



# A single admissions process for postgraduate initial teacher training

A SCORE response to the GTTR consultation

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### **About this response**

1. SCORE is a partnership of organisations, which aims to improve science education in UK schools and colleges by supporting the development and implementation of effective education policy. The partnership is currently chaired by Professor Graham Hutchings FRS and comprises the Association for Science Education, Institute of Physics, Royal Society, Royal Society of Chemistry and Society of Biology.
2. SCORE member organisations welcome the opportunity to contribute to the GTTR's consultation on a single admissions process for postgraduate initial teacher training, having already submitted evidence to the Department for Education's consultation on Training our next generation of outstanding teachers in July 2011.
3. In summary in this response:
  - a. SCORE welcomes the proposal to introduce a single admissions process for postgraduate initial teacher training, as it is hoped this will encourage a greater number of applications from STEM graduates to enter the teaching profession.
  - b. SCORE supports the introduction of tests to assess the literacy and numeracy skills of applicants, and would also be in favour of tests to measure applicants' subject-specific knowledge. However, it would be important for these to be an integrated part of the single admissions process, and for them to be used to highlight areas where further work is needed, rather than as a means of determining admission.

### **A single admissions process for postgraduate initial teacher training**

4. SCORE welcomes the Department's proposals to create a centralised system for applications and to ensure that applications are processed in parallel, rather than through the sequential system operating currently. These will simplify the applications process and help ensure that applicants' interest is maintained. Such a system may also allow greater efficiency in assessing suitability for teaching. Currently, some students deemed unsuitable for teaching may have the potential to become good teachers but may be deterred by their initial rejection. The new arrangements would allow the identification of extra preparation in terms of subject knowledge or training in interpersonal skills for such applicants. The current system manages to turn away more than a hundred physics graduates a year<sup>1</sup>, despite the massive shortage in that area, and much more can be done to offer extra support to such candidates. However, it is not clear how a central system will work with the increasingly diverse training routes. In particular it is not clear how the School Direct model will articulate with these proposals. The Department should ensure that any changes made to the current system are clearly communicated to ITT providers and monitor the impact of these changes on the application process.
5. The current proposals do nothing to address the problems experienced by those undertaking six month Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses prior to ITT. There is considerable confusion among candidates about whether they have to secure a provisional ITT place before undertaking such courses. SCORE would welcome further steps being taken during the application process to alleviate this problem.

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<sup>1</sup> Figure taken from communications with TDA, September 2010

6. SCORE is not convinced there is a need to insist on two Graduate Training Programme (GTP) places through Apply 1. Given there are only four choices available in Apply 1 we would welcome more parallel places for the PGCE/PGDE routes, which are currently far more popular. It notes that the Apply 2 route is better than the current system, and while not as advantageous as a fully parallel Apply 1 system, it does provide more responsiveness and flexibility for candidates.

#### **More information on candidates**

7. SCORE supports the proposals to test the literacy and numeracy skills of candidates seeking places on postgraduate initial teacher training courses and to restrict the number of retakes candidates may sit.
8. SCORE also believes that, for consistency and in the interests of achieving a robust common standard, the literacy and numeracy tests and interpersonal skills assessments (for example interviews) should be applicable to those seeking entry to all teacher training programmes (including those run by Teach First).
9. SCORE has recommended that the Department explores the use of subject-specific tests for initial teacher trainees. These tests could lend confidence that trainees/teachers have a sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of their discipline. Such tests are being developed and trialled by the Institute of Physics and Royal Society of Chemistry with support from the Gatsby Charitable Foundation. If such tests are to be introduced, it would be important for them to be incorporated into the single admissions process. However, they should not be used for accepting or rejecting candidates, but for identifying the need for remedial work.