

# Professional standards Support for Curriculum Mentors

## *Report on the TDA funded 'Professional standards Support for Curriculum Mentors' at the University of Southampton*

### **Introduction**

A revised framework of professional standards for teachers was published by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). These standards replaced existing teacher standards in September 2007 and form a clear, progressive framework of standards for teachers. The standards are statements of a teacher's professional attributes, knowledge and understanding, and skills. Importantly they clarify expectations at each career stage helping teachers identify how they need to develop professionally to progress in their careers.

- the awards of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (Q)
- teachers on the main scale (Core) (C)
- teachers on the upper pay scale (Post Threshold Teachers) (P)
- Excellent Teachers (E)
- Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) (A)

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) made funding available to help support initial teacher training (ITT) providers in meeting the revised qualified teacher status (QTS) standards which came into effect in September 2007. A Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) was also produced by the TDA.

The TDA states:

*'the revised QTS standards give providers of initial teacher training increased flexibility in the way they design their programmes, and encourage the use of professional judgement in the assessment of trainees against them. The purpose of this guidance is to help providers as they exercise that judgement and to help them maximise the opportunities for the development of their programmes that the QTS standards offer. It is designed to help everyone involved in initial teacher training (ITT), including teacher trainees, to understand the scope and expectations of the standards. The guidance is non-statutory and will be kept under review.'* (TDA 2007)

There are many different people involved in the assessment of trainees who all need to develop a common understanding of what is involved in meeting the standards. The TDA raised the importance of dissemination in embedding the new standards into practice nationwide. They noted that not only was there a need to address basic training needs with schools but also there was a requirement for Curriculum Mentors to gain new knowledge and experience in order to assess trainees using these standards. Teacher education were expected to respond to the needs of placement schools and importantly there had to be a common understanding in the interpretation of the new standards even when often there is a great variability between schools' practice.

Therefore an important question to be answered was:

*How could PGCE IT Curriculum Tutors of the School of Education, University of Southampton embed these standards into the training of their mentors so that they were able to consistently assess trainees' competence throughout school placements and at the same time enable consistency between schools?*

This was vital as if trainees were unable to demonstrate these standards and meet expectations, they could not pass!

## ***Aims and Processes***

The PGCE IT department used allocated TDA funds to address the issues raised by the TDA. In order to embed these standards in training of Curriculum Mentors, so that they are able to assess trainees' competence throughout the school placement, the following aims had to be addressed:

The aims were:

- To ensure the Curriculum Mentor is confident in locating evidence observed in a lesson and can apply this to the correct standard using the new School of Education PGCE lesson observation form.
- To develop and set trainee targets from identifying new standards that the trainee may be struggling to consistently meet.
- To ensure the Curriculum Mentor understands the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees.
- To ensure a common understanding in the interpretation of the new standards even when there could be variability between schools' practice.

The processes were:

- Arrange a meeting with a placement school targeting Curriculum Mentors who were new, less experienced or had trainees with initial concerns.
- With the Curriculum Mentor complete a joint observation using the new lesson observation form (Appendix A) addressing the new QTS professional standards.
- By specifically relating to the new professional standards agree on targets to address any trainee weaknesses.
- Look through the new QTS professional standards and by using the '*Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)*' document look at the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees' competence throughout the placement.

## ***Methodology***

In November 2007 five schools were visited by a PGCE IT Curriculum Tutor from the School of Education, University of Southampton. Out of the five schools, three Curriculum Mentors were less experienced and required basic training in the implementation of the standards. Two mentors had trainees in their first or second placement that were identified as requiring further support and therefore a common understanding in the interpretation of the new standards was required. For the purpose of this report and anonymity these schools are labelled as School A, B, C, D and E with corresponding Curriculum Mentor A, B, C, D and E and Trainee A, B, C, D and E.

