

PROPOSED STANDARDS FOR HIGHER LEVEL TEACHING ASSISTANTS

CONSULTATION RESPONSE BOOKLET

April 2003

We aim to ensure that all our consultation processes are as open and transparent as possible. Unless confidentiality is specifically requested, it will be assumed that responses to this consultation paper may be made available for inspection during normal office hours at the offices of the TTA.

Consultation on the proposed Standards for higher level teaching assistants

Last year the DfES consultation, *Time for Standards*, included proposals to develop a set of Standards and a related training programme for higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs). Respondents to this consultation were supportive of these proposals.

The DfES and TTA are now consulting on a set of Standards for HLTAs. These are set out in the accompanying document, *Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants*.

The purpose of this consultation exercise is to help us identify whether:

- the level of the Standards is appropriate, and whether any are set at a level that is too high or too low;
- all the key areas of potential HLTA work have been included in the proposed Standards;
- each HLTA Standard is clearly described;
- as far as can be predicted, any of the proposed Standards would be difficult to meet given the range of contexts in which HLTAs may work;
- there are particular areas where support and guidance would be useful.

The proposed Standards take account of the current National Occupational Standards for teaching assistants and are structured to support progression to Qualified Teacher Status for those with the interest and commitment to train to become a teacher. This consultation is likely to be of interest to those concerned with the quality of the teaching and learning that will be provided by HLTAs.

This consultation has been designed to comply with the Cabinet Office's *Code of practice on written consultation*, Nov. 2000 (www.cabinet-office.gov.uk). Respondents can reply electronically via the TTA website (www.tta.gov.uk/hlta) or by using this questionnaire. If you reply using this questionnaire, you may wish to include your e-mail address to enable the TTA to send you a summary of the final report on the consultation.

The consultation period commences on 7 April 2003 and finishes on 7 July 2003.

If you have any questions on this consultation questionnaire, or the electronic version, please contact the TTA enquiry line at hltaenquiries@teach-tta.gov.uk.

General Comment

The response below has been written with a deliberately narrow focus on the putative contribution the Standards might make to raising the attainment of pupils learning English as an additional language. Whilst many of the comments will equally apply to all pupils we believe it is important to limit our attention to those areas that most significantly impact on our particular area of expertise. This does not imply that we are in agreement with aspects we do not comment on here, merely that we have left such comment to others.

Comments

For each of the following, please tick the box which most closely matches your overall response to the question or statement. You can further help us by offering comments on each statement.

1. The proposed Standards identify the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding that higher level teaching assistants will require in order to contribute to raising standards of pupils' achievement.

Neither agree nor disagree

Please use the space below for any comment.

Whilst the Standards cover the broad areas of knowledge, skills and understandings necessary, they are too nebulously phrased and the context that underpins them too unclear to contribute effectively to raising standards of pupils' achievement.

For example, 2.2:

They are aware of national frameworks, typical curricula and teaching methods and expectations in the key stages or phases in which they are involved.

From the perspective of meeting the needs of students learning English as an additional language, it would be a rare Teaching Assistant (or indeed teacher) at KS3 who could meaningfully claim the above in more than one curriculum area. We assume that 'aware of' here is meant to signify more than 'have heard of'.

Currently, TAs typically work across several departments in secondary schools. Is the intention for HLTAs to be curriculum specialists, which seems desirable in many ways? If so, this raises many other issues, not least those of line-management and subject-knowledge.

There is no reference to working with parents or with adults from other agencies (bilingual support assistants, refugee workers, etc.). If the needs of students learning English as an additional language are to be included here (as we would argue that they should) then explicit reference to this group should be made in the Standards.

2. On the whole, the professional demands of the proposed Standards are set at an appropriate level for higher level teaching assistants.

The level is about right

Please use the space below for any comment.

It is impossible to make a judgement on this without a clear understanding of the wider context the Standards will be part of. For example, if the HLTA is paid at a rate close to that of a teacher with QTS then the Standards are not set too high. If they are paid substantially less, as a bilingual assistant would be, then they may well be.

There is a need to locate the Standards on a continuum of qualifications and training for teaching assistants, instructors and teachers. Others involved would include NNEBs, those on GTP and RTT programmes. There could then be a basis for developing pay scales for TAs and HLTAs in relation to teachers and others.

