

**HLTA Secondary Mathematics and Science
Frequently asked questions
May 2007**

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1. Pilot

1.1 How can the 'lessons learned' from the pilot be applied to other subjects?

The model that we have developed for integrating maths and science into the overall HLTA programme has the potential to be used for other subjects or specialisms in the future. We will continue to learn from the implementation of the programme and respond to schools' needs in designing future programmes.

1.2 Time is always in short supply! What time was given for HLTAs to communicate with teachers to ensure that effective teaching and learning of the subject material was assimilated?

We did not prescribe to schools the amount of time that was required for HLTAs to reflect on their practice during the pilot. In schools where this was prioritised, the training had much more significant impact on how the trainee worked in the classroom. Our subject knowledge guidance and pilot research summary highlights the school conditions that best support the candidate in training.

1.3 Has any data been collected on whether or not those who have gained HLTA status through this route have subsequently secured HLTA posts?

We are currently conducting research into the deployment of those who participated in the Pilot and others who have gained HLTA status in the past three years. The results will be published later in the Summer Term 2007.

1.4 What impact on teaching and learning has been seen in the pilot and how was it measured?

The pilot was able to capture early qualitative data on the impact that trainees had on the schools and pupils they supported. We are continuing to monitor the deployment of those who took part in the pilot and the effects they are having on teaching and learning.

2. Recruitment

2.1 What support will be given to LAs to ensure effective recruitment of candidates for this new initiative?

HLTA Regional Providers of Assessment (RPAs) have a responsibility to support LAs in achieving effective recruitment of HLTAs with a maths or science specialism. The LA should work collaboratively with the RPA to ensure promotion of the programme is tailored to the requirements of the area. The code of practice that the RPAs follow will be revised to include the minimum requirements that the RPAs will need to meet with regard to maths and science.

2.2 What support will be given to LAs to work with schools on taking up this programme, given that it is generally really hard to engage secondary schools with HLTA?

RPAs will help identify schools to participate in the programme and provide appropriate support at a local and regional level. The LA should work with the RPA to promote the programme and identify suitable schools to take part. We would encourage the use of secondary schools with a mathematics, science or training specialism as a source of candidates or training support.

2.3 Will each LA be given target numbers to achieve for HLTA subject specialist routes, and, if so, by what timescale?

We have asked RPAs to make an informed estimate of the number of candidates they believe is realistic for their region and how this will contribute to the national TDA target of ensuring at least 1,000 training and assessment places are taken up by March 2008.

2.4 What will be the additional entry requirements, if any, for support staff to embark upon subject focussed training?

There will be no entry requirements for training but we would suggest that candidates should have had a conversation with their line manager and made use of the Subject Knowledge and Skills Review tool to identify key areas for development prior to training. Candidates will not be required to attain level 3 subject knowledge as in the pilot but will demonstrate acquisition and application of subject knowledge relevant to their role through the HLTA assessment process.

2.5 Will Secondary Science HLTAs be required to have GCSE Science?

No. A candidate may well be funded to complete a GCSE science or maths, or already have acquired such a qualification and this would be considered as evidence of acquisition of subject knowledge. But it will not be a national requirement.

2.6 Did the requirement to achieve a NQF Level 3 in subject knowledge prove a barrier to recruitment?

Yes, which is why it is no longer required. It was also not considered necessary since there are A level courses in mathematics and science widely available, should trainees wish to pursue them. But the breadth of such courses was not considered to be necessary in supporting teaching and learning in the classroom.

2.7 How strict will the TDA be regarding the entry requirement of a level 3 qualification in Maths or Science?

There is no such requirement – subject knowledge will be evidenced in accordance with the subject knowledge guidance. We recognise that in some cases training may include a level 3 qualification, but this should satisfy the training needs of the individual – it is not a requirement.

2.8 Are there any plans to change the title of HLTA for science technicians?

No. But we recognise that, while HLTA may offer some technicians a career progression route, it will not be suitable for all of them.

