email logo

**External Examiner Report 2016-2017**

**BA (QTS) Primary Education 5-11 History Specialism & Foundation Subjects**

Note these comments are extracts from a 6,250 word report. The comments selected relate to History specialism and History within the Foundation Subjects. They are focused on a range of evidence drawn from two visits to observe students in school, a further visit to meet final year History specialism students and also reviewing examples of work from both the History specialism and the Foundation subjects related to both year 2 and year 3 of the course. I also met with the History subject lead on all my visits and reviewed History course material. I also met History specialist students.

I can confirm that standards are comparable to those within my own institution and others of which I am familiar in my current role as External Examiner and at those where I have held the post previously.

Within **ITT2039 (first Foundation Subjects assignment)** I saw some very accomplished pieces of work presented containing evidence of broad research being undertaken and a sound grasp of the educational theory underpinning LOTC. The 3 dissertations seen within the **principal module** **ITT4001 History dissertation** all contained valuable evidence and commentary worth sharing with a broader audience. It is hoped they are encouraged to do so particularly the dissertation focusing on the teaching of the holocaust. Subsequent discussions with students demonstrated they had clearly all gained a great deal from this experience of becoming experts in their chosen area.

The learning, teaching and assessment within the **History subject specialist course** (in all modules and within the history element of the Principle Module) are clearly of a high standard in all areas. However some areas are to be particularly commended as evidence of good practice and could be utilised as models for other specialist areas. The inclusion of the reflective element in **ITT2017** **(History 2nd year)** clearly challenges the weaker students and as such provides a valuable step to the accomplished academic writing for the principal module in year 3. In 2015-16 the students had commented on the value of the scaffolded experiences in **History** where they benefited from input from the tutor within the university and then applied idea by planning activities for pupils. These activities were then delivered in school and evaluated. Following a recommendation from the external this experience have been extended into the final year of the degree **IT3005**. The students welcome this development and suggest this model should be applied within other modules within the university

To help to alleviate some of the problems related to students not having sufficient opportunities to teach History in school. Consider introducing a tool for students to audit the experiences they have in developing their competence to teaching **History.** This may be teaching classes while on placement, observing the subject taught, supporting the subject in school via a history club or assembly. It could also include attendance at school CPD or conferences/ forums etc. The necessity to keep this audit may serve to make trainees more proactive in seeking opportunities for development. It would also be a useful tool for discussion with students with regard to the status of History in school.

Students commenting on **History specialism** **year 2** appreciated the broader application of the knowledge and understanding gained when looking at a particular time period, in this case the Vikings to further areas. They were now utilising this knowledge from study and assignment 1 when teaching other topics in school.

Hi**story specialist students** commented on the range of experiences they enjoyed within their pathway. It is clear that these have greatly enriched the life experiences for some students by introducing them to museums and other heritage sites. These opportunities are vital if we are to extend the range of opportunities for all our students, which can be very limited prior to entering university. It is clear that without these steps they would fail to see the value in providing similar experiences for the pupils within their care.

H**istory specialist students** met in school or within the university all spoke about the passion and caring nature of the module tutor. They said it was clear from the depth and variety of session content that he spent a great deal of time preparing for the modules.

E**nglish and History students** spoke about the range of experiences they had benefited from during the course for example the history students attended sessions on holocaust education while the English students benefited from voice coaching. Both groups saw a value in the experiences enjoyed by the other group and thought there would be a merit to extending these to the whole cohort if time and resources permitted this development.

Students felt it was very pertinent in today’s political climate and while terrorist threats are becoming more commonplace to extend support for them in how to approach the topic in school. They also felt the time they spent on the prevent duty should be extended. They appreciated that some of this material had been covered in the end of year conference, but were disappointed, as many of them had been unable to attend. Given its importance they thought it should be offered prior to the final teaching placement.

Students both seen in school and at the university were very positive when referring to the **Foundation subjects’** course. However they did feel that the spiral nature of the delivery of the subjects would be complimented by a final opportunity to revisit in the final year. This may provide a further opportunity to explore cross-curricular work or current themes of importance across the subjects for example diversity or creativity

I have some concerns regarding sustaining the quality of the course and the rich experiences gained by the students once the specialist subjects **including History** no longer remain in their current format. While I appreciate the reasons why it is necessary to move towards a different form of specialist course with much more of a generic approach. I believe that the implications of this for schools are huge. Primary schools need subject leaders with a firm grasp of how a subject can be planned, taught and resourced. If universities no longer train specialists where while this expertise be gained given that there is little CPD available for the foundation subjects?

I also have concerns for the continued excellent provision of the foundation subject within Northampton. How can this be sustained with the move to the new site and loss of specialist facilities? Effective teaching of the **Foundation subjects** is very resource rich. It should be remembered that they also provide a valuable way of modelling a diverse range of teaching approaches employed within primary classrooms.