



part of Independent Schools Inspectorate

International qualified teacher status (iQTS): pilot inspection report

University of Sunderland

Inspection dates: 20 – 24 May 2024

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Summary of iQTS inspection and grading

The University of Sunderland was inspected by The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), a Department for Education (DfE) approved iQTS inspectorate, referred to in this document as ‘the inspectorate’.

The inspection took place between 20 and 24 May 2024.

The inspectorate assessed the provider’s iQTS provision to be:

Grade 2

The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and all other core iQTS documents.

The quality of leadership and management and the quality of the programme design and delivery exceed requirements in most areas and are at least satisfactory in the remainder.

Purpose of iQTS inspection

The purpose of iQTS inspection is to:

- ensure that delivery of iQTS is compliant with the:
 - [iQTS criteria](#)
 - [iQTS Core Content Framework](#)
 - [iQTS Teachers’ Standards](#)
- assess and evaluate the effectiveness of:
 - provider leadership and management
 - programme design and delivery
- give independent external assurance that iQTS provision meets DfE’s quality expectations and legal requirements
- protect and maintain the integrity and reputation of the quality of iQTS
- identify key strengths and where relevant, provide recommendations to the provider on what it should do to improve
- inform:
 - trainees considering undertaking iQTS
 - schools considering employing iQTS trainees or partnering with an iQTS provider as a placement school
 - parents with children attending a school staffed by iQTS trainees or iQTS holders
 - governments and organisations who have an interest in iQTS quality and standards.

The inspection of a provider's iQTS provision and its subsequent grading is entirely separate from the inspection and grading of its domestic initial teacher training (ITT).

For more information, read the [International Qualified Teacher Status \(iQTS\): pilot inspection framework](#) in full.

Information about this iQTS provider

The University of Sunderland is an initial teacher training (ITT) provider accredited by DfE to deliver qualified teacher status (QTS) programmes in England.

DfE approval for iQTS delivery is an extension of the University of Sunderland's domestic ITT accreditation. The provider was approved to deliver the iQTS pilot in the academic year 2022/23 and is now in its second year of iQTS delivery.

In the academic year 2023/24, the University of Sunderland offers iQTS training in the following countries:

- Austria
- Brunei
- Cayman Islands
- China
- Germany
- Ireland
- Japan
- Kazakhstan
- Kuwait
- Laos
- Malaysia
- Netherlands
- Northern Ireland
- Poland
- Qatar
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Thailand
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United Arab Emirates

- Vietnam

A total of 91 iQTS trainees are undertaking the iQTS programme with the provider at the time of the inspection, 50 in the primary phase and 41 in the secondary phase.

The provider also offers an academic award of a 120-credit PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education). Academic awards are beyond the remit of iQTS inspection, and the inspectorate cannot make any comment on the quality of this provider's academic award.

In-person inspection activities

The inspectorate's in-person inspection included:

- visiting one overseas placement school partnering with the provider in the academic year 2023/24
- meeting iQTS trainees, iQTS mentors and other members of school staff involved in iQTS delivery.

Remote inspection activities

The inspectorate's remote inspection activity included:

- meeting iQTS provider staff as part of the review and collection of inspection evidence. These included meetings with the personal academic tutors (PATs)
- meeting with the Executive Chair of the School of Education Advisory Board and the Chair of the iQTS Advisory Board
- remote inspection activities with another eight placement schools partnering with the provider. These activities also involved meeting iQTS trainees, iQTS mentors and other members of school staff
- meetings with early careers teachers (ECTs) who were former trainees.

Summary of inspection findings

The provider's overall grade is based on the inspectorate's assessment of the following three elements:

- compliance of provision with the iQTS criteria
- quality of leadership and management
- quality of programme design and delivery.

Grade 1 is the highest grade that can be awarded and grade 4 is the lowest.

A full description of iQTS inspection gradings can be seen at Annex A.

Areas of strength

- The curriculum to develop trainees' pedagogical skills is well planned and taught.
- Current educational research informs the curriculum, and trainees use this effectively to inform their teaching.
- Both trainees and mentors are provided with helpful guidance and information which help them understand the expectations of the provider and their next steps in the programme.
- The provider's approach provides effective moderation of trainee assessments and readily available support for both trainees and mentors through the use of personal academic tutors (PATs).
- The provider makes available a wide range of high-quality online resources to support trainees' learning.

Areas identified for improvement

- The quality of mentor's target setting is too variable.
- Procedures to monitor trainees' workload and wellbeing are not sufficiently defined or developed.
- The quality of subject specific training in secondary subjects is not consistently high.
- Some trainees do not access parts of the planned curriculum fully.

Compliance of provision with iQTS criteria

The provider is compliant with the iQTS criteria.