2.9 Will schools be supported in the appointment of a maths and science HLTA?

Support will be in the form of ensuring that the capacity is put in place to generate enough maths and science HLTAs to enable every school to appoint one if it wants to. There is flexibility in funding allocations to LAs to ensure that schools can obtain support such as cover for staff involved with training and development if it is required.

2.10 How will you incorporate the Science discipline into the qualification. Will any part of the HLTA be taken out to add Science or Maths?

HLTA is a status, not a qualification. The requirement to demonstrate subject knowledge already exists in HLTA Standard 2.1 – the subject knowledge guidance builds on this, it does not replace it. The HLTA assessment process remains the same for all candidates regardless of school sector or subject specialism.

2.11 I worked on the pilot HLTA specialist science course and realise the amount of work involved for the teaching assistants gaining this status. What incentive is there for these teaching assistants and how will the schools go about encouraging teaching assistants to embark on this course?

This needs to be viewed in the context of CPD. The HLTA programme provides an opportunity for those who want to develop professionally to do so. The decision to embark on HLTA training should ideally be agreed between the candidate and their line manager in the context of their professional development. The Agency's remit does not include remuneration or conditions of employment. That is for the LA and schools concerned to determine.

3. Training

3.1 Will the assessment be different?

Candidates will be assessed against all thirty-one of the HLTA Standards. They will be expected to provide evidence of subject knowledge and of their ability to acquire and apply further subject knowledge within the existing assessment framework. The assessment process is the same for all HLTAs regardless of specialism.

3.2 Does the subject knowledge guidance consider pedagogy? Is there a Training Needs Analysis for pedagogy?

Yes. The subject knowledge guidance and Subject Knowledge and Skills Review tool used to analyse training needs covers both subject knowledge and pedagogy.

3.3 What will be the entry level for training, will a GCSE be required?

There is no entry requirement for training. All candidates who achieve HLTA status are required to achieve level 2 numeracy and literacy. The level of specialist subject knowledge required by candidates professing a specialism in maths or science will depend on the context in which the candidate is working. Training needs will be identified via the Subject Knowledge and Skills Review tool.

3.4 What training do the departments require to deploy HLTAs effectively?

HLTA funding can be used to train middle managers in schools to raise awareness of the programme. Best practice deployment models will be developed and shared using information from deployment research studies.

3.5 What exactly will HLTA specialist subject training look like? Will it be up to individual LAs to determine the detailed content and will there be funding to support it?

The training market for the HLTA programme remains open. LAs have to assure that they achieve best value in purchasing high quality training for candidates. Subject training in mathematics and science is no different. RPAs will be supporting LAs to 'make sense' of existing provision in their region and work with existing and new training providers who are likely to offer courses alongside existing subject qualifications. These include Higher Education Institutions, private providers, Science Learning Centres, training schools and existing providers of HLTA preparation and assessment. The National Centre for the Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics is also working with RPAs to promote good practice in CPD opportunities for staff in schools.

3.6 How do we know there will be consistency with the subject specific training across the country?

There will not necessarily be consistency with training across the country since we want training to meet local need. What is important is that training is high quality and is supported by the subject knowledge guidance, and that LAs are able to make informed decisions about purchasing training and/or providing it in-house.

3.7 Do schools or LAs have responsibility for training HLTAs in specific subjects?

LAs have a ring-fenced allocation of funding for the training and development of HLTAs in mathematics and science funding during 2007/08. Existing HLTAs who wish to further their subject knowledge need to pursue additional specialist skills or through their existing CPD channels.

3.8 What in-house development within departments has been effective in ensuring that HLTAs have the necessary pedagogical knowledge to support students?

The training and development of HLTAs in the pilot had most impact when the trainees were attached to subject departments and provided with an opportunity to reflect on their practice with their mentor. In this sense, training was applied to the classroom setting rather than viewed as a bolt-on activity.

