



## **The Geographical Association's Response to the Consultation on the Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education 2012**

1. The Geographical Association (GA) is the professional association for teachers of geography. It promotes supports and develops geography subject teaching at all levels, from new teachers in ITE to geography subject coordinators in primary schools and heads of department in secondary schools. The GA provides support for new geography teachers and ITE geography tutors.
2. One of the association's special interest groups is focused on teacher education. This group has prepared this response on behalf of GA members.

### **Overall effectiveness**

#### **Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to judging overall effectiveness?**

3. We disagree with some of this proposal. We understand and support the intention to simplify reporting and the number of inspection judgements and, in principle, we support the incorporation of 'capacity to improve' within the overarching judgement. We support the strengthening of criteria for judging "outstanding" and "good" so as to differentiate the quality of provision. However, we feel that there should be some flexibility in the requirement that all three categories should be 'outstanding'. The overarching Grade 1 category must be attainable and should not imply that there is no room for ongoing improvement.
4. Our key concern over the use of combined judgements and overarching grades is that judgements of subject quality are not reported effectively. In recent inspections the quality of subject training and trainees' outcomes has not been considered or reported. This does not apply only to the secondary sector. As the implementation plan for *Training our next generation of outstanding teachers* makes clear, it is the intention to train more specialist primary teachers, and Ofsted inspection should take account of this.
5. It is important that prospective geography trainees have confidence when they apply to a provider whose training has been judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted, that they will receive this quality of training in their subject. At present this is not the case, as the overall quality judgement can mask the quality in a specific subject. In some providers there is clear disparity of quality across subjects. There is a strong case, therefore, for clear reporting of the judgements made in the quality of each subject inspected.

## **The three contributory key questions and judgements**

### **Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to judging the quality of outcomes for trainees?**

6. We disagree with the proposed approach. By far the most important judgement is how well the trainees teach at the end of their training. This must be a key indicator for the overarching judgement of the quality of the provision and we believe it should be reported as a separate judgement.
7. The outcome criteria include “how well trainees can teach by the end of their training”. This judgement must be broader than classroom performance alone. It should include the trainees’ subject knowledge and their understanding of how students learn, pedagogic subject knowledge, understanding of curriculum development and how different teaching approaches can be effective for different pupils in different schools.
8. It is a mistake to combine judgements on how well trainees teach and their pedagogic subject knowledge with those that arise from statistical elements such as completion and employment rates. This statistical data must be interpreted carefully in inspection. There are often very personal reasons why a trainee decides not to complete a course or enter teaching after qualification - reasons as varied as financial difficulties or the desire to raise a family. Why should the quality of a training provider be influenced by such personal decisions on the part of a trainee? It is also unacceptable that training providers should be judged on “retention”. In today’s employment, people move in and out of jobs very differently from previous generations and providers should not be held responsible for circumstances that teachers find themselves in, maybe several years after they have completed their training.
9. Furthermore, obtaining accurate and comparative data on employment is difficult. The GA has attempted to survey the employment of NQTs and found the information to be piecemeal. If employment data is to be used as an inspection indicator, it should be collected centrally and provided by the new Teaching Agency.

### **Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to judging the quality of training across the partnership?**

10. We strongly agree with the proposed key inspection question “How well does the partnership prepare trainees to teach learners in the age range and subject(s) for which they are being trained?”
11. Since 2003 Ofsted has not inspected ITE secondary subjects in detail to provide evidence of quality. Inspectors have only sampled secondary subjects, so regular visits have not been made to all geography courses. Primary ITE inspection focuses on core subjects. We are pleased that it is intended to re-establish the inspection of subject specialist training in secondary ITE inspections. This should be an incentive to ensure that specialist geography training is of the highest quality, and provide information for prospective trainees and headteachers who employ NQTs about the quality of training that is being provided.

12. We also strongly agree with the elements listed in the consultation that it is proposed for inspectors to evaluate. These clearly indicate that good and outstanding training must be concerned with more than acquiring practical skills. The GA believes that new teachers must have a secure understanding of subject pedagogy to teach their subject well and they must develop their skills of critical reflection during their training if they are to become effective teachers.
13. We understand from the commentary that geography training will be inspected by geography specialist inspectors and we wholeheartedly support this. Only a geography inspector can make secure judgements about the quality of subject and pedagogical subject knowledge. Generic judgements on subject specific matters are not acceptable.
14. The GA is concerned that there are some training providers that have only one or two trainees studying geography and they do not have a subject tutor to provide them with good pedagogical subject training. In addition, some geography trainees spend almost all their training in one department and are not given sufficient exposure to a range of teaching approaches and techniques or practical experience to develop their teaching for the full range of learners. We anticipate that the introduction of more rigorous subject inspection will lead to improvements in such provision.
15. Good partnerships between schools and universities are essential to successful ITE geography training and the development of the teaching profession. Schools provide day-to-day practical support and experience essential in the training process while university tutors provide breadth of experience and theoretical underpinning necessary for trainees to achieve the Teachers' Standards. The best partnerships go beyond initial training and contribute to CPD. For many teachers, ITE mentoring is a good way of developing and updating their own understanding of geography teaching and learning and being part of a professional network. Ofsted inspectors should take account of these aspects how well universities and schools work in partnership when they judge the success and quality of the training partnership.
16. With respect to primary training, the GA recognises that effective training to teach reading is important. However, the consultation document continually refers to reading and phonics which suggests that inspections might be too focussed on these matters. It is equally important that primary ITE inspection makes judgements on how well trainees are prepared to fulfil their role as teachers of the whole curriculum. In a context where Ofsted is regularly reporting weaknesses in the teaching of geography in primary schools, it would be timely for the new ITE framework to collect evidence of the quality of the training of new teachers for geography.

**Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to inspecting the leadership and management of the partnership?**

17. The GA agrees that the inspection question "How well do the leaders and managers at all levels of the partnership ensure that the best outcomes are achieved and sustained?" is appropriate. Managers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the infrastructure is in place before they embark on training in a particular subject. Therefore, we would expect a provider not to train for geography unless they had identified good geography

placements and trainers. We would also expect managers to use external subject specialist advice to quality assure the geography training.

18. With respect to the inspection of selection, it is important that Ofsted evaluates how well providers ensure that those recruited from other careers (including those from the proposed Troops to Teachers and Teach Next) have good, up-to-date subject knowledge before they embark on their training.
19. In primary ITE, judgements on the quality of partnership training are not always straightforward. There is commonly a shortage of school placements, especially in Key Stage 1, because there is no expectation placed on schools that they should be involved in teacher training. To judge an ITE provider harshly for not providing sufficient high quality placements, when the decision about involvement rests with the headteacher, is not entirely fair. A solution could be found if schools were only judged to be “outstanding” if they played a role in contributing to ITE.

## **Risk assessment**

### **Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our approach to risk assessment?**

20. The GA agrees that taking greater account of users’ and stakeholders’ views could be beneficial. However, we have some concerns about over-reliance on trainees’ answers to questionnaires. Questionnaires only provide a partial picture, because a trainee does not know what they have missed! Interviews with inspectors can reveal a trainee’s ignorance in an area they had never thought about!

## **Partnerships previously judged to be outstanding, good or satisfactory**

21. The GA supports the extension of the inspection cycle to six years for better providers. We assume that the redefinition of “satisfactory” to become “requires improvement” will also apply to ITE inspection. We feel that these providers should be given support to improve before a further inspection, perhaps organised by the Teaching Agency.

## **Inspection arrangements**

22. The GA has concerns that the short notice may cause problems for inspection logistics because of the complexities of ITE inspection, especially in setting up visits across schools in the partnership. It is important that the sample seen by inspectors is not compromised by this.
23. We do not find the proposals for subject sampling and the “rolling programme” to be clearly explained in the consultation document. We would be very opposed to any plan that led to all geography provision being inspected in a single year during the inspection cycle. There are a number of reasons for this. Some providers might arrange special provision for geography once it was announced that it was to be inspected, which did not reflect the normal practice – for example by the employment of a specialist geography tutor. Conflating inspection into one year would also put excessive demands for

specialist geography inspectors during that year leading to the deployment of inexperienced inspectors and less secure judgements.

24. The GA proposes that the number of geography courses to be inspected should be agreed at the start of the cycle (perhaps proportional to places). These inspections should then be phased across the six years of the cycle, with each provider being informed of the subjects to be inspected when their inspection date is announced.
25. We strongly support the proposal for partnerships to receive feedback on the quality of training in geography when it has been inspected. We believe this should confirm good practice and identify where improvements are necessary. It was a mistake to end the publication of geography inspection reports. Without reports in the public domain on specific subject training there is no up-to-date, shared sense of what makes for good quality geography ITE provision. Subject reports were used as benchmarks to improve practice and provided independent information to applicants to ITE.
26. We look forward to the publication by Ofsted of clear inspection criteria for judgements in specific subjects. Not only would this give partnerships confidence that subject inspectors are inspecting consistently, but it would also provide quality benchmarks for training partnerships to work towards.

### **Awarding body provision leading to qualifications to teach in the further education and skills sector**

27. Since the DfE have recently made proposals to allow parity between QTLS and QTS qualifications in secondary schools, the GA believes that the inspection process should be as rigorous for the inspection of training in the further education sector, including the inspection of subject training.

### **Further comments**

The GA recommends that Ofsted publishes:

- characteristics of excellent, good and poor geography teaching (with examples) and these should be available in the public domain for inspectors, tutors and mentors to use. This would assist comparable and consistent inspection judgements from provider to provider.
- Geography ITE subject overview reports that draw on inspection evidence. In the past these reports were useful for providers because they highlighted good practice and identified areas for improvement. This brought about improved geography training and was particularly helpful for new training providers.

Response from The Geographical Association's Teacher Education Special Interest Group.  
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