

# 1 What will the PGCE at M-level do for me?

Keira Sewell and Liz Lakin

This chapter aims to help you to understand the difference between a Postgraduate Certificate in Education and the Professional Graduate Certificate awards so that you can:

- decide which PGCE route you should apply for;
- decide whether to opt for the Masters module option once you have been accepted onto a PGCE programme.

## What is the difference between the Postgraduate Certificate in Education and the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education?

In 2004, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) was brought into effect and this meant that institutions had to look at their range of awards to ensure that they fitted into the framework. PGCEs were a long-established route in initial teacher training and many understood that their role was to provide a professional qualification for those who already had a first degree. However, the term 'postgraduate' suggests that the academic work done will be at a higher level than that done in an honours award, whereas on most courses, this was not the case. This meant that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers needed to review their programmes to ensure that if they called their award postgraduate, it did indeed include academic work of a postgraduate nature, that is work at Masters level or level 7. Institutions were free to choose their own route; some decided to offer a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education in

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which the academic work would be at Honours level (H) or level 6, while others decided on the Postgraduate Certificate in Education route which included academic work at Masters (M) level (level 7). Both routes continued to lead to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Essentially, then, the difference between the two is the level at which you have to do the academic work: level 6 or 7.

### What does a PGCE at M-level look like?

Perhaps surprisingly, there is no guidance on what the PGCE M-level or the PGCE H-level should look like beyond the requirements for QTS. This means that courses can differ greatly yet lead to the same award. When deciding which route to follow it is useful to look at the following three things: the award options, the structure and organization of the course, and the admissions requirements.

#### Award options

As stated above, in England there are two award outcomes to a taught postgraduate course of study leading to Qualified Teacher Status: the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education or the Postgraduate Certificate in Education. The only difference between the two is the level at which the academic work is done. Some institutions have elected to offer only one or the other, while others offer both. Where institutions offer both you may be required to enrol on one route and then, with guidance from your tutors, elect to move to the other. For example, in some institutions everyone enrolls on the PGCE M-level, but if you gain lower grades in your assignments you may be awarded a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education. In other institutions you enrol on the PGCE H-level but if your academic work is considered of high quality you are encouraged to work for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

In the Scottish system things are slightly different in that postgraduate study for teacher training leads to a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), the details of which are discussed later in this chapter.

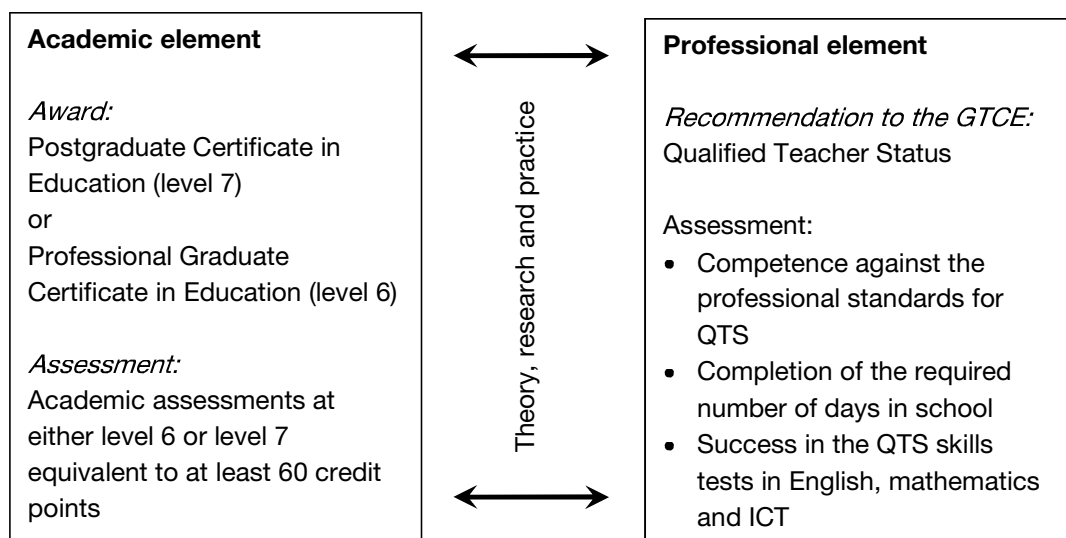
It is important to recognize that the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education is equivalent to the award you would previously have gained had you undertaken a PGCE at most initial teacher education institutions in England, Wales or Northern Ireland prior to the implementation of the FHEQ. It is important, therefore that this award is not seen as the 'deficit' model, but rather that the Postgraduate Certificate in Education is seen as the 'surplus' model.

