

Teacher Education Policy in Europe (TEPE) Conference 2008

Title:

The introduction of M level credits to the Secondary Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at the Institute of Education, University of London : the story so far

Author: Sheila King, Director for Learning and Teaching (ITE) in the Faculty of Culture and Pedagogy

Institution: Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H0AL, England.
s.king@ioe.ac.uk

Sheila is director of the secondary Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) where over 700 beginning teachers train to teach one of 14 subjects across a school partnership of 300 schools across Greater London. Her research interests are in school evaluation, classroom observation and collaborative placements.

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Abstract of paper

From September 2007 the Post Graduate Certificate in Education course at the Institute of Education, University of London has changed to become a teaching qualification assessed at Masters (M-level). This is in line with almost all other higher education institutions involved in initial teacher education in England and the changes are in response to a government decision about the academic level at which PGCEs are set. That decision was based on the European Bologna Declaration. (1999)

The emphasis that the Institute's PGCE has long placed on enquiry focused assignments and critically reflective teaching meant the course was well placed to be at least partially assessed at Master's level. Designation at M-level gives it added value and the Institute in recognition of the high calibre of beginning teachers attracted onto its PGCE, chose to offer up to 90 M-level credits which could be taken forward into Masters programmes. As the new style PGCE is developing in this pilot year a number of issues and challenges are facing the leadership and teaching teams, some which were foreseen and some which were not. These will be discussed in detail.

The altered PGCE differs from most other English M-level PGCE courses in a number of ways; the high number of credits, the fourth module which is chosen

from a range of options and a variety of progression routes into a full Master's course.

The government's teacher training body, The Training and Development Agency for Schools is increasingly focused upon the professional development of teachers from their initial teacher training year through their induction period and into the early years of teaching. It is our intention to encourage many of the beginning teachers to consider progression onto our innovative M Teach which aims to develop teachers' critical reflection on professional practice alongside educational research literacy, to replace knowledge transmission with knowledge construction and to use computer mediated communication as a central learning mechanism.

Introduction

The debate on what makes an excellent teacher is not a new one but it is a debate that continues to interest our politicians as well as education experts. One recent addition to that debate is the extent to which teacher training should be underpinned by theory and higher academic qualifications. If we accept the definition of The Royal Society (2007:13), that an excellent teacher 'is credited with inspiring life-changing decisions and is remembered forever and has an extra dimension, dedication and imagination', then does our existing professional development help to move teachers towards this or are there ways in which a reformed teacher education continuum can enhance teacher education still further? A recent and potentially very significant development in teacher education in England is the expectation that the majority (if not all) of our teachers achieve Master's credits while training and then continue to build them into M level courses that enhance their professional work.

Background

The UK's membership of the European Union has recently prompted this move to a Master's level teaching profession. The European Bologna Declaration (1999) prompted a review by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education. This led, in 2005, to a statement by the QAA, The Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) and the Standing Conference of Principals (see <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>). It recommended a change to our Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) courses to ensure that the levels of achievement of our beginning teachers has comparability with our European partners and from September 2007 changes have been implemented in teacher education to work towards that.

Now, two types of PGCE course are available: the traditional *Postgraduate* route, pitched beyond honours level and a new *Professional Graduate Certificate in Education* pitched at Honours level. Figure 1 summarises the level of awards. Barker (2007) reports that a survey by the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) showed that 18% of ITT institutions were planning to offer

only the Master's level with 77% planning to offer both. Many of the latter feel there is a need for a fall-back position should beginning teachers fail to reach the required M level standard. Therefore in common with other higher education institutions involved in initial teacher education in England, the PGCE courses at the Institute of Education, changed to become primarily a Master's (M-level) qualification.

This paper documents the process through which that change was managed, where we are now, our successes and our remaining issues. At the Institute of Education, we have always believed, and had verification from our external examiners and Ofsted, the English inspection body, that our beginning teachers are among the highest quality in the country. We have adopted a culture of 'reflective practitioners' who draw on 'critical reflection' and our beginning teachers engage with recent and relevant research. Written assignments have frequently been referred to as comparable to, or sometimes higher in quality, than many Master's level assignments. Our question was not whether to move to Master's (M-Level) but how many credits we should award in the initial training year. Our directorate was keen to award a high number of credits largely to demonstrate the high quality of the beginning teachers and after much debate 90 M level, plus 30 H level, credits have been assigned to the PGCE course. This applies to all our PGCE courses covering the pupil age range 4+ to 19.