3.9 How should TAs' subject knowledge be enhanced?

It will vary from one individual to another depending on their starting point (i.e. existing qualifications and experience) and context within which they are working (i.e. the age of the pupils they are supporting, and the strand of the Programme of Study).

3.10 What factors would ensure that a training programme in maths or science will be successful?

Ensuring that the candidate is adequately supported in school. Enabling candidates to fill any gaps identified in the outcome of their Subject Knowledge and Skills Review.

3.11 What are the implications for training science teachers to make good use of the HLTAs?

There is flexibility in LAs' funding to provide training for middle managers in schools to work with HLTAs. There is scope to investigate the link to CPD for teaching standards to support working with and use of HLTAs. We will work with the Science Learning Centres and National Strategies to ensure the programme is promoted.

3.12 In the assessment process what evidence will the candidate have to produce to secure the standard related to expertise and subject knowledge?

Candidates write four assessment tasks. In tasks 1–3 they are required to outline and evaluate their experiences of working within everyday classroom routines. Candidates should consider using at least one of tasks 1–3 to demonstrate how they have applied their subject knowledge to evidence the application of their subject knowledge. This may include certificates of achievement in subjects and is likely to include the Subject Knowledge and Skills Review tool.

3.13 What models of development and deployment have had the greatest impact in increasing capacity of maths departments to provide quality teaching & learning?

The research summary highlights a number of deployment issues and we will be following this up with further development of case studies.

3.14 Does the programme include GCSE mathematics grade C training so that HLTAs can work at KS4 supporting grade C targeted students as part of the school's intervention and also this will tie in with the study plus course rolling out this Sept 07? We plan to run such a course in the LA.

The training required by a candidate will depend on their existing subject knowledge and experience and whether these are sufficient to support learning in the context in which they are working. LAs are able to use allocated grant to support candidates in undertaking GCSE mathematics if it considered to be appropriate to their training and development needs.

3.15 What would define levels of subject knowledge?

The subject knowledge guidance, closely related to national curriculum levels.

3.16 What steps are being taken to ensure that HLTAs can be released from school to access subject specific CPD?

There is flexibility in the HLTA mathematics and science grant to fund cover so that candidates and mentors can be released from classroom duties.

3.17 When will the materials be ready for preparation of the training as they were very late last time and created a great deal of extra work?

RPA's will be working with Providers of Preparation to ensure they are aware of the programme. The preparation and assessment process will be the same for all HLTA candidates.

4. Roles & Deployment

4.1 How will the impact of an HLTAs work be monitored and evaluated?

RPA's are required to capture and evaluate emerging good practice. The TDA will also continue to research HLTAs deployment and capture data on specialisms and deployment. WAMG guidance Note 17 offers further guidance on deployment. (Note 17 can be downloaded from TDA website at: http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/w/wamg_guidance17.pdf)

4.2 How do you see the role of HLTAs within the proposed review of the KS4 curriculum and Specialised Diplomas?

We are currently working with the DfES to consider the role HLTAs may play in supporting the new diplomas. Further announcements are likely later in the year.

4.3 How will the LAs/RPA's/TDA ensure that M&S HLTAs will not be exploited?

The responsibility for effective deployment of HLTAs rests with the schools concerned. The relevant organisations will be influencing schools through the communication of best practice. We will ensure that the unions are kept informed about the development of the programme.

4.4 For the HOD please can you give detail of the activities that the HLTAs was involved in within the department?

The research summary presents some of the activities the HLTAs were involved with.

4.5 What overlap for science do you envisage when it comes to practical activities between what a senior technician might do and what an HLTAs might do? In some ways a suitably qualified technician may be more appropriate in this situation than an HLTAs.