The Professional Certificate in Education leads to the professional qualification of QTS and achievement is assessed through both academic work (usually practice-based assignments) at level 6 and demonstration of the competences outlined in the Professional Standards for QTS. The award of Postgraduate Certificate in Education requires academic study at postgraduate

level, that is level 7, in addition to demonstration of competency against the standards for QTS. It is, however, important to understand that while the academic study is at M-level, the PGCE is not a Masters award. It can contribute to a Masters award if you choose to continue your studies following completion of the PGCE (see Chapter 6 for further detail on this), but it does not automatically lead to one. Whichever award you choose to follow, you will notice that the award title does not include 'QTS'. This is because institutions do not have the power to award QTS, only to recommend to the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) that they award this. This is important, as the development of the FHEQ has enabled some separation of the academic and the professional awards, resulting in the range of routes now available for those wishing to teach. For example, the Graduate Teacher Programme route leads only to recommendation for QTS and does not carry with it an academic award. Some institutions have separated out the two elements of the PGCE so that it is possible to exit with a PGCE with QTS, just a PGCE or just QTS, although these cases are rare. This range of awards has led to some confusion in the teaching profession and it is important that you can explain your award to a potential employer when applying for your first teaching post. This is explored further in Chapter 6.

## Structure and organization of the award

In terms of structure, it is useful to see the PGCE as having two elements: the academic element leading to a postgraduate or professional award which is governed by the institution, and the professional element leading to recommendation for QTS which is governed by the



**Figure 1.1** The structure of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education

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Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). The key difference between the awards of Postgraduate Certificate and Professional Graduate Certificate is the level of the academic element, as the requirements for the professional element are the same in each. As Figure 1.1 shows, theory, research and practice link the two elements in both awards.

Let us first examine the academic award-bearing element of this structure. While the FHEQ outlines the exit criteria for a PGCE at M-level, it does not specify the number of credits which would lead to this award; neither does it specify a structure which all PGCEs must follow. As a result, different institutions organize this element in different ways. Most institutions have taken the guidance offered by the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), and consider the PGCE M-level equivalent to 60 credit points of study at level 7. This could be arranged as two modules, each of 30 credit points, or three modules each of 20 credit points, or some other combination that leads to a total of 60 credit points studied at level 7. One of your decisions should be how many assignments you want to do. Look at the programme specification for the PGCE at the institution of your choice, which will tell you how the modules are arranged and assessed. Some institutions have also elected to include level 6 credit points, often applying these to assessments designed to demonstrate competence in the Professional Standards. These could be credit points given to successful completion of school placements or assessments in specific subject areas. As a result, a PGCE could include up to 120 credit points, made up of both level 7 and level 6 work. Again, it is important to note that the number of credit points included within the PGCE will often be reflected in the number of assignments you are required to complete – those having 120 credit points sometimes require up to five assignments.

Not only does the number of credit points an institution applies to its PGCE vary, so too do the assessment strategies used. Some have written, theoretical assignments only, while others include small-scale research projects, presentations and critical evaluations of work undertaken in schools or even extracts from teaching practice files.

The professional element of the PGCE is governed by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), which has provided institutions with the statutory requirements of the Professional Standards for QTS and the Initial Teacher Education requirements which underpin these. At the time of writing these are under review but, whatever format they will take, they govern everything from what criteria are required for admission to a teacher training programme to how many days trainees must spend in school during their training. As a result, there will be more commonality between PGCEs in this element. For example, courses have to be structured so that students normally spend a minimum number of days in school (90 days for a primary course and 120 days for a secondary course); they have to complete the QTS Skills Tests in English, mathematics and information and communications technology; and they must be able to demonstrate competence against the Professional Standards for QTS for the age range they are being prepared to teach. There will be some variance in practice as institutions are free to decide how such things as the number of days in school are organized,

how competence against the standards will be recorded and assessed, and the amount of time allocated to each subject area. For example, institutions may have two, three or even four placements, each in a different age phase (Key Stage 1 and 2 in primary, or Key Stage 3 and 4 and A level in secondary).

Depending on their locality, some institutions may also need to consider how certain competences can be effectively supported for trainees. For example, the demographic of partnerships between schools and teacher training institutions means that certain standards which require you to engage all pupils and personalize learning appropriately to meet the needs of individuals may be more wide ranging in some areas than in others. This is particularly pertinent when partnerships are largely with monolingual schools and trainees have less opportunity to develop their understanding of how best to support children for whom English is an additional language. In this case, trainees may need to meet this through focused work in short-term placements in specially selected schools which provide the opportunities and experiences necessary. You may wish to consider this when selecting your training institution.

