

## WORKING GROUP: QTS SKILLS TESTS IN NUMERACY

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At the first meeting of the working group, a variety of suggestions was made for producing a critical research-based response to the Government's imposition of the skills tests in numeracy on those seeking to attain Qualified Teacher Status. At Loughborough, we met to review those suggestions, to report on progress to date and to discuss ways forward either jointly or separately.

Members from Sheffield Hallam University reported on the work they had been doing which aimed to catalogue trainees' feelings with respect to the test and their perceptions of the impact of the tests on their sense of professionalism and of what it means to be a teacher. They presented a brief paper about work done so far. This appears in these proceedings after this report (see Boylan et al – "An Outrageous Requirement"). Part of their research involved a questionnaire and Sue Pope from Roehampton had given the same questionnaire to her students with very similar results.

Pat Drake from Sussex described the research she was planning. It will involve exit interviews with a group of about 5-8 English PGCE students on the day of the test. She will be focusing on:

- overall feelings with respect to having just done the test;
- particular questions (which will have to be identified in the morning) to try to unpack feelings with respect to particular types of question, e.g. multiple choice, mental, read from a graph, calculations required but not explicitly demanded, calculations explicitly demanded;
- first impressions of which questions were the most difficult.

Pat will then try to re-interview the same people after the results have come out, briefly, to compare content areas of the identified questions with their perceptions about relevance to working practice. Colleagues from other Universities were interested in working with Pat to collect similar data at their own institutions.

A third area of suggested activity to be taken further involved sharing perceptions of the quality of the sample questions and the TTA support materials. Whilst it was understood that any mathematics materials will almost inevitably contain errors, it was felt that the nature of the errors in the material, indicating real mathematical misunderstandings rather than slips, were a cause for concern. Some colleagues undertook to do further research on this.

It is intended that all these projects will be followed up at future meetings of the working group.