

# Year 2 Regional Conference ECT Training Overview

3 hours

## How to use this overview

This training session outline aims to provide the training facilitator with a detailed outline of how to facilitate the training.

This conference aims to introduce Early Career Teachers (ECTs) to Year 2 of the programme and it is suggested that mentors may join the session halfway through. The learning intentions relate to the Early Career Framework (ECF) standards and there are suggested activities to enable ECTs to meet these intentions. The activities are intended to serve as a model and facilitators will want to adapt these and shape the session to suit the development priorities of the ECTs in the group. All materials are either embedded here or provided as a resource on the online learning platform.

## Preparation for the facilitator

You should familiarise yourself with:

ECF Year 2 Handbook, Practitioner Inquiry, which includes summaries of research, stimulus material and activities for use in mentor meetings, self-directed study and training sessions

Greany, T. (2014) 'Research and Development: the next big thing for schools?', Professional Development Today, March 16 (available in PDF format on the learning platform).

## Preparation for the ECTs

In their first meetings with mentors preceding this conference, ECTs will have revisited ECF standards from Module 1 and discussed: what are my development priorities?

In preparation for the conference, ECTs will have been asked to consider these questions:

- what are some of the opportunities and challenges for engaging in and with research in your school context?
- how do you currently use evidence to improve your teaching?

### **Learning intentions for this session**

The second annual regional conference will enable the ECT to learn:

- the benefits to their own professional learning of engaging in professional inquiry and how the approach will be used to deepen their engagement with the ECF (ECF Standards 8.1 and 8.7)
- how to form an exploratory inquiry question which examines the impact upon pupils of their normal practice (ECF Standard 8a)
- how to collect evidence about their practice (ECF Standard 8d)

### **Introduction**

This conference provides an important introduction to the second year of the ECF which uses inquiry approaches to deepen ECTs' engagement with the ECF.

Year 2 of the programme allows ECTs to deepen their practice knowledge allowing them to 'look up' from a concentration on their day-to-day experience to see their impact on pupils and develop a more fluent approach to teaching. There are 4 modules in Year 2. Some ECTs – whose progress may have been disrupted in Year 1 or who have significant areas for development – will benefit from a stronger emphasis on mentoring and will deepen their practice knowledge and skills by revisiting their learning from Year 1, referring back to relevant session materials. Other ECTs – those who made progress in line with normal expectations – will adopt a more explicit inquiry approach to their learning now.

In Year 2 of the programme, for those adopting this explicit inquiry approach, there are 3 inquiry cycles. In autumn half-term 1, there is an initial, exploratory phase that is essentially outward-looking – collecting evidence to find out more about a chosen area of focus (from ECF Standards 1 and 7). There is no innovation or 'development' aspect to this initial cycle. This is followed in autumn half-term 2 with a very small

improvement focused inquiry focused on engaging students in their learning (ECF Standards 2 and 3) The third cycle, in the spring term, is longer, more in-depth, and involves evaluating the impact of an aspect of ECTs' practice (ECF Standards 4, 5 and 6). For this reason, we use the more general phrase 'practitioner inquiry' to describe this strand of the ECT programme.

All ECTs will benefit from understanding practitioner inquiry principles and will decide with their mentors how to best apply these in engaging with their priority areas in the ECF.

### **Research summary for this session**

The research underpinning this session is summarised within Standard 8 ('Professional Behaviours' of the Early Career Framework). In particular, the ECT will learn that:

- 8.1 Effective professional development is likely to be sustained over time, involve expert support or coaching and opportunities for collaboration
- 8.7 Engaging in high-quality professional development can help teachers improve

And that the ECT will develop as a professional by:

- 8a. Engaging in professional development focused on developing an area of practice with clear intentions for impact on pupil outcomes, sustained over time with built-in opportunities for practice
- 8d. Engaging critically with research and discussing evidence with colleagues
- 8e. Reflecting on progress made, recognising strengths and weaknesses and identifying next steps for further improvement

The research related to 'practitioner inquiry', which provides the basis for this session, will show ECTs how they can use inquiry to deepen and extend their engagement with each aspect of the Early Career Framework.