In the PGCE M-level, perhaps the most important element is the way in which the course organization supports the level of study required and it is this area which has required institutions to think carefully about the ways in which this can be best achieved. While the M-level element of your PGCE will permeate through both your school-based and your university-based work, a premise explored in greater detail in the following chapters, there may be additional elements to a PGCE M-level programme which would not be evident in the PGCE H-level. These could include specific study skills sessions focusing on such aspects as writing in a critically reflective way, accessing and reading journal articles, using methods of referencing texts consistently, research methods, and data collection and analysis techniques. These may be offered as part of the taught programme but some institutions offer optional sessions either during the programme or during the summer vacation prior to entering the course. These are designed to recognize the fact that you all come with a range of backgrounds and it cannot be assumed that you will be able to write or conduct research in the manner required for this award.

Study at M-level requires autonomy, independence and time for reflection and many institutions will try to allow opportunities in the very hectic PGCE programme for you to develop these skills. There will be a requirement to carry out directed tasks or independent study, thus extending the actual time of the PGCE well beyond the structured, taught programme.

## Admission requirements

The admissions requirements for both awards are very similar as most of these relate to the QTS element of the course. For application to both routes you need to provide evidence of a minimum of Grade C GCSE or equivalent qualifications in English, mathematics and science, qualification in a first degree (usually at honours level), experience of working with children, preferably in a school context and in the age range you wish to teach, and having met the

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requirements for physical and mental fitness to teach and have no criminal record which would bar you from working with children.

In the past, the only difference you may have encountered between the two routes was the classification of first degree, with the PGCE at M-level requiring a minimum degree classification of upper second class. However, recent developments in teacher education suggest that only those trainees with upper second class honours degrees will have access to funded places and the competition for places on initial teacher training means that first degree classification is becoming an important criterion for selection.



### Activity

Consider how your academic profile and your personal and professional experience to date prepare you to do a PGCE at M-level. How can you best communicate this to your chosen institution and what else could you do to enhance your personal profile in this increasingly competitive market? For example, would further voluntary work in a wider range of schools support your application?

## How do I decide which route is for me?

The answer to this is very personal and therefore it is difficult to provide a generic response; however, it is useful to dispel a few misconceptions about the choice of route. The most common of these include the idea that doing the PGCE at M-level will entail more work; that this route will be much harder than doing the PGCE H-level; and that doing the PGCE at M-level adds little to the skills required for effective practice in the classroom. Let us explore these.

First, does the PGCE M-level really mean more work? In most cases, the PGCE M-level does not entail more work than the PGCE at level 6; indeed, it may even require less. In both routes you need to complete assignments, but in some institutions the M-level assignments have been devised in such a way that you actually do fewer, longer assignments than on the PGCE at level 6. For example, on a PGCE H-level you may need to do as many as five assignments, one on each of the core subjects (English, mathematics and science), a generic assignment on teaching and learning, and possibly an assignment on information and communications technology (ICT) or even a specialist subject. In the PGCE M-level you could do as little as two assignments. Therefore, it may be useful for you to decide whether you would rather do five shorter assignments or two longer ones.

Secondly, let us explore the idea that doing a PGCE at M-level is harder than doing it at H-level through the notion of challenge. All new learning presents challenge and it is in the level of challenge that the differences between the two routes become evident.

Let us go back to your first degree. In year 1 you were working at certificate level (level 4) on

the FHEQ. After successfully completing year 1 you then progressed to year 2 where you were working at intermediate level (level 5). Following this you moved to year 3 (and sometimes year 4 depending on the structure of your degree) where you will have been working at honours level (level 6). At each stage you will have found the level of academic work a little more challenging and the criteria on which your work was assessed a little more detailed. You will have seen that, increasingly, you were required to be more critical, analytical and evaluative in your thinking; that you were required to develop a broader and deeper understanding of the body of knowledge in your first degree subject or focus; that your skills of communication were becoming more complex and that you were able to engage further in debate and support and justify these debates with reference to a wider range of literature; and that you were able to begin to challenge the arguments and assumptions put forward by others.

At the end of each level you were able to make the transition to the next as your skills in academic study and your knowledge of your subject or focus area were developing, often without you even realizing this was happening. This kind of development is normal in academic study and resides firmly in the premise that the more you practise something, the better you get at it. I remember being upset to find I had been graded 'D' in one of my first assignments, but on looking back now I realize that I had simply churned out the views (some of them very suspect ones) of other authors with no attempt to challenge them or suggest alternatives. I thought that all I had to do was string together lots of quotations to demonstrate that I had read a lot of books! Try this activity yourself:



### Activity

Read one of your assignments submitted in the first year (level C) of your degree. Now read one of your assignments from the final year of your degree (level H). Write down the things that you feel are different between the two pieces of work. Now see if you can determine where you learned to apply these different approaches.