## **Implementation**

### **School A, B, C and E**

These schools were all visited and lesson observations of trainees and meetings with Curriculum Mentors took place in each. There were no additional concerns raised with regards to the need for additional support for trainees prior to the visits taking place.

The following processes were followed:

- With the Curriculum Mentor a joint lesson observation using the new lesson observation form (Appendix A) addressing the new QTS professional standards was completed together and discussed.
- From this lesson observation and by specifically relating to the new professional standards targets were set to address any trainee weaknesses.
- The Curriculum Tutor and Curriculum Mentor read through the new QTS professional standards and by using the '*Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)*' document the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees' competence throughout the placement were discussed in detail.

### **School D**

Initial concerns had been raised regarding Trainee D at this school which had been brought to attention by a routine Link Tutor visit. The email stated:

***'Some concerns re ICT trainee: subject knowledge issues' - Link Tutor***

A Curriculum Tutor contacted the school by email to arrange a meeting and the Curriculum Mentor stated:

***'So far Trainee D has taught one full lesson and a couple of starters. The opportunity to teach lessons has been limited, due to poor subject knowledge. Trainee D has been involved in team teaching other lessons'.***

This then gave a focus for support and for this school two visits then took place to meet the aims outlined. The first visit involved a meeting with the Curriculum Mentor and the second a lesson observation, a meeting with the Professional Mentor and another teacher within the department who was also involved in assessing the trainee's needs.

### **Meeting one**

The following took place:

- The Curriculum Tutor and Curriculum Mentor read through the new QTS professional standards and by using the '*Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)*' document the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees' competence throughout the placement were discussed in detail.
- A set of initial targets were discussed and set with the Curriculum Mentor for the forthcoming week.
- An email to arrange a meeting with the Professional Mentor was sent in advance of meeting two:

***'I am visiting Mentor D at 1.20pm this afternoon to support the introduction of new professional standards and to specifically use these to give additional support to Mentor D and Trainee D. I was made aware of an initial concern for Trainee D's subject knowledge and understanding and have since also been made aware that a 'Cause for Concern' form has just been faxed to the University. Could I possibly catch you this afternoon to discuss this further and to gain a copy of this form as part of my***

*visit this afternoon is to address this specific issue - please see attached document (Appendix B)'.*

## **Meeting two**

The following took place:

- A meeting with the Professional Mentor outlined the purpose of my visit and how Trainee D and Curriculum Mentor D could be best supported. The document (Appendix B) was discussed in depth.
- With the Curriculum Mentor a joint lesson observation using the new lesson observation form (Appendix A) addressing the new QTS professional standards was completed together and discussed.
- From this lesson observation and by specifically relating to the new professional standards targets were set to address any trainee weaknesses.

## **School E**

In addition to the above processes School E was also having Trainee D for the second placement and was therefore further briefed.

A Curriculum Tutor wrote in an email to a Link Tutor:

*'Trainee D's subject knowledge is under review and we have already briefed school 2 (School E) to ensure Trainee D gets the appropriate experience.'*

## **Evidence of Success**

### **School A, B, C and E**

As the trainees did not present any initial concerns in these schools the focus was more on providing support for the Curriculum Mentor.

### **Lesson Observation**

Each Curriculum Mentor observed a lesson with the Curriculum Tutor. Each Curriculum Mentor successfully filled out the new lesson observation form with the Curriculum Tutor (Appendix A).

However finding evidence for the following professional standards was more difficult to locate within the lesson observed and therefore in response these were discussed in more depth (extracts from *'Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)'* (TDA 2007) :

- ***Q18 Understand how children and young people develop and that the progress and well-being of learners are affected by a range of developmental, social, religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic influences.***

The following questions were discussed as evidence that could be used from a specific lesson:

Does the trainee know how various factors can present barriers to learning, progress and well-being, and how these barriers might be overcome? Does the trainee know how to interpret and use school and pupil level data to identify targets relating to specific groups of learners?

