

# Assessment for quality and standards initial conditions B7 and B8

The National Institute of Teaching

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# Executive summary

Type of assessment	Initial conditions B7 (quality) and B8 (standards)
For	School-Led Development Trust – The National Institute of Teaching (NlOT)
Advice to the OfS on B7	NlOT <b>does have</b> credible plans that would enable it, if registered, to comply with conditions B1, B2 and B4 from the date of registration
Advice to the OfS on B8	The standards set for the courses NlOT intends to provide, <b>does appropriately reflect</b> sector-recognised standards
Advice to the OfS on B8	The achievement of students on the courses NlOT intends to provide <b>does appropriately reflect</b> sector-recognised standards

For providers seeking registration with the Office for Students (OfS), the OfS will assess their application and relevant evidence to determine whether the provider satisfies the initial conditions of registration. For a provider that applied for registration on or after 1 May 2022, this includes an assessment of whether the provider satisfies initial conditions B7 (quality) and B8 (standards) as set out in the regulatory framework (November 2022).

For this assessment, the OfS appoints an assessment team that includes external academic experts. The assessment may include a visit to the provider by the assessment team, after which it produces a report. The report does not consider matters which may have occurred after that period.

As part of the registration process the OfS also assesses risk against the related revised ongoing conditions of registration. These cover the following areas: academic experience (condition B1), resources, support and student engagement (condition B2), assessment and awards (condition B1), resources, support and student engagement (condition B4) and sector-recognised standards (condition B5).

1. This report is an independent assessment of the National Institute of Teaching (NlOT) about its compliance with the OfS initial conditions of registration for quality (condition B7) and standards (condition B8).
2. The report shows the findings of an independent assessment team. **It does not represent a decision by the OfS about the provider's compliance with these conditions of registration.**
3. The OfS's regulatory framework sets out that a provider wishing to access the benefits of registration must register with the OfS.<sup>1</sup>
4. As part of the registration process, the OfS must assess whether a provider satisfies the initial conditions of registration, including initial conditions B7 (quality) and B8 (standards).

<sup>1</sup> See [Regulatory framework for higher education in England](#).

5. NlOT delivers taught Level 7 qualifications, specifically the postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) with qualified teacher status (QTS) in both primary and secondary subjects and in full-time and part-time modes. The subjects are listed below:
  - PGCE with QTS Primary Education
  - PGCE with QTS Primary Education with Mathematics
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Design and Technology
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Religious Education
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Biology
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Computing
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Chemistry
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in English
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Geography
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in History
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Mathematics
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Modern Foreign Languages
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Physics
  - PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Physical Education
6. NlOT is validated by the University of Birmingham for all its PGCE provision<sup>2</sup> and students on the PGCE courses will receive a University of Birmingham award.
7. In accordance with the guidance on registering with the OfS (Regulatory advice 3),<sup>3</sup> the OfS decided that it was necessary to undertake an assessment visit to NlOT to gather evidence and provide advice to inform the OfS's decision about whether the initial conditions B7 and B8 are satisfied. The OfS decided that this assessment should be undertaken by assessors able to provide expert academic judgement.
8. The purpose of the assessment is to provide advice to the OfS so that it can decide whether initial conditions B7 and B8 are satisfied and whether there is any regulatory risk.
9. The evidence from the assessment informs the OfS's decisions about whether to register NlOT and, if registered, whether any mitigation is necessary.

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<sup>2</sup> Validation enables a provider to deliver higher education when it might not otherwise have the expertise and resources to create new courses itself or have the powers to make the award.

<sup>3</sup> See Regulatory advice 3: Registration of English higher education providers with the OfS.

10. The OfS appointed an assessment team that consisted of two academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff. The team was asked to give its advice and judgement about NIoT's compliance with initial conditions B7 and B8.
11. The team considered a range of information submitted by NIoT as part of its application for registration.
12. The assessment team visited NIoT in March 2024 during which time it observed two teaching sessions (one primary and one secondary), viewed a demonstration version of the new virtual learning environment (VLE), which was due to be in place for the start of the 2024-25 academic year. The team met with the senior leadership team, including some of the regional leads, the academic directors and academic staff, full-time and part-time students and technical support staff. The team also met with the chair of the governing body, a representative from the validator and two members of the Department for Education (DfE) team responsible for overseeing NIoT's DfE funding.
13. In respect of initial condition B7, based on the information it considered, the assessment team's view is that NIoT:
  - a. has credible plans that would enable it, if registered, to comply with condition B1 from the date of registration.
  - b. has credible plans that would enable it, if registered, to comply with condition B2 from the date of registration.
  - c. has credible plans that would enable it, if registered, to comply with condition B4 from the date of registration.
14. In respect of initial condition B8, based on the information it considered, the assessment team's view is that:
  - a. The standards set in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course that NIoT intends to provide, if it is registered, do appropriately reflect applicable sector-recognised standards.
  - b. The standards applied in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course that NIoT intends to provide, if it is registered, do appropriately reflect applicable sector-recognised standards.

# Introduction and background

15. NIoT applied to register with OfS in January 2023. The ongoing registration assessment includes a quality assessment for conditions B7 and B8. The assessment included a visit on 21 and 22 March 2024
16. NIoT is operated by the School-Led Development Trust made up of four founding members, Harris Federation, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, Star Academies and Oasis Community Learning.
17. NIoT was established to offer school-led teacher education, and its founding members have been delivering QTS courses for several years. 2023-24 was the first cohort of students undertaking higher education courses at the provider.
18. NIoT's Board of Trustees is responsible for all its corporate and academic affairs, including quality outcomes, the maintenance of standards and outcomes for students. The trustees delegate responsibility for higher education quality assurance, management, and oversight to the executive team managing the daily operations of the provider. According to its organisational chart, each of the campus principals report to the director of academic development and delivery, who reports directly to the chief executive officer.
19. NIoT operates campuses in four regional areas, each based in a school run by one of NIoT's founding members:
  - a. North and west, with a campus based in Blackburn.
  - b. North and east, with campuses based in Doncaster and Redcar.
  - c. South and west, with campuses based in Birmingham and Bristol.
  - d. South, east and London, with a campus located in Bermondsey at the time of the assessment visit, but which will move to a school location in Peckham before the start of the 2024-25 academic year.
20. The Bermondsey, Doncaster and Blackburn campuses are the largest in the network, with Redcar, Birmingham and Bristol being much smaller.
21. Each region is responsible for delivering teaching to its students, but all teaching materials, timetable and course structure are controlled centrally so that students in all campuses experience the same delivery at roughly the same time.
22. According to the student number breakdown by campus and region submitted by NIoT, the number of higher education students studying on each campus at the time of the assessment visit in March 2024 were:

Region	Campus	Student numbers
North and west	Blackburn	92
North and east	Redcar	47
	Doncaster	117

Region	Campus	Student numbers
South and west	Birmingham	20
	Bristol	27
South east and London	Bermondsey	188

23. Many of the school placements open to PGCE students are at schools in the founder members networks but NlOT also partners with schools outside the network, providing a range of placement opportunities for its students.
24. Currently its PGCE provision is validated by the University of Birmingham, which is accredited by DfE to deliver a revised initial teacher training (ITT) programme from September 2024. NlOT will have access to course materials which reflect these revisions, and this does not change the current validation agreement between NlOT and the University of Birmingham.
25. There are two funding pathways for students on the PGCE programmes offered in both full-time and part-time modes:
  - a. Self-funded higher education students (known as trainees) who are studying for a PGCE with QTS in either primary or secondary subjects (listed below).
  - b. Salaried apprentices (known as apprentices) employed by schools in the NlOT network who are studying for a PGCE with QTS in either primary or secondary subjects (listed below).
26. There are also apprentices directly employed by schools in the network who are studying for QTS only. These students are taught in the same classes as students on PGCE courses.
27. NlOT is in its first year of higher education delivery and had 509 (465 full-time and 44 part-time) higher education students studying for PGCE awards at the start of the course. The number of students was reduced to 491 at the time of the assessment visit in March 2024 due to deferments and withdrawals.
28. The table below shows the breakdown of students across the PGCE subject specialisms.