Practitioner inquiry is a highly effective form of professional learning and development especially when it is conducted jointly, for example with a mentor and as part of a network or programme supported by a university. It is not a 'silver bullet' for improving practice and needs to be approached in a systematic way. But it can be a powerful vehicle through which to develop as an evidence-informed teacher, and will support ECTs in connecting the messages from research contained within

the ECF with their individual contexts as they reflect on, adapt, evaluate and develop their practice.

A note on evidence and workload:

Schools are already data-rich environments. Practitioner inquiries, first of all, make use of what we call here 'naturally occurring' evidence. They are in the pupils' work and the ECT's assessment of it. They are in the words and reactions of the pupils and what the ECT has heard or seen of this. When we refer to evidence-collection, in the main, we mean: look at what the pupils have done and listen to what they are saying. A practitioner inquiry invites ECTs to be more systematic about how they do this looking and listening, so they might deliberately ask a few questions of a few pupils for five minutes at the start of break time, or they might share lunch with a colleague and quiz them about how they approach a problem in their own class.

## **The training will need to cover**

### **Review 30 min**

In this review section, you should establish the principle that ECTs will be at different points in their learning journey, even though they might be at the same point in their careers. Part of the reflection required of ECTs around where they are in relation to previous learning and, importantly, their self-directed study, will have taken place in their first mentor meeting of the year, which precedes this conference. For this session, the review section will enable ECTs to understand how the approach being used in Year 2 will allow a personalised engagement with the ECF through re-visiting aspects of their learning from Year 1, in agreement with their mentor, and/or conducting practitioner inquiries that will enable them to deepen their understanding of key elements of the ECF.

You will need to check that the ECT understands:

- the learning intentions for this conference session
- the principles underpinning Year 2 of the programme, including principles of practitioner inquiry
- the structure of the programme, including increased opportunities for personalisation

- the ways in which the programme works is embedded within the ECT's professional practice, rather than being additional workload
- opportunities for collaboration with peers that will be a feature of Year 2.

## Theory to Practice

### **A. Connecting the principles of practitioner inquiry to individual school contexts: 20 mins**

Remind ECTs of the questions they considered in preparation for this conference. They will have the opportunity now to share their reflections in small groups. This will allow ECTs to recognise the importance of contextualising messages from research as they listen to the reflections of peers working in a range of phases, schools and communities. The questions will also give you as a facilitator the opportunity to gauge the level of understanding in the room and learn about the contexts of the ECTs you are working with today.

The questions ECTs will have considered are:

- what are some of the opportunities and challenges for engaging in and with research in your school context?
- how do you currently use evidence to improve your teaching?

You may wish to conduct this part of the session first in pairs to ensure full participation, then in small table groups of 4–6, then finally through some whole group facilitated discussion which draws out shared themes in ECTs' responses as well as areas of difference.

### **B. Introducing the Practitioner Inquiry Cycle: 10 mins**

Drawing on content from the ECF Year 2 Handbook, Practitioner Inquiry, introduce the inquiry cycle. Make it clear that during their first half term the ECT will be engaging in the ASK and INVESTIGATE phases through their small exploratory inquiry into an aspect of their normal practice in relation to their chosen area of the ECF.

### **C. Choosing an area of focus for Cycle 1 (Sept to Oct half-term): 30 mins**

Give ECTs time to re-read the Early Career Framework for Teacher Standards 1 (Set high expectations) and 7 (Manage behaviour effectively).

ECTs have discussed their strengths and priority areas for development in relation to the ECF in their first mentor meeting of this year. Invite ECTs to draw on this discussion and focus now on Standards 1 and 7. Ask ECTs to choose and highlight 3 potential topics (aspects of 'learn how' statements) to focus on for Cycle 1 – for example:

1d: Seeking opportunities to engage parents and carers in the education of their children (e.g. proactively highlighting successes)

7e: Using consistent language and non-verbal signals for common classroom directions.

Be clear that at this introductory stage they will only be using these themes to practise forming possible exploratory questions.

#### **D. Forming exploratory inquiry questions: 30 mins**

Mentors may join the session at this point, giving them the opportunity to actively support their mentees in developing their exploratory inquiry questions for autumn half-term 1. This sets the tone for a collaborative engagement between mentor and mentee during Year 2 and will ensure a shared understanding of inquiry principles.

Begin by explaining that there are two main types of inquiry question that we will be forming during this year: 'exploratory' and 'evaluative'. Ask table groups to discuss what the differences between these two types of question might be.