- ***Q19 Know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.***

The following questions were discussed as evidence that could be used from a specific lesson:

Is the trainee able to take account of the range of learners' needs through an inclusive approach? Does the trainee differentiate tasks, activities and resources effectively to support individuals and groups of learners including those with special educational needs, those with disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language, and those from diverse social, cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds? Does the trainee know how to use the principles and techniques of Assessment for Learning (AfL) in order to achieve personalisation?

- ***Q21(b) Know how to identify and support children and young people whose progress, development or well-being is affected by changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances, and when to refer them to colleagues for specialist support.***

The following questions were discussed as evidence that could be used from a specific lesson:

Is the trainee able to recognise and identify an individual's specific difficulties, and do they know how and when to intervene in order to support them? Does the trainee understand the connection between the behaviour of a child or young person and changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances? Does the trainee know how to deal with issues of e-safety?

- ***Q25 (a) Teach lessons and sequences of lessons across the age and ability range for which they are trained in which they: use a range of teaching strategies and resources, including e-learning, taking practical account of diversity and promoting equality and inclusion.***

The following questions were discussed as evidence that could be used from a specific lesson:

Does the trainee demonstrate flexibility in adapting teaching strategies, for example, to challenge and extend learners, or to help them overcome barriers? Does the trainee successfully differentiate teaching to take account of learners' needs? Does the trainee promote equality and inclusion of all learners in their teaching strategies and choice of resources? Does the trainee avoid and, where necessary, challenge stereotyping? Is there evidence that learners are engaged, challenged, and enjoying learning?

- ***Q33 Ensure that colleagues working with them are appropriately involved in supporting learning and understand the roles they are expected to fulfil.***

The following questions were discussed as evidence that could be used from a specific lesson:

Does the trainee brief colleagues sufficiently about the expectations of learners' progress? How effectively does the trainee plan the work of colleagues to utilise their specific skills and expertise? Does the trainee ensure that colleagues are involved, where appropriate, in assessing and recording learners' progress? Does the LSA know and understand the outcomes of the lesson beforehand? Does the LSA support the teacher in organising students within the lesson? Is there support for pupils throughout and is there evidence in planning as well as teaching.

Within the lesson observed Curriculum Mentors found it much easier to locate evidence for the following professional standards and therefore these did not provide any difficulties:

- Professional attributes - Q1, Q2, Q4,
- Professional knowledge and understanding - Q12, Q14,
- Professional skills - Q23, Q24, Q25 b, c, d, e, Q26a, Q27, Q30, Q31.

After the lesson observed the Curriculum Mentor and Trainee had a meeting to discuss the lesson and a set of targets were developed and discussed. For example the trainee at school A had the following targets set:

- To clarify and set clear expectations of behaviour from the beginning of the lesson. (Q1, Q30, Q31)
- To gain an understanding on how to assess performance of students against the level descriptions. (Q11, Q12)
- To familiarise myself with the term 'Inclusion' – what it is and how it is implemented at a classroom level. (Q10, Q19)
- To find out which students in my classes have Special Educational Needs, and check their I.E.P. file so as to structure the lesson plan accordingly and meet their needs. (Q10, Q19, Q20)

The trainee at school E had the following targets set:

- To develop my knowledge of assessment and monitor my teaching groups in order to raise standards of attainment. (Q1, Q12, Q13)
- To become familiar with the SEN practice in my current school and be able to differentiate material for students I teach who are on the SEN or Code of Practice register. (Q10, Q19, Q20)
- To practice the use of my voice to command control of a classroom. (Q7a, Q4, Q31)

An additional challenge was to ensure each Curriculum Mentor was consistent in the grade given at the end of the lesson observation form (Appendix A). In addition to this initial joint observation this would also be closely monitored through further Monitoring and Moderation visits.