Qualification	Full-time students	Part-time students
PGCE with QTS Primary Education	116	12
PGCE with QTS Primary Education with Mathematics	9	0
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Design and Technology	38	3
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Religious Education	11	2
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Biology	34	1
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Computing	15	2
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Chemistry	32	3

Qualification	Full-time students	Part-time students
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in English	62	3
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Geography	16	2
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in History	17	2
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Mathematics	76	7
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Modern Foreign Languages	22	5
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Physics	8	2
PGCE with QTS Secondary Education in Physical Education	9	0

29. NIoT operates with a schedule where full-time students spend four days in their school placements and one day (Thursday) at the institute for largely in-person teaching. Part-time students are required to attend the Thursday training but spend fewer days in their school placement across the week. The longer duration of the course ensures they complete the same number of placement days as their full-time counterparts.
30. NIoT is validated to deliver 14 subject-specific PGCE courses (listed above with the numbers of 2023-24 students on each course). In practice, the bulk of teaching is delivered via large lecture groups using non-subject specific training materials, with ten subject-specific training days spread out across the academic year.
31. Most core training is synchronous delivery where students attend lecture groups, either in person or online. The training is delivered live by a teacher. There are timetabled opportunities within the core training day for asynchronous learning where students do not attend a lecture group and watch pre-recorded content.
32. NIoT delivers the Intensive Training and Practice (ITaP) framework. This is a government-published element of ITT, which seeks to strengthen the link between classroom practice and evidence-based teaching principles. The ITaP framework is based on the Core Content Framework<sup>4</sup> (CCF), which details the ITT skills needed for students to gain QTS and for positive assessment against the Teachers Standard. The latter sets the minimum professional standards for teachers' practice and conduct. This does not include the additional academic skills required to complete the PGCE award, but it does form a significant part of the PGCE course content.
33. NIoT offers fortnightly 'writing retreats' (the provider's own term) where it offers help and support to PGCE students. This includes guidance on how to complete their assessments in a scholarly manner with correct referencing and essay structure. There are also formative tasks for students to complete which are designed to help them with academic reading and writing. These are offered outside of core training hours on an asynchronous basis but with a live teacher. The teaching materials with recorded narration are available on the VLE for students to access.

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<sup>4</sup> See [Initial teacher training \(ITT\): core content framework](#).



34. The validation agreement between NlOT and the University of Birmingham references M and H level courses. The assessment team have noted that these descriptors do not align with those in the framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ) and the sector-recognised standards. Where NlOT uses M or masters' level descriptors in its documentation, the assessment team has taken these to refer to the relevant levels described in the sector-recognised standards with M being Level 7 and H being Level 6.
35. At the time of the assessment, there was a discrepancy between the validated programme specifications and NlOT's own course documentation. According to the validated programme specifications, NlOT is validated to deliver a PGCE of 60 credits, comprising 40 Level 7 and 20 Level 6 credits. The NlOT Trainee and Apprentice handbook and the 2023-24 academic regulations both state that the courses carry 60 Level 7 credits. The third assessment module was revalidated in April 2024 so that all credit-bearing PGCE modules now carry 20 Level 7 credits.

# Assessment process

## Initial condition B7: Quality

36. NIoT submitted a quality plan and supporting evidence, as required by Regulatory advice 3.<sup>5</sup>
37. The assessment team sought further evidence from NIoT on 23 February 2024 and then undertook an assessment visit on 21 and 22 March 2024 during which the assessment team met the Executive Leadership Team, academic staff, key stakeholders, including the institute's validator and students from across the campuses. The assessment team also accessed data and information about NIoT relevant to the assessment, held by the OfS.
38. The assessment team used this evidence to provide advice on whether NIoT complies with the requirements set out in initial condition B7. Condition B7 requires that NIoT has credible plans that would enable it, if registered, to comply with conditions of registration B1, B2 and B4, and requires it to have the capacity and resources to deliver these plans.

## Initial condition B8: Standards

39. The assessment team considered information relevant to a sample of the courses the institute intends to provide upon registration in reaching its view on B8. Details of the sample can be found in Annex A of this report.
40. NIoT submitted information relevant to the academic standards<sup>6</sup> of the courses in the sample, including course documentation, programme handbooks and module outlines for each specified course.
41. Evidence of student achievement in assessed work and associated records of this achievement were also required. NIoT submitted student assessed work for its PGCE assessment one, as this was the only assessment students had completed at the time.
42. The assessment team also considered information held by the OfS relevant to the standards of NIoT's existing higher education courses.
43. The standards relevant to initial condition B8 are set out in the sector-recognised standards published by the OfS.
44. The sector-recognised standards that the OfS has identified as applicable are:
  - A.1: Qualification titles and qualifications at each level
  - A.2: Volumes of credit
  - A.3: Qualification descriptors, specifically:
    - A.3.4 Descriptor for a qualification at Level 7.

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<sup>5</sup> See [Regulatory advice 3: Registration of English higher education providers with the OfS](#).

<sup>6</sup> See 'Annex I: Guidance for providers on the assessment of initial condition B8 (standards)' at [Regulatory advice 3: Registration of English higher education providers with the OfS](#).

45. The assessment team considered the evidence available to provide advice on whether NlOT complies with the requirements set out in condition of registration B8. Those requirements are that NlOT demonstrates, in a credible manner, that any standards to be set and/or applied in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, NlOT (if registered), whether or not NlOT is the awarding body, appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.

# Part 1: Assessment of condition B7: Quality

46. This section sets out advice on whether NIoT has credible plans that would enable it, if registered, to comply with conditions B1, B2 and B4 from the date of registration.

## Condition B1: Academic experience

### Criterion B1.2

**Does NIoT have credible plans to ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high quality academic experience (B1.2)?**

47. The assessment team considered NIoT's plans to ensure that students registered on each higher education course will receive a high quality academic experience. In doing so, the assessment team first considered the factors set out below at B1.3, alongside any other information relevant to ensuring a high quality academic experience.

### Criterion B1.3.a

**Does NIoT have credible plans to ensure that each higher education course is up to date? (B1.3.a)**

## Advice to the OfS

48. NIoT **does have** credible plans to ensure that each of its higher education courses is up to date as it has access to up-to-date course materials through its validating partner. It also has detailed plans to develop a body of research and sector feedback which will inform course planning in future.

## Reasoning

49. NIoT has submitted a quality plan in which it sets out how it will meet its responsibilities to ensure that its courses are up to date in the future. In this plan, NIoT discusses its research function. Using this function, it plans to generate evidence that will shape best practice in the design and delivery of future courses and ensure that all its courses remain contemporary with sector thinking. The plan cites supporting evidence also submitted by NIoT, including its Learning and Teaching Strategy and the terms of reference for several committees and boards, particularly those for the programme advisory and college advisory groups and the programme board. This would set up formal lines of communication which will provide NIoT with informed advice regarding the future development of NIoT programmes and provide a forum for testing and discussing new programme ideas and design.
50. The Learning and Teaching Strategy demonstrates that NIoT has given considerable thought to the plans for future development and has defined its aspirational goals clearly. This is particularly clear in the section entitled 'What are we seeking to achieve at the Institute?'. This states the intention for NIoT to provide programmes that are based on leading-edge educational research and scholarship delivered by professionally recognised staff.

