International qualified teacher status (iQTS): inspection report

The University of Buckingham

Inspection Dates: 24th – 27th November 2025

Contents

Summary of iQTS inspection and grading

The University of Buckingham was inspected by Penta International, a Department for Education (DfE) approved iQTS inspectorate, referred to in this document as 'the inspectorate'.

The inspection took place between 24/11/2025 and 27/11/2025.The inspectorate assessed the provider's iQTS provision to be:

Grade 1

The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and other core iQTS documents. The quality of leadership and management and the quality of programme design and delivery meet all requirements and exceeds in most areas.

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Purpose of iQTS inspection

The purpose of iQTS inspection is to:

- ensure that delivery of iQTS is compliant with the:
    - iQTS criteria
    - Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF)
    - iQTS Teachers' Standards
- assess and evaluate the effectiveness of:
    - provider leadership and management
    - programme design and delivery
- give independent external assurance that iQTS provision meets DfE's quality expectations and legal requirements
- protect and maintain the integrity and reputation of the quality of iQTS
- identify key strengths and where relevant, provide recommendations to the provider on what it should do to improve
- inform:
    - trainees considering undertaking iQTS
    - schools considering employing iQTS trainees or partnering with an iQTS provider as a placement school
    - parents with children attending a school staffed by iQTS trainees or iQTS holders
    - governments and organisations who have an interest in iQTS quality and standards

The inspection of a provider's iQTS provision and its subsequent grading is entirely separate from the inspection and grading of its domestic initial teacher training (ITT).

For more information, read the [International qualified teacher status (iQTS): inspection policy - GOV.UK](#) in full.

Information about this iQTS provider

The University of Buckingham is an initial teacher training (ITT) provider accredited by DfE to deliver qualified teacher status (QTS) programmes in England.

DfE approval for iQTS delivery is an extension of The University of Buckingham's domestic ITT accreditation. The provider was approved to deliver iQTS in the academic year 2023/24 and is now in its third year of iQTS delivery.

In the academic year 2025/26, The University of Buckingham offers iQTS training in the following countries:

- Cambodia
- Cayman Islands
- China
- Germany
- India
- Ireland
- Jordan
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- Poland
- Qatar
- Thailand
- Turkey
- United Arab Emirates

A total of 33 iQTS trainees are undertaking the primary and secondary iQTS programme with this provider.

This provider also offers an academic award with their iQTS programme. However, academic awards are beyond the remit of iQTS inspection, and the inspectorate cannot make any comment on the quality of this provider's academic award.

In-person inspection activities

The inspectorate's in-person inspection included:

- visiting one overseas placement school partnering with the provider in the academic year 2025/26

- meeting iQTS trainees, iQTS mentors and other members of school staff involved in iQTS delivery

Remote inspection activities

The inspectorate's remote inspection activity included:

- meeting iQTS provider staff as part of the review and collection of inspection evidence. These included meetings with the Dean of Education, Director of International Programmes, Director of Programmes, Head of Cohort, The Faculty Quality Manager, Lead Tutor and Lead Mentor

- scrutiny of the compliance grid and the full evidence base supplied by the provider

- remote inspection activities with another three placement schools partnering with the provider. These activities also involved meeting iQTS trainees, iQTS mentors and other members of school staff, alongside observation of the provider's in person tutor visits.

Summary of inspection findings

The provider's overall grade is based on the inspectorate's assessment of the following 3 elements:

- compliance of provision with the iQTS criteria
- quality of leadership and management
- quality of programme design and delivery

Grade 1 is the highest grade that can be awarded and grade 4 is the lowest.

A full description of iQTS inspection gradings can be seen at Annex A.

Areas of strength

- There are well-established layers of quality assurance operating from recruitment through to award. Oversight by a dedicated Faculty Quality Manager ensures that compliance and quality processes are consistently and rigorously maintained.

- Partnerships with schools and mentors are strong and mutually supportive. The depth of professional collaboration contributes to trainee confidence and facilitates sustained professional development. Schools returning to work with

the provider speak highly of the programme and the professional experience associated with University of Buckingham.

- The in-person tutor visit for every partner school and trainee further consolidates the partnership model, enabling early and constructive dialogue between trainees, mentors and the provider, and strengthening the sense of professional cohesion.

