

Response from the Geographical Association to Proposed changes to allow qualified teachers from further education and from the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to become permanent teachers in English schools

Introduction

The Geographical Association (GA) is the professional association for teachers of geography. It promotes, supports and develops geography subject leadership at all levels, from new teachers in their initial training to geography subject coordinators in primary schools and heads of department in secondary schools. One of the association's special interest groups is concerned with all matters of teacher education, particularly ITT. It is this group that has prepared the response to this consultation.

Q1) Do you agree with our proposals to allow QTLS holders to teach in schools as qualified teachers?

We do not believe that holders of QTLS should be automatically deemed to have qualified teacher status. In order to achieve QTS, teachers must meet much more rigorous training and standards than are required for QTLS.

If this proposal were adopted, it would mean that teaching would no longer be an all graduate profession. Although many holders of QTLS are graduates, it is not a requirement that they have a degree. Currently the government has introduced a policy to discourage new entrants without good honours degrees. It would be contradictory if, at the same time, non-graduates with QTLS were given QTS equivalence.

A typical training course leading to QTLS requires 150 hours of teaching experience and 360 guided learning hours. This is considerably less training than PGCE secondary trainees receive in a 36 week course, of which 24 are spent in school. Our members report that those who hold QTLS and subsequently undertake QTS training through a PGCE, confirm the higher expectations required in the latter and its more rigorous training. The QTLS standards were designed for those teaching older students and adults and it is not an appropriate qualification for those teaching pupils up to 14. For example, the training for QTLS does not prepare teachers to tackle behavioural problems, teach pupils with special educational needs or, for primary teachers, use synthetic phonics. All of these are current government priorities for ITT. These are all good reasons for not giving blanket parity with QTS for all QTLS holders - a move that would undermine and devalue QTS.

We understand that a key reason for the proposed changes is the demand for teachers for vocational courses with QTLS qualifications to teach in schools. This is not generally an issue in geography, although we accept that our members are asked in some schools to teach Leisure and Tourism qualifications to post-14 pupils because no suitable teachers available.

We propose that, where headteachers need to appoint suitably qualified teachers for vocational courses, they are given the flexibility to appoint those with QTLS to teach

these courses to post-14 pupils in their school and to pay them on the qualified scale, as they deem appropriate. However, there should be the expectation that these teachers will undertake professional development to meet the QTS standards within a specific time-scale, say two years. We are aware that some headteachers do employ QTLS holders and arrange with local ITT providers to give them professional support to meet the QTS standards through the "assessment only" route. We would favour the continuation of this approach. All teachers who are deemed "qualified" to teach in schools should demonstrate that they meet the QTS Standards.

Q2) Do you agree that QTLS holders should continue to meet the conditions for QTLS status in order to be qualified to teach in schools?

Our suggestion is that QTLS holders should be required to meet the QTS standards to teach in schools – and therefore this would not apply.

Q3) Do you agree with the suggested process for verifying the qualifications of QTLS holders?

The new Teaching Agency should be responsible for all those qualified to teach in schools – this should include all QTLS holders who achieve QTS.

Q4) Do you agree with the proposal to allow fully qualified teachers from the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia to teach in schools as qualified teachers?

We are happy to concur with the NARIC recommendation, although we have concerns that the research on which the proposal is based dates from 2003. The implications of any recent changes in ITT qualifications need to be considered.

Q5) Do you agree with the suggested process for verifying that a teacher is fully qualified in the US, Canada, Australia or New Zealand?

We agree that it is appropriate for the Teaching Agency to undertake the verification.

Q6) Do you agree that QTLS holders should be exempt from the requirement to complete a statutory induction period?

We do not agree with this proposal.

All teachers moving from one teaching environment to another need to undertake a period of induction. We note that all NQTs must all undertake induction, even if they have considerable prior experience of teaching as an instructor. (Although the current consultation on induction proposes that this should be reduced in length in these circumstances.) Teachers with QTS who move to the FE sector are required to complete a specific CPD 'orientation to FE' module' and as well as completing the professional formulation process for QTLS within two years.

We believe that some form of induction period should be required for QTLS teachers moving to schools, although this could be in a different, and more appropriate, form than the current form of statutory induction.

Q7) Do you agree that teachers who have met all the requirements leading to fully qualified teacher status in the US, Canada, Australia or New Zealand should be exempt from statutory induction in England?

We believe that all teachers joining English schools should undertake some induction. This period allows them to adjust to different systems and can check on their teaching competence. The induction requirement for overseas teachers could be different to the statutory induction designed for NQTs.

We note that teachers who qualified in countries within the EEA and have successfully applied to the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) for QTS are exempt from the need to complete induction. We feel that this should be reviewed to bring it in line with requirements for others as discussed in this paper.

Q8) Do you agree with the proposed arrangements for the pay and conditions, CPD, performance management and regulation of QTLS holders in schools? Do you have any comments on these specific proposals?

We note that academies and non-maintained schools are free to set their own pay and conditions and believe that all head teachers should be given a similar freedom to appoint and set pay for QTLS teachers.

Q9) Do you agree with the proposed arrangements for the pay and conditions, CPD, performance management and regulation of fully qualified teachers from the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia? Do you have any specific comments on these proposals?

We agree with these proposals.

Q10) Do you have any other comments?

We believe that with the raising of the school leaving age, the qualifications and training of teachers across the school and FE sectors should be brought into line. It would be more appropriate to have common standards, based on QTS, and to confer QTS on all teachers with a specific age range recorded. Any teacher wishing to teach in a different age range should be required to undergo relevant professional development and demonstrate their competence at the new age-range.