

ATL ADVICE



Threshold and the upper pay scale

This factsheet has been produced to help you understand the threshold and upper pay scale progression. You should read it in conjunction with the Department for Education (DfE) guidance notes for schools and teachers available at www.education.gov.uk/schools/careers/payandpensions/performancethreshold.

Crossing the threshold is an entirely voluntary process and you must make it clear to your headteacher that you wish to be considered for progression.

What is the upper pay scale?

The upper pay scale is a three-point scale available to those teachers who hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and have been assessed by their employer as meeting both the core and post-threshold professional standards.

Accessing the upper pay scale is often referred to as 'crossing the threshold'.

What are the core and post-threshold professional standards?

The professional standards are published as an annex to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). Your school will have a copy or you can download it at www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFE-00516-2010.

What is the application process?

In England, you do not have to apply to cross the threshold but you must make it clear that you wish to be considered for progression. You should ensure that you make a formal request to be assessed against the threshold standards by 31 October.

When you progress to point M4 of the main pay scale you should make sure that your performance management reviewer is aware that you wish to be

considered for progression to the upper pay scale. This should be written into your performance management review statement.

Your headteacher should assess your performance based on your performance management reviews. Your performance management objectives should be such that by the time you have reached M6 there is sufficient evidence available for your headteacher to recommend progression to the upper pay scale. You should ensure that you make a formal request to be assessed against the threshold standards by 31 October. Please ask or check your school pay policy for the process at your school.

In Wales, you are required to provide summarised evidence in the form of concrete examples from your day-to-day work that you meet the post-threshold standards. The evidence should be as recent as possible and normally cover the two years leading up to your assessment. You must submit your evidence by the end of the academic year to be considered. Please ask or check your school pay policy for the process at your school.

What evidence is taken into consideration?

The only evidence that should be considered should be the outcome of your performance management reviews.

ATL's view is that it should be assumed that you have met the core standards unless this has been brought to your attention through feedback during the performance management review or following any classroom observation or headteacher drop-in.

When should I progress to the upper pay scale?

You need to have two successful performance management reviews and have been paid at M6 for a year before you can progress. The table below shows when you would progress on to the upper pay scale.

Performance management reviews used	Progression to the upper pay scale due
M4 and M5	At the end of your first year on M6
M5 and your first year on M6	At the end of your first year on M6
Two years on M6	At the end of the second year of performance management used

I am about to start at a new school on M6. Can I still apply?

If you have just started at a new school and are eligible you may still apply to cross the threshold. When you make your application, you will need to cite evidence from your previous school or schools. Your previous performance review statements should be sufficient.

You should inform your headteacher who should then consult with the headteacher(s) of your other school(s) during the previous two years for evidence of your performance.

I work at more than one school. How will this affect crossing the threshold?

If you are employed to teach at two or more schools you can only make one application to cross the threshold. You should submit the application to the school at which you spend most of your time or, if you spend equal amounts at the schools, to the school where you have been employed for the longest period.

The headteacher of the school where you apply should consult with the other headteachers before deciding whether you should cross the threshold.

When should I apply to cross the threshold?

As there is no application process you can do this at any time. However, the application process in England is linked to the performance management cycle and you should make it clear at your performance reviews that you wish to be assessed for crossing the threshold.

You should first mention this when placed on point M4 and again at point M5. Once you are placed on point M6 you should ask for your performance to be reviewed against the standards and assessed for threshold at the end of your M6 year.

In Wales, you should apply by the end of the academic year but you should check your school's pay policy.

I have recently returned from long-term sick leave. Can I still be assessed to cross the threshold?

Absences as a result of injury or sickness should not preclude you from applying for threshold. The evidence required as part of your application should normally cover the two-year period leading up to and ending at the date of your application.

However, in certain circumstances evidence collated over a period of up to five years can be taken into account. The evidence of teaching should be taken from all educational settings where you have taught children of school age (up to 19 years of age).

I work part time and my headteacher has told me I cannot apply for threshold. Is that correct?

No. Whether your service has been part time, regular or otherwise, this cannot preclude you from being assessed. All teachers with a contract of one term or more should have performance management objectives set and reviewed.

I am a supply teacher. Can I cross the threshold?

