

Robin Walker MP

Minister for School Standards
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Westminster
SW1P 3BT

10 December 2021

Dear Minister

Concerns remain over the ITT Market Review accreditation timetable and process

MillionPlus, The Association for Modern Universities, via our Deans of Education Network, represents 20 Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers across England, who work with thousands of trainees each year in partnership with hundreds of schools and are a critical part of the teacher supply pipeline in England.

The MillionPlus Deans of Education network meets regularly with Department for Education officials to positively engage with policy initiatives. Our institutions are committed to continually improving the quality and standards of ITT, and as such will support any reforms that achieves this aim. With this in mind the MillionPlus Deans of Education Network sought to engage positively with the Review Team and DfE officials throughout the process.

MillionPlus welcomed the amendments to the ITT Review Teams recommendations as outlined in the government's formal response (published 1 December). It was encouraging that the government had listened to our concerns, and the sector more broadly, as well as acknowledging the outstanding work already being undertaken by our ITT providers and their partners.

However, we remain deeply concerned with the proposed accreditation timetable and process.

It has become increasingly clear that even with the revised timetable set out by government, that tension remains between getting the outcomes of the ITT review right and getting them done quickly. The time allocated for providers to prepare their applications for the first round accreditation does not account for the immense pressure staff are still managing due to the ongoing problems arising from the pandemic, and we would urge the government to reconsider the proposed timetable.

The diversity of our ITT sector is something to be cherished and to be proud of, but providers large and small need support at this time and not even greater pressures placed upon them that may even put their continued involvement in ITT in doubt, with potentially calamitous consequences for teacher supply.

We would also argue that the accreditation process itself needs urgent clarification – in particular its relationship with, and the role of, Ofsted in both the accreditation and assessment of the ITE providers. It is still not clear how this system will work. If the two processes remain entirely unrelated it raises significant questions about the importance of one over the other; and if the two are inter-linked it raises equally difficult questions around conflicts of interest and impartiality.

MillionPlus has never objected to the principle of an accreditation system, despite the numerous quality assurance processes already in place throughout the sector. However, for such a system to work it needs providers to have faith in the process, and in its transparency and fairness. We remain committed to working with the government to ensure that this is the case.

These are extraordinary times for schools and ITT providers alike, with a level of unprecedented disruption that is still impacting upon schools across the country. The incredible work that has been done by providers, much of it built on the strong partnerships between universities and schools, has kept the system running thus far. It is imperative that this extraordinary work is acknowledged and supported, and every effort is made to alleviate pressure on the sector to help them in their work. To that end we would urge the government to rethink its timescales, provide further assurances on the accreditation system, and work with the sector in our shared endeavour to improve and strengthen teacher education in the years to come.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Hewitt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel Hewitt
Chief Executive, MillionPlus