There is often a desire to be radical at times of key change and there were many staff in The Institute of Education who wished to use this change as an opportunity to adopt very different, innovative, models of teacher education. Some advocated different or multiple-start points in the year, some the use of more distance and blended learning while others presented plans for different models of school partnership arrangements. In the end an evolutionary rather than revolutionary model was adopted, possibly because many felt that the 'if it hasn't broken...don't fix it' saying should apply, or possibly because our funding streams, ability to recruitment and schools partnership are too fragile and the attached risks are just too great. A final reason for moderate change was that our institution was in the process of being restructured and new leadership, management and day-to-day organisation were seen to be barriers to introducing too much change all at the same time. Whether this was a missed opportunity or an effective move, only time may tell.

The new style PGCE

Figure 2 summarises the new PGCE course outline. Although the course is divided into modules, at least three of the four modules run concurrently through the year and have been designed to be largely consistent with current practice. The course programme and regulations described below were approved by our governing body in 2007 and covered both the awards of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (M level) and the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (H level). We need the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education as a 'fallback' qualification for those who fail one or more modules. The

Professional Graduate Certificate will be awarded to candidates who achieve less than 90 M level credits but who pass all modules and teaching practice elements. Before describing the course details it is important to stress that the base line for qualified teacher status in England is to meet the thirty three Standards required to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) as defined by the government's body The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) www.tda.gov.uk/partners/ittstandards/qtsstandards.aspx . Academic qualifications are considered desirable rather than essential. However, that stated, the traditional style PGCE has always been the route through which most teachers train and it incorporates an academic qualification with the requirements of the Standards included.

The Professional Practice module

The thirty H level credits are awarded to that element of the course that concerns school-based Professional Practice. One of the key reasons for having to place these at H and not M level is the difficulty of providing a robust and reliable quality assurance procedure for the school partnership. Our secondary partnership has over two hundred and fifty secondary schools and colleges and comparing standards across the multitude of contexts in which those schools work would prove impossible. Figure 3 summarises the assessed elements of the H level module. The PGCE course changes have been designed so that school staff should not notice any significant impact to their day-to-day work with beginning teachers.

The subject modules

Sixty M level credits are awarded for the two modules that are attached to the fourteen subjects offered by the Institute of Education's secondary PGCE course. Thirty of these relate to the module titled Subject Studies and thirty for the Subjects in a Wider Context module. The latter extends the scope of the teacher to looking at their subject across the whole school curriculum or beyond the classroom.

The fourth module

The final thirty credits are awarded for a fourth module, for which there is some element of choice. Beginning teachers select their fourth module from one of the three types of module:

Type 1: A generic module, The Professional Learning Portfolio (PLP) is based on the reflective practitioner. It is open to all beginning teachers, regardless of age phase and a more detailed description and analysis of this module is provided later in this paper.

Type 2. A subject module, restricted to beginning teachers in the relevant subjects and which extends existing subject work. Chosen from:

- Educational visits in Business Education
- Learning outside the Geography classroom
- PGCE Art & Design: Learning beyond the classroom

- Historical consciousness & Public History
- Religion and School Life
- Secondary Music: Learning opportunities beyond the classroom
- Media Literacy in Education
- Developing Appropriate Pedagogies for MFL Learning

Type 3. A module available from within some MA courses already offered by the Institute. Some are restricted whereas some are open to all beginning teachers.

Chosen from:

- Gender, Theory and Practice in Education
- Philosophy of Education: Knowledge, Mind and Understanding
- Philosophy of Education: Values, Aims and Society
- Designing mathematical learning and teaching with digital technologies
- Choral conducting, Leadership and Communication
- Introduction to music technology in education (distance learning)
- Learning to live together: children's rights, citizenship and identities (distance learning)
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment in Citizenship (distance learning)
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment in Citizenship (face-to-face)
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment in History
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment in Religious Education Teaching controversial issues

Issues

Adopting any change to an academic course as radical as the one outlined above would be expected to throw up challenges and take some time to establish itself. Half way through this first year we have already encountered a number of issues which we need to address. Some of these are likely to apply to other English higher education institutions, some apply only to our London context and some apply only to my own institution. Some of these key issues are described below.

How important is an M level qualification to new teachers?