51. In paragraphs 23-25 of its Quality Manual for Evaluation, Monitoring and Review of Academic Provision, NloT demonstrates it understands the need for periodic review of course materials, independent of its validator, to ensure the higher education courses it delivers are up to date.
52. However, no details regarding how NloT plans to review its courses, or what methodology it will use to ensure these reviews are robust, were included. The assessment team has taken assurance from the detailed and credible plans which show NloT intends to gain insight, advice and feedback to build a significant body of research (which will help influence course design and delivery) as evidence that NloT will be able to ensure its courses remain up to date.
53. NloT intends to provide its own courses independent of the validator and the assessment team considers that it has credible plans to ensure its courses remain up to date. However, the assessment team is concerned that it may take some time for these groups to develop meaningful feedback and, consequently, NloT's plans for keeping its own courses up to date may not be realised at the point of registration.

### Criterion B1.3.b

**Does NloT have credible plans to ensure that each higher education course provides educational challenge (B1.3.b)?**

### Advice to the OfS

54. NloT **does have** credible plans to ensure that each of its higher education courses provide educational challenge. The course materials demonstrate the minimum level of rigour and difficulty reasonably expected for the level of the course.

### Reasoning

55. NloT's submitted quality plan breaks down the elements which it considers demonstrate how it ensures that its courses provide educational challenge and links to the evidence it considers supports these plans. This plan details five key principles which NloT plans to use to ensure its programmes provide educational challenge. These are listed as:
  - varying the challenge level of the assessment by using tasks which encourage students to develop critical-thinking and problem-solving strategies
  - giving students a clear rubric which will detail the type of work expected from them
  - to build students' skills incrementally by moving from intermediate to more challenging tasks.
56. It also indicates that it will ensure the student's workload is appropriate and avoids excessive repetition. By including elements which are of interest to students, it will also encourage them to actively engage with the material.
57. The assessment team considered the supporting evidence submitted by NloT in relation to these principles. Plans to use the programme and college advisory groups and the programme board to build a body of research, advice and feedback which will influence course design and development are credible. The groups will act as a forum for testing and

discussing new programme ideas and designs and will enable NIoT to review the educational challenge of its courses and make modifications and amendments if necessary.

58. NIoT has developed a policy and process for the approval, modification and discontinuation of its academic provision. The outline of the process is clearly articulated with each level of review and approval set out. The academic management group and the programme proposers will develop any new programme approval that the senior management team considers before the academic board considers it formally. New modules are considered by the director of academic development and delivery and then formally by the academic board. There are also provisions to modify academic provision in a smaller way by changing an aspect of currently existing provision. These again will be formally considered by the academic board. This policy and process demonstrates the NIoT has sufficient understanding of how Level 7 courses should be designed.
59. The assessment team considered the validation agreement between NIoT and University of Birmingham to test if the courses contained the educational challenge required by the terms of this agreement. The validation agreement states that:
- students will be able to plan for, teach and evaluate learning experiences for the appropriate age group
  - students will understand the place of their subject(s) and the key stages within national frameworks and initiatives and issues related to the whole school context
  - students will be able to use the findings from research to inform their teaching and will have carried out some small-scale research activities related to teaching and learning
  - students will develop an understanding of the theory and practice of teaching, to underpin the performance of teaching with a sound academic and professional framework that allows the student to cater for the many varied needs of learners in schools.
60. Most of NIoT's teaching is delivered via large lecture groups comprising both PGCE students and QTS-only apprentices. These lectures deliver the training required for the QTS and assessment against the Teachers Standard. This means students can teach in a classroom setting. There are eight assessment sessions delivered across the academic year which deliver the teaching and training necessary for PGCE students to complete the two essay-based assessments.
61. NIoT delivers three assessment modules for PGCE students. The assessment team was unclear about the educational level of the assessments that NIoT delivers. NIoT's 2023-24 academic regulations state that the PGCE will comprise 60 Level 7 credits as does page 9 of the NIoT Trainee and Apprentice Handbook. However, the validation agreement shows 40 Level 7 and 20 Level 6 credits. The assessment team considers that NIoT's plans are based on its view that it is offering 60 Level 7 credits. While assessment modules one and two contain learning outcomes at Level 7, the outcomes for module three are at Level 6. In April 2024, module three was revalidated so that the courses offer 60 credits at Level 7. However, the module specification supplied by NIoT alongside the new module validation agreement was the same one considered by the assessment team. The team still considers the learning outcomes for module three as presented in this module specification align with Level 6 requirements.

62. Assessment modules one and two are essay-based questions and have clear learning outcomes which will enable assessment of student achievement at Level 7. The module outcomes will require students to critically engage with and analyse existing literature, apply their learning to their classroom practice and critically reflect on their application over time. Assessment module three is an assessment of a student's teaching practice across the year and it is not clear how NIoT plans to mark the third assessment, as details were not available at the time of the visit. This is discussed in more detail in section B4.2.a.
63. A sample of the third assessment learning outcomes requires students to:
- develop a critical awareness of some of the whole-school issues research in the context of their subject
  - demonstrate a reflective and critical understanding of the implications of their professional practice to their future development as a teacher
  - demonstrate reflective, analytical and self-critical capabilities in the evaluation of planned and taught learning experiences
  - understand systematically the place of core subjects within national frameworks and initiatives.
64. These learning outcomes reflect the qualification descriptors at Level 6 of the sector-recognised standards and meet the requirements set out in the validation agreement.
65. The assessment team requested additional evidence which demonstrated how NIoT ensured its courses contained the required educational challenge. In response, NIoT submitted examples of the weekly tutor training reviews. These meetings are a reflective review between tutor and student and are based on a summary of the relevant core training. Looking at the examples provided, these summaries test a student's understanding of the training material and how they have applied it to their practice and demonstrate critical reflection through practice. However, the submitted documentation does not show how these weekly summaries will be used when it comes to marking for assessment module three. It is not clear how NIoT will judge the educational challenge of the practice elements of its courses to ensure that students have sufficient opportunities to demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to meet module learning outcomes.
66. The assessment team considers that NIoT's plans to ensure its courses contain the minimum level of rigour and difficulty reasonably expected of a higher education course, in the context of the subject matter and level of the course, are credible. This is because assessment modules one and two contain learning outcomes which meet the requirements of the validation agreement and the sector-recognised standards for Level 7. However, NIoT must ensure it clarifies, for its actual delivery, how the educational challenge of student's classroom practice is judged and recorded to ensure students are given sufficient opportunities to demonstrate the module three learning outcomes.

### **Criterion B1.3.c**

**Does NIoT have credible plans to ensure that each higher education course is coherent? (B1.3.c)**

## Advice to the OfS

67. NIoT **does have** credible plans to ensure that each higher education course is coherent and key skills necessary to complete the assessment modules are taught at the appropriate times across the courses.

## Reasoning

68. The assessment team assessed the coherence of each course by focusing on three modules that make up the 60 credits for the PGCE award. However, there is knowledge and skills from the practice elements of the course required for students to be able to complete the assessment modules successfully. For example, understanding how learners learn is a key skill for trainee teachers and skills and understanding in this area would meaningfully aid students as they completed assessment module one. The academic calendar for 2023-24 shows course content is structured so that key areas are introduced early in the course with subsequent sessions continuing to develop knowledge and understanding as students complete the assessment modules.
69. The NIoT Programme of study demonstrates that course content is mapped against the professional practice requirements outlined in the CCF which shows that key concepts are covered systematically. This means that the foundational skills and information which enables students to complete assessment modules one and two are delivered at the appropriate points in the curriculum.

