



# OU ITE

# Partnership

Criteria and Deselection Policy

This document is also available in Welsh. Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn

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# The OU ITE Partnership

Over fifty years, the Open University has helped 2 million students from a wide range of backgrounds to access higher education, gain quality qualifications and help launch them into their future careers. We have pioneered distance learning so that students can fit in study around their busy lives. We offer a unique all-Wales PGCE qualification with two routes of study: an employment-based option known as the Salaried route and a separate self-funded, Part Time route.

The OU ITE Partnership has an important social justice mission. We use our expertise in teacher education and distance learning to attract aspiring teachers from all communities across Wales. Combining online teaching with in-school school experience over two years helps remove barriers for people to become teachers. This offers an opportunity to qualify alongside existing work or caring responsibilities, making it more accessible for people, including career changers or mature students.

## Our Vision

Initial teacher education in Wales is based on a close collaboration between schools and a university. It is founded on a culture of joint ownership and accountability. At its heart, Partnership culture is about a shared vision for the growth of new beginner teachers, where each partner's expert and unique contribution to the student teacher's learning is recognised and celebrated.

Our vision is that together the OU and schools work in partnership to remove barriers to participation to provide a flexible route to developing excellent

teachers who may find access to traditional routes more difficult. In doing so, we seek to make a positive impact on the lives of children and communities across Wales. Our mission is to widen access to and diversify teaching and support recruitment to shortage subjects. We are the only employment-based route and part time route in Wales. Distance learning and innovative technology (such as remote lesson observation) is central to our teaching model. We invite schools who share a strong affinity with our vision and our mission to join us as a Partner school.

## **Becoming a Partner School**

The OU ITE Partnership reflects the Welsh education system's diversity and encourages a whole range of maintained and special schools to join the Partnership.

It is important that a school applying to become a partner school should reflect on their preparedness and capacity to engage with the programme and to meet the accreditation requirements for the roles and responsibilities of a partner school. We work closely with all Regional Consortia and relevant Local Authority ITE leads and they play an important part in the approval of partner status applications. **Any school wishing to apply for partner status should discuss this with their regional consortia ITE Lead prior to making an application** (please contact [Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk](mailto:Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk) for ITE lead contact details if required).

Schools can then consider to which status they wish to apply and is best suited to their school's strengths and development needs. These roles and responsibilities have been set as per our accredited model in response to the

[Criteria for the accreditation of ITE programmes in Wales](#) (Welsh Government, 2023). You may find it particularly helpful to review Section A Part 3 which sets out the vision for school and university collaboration within reformed models of ITE.

## **Lead Partner School**

Lead Schools play a key role in the governance and development of all aspects of the OU ITE Partnership's provision. They are members of the Partnership Committee with a wide range of strategic and operational responsibilities relating to supporting the OU Partnership provision and developing student teacher progress. Further information is set out in the Lead School Information pack which is available upon request.

## **Partner Schools**

Partner schools play a key part in widening access to teaching through supporting the learning of part time student teachers across three practice learning placements in a year. Our model is based on School AAB where most students will be placed for 60-days per year.

Partner schools may wish to endorse an existing staff member or be matched to a Secondary salaried student. This means that schools can take a 'grow your own' approach or make an investment in long-term workforce strategies. Schools will need to commit to supporting the staff member at point 1 of the unqualified teacher pay scale for the duration of the programme on a full-time basis and provide significant release time (50% in year 1) to enable a combined timetable of employment duties and PGCE study.

Partner schools endorsing a salaried student are required to submit a letter of endorsement and the school employee should complete the [OU PGCE application form](#) (available on the OU website).

Secondary schools who wish to support a Salaried student but do not already employ an appropriate existing member of staff may request to be matched to suitable applicants to the Salaried route (where factors such as geographical location and subject choice make this possible). In the first instance, please discuss your school's interest with your Regional Consortia ITE Lead or contact [Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk](mailto:Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk). **The Partnership advises schools to discuss any contractual obligations with their designated HR department.**

To become a partner school, you'll place high value on the part time and salaried route and share our strong social mission centred on promoting diversity and inclusion. You'll need to be a maintained, state school who can showcase high quality teaching and learning and progress towards Curriculum for Wales to meet our entry criteria. In return, we'll offer a range of professional development opportunities for your staff and actively support your mentors towards the Leadership Standards. We'll also make a financial contribution for the support of usually between two and four student teachers. This ensures a good peer-network, critical for distance learners, and enables schools to embed initial teacher education approaches strategically.