Each school was revisited for a Monitoring visit in March 08 and a Moderation visit in April/May 08. Previous lesson observations carried out by the Curriculum Mentor were scrutinised and evidence was seen to be continually applied to the correct standard. During the Moderation visit a further joint lesson observation took place and in each school final moderation grades were agreed. The evidence showed that each Curriculum Mentor was becoming far more confident in locating evidence for the professional standards that were previously presenting challenges in their scope and expectations e.g. Q18, Q19, Q21b, Q25a and Q33. The grades assigned for each lesson were also becoming more consistent between the schools.

### ***Scope and expectations of the standards***

The Curriculum Tutor and Curriculum Mentor read through each of the new QTS professional standards and by using the 'Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)' document looked at the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees' competence throughout the placement.

Another important question was then discussed:

*'Which professional standards do 'borderline satisfactory' trainees often have most challenges with and how could the pen portraits and scope and expectations of the standards be used in order that trainees could become a consistent 'satisfactory'?'*

The pen portraits from the STAR document (Appendix C), 'Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)' and lesson observation form (Appendix A) were all scrutinised in relation to this question. This enabled the Curriculum Mentor to become more familiar and further understand the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees by drawing upon the pen portraits, which in turn helped with writing review statement one.

The key professional standards that presented the most challenges for 'borderline satisfactory' trainees were:

- **Q22** *Plan for progression across the age and ability range for which they are trained, designing effective learning sequences within lessons and across series of lessons and demonstrating secure subject/curriculum knowledge.*
- **Q25** *Teach lessons and sequences of lessons across the age and ability range for which they are trained in which they:*
  - b) build on prior knowledge, develop concepts and processes, enable learners to apply new knowledge, understanding and skills and meet learning objectives;*
  - c) adapt their language to suit the learners they teach, introducing new ideas and concepts clearly, and using explanations, questions, discussions and plenaries effectively;*
  - d) manage the learning of individuals, groups and whole classes, modifying their teaching to suit the stage of the lesson.*
- **Q26 (b)** *Assess the learning needs of those they teach in order to set challenging learning objectives.*

These linked to a discussion on the following matching pen portraits (Appendix C):

### **Unsatisfactory**

**PS – Planning** *little progress made in planning. Usually unprepared, disorganised. Lesson plans usually lack or have unfocused objectives and poor sense of purpose. Needs considerable support in setting suitable learning objectives. Some insecurity with key subject knowledge.*

**PS - Teaching** *makes little constructive use of observation time in classroom. Has difficulty translating plans into lessons. Problems with establishing / maintaining order and frequent lack of engagement by many pupils Does not convey instructions and explanations clearly. Questioning limited or ineffective. Has difficulty translating plans into lessons. Staff continue with high levels of support. Inconsistent in managing the classroom with ineffective behaviour management skills.*

### **Satisfactory**

**PS – Planning** *can set suitable objectives for lessons although preparation is sometimes inappropriate. Generally secure subject knowledge. Lesson plans often have unclear objectives, but beginning to understand how to plan for satisfactory content and teaching strategies.*

**PS - Teaching** *Observes teachers but only beginning to demonstrate some 'withitness' in the classroom and to distinguish strategies by the end of the experience. Beginning to convey instructions clearly. Explanations may lack exemplification. Beginning to be confident with a limited range of teaching strategies and resources. Lessons taught have successful elements but patchy management skills mean that control is sometimes unsatisfactory and some pupils disengaged.*

From discussing the links between the pen portraits and scope and expectations of the more challenging standards Curriculum Mentors became clearer on how the pen portraits and scope and expectations of the standards could be used to support and enable 'borderline satisfactory' trainees to become a consistent 'satisfactory'. The pen portraits helped the Curriculum Mentor and the trainee see a clear progression between an 'unsatisfactory' and a 'satisfactory' and these could also be clearly linked to the professional standards that were identified as being particularly challenging.

