

Professional Qualification for Headship in Northern Ireland

PQH (NI)

Guide for Principals/Line Managers
on Statement of Verification and Support

Cohort 18

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Foreword

Thank you for agreeing to support your colleague who aspires to be a Headteacher and wishes to apply for the Professional Qualification for Headship in Northern Ireland (PQH (NI)). You can provide crucial support by discussing the application with your colleague and completing the Verification and Support sections of the Application Form.

There is no more important role than headship. We know that the quality of school leadership has a significant impact on the progress pupils make, their achievements and their life chances. Effective headteachers have high expectations and a clear vision for the school, developed and shared with its whole community. They set high standards for themselves and others as they implement this vision and seek to learn and improve continuously.

As you will know, it is clear also that the context in which headteachers undertake their role is changing. Headteachers now lead and manage within complex, multi-agency partnership environments with increased autonomy and clear accountability frameworks. Headteachers need the capability and capacity to lead the personalisation of learning to improve outcomes, to engage parents and the community and to respond to future policy initiatives.

To enable aspiring headteachers to prepare effectively for this diverse and challenging role, RTU, on behalf of the Department and the Employing Authorities, offers a redesigned Professional Qualification for Headship (PQH (NI)). Our ambition has been to create a more personalised, flexible structure which will take account of a Trainee Headteacher's (THT) leadership and management expertise, his or her current context and headship aspirations. Trainee Headteachers will be able to create their own personalised development pathways, access a range of development opportunities, undertake placements and learn alongside their peers. As our schooling system's expected qualification for headship, PQH (NI) is underpinned by the National Standards for Headteachers (NI Edition) and individuals will have to demonstrate their capability in relation to these standards.

Should your colleague be accepted onto PQH (NI) as a Trainee Headteacher, you will have a really important role to play during his or her journey, including agreeing appropriate development priorities, facilitating access to strategic leadership experiences and supporting his or her participation in a placement in (a different) another school context. So thank you for supporting your colleague's journey to headship and enabling our schooling system's investment in leadership capacity building for the future to be optimised.

Dr T Hesketh
Director
RTU

About PQH (NI)

This section contains the information that is provided to applicants about PQH (NI)

PQH (NI) is designed to reflect the changing role of headship and of school leadership in general. Principals today have redefined responsibilities and there are radical changes to the way schools interact with each other and other services.

PQH (NI) prepares aspiring headteachers for 21st century strategic leadership and management challenges. Through personalised provision designed to meet your individual needs, PQH (NI) will give you the confidence, skills and professional knowledge you need to deliver the best for pupils and all members of the school community in your first headship post. Employers can be assured that in gaining the qualification you have demonstrated, in relation to the National Standards for Headteachers (NI Edition), that you are ready for headship.

PQH (NI) puts you in the driving seat. You create your own flexible, personalised, leadership learning pathway that:

- Takes account of your professional development needs, prior learning and achievements.
- Improves and develops further your strategic leadership expertise.
- Develops key leadership and management skills.
- Provides opportunities to work in different educational contexts.
- Gives you the confidence and competence to take up your first headship so you will make a positive impact on your school, the lives of children, young people and their families.

What are the National Standards for Headteachers (NI Edition)?

PQH (NI) is underpinned by the National Standards for Headteachers (NI Edition). The National Standards define, within six key areas, the associated knowledge and professional qualities that principals require. They provide the framework for assessment and development throughout PQH (NI).

The National Standards describe the six key areas of headship:

- Shaping the Future.
- Leading Learning and Teaching.
- Developing Self and Working with Others.
- Managing the Organisation.
- Securing Accountability.
- Strengthening Community.

The National Standards were developed in consultation with teachers, principals, professional and subject associations, local authorities, higher education institutions and the Department of Education. The National Standards for Headteachers (NI Edition) can be found in the **Are you ready for Headship?** section within the PQH (NI) area of the RTU website http://www.rtuni.org/courses/aspirant/pqh/page.php?page_id=3 You should read this document in preparation for completing your application.

HOW IS PQH (NI) STRUCTURED?



Who can apply for PQH (NI)?

