

The Early Career Framework

A Guide for School Leaders and Induction Leads



Introduction

This guide has been developed from findings from the Early Career Teacher Support pilot evaluation (*Hardman et al., 2020*), funded by the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) (EEF). It is one of three guides intended to summarise the key messages from the evaluation and provide strategic and practical suggestions that can inform planning to support the development of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in schools. The guidance is applicable to all school contexts and is not specific to particular programmes of support.

Who should read this guide?

This guidance is aimed at those who are involved in implementing the Early Career Framework in schools, including school governors, leaders of Multi-Academy Trusts, Federations and school groups and school leaders who support CPD and the induction of new teachers. For further guidance please see also:

- [The Early Career Framework – A Guide for Implementation](#)
- [The Early Career Framework – A Guide for Mentors and Early Career Teachers](#)

Key Definitions

ECF Early Career Framework: published by the DfE listing what new teachers should know and know how to do.

ECT Early Career Teacher: teacher in their first two years after qualifying to teach.

The Early Career Framework & Our Research

The Early Career Framework (ECF) has been introduced in some parts of England from September 2020 and will be rolled out nationally in September 2021 along with guidance to support participating Early Career Teachers and mentors. Stemming from the Recruitment and Retention Strategy (*DfE, 2019*) the ECF seeks to ensure that all teachers in England receive high quality support in the first two years of their career. During 2019-20 the Centre for Teachers and Teaching Research at UCL Institute of Education undertook an evaluation of three pilot programmes which were designed to test different ways of supporting Early Career Teachers and their mentors. We worked with the Chartered College of Teaching, Ambition Institute and The Education Endowment Foundation as well as 98 schools (both primary and secondary) to evaluate the impact of these pilot programmes.

Following the pilot which we evaluated, the DfE selected four suppliers to develop freely available resources for schools to use. This included a separate team from UCL Institute of Education. We shared our initial findings with these suppliers to inform their materials. From 2021 there will be six suppliers, including UCL Institute of Education, offering programmes based on one of these four initial programmes. Schools now have three options around how they implement the ECF. The guidance in this document is relevant to all three options.

As detailed at <https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk> schools have three options around how they implement the Early Career Framework:

- **Full induction programme**
A funded provider-led programme offering high-quality training for early career teachers and their mentors alongside the professional development materials.
- **Core induction programme**
Schools can draw on the content of the high-quality core induction programmes to deliver their own early career teacher and mentor training.
- **School-based programme**
Schools design and deliver their own ECF-based induction programme.

The Early Career Framework presents an opportunity to develop the support offered to new teachers, and their mentors, through placing research-engaged professional development at the heart of schools. In this guide we pose key questions towards that aim.

Key recommendations

A growing body of research shows that the values of school leaders influence how schools respond to policy reforms (*Day & Gu, 2018*) and that teacher development is influenced by school leaders, the context and daily experiences (*Timperley et al., 2007*). Our evaluation found that the perceived investment of senior leaders influenced the success of the pilot programmes. Whichever approach to implementing the ECF is taken, we recommend careful consideration of how an early career support programme aligns with your whole-school development priorities and culture of leadership, as well as how this is conveyed to colleagues.

In the rest of this guide we suggest four key issues in maximising the opportunities presented by the Early Career Framework:

1. Ensuring early career teachers learn what they need to.
2. Placing mentoring and coaching at the heart of school life.
3. Building a culture of research-engaged professional development.
4. Managing workload and wellbeing.

1. Ensuring early carer teachers learn what they need to.

The Early Career Framework contains a set of statements against the Teachers' Standards which detail what teachers should know ('know that...' statements) and what they should be able to do ('know how to...' statements). These are intended to follow on from the Core Content Framework for Initial Teacher Training.

It may not come as a surprise that there is no definitive account of what teachers need to know in order to be able to teach well (Kennedy, 2015). The DfE approached this issue by appointing an Expert Advisory Group to develop the ECF. It should be noted that because the ECF was devised by a specific group of experts, and linked to existing policy, there may be other aspects of teachers' professional knowledge and practice which the framework does not address. It is also fair to say that some statements within the framework are supported by more extensive research than others.