- A key strength of the programme is the intensive training and practice (ITAP) model. The 100-hour structure gives trainees focused time to build and apply core teaching skills.

- The provider demonstrates a clear ethos of commitment and professional pride. The team engages in continuous reflection and review, with a culture of improvement that meaningfully benefits all stakeholders, particularly trainees and mentors.

- Trainees consistently express a strong sense of belonging to the Buckingham community, indicating that the system of academic and pastoral connection is effectively embedded.

Areas identified for improvement

- The provider is responsive to trainee feedback and would benefit from refining systems that capture additional learning and support needs, enabling clearer demonstration of progress and the effectiveness of interventions.

- Strengthening the pathway into post-programme employment would ensure all trainees are supported into meaningful teaching roles. Establishing a longitudinal record of destinations, beyond anonymous surveys, would provide clearer evidence of alumni success and programme impact.

Compliance of provision with iQTS criteria

The provider was compliant with the iQTS criteria.

Quality of leadership and management

1. Leadership and management of the iQTS programme are characterised by a distinct sense of ownership and collegiate responsibility. The leadership team has a consistent and confident command of the programme's direction and a coherent shared vision for its ongoing development.

2. The information on the provider's website is clear and accessible. It sets out the programme's expectations, entry criteria, time commitments and structural features clearly. The website is regularly updated and is a helpful resource for applicants and future trainees. This helps to ensure that the process for application, and expectations prior to admission are clear.

3. Pre-course qualification checks are thorough, ensuring that all trainees meet academic and language requirements. International qualifications are verified through the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) to confirm UK equivalence. The university accepts a range of recognised English proficiency certificates. These are complemented by evidence of language ability shown through written applications, interview performance and communication on the programme.

4. Recruitment procedures are orderly, timely and handled with professionalism. Trainees reported that communication with the university was responsive and supportive, and that they felt guided throughout the process. Entry checks and verification of certificates, references and background checks are meticulously conducted and recorded. The school placement approval meeting (SPAM) is a particularly effective mechanism for evaluating suitability in relation to the teaching environment. It ensures consistency between procedural compliance and professional judgement.

5. Safeguarding and suitability processes are carefully managed and fully embedded within the programme's operational systems. The single central record is underpinned by the university's compliance framework and bespoke adaptations, reflecting the specific demands of international contexts. Suitability checks are conducted rigorously, including document verification, reference checks, and International Child Protection Certificate or equivalent where relevant.

6. Leaders ensure that trainees receive structured support. Induction materials are practical, sequential and accessible, promoting an early understanding of systems and expectations. Trainees describe the induction period as helpful, contributing significantly to their confidence as they enter the programme.

7. Communication across the programme is strong and appreciated by stakeholders. Trainees referred repeatedly to the weekly newsletter as an effective tool for managing their workload and priorities. It contributes significantly to the clarity of the trainee experience and supports their organisation across a demanding working week. Communication with mentors is also timely and constructive. Mentors describe to ease with which questions or concerns can be raised.

8. Leadership is open, reflective and solution focused. Leaders use feedback well to review their programme. They explore where processes might better serve trainees and mentors, and where experiences in schools can meaningfully inform programme refinements. The commitment to continuous improvement is evidenced in the recent introduction of the live special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) support tracker. This enables new disclosures or emerging needs to be captured immediately rather than retrospectively. Similarly, the initiative to establish a more targeted approach to monitoring trainee employment post-award is proving very effective. It demonstrates leadership's attentiveness to long-term outcomes and their desire to strengthen the programme's contribution to the international teaching workforce. This capacity for internal challenge and adjustment is a clear strength.

9. Engagement with partner schools is a defining strength of leadership. Schools repeatedly report that The University of Buckingham is a reputable partner that is responsive and collaborative. Returning partner schools also comment that they are able to promote the university's iQTS programme due to the calibre of support and professionalism of staff. The value of the in-person tutor visit early in the year was emphasised repeatedly by trainees and mentors. This builds a foundation of mutual confidence and creates shared accountability and partnership.

10. Workload, wellbeing and professional support are handled with insight and empathy. Leaders recognise the additional pressures of professional teaching roles across varied international contexts. Mechanisms to monitor workload and intervene where necessary are well established. Trainees and mentors routinely describe the team as responsive, and supportive. The wellbeing provision, including counselling access, the wellbeing hub, tutor and mentor drop-ins, SEND screening and personalised tracking, values the person as well as the professional.

