

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

6 March 2014

Dear Secretary of State,

**Subject Knowledge Enhancement in the sciences**

In August 2013, I expressed SCORE's concerns about the impact of changes to initial teacher training on the recruitment of trainee teachers in the sciences.<sup>1</sup> I emphasised that Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) courses in physics and chemistry provide an important route for graduates into teaching these subjects, and that proposed changes to SKE allocation risked a decrease in applications. In recent years SKE courses have played a central part in boosting recruitment in chemistry and physics, which as you know suffer from a shortage of teachers, and SCORE estimates that around 200 physics and 150 chemistry trainee teachers have entered these subjects annually via this route.

SCORE's concern has now become a reality, with a dramatic shortfall in uptake of places on SKE courses for entry into teacher training in 2014/15. In 2013, the window for applications to SKE courses opened in October for courses beginning the following January, which reduced the recruitment period effectively to a matter of weeks. As a result there were far fewer recruits, including the loss of some people who previously would have made the transition to specialist teaching in physics, chemistry or mathematics, and others, who would have been advised to take an SKE course but instead progressed to teacher training directly with an inadequate knowledge of their chosen science specialism.

SCORE recommends strongly that providers of SKE courses be permitted to recruit trainees up to 16 months before the courses begin to accommodate the needs of all ITE applicants. We hope the Department for Education and National College for Teachers and Leaders will now develop a strategy for national SKE training that supports the need for science teachers nationally. SCORE is willing to assist in developing such a strategy.

I hope you will take these issues seriously, given the current concerns surrounding the supply of teachers for STEM subjects.

Yours sincerely



Professor Julia Buckingham  
SCORE Chair

cc Rt Hon David Willetts MP  
Graham Stuart MP

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Julia Buckingham to Michael Gove, 8 August 2013; <http://score-education.org/media/13764/201308%20jb%20to%20sos%20itt.pdf>