Because the framework needs to be relevant to all schools in England, and relate to teachers of all phases and specialisms, the ECF cannot specify the detail of what every teacher needs to know within their contexts and the specifics of each subject. We found within our evaluation of pilot programmes that ECTs felt most supported when Mentors were able to relate learning around the framework to the practicalities of their schools, phase and subject(s). However, in the majority of schools within our evaluation, the learning around the ECF remained separate from the practical concerns of ECTs, and this adds to workload.

Questions for you to consider:

- How will the implementation of the ECF align with and develop the culture of support and leadership in your school?
- What needs to be learnt by your Early Career Teachers beyond what is listed in the framework? For example around curriculum or your local context?
- How will new teachers and mentors be supported in contextualising the Early Career Framework within your setting?

2. Placing mentoring and coaching at the heart of school life.

We believe that the introduction of the ECF presents an opportunity to develop the role of mentoring and coaching within your school. Understandably, teachers prioritise their students before considering their own development and that of their colleagues. The pilot programmes in support of the ECF began to change school cultures to recognise that the development of ECTs and their Mentors ultimately leads to improved teaching, and likely supports job satisfaction and retention.

“It is about the development of both NQT and Mentor. And improving mentoring, in turn, should improve, obviously, the outcomes for the NQT, hopefully, but also retention, and the quality of what an NQT is getting comes from the quality of the mentoring” (Induction Lead)

Our research findings echo existing research which suggests that mentoring (or coaching) is not yet as supported as it could be in schools. *Hobson & Malderez (2013)* identified several issues around mentoring in schools. Firstly,

“many schools do not employ rigorous methods of Mentor selection based upon clear criteria, including aptitude for the role based on prior experience and perceived characteristics and expertise, and a willingness to assume it.” (Hobson & Malderez, 2013, p. 97)

Secondly, Mentors are often not adequately trained for the role. The pilot programmes of support for Early Career Teachers centred around the development of Mentors too and our evaluation found that this was welcomed by Mentors and Mentees alike. However, Mentors need time and resources to develop their knowledge and skills in mentoring and coaching. It is helpful to see Mentor meetings as a ‘taught session’ which also needs planning and administration time. The pilot programmes showed that Mentors could support their Mentees best when they could engage fully with the activities provided.

A further issue identified within our evaluation was what *Hobson & Malderez (2013)* call ‘judgementoring’: the conflict between Mentors being supportive and also having a role in accountability. This can lead teachers to ‘fabricate’ and disguise their own development needs (*Hobson & McIntyre, 2013*). The [statutory induction for newly qualified teachers](#) has recently been updated to accommodate the two year induction period. Nevertheless schools and Mentors need to consider carefully how ECT development is not inhibited by accountability procedures and how it can relate to a culture of all staff being aware of their areas for development and supporting each other.

Questions for you to consider:

- How are mentors selected and supported?
- How can mentors be afforded a timetable which allows their own development and that of their mentee?
- How will support be related to accountability for new teachers?

3. Building a culture of research-engaged professional development.

The Early Career Framework draws on research evidence to support the statements around what Early Career Teachers need to know and be able to do. The pilot programmes each provided carefully selected, accessible readings and videos to support teachers in bringing research to bear on their practice. The programmes also provided prompts for mentoring and coaching discussions.

“The thing that I was really excited about was having access to all of the educational research, which I’m interested in anyway, but presented in bitesize chunks, if you like, in a way that I could then discuss it with those for whom I have responsibility, the NQTs. I felt it would filter down with my work with ITT as well, which, to some extent, it has” (Induction Lead).

However, in many schools in the pilot, day-to-day concerns of new teachers took priority and remained separate from professional development around the ECF. We saw the most promise when Mentors and Mentees used research when they reflected on practice. This resulted from both having become familiar with what research suggests before discussing day to day concerns. It can also be supported by ensuring a collegiate approach in the effective planning of mentoring and coaching, for example with issues for discussion being flagged up before meetings. Such collegiality reduces the perception of ‘power relations’ (Milton et al., 2020) in which Mentors are seen to hold all the knowledge.