A detailed answer to this question would require mapping LATA standards against a particular HLTAs specialist role. Generally speaking, there will almost certainly be some overlap between the roles. However, a technician is likely to have less contact with pupils than an HLTAs. When a technician is demonstrating an experiment the focus is on conducting the experiment, possibly with a teacher explaining to pupils what is happening. HLTAs would tend to focus on explaining how the experiment supports teaching and learning. Ultimately, it is for the classroom teacher to determine how best to make use of individuals in the lesson concerned. If it becomes apparent that any overlap between technicians and HLTAs working in science is raising any particular issues then we will produce further guidance.

4.6 How do you see the Maths and Science HLTAs specialist being used in an integrated curriculum model of working?

The pilot has provided some real examples of how HLTAs can effectively support teaching and learning in mathematics and science. We expect to build on this evidence base over the next 12 months as more schools come on board.

4.7 How will the HLTAs be deployed?

We will not specify how HLTAs should be deployed since there is no definitive model. It is for the school to determine. Our pilot generated a number of case studies and models of deployment we will be building on those in the coming months.

4.8 Are HLTAs given enough time for good two-way communications with the teachers responsible for the pupils they work with?

The time allocated for such discussion varied considerably in the pilot. We are promoting the need for schools to support trainees in this way in all of our publicity material and guidance.

4.9 Has the relationship between HLTAs and standard assistants been affected by this?

We have not explored this issue in depth, although the pilot revealed some tension between existing staff and new staff in the event of the latter being appointed externally. This was because the existing staff may have felt they had missed out on a development opportunity. Clearly, schools need to consider carefully when selecting candidates for training.

4.10 Will a HLTA be a member of a Mathematics or Science Teaching team as opposed to being a 'general' TA for the school?

This is for the school to consider. But it has been established that subject specific HLTAs have maximum impact when they belong to the relevant subject department.

4.11 What are the legal implications of a HLTA being in charge of a practical science lesson?

An HLTA should work under the supervision of a teacher, so should not be "in charge". In general, headteachers will need to be able to vouch for the competency of their staff in terms of health and safety.

4.12 What are the Health and Safety implications of HLTAs leading practical lessons? Should this happen?

An HLTA should work under the supervision of a teacher.

4.13 How would you envisage a maths or science specialist HLTA being deployed at school?

In the relevant subject department, supporting the teaching and learning of the relevant subject.

4.14 How will Head Teachers be directed / advised regarding deployment of HLTAs with additional subject knowledge skills?

Initially, through the dissemination of good models of deployment identified from regional research.

5. Networks

5.1 How can NCETM support you in your work?

RPA's are already in the process of establishing relationships with NCETM regional directors in order to identify and exploit existing NCETM networks that might be used to support the HLTA maths and science programme (e.g. through the promotion of the programme). They might also identify potential providers of training.

5.2 How will the national strategies be involved at a local, regional and national level?

We work closely with the national strategies on secondary maths and science and they are represented on our Maths & Science Advisory Board. The newly appointed RPA subject leads will be responsible for ensuring co-ordination with national strategy advisers as part of their regional networks and for advising on similar co-ordination at a regional and local level. We will continue to work with the national strategies to ensure maximum use of promotional and training opportunities.

5.3 How can RPA's/TDA ensure that the individuals in the LA that may be involved (i.e. the HLTA contact, and maths and science contacts) all know about each other?

RPA subject leads will be responsible for co-ordinating activity between stakeholders at a local and regional level. The national conferences are the starting point.

5.4 How will information about maths and science be disseminated?

By a variety of means, including making use of existing NCETM, SLC and SSAT channels, and by RPA's building on existing LA contacts.

5.5 What follow-up documents will be produced after the events for those who could not attend?

Packs including the subject knowledge guidance documents and a research summary of the maths and science pilot will be available after the conferences and published on the TDA website.

6. The Future

6.1 Will there be any other HLTA subject specialism training in the future eg SEN, ICT or Modern Foreign Languages?

Further subject specific HTLA programmes are likely to happen in the future. This will develop as thinking on further government priority areas emerge. No decisions have been made on which subjects or specialisms will be addressed next.