PQH (NI) is the final stage on the pathway to a first headship. It is not for those just seeking really good professional development. Applicants should be highly motivated to acquire a headship position and be ready to apply for headship posts after graduation. In other words, when they apply for PQH (NI):

- **They should be no more than 12-18 months from headship.**
- **Aspiration for their next post should be one of headship.**

Applicants do not have to be currently working in a school to apply for PQH (NI), however, they must hold a Northern Ireland Teacher's Reference number and have completed their EPD. Applications from those working in other organisations will be assessed in exactly the same way as others, and if they are in this situation they should provide evidence of their capabilities that they consider to be transferable to the school context. In various places in this guide, the terms 'whole-school' and 'organisation-wide' reflect these different contexts.

How do applicants know whether they are ready to apply for PQH (NI)?

If they are already working in a school leadership role, as part of their ongoing performance management they should be discussing their career aspirations with their current principal or line manager. Whatever their circumstances, seeking feedback from others and reviewing evidence associated with their performance management will help them to think about their achievements, strengths and areas for development in relation to the National Standards for Headteachers (NI Edition).

They are asked to look at the resources and activities available on the ***Are you ready for Headship?*** section within the PQH (NI) area of the RTU website.

A self-assessment diagnostic based on the National Standards for Headteachers is available to help them to decide on your readiness for PQH (NI). You, as their principal/line manager are also encouraged to look at these resources.

What part do principals/line managers play in PQH (NI)

Principals/line managers play a critical role in encouraging those with leadership potential to aspire to headship. In PQH (NI) there are a number of formal points of involvement for the headteacher:

- As part of the application process you are asked to provide verification and support of the applicant's evidence.
- At the point when the trainee headteacher presents him or herself for graduation, you will be asked to validate elements of his or her evidence.

In addition to the formal elements outlined above, there is much that you can do to support individuals, both at application stage, and if they are ready for PQH (NI), during their personal leadership development pathway. The context of the organisation, and the individual's existing job description, will determine the starting point. Of particular help will be:

- Being an ambassador for the role: talking to potential headteachers in your school about what you do and sharing your experience and leadership expertise.
- Identifying and encouraging those with headship potential through performance management.
- Assisting potential applicants in reflecting on their readiness for headship – giving open, honest feedback about strengths and development needs.
- Ensuring that potential applicants have the opportunity to become involved in all the key areas of headship as set out in the National Standards for Headteachers (NI Edition) and to carry out whole-school improvement activities.
- Discussing and agreeing tailored development plans with trainee headteachers, and supporting and coaching them as they work through these plans.
- Providing them with opportunities for working with governors.
- Releasing them from school/organisation for a placement in a different school context and for other development opportunities as appropriate. Sub cover is available up to a maximum of 3 days.
- Offering pastoral and professional support throughout their time on PQH (NI).

The commitment to undertake PQH (NI) is significant. As the trainee headteacher attempts to balance the demands of professional development, personal life and job commitments there may be times of pressure and your support may be especially welcome.

Your Statement of Verification and Support

The Statement of Verification and Support comprises several short sections integrated into the application form and is essential to the application process. The evidence that you provide will be considered alongside that submitted by the applicant.

Applicants are required to ensure their application has the sections comprising the Statement of Verification and Support completed and are advised that, if they are currently working in a school, they should ask their principal to complete these parts of the form. Applicants working in other organisations should obtain this verification and support from their line manager or employer. Acting principals should ask the Chair of Governors, to complete the relevant sections of the form.

By completing sections of the form comprising the Statement of Verification and Support you will;

- validate the evidence presented in the application form and provide any further evidence relevant to the examples given;
- state that, in your professional opinion, the applicant will be ready to take up a headship post within 18 months; and
- commit to supporting the applicant through PQH (NI), providing them with the necessary funding (if appropriate) and the time to undertake relevant development activities.

The sections of the form comprising the Statement of Verification and Support should not be treated as a confidential reference and you are encouraged to discuss and share this with the applicant before submission. Given the requirements of Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation, RTU would be obliged to release the fully completed application form if requested.

If you are unable to verify and support the application you will need to discuss the reasons with the applicant as it is unlikely that they will be deemed 'ready' without your endorsement.