11. The leadership team is forward-thinking and fully aware of the global educational context. It adapts the programme's content to international differences in policy, regulation, curriculum culture and safeguarding expectations most effectively. The 'Belonging' sessions and perspective-broadening exchanges, through weekly breakout sessions during lectures, develops trainees' understanding of cultural diversity and international pedagogical variation. The recent establishment of a faculty office in China, strengthens the responsiveness for trainees in eastern time zones. This shows Buckingham's commitment to transnational accessibility.

12. Technology is used well to reinforce leadership ambition and oversight. Engagement with online teaching, assessment tracking and resource interaction enables the early identification of emerging patterns, whether of

disengagement, delay, or particularly strong progression. This enables leaders to intervene with precision and provide tailored developmental input where needed.

13. Quality assurance is systematic, purposeful and consistently applied across the programme. The layered mechanisms for reviewing trainees' progress, teaching quality, administrative compliance and policy adherence are very effective. The quality improvement plan (QIP) provides a structured process for tracking priorities and evaluating impact, with regular revisiting ensuring that actions lead to demonstrable change. Alongside this, the self-evaluation form (SEF) shows that leaders' regular reflection and evaluation is accurate.

14. Moderation, internal review points and ongoing communication with schools contribute to coherent decision-making and consistency of judgement. The end-of-programme viva further strengthens this system, providing a final moderated reflection of each trainee's professional readiness and their secure understanding of pedagogical principles. The quality assurance process protects standards, supports trainees and ensures the ongoing integrity of the programme extremely well.

Quality of programme delivery and design

15. The programme design and delivery are of an exemplary standard. The programme is highly structured, thoughtfully sequenced and strongly evidence informed. It provides a training experience that equips trainees with the knowledge, skills and reflective capacity they need to become successful teachers. At the core of the programme is a meticulously constructed curriculum aligned with the iQTS Teachers' Standards and the ITTECF. There is a coherent link between theoretical learning, practical application and developmental assessment points.

16. The professional knowledge audits (PKAs) and termly reviews provide a strong foundation for progression, enabling trainees to identify and revisit areas of growth whilst reinforcing a cycle of self-assessment. The PKAs enable trainees to identify their strengths and areas of development. They show where trainees have evidenced a particular knowledge or skill, where they are frequently applying them within their practice and where more focus may be required.

17. The delivery of the taught content is cohesive and meaningful. The weekly online sessions are structured and sequenced consistently well. Trainees know when and how content will be delivered and where to access reinforcement materials. Subject-specific elements are highly valued and contribute strongly to trainees' deepening subject knowledge. Trainees

describe how insights from these specialist sessions informed their practice. The breadth of access to subject expertise across such a geographically dispersed cohort is commendable.

18. Trainees are encouraged to engage in weekly academic reading as a core part of their professional development. Each trainee has been provided with a copy of Introduction to Teaching: Making Teacher Training Work by Barnaby Lenon (2025), alongside other readings embedded within their individual professional development programmes (PDPs). Trainees reflect positively on the reading component, describing it as both enjoyable and practically useful in informing their classroom planning and pedagogical thinking.

19. A distinguishing feature of the provider's programme is the strength of the ITAP model. The 100-hour training and practice structure provides a deeply focused approach that embeds key teaching competencies. Each weekly focus is introduced through expert materials, reinforced through mentor-guided reflection, and subsequently applied in classroom practice. Mentors comment that they now incorporate aspects of ITAP-style coaching into their wider school work. This ripple-effect demonstrates meaningful transfer of training principles beyond the trainee cohort.

20. Delivery through digital platforms is effective. Online resources are consistently high in quality. The programme's virtual learning environment houses the PDP schedules, assessment prompts, reading materials and clear expectations. The programme additionally makes thoughtful use of specialist software for mentoring guidance, enabling clear tracking of weekly foci and ITAP alignment.

21. All trainees are employed in schools prior to the start of the programme, ensuring an authentic and sustained teaching context from the outset. The school placement agreement meeting (SPAM) is used to confirm that each placement provides a suitable environment for meeting the iQTS Teachers' Standards and applying the ITTECF. A significant proportion of trainees already teach at or above 80% of a normal teacher's timetable, providing extensive classroom experience during training.