6.2 What about candidates who already have HLTA status who want to access maths or science training?

Funding is restricted to new HLTA candidates. Those who have already gained HLTA status should access training through the usual CPD routes.

6.3 Will there be any possibility for established HLTAs to access subject specific training in the future?

Yes, through their existing CPD channels.

6.4 Will there be guidance produced for candidates and LAs outlining the 'journey' that the candidate will take and who is responsible for the different stages?

We will be updating all of our guidance in the Autumn 2007, following the publication of the revised HLTA Standards.

7. General HLTA issues

7.1 How would you defend the use of a specialist HLTA to replace a teacher when questioned by a parent?

We wouldn't. HLTAs do not replace teachers - they compliment and support teachers. They work under the direction and supervision of a teacher to ensure effective learning and teaching with the classroom.

7.2 Is there going to be a pay structure for the HLTAs with progression built in?

Remuneration and progression for an HLTA is assessed at individual school level. There is no national agreement of HLTA pay to date. HLTAs can continue to use the Subject Knowledge and Skills Review tool as a means of CPD after assessment.

7.3 Will HLTA be given PPA time?

There is no statutory requirement for schools to provide PPA time for HLTAs. Our subject knowledge guidance and research summary reflects the need for schools to support trainees and HLTAs in providing them with enough time to reflect on their practice and participate in planning and preparation activities outside of the classroom.

7.4 How will you ensure that overseas qualifications are verified as suitable for Maths/Science subject content requirements?

The Subject Knowledge and Skills Review tool provides a mechanism to enable a subject line manager in school to assess a potential trainee's existing skills and experience. Since there are no specific entry requirements for training we will not be considering whether or not overseas qualifications are equivalent to UK qualifications.

7.5 Will the HLTA Maths/Science role be considered senior to the generic HLTA?

No – they will both be HLTAs.

7.6 Line management and CPD for HLTAs?

Line management and CPD of HLTAs are at the discretion of the school. The HLTA grant allocation to LAs cannot be used to fund CPD opportunities for existing HLTAs.

7.7 Would the accreditation of science/maths training encourage more aspiring HLTAs to consider this route? Eg Linking training to a Foundation Degree module.

Accreditation of training courses is at the discretion of the provider concerned. We would encourage linking training to foundation degrees and there are already courses in existence in relation to the HLTA programme.

7.8 Our LA is already pioneering Teaching Assistant training on intervention in science over 2 days. Teaching assistants are able to provide impact from this CPD towards NVQ qualifications. Could this CPD form the basis of HLTA qualification in the future?

HLTA is not a qualification - it is a status. Such training could be funded by the HLTA mathematics and science grant and contribute towards trainees' progression to HLTA assessment and the development of their subject knowledge. The Subject Knowledge and Skills Review tool could feed into or complement this process.

7.9 How do the HLTAs fit within the whole staffing structure of the school in terms of PM and pay and clear job descriptions/differentials.

This is a matter for individual schools.

7.10 How can LAs best support HLTAs?

RPAs work closely with LAs who have developed a number of support networks for existing HLTAs. Contact your RPA for more information if you are interested in setting up something in your authority.

7.11 What will be the relationship between HLTAs and other TAs?

Depends on the context in each individual school. In some cases HLTAs line manage TAs but this is just one example.

7.12 If authorities are unable to use this ringfenced resource, will the TDA re-distribute the funds to other authorities?

There will be a review of actual and predicted spend in the course of the year, at which point it may be possible to re-allocate funding.

7.13 What do you suggest a TA does if they would like to apply to be an HLTA but do not have the support of their school?

Talk to the LA HLTA contact who should speak directly with the school.

7.14 Roughly what proportion of schools have HLTAs dedicated to one subject such as science or maths? Is this seen as the desired practice in schools?

We are only just beginning to capture such data. It has been shown that specialist HLTAs have most impact when they belong to the department they are supporting, so development in this direction would be desirable.