Some beginning teachers on PGCE courses are confused as to the value of, and need for, the M level credits, which given that this is a pilot year is perhaps not surprising. Two examples illustrate this. A blog for teachers on the Times Education Supplement website (www.tes.co.uk) reveals uncertainties from trainee teachers about whether completing a Master's course is compulsory, whether schools value teachers with a Master's degree more and even whether they are able to opt out should they wish. In presentations made to potential recruits for 08/9 Institute of Education Open Evening it was estimated that around three quarters of the questions related to the Master's Level elements and attached progression routes.

In 2005/6 3,550 of England's 17,440 beginning teachers trained through an employment based route called the Graduate Teacher Programme. (DfES RS database 2007). The vast majority of those teachers on that and any other

employment based route will not receive M level credits attached to their training though the government is planning that in the long term they should.

The government, though the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), and the higher education institutions themselves, need to market a clear and transparent pathway through Master's qualifications, linked closely to professional practice in schools and other educational settings. The rationale as to why such a qualification is of benefit must also be explained, with reference to the individual teacher and to schools but primarily to the young people being taught.

A country such as Finland that has a strong M-level emphasis for its teachers is generally accepted as having a high quality education system and this would be evidence for England to promote the M level route. In an extract from his inaugural Sir John Cass Memorial lecture, Lord Adonis, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners noted the link between Finland's high quality education system and the numbers of teachers with a masters degree.

'In Finland I was struck not only by the extraordinary social status of teachers – 10 applicants for every teacher training post – but also by the fact that almost all teachers either have a masters degree or are working towards one, their courses including practical projects to improve their pedagogy. When I asked the head of a primary school in suburban Helsinki what was the biggest staffing problem she faced, she replied: "My best teachers going to do PhDs". I cannot think of anything I would be less likely to be told in an English school. We need to extend such opportunities to far more teachers in England, perhaps partly by means – as in Singapore – of special sabbaticals for the purpose.'

June 2007 at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/speeches/speech.cfm?SpeechID=649>

There is also evidence from the USA that 'the brightest and best candidates leave earlier and in greater numbers than their less academically grounded counterparts. Quartz et als (2004 p. 6) quoting from four sources including Darling-Hammond & Sclan (1996) and Murnane (1991).

How many credits should be offered?

Anecdotal comments from our current beginning teachers suggest that the *number* of credits offered, or even the M level itself did not attract them to do our particular PGCE. Reputation of the PGCE at the Institute and availability of a suitable PGCE near to their home remain the two biggest 'pull factors'. That may well change, as the new courses are adopted and better understood by schools and higher education staff. Clearly if beginning teachers leave the PGCE with 90 M level credits accepted towards a continuing Master's degree then they are more likely to sign up to continue their study. Universities are keen to promote their courses partly because they stand to gain increased student numbers and revenue. The Institute of Education hopes that rather than our current pattern of a very small number of new teachers opting to study for a Master's course and paying for the full six modules, a much larger number will take forward their credits within the institution and complete and pay for the three or maybe four additional modules required to complete. Marketing plans are underway to persuade this first year's entry of the need to use their credits to develop their

career within the next few years and of the supportive and varied pathways that the Institute of Education offers.

How easy is it to transfer credits?

Policies are currently being written about what UK institutions will accept into their own M level courses from new teachers who move into another geographical area or simply prefer to continue their study in a different institution. For most institutions it seems to be set at a sixty-credit limit. Many will make use, as we will, of distance or blended learning so we retain our former beginning teachers who move elsewhere, either in the UK or abroad. But academics can be precious about their courses and many will need convincing to accept teachers with very little experience or who do not have a proven track record of writing and research. That is why dedicated early professional M level courses have been created for this market. In the Institute of Education this is called the Masters of Teaching (MTeach) and it has provided a model that many other institutions have adopted as described in Kearns et al (2007 pp23-50). This innovative course will be described in more detail later.

Abilities of the beginning teachers

While we knew most of our course participants were capable of writing at Master's level, we also suspected many will struggle. Producing work at a higher academic level will be challenging for many beginning teachers unused to writing in a reflective way, drawing from research and learning how to conduct enquiries, albeit that all this work would be practice-based and relevant to a teacher's core need i.e. to train to be high quality practitioners.

To attempt to minimise this we formulated new module assessments structured around portfolios or smaller assignments, we included video, drama or artefact contributions and utilised presentations. We made use of our academic support department resources and offered additional workshops. In total this represents a significant additional staff input.

