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School of Education  
Last revised January 2024

**PGCE Reference Policy**

1. Utility

The references we provide should support Headteachers and other employers in identifying the candidate most suited to their particular post. References should enable potential employers to identify differences between candidates whilst enabling them to make their own judgement about the individual candidates’ overall quality. To that end, all Exeter University PGCE References for current trainees or those applying for a teaching post in the year following their PGCE year should include the sections outlined in section 3 below (see Annex 1 for template).

1. Administration

References are completed by the trainee teacher’s subject leader or personal tutor. Trainees should direct reference requests to their named tutor, through the [ed-references@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ed-references@exeter.ac.uk) email address, who will direct the request to the relevant tutor. Any reference emailed directly to schools should be copied to [ed-references@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ed-references@exeter.ac.uk) to enable complete records to be kept. This ensures that all reference requests can be responded to swiftly where tutors are away from the office.

1. Format

Reference requests should be responded to using the University of Exeter PGCE standard format. Where reference requests send a specific form, tutors should acknowledge receipt of this form as follows, *‘We are pleased to attach a reference for xxx. It is University of Exeter PGCE Policy to respond to reference requests using our standard reference format as this enables us to respond to requests swiftly and ensure equality of opportunity for our trainees, and we are sure this will provide you with all the required information. Please get in touch if you need anything further.’*

All PGCE References should include the following information:

1. A **brief** paragraph about the structure of the course
2. A completed grid (e.g annex 1) offering judgements about the candidate’s teaching capabilities, with the sentence ‘*ratings provided offer tutors’ subjective views of the candidate’s ability as demonstrated on the PGCE Programme and are not equivalent to Ofsted gradings’.*
3. Comment about the candidate’s particular skills, with evidential quotes from relevant UVT records, FRAPs etc.
4. Comment about the candidate’s academic performance and capacity to make critical and constructive use of research and innovation in classroom practice.
5. A sentence about Safeguarding (see point 4 below)
6. Where appropriate, a disclaimer about offering health and punctuality information, in line with disability legislation (see point 5 below)
7. A summary sentence highlighting whether the candidate can be *recommended without reservation (see point 6 below)*.
8. All PGCE students from Exeter are able to access ECT support. Please see our website for more information -<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/nqt/>
9. Safeguarding

All references should include a statement about the candidate’s suitability to work with children, using the following form of words. ‘*Before beginning the PGCE, we require all students to undertake an enhanced DBS check. I know of no reason why xxx should not be employed to work with children.’* If there were any concerns relating to safeguarding during a candidate’s training year which resulted in a fitness to practise investigation, please contact the Partnership Director and ITE Programme Manager for advice before continuing with the reference.

1. Disability Legislation

Current legislation is such that we are unable to provide details of a student’s health and attendance record within a reference (see <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publication/pre-employment-health-questions-guidance-job-applications-section-60-equality-act-2010> for further details). If schools specifically request this information, a sentence should be included as follows ‘*In line with Section 60 of the Equality Act 2010, we are unable to provide details of any trainee teacher’s health and attendance record prior to a job offer being made’.*

1. Cause for Concern

Where trainees are currently a cause for concern, the reference should highlight areas of strength and also areas which the trainee is currently developing, and the final sentence should be adjusted accordingly, from ‘*recommend without reservation’* to *‘are able to recommend’* or *‘believe that xxx will meet the Teachers’ Standards by the end of the course’.* If there are real concerns that the trainee will fail to meet the standards, this sentence should simply be omitted.

1. Telephone references

It is not our policy to provide telephone references, and any telephone conversation should be followed up with a written reference.

1. References for trainees from previous years  
   For teaching references where the trainee was on the PGCE course more than one year ago, please see Annex 2 template. (Note: Teaching references for trainees in the first year following their PGCE year should use the standard Annex 1 template). Where the request is for an academic reference rather than a teaching reference, please see Annex 3

**Annex 1** - Exemplar Personalised Teaching Reference (for current trainees and those requesting a teaching reference during the year following their PGCE year – to be completed by the personal tutor)

**Annex 2** – Exemplar Standard Teaching Reference (for trainees on the PGCE course more than one year ago who gained the PGCE with QTS and require a teaching reference – to be completed by the personal tutor with subject lead cc’d in)

**Annex 3** – Exemplar Standard Academic Reference (for trainees who gained the PGCE with QTS and require an academic reference – to be completed by the personal tutor with subject lead cc’d in)

Annex 1

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Text  Description automatically generated | **SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**  Heavitree Road  Exeter  EX1 2 LU  Date: |

