

Draft criteria for the accreditation of Initial Teacher Education programmes in Wales and the proposal for the Education Workforce Council to accredit initial teacher education

Consultation response form

Your name:

Sue Williams, Senior Advisor Education and Skills

Organisation (if applicable):

Natural Resources Wales

e-mail/telephone number:

sue.williams@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk
education@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

0300 065 5075

07789 923830

Your address:

**Natural Resources Wales, Clawddnewydd, Ruthin,
Denbighshire. LL15 2NL**

Responses should be returned by **14 November 2016** to

Julie Owens
Workforce Strategy Unit
The Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Sarn Mynach
Llandudno Junction
Conwy
LL31 9RZ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: ITEducationAddysgGA@wales.gsi.gov.uk



Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is the largest Welsh Government public sponsored body with approximately 1600 staff, an operating budget of £17 million and manages 7% of the land in Wales.

The Environment (Wales) Act and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act together create modern legislation for managing Wales' natural resources and improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. They will help us tackle the challenges we face and to take better advantage of the potential opportunities for Wales. The Environment Act focuses on building resilience into our ecosystems and recognising the benefits that they provide if we manage them in a smarter way.

The Environment Act gives Natural Resources Wales a new purpose - *to pursue sustainable management of natural resources*. We will apply a specific set of principles while maximising our contribution to the well-being goals.

More information can be found by linking through to this booklet
[Introducing sustainable management of natural resources](#)

Natural Resources Wales welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation. Our aim is to highlight:

- the importance of the sustainable management of our natural resource now and in the future,
- the need to embed the environment and sustainable development in the widest sense within the curriculum
- the importance of out of classroom learning for all key stages and the need for confident and competent teaching staff
- the strong links and joint benefits of bringing the natural environment, together with education and health

For more information please go to:
<http://naturalresources.wales>

Question 1 – Should the EWC have the statutory responsibility for accrediting all programmes of initial teacher education (ITE) in Wales?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting comments					
<p>NRW believes this option will provide quality and consistency across the sector as per point Page 3, 1.6 of the Consultation Document, ensuring core programmes across the ITE providers, whilst leaving room for different modes of learning and individual specialisms. This in turn will help to raise standards across Wales.</p>					

Question 2 – Should the EWC establish a Teacher Education Accreditation Committee?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
If no, please specify the further detail that should be provided.					
<p>Yes. From the information provided NRW agrees with the establishment of a Teacher Education Accreditation Committee with representation on the committee drawn from the profession, experts in the field of ITE, practising or very recent head teachers and a representative from Estyn.</p> <p>NRW would like to see the good practice set in Scotland reflected in Wales as set out on Page 8, 2.18 of the Consultation Document.</p> <p><i>“GTC Scotland’s Education Committee delegates the scrutiny and evaluation of programmes to Programme Accreditation Panels. These consist of a minimum of two council members from the Education Committee and one external expert drawn from the relevant educational context”</i></p> <p>As every mention of the “classroom” is made in an indoor context and there is no mention of the natural environment, sustainability, out of classroom learning or any related topic, NRW would like to see an expert in this field as part of any panel looking at relevant programmes of study.</p>					

Question 3 – Do you agree that the criteria for the accreditation of ITE in Wales, as set out at Annex A, provides sufficient detail for the development of initial teacher education programmes?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
If no, please specify the further detail that should be provided.					

NRW does not agree that the criteria for the accreditation of ITE in Wales, as set out at Annex A, provides sufficient detail for the development of high quality initial teacher education programmes.

As stated above, all references to the “classroom” throughout Annex Two are made in an indoor context. On page 13 of *Qualified for Life – A Curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life*, published in October 2015 it states “*Successful Futures emphasises the importance of rich learning experiences being integral to the curriculum and to deep learning*”.

However there is nothing in the criteria listed that would ensure trainee teachers develop the skills to become competent and confident in the outdoors – essential to bringing the ESDGC, Biology, Geography and STEM curricular to life and an enormous benefit to both physical and mental wellbeing when using the natural environment to teach a range of subjects in. This benefit can be equally positive for the teaching staff and children involved.