The HLTA standards also need to be set in a framework that articulates what would be expected of TAs and teachers. Within this broad framework it would then be possible to map out specialisms such as EAL.

3. How far do you agree that the proposed HLTA Standards could be demonstrated in the wide range of school settings in which higher level teaching assistants work?

Neither agree nor disagree

Please use the space below for any comment.

As the Standards do not differentiate between the different phases (as the QTS Standards do) it is impossible to agree with the statement. For example, as argued above, it is unlikely that an HLTA in KS3/4 could meet Standard 2.2 in any meaningful way unless they were a specialist in a particular subject. Any such specialisation of the HLTA role could usefully include English as an additional language.

4. The proposed Standards require higher level teaching assistants to demonstrate they have achieved a qualification in English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy equivalent to at least Level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework. (This is the same level as GCSE grades A to C.) How far do you agree that this is an appropriate expectation?

✓ Agree (but note our concerns below)

Please use the space below for any comment.

It is, of course, desirable to have high standards of literacy and numeracy from all who work with pupils in schools. However, the requirement to achieve an A-C equivalent grade in English and mathematics is proving an obstacle to the recruitment of trainee teachers; it is likely to be even more off-putting to putative HLTAs, particularly those whose education has taken place outside the UK system.

Comment [OOWI1]:

Comment [OOWI2]: ✓

5. The Standards have been organised in a similar way to the Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status. To what extent do you agree with this approach?

✓ Neither agree nor disagree

Please use the space below for any comment.

The problem here is, again, how these Standards will relate to those for an ordinary TA and those for QTS. If there is a clear progression route, then it is appropriate to organise them in this way. There is an opportunity here to establish similar standards for the variety of adults working with students, such as bilingual assistants, to provide clear progression routes for all.

6. Are any of the Standards not worded clearly? Would any benefit from further clarification? (Please include the number of any Standards and an explanation of why the Standard is unclear.)

As a general principle, all the Standards require exemplification and guidance. Unlike the QTS Standards, which have a long established pre-history and context to draw on to ensure their consistency of meaning, these Standards do not. In particular:

1.7 – this is expressed in a reactive manner. It should be redrafted to require that HLTAs actively promote equal opportunities for students and colleagues and implement relevant school policies and procedures.

3.1.3 – *They support teachers in selecting and preparing teaching resources* – is the inference that they do this independently on their own initiative or under direction? What does this imply about reduced loadings for effective planning time and collaboration with the teacher? How will this relate to the work of EAL teachers and bilingual assistants?

3.3.3 – *working with individuals, small groups and whole classes* – The concern must be with the appearance of the phrase ‘*whole classes where the assigned teacher is not present*’, which appears to undercut the guarantees of non-interchangeability between TAs and teachers. It is easy to imagine a hard-pressed Headteacher reading this Standard as entitling them to deploy an HLTA to a whole class for a Year in a primary school so long as they are ‘under the direction’ of a Year Leader, for example. We would be concerned about similar slippage applying to the work of EAL teachers and bilingual assistants.

7. Is there anything you think should be added to the proposed Standards? Please give brief reasons for your views.

Mindful of the proposed introduction of the *Chartered London Teacher* status, which will require people to demonstrate their cultural knowledge of the backgrounds of their students, it seems essential to include a Standard that is more explicit in relation to this than 1.1, which does not necessarily imply any explicit behaviour.

There are many thousands of students learning English as an additional language in schools throughout the country (and not just in the metropolitan areas). A standard relating to (second) language development would also be helpful, and – indeed – to language development as a whole.

There should be a Standard relating to working with other adults. This is an STA competence and so should be included here. This is particularly important in terms of working with students learning English as an additional language, an area that inevitably involves a number of adults working together.

8. Is there anything you think should be removed from the proposed Standards? Please give brief reasons for your views.

The ambiguity in the phrasing '*where the assigned teacher is not present*' is not helpful in establishing the principle of non-interchangeability between teachers and TAs. If the standard is to be included at all, it would be best to end it after 'settings'.

3.3.7 –The potential management role of HLTAs needs to be much more carefully articulated in order to clarify how this links with HLTAs' work being carried out '*under the direction of the classteacher*'.