## Criterion B1.3.d

**Does NIoT have credible plans to ensure that each higher education course is effectively delivered? (B1.3.d)**

## Advice to the OfS

70. NIoT **does have** credible plans to ensure that each higher education course is effectively delivered because it has demonstrated adequate plans for delivery, teaching and assessment, and has the resources to support those plans. The method of delivery heavily favours online or in-person where students attend large lecture groups, but there are opportunities for asynchronous, self-directed and small-group learning.

## Reasoning

71. The academic calendar for 2023-24 shows that there are opportunities for students to experience different delivery methods such as asynchronous and self-directed learning built into the timetable, but the time given to these methods is limited. However, the assessment team considers that this is largely unavoidable in courses of this nature as most of the students' time is spent in their school placements, so there are constraints which limit the amount of time available to deliver the volume of teaching required for the courses.
72. NIoT uses tutors to support students within their placements and to act as a bridge between the core training and classroom practice. These tutors meet individually each week with members from their student tutor group to check students' understanding of the core training delivered the previous week and answer any questions students may have. However, documentation reviewed by the assessment team does not show how development of the critical engagement and understanding skills required for students to complete the



assessment modules are embedded within these tutor support and core training summary meetings. Students have sufficient opportunities to engage directly with teaching staff, to test their understanding of training materials and to ask questions resulting from the application of training in their professional practice but may not have the same support available in relation to the assessments.

73. At the time of the visit, NIoT was developing a new VLE which would be in place for the start of the 2024-25 academic year and would contain all lecture slide decks, learning presentations, access to the library of the validating partner and other teaching materials. The assessment team viewed a demonstration version of the VLE and concluded it would provide sufficient resources for students to pursue independent and small peer-group study outside core training should they wish to do so. Further discussion of the VLE can be found under condition B2.2a below.
74. The assessment team considers the plans to ensure that courses are effectively delivered are credible. There is evidence that students have sufficient access to teaching materials and academic staff, and two of the three assessment modules have clear outcomes which are at Level 7. However, NIoT should ensure that tutors are actively engaging with students to support the development of the critical engagement skills required to complete the assessment modules.

### Criterion B1.3.e

**Does NIoT have credible plans to ensure that each higher education course, as appropriate to the subject matter of the course, requires students to develop relevant skills? (B1.3.e)**

### Advice to the OfS

75. NIoT **does have** credible plans to ensure that each higher education course requires students to develop relevant skills. The courses display a variety of skills designed to meet professional competences, are transferable and include the cognitive, reflective and critical analysis skills necessary for an award at Level 7.

### Reasoning

76. NIoT submitted its quality plan, and Quality Assurance Manual to demonstrate how it ensured its PGCE courses require students to develop the skills required for a Level 7 award. The assessment team considered that the supporting evidence submitted by NIoT was credible. Plans to use the programme and college advisory groups and the programme board to act as a forum for the discussion and testing of new programme ideas and designs could provide credible avenues for NIoT to consider and develop its provision.
77. NIoT also submitted Appendix 1 to the Quality Assurance Manual as supporting evidence under this heading. The appendix outlines the academic skills NIoT considers fundamental to its higher education provision regardless of educational level and makes it clear that it intends to map its courses against the qualification descriptors contained in the sector-recognised standards.
78. Assessment modules one and two have learning outcomes that will enable assessment of student achievement at Level 7. The assessment team reviewed a sample of student

assessed work relating to module one as this was the only assessment completed at the time. This work shows clear evidence that students are demonstrating key skills as required by the validation agreement and the sector-recognised standards for Level 7, particularly the key skills relating to developing a sound academic framework to underpin their teaching practice and critical engagement, reflection and analysis. The third assessment has been validated so that it provides 20 Level 7 credits. However, the assessment learning outcomes submitted alongside this validation agreement remain aligned with Level 6. Details of how students will be assessed against these learning outcomes were not available for review.

79. As discussed under condition B1.3b, NIoT has developed a policy and process for the approval, modification and discontinuation of its academic provision. Development and review by the academic board would give credible opportunities to consider the educational challenge of courses and ensure that this challenge would enable students to demonstrate the cognitive and professional skills at the required level.
80. The assessment team considers that NIoT has demonstrated credible plans to ensure its courses enable students to develop the relevant skills. The documentation reviewed by the assessment team demonstrates that NIoT recognises the skills relevant to a Level 7 award. It has developed plans that will ensure module-learning outcomes will be designed under the headings of 'cognitive', 'professional', 'transferable' and 'knowledge and understanding'. These are likely to reflect the requirements necessary for a Level 7 award.

## **B1 conclusions**

**Does NIoT have credible plans that would enable it, if registered, to comply with condition B1 from the date of registration?**

81. The assessment team considered that, overall, NIoT does have credible plans to ensure students will receive an academic experience which meets the required quality threshold. The assessment modules contain educational challenge at the minimum level of rigour and difficulty reasonably expected for a Level 7 course. The critical engagement, analysis and reflection with the body of research and scholarship underpinning teaching practice is apparent in student assessed work. NIoT has credible plans for developing a body of advice, feedback and research through its committees, which will be used to inform programme development and has developed a process for course approval. The documentation reviewed by the assessment team demonstrates that NIoT recognises the cognitive, professional, transferable skills and knowledge and understanding relevant to a Level 7 award.

## **Condition B2: Resources, support and student engagement**

### **Criterion B2.2.a**

**Does NIoT have credible plans for how each cohort of students would receive resources which are sufficient for the purposes of ensuring:**

- i. a high quality academic experience for those students**
- ii. those students succeed in and beyond higher education? (B2.2.a)**

## Advice to the OfS

82. NIoT **does have** credible plans for how each cohort of students receive resources which are sufficient for the purposes of ensuring a high quality academic experience for those students.

## Reasoning

83. The assessment team visited the south, east and London campus located in Bermondsey, London. This campus is due to move to a new location in Peckham for the start of the 2024-25 academic year because its host school has grown in recent times and now requires the return of the space used by NIoT. The Peckham location has larger teaching spaces with additional smaller student and learning spaces available. During the assessment visit meeting with resource and facilities staff, NIoT outlined credible plans to support students who may experience barriers accessing the new location, including implementing a new VLE (discussed in more detail below) to enable students to access more teaching materials and content. The assessment team spoke to students who had experienced the London campus. They felt that as they would not be affected by this change, they could not fully comment on the move. In general, they felt the larger space and additional smaller learning spaces would benefit students and provide easier opportunities for students to create their own learning and support groups than were available at the Bermondsey site.
84. As mentioned above, NIoT presented plans for a new VLE for the start of the 2024-25 academic year and the assessment team was shown a demonstration version of this product. All learning resources, including lesson slide decks, reading lists with connections to online library copies, associated journals and other research materials will be available on demand to all students. The VLE will contain the portal that students will use to submit their assessments and will enable students to track and measure their own progress and view their grades and feedback. Students will be able to access all teaching materials outside of core training time and course reading lists will link directly to online library resources. Although the demonstration site did not contain live data, after meeting with the technical staff during the visit, the assessment team was satisfied that the VLE would function as intended.
85. NIoT does not have a library of its own but students have access to its validator's online library via its validation agreement. NIoT has committed to developing its own library resource but plans to do this are at a very early stage and it does not yet have an implementation plan which could be reviewed by the assessment team. This means that NIoT's current library facilities are sufficient. If, however, it was to operate without access to a partner's library, the plans presented at the time of the assessment would not be sufficient.
86. With the reliance on tutors to provide sufficient staff contact time for students, maintaining sufficient staff appropriately qualified to teach at higher education level will be a particular necessity as NIoT is planning significant expansion in the next few years. However, its academic staff are appropriately qualified and adequately resourced for the size of the current student body.
87. During the assessment visit meeting with students, the team was told about difficulties students had faced in accessing tutor and library support. Students reported that they had difficulty booking time with their tutors due to the large number of students in each tutor group and that the validator's library was not accessible to NIoT students for the first few months of the course. These issues had been largely resolved by the time of the visit by providing additional tutor support to students and NIoT's validator resolving licensing issues which had

restricted student library access. The assessment team does not consider them to undermine the credibility of NIoT's plans to provide sufficient resources to students.