The likelihood is that you cannot pinpoint the exact moment that you learned how to develop your skills in academic work, but rather that it was an ongoing process that developed throughout your first degree. This development will be the same in the PGCE at whatever level you choose to study but the extent of challenge will be different depending on the route chosen.

If you decide to do the PGCE at H-level, you will be required to take on another body of knowledge which is different from the one you took on in your first degree and, in this respect, this route will present challenge. However, in terms of academic skills, those of thinking in a critical, analytical and evaluative manner and communicating your debates in a style commensurate with this level of academic study, you will be working at a level which should be

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well within your comfort zone as it will be similar to the level you were working at in the final year of your first degree.

The PGCE M-level, however, will require you not only to take on another body of knowledge but also to make the next transition in terms of developing your academic skills. Let us have a look at what the FHEQ says about the differences between the two levels:

### *Honours level (Level 6)*

An Honours graduate will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the graduate will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The graduate will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate effectively.

An Honours graduate should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.

### *Masters level (Level 7)*

Much of the study undertaken at Masters level will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems.

They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments.

(QAA, 2001)

But what does this actually mean? What are the differences between the two? The key difference has two elements: a knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning; and the transferable skills which enable this to be put into practice. Let us first explore the former.

In terms of knowledge and understanding, H-level graduates would be expected to have an understanding of a *complex body of knowledge*, some of which may be at the *current boundaries* of education. At M-level this understanding will have been informed by current theory and research at the *forefront* of education. In other words, someone who leaves with a Postgraduate Certificate in Education will have an understanding of current thinking about some areas of education and will be prepared for teaching in the future as well as teaching in the present.

In terms of the skills and attributes developed, M-level work requires an ability to engage in critical analysis and evaluation of both current and emerging theory and research underpinning effective education, and to apply their thinking systematically and creatively when dealing with complex issues and problem-solving. M-level graduates are required to demonstrate originality of thought, something which requires them not only to look at how things are at the moment but to consider how our developing understanding can inform future practice. They are



self-directed and act with autonomy when planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level. Through the synthesis of their developing knowledge and understanding of education and their ability to think deeply and critically they are required to demonstrate both sound judgement and initiative, both qualities which will prepare them for effective leadership within schools.

The PGCE M-level means that you will develop the knowledge and understanding of educational theory and the skills and attributes which enable you not only to apply your thinking to your own professional practice but also will prepare you to lead the practice of others in the future. Therefore the PGCE M-level is an enhanced model to that provided by the PGCE H-level.

However, let us just remember one important point. The PGCE is not a Masters award and the statements for the FHEQ were written as 'exit' statements, that is for someone who has been awarded a Masters. This means that, just like your honours award, you will be developing the knowledge, skills and attributes outlined in the framework throughout your work at Masters level, including the PGCE at M-level.

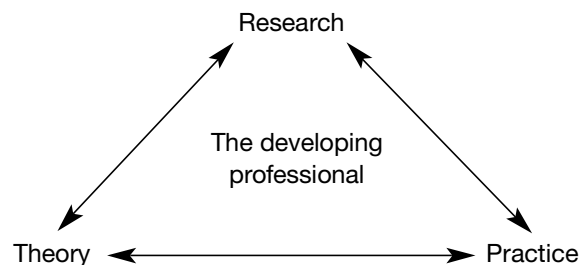
Finally, let us explore the idea that doing a PGCE M-level adds little to the skills required for effective practice in the classroom. It is true that the PGCE H-level was designed to meet the professional requirements for a beginning teacher and has succeeded in producing very good teachers for a great many years. You might think, therefore, that there is no need to change something which has worked so well for so long. However, with the rate of change in education and the enhanced professional requirements for moving up the career ladder, many have felt that a shift is required from teacher *training* to teacher *education*. This shift requires that teachers are able to think critically about education and the way in which it can best be interpreted, not only for the next five years but for the whole of a teacher's career. There is a saying in education that the only thing constant is change and this is certainly true, with not a year going by without some new initiative, directive or regulation. The changes proposed by the Coalition at the time of writing are no exception: these changes will impact on all aspects of education from the nature and delivery mode of the curriculum to the management and structure of schools themselves. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate, linking success at secondary level to the coverage of specific academic subjects (awarded to any student who gains five good GCSE or iGCSE passes in English, Mathematics, the Sciences, a modern or ancient foreign language and a humanities subject) emphasizes a significant move away from the vocational agenda introduced during the previous government term. Perhaps the biggest educational intention of the current government is that ultimately all state schools will be academies or Free Schools; instead of a state education system the proposal is a network of privately sponsored and independently managed state-funded individual schools. A system of this type may well impact on teacher pay, conditions of employment and transferability within the network, as the academies and Free Schools will not have to follow the National Curriculum. Running parallel with this are the proposed changes to teacher training and practice: the school improvement policy underpinning these changes is based on raising the quality of teaching and teachers. The

role of universities in teacher training will also change with the introduction and development of ‘teaching schools’. The proposals to transform teacher training aligns with the ‘Teach First’ training model: a model which trains graduates with appropriate qualifications (a 2.2 degree or above) for six weeks, then places them in school. The assumption is that the student teacher will remain in school for a few years before moving into leadership.