Another influential factor in our evaluation was the expectations that senior leaders placed on the role of the Mentor and ECT. Where there was a clear expectation that protected time was to be used for developing against the ECF, including preparation and reading, then these were more likely to take place. Each of the pilot programmes provided engagement data to the Induction Leads around the completion of tasks and some Induction Leads met regularly with Early Career Teachers and Mentors, which further supported engagement around the ECF.

Induction Leads also facilitated development in other ways, for example by negotiating with senior leaders whether ECTs might be excused from other school activities to focus on their

development, occasionally stepping in where a Mentor was overwhelmed, or knowing who else in the school might offer support around a specific area.

Research has shown that in some schools there is a *“largely privatised and isolated mentoring relationship where the locus of responsibility for the NQTs’ development rests solely on one Mentor rather than the wider school staff/team”* (Milton et al., 2020, p. 7). We feel it is helpful to instead draw on an ‘ecological perspective’ (Daly et al., 2020) and see that within the unique and dynamic system of a school, the responsibility for supporting and developing ECTs is much wider. School leaders help shape the culture of schools as organisations in which new teachers can thrive. This includes considering how the whole school staff will be engaged with the development of ECTs and Mentors, within a broader culture of development.

We found that where ECTs were given responsibility for their own development, for example in setting agendas for observations and meetings, this resulted in increased engagement by Mentors too. This fits with research suggesting that self-determination is important in teacher wellbeing, although this is situated within a wider range of personal and environmental factors (Hobson & Maxwell, 2017). In the context of the ECF this includes Mentors and new teachers having a clear sense of the importance of development and the capacity to prioritise their individual needs in this regard. Where Mentors and Mentees work together to set their own agendas for development, they are able to then utilise research and resources to address their development needs. This provides a greater sense of autonomy as well as more tailored learning. By also focusing on Mentor development, implementation of the Early Career Framework has the potential to bring research evidence into development conversations across a school. This can then be further extended by some colleagues also conducting their own educational research, to the benefit of their development and the school as a whole.

Questions for you to consider:

- What expectations will be made explicit to mentors and mentees about their development in relation to the ECF?
- How will Induction Leads work to support learning but also ‘protect’ mentors and mentees to enable this?
- How will new teachers and their mentors be afforded autonomy to respond to their own development needs whilst engaging in a programme of support?
- How will all staff be made aware of the ECF and the ways they can contribute to the learning of ECTs and support for mentoring?

4. Managing workload and wellbeing.

Within the pilot programmes that we evaluated, we found that newly qualified teachers were mostly able to accommodate their learning against the Early Career Framework within the 10% timetable reduction allocated to them. However, it is not clear if this will be the case for the 5% that teachers in their second year will receive. The majority of Mentors were not able to accommodate the programmes with their existing workloads however, and this likely contributed to low levels of engagement and attendance in online sessions targeted at Mentors' development. Where Mentors were given time to deliver the programme, there was greater evidence of promise.

“I find, like, coaching an NQT is really, really important—they’re our future teachers, and if that’s not done properly, it’s not fair. Also, at the same time you think, “I’ve got so many things at the moment.” It’s about prioritising. My NQT shouldn’t be at the bottom of my priority list and I wouldn’t say that she’s at the bottom at all but she’s not as high up that I wish she was” (Mentor).

Whilst funding allocated to mentoring in the 2020 spending review (HMT, 2020) may go some way to addressing this, it is unlikely to provide all the time that Mentors need to best support ECTs. Schools will need to carefully consider how to timetable and support Mentors.

Both Mentors and ECTs were willing to undertake work which they found to be meaningful to their own development or that of colleagues but considered more bureaucratic tasks such as recording and evidencing progress less meaningful. Carefully mapping out what Mentors and their Mentees do in relation to their own development can reveal tasks that might be less useful. This helps in setting appropriate expectations around the Early Career Framework, particularly in relation to the [new statutory guidance](#) on induction outlined by the government in April 2021.