In school A, B, C and E, after following the processes outlined above, the following aims had been clearly met:

- To ensure the Curriculum Mentor is confident in locating evidence observed in a lesson and can apply this to the correct standard using the new School of Education PGCE lesson observation form.
- To develop and set trainee targets from identifying new standards that the trainee may be struggling to consistently meet.
- To ensure the Curriculum Mentor understands the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees.

## **School D**

From the meetings that took place it was clear that School D needed to address specific professional standards with Trainee D. Therefore the support concentrated on the following aim in particular:

- To develop and set trainee targets from identifying new standards that the trainee may be struggling to consistently meet.

The document (Appendix B) was given to School D with the targeted professional standards clearly identified. The following strategies were then suggested:

1. Use professional standards document (Appendix B) in mentor meetings and focus on these within lesson observations.
2. At the end of each lesson plan a list of knowledge, skills, and understanding required in order to teach the next lesson. Mentor D will check the lesson plan and check whether the list covers all that is required.
3. Team teach a Yr 8 lesson with Mentor D - then Trainee D to take on the same lesson with another group.
4. Mentor D will provide exemplar material for the lesson, to enable Trainee D to clearly identify the outcome.
5. Trainee D completes further structured observations of Yr 10 and Yr 11 (to gain further knowledge and understanding of the curriculum) for part of the non teaching time.
6. For Trainee D to continue some in-class support during non teaching time.
7. Week 12 - Trainee D to teach at least 3 whole lessons and team teach the rest.
8. Week 13 - Trainee D to teach at least 6 whole lessons and team teach the rest (Trainee D with lead role).
9. Week 14 - Trainee D to teach at least 9 whole lessons and team teach the rest (Trainee D with lead role).
10. Week 14b - Trainee D to teach 10/11 whole lessons.
11. If necessary, Curriculum Tutor D will complete a joint lesson observation of Trainee D during Week 14 to give additional support to Mentor D.

During this placement trainee D's subject knowledge was continually under review and placement school 2 (School E) was then briefed. Having focused on the professional standards the support became more targeted.

From identifying new standards that the trainee was struggling to consistently meet (Appendix B) the following targets were discussed with the trainee and continually monitored throughout the whole placement:



- To plan work at a suitably high level in relation to age and ability of the class taught and to plan to meet student needs. (Q1)
- To set appropriate targets at the end of each lesson and to act upon advice given after lesson feedback. (Q7a)
- To be able to answer learners' questions confidently and fully and monitor individual responses and use discussion and questioning to provide challenges at a variety of levels. (Q10)
- To expand my knowledge of spreadsheets, databases, and web page publishing software in order to be able to teach these more effectively. (Q14)
- To develop a sufficiently secure knowledge and understanding of the ICT Framework and National Curriculum for ICT. (Q15)
- To take account of the age and ability range of the learners in my planning and demonstrate a secure knowledge of ICT. (Q22)
- To establish the purpose and structure of the lesson, including communicating learning objectives in order to engage and retain the active participation of learners. (Q25a)
- To develop the use of teaching strategies to enable learners to apply new knowledge, understanding and skills. (Q25b)
- To demonstrate that I have fully understood and can explain the ideas and concepts I am teaching. (Q25c)
- To be able to select and adapt teaching styles and strategies to suit the stage of the lesson, and to suit the learning of individuals, groups and whole classes. (Q25d)
- To be able to set realistic, challenging, measurable, achievable objectives that are based on a clear understanding of learners' progress and achievements. (Q26b)

For School D the following three aims were therefore met, with a particular focus being on the final two aims:

- To ensure the Curriculum Mentor is confident in locating evidence observed in a lesson and can apply this to the correct standard using the new School of Education PGCE lesson observation form.
- To develop and set trainee targets from identifying new standards that the trainee may be struggling to consistently meet.
- To ensure the Curriculum Mentor understands the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees.

## School E

Trainee D was going to School E for the second placement and therefore this school was briefed further.

