

Initial teacher training

7 November 2013

Summary

While demand for teachers is rising, the government has announced a 15% cut in the number of teacher training places allocated to universities for 2014–15. Universities are concerned that these cuts will make it difficult to sustain teacher training provision, including their capacity to support school-led routes such as the School Direct programme, and lead to teacher shortages in the future.

Rising demand for teachers

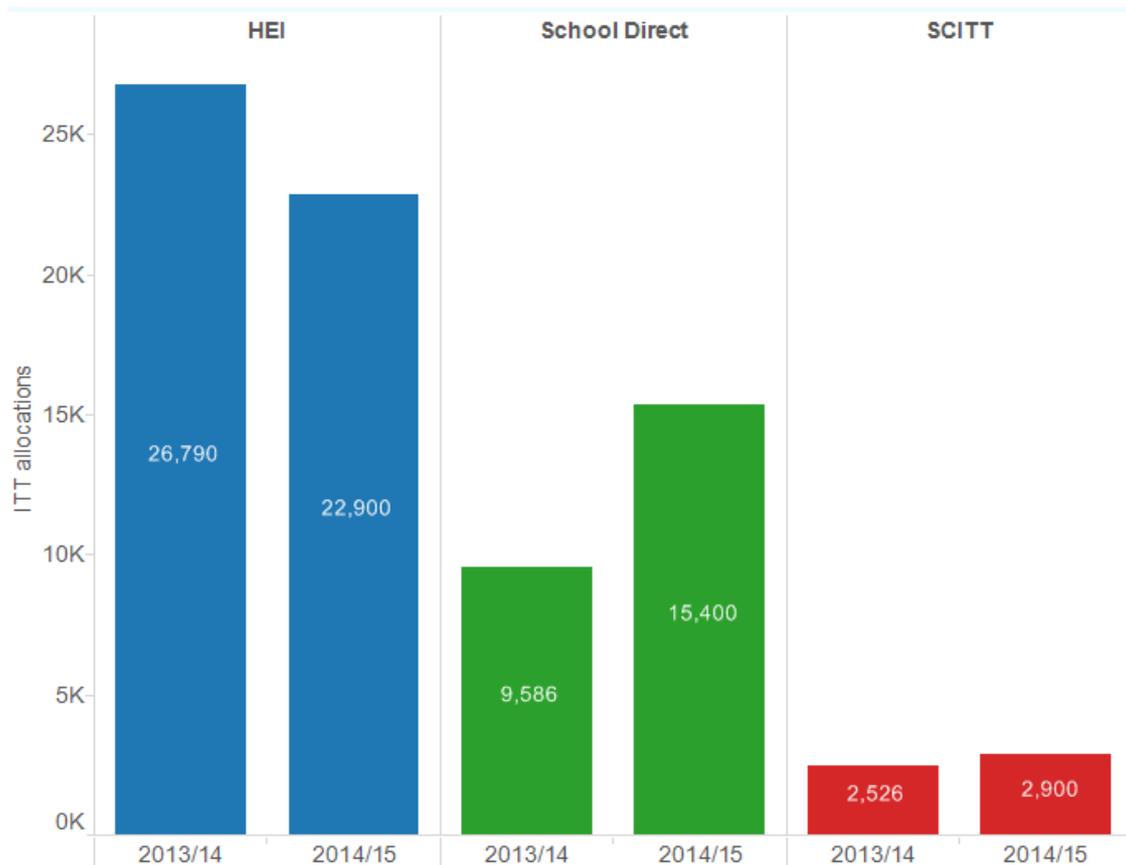
1. The growth in the number of primary school-age children is leading to increased demand for teachers. The National Audit Office has predicted that an extra 256,000 school places will be needed by 2014–15, suggesting demand for teachers could increase by 14,000 between now and 2014. Demand is particularly acute at primary level.
2. While demand for teachers is growing, recruitment to initial teacher training (ITT) has fallen. Preliminary data suggests a reduction in the number of new entrants for teacher training this year (2013–14). In particular, although the government allocated 9,580 to the School Direct teacher training route (see below) just 6,370 places were taken up. To allow for growth in School Direct, the government has reduced the number of training places in universities so acceptances for this route are also down compared to previous years, and government targets.
3. The latest data shows that in 2013–14 just 560 postgraduate ITT places for physics were filled against an overall target of 990¹. In mathematics the number of filled places is 550 short of the target. This should be of particular concern to the government in the light of its aim to increase both uptake and attainment in maths.

¹ The latest available data is a snapshot of recruitment as of 27 August 2013.

