**School Direct Suggested Interview Questions and Advice**

For guidance on the full admissions process, please refer to the '[Recruitment & Admissions Procedure for School Direct ITE Programmes](https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofsocialsciencesandinternationalstudies/education/partnership/schooldirect/Recruitment_&_Admissons_Procedure_for_School_Direct_ITE_Programmes_April_2019.doc)' and particularly to the troubleshooting tips included there.

As many applicants apply to multiple Exeter lead schools, it's important that they experience a fair, transparent and consistent process. This includes not inviting applicants to interview until you have all of the information needed to reliably make a decision regarding whether to offer a place by the end of the interview. It also includes not making an offer in person on the day, but following the official procedure mandated by the DfE. We have had extremely positive feedback from trainees when we've explicitly encouraged them to attend all of their interviews before making a decision about an offer - they appreciate the respect this affords them, and makes us seem confident and welcoming rather than desperate and grabby.

The vast majority of trainees recruited through school direct routes do extremely well, and this is testament to the skill of the Lead School interviewers in selecting candidates. Below are ideas shared by school and university staff to support the interview process and your decision making.

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| **At interview - in general** | |
| **Fundamental English and Mathematics** | * With the removal of literacy and numeracy tests, we are now required to QA these skills and we will not be able to award QTS if a trainee does not demonstrate adequate knowledge before the end of the course. GCSE qualifications are still required but are not a sufficient proxy, so we should build in opportunity to discuss fundamental English and Mathematics, set targets and create support plans for numeracy/literacy where possible. |
| **Subject knowledge** | * Carefully discuss strengths and limitations within subject knowledge and make sure that an audit of knowledge is done and that a clear subject knowledge development target is set and recorded on the interview paperwork. * Initial needs analyses for primary are available on the ITEC information page - for other secondary subjects, create one based on the current GCSE specification in that subject. * Note that SKE length needs to be checked by university colleagues |
| **Workload** | * Ensure that trainees have realistic expectations, but also emphasise support. |
| **Understanding of the demands and rewards teaching and training to teach**  ***- This is a priority for minimising interruptions and withdrawals*** | * Written task - a day in the life of a teacher. * Asking about what they expect the challenges to be / what are they looking forward to? * "What are you letting yourself in for?" * "Why do you think so many teachers leave the profession after the first 2 or 3 years" (and maybe follow up with) "So why do *you* want to teach?" * Include a question about their understanding of safeguarding and the role of the teacher * Invite candidates to talk to current or recent trainees as part of the interview process. |
| **Interactions with students** | * Even if you are unable to observe a candidate micro-teaching an episode, feedback from partners suggests that watching how candidates interact with students (e.g. on a student panel) can be very telling. |
| **Academic support plan** | * If a primary trainee has a C rather than a B at GCSE in Maths or English but you believe they are otherwise a strong candidate, note that there is a proforma for a support plan to complete and return with the interview paperwork to ensure that we can make an offer immediately. |

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| **At interview - questions for distance** | |
| **Suggested questions – School Direct distance (fee-paying and salaried) applicants** | **What we are looking for in an answer** |
| Do you have experience of online learning?  What are/might be the challenges of learning in this way?  How might you overcome them? | * Understanding of the demands of online modules * An ability to self-direct learning * An awareness of the challenges of combining training in school with academic study * Resilience, flexibility and the ability to work independently * An awareness of the need to engage with the online GSE School Direct community |
| What do you know about the fee-paying /salaried School Direct PGCE? | Understanding of the structure of the course:   * Completion of subject knowledge audits and writing action plans for development of subject and curriculum knowledge * Interaction with online resources posted for the module on our VLE that will include reading selected literature, accessing video clips and listening to recorded lectures * Tutorials (school-based tutorials including link tutor visits) * Completion of directed tasks related to module content * Independent reading and reflection, classroom observation and teaching experience while on placement in school * Completion of 2 written Masters level assignments, totalling 7500 words each   **NB: this should equate to approx. 500 hours over the year** |
| What experience do you have of academic writing and how might this relate to writing at Masters level on the PGCE? | * Recent experience of working with academic literature * Recent experience of writing at Masters level (or undergraduate level) * Awareness of the need to link educational theory and policy with practice in school |
| What are the issues and challenges currently facing teachers of your subject (secondary) or phase (primary)? | Understanding of current policy and guidance. For example:   * Recent curriculum developments and the new NC * Public examination and national testing requirements * Issues surrounding early reading/maths (primary) |
| What do you know about the Teachers’ Standards for QTS? | Understanding of how the PGCE course will enable trainees to meet the Standards |

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| **At interview - questions for @Exeter** | |
| **Suggested questions – School Direct @exeter PGCE applicants** | **What we are looking for in an answer** |
| What do you know about the School Direct @exeter PGCE? | Understanding of the structure of the course:   * Trainees spend the autumn term following the PGCE taught course * Schools negotiate with the trainee how much time is to be spent in school during the Autumn Term * Attendance at the University taught course, and completion of all directed study and tasks) is essential and should take priority |
| What experience do you have of academic writing and how might this relate to writing at Masters level on the PGCE? | * Recent experience of working with academic literature * Recent experience of writing at Masters level (or undergraduate level) * Awareness of the need to link educational theory and policy with practice in school |
| What are the issues and challenges currently facing teachers of your subject (secondary) or phase (primary)? | Understanding of current policy and guidance. For example:   * Recent curriculum developments and the new NC * Public examination and national testing requirements * Issues surrounding early reading/maths (primary) |
| What do you know about the Teachers’ Standards for QTS? | Understanding of how the PGCE course will enable trainees to meet the Standards |

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| **Example Subject Knowledge Targets for students not undertaking an SKE** | |
| English | * Develop understanding of key grammar vocabulary - verbs, nouns, noun phrases, using the self-study materials on [www.cybergrammar.co.uk](http://www.cybergrammar.co.uk) * Select 6 poems from the current AQA GCSE anthology and annotate for meaning, form, structure, imagery, sound (use [BBC](http://www.bbcbitesize) Bitesize for support) and research the history of the poets and the themes of the poems. |
| Science | * Develop knowledge of your least confident science subject (Biology, Chemistry, Physics) selecting a topic relevant to the key stage you will be teaching (refer to the national curriculum or GCSE specifications). |
| Maths | * Use BBC Bitesize to develop your understanding of XXX (e.g. fractions, quadratic equations) and use the NCTEM website to explore approaches to teaching that topic <https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/26086>. |