



The Historical Association
59a Kennington Park Road,
London SE11 4JH
T: 0300 100 0223
F: 020 7582 4989
E: enquiries@history.org.uk
W: www.history.org.uk

Patron: Her Majesty the Queen
President: Professor Justin Champion
Deputy President: Dr Michael Maddison
Honorary Treasurer: Richard Walker
Honorary Secretary: Dr Tim Lomas
Chief Executive: Rebecca Sullivan

Incorporated by Royal Charter.
Registered charity 1120261.

Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings

CC: Nick Gibb MP, Neil Carmichael MP,
Chris Skidmore MP, Roger Pope NCTL

3 December 2015

Dear Ms Morgan

The Historical Association and the Royal Historical Society wish to express serious concerns regarding the future of outstanding initial teacher training in history in higher education, and consequences for future high standards in history education in this country. We seek your assurances, first, that the rushed scramble for places due to a mismanaged quota will not be repeated; second, that the distinctive emphasis of these history courses on subject knowledge and on bringing historical knowledge to *all* students is properly understood and valued, as we understand is the government's intention, but which is not being well served by current policy.

Last week's fear that we could lose internationally recognised history PGCE courses, while total history numbers had not been filled, shows the damaging unintended consequences of current policy. We are already seeing many more history teachers trained in highly generic courses many of which fail to train for deep subject understanding. Knowledge about history education is generated and mobilised by the communities of teachers who mentor on these scholarly yet practical courses, providing national leadership in history education. If we want outstanding history teachers in schools to play a pivotal role in both nurturing trainees' expertise and developing the courses themselves, we need strong, stable communities of mentors which have been built over time. This is much less likely to occur in less stable alliances in which particular schools opt in and out of taking history trainees from one year to the next and where there are insufficient numbers in any one subject to warrant investment in subject-specific training.

University-led PGCE courses put strong emphasis on teachers developing historical knowledge and keeping up with recent scholarship so as to help pupils build secure historical knowledge. Their strong subject leaders are able to drive the quality of the largely school-based training and to keep trainees in touch with their academic discipline through scholarly reading and history education research. Too often trainees in *purely* school-based courses have little or no access to the wider subject community and those courses thus fail to identify or to address adequately their continuing need for subject knowledge development. The Carter Review stated that strong subject knowledge was a defining characteristic of outstanding ITT. University-led ITT has the time and expertise to nurture subject understanding.

Those history teachers trained through university-led courses make an immense contribution to the development of their students' knowledge and to their peers through research and writing and through their own engagement in mentor communities. As numbers opting for history in the English Baccalaureate are set to increase, it would seem wrong to reduce the number of highly-trained subject-specialists needed to teach those students.

We look forward to your reply and would be happy to discuss this issue in greater depth.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Sullivan
CEO, Historical Association

Professor Peter Mandler
President, Royal Historical Society