

## Education Select Committee Inquiry: Administration of School Direct 2012-13

### About million+

1. million+ is a university think-tank which provides evidence and analysis on policy and funding regimes that impact on universities, students and the services that universities and other higher education institutions deliver, including in respect of teacher education. We welcome the Committee's previous recognition of the role of universities in delivering teacher education and teacher supply.

2. Concerns about the introduction and administration of School Direct have emerged during 2012-13 and million+ convened a roundtable in the House of Commons in March 2013. This was attended by a wide range of stakeholders including Headteachers, Teach First, Deans of Education, MPs and Peers. A report of the roundtable was forwarded to the Secretary of State and can be found here

[http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/documents/Who\\_should\\_train\\_the\\_teachers\\_Report\\_March2013\\_Final.pdf](http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/documents/Who_should_train_the_teachers_Report_March2013_Final.pdf)

### The Administration of School Direct (2012-13)

3. This submission focuses on the administration of School Direct in 2012-13 i.e. the processes applicable to the recruitment of School Direct trainees seeking to commence training in the academic year 2013-14.

### Key points

- Overall more places are thought to have been allocated to all routes into ITT than required in order to compensate for the potential of under-recruitment.
- The application process for School Direct was put in place without any advance briefing or consultation with universities.
- Applications had to be handed manually with significant resource implications and delays for early applicants.
- The process has operated in parallel with GTTR (Graduate Teacher Training Registry) for 2013/14; as a result applicant behaviour is less predictable.
- The new School Direct processes have created confusion for some applicants and the merits and opportunities associated with different entry routes have not been clearly presented e.g. applicants are not advised that QTS alone is not a transportable teaching qualification.
- NCTL (National College of Teaching and Leadership) has promoted School Direct to applicants at the expense of places available at universities
- The new applications process has impacted significantly on applications for PGCE Primary places.
- There has been no incentive for schools to fill all allocated SD places.
- Applicants have been able to hold more than one offer.
- DfE / NCTL have declined to provide information about patterns of recruitment and confirmed acceptance, undermining the potential for universities to provide additional resources for SD partner schools to seek to address under-recruitment
- Changes for 2014/15 entry have the potential to create further uncertainties in respect to the future delivery of teacher supply.

4. The application process for School Direct was put in place at short notice. Universities received details of the new system on the same day that it was launched to applicants. As a result universities had to react to a system without any notice, prior consultation or opportunity to plan. This resulted in a time lag while processes were put in place, causing delays for early applicants. Opportunities for automation were reduced leading to significant additional resource requirements relating to manual handling and data entry of applicant details to integrate with established University systems.

5. The 2013/14 admissions portal has operated in parallel with the GTTR, the traditional route for submission of Postgraduate teacher training applications. This created additional administration as student record system providers were not able to plan for changes as would normally be the case.

6. Applicants were able to change the phase their application related to after selecting a lead school, resulting in a number of applications for primary places at lead schools which do not have a primary allocation.

7. Applicants have been able to simultaneously hold offers in both systems and more than one SD place, something which not previously permitted when applying through GTTR. As a result there has been and is greater uncertainty as to whether applicants accepting places are committed to entry on the specified route. The introduction of skills tests as an additional entry requirement will inject a further significant element of uncertainty into the admissions process for 2013/14 entry.

8. The introduction of the new admissions portal and its marketing as School Direct has created confusion for some applicants. The opportunities and merits of different application routes are not clearly presented or specified and do not enable applicants to make an informed choice. This is not in the interests of applicants. For example, some routes are QTS (Qualified teacher Status) only but it is not made clear that QTS is not a portable teaching qualification and is not recognised in Scotland or other UK home nations and many other countries.

9. NCTL has used its resources to actively promote the School Direct route to applicants to the detriment of the university ITT 'offer' creating further uncertainty about applicant behaviour. In spite of representations, NCTL external communications and publicity have focused on SD.

10. The change resulting in salary funding grants being paid directly to Lead Schools has caused considerable double working of processes and unnecessary work on partnership agreements. Lead schools are identified by postcode only. As a result some schools within an alliance or trust have received no or very few applications. Some schools did not recognise the resource implications of the SD system and were unable to process applications as quickly as required. Schools have also sought to switch HE partner and /or change SD subject places after allocation because of amended recruitment needs.

11. For some lead schools there is not the same imperative to recruit and fill allocated places as there is for universities. For many schools this remains a relatively small scale activity and does not provide a significant source of income. This has a potentially destabilising effect on ensuring adequate supply of teachers across subject and phase ranges.

12. In spite of representatives from universities, NCTL / DfE have not supplied information about patterns or numbers of confirmed SD acceptances. If this information had been made available there was the potential for universities to work with schools to address any under-recruitment problems prior to the end of the school year.

## **2014/15**

13. A new single admissions system for all Postgraduate Teacher Education places is to be introduced for 2014/15 entry and will introduce significant changes. The new single admissions system planned will address some of the issues experienced in the 2013/14 recruitment round and arguably provide a better system for admissions in the medium term. However it also introduces some short term issues the effects of which are difficult to predict.

14. The move to a single admissions system with three choices at the initial stage received concurrently rather than sequentially, will have a very unpredictable effect on the volume of applications for core training places with the potential for a two tier system of application with School Direct places comprising many applicants' first three choices.

15. The ability of schools to directly access the new admissions system for 2014/15 entry will introduce an added layer of complexity. The capacity of universities to work collaboratively and efficiently with partner schools will be fundamental to successful implementation of this new system. The introduction of the 40 day turnaround requirement is likely to be a significant challenge for some schools to meet particularly where these timescales overlap with holiday periods.

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