22. The second school placement or equivalent in-school diversification represents practicality. Where physical movement to a separate institution is not possible, trainees are provided with opportunities to extend into alternate key stages, curriculum areas or learner demographics within their existing school. This flexible yet principled approach to placement design, helps to ensure equity of experience and developmental opportunity.

23. Mentoring is a notable success of programme delivery. Mentors engage seriously with their responsibilities and demonstrated understanding of

pedagogical aims and developmental goals. The quality of mentor and trainee dialogue is high. Discussions focus on instructional techniques, self-reflection, the iQTS Teachers' Standards and plans for the following week. The option for mentors to pursue formal mentoring qualifications with discounted tuition, underscores the programme's commitment to capacity-building beyond the trainee cohort.

24. The provider gathers stakeholder feedback systematically from trainees, mentors, tutors and partner schools, and uses this to inform programme improvement. Prior trainee feedback led directly to a more streamlined approach to paperwork, reducing administrative burden and ensuring that documentation is purposeful. The on-line platform presents information in a step-by-step, user-friendly structure that supports clarity and accessibility. Leaders continue to seek feedback throughout the year and engage with it constructively, ensuring that programme design and delivery remain responsive, efficient and grounded in real trainee experience.

25. Assessment procedures are coherent and thorough. Weekly mentor observations, tutor visits and termly progress reviews provide ongoing insights into trainee development, offering the opportunity to triangulate evidence. Each trainee presents with a consistent evidential portfolio of what is documented, what is observed live and what is reflected upon in a clear and credible narrative of progression.

26. The end-of-programme viva is a celebratory assessment, requiring trainees to articulate, synthesise and evidence their professional journey toward meeting the Teachers' Standards.

27. Viewed in its entirety, the programme demonstrates considered design that balances theoretical underpinning with practical application, providing both structure and flexibility, and combining academic rigour with professional responsiveness. The programme equips trainees to emerge as reflective and assured teachers with a strong sense of professional identity and connection to a wider educational community.

Next steps

The provider will work on the areas identified for improvement in this report. DfE will assess their progress within 3 months.

The provider will be inspected again in 3 to 4 years' time.

Contact us

If you have questions about this report or any other aspect of the iQTS programme, please contact us at iqts.policy@education.gov.uk.

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition/Explanation
Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF)	The ITTECF framework sets out what trainee and early career teachers need to know, and know how to do, at the start of their careers. It captures the minimum entitlement to training for both in a single framework that will come into effect from autumn 2025. iQTS providers should continue to use the ITTECF as they did the ITT Core Content Framework (CCF, 2019) ensuring that all framework statements are covered.
DfE	Department for Education.
Inspection	The process carried out by DfE-approved inspectorates to ensure that delivery of iQTS is compliant with the iQTS criteria, the Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF) and iQTS Teachers' Standards.
Inspectorates	Independent companies who quality assure products and services in overseas and domestic education.
iQTS	International qualified teacher status.
International qualified teacher status Teachers' Standards	Standards which trainees must meet by the end of the programme to be awarded iQTS.
International qualified teacher status: criteria for providers	Statutory guidance on the criteria that providers and their partners must meet to provide iQTS.
International qualified teacher status (iQTS): inspection policy - GOV.UK	Sets out DfE's inspection policy and gives information about how inspections are carried out.
ITT	Initial teacher training.
ITT provider	Initial teacher training provider accredited by DfE to deliver training leading to QTS.
QTS	Qualified teacher status.
Working days	Monday to Friday, excluding national holidays, which will differ overseas.

Annex A: Inspection gradings

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and other core iQTS documents. The quality of leadership and management and the quality of programme design and delivery meets all requirements and exceeds in most areas.	The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and other core iQTS documents. The quality of leadership and management and the quality of the programme design and delivery meets all requirements and may exceed in some areas	The provision does not fully comply with the iQTS criteria and other core iQTS documents. The non-compliance is minor, easily rectifiable and does not have significant negative impact on the learning of trainees or their development into qualified teachers. It also does not significantly affect the quality of leadership, management or the quality of programme design and delivery.	The provision is not compliant with the iQTS criteria and all other core iQTS documents. Non-compliance has a significant negative impact on the quality of leadership and management and the quality of programme design and delivery. Recommendations are significant; therefore, reinspection will be required.