Whatever changes are bestowed on the profession, the recognized need to continue to develop the professionalism of teachers means that there is now a real opportunity to take teacher education to the next level, a notion at the heart of which lies the idea of the ‘visionary teacher’: the teacher who can respond to the multitude of changes which will occur throughout their career by drawing on theory and research and by possessing the skills of critical evaluation and reflection which will enable them to make changes in their practice which account for this.

At the heart of the development of the PGCE M-level, as Figure 1.2 shows, is the philosophy that the developing professional requires an understanding of research, theory and practice in order to be effective throughout their career.

Examples of how this can be put into effect can be found in later chapters; however, it could be argued that this relationship is also integral to the PGCE H-level, so just how different are the two? Let us start by exploring the idea of ‘professional teacher’. Figure 1.2 shows that in order to develop as a professional there is an integral relationship between theory, research and practice. It is this which will enable teachers to continue to develop their own practice throughout their career. It is this which enables the professional to both anticipate and respond to the almost constant changes in education.



**Figure 1.2 Model of the developing professional**

The perceived role of a professional teacher has changed significantly over the years, alongside educational policy, initiatives, strategies and directives. If you were to interview a teacher from the 1970s or early 1980s their view of professionalism may be very different from that of a teacher nowadays. It is likely that their emphasis would have been on the full creative process of reviewing, designing and evaluating curriculum guidelines: developing and planning their own curriculum in the light of advances and developments within their own subject area and education generally. The curriculum was not static, and lively and fruitful dialogues were established between teachers from neighbouring schools as well as between universities and

schools. Continuing professional development activities focused on updating subject knowledge and understanding, techniques and procedures, as well as developing pedagogy. Experienced teachers of today may recognize some similarities with current practice, but the focus is very different.

Perhaps the most important factor in changes to the professionalism of teachers has been the implementation of centrally prescribed curriculum guidelines which began in the mid-1980s. These guidelines, which included the National Curriculum, GCSE and AS/A2 criteria and syllabuses, were produced to provide a framework for subject teachers to operate in. The quality of education, and indeed the pupils' attainment, was largely down to the way these guidelines were interpreted and implemented (Rawling, 2003), and following the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1989 Roberts (1995) noted that one of the biggest changes this introduction brought about was how teachers perceived their role. She explained that the new curriculum seemed to negate teacher involvement and refocused curriculum control at a national level. The impact of this tended to find teachers 'delivering' the curriculum rather than interpreting or engaging with it. The curriculum presented one set of approved knowledge and skills, of which the content appeared static, and this, in itself, limited the need for updating and creative thought. Liaison with universities and the productive dialogues of the past became increasingly inappropriate as autonomy on the part of the teacher seemed to wane. Owing to increasing administrative pressures, cooperative work with other schools also declined and in-service opportunities assumed a different focus, relating more to delivery and assessment and management issues than being 'subject' related. At the same time, teacher education changed and the restructured courses included limited subject-based training. This meant that newly qualified teachers, especially at primary level, were struggling to interpret the curriculum for those areas that were outside of their specialism. At secondary level, specialism content was sometimes far removed from the subject studied at undergraduate level.

Since the late 1990s and into the early 2000s there has been an increasing drive from central government to shift curriculum planning back to the subject teacher.

A significant move away from the prescriptive nature of the now defunct Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) Schemes of Work to more personalized schemes and creativity gained status within the educational community towards the end of 2010. The changes to the curriculum implemented through the Primary Strategy and the Secondary National Strategy (2008 onwards) afforded the potential to resurrect levels of autonomy within the profession, despite the continued 'accountability' approach to assessment that continued to straitjacket progress (Ross et al., 2010). For some, however, especially those within the Coalition government, this increased level of autonomy was a move too far. At the time of writing the revised National Curriculum has been through the early stages of consultation. The new curriculum aims to raise standards by providing opportunities for all children to acquire a core of essential knowledge in the key subjects and beyond that for teachers to have the freedom to use their professionalism and expertise to help all children realize their potential.

