



October 2016

Re: Mathematics Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses

Dear Dr. Watson

I am writing on behalf of MMSA¹ about Mathematics Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses (SKEs). We are pleased that NCTL has increased the overall funding available for SKEs and by NCTL's commitment to encourage greater take up of SKEs by those intending to follow a school-led route into teaching. However, we have a number of concerns regarding recent developments:

- the lack of quality assurance of SKEs
- the discontinuation of funding for 36-week SKEs
- the proposed two tier bursary system and the reduction for most participants

We welcome the continued expansion of SKEs but it is becoming increasingly apparent that there is unacceptable variation in terms of their content, outcomes, entry requirements, quality and expectations. We urge NCTL to address matters of quality assurance for SKEs.

The discontinuation of funding for 36 week programmes means that prospective teachers will be deprived of excellent opportunities to develop their subject knowledge to a deeper level. This seems contrary to the new core ITT framework that requires trainees to "*be able to teach a knowledge-rich curriculum to a depth beyond what is required of pupils*". The increased demand of the National Curriculum and the new GCSE in mathematics put in-depth subject knowledge at a premium. In contrast shorter programmes tend not to allow for the development of such subject knowledge by many prospective teachers.

The two tier bursary system causes us considerable concern. It will be time-consuming and difficult to administer fairly, especially as each provider has an allocation for 20% of their students to gain a bursary uplift. Local variation in student profiles means that the need for the higher bursary is far greater for those studying with some providers than others. Bursary provision therefore becomes a lottery based upon student location.

¹ MMSA (the Meeting of Mathematics Subject Associations) is a collaboration of the classroom-facing professional associations focused on mathematics education in this country: Association of Mathematics Education Teachers (AMET), Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM), National Association of Mathematics Advisers (NAMA), National Association for Numeracy and Mathematics in Colleges (NANAMIC) and the Mathematical Association (MA).



80% of SKE students will receive a lower bursary than in previous years, and therefore fewer will choose face-to-face provision. This could well lead to the closure of some face-to-face SKEs with significant consequences. We know that student engagement with online provision is very variable and we are of the view that all SKEs benefit from high quality face-to-face elements when aiming to develop deep conceptual understanding. Our view is that it would be fairer to have a national allocation of the higher bursary payments for face-to-face provision and that the expectation should be that they are only available to those studying online in exceptional circumstances.

We remain committed to working with NCTL to improve both the quality and quantity of mathematics teachers in schools and to continuing to support and develop the provision of high quality SKE. MMSA member organisations would be very willing to meet with you to discuss the issues further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'S Pope'.

Dr S Pope

MMSA Hon Sec

cc Nigel McFarlane