As a supply teacher, you will need to discuss the process and assessment of your application with your headteacher or local authority manager. You will need to show evidence of your performance to progress. All teachers with a contract of one term or more should have performance management objectives set and reviewed.

I have just returned from maternity leave. Can I cross the threshold?

Periods of absence on maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave, which are statutory or contractual, cannot preclude you from crossing the threshold. The evidence should normally cover the two-year period leading up to and ending at the date of your request to be considered.

However, in certain circumstances evidence collated over a period of up to five years can be taken into account. The evidence of teaching should be taken from all education settings where you have taught children of school age (up to 19 years of age).

I only recently returned to the maintained sector after several years teaching at an independent school. Am I eligible to apply for threshold?

Yes. Teachers who have recently returned from working in the independent sector can still apply for threshold as long as they have QTS and are on M6, have evidence of teaching children of school age for at least six years, and are employed in service at the time they make their application.

I have been on the leadership scale for several years and I will be giving up my post of responsibility. Do I still need to apply to cross the threshold?

Members of the leadership team who are stepping down to the classroom teachers' pay scale and who have been on the leadership scale for at least one year will automatically be placed on upper pay scale 1 (U1) if they return to a classroom teaching post.

The STPCD states that any pay progression in your previous role that could be comparable to the requirements for progression on the upper pay scale should be taken into consideration. Employers should not unreasonably refuse to place you on point U2 or U3 if you have progressed on the leadership group.

I have been on the leadership scale for several years; previously I was a classroom teacher on the upper pay scale. If I step down from my leadership post, where should I be on

the upper pay scale?

The lowest point you could be placed on the upper pay scale is the point you were on when you joined the leadership scale. Therefore if you were on U1 before moving to the leadership scale, you would return to U1 if you decided to step down sometime in the future. Similarly this would be the case if you were on upper pay scale 2 or 3.

The STPCD states that any pay progression in your previous role which could be comparable to the requirements for progression on the upper pay scale should be taken into consideration. Employers should not unreasonably refuse to place you on point U2 or U3 if you have progressed on the leadership group.

I have requested assessment to cross the threshold, when can I expect to hear back from my headteacher?

Unfortunately, there is no timescale that must be adhered to when assessing an application, although your school's pay policy may cover this. The legislation only requires that you are informed within 20 working days of the day on which the decision is made.

If you are concerned about the length of time it is taking, please contact your ATL school representative, your branch secretary or ATL's London office.

Is my headteacher required to provide feedback and, if so, when should this take place?

Once your application has been assessed and you have been informed of the decision, you should be informed in writing of the outcome. It should include any written comments that have been made by your headteacher.

You should also receive oral feedback from your headteacher or LA manager on each standard and the reasons for the outcome of your application. You should receive advice on aspects of performance that would benefit from further development.

I have been unsuccessful in my application. When can I be reassessed?

Teachers can only be assessed once in an academic year and this also refers to teachers who work at two or more schools. You must wait until the beginning of the following academic year before requesting a further assessment.

Can I appeal?

Unsuccessful applicants may appeal against a failed application through the school's pay procedure. Information about making an appeal should be available in your school's pay policy. If you are considering making an appeal, you should contact your ATL school representative, your branch secretary or ATL's London office.

I have been on threshold for a year.

When can I progress to U2?

Progression on the upper pay scale should occur every other year.

Where can I find the application form for progression to U2 or U3?

There is no formal application form for progression to U2 or U3. Any written documentation required to assess your eligibility to progress should be available from your performance management meetings over the previous two years. Your school's pay policy should also contain information about pay progression.

What are the criteria for progression to U2 or U3?

Progression on the upper pay scale is based on your performance over two consecutive performance management reviews. Your performance review should ensure that you are maintaining the post-threshold standards and have grown professionally by developing your teaching expertise.

Can my headteacher withhold progression on the upper pay spine?

Headteachers who withhold progression should provide a detailed explanation for their reasoning. To be fair and transparent, judgements must be properly rooted in evidence. Headteachers should also demonstrate how a teacher should have performed in order to have achieved progression. Any concerns about your performance or overall contribution should have been raised during performance management meetings.



Need advice?

You first point of contact is the ATL rep in your school/college. Your local ATL branch is also available to help, or you can contact ATL's member advisors on 020 7930 6441, email info@atl.org.uk. Don't forget there's lots more advice on ATL's website at www.atl.org.uk.

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