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Dear Francesca

TEACHER WORKFORCE PLANNING: INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (ITE)

1. This letter contains Scottish Government Ministers' guidance to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in academic session 2026/27. Having considered all the factors involved and the advice of the Teacher Workforce Planning Advisory Group (TWPAG) the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills is recommending that student teacher places on programmes for ITE should be reduced to 3,819 in 2026/27.

ITE intakes for 2026/27

2. The annual teacher workforce planning process is informed by a statistical model which estimates the number of ITE students required to maintain teacher numbers. The model is based on a number of inputs including projections about the number of pupils in the education system at primary and secondary ages, churn in teacher numbers (recruitment, maternity, returners, etc) and the retention rates of ITE students.
3. The recommendations recognise the on-going need to increase teacher numbers in secondary in specific subjects. In making this recommendation, it is recognised that we should aim to better capture an analysis of local authority need to inform target setting by sector and subject in future years. It is recognised that considerable effort will be required on the part of ITE providers to reach the PGDE secondary target of 2,000 in 2026/27 and support will be required in promoting teaching as a career to meet this challenging target.
4. In order to support workforce planning, the Strategic Board for Teacher Education, is looking at a range of issues, including recruitment into hard to fill subjects and promoting teaching as a valued career.



5. The following recommendations are made:

Intakes to primary programmes in 2026/27

- 1,483 across both PGDE and undergraduate and combined degrees;

Intakes to secondary programmes in 2026/27

- 2,000 PGDE and other routes;
- 336 undergraduate and combined degrees;

6. It is recognised that clawback of funding for under recruitment to programmes is a significant issue for ITE providers. In taking any decisions around clawback there is a need to balance efforts made by ITE providers in terms of the recruitment of students against the fact that we should not be providing ITE providers with funding for students not studying in schools of education. We will, therefore, continue with current arrangements.

Other points:

Requirement for teachers for Catholic schools

7. Scottish Ministers wish to ensure that the requirement for teachers to teach religious education in Catholic schools are met and look to the SFC to seek to secure this through its funding allocations.
8. The University of Glasgow is generally recognised as the major provider of teachers for Catholic schools. However, not all students wishing to teach in Catholic schools can attend the University of Glasgow and not every secondary subject is offered there. The Scottish Government is, therefore, supporting the provision of the Catholic Teacher's Certificate at the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Strathclyde, West of Scotland and the Royal Conservatoire Scotland.

Requirements for teachers in Gaelic medium

9. The supply of teachers able to teach in the medium of Gaelic continues to be a priority for Scottish Ministers. The Scottish Government would like SFC to continue to assist in promoting provision in this area and to give consideration to any initiatives which could improve effectiveness. We ask that SFC encourage ITE providers to increase the places currently allocated to them and to promote a positive approach in relation to applications for all ITE programmes by interviewing all who would be able to teach in Gaelic medium education.
10. The SFC and ITE providers should be aware of Bòrd na Gàidhlig's National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28; the Gaelic Education Guidance published in February 2017 as required by the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 and the Scottish Languages Act 2025 which is currently being implemented. We would like the SFC to continue to have regard to the priorities set out in these documents in relation to Gaelic education matters.

11. In addition, the SFC are aware of the TOG group on Gaelic economic development and are directly involved in delivery of its teacher work stream which we ask is reflected in the SFC's activity. We would also ask the SFC to continue to pursue the introduction of further avenues to increase the numbers of Gaelic medium teachers in both the primary and secondary sectors where possible, while bearing in mind that all students applying for ITE must meet the same minimum academic entry requirements.

Diversity in the teaching profession

12. We know that Black and minority ethnic teachers continue to be significantly underrepresented in Scotland's schools (1.9% of the workforce in 2023 compared to 7.1% of Scotland's population overall identified as being from a visible minority ethnic group). The Report "Teaching in a diverse Scotland" contains a recommendation which aims to increase the number of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds at all levels in Scottish schools by 2030. Following the release of Scotland's Census 2022 data, this target is in the process of being reviewed.

13. The Scottish Government is firmly committed to developing an education workforce that is representative of Scotland's increasingly diverse population. Doing so provides clear benefits to pupils, teachers and other school staff. We would therefore ask the SFC to encourage all ITE providers to embed a proactive approach in terms of race equality, and consider using the positive action provisions in the Equality Act 2010 when assessing their 2026-27 intake.

Distribution

14. This letter is copied to Principals of Universities and Heads of Schools of Education. Copy recipients should bear in mind that this letter constitutes advice to the SFC to assist in the setting of intakes to ITE programmes. It is for SFC to decide on student intakes to ITE and to allocate the share of the intake numbers to individual institutions and programmes.

Yours sincerely



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Head of the Education Workforce Unit