9. The TTA is planning to produce materials to support training to meet the HLTA Standards. Are there any proposed Standards or groups of Standards where support materials would be particularly useful?

As in response to 6 above:

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3.3.3 –*working with individuals, small groups and whole classes* –The concern must be with the appearance of the phrase '*whole classes where the assigned teacher is not present*', which appears to undercut the guarantees of non-interchangeability between TAs and teachers. It is easy to imagine a hard-pressed Headteacher reading this Standard as entitling them to deploy an HLTA to a whole class for a Year in a primary school so long as they are 'under the direction' of a Year Leader, for example. We would be concerned about similar slippage applying to the work of EAL teachers and bilingual assistants.

Further comments

Please add comments you may have on any aspect of the proposed Standards.

- The timescale for the introduction of the Standards (pilot in November '03, roll-out in April 0'4?) seems premature given the lack of clarity regarding key issues such as:
 - pay
 - how the Standards will be assessed and by whom
 - how long it will take to meet the Standards and how this relates to the time taken to achieve their supposed equivalents (e.g. Foundation Degrees are equivalent to two years undergraduate study)
 - their relation to QTS Standards and those for TAs in general
 - lack of exemplification and guidance material
 - CPD opportunities to acquire appropriate subject knowledge to meet the Standards (not only curriculum content terms but also in areas such as formative assessment and the wider professional role) and prepare for progression
 - Guarantees regarding liaison time with teachers (and possibly others) to meet the Standards on planning and monitoring, etc. We are aware of the adverse effects that the lack of such guarantees is having on the development of successful partnership teaching between mainstream and EAL teachers where no provision is made to ensure such collaboration. There is an opportunity here to create conditions under which the HLTA role might flourish.
- There are concerns to be addressed about the line-management implications. Currently, in the secondary phase at least, TAs largely work under the line-management of SENCOs. If they are to assume a greater curriculum focus and take on a specialist area, such as working with pupils learning English as an additional language, then the line-management ought to be through Heads of Department. The implications of this are considerable in terms of job descriptions, training, liaison time, the coordination of cross-team monitoring, etc.
- There are concerns to be addressed about the position of HLTAs within the Ofsted framework. If they are taking whole classes in the absence of a teacher then they will, presumably, be subject to the normal Ofsted Inspection Framework for teachers. This has obvious implications for their deployment and training needs.
- There are clear implications for the training of teachers, who will need to extend their understanding of the role of HLTAs.
- There are concerns about the professional status of Learning Support Teachers (many of whom do not have QTS) given the existence of HLTAs. Is there an implication that schools will no longer need such experts? In London at least, the LST role is attracting bilingual teachers from overseas who do not have QTS and use this route as a way into acquiring it (through the OTT or flexible PGCE schemes, for example). Such teachers add enormously to schools and it would be a sad loss if their expertise were lost.
- There are concerns about the professional status of EMAG/EAL teachers working in partnership with mainstream staff. At a time when Ofsted and the TTA are beginning to recognise the distinctive role and professional expertise, a lesser qualified (cheaper) grade is being introduced that could, conceivably, lead to the replacement of specialist teachers with HLTAs. This is unlikely to raise standards of achievement and should not be accepted.

Your answers to the following questions will help us analyse responses to this consultation. Please consider all of the categories before making your choice as, for the purpose of analysis, it is important

that only one is chosen.

If you are making an **individual response** to the consultation, please indicate whether you are responding in your role as:

a: (tick **one** box)

Teaching assistant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher training provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other support staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	School governor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headteacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	LEA employee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		

[please specify:.....]

If you are making a response **on behalf of** a school, LEA, professional association or other organisation please give the following information:

b: (tick **one** box)

Professional association/union	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Higher education institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training school	<input type="checkbox"/>	LEA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other school	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		

[please specify: National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC).]

Name

Address

Postcode

E-mail

This data will only be used by the DfES and TTA for the purposes of this consultation.

Please tick if you would like to receive further information about HLTAs.

Responses should be sent by 7 July 2003 to:

The HLTA Team
Teacher Training Agency
Portland House
Stag Place
London SW1E 5TT