88. The assessment team has taken assurance from the very detailed plans for the campus move and new VLE, that NIoT is able to produce workable, coherent plans which minimise student disruption while providing increased resources and better usability for students. The current resources are sufficient to ensure a high quality academic experience for students.

### Criterion B2.2.a

**Does NIoT have credible plans for how each cohort of students would receive support which is sufficient for the purposes of ensuring:**

**i. a high quality academic experience for those students**

**ii. those students succeed in and beyond higher education? (B2.2.a)**

### Advice to the OfS

89. NIoT **does have** credible plans which set out the support available to students. This is sufficient for the purposes of ensuring that students have a high quality academic experience and for those students to succeed in and beyond higher education.

### Reasoning

90. Students receive tutor support to bridge the academic and practice elements of the course. Tutors undertake reflective reviews with students designed to identify gaps in knowledge and understanding or difficulties in classroom practice. The meetings are based on a summary of the relevant core training and provide actions and additional learning agreed between tutor and students. These meetings ensure that students have ongoing and regular contact with academic staff and that any issues can be identified and resolved at an early stage.
91. NIoT has plans to recruit dedicated student support staff for the start of the 2024-25 academic year. Regional support and wellbeing officers will have a focus solely on supporting students. A participant experience lead, based in the central programme team, will provide oversight and pastoral support for the support and wellbeing officers. In the visit meeting with the senior leadership team, NIoT discussed plans for student support to be developed further once the newly appointed academic registrar was in post (June 2024) and had established their own department.
92. NIoT submitted its Health and Physical Capacity to Study policy, which sets out the process for determining if a student is fit to study. The policy is intended as a way for students to access a substantive study break rather than additional ongoing support as they continue their studies. The policy is designed to be used at recruitment, to identify students whose physical limitations may hinder their progress on the PGCE courses. It is a formal process designed to test a student's ability to engage fully with their studies, including action-plan targets and additional scrutiny of learning activities and professional practice. Further referral to a review panel may be made if students fail to meet their targets.
93. The PGCE student handbook clearly sets out the NIoT definition of academic misconduct and includes additional detail regarding the use of artificial intelligence in a student's work. Two of

the three assessment briefs are stated in full as is the marking scheme and the assessment criteria. Together, they provide students with clear information about extenuating circumstances, assessment extension and assessment re-submission.

94. NIoT provides students with academic support about completing formative and summative assessments during PGCE assessment-specific sessions and via its writing retreats. These retreats are delivered every fortnight outside of core training hours. They include live and pre-recorded materials providing information on such topics as critical writing, academic reading and writing as well as practice tasks and examples, including examples of critical and non-critical writing to aid students in completing their assessments. NIoT also runs assessment-specific sessions within timetabled training. These sessions are built around tasks which will help students understand the expected requirements of the PGCE assessment. However, during the visit, students reported that they had found these hard to attend as they often had to prioritise the demands of their teaching practice and placement. NIoT's response to this student feedback is discussed in more detail in paragraph 106.
95. Many of the PGCE students are already employed as salaried trainees by schools in the NIoT network. For self-funded students, NIoT has a comprehensive network of associate schools and colleges in and outside its direct school network. It uses these networks to provide placements which may aid students who are seeking employment after completing the course.
96. NIoT submitted an example cause-for-concern support plan as evidence of how academic support needs are recorded and monitored. The support plan states that if concerns are raised, 'additional specific support will be put in place to raise the standard of assessment criteria responses.' The support plan is designed to provide support when a student is already experiencing either practice or academic difficulties. Students do not currently have access to guidance about the support options available. If they did, it could help prevent them from experiencing difficulties.
97. The example support plan contains an action plan which the student must follow to demonstrate improvement while experiencing closer supervision. The student is required to improve their performance by demonstrating increased commitment to doing better and trying harder. The submitted support plan does not consider that a student may already be working at maximum capacity, with other factors affecting their ability to succeed on the course or that other forms of support may be more appropriate.
98. There is a lack of information regarding how specific ongoing support needs for students with physical or learning differences such as dyspraxia or dyslexia would be identified and implemented. There is no guidance for students on when reasonable adjustments could be made or even if this would be possible without undergoing the formal review process detailed in the Fitness to Practice and Fitness to Study policies.
99. There is a lack of independent advocacy available to students who wish to access the support offered by NIoT. This is particularly important as some of the students are salaried apprentices – i.e. PGCE students directly employed by schools in the NIoT network. Having access to advocacy could empower students to access the support they need without being afraid for their jobs and help ensure they receive support in a manner appropriate for their own learning needs.

100. The assessment team considered the current plans for student support to be sufficient to ensure students have a high quality academic experience. However further consideration is required to ensure independent advocacy and clear guidance regarding the specific types of support available are provided to ensure students are sufficiently supported to succeed in and beyond higher education.

### Criterion B2.2.b

**Does NloT have credible plans for how it would ensure effective engagement with each cohort of students which is sufficient for the purpose of ensuring:**

- i. a high quality academic experience for those students; and**
- ii. those students succeed in and beyond higher education? (B2.2.b)**

### Advice to the OfS

101. NloT **does have** credible plans which ensure that student engagement is sufficient for the purposes of ensuring that students have a high quality academic experience and for those students to succeed in and beyond higher education.

### Reasoning

102. NloT is finalising its plans to have student representatives throughout its governance structures. While these representatives are not yet all in place, the assessment team considers the plans are in place to deliver this. NloT has developed a role description for student subject representatives, and for a staff student consultative committee which it intends to establish. Students who take on these roles will represent their regional area with one representative from each region nominated to sit on the academic board. The board will have oversight of academic standards, including course content and delivery, NloT's academic regulations, assessment and procedures for the approval and award of qualifications.
103. The terms of reference for the programme board show that there will be two students elected annually by the student body on the board along with the academic teaching staff and a representative from NloT's validating partner. This board will have responsibility for overseeing delivery of the PGCE courses, including reviewing staffing, ensuring the courses are in accordance with the validation agreement and the scrutiny and maintenance of academic standards.
104. Although they were not operating as intended at the time of the visit, the assessment team considers NloT is committed to developing these boards as part of its growth as a higher education provider. It also has credible plans to support this. These will ensure that there are opportunities for the student voice to have a direct impact on course delivery and design.
105. There are opportunities for students to feedback on their experience of core learning every week by completing an evaluation distributed using a QR code. NloT has developed plans to respond to student feedback, where practicable, via a You Said/We Did framework. This response presents student feedback (You Said) and the changes NloT has made in response to the feedback (We Did). NloT reports these changes to the student body and actively

encourages student feedback. The assessment team noted there were You Said/We Did notices on several of the display boards lining the campus hallways during the visit.