- ✓ [Learn more about the Part Time PGCE route here.](#)
- ✓ [Learn more about the PGCE Salaried route here](#)

## **Partnership Status Review Process**

A school's initial partnership status is reviewed every two years (in line with the programme length). The criteria by which schools are selected will also be reviewed by the Partnership (and led by the Chair of the Recruitment, Admissions and Retention Sub-Committee) every two years.

Schools should notify the Partnership of any changes to their ability to meet their status criteria as soon as possible.

Partnership staff may also raise any changes to a school's ability to meet the criteria at any point during that period with the Director of the PGCE. Examples of changes to a school's circumstances which may affect their ability to meet the criteria may include (but is not limited to):

- Significant changes to staffing or leadership.
- Industrial action.
- Challenge Advisor advice.
- Significant changes to the school such as closure/federation/amalgamation/new school opening which may trigger a review of status.
- Feedback from Estyn (e.g. special measures, significant improvement, follow up).
- Issues raised via the Student Support or Issues Resolutions framework.
- Unable to meet criteria signed up for in terms of fulfilling lead/partner school status.

Changes to a school's ability to meet the criteria for their Partnership Status may be raised by any member of the Partnership:

- By the school (e.g. Headteacher or ITE Lead)
- Regional Consortia / Local Authority ITE Leads
- Practice Tutors
- Mentors / School Coordinators
- Student teachers
- Curriculum Tutors

In the event that the Partnership is notified of changes to a school's ability to meet the criteria, this will trigger a Partnership Status Review through the Issues Resolution Framework. Outcomes of such a review may include:

- A change to the school's Partnership status (e.g. a Lead Partner School may reduce their strategic commitments to Partner School level).
- Additional mitigating actions to provide further support to the school and/or student to address areas impacted by changes.
- No further placement of students within the school on a short or long-term basis.
- The de-selection of a school from the Partnership.

## **De-Selection of Schools from the Partnership**

Lead Partner schools are invited to play a full role in the strategic design and delivery of the programme. In the event that the Lead Partner school does not engage with the work of the Partnership Committee (e.g. repeated absence at committee and sub-committee meetings; does not support student teacher placements for the duration of their status period), a Partnership Review Meeting should be held.



The de-selection of a partner school from the Partnership is a significant and serious decision. The Partnership would endeavour, using the Issues Resolution Framework, to work closely with the school to provide support and mitigation where possible to resolve issues in the first instance, based on the principles of maturity, honesty and transparency. The decision to de-select a school should be made in close consultation with the school headteacher and where possible, mutual agreement should be reached.

In the event that mutual agreement cannot be reached, or the school does not engage in the Issues Resolution Framework the OU ITE Partnership may withdraw the partnership status of the school without consultation.

If changes to any school's circumstances are such that mitigation is limited in effect or the school receives notification from Estyn that they are unsatisfactory and need urgent improvement, the Partnership must review the placement of any part-time or salaried student teachers in the school.

Where possible, part time students may be placed in an alternative school. If a school is hosting a salaried student, careful consideration must be given to the quality of the student teacher's experience within the school as a site of practice-based learning. Student teachers should always receive their minimum entitlement. Members of the Issues Resolution Panel will need to determine whether:

- Strong mitigations can be made to support the salaried student to remain within the school. Examples of mitigation may include:
  - Additional Practice tutor visits to the school (to support the student teacher and/or mentor)

- Additional online tutorials with the Curriculum Tutor
- Additional support from a Lead Partner School (e.g. teaching a minimum of 50% in a Lead Partner School)

The salaried student should be offered an alternative placement within another school. Whilst all efforts will be made to support the student in finding another Salaried placement, it may be necessary for the student to transfer to the part time route to complete the PGCE qualification in another setting.

Schools faced with significant period of changes, included but not limited to, changes in the School Leadership; school merger / major building programmes; a high proportion of new or inexperienced teachers, the school will be required to re-apply to the partnership.

