL DELIVERY PARTNERS

Q. Can the Department share the contact details of attendees at the provider information events/provide a forum for those interested in partnering with other organisations to facilitate networking?

A: We are currently looking into options as to how this might be achievable. We will publish a response on this Q&A once we have this information.

HOW THE REFORM PROCESS WORKED

Q. How did you involve the sector in reforming the NPQs?

A. We brought together an expert group, consisting of leading headteachers, MAT CEOs and other experts to develop a reformed suite of world-leading National Professional Qualifications to prepare leaders more effectively for the full range of leadership roles in the new schools system.

Q. Was the expert group an independent external review group?

A. No. Independent external review groups make public recommendations to the government. The expert group was a group of sector experts helping officials to advise the Department's ministers.

Q. What was the remit of the expert group?

A. The expert group was convened to:

1. identify the suite of qualifications needed to ensure that leaders are prepared for the full range of leadership roles in the new school system;
2. identify the high-level knowledge and skills required at each leadership level, and how this should be assessed;
3. inform the development of a new high-level framework for these qualifications which can be used by the sector to develop leadership provision, whilst allowing the space for innovation; and

4. advise on future delivery and long term governance arrangements to ensure a quality-assured and sustainable sector-led approach to reformed NPQs against this new high-level framework.

Q. How were the members of the expert group chosen?

A. The members of the expert group were chosen for their educational expertise, which enabled them to offer key insights and challenge throughout the reform process. Membership was drawn from a range of school types and phases, alongside key sector-led bodies, ensuring a sufficient mix and breadth of expertise.

Q. Who chaired the expert group?

A. Roger Pope. Roger is the Principal of an outstanding school, Kingsbridge Community College in Devon, CEO of a successful academy trust in the South West and Chair of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).

Roger has many years' experience as a teacher and school leader. During his 25-year career he has taught English in schools across the south of England and in Hong Kong, formed a teaching school alliance of over 25 schools and was a member of the NCTL's group in Shanghai examining maths and science practice. He is also a National Leader of Education.

Q. Did you consult faith groups when developing the new qualifications?

A: Yes, we consulted faith groups as we tested the working model for the reformed NPQs.