Although the approaches suggested by the Coalition government have caused considerable

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consternation among the education fraternity, this increased emphasis on professionalism and teacher autonomy, at least beyond the core subjects, is important as it enables those of us who have continued to recognize the value of such qualities as creativity and autonomy in curriculum and lesson design and see this as a driving force within the profession to use the prescribed guidelines as initially intended, *as guidelines*: a platform from which to enthuse and inspire pupils. The PGCE M-level is built on this understanding, requiring trainees not simply to accept prescription but rather to analyse its effectiveness and adapt it to suit the individuals in their class or their school.

Research undertaken by Rawling (2003) into developing professionalism among geography teachers identified five aspects of professionalism (see Table 1.1):

- interacting with pupils;
- interacting with other teachers;
- valuing him or herself professionally;
- interacting with the wider subject community;
- interacting with state and policy-making.

**Table 1.1 Being professional as a teacher (Rawling, 2003)**

	Continuum of characteristics of professionalism	
Aspects of professionalism	Fully developed professionalism	Restricted professionalism
How the teacher interacts with pupils	<p>Focusing on the needs of individuals and how to develop each to own potential.</p> <p>Focusing on variety of teaching and learning strategies to fit each situation.</p>	<p>Focusing on the needs of the group to bring as many as possible to the required level/standard.</p> <p>Focusing on transmission/ direct teaching to ensure required detailed content is 'delivered'.</p>
How the teacher interacts with other teachers	<p>Working in cooperation, emphasis on teamwork at school and subject level.</p> <p>Professional development activities focus on new ideas, creativity and reflecting on own classrooms.</p>	<p>Working as an individual teacher and/or subject department in competition with those in other schools.</p> <p>Professional development focuses on 'tips for teaching' and how to manage and 'deliver' national curriculum/assessment requirements.</p>

How the teacher values him/herself professionally	Gaining enjoyment and satisfaction from finding out about new developments in education, research and in society.  Seeing out-of-school hobbies and interests as feeding into personal development and professional creativity.	Finding no relevance in and/or time to follow up new developments in the wider educational context.  Seeing school and 'outside school' as separate existences with no beneficial overlap or creative interchange.
How the teacher interacts with the wider subject community	Participating in interchange and updating activities with subject colleagues at all levels from higher education to primary education.  Having an interest in the subject, its character and relevance to society.	Seeing the subject in school and in higher education as being separate systems and therefore no need for interchange.  Accepting the national requirements as the definition of the subject and seeing no need for debate.
How the teacher interacts with the state and policy-making	Making a valued contribution to discussions about the appropriate national frameworks for the subject (need to be creative).  Seen as a creative professional who is trusted to make decisions about subject and classroom matters.	Seen as the 'technician' trained to deliver knowledge, understanding, skills prescribed by the state (need to be competent).  Not envisaged as needing to make important decisions about subject or pedagogy and generally not trusted to do so.



**Activity**

Thinking about the areas identified in Table 1.1, how would you distinguish between being a 'reflective' and a 'reflexive' professional? Some ideas are given later in the chapter.

Perhaps the most important quality identified in Table 1.1 relates to how you value your own development as a teacher. Achieving QTS is only the very first step on your career journey, a journey that needs constant reviewing, revisiting and evaluating. During that time you will need to keep abreast of developments within your specialist subject, education generally and related research and use these to impact on your practice. Education, as mentioned above, is not static but is an evolving entity that demands an input of energy to keep it fresh and dynamic. During the PGCE M-level programme you will be encouraged to develop your reflective, reflexive and critically analytical skills, setting you well on the path of the 'visionary teacher'.

Let us consider your developing understanding of teaching, learning and behaviour management as a beginning teacher. As you start your training you will probably find that much of your focus is on your role as the teacher and the ways in which you can get children to behave sufficiently for you to get to the end of the lesson (no mean feat with some classes!). As you become more skilled in behaviour management you will then be able to turn your attention to the learning taking place in your classroom and analysis of your own teaching will become more critically evaluative. You will consider what you did well and why this led to new learning and you will be all too aware of what did not go well, although you may not always understand why or how to move forward. As you move into the first year of teaching you will continue to develop, extending your range of teaching approaches, developing a greater range of behaviour management strategies and honing your skills in differentiating learning so that it moves from whole-class to more individualized and personalized approaches. This process will be a constant element of your developing career in teaching. The curriculum will change, teaching approaches will evolve and, most importantly, each child will respond differently to the approaches you adopt (sometimes on a daily basis), requiring you to continually review and develop your own skills and understanding in these areas. The key to this development is criticality, the ability to review approaches in a way which draws on current research and theory about how children learn and use this to determine how you will personalize learning in a way which provides the opportunity for all learners to achieve their full potential.