106. During the visit meeting with the senior leadership team, the assessment team asked for an example of where student feedback led to changes in delivery. The delivery of the writing retreats was initially designed to be asynchronous delivery with students accessing the content independently. Students requested opportunities to access these materials in small study groups and NIoT changed the delivery to make study groups available to students who wish to participate in them. This change was confirmed to the assessment team during the visit meeting with student representatives.
107. The assessment team noted that there are limited opportunities for students to provide anonymous feedback outside the proposed student representative system and little information on plans to safeguard student representatives, particularly those sitting on substantial and critical governance boards. As many PGCE students are salaried apprentices, students could be discouraged from being open and honest in their feedback out of fear their employment may be affected, particularly if they have negative feedback relating to their experiences in their school. NIoT should consider how to ensure that all students fully understand that they can freely speak out and represent students' perspectives without fear regarding their employment or placement. However, the assessment team does not consider this concern reduces the overall credibility of NIoT's plans for student engagement.

## **B2 conclusions**

**Does NIoT have credible plans that would enable it, if registered, to comply with condition B2 from the date of registration?**

108. Student support is in place for both the practice and academic elements of the course. The support offers regular opportunities for students to speak to academic staff, support with the academic requirements of the PGCE assessments and clear guidance relating to the Fitness to Practice and Fitness to Study policies. However, plans lack content on specific ongoing support needs for students with physical or learning differences, guidance for students regarding reasonable adjustments and access to independent advocacy to aid students to gain the support they require.
109. NIoT has plans to ensure effective student engagement. The plans are well developed to include elected student representatives on advisory boards. This will ensure that the student voice can be heard at a level within the provider which has responsibility for course content, delivery and academic standards. There are opportunities for students to give direct feedback and provide evaluation of their training, and NIoT has a clearly defined mechanism to report any changes made from this feedback to students.
110. NIoT is currently providing adequate and sufficient resources, both practical and academic, to enable students to enjoy a high quality academic experience and which would enable students to succeed in and beyond higher education. NIoT has made firm commitments to create other resource elements, such as a library, but these plans require further development.



## Condition B4: Assessment and awards

### Criterion B4.2.a

**Does NIoT have credible plans to ensure that each higher education course is assessed effectively? (B4.2.a)**

#### Advice to the OfS

111. NIoT **does have** credible plans that would enable it to ensure that courses are assessed effectively. Assessment requirements are clear, and internal examiners undergo training designed to ensure that marking criteria are consistently applied.

#### Reasoning

112. At the time of the assessment visit, NIoT was validated to deliver a PGCE with 40 credits at Level 7 and 20 credits at Level 6 and this is what is being delivered in practice. There is a discrepancy with NIoT documents, which state that the PGCE it is delivering is worth 60 Level 7 credits. This impacts on the assessment of the level of challenge and effectiveness of assessment and this discrepancy needs to be resolved. The courses NIoT is currently delivering are in line with its validation agreement. Assessment three was re-validated in April 2024 so that each of the three assessment modules are now listed in the validation agreement as offering 20 credits at Level 7. However, NIoT has not submitted updated module learning outcomes for assessment three so the outcomes for this assessment are still aligned with Level 6.
113. Modules one and two are essay-based assessments and provide the stretch and rigour consistent with a Level 7 award. The learning outcomes require students to demonstrate cognitive and metacognitive skills which have come from a critical engagement with the literature and scholarship underpinning teaching practice at the level consistent with Level 7 qualifications.
114. Modules one and two are marked in accordance with a standard marking matrix designed to recognise student attainment as might be expected for an award at Level 7, which is accessible to all students via the PGCE student handbook. NIoT ensures that all assessment markers receive training so that marking and feedback follow set principles. The student assessed work submitted by NIoT displays marking in line with the matrix and principles. Marked assessments are calibrated at a regional and national level to ensure consistency in marking across all campuses. Assessment feedback to students is available for every assessment and can be viewed electronically on the student's assessment script. NIoT has demonstrated that these assessments have been designed in a way which provides the rigour consistent with Level 7 and ensures student assessment is valid and reliable.
115. NIoT submitted the Fundamentals of Marking document, which sets out the principles for marking student work. These principles have been designed to ensure consistency across all marking activities, campuses and regions. All staff likely to mark student work, and all external markers undergo this training and are expected to adhere to these guidelines. However, the guidelines contain several limitations which the assessment team considers are not common higher education practice:



- They fix annotations to at least two and no more than six per page. The team felt that this limited the freedom of markers to provide significant and meaningful feedback where it was needed within the body of the script.
- Markers are directed to comment on grammar and spelling for the first two pages only. This does not allow for students who have learning differences such as dyslexia to receive feedback. Such feedback could aid them in future assessments across the entirety of their script.
- The 'feedforward' targets designed to provide feedback to specifically support future academic writing are limited to two per script. The assessment team would have expected to see a more flexible approach. Such feedback is often the most valuable for students as they develop their skills and is especially crucial for those required to resubmit assessments.

116. The third module brief was presented to the assessment team during the visit. The assessment takes the form of a viva where the student will present evidence relating to the development of their professional practice and from their teaching placement folder, including formal reports, summaries of weekly training and tutor observations. Students are not required to prepare any additional materials for this viva.
117. The assessment team does not consider this assessment brief has learning outcomes that reflect what might be expected for an assessment at Level 7. The learning outcomes state that students must apply approaches and insights from the course and demonstrate a reflective and critical understanding of their professional practice and future practice as a teacher. The assessment does not require the critical awareness and systemic understanding of the current thinking underpinning teaching practice seen in the learning outcomes for the essay-based assessments. In particular, the team considered outcomes such as 'apply the approaches and insights from the programme' and 'demonstrate reflective, analytical and self-critical capabilities in the evaluation of planned and taught learning experiences' to be more closely aligned with the sector-recognised standards descriptors for Level 6. The team still considers that these outcomes align more closely with Level 6 descriptors. Updated module outcomes reflecting the validation of this assessment at Level 7 have not been shared with the team.
118. However, the assessment team was most concerned with the lack of detail about how the third module would be marked. The assessment brief gives no details how these learning outcomes will be assessed or what marking matrix will be used to judge the level of student achievement.
119. NlOT submitted its Programme of Study which maps out the skills required for successful completion of the QTS and Teachers Standard as a series of actions and behaviours which students should demonstrate. These behaviours scale upward with establishing and securing levels which outline the development of teaching skills across the year in line with the expectations of the Teachers Standard. Personal tutors record progress against these behaviours in formal assessment reports. However, these reports do not record evidence of how a student demonstrated an action or behaviour and so cannot be easily tested or verified by a third party. NlOT has based its plans on ensuring effective assessment on the robustness of its marking calibration and standardisation processes, but it is not clear that

student achievement in practice is recorded in a way which enables these processes to occur.

120. NloT has a clearly defined policy which defines what it considers to be academic misconduct and sets out the informal and formal actions which may be implemented if such misconduct is identified. NloT uses technology to detect and combat plagiarism, students' use of essay mills, or other forms of academic misconduct.
121. Plans to ensure that courses are assessed effectively are credible. The essay-based assessments are designed in a way that minimises the opportunities for academic misconduct and facilitates the detection of such misconduct if it occurs. The two essay-based assignments present the required educational rigour and test student achievement at a level consistent with the requirements of a Level 7 award. However, NloT needs to update the learning outcomes for assessment three to ensure they fully align with the requirements for Level 7, and review how it intends to ensure that the assessment of practice skills is completed in a manner which ensures student achievement is assessed effectively across all elements of the courses.