Quality of leadership and management

1. Detailed information for prospective trainees is available on the provider's website so that trainees are well informed about the requirements and scope of the course.
2. Recruitment procedures are robust. They are clearly outlined in the provider's policies and followed in practice. There is a rigorous selection process to assess applicants' suitability to undertake the course. This involves interviews, group discussions and a presentation.
3. Trainees' qualifications are checked to ensure they meet the minimum entry requirements specified in the iQTS criteria.
4. Trainees' proficiency in English is assessed as part of the process, and leaders ensure they meet the minimum requirement of an IELTS score of 6.5 before they embark on the course.

5. There are effective procedures to ensure the suitability of trainees to work with children. All the required safeguarding checks are undertaken. Trainees must confirm their understanding of their local safeguarding context and how to safeguard the children they teach during their school placements, as well as the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education in the United Kingdom (UK).
6. Providers have developed a well-designed curriculum which develops trainees' pedagogical skills systematically and is informed by current research. The curriculum covers all elements of the iQTS Core Content Framework (iCCF).
7. Trainees train to teach in either the primary and secondary phase. Following leaders' initial assessments, trainees are allocated to one of two pathways, with activities tailored to the needs of trainees who are new to teaching and those who join the programme with considerable prior teaching experience.
8. There is a clear and well-structured assessment process. Trainees and their mentors are provided with detailed information to help them to identify key milestones in the process, such as the progress points. Trainees cannot progress to the next stage of the course until all of the relevant requirements are met.
9. Trainees have access to comprehensive online resources. They find these helpful and appreciate the opportunity to access them at times which suit their school commitments and local time zones.
10. Partner schools support trainees to gain the skills they need and develop their skills and knowledge. Course leaders have considered suitable adaptations in the context of the country where trainees are teaching. For example, they identify aspects of the curriculum content which are precluded by national legislation.
11. Trainees' fundamental skills in English and mathematics are assessed at the start of the course, and these are improved where necessary before the award of iQTS.
12. The quality of training to support secondary trainees to teach in their chosen subjects is variable and not consistently high. All subject specialist teaching follows a core curriculum. Some subjects provide extensive additional activities which help prepare trainees to teach particular aspects of their subjects, but this provision is not consistent.
13. Some trainees do not engage fully with all aspects of the curriculum. Trainees can attend central training live online or can access recordings. However, course leaders do not always identify and tackle inconsistencies in the frequency of attendance and engagement in the training programme. Some trainees miss key elements of the central training programme and leaders can be unaware of this.
14. Issues over trainees' attendance are typically linked to challenges that they find in managing their workload. Trainees report that they sometimes have to

prioritise certain tasks related to their teaching placements at the expense of other parts of the curriculum. Mentors and trainees lack guidance to support trainees to manage any conflicts.

15. Trainees arrange their own school placements and a suitably qualified mentor. Mentors are provided with training for their role and are supplied with informative written guidance. This outlines the expectations of the role, key policies and information such as the iQTS CCF and iQTS Teachers' Standards. It also details the mentor activities they should undertake, key deadlines and offers guidance on aspects such as target setting following lesson observations.
16. Some mentors do not access this training consistently and require support in carrying out their role. As a result, mentors do not always set clear and precise targets to help trainees understand how to further develop their teaching. Targets are sometimes repeated for several weeks, and do not take into account the progress that trainees make.
17. Leaders have created a well-planned arrangement, where both the mentor and the trainee are supported by a PAT, who forms part of the internal quality assurance processes. The PAT brings significant prior teaching experience and specialist subject knowledge to their role. Trainees recognise and value the role which the PAT undertakes in liaising between trainees, course leaders and the placement mentors.
18. Leaders ensure trainees meet the iQTS Teachers Standards before they are awarded iQTS. The award of iQTS is made in line with the published criteria. If necessary, the award is delayed until the trainee meets all of the Teachers' Standards.
19. There are effective partnerships with trainees' placement schools and mentors. Suitable partnership agreements outline the respective roles and responsibilities. These highlight the requirement for equal opportunity, and any necessary adjustments required. The agreement includes how the programme will be delivered, as well as requirements for safeguarding checks. There are protocols for information sharing and secure data storage which reflect the local regulations relevant to each partner school.
20. There is effective record-keeping in place. An online monitoring system ensures there are detailed records of progress meetings and agreed actions. Trainees, mentors and university staff regularly access the platform in order to review on-going actions.
21. Appropriate internal and external moderation processes confirm the accuracy of assessment decisions. Leaders have engaged an external examiner as well as an external reviewer to support their self-evaluation process. As a result, leaders identify priorities for development. They recognise a need to increase the time allocated to develop secondary phase trainees' subject specialist knowledge, and this has been implemented for the next cohort of trainees.