Although the PGCE M-level may provide you with a critical understanding of only a small part of that expected later in your career, you will already have developed the skills which enable you to think at this level and therefore will be able to transfer these skills into other aspects of your work within the classroom. You will know where to go to support your developing thinking and how to analyse critically and evaluate current theory and research in this area. You will have developed skills in independent and autonomous study and be able to apply your thinking creatively and with some originality. In other words, you will already be well on the road to thinking in the ways expected from teachers much further up the career ladder.



### Activity outcome: Reflexive vs reflective

Look back at your responses to the earlier activity and consider again the idea of reflexivity and reflectivity.

Being reflexive is a specific example of being reflective. When you reflect on something you look back at it and analyse what went on, deciding, for example, what was good and what needs improvement. When you are being reflexive you take into account the impact and implications that you as a teacher will bring to, and have on, a particular learning situation. For example, you have your own bias, values and indeed your own 'persona' that could influence how you teach and what and how the pupils learn. You need to be aware of this and not prejudice the learning situation by your own direct influence.

### Reflective Activity

Spend some time in a school identifying the aspects of a fully developed professional. Observe an experienced teacher and, using Table 1.1 as your reference, identify what it is that they do in practice. For example, how do they interact with pupils? How do they focus on the needs of individuals? What teaching and learning strategies do they use to enable each pupil to make progress?

If possible, talk through your observations with the teacher at some point following your observation to see if there are other things they are doing which you have either not observed or have not been aware of them doing. Remember that good teaching is often very subtle in its approach. It is often difficult to identify what an experienced teacher seems to do with ease.

Now draw up a list which identifies the types of practice you would wish to use in your own classroom. What have you learned about effective teaching and learning and how might you convey this?

This is a particularly useful activity to do prior to attending an interview for a place on a teacher training course as it will prepare you for the types of questions you may be asked and demonstrate that not only have you visited schools but that you are capable of reflecting on and learning from your experience.

## Education in Scotland

The Scottish Parliament (1999) in their Subject Map on Education described the Scottish education system as being ‘. . . quite distinct from the education systems of the United Kingdom’ (p. 1). This distinction arises from several factors.

### The Scottish system has its own legislative framework

As in England, the Scottish legal framework is based on a series of Scottish Education Acts. The entire education system from pre-school to higher education and life-long learning is the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Executive is responsible for policy development; the Scottish Office Education Department administers national education policy and the Scottish local authorities oversee provision in their local schools and pre-schools.

## Curriculum framework

In 2004 the ‘Curriculum for Excellence’ was introduced replacing the existing non-statutory curriculum guidelines. This 3–18 curriculum aims to ensure all children and young people in Scotland develop the perceived attributes, knowledge and skills they need to flourish in life, learning and work. These skills and attributes relate to four capacities which the curriculum seeks to develop:

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- Effective contributors

The curriculum aims to provide each child and young person with the relevant set of experiences to develop these skills and attributes directly through the curriculum subjects: interdisciplinary learning, school ethos and specific opportunities for personal achievement, building on the contributions afforded by the wider informal education experiences. These experiences and outcomes signpost progression in learning and form the cornerstones of student development and targeting setting.

Table 1.2 shows the progression of qualifications in the Scottish education system while Table 1.3 shows the way in which the Scottish system equates to that in England.

**Table 1.2 Qualification progression in the Scottish system**

<b>S3 and S4</b>	<b>S5</b>	<b>S6</b>
Standard Grade (Foundation Level) / Access 3	Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2
Standard Grade (General Level) or Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2	Higher
Standard Grade (Credit Level) or Intermediate 2	Higher	Advanced Higher



**Table 1.3 The Scottish education system and English equivalents**

Year	Age range	England equivalent
Primary (P) 1	4–6	Year 1
P2	5–7	Year 2
P3	6–8	Year 3
P4	7–9	Year 4
P5	8–10	Year 5
P6	9–11	Year 6
P7	10–12	Year 7
Secondary (S) 1	11–13	Year 8
S2	12–14	Year 9
S3	13–15	Year 10
S4	14–16	Year 11
S5	15–17	Year 12
S6	16–18	Year 13

## Qualifying to teach in Scotland

While the philosophical principles underpinning everything written above apply equally to the all the devolved nations, the detail of the education system, the curriculum and the training process varies significantly in Scotland and warrants a specific mention.

There are several ways to qualify as a teacher in Scotland, depending initially on your target age group and the nature of the course you wish to take (see Table 1.4).

**Table 1.4 Qualifying as a teacher in Scotland**

Primary – 2 main routes	Secondary – 3 main routes
The four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree	The four year Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree or a combined degree course at a Scottish university
The one-year full-time Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)	The one-year, full-time Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)
	PGDE courses, that are part-time and/or distance learning
	For secondary teaching in Scotland, your degree must be relevant to the subject you wish to teach

Successfully qualifying at a Scottish university entitles you to teach in a Scottish school. Allocation of students for school experience is managed and organized by a local authority and quality assured by the National Strategy Group covering student placements. Representatives from interested parties across the education sector sit on this group whose main aim is to maintain a strategic overview of student placements in Scotland, to work closely with all the relevant stakeholders and to ensure consistency of national practice.