Assessment

Regulations and policies are currently being drawn up to establish consistent and fair practice for a number of situations that will arise. As I write there are many questions being asked, answers found and policies written. How many drafts should a tutor comment on? Should all work be double marked or only a sample? Should it be blind double marked? What are the consequences of failure and can students appeal against this procedure? Is a second attempt allowed? If one module is failed is the beginning teacher awarded a *Postgraduate* or *Professional* graduate certificate?

At the other end of the spectrum many of our beginning teachers are truly excellent practitioners even at the end of their training year. We are considering whether distinctions should be offered to those with the highest grades for individual modules or would this need to be reassessed in future years when a teacher has completed the whole M level course? Our most recent practice has offered simply a Pass or Fail at PGCE.

Are H level credits necessary?

The module of Professional Practice, which is primarily school-based and grounded in professional attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills, has thirty H level credits attached to it. An assessment is made based on a portfolio of the beginning teachers' work. Figure 3 lists the items included in the portfolio and therefore gives a flavour of the module. Some tutors, keen to reduce their marking of assignments are advocating that this module is dropped.

The MTeach at the Institute of Education

A key feature of the Institute's development of M level work is the innovative Master of Teaching (MTeach) which has been in existence for over five years. It 'foregrounds critical reflection on professional practice as well as educational research literacy, i.e. the ability to read, interpret and implement educational policies in a critical and context sensitive manner as well as to understand, apply and be able to produce educational research and enquiry' Pickering et al (2007 p 2). Other significant elements are its mixed-mode teaching pattern with computer-mediated communication between participants as well as tutors and some face to face elements. This mix allows the much-enjoyed contact and sharing of experience between teachers in their early years of teaching but the distance element ensures that teachers only travel into a central teaching session for a limited number of sessions. The course was developed out of the shortcomings of tradition professional development for teachers which Lock (2006:665) describes as '(a) one-shot and one-size fits all workshops; (b) use of the transmission model from experts to teachers; (c) failure to address school-specific differences; (d) just in case training; and (e) system wide presentations that do not provide sufficient time to plan or to learn new strategies to meet the reality of their own classrooms.' We believe that the MTeach offers a useful alternative to shape and evaluate the knowledge and practice of teachers in their early years of practice.

Progression routes

Progression from the PGCE into a full M level course is crucial to the success of these changes and as yet it is not possible to predict which paths the beginning teachers will take or how many will wish even to continue to M level. Crucial will be the volume and type of additional work required and the relevance of any further modules to these new teachers as they are challenged by the intensity and volume of their initial first years in the classroom. At that stage they move from a supported, 50% teaching load to responsibility for whole classes for over 80% of the time.

Various stakeholders have specific views on what pathways should involve. Any long-term impact should be measured on the benefits to the school pupils but this is notoriously difficult to achieve. Schools may be looking for teachers who are expert practitioners in the subject or who can manage and lead more effectively. Higher education lecturers may be seeking competent research practitioners

while government seek to build a strong world class teaching workforce, able to adapt to the demands of the coming decades.

The Institute of Education's PGCE allows three pathways into completion of a Master's degree. The majority are likely to choose to complete the specialist MTeach as outlined above. As I write it seems likely that a decision will be made to allow *any* Institute of Education beginning teacher to use their 90 M level credits for the Teach regardless of choice of the fourth module.

The MTeach teaching methodologies utilises computer technologies and e learning in which the primarily young teachers are usually highly proficient and comfortable. The emphasis on practitioner enquiry and reflection makes the modules highly appropriate for schools as assignments can be based around school activities in which teachers are already engaged. Professional Development managers in schools have begun to develop closer partnership with staff at the Institute to ensure there is 'joined up thinking' and to ensure effective use is made for the school from the course. Since some schools part fund their teachers through Master's courses this is especially important to them.

Where beginning teachers have chosen a subject-based fourth module they may prefer to follow a subject 'expert' route and complete an MA in, for example, Geography in Education, Art & Design Education and Science in Education. The 90 credits will be accepted and over the next two to five years 90 additional credits from a limited selection must be completed.

Finally some beginning teachers choose modules linked to other generic MA courses. Modules from the Type 3 option modules listed above could be accepted by Master's course leaders in related fields. In some cases only sixty credits can be transferred instead of 90 and final decisions are being made as I write. As a general rule any beginning teacher wishing to import module credits from another PGCE will find they are limited to sixty credits and likewise our beginning teachers will find only sixty of theirs will be accepted. Once more this is a 'watch it and see' situation at present.