### Criterion B4.2.b

**Does NloT have credible plans to ensure that for each higher education course assessment is valid and reliable? (B4.2.b)**

### Advice to the OfS

122. NloT **does have** credible plans to ensure that the assessment for each higher education course is valid and reliable because students are required to demonstrate the skills and knowledge intended by the assessment and as appropriate to the content of the course. The courses have policies for marking and moderation and external examiner arrangements in conjunction with its validating partner. However, there is a lack of transparency relating to the assessment of practice skills.

### Reasoning

123. The assessment briefs for modules one and two provide clear information to students, particularly the learning outcomes, including the critical engagement, analysis and reflection of a body of literature and scholarship, and the application of that evaluation onto a student's professional practice required for a Level 7 award.
124. Anyone marking student work receives training designed to ensure each marker understands the requirements of the assessment they are marking and applies the marking rubric consistently across all assessments and regional campuses. This training also covers the provision of assessment feedback to students and provides clear instruction and guidance to markers regarding the form and content of this feedback. NloT also uses standardisation meetings to maintain marking consistency.
125. Each assessment script will be subject to internal moderation in each region and nationally and will be reviewed by external examiners. This aligns with the requirements of the validation agreement. These plans ensure assessment is reliable in that student achievement can be assessed consistently between students on these courses over time, and that

assessment is valid as student achievement is assessed in the way intended by the design of the assessment.

126. The third module is a review of a student's professional practice using skills and behaviours recorded by personal tutors across the year using formal assessment reports. The report does not record how or when a student demonstrated the skill or behaviour and NIoT has not submitted any plans or policies to show how it intends to ensure the assessment of a student's practice is consistently assessed across the student body.
127. NIoT has based its plans for ensuring that assessment is valid and reliable on the robustness of its marking calibration and standardisation processes. Although the assessment of student achievement in module three may be valid in that it requires students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills as intended by the design of the assessment, the lack of evidence which can be verified by a second or external examiner means that the third module is not open to the same moderation as modules one and two. The lack of transparency regarding how practice skills and behaviours are assessed means that the assessment of student achievement for module three is not reliable in that assessment does not require students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a manner which is consistent between students registered on the course and over time.
128. Overall, the assessment team considers NIoT does have credible plans to ensure all modules have learning outcomes and that there are robust and appropriate plans for assessment calibration and standardisation. Modules one and two have marking schemes which demonstrate that the assessment for these modules will be valid and reliable. However, the lack of transparency relating to the assessment of the professional practice underpinning module three means that the assessment of student achievement in that module is not reliable.

#### Criterion B4.2.c

**Does NIoT have credible plans to ensure that for each higher education course the academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible? (B4.2.c)**

#### Advice to the OfS

129. NIoT **does have** credible plans to ensure the academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible. The academic regulations and NIoT's application of them demonstrate that it will ensure that all awards granted reflect students' knowledge and skills. NIoT's calibration and standardisation processes are likely to ensure that the classification of awards over time will reflect the appropriate standard of student achievement, once the issues discussed in sections B4.2.a and b are resolved.

#### Reasoning

130. NIoT is a validated institution, and its academic regulations are informed by the requirements of the validating partner, particularly in respect of the assessment of student work, academic misconduct and how to determine award classifications. Page 19, section 21b of these regulations makes it clear that the PGCE award is unclassified. The award is made on a pass/fail basis determined by achieving a specified number of credits. The credits are gained

by passing the assessments set out in the course materials at 20 credits per assessment and there are no algorithms used to determine the classification of the award.

131. NlOT has developed an academic misconduct policy which clearly defines what NlOT considers to be academic misconduct and sets out the actions which will be taken where misconduct has been alleged or identified. It also uses external examiners and has plans to ensure that external examiners demonstrate sufficient skill and experience for the role, and that each examiner undergoes training designed to ensure that the marking schema as applied by NlOT is understood and consistently applied.
132. The issues with assignment three discussed in sections B4.2.a and b mean that not all the assessments have suitable assessment briefs, and the assessment of practice skills is not transparent. However, the examination of student assessed work for assignment one (the only assignment completed at the time of the visit) shows that student achievement is being assessed at the right level. This gives the assessment team assurance that the academic regulations used by NlOT are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible as they reflect students' knowledge and skills at the appropriate level.

#### **Criterion B4.2.d**

**Does NlOT have credible plans to ensure that for each higher education course, the academic regulations are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner which appropriately reflects the level and content of the applicable higher education course? (B4.2.d)**

#### **Advice to the OfS**

133. NlOT **does have** credible plans to ensure that academic regulations are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner which appropriately reflects the level and content of the courses delivered by NlOT.

#### **Reasoning**

134. Students who do not have English as a first language are required to demonstrate English language proficiency. The regulations are found on page 8 of Section 3 of NlOT's Quality Assurance Manual and again on page 4 of the 2023-24 academic regulations. In the additional observations to the quality plan, NlOT states that all students are required to submit a written assessment as part of their recruitment interview, and this is used to assess the level of English language proficiency.
135. The 2023-24 academic regulations are designed to ensure that students must demonstrate proficiency in the English language at the appropriate level of the course. NlOT has credible plans to ensure this is maintained without the support of a validating partner.

#### **Criterion B4.2.e**

**Does NlOT have credible plans to ensure that relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously? (B4.2.e)**

## Advice to the OfS

136. NIoT **does have** credible plans to ensure that relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously. It does not use degree algorithms to calculate an award classification and plans to monitor awards via the academic board and programme assessment board to ensure student achievement is rewarded consistently compared with previous years.

## Reasoning

137. At the time of the assessment, NIoT was teaching its first cohort of higher education students so it was not yet possible to assess if the awards were credible compared with those previously granted. However, responsibility for monitoring awards and ensuring that comparable student achievement is rewarded consistently over time has been given to the programme assessment and academic boards. The terms of reference for each board outline these responsibilities.
138. The PGCE awards are unclassified and are awarded on a pass/fail basis where students must accumulate 60 credits to gain the award. Assessment marking for assessments one and two is closely monitored with all internal examiners undergoing training. Calibration of marks occurs at regional and national level to ensure that marking given to student work is consistent across the assessments. There are issues with how practice skills are assessed in relation to assessment three which need to be resolved to ensure marking for this assessment remains consistent between years.
139. These plans give assurance that the marks for student assessed work could be compared and tracked across multiple years.

## B4 conclusions

**Does NIoT have credible plans that would enable it, if registered, to comply with condition B4 from the date of registration?**

140. NIoT has credible plans which would enable it to comply with the requirements of condition B4 from the point of registration and ensure that students will receive a high quality academic experience.
141. Modules one and two are effectively assessed and that assessment is both valid and reliable. This is because these assignments have learning outcomes which clearly define the necessary levels of student achievement required. These learning outcomes ensure that students will demonstrate the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding required for a Level 7 award.
142. The assessment of module three is valid as it requires students to demonstrate the skills and knowledge as intended by the design of the assessment. A student's professional practice must demonstrate they have the required skills and knowledge to teach in a classroom setting. However, the lack of transparency regarding the assessment of both practice skills and module learning outcomes means that it is not reliable, as it does not require the demonstration of skills and knowledge in a manner which is consistent between students and over time.

## Part 2: Assessment of condition B8: Standards

### Requirement

**Does NIoT demonstrate in a credible manner that the standards set for the courses it intends to provide, if it is registered, appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards?**

### Advice to the OfS

143. NIoT **does** demonstrate in a credible manner that the standards set for the courses it intends to deliver, if registered, appropriately reflect the sector-recognised standards. The issues around the educational level of module three and the assessment of practice skills as it relates to the assessment of this module are relevant, but they do not prevent the courses from aligning with the applicable sector-recognised standards.

