

Detailed response:

We recognise your commitment to the role that HEI courses can play but you say nothing of the role that HEI distinctively *do* play in history, especially concerning a key point in our letter – the ways in which specialist history course leaders in HEI have nurtured the knowledge of stable teams of history mentors, rendering these mentors ready to shape courses so that these can be teacher-owned *at the subject level*. We would like to expand on our concerns as follows:

- 1) Your letter makes no reference to the way in which professional knowledge is generated, sustained and mobilised by the communities of history teachers who mentor on these school-based courses. Where such courses see history-specialist leaders (normally a blend of university and school personnel) confident that every history mentor has strong knowledge about history curriculum issues, sufficient to contribute to ITT course content and own its vision, this is the fruit of years of collaboration and nurture. At their strongest, these courses proceed from the community, and the community proceeds from the course.
- 2) You refer to 'feedback from the sector' but we know of no *history-specific* evidence that could have led NCTL to decide, two years ago, that HEI history alone warranted a uniquely large cut. In 2012-13 Ofsted undertook thematic inspections of some secondary subjects, one of which was history. The institutions included HEIs, SCITTs and GTP provision. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-improvement-in-initial-teacher-education-secondary-history/> The inspection evidence showed that some history courses needed to strengthen the role of the school-based subject mentor. The report noted that non-HEI ITE partnerships needed to focus much more on subject-specific comments in lesson observations, subject-specific targets in weekly meetings and the routine provision of sharply focused subject-specific advice. It was clear that HEIs were more successful in training their history mentors and in ensuring trainees had the history-specific pedagogic knowledge necessary to teach in a range of settings. Likewise, some of our own members who are heads of history are concerned by recruits whose largely generic training has not engaged them with the wider subject community, its scholarship and its learned societies. Meanwhile, many alumni and mentors from HEI courses provide national leadership in history education through publication and training, often inviting international admiration from history education policy-makers in other jurisdictions such as Singapore.
- 3) We are surprised at your reference to the forthcoming framework of core content for ITT as a response to these problems. The ITT core content expert group has made it clear that the framework will be generic. It would be impossible to capture a fraction of the subject-specific knowledge – of history, of the history of its teaching in schools, of extensive literature by history teachers, of research into school history – let alone the ways in which this knowledge is threaded through practical work in schools and owned and renewed by stable teams of history mentors – in a single state-imposed, generic framework.
- 4) We welcome innovation in ITT through new courses and new routes. SCITTs, SD trainees and HEI all have a part to play. Moreover, the subject-specific strengths of HEI courses can, of course, be developed in non-HEI courses. But to destroy the scholarly mentor communities that enliven HEI courses is to remove models that actually enact sustained subject-specific and scholarly excellence in day-to-day practical training. Future courses need models of cohesive, history-teacher-owned programmes collaborating across several history departments, intricately connected with every detail of a provider's rigorous history-specific sessions.
- 5) Current challenges for improving young people's historical education in this country require increasingly well-informed history teachers and future curriculum leaders whose training prepares them to make judgements in the interests of rigour for all. The History National Curriculum will be a paper exercise without history teachers who have been trained to teach such content systematically and to interpret its disciplinary 'Aims'. Meanwhile, history teachers in schools not bound by the NC need training in how to build, adapt and teach curricula that secure rigorous disciplinary knowledge for all. They need to be able to do this in any setting, beyond the school or Trust in which they were trained. The 90% E-Bacc target requires history teachers who are passionate about bringing demanding historical knowledge

to all students and who have been trained to prepare low-attaining or disadvantaged students, from Year 7, to enjoy the breadth of content security that will ensure success in the longer-term. All these initiatives are at risk without thorough training in subject-specific planning, resourcing, evaluation and assessment. Crucially, future heads of history need intellectual confidence and knowledge of curriculum history if (say) they are to resist growing pressures to choose GCSE specifications deemed 'easier' than others or to recognise when they are being sold a Key Stage 3 assessment model that merely reinvents square wheels.