

Fundamental skills

Information sheet for applicants

In the teacher recruitment and retention strategy, the government committed to helping great people become teachers and making sure they receive high-quality teacher training.

To support this, the government announced that it is introducing a new approach to assessing the numeracy and literacy of prospective teachers, which will replace the existing skills tests. The former skills tests have been replaced with a new system where trainees will be assured against a set of fundamental maths and English skills **by the end of their initial teacher training**. This approach allows universities and schools to better identify the individual needs of each trainee and offer them extra support to strengthen their skills where needed. This decision was taken following a review of the skills test and after engaging with universities, schools, candidates, teachers and representative bodies. This review found that these tests do not provide appropriate assurance of the maths and English skills of teacher trainees.

Under this new approach, Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers are expected to assure English and mathematics knowledge of a trainee before Qualified Teacher Status or Early Years Teacher Status is awarded. ITT providers must, as an accreditation requirement, assure that trainees have these skills either during the selection process, or later during the training programme. The DfE has said that all teachers are expected to be competent in Fundamental English and mathematics.

Before being recommended for QTS at the end of their training, trainees must be able to demonstrate competence in four areas:

Area 1: Speaking, Listening and Communicating

Speaking, listening and communicating are fundamental to a teacher's role. Teachers should use standard English grammar, clear pronunciation and vocabulary relevant to the situation to convey instructions, questions, information, concepts and ideas with clarity. Teachers should read fluently and with good understanding.

Area 2: Writing

Writing by teachers will be seen by colleagues, pupils and parents and, as such, it is important that a teacher's writing reflects the high standards of accuracy their professional role demands. They should write clearly, accurately, legibly and coherently using correct spelling and punctuation.

Area 3: Use of Data and Graphs

Teachers should use data and graphs to interpret information, identify patterns and trends and draw appropriate conclusions. They need to interpret pupil data and understand statistics and graphs in the news, academic reports and relevant papers.

Area 4: Mathematical Calculations and Problems

Teachers should be able to complete mathematical calculations fluently with whole numbers, fractions, decimals and percentages. They should be able to solve mathematical problems using a variety of methods and approaches including: estimating and rounding, sense checking answers, breaking down problems into simpler steps, and explaining and justifying answers using appropriate language.

Any work to address shortfalls in English and mathematics must be undertaken by the trainee teacher in addition to other aspects of their training. It is the trainee's responsibility to secure these fundamental skills, whereas responsibility for assurance lies with the ITT provider. At the University of Reading, our Initial Teacher Training programmes and school partners will help you to identify and reflect on any shortfalls and work with you to achieve your targets towards achieving proficiency in these four areas.