

If lockdown has taught us anything, it is that belonging to something bigger than yourself, something you believe in and are valued by, is what sustains us.

Lockdown has proved that our partners truly believe in the value of the partnership. They have acted as a local, community driven alliance with a vision to develop the best quality teachers, even when they have a hundred other demands being made on their time.

What do we have to be proud of?

Going online

We are lucky that our SCITT staff are IT groupies. Our online systems were already strong, but within a week of lockdown, SCITT provision had a well-organised Google Classroom platform. Within two weeks, trainees could access pre-recorded General Professional Themes development sessions, post their responses and interact with ongoing tutor feedback. Application tasks were adapted to imagine how new learning could be applied when supporting home learning. Swift use of Google forms meant we could keep track of stakeholder communications without making unnecessary demands on pressured staff at a time of crisis. Our small but perfectly formed admin team provided the friendly, efficient backbone to the process that they always do.

Two months later, we now think we will use Google Classroom moving forward for all logs and assessment records.

Flexibility and commitment

At this crucial point in the year, the mentor-trainee partnership is driving development. The home situation of mentors and trainees reflected the full national spectrum. Some were in comfortable, less pressured home circumstances, with the space, time and resources to work unencumbered. Some were looking after young children, older relatives, with little time or space to work and only a phone to access the internet. We wanted to maintain professional expectations with low threat equity, making adjustments to how, when and where meaningful mentoring exchanges could happen with an attendant restructure of the weekly log. This could only happen with the commitment and professionalism of trainees and mentors.

Focusing down: reduce anxiety, increase utility and validity

Anxiety naturally ran high with trainees before the DfE confirmed arrangements to adapt the process of awarding QTS. Even when the 'on trajectory' guidance was confirmed, tutors, mentors and trainees were left staring at previous targets and an assessment framework that just did not square with a vastly different and fast changing landscape of remote learning. Our [De](#)irector appointed a small task-force to adapt the framework for lockdown. It was a foxing conundrum. TS5 behaviour feel through the sieve – of course – but ways were found to combine the remaining standards into 4:

TS1 (incorporating aspects of TS8): Inspire, motivate and challenge pupils in a safe, stimulating, respectful climate: included elements of home-school contact, safety and safeguarding online and maintaining motivation to learn through relationships

TS3 (incorporating TS8 professional responsibilities): Subject and curriculum knowledge: maintaining the development of subject knowledge in a focused, online, purposeful way would demand professional energy and strategy

TS4 (incorporating TS2, progress and 5, adaptation): Learning design: support pupils to connect, develop and extend their understanding, planning for adaptations and promoting reflections on progress: learning design would have to centre on planning rather than live teaching, with increased demands on adaptation according to circumstance

TS6 Make accurate and productive use of assessment: the only compulsory strands centred on deeper familiarisation with national, compulsory assessment processes and materials, with conditional strands related to receiving and giving online feedback

The framework described strands that could meaningfully be worked on during school closure in two layers:

- What strands could meaningfully be achieved by ALL trainees, whatever their current placement or circumstance?
- What strands *might* be possible, conditional to circumstance and adapted school systems.

The conditional strands were often inspired by gathering examples from live case studies: activities that creative mentors and trainees had already instigated. 10 partners responded within a week with some helpful suggestions, but largely a big thumbs up.

Through a QA trawl of mentor logs, trainee voice, mentor and professional mentor meetings, and recent moderation, we can now feel secure we did the right thing for our trainees. The revised framework seemed to give mentor-trainee partnerships a new lease of life. Professional development was ongoing and eminently possible during lockdown.

Being nimble and clear

In the national context, we are a small partnership. Does this mean we can act more swiftly and be nimble in our adaptations? Probably. But it also means it is hard to seek extra capacity when the chips are down. Folk were acting beyond a usual remit. How do you not take advantage, particularly when you can't pick up on face to face cues? Apply the same rules as to all online learning. Clarify tasks, set clear time-frames, make resources easily accessible and organised, make it clear how to call for extra help.

Looking backwards and forwards

It took a while for this to emerge...of course there was the initial panic phase of school closures, but it didn't take long for the reflective, metacognitive mode to kick in. We were learning things through a crisis that could improve the future operation and strategy of the SCITT. The legacy of lockdown will ripple through:

- IT systems and records
- Online conference calls to improve capacity for meetings
- Using the flexibility of technology to support staff and trainee workload and well-being
- Approaches to assessment, as we move away from graded judgements and towards securing mastery
- Developing the structure and content of our curriculum
- Adapting assessment records sent to NQT schools and working with them on a revised NQT programme.

We will not pretend we are fighting fit and raring to go with the ITT Core Content or revised Ofsted framework this side of the summer break, but we have proven that adaptive development is part of who we are.