In the future there are opportunities to grow on the successes and failures, the demands and expectations of schools and the teachers themselves. For example pathways linked to early leadership such as Fast Track described in King (2006), or to Special Educational Needs (SEN) could be developed.

One example of the fourth module: The Professional Learning Portfolio (PLP)

Since the Institute's Master of Teaching (MTeach) was designed to provide innovative Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for teachers in their early years in the profession, Pickering et als (2007 p 3), it made sense to establish a pathway through the PGCE that fed harmoniously into that Course. As described above, the emphasis is on knowledge construction rather than transmission and on reflection about and through school-based professional practice. The module created to serve that purpose is titled the Professional

Learning Portfolio. It consists of four items; each developed at a different point in the course and then brought together by the beginning teacher, through a return to the first item philosophical statement. The four items are:

- A Philosophical Statement based on 'The kind of teacher I want to be' and 'What makes a good teacher?'
- A piece of reflective writing based within the subject
- A piece of reflective writing based on the school practice beyond the subject
- A reflection on one specific teaching and learning experience.

Each task aims to help beginning teachers to reflect deeply on experiences, and from those experiences, to recognise learning and how it can be applied to other contexts. The construction of a portfolio helps to prepare these new teachers in the ongoing process of building a portfolio that is now part of an English teacher's continuing professional development process. Those selecting the Professional Learning Portfolio (PLP) as their fourth module will benefit from an established understanding of the philosophy and practice of the MTeach should they decide to pursue that pathway.

Conclusion

Most new teachers will now enter the teaching profession with a number of M-level credits towards a full Master's level qualification. At the same time the remit of the Training and Development Agency for Schools is to create a more structured early professional development programme for new teachers which brings coherence. Therefore we expect the Department for Children, Schools and Families in England and the its Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) to develop the early professional development of teachers and integrate the various initiatives, qualifications, professional frameworks and funding streams to build teacher quality. Another strong possibility is that, building on the success of the Chartered London Teacher (www.clt.ac.uk) and schemes devised by two subject associations; Chartered Geographer (Royal Geographical Society) and Chartered Science Teacher (The Association for Science Education: CSciTeach) a significant award could be introduced offering chartered teacher status around five years after entering the workforce. This would be somewhat similar to Chartered Accountants, Surveyors and Engineers and could involve demonstrating competencies against advanced Standards through a portfolio of evidence. The profession must see M-level credits awarded during the PGCE year built into coherent, accredited courses which meet the needs of individual teachers and schools rather than being academic and of little relevance. Higher education institutions must develop courses that allow teachers to transfer credits if they relocate to different parts of the country and to defer study when life circumstances or the sheer pressure of early teaching proves too great. Crucially, government must develop funding incentives to encourage new teachers to utilise their PGCE credits and continue to develop professionally linking practice with further study. It is possible that if the government are creative they could use this funding stream as an additional way to influence the gaps or weaknesses in new teachers' training, for example, as

identified in the 2007 Newly Qualified Teachers Survey special education needs, subject knowledge enhancement and working with the wider workforce. (www.tda.gov.uk/partners/datasurveys/nqtsurvey.aspx) By that means, and using differential funding, they could address their own agendas for teachers' development. At the same time government and the TDA will need to inform and then encourage both teachers and schools to view this significant new development into an M level PGCE as an essential part of retaining teachers and developing them into the world class teaching force England strives to have.

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<http://royalsociety.org/education>