The criteria are also limited to “school facilities” which again does not allude to being able to “*develop a breadth of opportunities and activities that expand horizons within and **beyond** the traditional learning environment of the classroom*” again stated on Page 13 of *Qualified for Life – A Curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life*, published in October 2015

Additional criteria could be added:

Page 3 and 5: Add – “develop student teachers’ confidence and competence in using the outdoors and natural environment for teaching and learning”.

Page 17: Add WBFGE Act to the programme inputs

Page 19/20: Add – “effective and sustainable use of the outdoor and natural environment as a learning environment and resource” to section 5.6

These additions are required in order to produce newly qualified teachers who have confidence and competence to teach in an outdoor setting and understand the benefits it allows, both in terms of a stimulating and safe setting and the associated physical and mental health benefits. This includes field survey skills, ID skills, group management and risk benefit analysis and the development and use of school grounds e.g. planting for biodiversity, outdoor classroom areas, vegetable growing and water collection and recycling. There is a need to be explicit about this, as the children the new curriculum will benefit and who are to be taught through this new system, are those most likely to be facing significant environmental issues in later life related to degradation of ecosystem services and the pressures on the sustainable use and management of our natural resources. This fact increases the importance of connecting young children with nature and their local natural environment as early as possible and maintaining that contact through their school life in order to foster positive behaviours into adult life.

Good practice has been developed and tested in Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence which highlights the need to provide opportunities to learn beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/approaches/outdoorlearning/index.asp>

NRW would be pleased to offer support to develop any opportunities to highlight the importance of sustainably managing our natural resources and the benefits of associated outdoor learning through the use of our land, resources and data, training opportunities, case studies and examples of existing accredited units which can be built into new programmes of study.

For example: The production of a case study about a Flood Alleviation Scheme provides all the resource and data to challenge GCSE students to come up with solutions to a real problem. Although maps and information are provided, a trip to the site can bring the issue to life and allow those who find paper based learning a challenge, to grasp the solution in real terms whilst covering many curricula subjects – geography, ESDGC, maths, literacy, technology and engineering, and being physically active.

Question 4 – Do you agree with the roles and responsibilities proposed for schools and HEI (higher education institution) partnerships?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If no, please specify the further detail that should be provided.					
NRW has no comment to make with regard to this question					

Question 5 – Do you agree with the overarching requirements that accredited providers must meet for all programmes of ITE study?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
If no, please explain why.					
NRW agrees with this statement but wishes to see the opportunity to develop confidence and competence in providing opportunities outside the traditional classroom as a part of the university/college setting and explicit within the programmes of ITE study.					
NRW would be pleased to offer support to develop any opportunities to highlight the importance of sustainably managing our natural resources and the benefits of associated outdoor learning through the use of our land, resources and data, training opportunities, case studies and examples of existing accredited units which can be built into existing programmes of study.					

Question 6 – Do you agree with the entry and selection minimum standard requirements for student teachers in Wales?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If no, please explain why.					
NRW has no comment to make with regard to this question					

Question 7 – Do you agree with the principal that the EWC should have the power to charge a fee (which will be subject to a separate consultation) for the consideration of applications, which will be payable by HEIs participating in the accreditation process?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If no, please explain why					
NRW has no comment to make with regard to this question					

Question 8 – How could the policy under consideration be formulated or revised so that it would have positive effects, or increased positive effects, on:

- (a) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language?
- (b) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

Supporting comments

The Welsh language has a unique way of describing nature, culture and the landscape of Wales. Any learning in or about the natural environment can be used to provide positive effects. NRW has previously provided training to teachers through the University of Wales Bangor to improve spoken Welsh whilst benefiting from being in the natural environment. Outdoor Learning can provide opportunities to reinforce use of the Welsh language in a real and meaningful context and we would be happy to share the learning from this project.