Teacher training places for 2014–15

- On 1 November 2013, the government announced the provisional allocation of training places for teachers for the academic year 2014–15. This indicated that the core allocations of training places to universities is to be further reduced by 15%, from 26,790 in 2013–14 to 22,900 in 2014–15, while places allocated via School Direct are to increase by 61%, from 9,586 to 15,400.

Figure 1: ITT allocations by route, 2013–14 and 2014–15



Total allocations	2013–14	2014–15 (provisional)
Total Core HEIs	26,790 (69%)	22,900 (56%)
SCITT	2,526 (6%)	2,900 (7%)
Total School Direct	9,586 (25%)	15,400 (37%)
Total	38,902	41,100

5. This follows reductions in core allocations to universities in 2013–14, and is the result of a policy to increase the proportion of teachers trained via the School Direct route, which provides a graduate route to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) that is managed and led by schools. Other routes to QTS are a postgraduate route and undergraduate route led by higher education institutions, and a postgraduate route led by consortia of schools and colleges that are accredited providers of initial teacher training: School-Centered Initial Teacher Training (SCITT).
6. While so-called 'Core' initial teacher training is led and managed in most cases by higher education institutions, it is delivered in partnership with schools and trainee teachers spend a large proportion – often around two thirds – of their time in these schools. Universities providing ITT work closely with their partner schools, including on selection and admissions.
7. Meanwhile, School Direct provision is led by schools, but often delivered in partnership with, and validated by, universities. The amount of involvement by universities in the delivery of School Direct training varies considerably.

Impact of allocation of teacher training places for 2014–15

8. Universities are concerned about the impact of this year's allocations on their ability to sustain teacher training provision, including their support for the schools-led route. Many universities have found that the number of training places allocated for particular courses is insufficient to make the courses viable. A survey conducted by Universities UK points to several providers that have had their core allocations reduced to zero. The University of Bath has recently pulled out of teacher training, and the Open University announced its withdrawal from courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status. Several other institutions are considering their position.
9. Where allocations have been reduced, some providers have needed to co-teach different subject specialisms (eg history, geography and social sciences being amalgamated into a wider 'humanities' group). This reduces the amount of subject-specific training that can be delivered, and may therefore reduce the ability of providers to deliver this subject-specific training to School Direct partners.
10. Particular concerns have been raised about allocation of places for primary teacher training. Based on responses received to date, primary numbers are down by down 16% (compared to 4% at secondary level). Universities have raised concerns about this drop in primary places and how it will affect future ability to meet educational needs at a time of growth in school places.

'Virement' between teacher training routes

11. There was limited opportunity in the 2013–14 admissions cycle for allocations to be transferred ('vired') between different routes. We have some evidence from our members that this could have had a particular impact on recruitment in key subjects where recruitment at the national level is below target such as maths, physics and modern foreign languages.
12. In 2013–14 a significant number of School Direct places were not filled and some lead schools returned their allocations to the National College of Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). However, universities tell us that despite places being returned by schools, universities were having to turn away well-qualified candidates because the NCTL refused to increase the number of places they could offer. Although more than 3,000 School Direct places went unfilled, university allocations were only increased by 500 by the end of the recruitment cycle.

Applications after 15 July

13. As the selection of candidates is led by schools, many of the School Direct partnerships did not consider applications made after the school term had concluded (15 July 2013). However, many university providers were receiving applications after this point but, having filled their allocations, were unable to recruit from them even though they were often from good applicants in key subjects.
14. In response to a survey conducted by Universities UK, some universities stated that significant proportions of applications were received after 15 July for key subjects. Figures as high as 37% for physics and 26% for maths were reported. Initial responses to the survey suggest that a very high proportion of all applications received after July 15 were for maths, physics and modern foreign languages.

Promotion and marketing

15. Despite rising demand for teachers, under-recruitment against target, and the fact that the majority of initial teacher training is led by higher education institutions, last year the government only conducted marketing campaigns in support of the School Direct route. There was no government-backed promotion of the majority training route for new teachers.

The government should review allocations, and increase flexibility to transfer places

16. While we understand, and support, the government's policy of encouraging more school-led teacher training, we believe that the following steps should be taken now:

- Review the provisional allocations on an institution, regional and subject basis to ensure a good geographical spread of provision.
- Consider scope for increasing allocations to universities rated 'good' by Ofsted when final allocations are set.
- Make it easier to transfer unfilled places between routes, so that universities can meet qualified demand, particularly in priority subjects.
- Ensure that any unfilled School Direct allocations are released back to the NCTL for re-allocation after the end of the summer school term, after which point most schools will have ceased recruitment, allowing universities to bid for additional numbers.
- Invest in promoting and advertising all routes into teacher training – last year advertising was largely restricted to the School Direct route, despite the fact that the majority of training still takes place in universities.

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