

Briefing Paper on Guidance for Funding Degree-level and PGCE Studies for Teachers

This paper sets out guidance for the funding of degree-level and professional qualifications for serving and prospective teachers. The purpose of this guidance is to provide a fair and transparent process for decision-making around selection of individuals for higher level teacher training activities and to establish a basis on which decisions may be made as to the allocation of funding for this purpose. This guidance is intended to support existing systems and processes as set out in the Code of Management, and to provide some clarity around their application to the teaching profession. Nothing in this guidance may override provisions in the Code of Management.

Decisions requested

Members of the Education Committee are asked to:

- Consider and approve the proposed guidance for funding degree level and PGCE study by prospective or serving teachers.

Context

The Education and Employment Directorate strongly supports the training and development of local teachers. The Education Committee will be aware of the difficulties experienced in recruiting and retaining excellent teachers in all subjects, but particularly specialist teachers at the secondary level. There is a general consensus in Education that ongoing investment in teacher training is essential to improving student outcomes. Teachers who have attained international standards of professional qualifications represent valuable assets within St Helena's education service.

As part of the Scheme of Service for the Teaching Profession adopted in 2015, teachers are required to have earned a relevant first degree and a Level 5 or higher qualification in order to access the highest salary grades. Within the UK, the academic requirements for Qualified Teacher Status are the first degree and the PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education), along with GCSEs at grade C or higher in English and Mathematics.

At the present time sponsorship for an individual to complete the PGCE in the UK is likely to require at least £23,000 for the one year course of study. If individuals undertaking the training are already employed by SHG at the time of the commencement of training, they are also eligible to receive half of their salary.

Options for Consideration

International PGCE programmes are increasingly available, and it is no longer the case that prospective teachers must undertake this study in the UK. All PGCE programmes, regardless of their format, will require a first degree for entry, and many will also look for some degree of experience in schools.

At present, a young St Helenian with a degree in IT is making excellent progress towards completion of a PGCE while working at Prince Andrew School. This programme requires that a fully qualified and experienced mentor teaching in the relevant area is available to support the training locally, with dedicated tutors in the UK providing the academic component of the course via distance learning and further support offered by the directorate's Teacher Trainer. The cost of the international PGCE is less than £6,000.

Proposed Guidance for Funding Degree Level and PGCE Study by Prospective or Serving Teachers

Drawing on previous discussion with the Education Committee and the direction provided by the Committee in the August 2018 meeting, the following guidance for funding PGCE studies is proposed:

- The Education and Employment Directorate will seek to provide support for serving and prospective teachers to earn academic and teaching qualifications up to the level required by the St Helena Scheme of Service for the Teaching Profession.
- Funding for degree level and post-graduate study, including the PGCE, cannot be guaranteed. Individuals seeking such support make make a formal application, setting out a clear plan for their course of study and a rationale for how supporting their educational goals will directly benefit education in St Helena.
- Approval for such training shall lie first with the Director of Education, but will always be dependent on available funding.
- The first preference in pursuing degree-level study and PGCE qualifications funded directly by the Education and Employment Directorate will be for distance learning undertaken while working within schools in St Helena, unless there are circumstances that make this impossible.
- Where individuals who have already earned a first degree indicate interest in completing professional teaching qualifications through PGCE studies, the Education and Employment Directorate will offer support for the distance learning option wherever this may be feasibly undertaken.
- The local delivery of both degree level and post-graduate study will be deemed feasible if, in the judgment of the Education Directorate:
 - An appropriate course of study is available for delivery in St Helena.
 - In the case of the PGCE, there is a reasonable certainty that appropriate support and mentorship can be assured.

- The cost of training delivered locally, whether by conventional distance learning or otherwise, is substantially less than the total cost of such training undertaken overseas.
- Funding for the training is available.
- The course of study is deemed to meet the needs of St Helena.
- In extraordinary cases, and in those cases where the necessary professional support is unavailable on St Helena and where funding is available without undue compromise of other priorities, the Director of Education may consider applications for overseas study for candidates seeking either degree level studies or the PGCE.