

## ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS AND LECTURERS

7 NORTHUMBERLAND STREET, LONDON WC2N 5RD TEL: 020-7930-6441 FAX: 020-7930-1359  
e-mail: [info@atl.org.uk](mailto:info@atl.org.uk) web site: <http://www.atl.org.uk> VAT REG NO 539 0866 17  
GENERAL SECRETARY Dr MARY BOUSTED B.A.(Hons) PhD



### ***TDA Consultation on draft requirements for a proposed assessment-only route to QTS***

***Response from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, November 2009***

ATL, as a leading education union, recognises the link between education policy and our members' conditions of employment. Our evidence-based policy making enables us to campaign and negotiate from a position of strength. We champion good practice and achieve better working lives for our members.

We help our members, as their careers develop, through first-rate research, advice, information and legal support. Our 160,000 members – teachers, lecturers, headteachers and support staff – are empowered to get active locally and nationally. We are affiliated to the TUC, and work with government and employers by lobbying and through social partnership.

#### **ATL Policy**

ATL's education policy is underpinned by the professionalism of teachers. Teachers should be recognised for their knowledge, expertise and judgement, at the level of the individual pupil and in articulating the role of education in promoting social justice. Development of the education system should take place at a local level: the curriculum should be developed in partnership with local stakeholders and assessment should be carried out through local professional networks. Schools should work collaboratively to provide excellent teaching and learning with a broad and balanced curriculum, and to support pupils' well-being, across a local area. This means that mechanisms must be developed that ensure a proper balance of accountability to national government and the local community, and which supports collaboration rather than competition.

#### **Introduction**

ATL, the education union, has long been concerned with the initial training and continuing professional development of teachers and we therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the proposed assessment-only route to QTS. The teaching workforce is a diverse one, with individuals with a range of professional experience and with a diverse set of training and professional development needs. The assessment-only route to QTS may well meet some of those needs but our members also have a variety of concerns about the detail of the proposal and how it is to be implemented.

#### **Teacher Professionalism**

ATL believes that teaching is an intellectual profession, based on a high degree of general and systematised knowledge. This includes an in-depth knowledge of:

- Learning; how pupils learn, potential obstacles to learning, pre-conditions and dispositions to learning, how learning develops, and
- Curriculum content; knowledge of subjects and the relationships between them, understanding of wider content such as the development of thinking skills, problem solving, questioning and group working, and a knowledge of how pupils' understanding of particular content grows and develops.

Teachers, drawing on their theoretical understanding of learning, their knowledge of curriculum content and of what pupils need, have the ability to adapt teaching practices and methods to particular pupils. It is the suitability of the assessment-only route to ensure and support this knowledge and these skills and abilities in the teaching profession which is the key concern to ATL members.

## **The Assessment-Only Route**

### *Establishing eligibility*

At this early stage of consultation, we recognise that there is a lack of detail due to the developmental stage of this work. However, we are concerned with questions regarding the assessment of candidates' eligibility for the assessment-only QTS route. The consultation document states that candidates will take part in an interview designed to assess their suitability for this QTS route. It is crucial to know who will be taking the role of assessor and against which criteria. If the assessors are the providers, there may be a concern that pressure caused by the number of course places available could compromise the assessment process; we need to be clear whether the object is to assess suitability or to allocate course places. It is not clear from the consultation document whether the initial assessment of candidates confirming that they have the required "intellectual and academic capabilities", possess the "appropriate qualities, attitudes and values expected of a teacher" and other such requirements will be part of the interview or a longer assessment process for entry to the assessment-only route. It is also unclear at what stage of the assessment process the skills test occur; we are unsure whether this is to be part of the initial assessment-for-programme process or to be part of the overall QTS-assessment process for candidates.

The consultation document alludes to qualities, attitudes and values expected of teachers; perhaps it would be more helpful to refer to such aspects in relation to teachers' professional standards, which, after all, have been agreed by the profession, through the medium of the social partnership. Referring to concepts such as attitudes and values in terms of what is expected of teachers is open to interpretation, lacks in specificity and is therefore unsuitable for use in this manner in a professional assessment process.

### *Provision*

The provision section of the consultation alludes to providers ensuring that rigorous external and internal moderation procedures are in place. ATL would like more detail about this moderation; by whom will it be carried out, with what support, within what kinds of frameworks of checks and balances and how it is to be embedded in ongoing quality control.

Due to the nature of this route, which measures the quality and experience of unqualified teachers against the QTS standards, there may be a measure of responsibility on their current / recent school or college employers to provide sufficient information for the assessment and we urge that this responsibility and the workload that may well accompany it is recognised and schools supported in fulfilling their role in this process.

Although ATL has concerns that existing ITT provision does not adequately prepare or support trainees in the areas of equality and diversity, behaviour-management and SEN, we need to ensure that this assessment-only route, which provides no training, will ensure that these areas are given the appropriate weighting in the assessment of candidates for QTS.

## **Conclusion**

There is a worrying lack of detail at this early consultation stage regarding the assessment-only route to QTS and we hope that there will be an opportunity for further consultation and input once there are further proposals. Whilst we welcome flexibilities in terms of training and professional development, we are clear that all members must be supported in whatever routes they take and that these routes culminate in sufficient support for high quality teaching and professional practice.