Figure 1 Summary of M and H level

<p>What do we mean by M-level?</p> <p><i>Level 7 - The level of study normally associated with a Master's degree in England</i></p> <p>What do we mean by H-level?</p> <p><i>Level 6 - The level of study normally associated with the final year of a Bachelor's degree in England</i></p>	<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Credit level</th><th>is typical of the learning expected of</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>8</td><td>a doctorate</td></tr><tr><td>7</td><td>a masters degree</td></tr><tr><td>6</td><td>the last part of a bachelors degree</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>the last part of a Foundation Degree; middle part of a bachelors degree</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>the first part of HE study</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>entry qualification for HE</td></tr></tbody></table>	Credit level	is typical of the learning expected of	8	a doctorate	7	a masters degree	6	the last part of a bachelors degree	5	the last part of a Foundation Degree; middle part of a bachelors degree	4	the first part of HE study	3	entry qualification for HE
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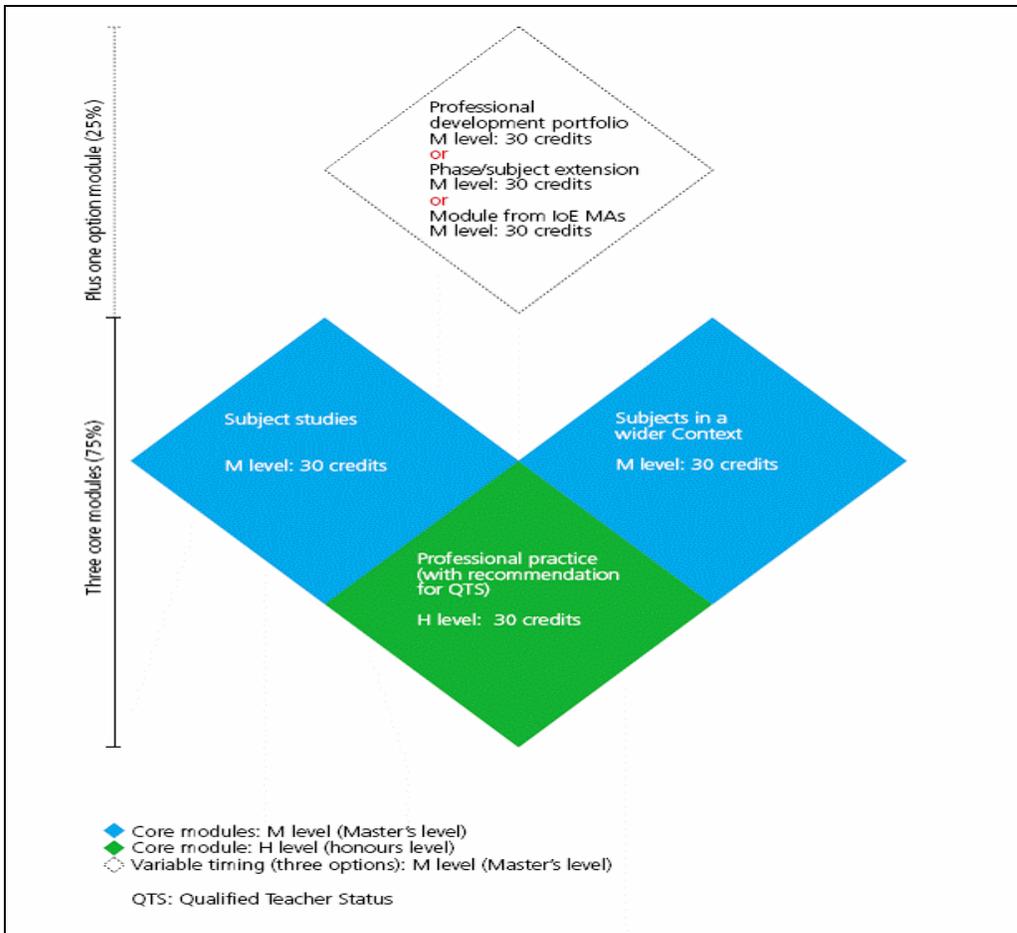


Figure 2 Summary of the Secondary PGCE modular structure

Figure 3

The contents of the assessment portfolio for the Professional Practice at H level

For Professional Practice 1

- 5 lesson observations
- 1 end of Professional Practice 1 placement report
- For 1 observed lesson of the BT's choice – plans, resources and evaluation for that lesson together with the lesson before or the lesson after
- 1000 word reflection of Professional Practice 1 (guidance framework given but to include reference to tracking e.g. areas of most progress and areas where greater progress is required)
- Weekly meeting record of subject meetings
- Weekly meeting record of professional studies school-based sessions

For Professional Practice 2

- 5 lesson observations
- 1 end of Professional Practice 2 placement report
- For 1 observed lesson of the BT's choice – plans, resources and evaluation for that lesson together with the lesson before and the lesson after
- 1000 word reflection of Professional Practice 1 (guidance framework given but to include reference to progress and areas for further improvement in induction year)
- Weekly meeting record of subject meetings
- Weekly meeting record of professional studies school-based sessions
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This file will contain the documentary evidence towards the award of QTS and H level and will be examined by Institute Tutors in consultation with school-based colleagues.