## Criteria for the Inclusion of Schools

1.	An effective school for ITE recognised for high-quality provision for student teachers.
2.	A demonstrable commitment to the vision of the OU ITE Partnership and its aim to widen access to teaching, diversify the teaching profession and support recruitment to teaching via alternative, flexible routes. You must be able to provide the necessary flexibility to support student teachers following a distance and blended form of study.
3.	Accept joint accountability for the compliance of provision with the statutory Accreditation Criteria for ITE in Wales and be able to confirm that all programme requirements are understood and can be effectively met within the school.
4.	Provide relevant opportunities and have sufficient capacity and expertise to support and enable all student teachers to make progress from their point of entry in line with the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership and in order to achieve Qualified Teacher Status.
5.	A demonstrable commitment to developing a research informed and engaged profession and have a shared culture of evidence-informed approaches within the school to enable student teachers to teach, research, reflect and evaluate critically. This includes supporting professional enquiry for student teachers

	through lesson study and the completion of a small-scale research project.
<b>For Lead Schools only:</b>	
Lead schools will be expected to meet all aspects of criteria 1 – 5 to a highly effective level and will also be required to show how they can support and influence the practice of wider partner schools.	
6.	Significant capacity and high-quality expertise for the joint leadership of the OU ITE Partnership sharing joint accountability in all strategic decisions and processes and proactively contributing to the continuous improvement of the quality and governance of programme areas.
7.	Capacity and expertise in the principles and processes of collaborative working with the ability to influence and lead pedagogical innovation within the wider partner school network.

## Applying to be part of the OU ITE Partnership

In the first instance, schools should contact their designated Regional Consortia ITE Lead to register their interest and to discuss programme requirements in further detail. The Partnership Committee will advertise when opportunities to join the OU Partnership become available and detailed information can be found on our [Partnership Website](#).

If you have any questions or require advice about this process, contact [Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk](mailto:Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk)

Please apply via our [online application form](#) which demonstrates how your school meets the relevant criteria set.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **We are a special school – can we support OU partnership students?**

The OU Partnership welcomes the involvement and expertise of special schools as Lead and Partner schools. All schools, including special schools wishing to join a Partnership and deliver ITE should meet all the requirements, roles and responsibilities as set out within the criteria.

### **We are a Pupil Referral Unit – can we support OU partnership students?**

OU Partnership students (part time and salaried) cannot be placed in PRUs at present. We encourage our students to consider a wide range of educational settings in which to undertake brief periods of enhancement and enrichment in year 2 of the programme. Student teachers may attend a PRU as part of their enrichment activities.

### **We are an independent school. Can we support OU Partnership student teachers?**

OU Partnership students (part time and salaried) cannot be placed in independent schools at present. We encourage our students to consider a wide

range of educational settings in which to undertake periods of enhancement and enrichment in year 2 of the programme. Student teachers may attend an independent setting as part of their enrichment activities.

### **Can we support both part time and salaried students?**

We encourage schools to place both part-time and salaried students at any given time. This ensures a good peer-network, critical for distance learners, and enables schools to embed initial teacher education approaches strategically.

The OU ITE Partnership contributes financially to the mentoring of students as follows:

- £600 per part-time student, per 60-day placement
- £300 per salaried student per 30-day second school placement
- Schools endorsing a salaried student will receive £900 payment (£300 in Year 1 and £600 in Year 2)

### **Are OU ITE PGCE students required to complete experiences in other settings?**

It is mandatory for all student teachers to receive school experience across a minimum of two contracting schools and may also include experiences in other educational settings to broaden student teachers' knowledge and skills in a collaborative environment with co-professionals.

### **How does the OU ITE PGCE programme work for small schools?**

We encourage small schools to contact [Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk](mailto:Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk) to open a discussion on how our model can work for you. We can offer collaborative options for mentoring students employed in small school settings.

**Where can I find additional information on how this programme is delivered on a day-to-day basis?**

Schools can access guides and professional development information from the free access *Partner School Resources and Training* tile on the [OU ITE Partnership website](#). School Coordinators and Mentors can review the guide to practice learning which details the mentoring and timetable requirements; find the key dates checklists as well as accessing recordings from recent professional development events.

**Thank you for your interest in the OU ITE Partnership.**