Question 9 – How could the policy under consideration be formulated or revised so that it would not have adverse effects, or so that it would have decreased adverse effects, on:

- (a) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language?
- (b) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

Supporting comments

NRW has no comment to make with regard to this question

Question 10 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

Supporting comments

The ITE programmes of study should aim to produce newly qualified teachers who have confidence and competence in an outdoor setting and continued CPD should be included in the proposed passport.

In order to provide context to some of the questions above, NRW would like to highlight the information below:

It is important that ITE programmes of study recognise the importance of learning **in and about** the natural environment and of connecting children and young people **to** the natural environment. This is a priority in order that they can learn to understand and appreciate the importance of sustainably managing our natural resources now and in the future, to improve Wales' well-being, and provide a better future for all. This needs to be embedded in the new Successful Futures curriculum to ensure that the current push for digital literacy, whilst recognised to be extremely important, does not overshadow the sustainability, physical literacy and health agendas.

There is much evidence and regular reports to show that children and young people are spending less time in the natural environment, with children's roaming range decreasing from 6 miles in 1915 to 300 yards in 2015. It is acknowledged that in today's modern childhood, 11-15 year olds spend around 7.5 hours a day looking at screens. Reports also highlight the detrimental effect this can have on both mental and physical well-being, development, learning and for Wales, the linked concern regarding the lack of ownership of the environment and therefore the understanding of the need to manage its natural resources sustainably:

http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/connecting-with-nature_tcm9-354603.pdf

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/documents/read-our-natural-childhood-report.pdf>

Opportunities to learn in and about the natural environment, including field work and residential stays, are essential to provide memorable experiences, increase physical activity (learning outdoors can lead to lifelong recreation habits), and provide opportunities:

- to gain experience from hands on, experiential learning tasks which help to develop leadership, communication, team work, problem solving skills and confidence
- consider future career paths
- for those who do not as well in a classroom setting, to succeed in a less formal environment
- to improve physical development, outside the usual sport related physical activity
- to provide opportunities which contribute to positive mental well-being
- to develop skills to assess and manage risk when making decisions.
- to connect with the natural world, built heritage and culture
- to develop child led play experiences (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- to gain skills in field survey and practical scientific experimental techniques (contributing to STEM)
- to explore and develop an enhanced understanding of how the world works, how to interact with it and Wales' position within the global context

“Outdoor learning experiences are often remembered for a lifetime. Integrating learning and outdoor experiences, whether through play in the immediate grounds or adventures further afield, provides relevance and depth to the curriculum in ways that are difficult to achieve indoors”.

Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning – page 5

“Well-constructed and well-planned outdoor learning helps develop the skills of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection necessary for our children and young people to meet the social, economic and environmental challenges of life in the 21st century. Outdoor learning connects children and young people with the natural world, with our built heritage and our culture and society, and encourages lifelong involvement and activity in..... outdoors”.

Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning – page 7

*A review by the **National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)** and **Kings College London** found substantial evidence that fieldwork and out of classroom learning, providing it was properly conceived, adequately planned, well taught and effectively followed up, not only improves students’ knowledge but also teaches skills that add value to their everyday experiences in the classroom.*

In answer to research showing the down side of limited connection with and time spent in the natural environment, many reports highlight the benefits and the strong links between the environment, learning, and health.

Research by [NeF](#) reported the benefits of outdoor learning as:

- **Confidence:** children had the freedom, time and space to learn and demonstrate independence
- **Social skills:** children gained increased awareness of the consequences of their actions on peers through team activities such as sharing tools and participating in play
- **Communication:** language development was prompted by the children’s sensory experiences
- **Motivation:** the woodland tended to fascinate the children and they developed a keenness to participate and the ability to concentrate over longer periods of time
- **Physical skills:** these improvements were characterised by the development of physical stamina and gross and fine motor skills
- **Knowledge and understanding:** the children developed an interest in the natural surroundings and respect for the environment

Further focused research by Forestry Commission Scotland on [physical activity](#) found that during a day spent learning in a woodland environment, children were 2.7 times more active than on a normal inactive school day, but more surprisingly 2.2 times more active than a day with timetabled P.E. A further report looked at the [restorative health benefits](#) of woodland based learning concluded that the environment was advantageous to mood and helped stabilise anger.