Further to the benefits of autonomy and personalisation in the work of Mentors and Mentees, our research also echoed existing literature on the importance of informal support for teacher wellbeing. This can come from other colleagues in schools, friends and family outside of schools, and even from pupils and parents/carers.

Paptraianou and Le Cornu (2014) identify seven facets of social support for Early Career Teachers:

1. Listening support	Listening to concerns without judgement
2. Emotional support	Being on someone's side
3. Tangible assistance	Offering advice, knowledge and guidance on specific tasks
4. Task appreciation	Acknowledging work, effort and progress
5. Reality confirmation	Recognising the realities and struggles faced
6. Emotional challenge	Challenging attitudes, values and feelings to stretch and motivate
7. Task challenge	Challenging thinking on a task to stretch and motivate

Within the pilot programmes we saw that new teachers were provided with support from a range of different interactions. Notably, support in relation to a subject area or age group might sit outside of a mentoring/coaching relationship. We also saw that in larger schools, ECTs working together (for example on tasks around the ECF) provided peer-to-peer pastoral support.

Questions for you to consider:

- Which processes within the early career support programme will new teachers and their mentors find most meaningful for development? Which are more focused on accountability and evidencing?
- What formal and informal support networks will exist in the school (and outside it) to support new teachers in the fullest sense?

Summary

Overall, we believe that many of the issues that are considered in this guide will contribute to teacher learning and wellbeing. A programme of development will support wellbeing if: learning is contextualised and relevant to the classrooms and subjects being engaged with; support processes are meaningful, personalised and offer autonomy; and expectations are clear around what is important and why within workload.

With forethought, the Early Career Framework offers the potential to reshape professional development so that ECTs and Mentors continue to grow throughout their careers, to the benefit of colleagues and pupils alike.

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Other useful resources

Early career framework reforms: overview (Department for Education, 2020).

An overview of the Early Career Framework policy and Early Career Teacher entitlements. This page has been regularly updated as more information becomes available.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-career-framework-reforms-overview/early-career-framework-reforms-overview>

Early Career Framework: Core Induction Programme (Department for Education, 2020). This website outlines the purpose of the Early Career Framework and links to the four suppliers for national rollout of Early Career Support. <https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk/>

Early Career Framework (Department for Education, 2019). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/913646/Early-Career_Framework.pdf

Early Career Support (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020). Information about the pilot programmes and evaluation, including the pilot evaluation report. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/early-career-support/>

Further resources

Teacher Professional Learning and Development – Best Evidence Synthesis (Timperley et al. 2007)

This comprehensive review centres on a clear model of teacher knowledge-building which could be placed at the heart of professional development.

<https://www.oecd.org/education/school/48727127.pdf>

Powerful professional learning: a school leader's guide to joint practice development (National College for School Leadership, 2012)

Joint Practice Development is about the mutual learning of teachers, students and others in schools and this guide provides a background and practical steps towards this.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/329717/powerful-professional-learning-a-school-leaders-guide-to-joint-practice-development.pdf

Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) @CUREE official

The 2005 *National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching* remains a helpful resource today. It sets out ten principles, based on research evidence and consultation, to underpin effective mentoring and coaching in schools. These principles are supported by a table of the practical activities required (the who, what, where and why?) and the skills and professional development that underpins them.

<http://www.curee.co.uk/resources/publications/national-framework-mentoring-and-coaching>

Mentoring new teachers is harder than lots of people think

The Education Workforce Council blog by Daly and Milton (2017) identifies eight principles to guide the development of mentoring as a professional practice.

<https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/about/staff-room/son-archive/43-english/about/staff-room/blog-archive/595-caroline-daly-emmajane-milton-mentoring-teachers-is-harder-than-lots-of-people-think.html>

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This resource is also available on our website
www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe-ctr

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