A Curriculum Tutor wrote an email to update the Link Tutor:

***'Trainee D's subject knowledge is under review and we have already briefed school 2 to ensure Trainee D gets appropriate experience.'***

The professional standards specifically identified for Trainee D for the second placement were Q10, Q14, and Q15, but also Q30. The following targets were set for Curriculum Mentor E and trainee D:

- During the first week of January 2008, the Curriculum Mentor was to give clear and detailed guidance of the Knowledge and Understanding required to teach the KS3 and KS4 syllabus e.g. spreadsheet modelling. This gives 'Trainee D' time to ensure

the appropriate level of knowledge is gained to teach effectively and brush up on any skills needed.

- Trainee D to observe a top set KS4 class to gain further understanding of the level of Knowledge and Understanding required.
- Trainee D to observe various classes to gain further strategies on behaviour management e.g. shadowing a student. Trainee to go through scenarios of the typical behaviours shown by students and discuss strategies for dealing with each one.

For school E the following aim was therefore met further:

- To develop and set trainee targets from identifying new standards that the trainee may be struggling to consistently meet.

### **Consistency across schools**

Discussions while using the 'Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)' ensured that there was a common understanding in the interpretation of each standard. Having looked at the scope and expectations the Curriculum Mentor could easily identify what evidence was required to meet the standard presented. For each school standards Q13, Q18, Q19, Q21b, Q25a and Q33 were consistently identified across all schools as being more difficult to assess. Having looked at the scope and expectations the interpretation of each became more consistent between schools and mentors. From evidence such as joint lesson observations which took place during Moderation visits in April/May 08 it is evident that the mentors are now more consistent in their interpretations of each standard.

In addition the School of Education also provided 'Professional standards exemplification' (Appendix D) to further support Curriculum Mentors and the work of Curriculum Tutors. This would also ensure a greater consistency in the interpretation of the professional standards.

Finally therefore the following aim was also met across the schools visited:

- To ensure a common understanding in the interpretation of the new standards even when there could be variability between schools' practice.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion the following aims were clearly met in School A, B, C, D and E:

- To ensure the Curriculum Mentor is confident in locating evidence observed in a lesson and can apply this to the correct standard using the new School of Education PGCE lesson observation form.
- To develop and set trainee targets from identifying new standards that the trainee may be struggling to consistently meet.
- To ensure the Curriculum Mentor understands the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees.
- To ensure a common understanding in the interpretation of the new standards even when there could be variability between schools' practice.

In all schools Curriculum Mentors were building in confidence in locating evidence observed in a lesson and being able to apply this to the correct standard using the new lesson observation form (Appendix A). This evidence was further backed up through Monitoring and Moderation visits during March and April/May 2008 where lesson

observations were further scrutinised. By using the 'Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)' Curriculum Mentors were also beginning to understand the scope and expectations of the standards in order to assess trainees.

From these visits a common understanding was being developed in the interpretation of the new standards even when there was variability between schools' practice. In addition regular Curriculum Mentor meetings, Monitoring and Moderation visits also ensured this consistency remained and the use of the 'Professional standards exemplification' (Appendix D) further supported Curriculum Mentors and Curriculum Tutors in this process.

In School D the setting of trainee targets from identifying new standards that the trainee may be struggling to consistently meet was the main focus due to the initial concerns of Trainee D. The training by the Curriculum Tutor was invaluable in identifying the needs of one trainee in particular. These needs were then transferred to School E and that ensured a greater consistency in the interpretation of the new standards.

## ***References***

TDA (2007) Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)  
London: Training and Development Agency for Schools

## ***Appendices***

Available on request from [PGCE@soton.ac.uk](mailto:PGCE@soton.ac.uk)

Appendix A – Lesson observation form

Appendix B – Professional standards support document for School D

Appendix C – Pen Portraits, STAR document, School of Education

Appendix D – 'Professional standards exemplification' - School of Education

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