Share some examples of exploratory and evaluative questions, drawn from Standards 1 and 7 of the ECF and support ECTs in teasing out the differences, focusing on the purpose of each.

As the Practitioner Inquiry Handbook explains, an exploratory research question is designed to help you find out more about your chosen area of focus. In other words, a good exploratory question will help you understand your current practice better.

This might involve asking questions such as:

- what is the current state of play regarding ... pupils' understanding of the rules, sanctions and rewards systems in the school?
- what do pupils say about ... whether the tasks I set stretch them and yet are achievable?

- why do some pupils find it hard to ... understand what they need to do next?
- to what extent do pupils ... respond positively when I acknowledge and praise their effort and emphasise progress being made?
- to what extent do I ... intentionally and consistently use language that promotes challenge and aspiration?
- in what conditions ... do pupils feel able to make mistakes and learn from them?
- what helps pupils to ... articulate their long-term goals and helps them to see how these are related to their success in school?
- how can I find out more about how to ... engage parents and carers in the education of their children (e.g. proactively highlighting successes)?

In contrast, evaluative questions, which ECTs will be developing later on in the inquiry cycle, are specific and improvement focused, for example:

How can I develop my use of positive feedback to parents, implemented once a week for half a term, in order to improve the motivation of identified pupils in Year 4?

Ask ECTs, working with their mentors, to:

- discuss the 3 themes they have each chosen and agree on one each that they will focus on now
- together, consider what information they will need in order to understand their practice better in this area
- draft 3–4 exploratory questions each, using the question stems above as a starting point
- begin to consider what evidence might need to be gathered in order to answer each of these exploratory questions
- join with another mentor/mentee pair and use the checklist on p.11 of the ECF Year 2 Handbook, Practitioner Inquiry as a basis for peer critique of each other's questions

You might choose to end this part of the session by asking 3–4 mentor/mentee pairs to give feedback to the group and lead a discussion which addresses any misconceptions about the nature of exploratory questions.

## **E. Collecting valid evidence about your practice: 30 mins**

Explain to ECTs and mentors that they will have the opportunity to explore a range of evidence collection methods and types of evidence during the second training session of Year 2, when they will also consider what constitutes 'valid' evidence in a school context. In this final part of today's session, they will begin to think about the evidence they might wish to gather in order to answer the exploratory questions they have just drafted.

The Year 2 Handbook, Practitioner Inquiry differentiates between two types of school-based data that can be described as 'evidence':

- quantitative: counted, measured, number-based
  - e.g. test scores, behaviour points, survey results, and the use of control or comparison groups
- qualitative: descriptive, conceptual, text-based
  - e.g. observations, interviews, and looking in pupils' books

It also draws a distinction between naturally occurring data (data that schools gather as a matter of course – e.g. data relating progress, behaviour, attendance), and data that we elicit using a data collection tool (e.g. survey, observation, interview). For this initial, short inquiry into their own practice, encourage ECTs to begin by focusing on naturally occurring data as it already exists.

Invite ECTs to review the types of naturally occurring data described in the Practitioner Inquiry Handbook and discuss with their mentors:

How might the examples of naturally occurring data in their particular school contexts allow them to learn more about their own current practice in relation to their chosen ECF topic and the linked exploratory questions they have developed?

What other evidence might ECTs need in order to answer their exploratory questions? Will they be noting critical reflections in their Learning Log, for example? Encourage ECTs to be realistic about any data collection at this point.



You may wish to draw this part of the session to a close with a facilitated whole-group discussion that synthesises a set of 'top tips' for using school-based evidence to answer the exploratory inquiry questions that ECTs have created.

Explain to ECTs that they will be presenting the findings of their mini-inquiry to their mentor during their Week 5 meeting.

### **Next Steps 30 min**

Before closing, this part of the session should be used for ECTs and mentors to jointly agree on next steps and an achievable plan for this initial exploratory inquiry. For ECTs who need to revisit their learning from Year 1 and so may not be conducting this initial inquiry, mentors should support their mentees in considering how messages from this session can sharpen the quality of their reflection on their own practice this term.

Finally, make sure there is an opportunity for ECTs and their mentors to ask any questions they may have about the year ahead.