It can be seen from the brief description above that outdoor learning has a key role to play in improving outcomes for children and young people in Wales and can help establish positive behaviours into adulthood.

The links between the natural environment, learning and health are obvious and increased collaboration between these agendas within Welsh Government, other public bodies and agencies has the ability to contribute to a wide range of prevention agendas from obesity to decreasing literacy and numeracy levels.

Natural Resources Wales held a conference in March 2014 entitled “Environmental Education and Out of Classroom Learning – where do we want to be in 5 years’ time?” Following a presentation by Professor Peter Higgins of Edinburgh University and discussion at the event, the consensus of the 85 delegates was that Wales could learn much from the developments in Scotland including:

- To consider that Health and Well-being and Learning for Sustainability should have equal priority to Literacy and Numeracy within the curriculum
- To highlight areas of the curriculum that could be delivered in the outdoors in all curriculum literature
- **To include a core element of teaching outside the classroom in all ITE courses (and as a requirement of teacher registration if that should ever be adopted in Wales)**

NRW has recently highlighted three clear priorities to the Children, Young People and Education Senedd Committee which have a clear relevance to this consultation.

1. To embed the sustainable management of natural resources as a cross-curricular thread throughout the new Successful Futures programme during its planning stage. NRW recognises that the term “sustainable management of natural resources” is new (Environment Act 2016) in relation to the curriculum, however this approach maps easily to the existing Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) curriculum. The teaching of this subject also supports topics across the curriculum. NRW is happy to see in the detail on Page 31 of the Successful Futures report, that ethical and informed citizens will be expected to “show their commitment to the sustainability of the planet”. This should include how they can contribute to a more sustainable local and global society and environment, by developing an understanding and appreciation of the natural world and the services it provides (the ecosystem approach), by developing an understanding of the need to manage our natural resources sustainably now and in the future and the essential contribution this will make to a more resilient Wales. In future the ESDGC curriculum (or its replacement) will be the main vehicle to embed this thinking to ensure longer-term outcomes for children and young people and by using outdoor learning as a vehicle to do this the added benefits outlined in question 1 can be realised. Embedding SMNR into the curriculum will also contribute to the achievement of the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the delivery of the Environment Act and contribute to future generations of skilled workforce (including green jobs) and knowledgeable policy makers, ensuring a resilient and sustainably managed environment.

2. It is essential that initial teacher training courses and ongoing CPD for teachers includes developing the skills and knowledge to teach about and foster an understanding and appreciation of the natural world and the services it provides. Linked to Professor John Furlongs report, all practitioners also need to be competent and appropriately trained to facilitate the process of learning in the natural environment including field survey skills, ID skills, group management and risk benefit analysis. This also includes the development and use of school grounds e.g. planting for biodiversity, outdoor classroom areas, vegetable growing and water collection and recycling. There is a need to be explicit about this, as the children this new curriculum will benefit are those most likely be facing significant environmental issues in later life related to degradation of ecosystem services and the pressures on the sustainable use and management of our natural resources. This fact increases the importance of connecting young children with nature and their local natural environment as early as possible and maintaining that contact through their school life in order to foster positive behaviours into adult life.

Identifying and resolving barriers to accessing learning “in and about” the natural environment for all key stages within LEA’s is also required. This will help to ensure teachers and trainee teachers have the support to provide balanced opportunities for pupils

and understand how a wide range of curriculum subjects including literacy and maths can be taught and assessed in the outdoors.

3. To encourage links between the environment, education and skills and health departments and to increase joint working (programmes and projects), shared budgets and more use of the links to maximise the contribution to a range of prevention agendas.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:

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