Quality of programme delivery and design

22. Overall, the planned training programme is of high quality and supports trainees in developing the knowledge and skills they need to assimilate the iCCF and meet the iQTS Teachers' Standards.
23. The programme is designed so that trainees are well prepared for their subsequent teaching. Trainees learn about current research-informed practice, and aspects such as adaptive teaching methods, how to use achievement data and effective assessment practice. Trainees are also supported to learn about a range of curricula they may encounter, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme.
24. Course leaders require trainees to reflect on their teaching and identify areas that will support development of their professional practice. For example, trainees undertake research to help their understanding of behaviour management strategies, and specific approaches to teaching pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Trainees find this learning supports their professional practice.
25. Trainees in the secondary phase receive training to support them in the teaching of their specialist subjects. Some subject specific training provides a detailed programme of activities that teaches trainees about appropriate pedagogical strategies and explores required subject knowledge. Others are not as well developed. Leaders have identified this inconsistency and increased the allocated time for this aspect of the course for future cohorts of trainees.
26. The training programme supports primary phase trainees well in developing the knowledge and skills they need to teach in this phase, including those with previous prior classroom experience. Trainees learn about the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics, early mathematics and science, and many trainees have the opportunity to put this learning into practice.
27. The procedures to monitor trainees' workload and wellbeing are not sufficiently clear and defined. Attendance by some trainees at training sessions is variable, often due to their existing workload commitments. Leaders put in place additional support for those trainees who cannot attend. Training sessions are scheduled to enable trainees in different time zones to attend, and recorded sessions are available if required.
28. Course leaders ensure the curriculum is adapted to reflect the needs and requirements of the different countries and regions where trainees are based. For example, trainees helped to understand a range of approaches to supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They ensure that trainees are prepared for teaching in a range of different schools and localities.

29. Leaders provide additional support sessions and resources to help trainees address any specific skills gaps in their fundamental English and mathematics skills, and these arrangements are clearly recorded.
30. Trainees have appropriate opportunities to experience teaching in other age ranges or different schools, mostly through second school placements or online links arranged with other schools. Trainees with significant prior teaching experience are able to reflect and compare their previous experience to their current teaching placement. All trainees complete a written task to ensure that the learning from this second placement or additional experience is assimilated.
31. Assessment schedules are clearly detailed in the university's online recording system. Personal academic tutors provide constructive feedback on trainees' academic assignments, which identifies their strengths and areas for further development. Trainees find this feedback helpful in improving their skills and understanding.
32. Not all mentors attend central training for mentors or view the recorded training sessions or engage with the drop-in support sessions. Guidance documentation for mentors clearly lays out the expectations for mentoring and the arrangements for the formative and summative assessment of trainees.
33. Mentors meet with trainees weekly and carry out formative lesson observations to inform their discussions with trainees about their progress and areas for development. Mentors do not always set clear and precise targets to help trainees understand how to further develop their practice.
34. The PATs conduct shared observations with mentors and moderate the evaluations of mentors. They also contribute to trainees' feedback.
35. Trainees benefit from access to the university's support services and extensive online materials. For example, trainees can use these resources to support the development of their teaching skills as well as providing the resources to enable them to undertake the research-based elements of the course. Effective support is available for their welfare, including any emotional and mental health needs.
36. Course leaders have implemented effective procedures to ensure trainees can demonstrate that they meet the iQTS Teachers' Standards by the end of the programme.

Next steps

The provider will be inspected again in three to four years' time.

Contact us

If you have questions about this report or any other aspect of the iQTS programme, please contact us at iqts.policy@education.gov.uk

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition/Explanation
Initial teacher training core content framework for iQTS	The iQTS framework defines the minimum training entitlement of all trainee teachers. It sets out the content that iQTS providers and their partnerships must draw upon when designing and delivering their iQTS programme.
DfE	Department for Education.
Inspection	The process carried out by DfE-approved inspectorates to ensure that delivery of iQTS is compliant with the iQTS criteria, the iQTS Core Content Framework and iQTS Teachers' Standards.
Inspectorates	Independent companies who quality assure products and services in overseas and domestic education.
iQTS	International qualified teacher status.
International qualified teacher status Teachers' Standards	Standards which trainees must meet by the end of the programme to be awarded iQTS.
International qualified teacher status: criteria for providers	Statutory guidance on the criteria that providers and their partners must meet to provide iQTS.
International qualified teacher status: pilot inspection framework	Sets out DfE's inspection policy and gives information about how inspections are carried out.
ITT	Initial teacher training.
ITT provider	Initial teacher training provider accredited by DfE to deliver training leading to QTS.
QTS	Qualified teacher status.
Working days	Monday to Friday, excluding national holidays, which will differ overseas.

Annex A: Inspection gradings

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
<p>The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and all other core iQTS documents.</p> <p>The quality of leadership and management and the quality of programme design and delivery exceed requirements and are exceptional.</p>	<p>The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and all other core iQTS documents.</p> <p>The quality of leadership and management and the quality of the programme design and delivery exceed requirements in most areas and are at least satisfactory in the remainder.</p>	<p>The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and all other core iQTS documents.</p> <p>The quality of leadership and management and the quality of the programme design and delivery meets requirements in most areas, with minor issues identified for improvement.</p>	<p>The provision is not compliant with the iQTS criteria and all other core iQTS documents.</p> <p>The quality of leadership and management and the quality of the programme design and delivery are unsatisfactory. They do not meet requirements and there are significant recommendations for improvement.</p>