### Reasoning

#### A.1: Qualifications at each level

144. The titles used for each qualification offered by NIoT convey the appropriate information regarding the type and level of the qualification and the nature of study undertaken. The validated programme specifications, PGCE course handbooks and academic regulations show that these titles are appropriate.
145. The validated programme specifications and course handbooks clearly state the phase and specialist subject relevant to each course and it is clear whether the PGCE is for primary or secondary teaching. Each PGCE contains a clear requirement that students must be assessed against the QTS and Teachers Standard as well as the academic assessment expected for an award at Level 7.
146. The PGCE courses offered by NIoT are located at the correct level of study according to Table 1 of the sector-recognised standards for a PGCE award.
147. NIoT has demonstrated in a credible manner that the courses it plans to deliver upon registration appropriately reflect the standards set out in part A.1 of the sector-recognised standards.

#### A.2: Typical volumes of credit for qualifications

148. NIoT uses credit to define the volume of learning expected of students and each PGCE course is clearly described in relation to the typical credit volumes set out in Table 2 of the sector-recognised standards.
149. The assessment team's view is that the courses delivered by NIoT appropriately reflect the standards set out in part A.2 of the sector-recognised standards.

### A.3: Qualification descriptors

150. Two of the three assessment modules have Level 7 learning outcomes which can be found in the assessment briefs in the PGCE student handbook. The assessment team accepts that the sector-recognised standards for Level 7 qualifications describe a full masters' degree and that it would be inappropriate to expect a course a third of the size reflecting all these descriptors. They consider the outcomes for modules one and two align with what might be expected at Level 7. Students are required to demonstrate a systematic understanding of knowledge and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights at the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice. The outcomes also show that students must demonstrate conceptual understanding that enables them to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline and to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.
151. The module descriptors for module three align with the descriptors for Level 6 awards. They cover a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge. Some of this knowledge is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline. They also cover an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline. The module will also demonstrate that students have the conceptual understanding to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline. They will also need to describe and comment on aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline.
152. Assignments one and two ensure that student achievements are being tested at the right level and that the assessment of these assignments is effective, valid and reliable. Assessment for module three is valid but the ambiguities regarding how student achievement in practice is recorded and how the module three outcomes will be assessed mean that the assessment for this module is not reliable.
153. However, the assessment team considers that all module outcomes align enough to maintain the credibility of the courses overall and to demonstrate a functional alignment with the qualification descriptors for Level 7 awards.

**Does NIoT demonstrate in a credible manner that the achievement of students on the courses it intends to provide, if it is registered, appropriately reflect applicable sector-recognised standards?**

### Advice to the OfS

154. NIoT **does** demonstrate in a credible manner that student achievement on the courses it intends to provide, if it is registered, appropriately reflect applicable sector-recognised standards. The student assessed work reviewed by the assessment team shows achievement at the required level.

## Reasoning

### A.1: Qualifications at each level

155. The awards made to students appropriately reflect the course titles set out in the programme specifications and subject-specific handbooks. Students will be awarded a PGCE in a specific subject and teaching phase (primary or secondary education). These award titles are clearly set out, reflect the qualification level and are appropriate.
156. The courses offered by NlOT are located at the correct level of study for a PGCE according to Table 1 of the sector-recognised standards. Each PGCE contains a clear requirement that students must be assessed against the QTS and Teachers Standard as well as the academic assessment expected for an award at Level 7.
157. The PGCE courses offered by NlOT are located at the correct level of study according to Table 1 of the sector-recognised standards for a PGCE award.

### A.2: Typical volumes of credit for qualifications

158. The team has reviewed the assessment briefs NlOT uses to assess student attainment, a sample of available student assessed work and the published marking matrix. It finds that awards made to students are based on the relevant volume of credits designated in Table 2 of the sector-recognised standards.
159. The courses are consistently described with the appropriate credit value located at the correct level. The students will accumulate enough credits to make a PGCE award under the relevant terms set out in Table 2 of the sector-recognised standards. These courses appropriately reflect the standards set out in part A.2 of the sector-recognised standards.

### A.3: Qualification descriptors

160. The learning outcomes for assessments one and two require students to demonstrate a systemic understanding of knowledge and a critical awareness of new insights at the forefront of the professional practice of their subject specialism. They must also show a comprehensive understanding of the techniques applicable to their own advanced scholarship, particularly in the following learning outcomes:
- students are required to demonstrate a deep, systematic and critical awareness of at least one of the subject areas offered by NlOT
  - students are required to demonstrate a critical understanding of the place of their subject or phase within the National Curriculum
  - students are required to demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate research and evidence
  - students are required to demonstrate a critical awareness of the research and scholarship underpinning teaching practice and its application to their individual teaching context.
161. The assessment team considered student assessed work submitted for assessment one as this was the only completed assessment available at the time. The team saw evidence of student attainment indicating the following elements of the qualification descriptors at Level 7:



- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses
- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional level.

162. The learning outcomes for module three align with those required at Level 6, even though the assessment has been validated for 20 credits and Level 7, because NIoT has not made updated learning outcomes available to the assessment team.

163. The assessment team has only reviewed student assessed work from assessment one and this work clearly demonstrates student achievement at Level 7. Assessments two and three were not complete at the time of the review, but the team has taken assurance from the assessed work it has seen. It considers that student achievement appropriately reflects the applicable standards set out in part A.3 of the sector-recognised standards.

# Annex A: Approach to sampling of evidence

## Condition B8: Standards

1. NIoT has applied to register as a provider delivering 14 subject and phase specific PGCE courses.

### Courses offered by the provider

Name of course	Level
PGCE (with QTS) Primary Education	7
PGCE (with QTS) Primary Education with Mathematics	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Design and Technology	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Religious Education	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Biology	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Computing	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Chemistry	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in English	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Geography	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in History	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Mathematics	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Modern Foreign Languages	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Physics	7
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Physical Education	7

2. It was decided that a sampling approach to evidence collection was required.
3. The requested sample was:
  - a. Course specifications for all 14 courses.
  - b. Module outlines for:
    - PGCE (with QTS) Primary Education
    - PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Design and Technology
    - PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Modern Foreign Languages
    - PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Physical Education.
4. NIoT is teaching students on these PGCE courses and student assessed work was available. The requested sample was:

## Student assessment work

Course	Proposed sample
PGCE (with QTS) Primary Education	All student assessed work from 2 FT students and 1 PT student
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Design and Technology	All student assessed work from one student
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Modern Foreign Languages	All student assessed work from one student
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Physical Education	All student assessed work from one student
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in English	One piece of assessed work from one student
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Mathematics	One piece of assessed work from one student
PGCE (with QTS) Secondary Education in Biology	One piece of assessed work from one student
PT student studying on any course other than PGCE (with QTS) Primary Education and not previously included in the sample.	One piece of assessed work from one student
Assessments from any course which did not meet the standard to pass the module	Two pieces of assessed work from two separate students if such assessments exist

5. NIoT submitted the sample as requested. It noted that it did not have separate module outlines for the individual courses requested but submitted the course handbooks for the 14 courses.

## Annex B: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
CCF	Core Content Framework
DfE	Department for Education
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
ITaP	Intensive Training and Practice
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
NIoT	National Institute of Teaching
OfS	Office for Students
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
QTS	qualified teacher status
VLE	virtual learning environment



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