Verification of Evidence

You are asked to verify the evidence provided by the applicant and to provide additional evidence that will be assessed as part of the application process.

You will need to refer to the evidence the applicant has provided on the application form for;

- each Key Area of the National Standards for Headteachers (NI Edition);
- their readiness to be a Trainee Headteacher; and
- the two development needs they have identified to pursue whilst undertaking PQH (NI).

You should note that even though you may verify the applicant's evidence, the evidence itself may not meet the rigorous assessment criteria.

For each of the Key Areas applicants are asked to demonstrate their capabilities by providing an example of a whole-school or organisation-wide initiative or activity they have led which is relevant to the Key Area. They are asked to give their best example for the Key Area and to evaluate the difference they made.

In the Application Form there is a short statement describing each Key Area. For example, for Key Area 1, Shaping the Future, the statement is *Headteachers are able to create a shared vision focused upon significant goals for improving learning, inspire stakeholders and plan effectively for the achievement of those goals*. Each statement is designed not only to provide an overview of the Key Area, but also to indicate the areas that will be assessed from the evidence in the example. For further information, **Appendix 1** lists the core capabilities that you will need to demonstrate throughout your PQH (NI) journey. Only 3 out of the 4 core capabilities in each Key Area are assessed (NB Key Area 3 assess only 2). These are shown in *italics*.

Applicants are encouraged to use examples drawn from their experience in the last three years. However they will not be disadvantaged for using an older example providing they explain why it is their best example.

For each example applicants have been asked to include:

- 1. Their personal leadership role** – it is important that they make clear the extent of their personal contribution to the activity and the results and are advised to choose activities/examples where they had a central leadership role.
- 2. Why the initiative or activity was necessary?**
- 3. What they did, what difference they made and how do they know?** The assessors will be particularly looking for evidence that the activity made a positive difference. They are advised to provide information about how they have raised standards and improved outcomes for the school/organisation. This should include specific, quantifiable information such as a percentage improvement in pupil results, budget savings, estimate of time savings, reduced or increased incidence against key indicators, the number of staff positively impacted by the initiative or improvement in inspection judgements.

Applicants from other contexts have been asked to demonstrate how they have prepared for a transition into school leadership, and how the skills and experience gained in the alternative context will be transferable to headship.

In the Application Form the Statement of Verification and Support comprises part 2 for each of the sections for the Key Areas and you should verify the example and add any further evidence taking no more than 100 words.

With regard to **readiness and identified development needs**, the applicant has been asked to show how their leadership demonstrates that they have reached the right point in their career to be a trainee headteacher and how their ambitions are supported by valid evidence of their capability and potential. They are asked to draw on experience of strategic leadership and successful school improvement and achievement in raising standards to show that they are ready to take on the challenge of leading a whole school. They should also show how they have already prepared for headship and in addition to specify **two** development needs to pursue whilst undertaking PQH (NI).

Throughout the Application Form there may be occasions where the applicant uses an example from a previous post. In these circumstances, if you are able to verify the evidence by making contact with the principal/line manager concerned, this could be very helpful and you should indicate that you have done this. If you cannot verify the specific evidence you should provide evidence of the applicant's capabilities in relation to the Key Area or their Readiness for Trainee Headship from your own experience of their work and cite the evidence on which you are basing your judgements.

Commitment of Support

By completing the Statement of Verification and Support you are making the following commitments;

- you are agreeing to provide the applicant with time to undertake professional development activity in relation to PQH (NI) (if you are the applicant's principal/line manager);
- you are indicating in your professional judgement that the applicant will be ready to take up a headship position within the next 18 months;
- you are certifying that you know of no legal reason why the applicant should not become a headteacher;
- you understand the funding requirements for PQH (NI) (see next section);
- while the applicant is working towards PQH (NI), you will undertake to inform PQH (NI) of any relevant change in his or her circumstances which might disqualify him or her from becoming a principal, or of any capability issues or disciplinary actions of which he or she is the subject; and
- you are certifying that the information in your Statement of Verification and Support is correct.