**NAME: xxxx ACADEMIC YEAR: 20xx-xx**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The PGCE course at the University of Exeter places considerable emphasis on participation, self-direction, creative teaching strategies, and on taking individual responsibility for learning. All students are able to access ECT support from the University of Exeter.** | | | |
|  | Working above expected level for this point in the training year | Working at expected level for this point the training year | Working towards expected level for this point in the training year |
| Ability to work collaboratively with peers and colleagues |  |  |  |
| Ability to meet deadlines |  |  |  |
| Willingness to contribute to the school community |  |  |  |
| Planning for learning |  |  |  |
| Imaginative and creative teaching ideas |  |  |  |
| Relationships with students |  |  |  |
| Behaviour management |  |  |  |
| Confidence with ICT for teaching and personal use |  |  |  |
| Academic assignments and tasks |  |  |  |
| Ability to reflect on own teaching |  |  |  |
| *Please note that ratings provided offer tutors’ subjective views of the candidate’s ability as demonstrated on the PGCE Programme and are not equivalent to Ofsted gradings. Some categories may be left blank if the candidate is in the early stages of training and evidence is therefore not yet available on which to make a judgement.* | | | |

Personal comment:

I have known xxx since xxxx, as his/her xxxx.

*Add your own comment here – see Guidance below*

Xxx will bring to her/his first post a detailed Early Career Transition document outlining her/his areas of strength and areas for development. This document can form the basis of initial discussions with an ECT Mentor.

We require all trainees to undertake an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check prior to joining the PGCE and I know of no reason xxxx should not be employed to work with children. I am happy to recommend xxx for a role as xxxxx.

<Referee Name>  
<Referee Role>  
School of Education, University of Exeter  
Email: <Referee email address>

**Guidance for the Personal Comment** *<please delete this guidance before sending reference>*

* Please avoid using the phrases ‘Outstanding’ or ‘Requires Improvement’.
* This should be no more than 200 words (not including the set text above).

In the comment you might:

* Comment on the trainee’s professional qualities (e.g. how they respond to feedback/guidance, their work with peers)
* Comment on the trainee’s academic ability and as their aptitude in school / the classroom
* Incorporate quotations / comments from feedback from schools (e.g. as recorded on the UVT record or FRAPs)
* Highlight particular strengths.

Annex 2

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| --- | --- |
| Text  Description automatically generated | **SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**  Heavitree Road  Exeter  EX1 2 LU  Date: |

**NAME: xxxx ACADEMIC YEAR: 20xx-xx**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The [PGCE/Teach First PGCE] course at the University of Exeter placed considerable emphasis on participation, self-direction, creative teaching strategies, and on taking individual responsibility for learning.** | |
|  | Attained expectations by end of the course |
| Ability to work collaboratively with peers and colleagues | Yes |
| Ability to meet deadlines | Yes |
| Willingness to contribute to the school community | Yes |
| Planning for learning | Yes |
| Imaginative and creative teaching ideas | Yes |
| Relationships with students | Yes |
| Behaviour management | Yes |
| Academic assignments and tasks | Yes |
| Ability to reflect on own teaching | Yes |
| Effective assessment | Yes |

I have known XXXX since XXXX, as his/her xxxx on the xx*course name*xx with the university of Exeter.

I can confirm that xxxx completed the course successfully in the academic year xxxx.

The [University of Exeter/Teach First] PGCE course combines the award of Qualified Teacher Status with 60 credits at level 7. Students undertake a rigorous programme of initial teacher education which requires them to demonstrate the capability of a qualified teacher in relation to the Teachers’ Standards. All students gain significant experience of teaching in two contrasting school placements. Alongside this, students undertake academic study which develops their understanding of teaching and learning at Masters’ level, which is assessed through academic assignments which link their understanding of theory to practice. Students who graduate with the full PGCE have met professional requirements, and have demonstrated their ability to manage an intense workload, balance academic and practical work, work effectively with others, lead learning in the classroom, and manage their time effectively.

We require all trainees to undertake an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check prior to joining the PGCE and we know of no reason xxxx should not be employed to work with children. *Insert 1 sentence personal comment and recommendation if possible.*

<Referee Name>  
<Referee Role>  
School of Education, University of Exeter  
Email: <Referee email address>

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Annex 3  Text  Description automatically generated | **SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**  Heavitree Road  Exeter  EX1 2 LU  Date: xxxxx |

**NAME: xxxx ACADEMIC YEAR: 20xx-xx**

I have known XXXX since XXXX, as his/her xxxx on the xx*course name*xx with the university of Exeter.

I can confirm that xxxx completed the course successfully in the academic year xxxx.

The [University of Exeter/Teach First] PGCE course combines the award of Qualified Teacher Status with 60 credits at level 7. These are typically undertaken as two modules which require students to engage critically with a range of contemporary education policies and issues, theories of learning and development, and current research related to their own particular field of teaching and learning.

Students undertake these modules alongside a rigorous programme of initial teacher education which requires them to demonstrate the capability of a qualified teacher in relation to the Teachers’ Standards. Students who graduate with the full PGCE have met professional requirements and have therefore demonstrated their ability to manage an intense workload, balance academic and practical work, and work effectively with others.

xxxx obtained marks of xx and xx in their assignments. The pass mark for both assignments was 50%.

<Referee Name>  
<Referee Role>  
School of Education, University of Exeter  
Email: <Referee email address>