Once qualified, all Scottish trained teachers are guaranteed a one-year teaching post in a Scottish local authority under the national induction programme for newly qualified teachers. Teachers are allocated to one of five local authorities of their choosing. The Teacher Induction Scheme has gained international recognition. Teachers on the programme have a maximum class commitment time equal to 70 per cent that of a full-time teacher, with the rest of the time devoted to their professional development. All have access to the services of an experienced teacher as a mentor. By the end of their one-year induction, they should be ready to gain full registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

A national framework for continuing professional development (CPD) is in place to enable teachers at every stage in their career to realize their potential and to develop and maintain skills. The Scottish government funds a national database of CPD supported by the National CPD Team and Learning and Teaching Scotland. An annual Scottish Learning Festival organized by Learning and Teaching Scotland and held every September in Glasgow is the largest national educational conference and exhibition in Scotland.

Chartered teacher status was introduced as a means of rewarding teachers who want to further their career but stay in the classroom. There are chartered teachers in each local authority and more and more teachers are signing up for the programme.

## Summary

It should now be clear to you that there are differences between studying the PGCE at M-level and at H-level and that the decision of which route to take is very much a personal choice, based on the level of challenge you want in both your training and your future career. While it is true that the PGCE M-level does present greater academic challenge, this is something that you have already demonstrated that you can respond to successfully and there is no reason to assume that you would not be able to do so again. The move from level 6 to level 7 presents no greater challenge than moving from level 4 to level 5 or from level 5 to level 6. In terms of workload, the PGCE M-level is no more demanding than the PGCE H-level and may even be less. Also, there is likely to be more autonomy in the PGCE M-level than in the PGCE H-level, as independent, autonomous working is a requirement of M-level study. The enhancement offered by the PGCE M-level to developing professionalism in terms of education as a whole and to you personally is evident and should not be easily dismissed. We have heard trainees

bemoan the fact that they ‘just want to be a teacher’; our response is that there is no such thing as ‘just a teacher’. The following chapters provide more details about the ways in which the PGCE M-level enhances the profession, but if you are still trying to make up your mind as to which route to follow, you may find the following questions useful.

- What award do I want to gain (Postgraduate or Professional Certificate in Education, or perhaps another route into teaching) and how does this support my personal and professional aspirations?
- Do I have the appropriate degree classification for the award and institution of my choice?
- How many assignments do I want to do and at what level? (This is particularly important when the institution requires you to do assessments at both level 7 and level 6, which may be the equivalent of 120 credit points.)
- What kind of assessment do I feel most comfortable with (e.g. theoretical written essays, presentations, small-scale research)?
- Is the course I am considering organized in such a way as to enable me to develop my own independence and autonomy?
- With which school placement arrangement do I feel most comfortable? Look carefully at the number of placements and the amount of time you spend in each school.
- What opportunities can the institution offer me to meet some of the specific needs I have in terms of where I will be seeking employment? For example, if you wish to work in an inner-city school, will you have access to these types of experiences during the period of your training?
- What support will the institution offer for preparing to work at M-level, and is it appropriate to my needs?
- If I choose to articulate my M-level credit points from the PGCE into a Masters award, will the institution of my choice accept the modules I will take with me and the number of credit points? (This is particularly important if you will complete more than 60 credit points at M-level as some institutions will only allow articulation of this amount into an existing Masters award – see Chapter 7 for further details on this.)
- Do I have the time and the commitment to pursue a challenging course of study at this time?

Although some of these questions are very personal to you, the information you require to answer them can usually be found in the prospectus for an institution. The website relating to the course is a good starting place and the programme specification will provide much of the information you require.



## Further reading

[www.ltscotland.org.uk](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk) – Learning and Teaching Scotland is a useful portal for reference to the Scottish education system

[www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk) – the Quality Assurance Agency is the central government site for higher education and the quality assurance mechanisms which underpin it.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/FHEQ08.pdf> – this site gives the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk) – the Scottish government portal which provides access to the education and training pages.

[www.tda.gov.uk](http://www.tda.gov.uk) – the website for the Training and Development Agency for Schools which provides key information for anyone wishing to enter teacher training.

[www.tda.gov.uk/teachers/professionalstandards.aspx](http://www.tda.gov.uk/teachers/professionalstandards.aspx) – provides access to the Professional Standards for Teachers and trainee teachers.

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