Help with completing and submitting the Statement of Verification and Support

Once the applicant has completed their section of the application they will give you access to the Application Form.

Complete the Statement of Verification and Support as follows:

Principal/Line Manager details

The first section of the form you are asked to complete is the personal details section. You are asked to provide:

- your name;
- your role (e.g. Principal, Line Manager, Chair of Governors);
- your place of work (the name of the school or organisation that you work for); and
- the length of time you have known the applicant.

You are then asked to record formally your support.

Key Areas

These sections have been described above and you need to provide your additional evidence within the 100 word limit.

Readiness to be a Trainee Headteacher

This section has been described above and you need to make your comments on the applicant's readiness for headship and their two development needs within the 100 words limit.

Ensure anonymity: apart from the **principal/line manager details** please do not include the applicant's name or any other proper names, including names of schools, in the Statement of Verification and Support because it will be assessed anonymously.

Word limits: the word limits must be strictly adhered to.

Applicants are advised that they should ensure that you have sufficient time to complete the sections of the form for which you are responsible. Although every effort has been made to ensure the process is as straightforward as possible, it is essential to allow sufficient time to meet with the applicant to discuss the application and to verify and support their evidence.

Submitting the Application Form:

Once you have completed the verification and support sections of the Application Form, a "Complete and Notify Supportee" button will be presented. Clicking this button will finalise your application and notification will be sent to your supportee's email address informing him/her that the fully completed application is now ready to be submitted before the deadline.



Complete & Notify Supportee

Prior to this you should print a PDF version for your own records. This can be achieved by clicking on the **View My Application (PDF)** button and then using File → print or you can save a copy to your device by clicking the Download PDF button.

You must ensure that you complete your Supporting Application well before the deadline to allow the applicant time to submit his/her form otherwise the application cannot be assessed.

Key Areas and Core Capabilities

Key Area 1 Shaping the Future

Headteachers are able to create a shared vision focused upon significant goals for improving learning, inspire stakeholders and plan effectively for the achievement of those goals.

- *Shows vision and conviction focused on improving learning.*
- Understands and responds to the local and national context.
- *Thinks, plans and acts strategically to achieve that vision.*
- *Involves and inspires stakeholders.*

Key Area 2 Leading Learning and Teaching

Headteachers are successful in raising the quality of learning, teaching and achievement through setting high expectations, monitoring and evaluating progress, establishing improvement strategies and addressing underachievement of learners.

- *Sets high expectations which focus on improvement of learning and teaching.*
- *Evaluates effectively, identifies actions and secures improvement.*
- Works with others to raise levels of progress and achievement.
- *Challenges and addresses underachievement of learners.*

Key Area 3 Developing Self and Working with Others

Headteachers are able to lead a collaborative learning culture by showing self-awareness, with a readiness to learn and help others learn.

- *Builds a collaborative learning culture within the school.*
- Sets high expectations and gives clear feedback, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
- *Recognises and uses opportunities for learning and development, for self and others.*
- Uses effective coaching and feedback skills.

Key Area 4 Managing the Organisation

Headteachers manage effectively, use resources efficiently, make appropriate decisions and show good judgement.

- *Takes and shares responsibility, creating an effective organisation.*
- *Shows good judgement, makes appropriate decisions and gets things done.*
- *Ensures strategic plans are implemented effectively.*
- *Manages resources efficiently.*

Key Area 5 Securing Accountability

Headteachers hold themselves and others accountable for high standards of performance and behaviour and take effective action for sustainable school improvement.

- *Makes clear own and staff accountabilities to secure high standards of performance and behaviour.*
- *Routinely analyses and evaluates school performance rigorously.*
- *Provides clear and ongoing feedback to others, recognising good practice and addressing unacceptable levels of performance.*
- *Gives an accurate and comprehensible account of school performance to a range of stakeholders.*

Key Area 6 Strengthening Community

Headteachers engage effectively with the community, supporting individual pupils and families, reducing barriers to learning and securing improved outcomes for children and young people.

- *Creates and maintains effective partnerships with a range of stakeholders.*
- *Works to achieve pupil wellbeing.*
- *Recognises and takes account of diversity.*
- *Contributes to community cohesion.*