



Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for Schools

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Ms Rebecca Sullivan and Professor Peter Mandler
The Historical Association
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// January 2016

Dear Ms Sullivan and Professor Mandler,

Thank you for your letter of 3 December, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding initial teacher training in history. I am replying as the Minister of State for Schools.

In response to feedback from the sector, we have introduced a new system for postgraduate initial teacher training (ITT) recruitment for the 2016/2017 academic year that gives more freedom to schools and universities to recruit the trainees they need. We have been clear from the outset that we will apply controls, where required, in certain subjects to avoid over recruitment. Our published controls include caps at subject and route level and allow intervention to protect individual institutions and regions if necessary.

Before introducing the new approach to ITT recruitment for the 2016/2017 academic year, we worked with representative bodies to identify potential issues. We also sought feedback from a range of experienced schools, school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) providers and higher education institutions (HEIs) over the summer. The opportunity to have more control over the numbers recruited, rather than being limited by the National College for Teaching and Leadership within an allocation of places, was welcomed in the feedback. They recognised the delivery risks but welcomed the opportunity to recruit where they had strong candidates in a wider range of subjects than previously permitted. We do not consider that the change in recruitment process threatens the rigorous quality assurance that should underpin the recruitment of trainees. We know that schools, SCITTs and HEIs are committed to recruiting the best possible quality of trainees.

We recognise that this approach, as with allocations before it, carries some risks, and following sector feedback and input from the regional information events we held in October, we have put processes in place to mitigate the

majority of risks identified. The speed of recruitment so far and the capacity of the system to make a large number of offers in a single day were greater than expected. We are working to improve our communications so that we can inform institutions as quickly as possible on progress against recruitment controls.

As we approached HEI capacity in history, we employed the reserve organisation recruitment control to provide limited protection to institutions that had yet to recruit sufficient applicants. A number of universities, including Durham, Oxford and Cambridge had made a small number of offers. We value the contribution of these universities and agreed to provide all of these institutions with the same level of protection to guarantee that they would be able to recruit up to 75 per cent of the trainees that they recruited last year.

As you have noted, the Carter Review concluded that strong subject knowledge is a defining characteristic of outstanding ITT. As a result of Sir Andrew's recommendations, we have established an expert group led by Mr Stephen Munday CBE, and involving subject specialists, including a historian, Ms Kath Goudie, who is directly involved with Cambridge University's PGCE programme. This expert group will develop a framework of core content for initial teacher training. The group is looking carefully at how best to ensure that subject knowledge development is appropriately embedded in all teacher training, and will be making its recommendations to the Department in the spring.

We are working with colleagues at representative sector bodies to understand the impact that the move to school led ITT is having on individual HEIs. This is not clear, however, as some HEIs have significantly expanded their business through School Direct. We remain committed to the role that high quality universities can play in school led ITT.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Gibb', written in a cursive style.

Nick Gibb MP