

## WORKING GROUP: QTS SKILLS TESTS IN NUMERACY

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The purpose of the session was to begin the process of developing a critical, research-based response to the government's imposition of skills tests in numeracy on those seeking to attain qualified teacher status (QTS). We asked

- what are the key research questions we should be asking about this development?
- how might we set about answering them?

Strategies suggested included the following.

1. Conduct exit interviews with a small number of students across a range of phases at the end of the test in June with a view to:
  - establishing evidence about affective responses to being in test conditions
  - investigating whether trainees recognise the particular skills being tested as being required in school situations
  - asking the students to provide exemplars of the numeracy needs experienced on school placement.
2. Take four or five questions from the sample paper into schools (interview or questionnaire??) and ask teachers to:
  - do the questions
  - discuss whether the questions are 'genuine' - is this what they need to do in this context and how frequently?
  - ask what teachers have actually done this year that has made numeracy demands on them.
3. In public, and especially at meetings where government representatives are speaking, begin with some warm up numeracy questions, to raise the 'ridicule factor' and maintain sense of the surreal.
4. Find out what institutions are doing in terms of preparing trainees, and why, and how the administration is being done, and why, with a view to collating evidence

about comparability/validity and to compare what involvement/responsibilities those working in mathematics education are taking.

5. Identify particular skills 'being tested' and then simulate these in other ways to check how worthwhile the instrument of the skills test is as a method of assessment of student teachers.
6. Give the mental test to a variety of different populations, e.g. students, secondary deputy heads in Beacon schools, people in the street, other professionals and then ask whether they think success in the skills test is a suitable gate-keeping instrument for QTS.
7. Ask deputy heads & headteachers how the test relates to what they want from an NQT.

The session may have been one-off or the working group may meet again at the Loughborough BSRLM day conference in May depending on the responses from participants and others.