

Case study

Subject knowledge enhancement (SKE): a school's experience

From: [National College for Teaching and Leadership](#)

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The Salop Teaching School Alliance shares its findings on using SKE to recruit applicants to shortage subjects maths and physics.



Background

Alison Bell, Assistant Headteacher and Director of Teaching Schools, The Priory School in Shrewsbury talks about her experience of how SKE programmes can support schools with recruitment into teaching. Alison got most of her information on SKE programmes from:

- School Direct bulletins
- college associate meetings
- their university partner
- provider emails stating what subject courses they offer

Identifying providers

Providers that are flexible and offer different approaches is important to us. We have lots of candidates who are still working or have young families. Online programmes often suit these applicants. Geography is also a consideration. We only provide applicants with a list of providers in the West Midlands, as travel can become an issue for programmes that are not available online.

Marketing SKE

We hold 2 information events a year where we include SKE in our presentations to future applicants. We also refer to shortage subject SKE on our:

- UCAS profile
- School Direct partnership school website

Reasons for asking applicants to do SKE

We look at applicants on UCAS to get an overview of their qualifications, degree module breakdown and A Level results in relation to the subject they have applied to teach. We think about whether SKE is appropriate but will not discuss this with the applicant until the interview. We talk about this in more detail as part of the formal interview questions. There is a variety of programmes available and we review these with the applicants. A decision on the length of SKE is only made after the interview when the panel considers the applicant's mini teach, subject knowledge tasks and answers to questions during the formal interview.

This helps us see what the knowledge gaps are. If an applicant only has an A Level in maths, we would advise the applicant to complete a 1 year SKE and offer them a place on their teacher training programme the following year.

How SKE funded programmes are run

We do not have the capacity, staffing or room to be able to offer SKE in-house. All our SKE funded programmes are completed online with other providers.

Benefits of using SKE

Our applicants were keen to complete SKE when this was discussed at interview. It reminds applicants of subject knowledge and how this applies to the curriculum, especially when they have been out of education. Applicants who have completed SKE are more confident that they do have the right subject knowledge to teach the secondary curriculum.

As a school it has enabled us to successfully recruit in shortage subjects such as maths and physics.

Summary

SKE is a refresher, it is not a teaching course. You have to be sure that the applicants' qualifications make them suitable for SKE. We usually advise applicants to complete their SKE programme first and on condition of them completing this we then offer them a place the following year.