

# Subject Specialism

## Aim of Workbook

An Introduction to Subject Specialism

## Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

- Reflect on how to make observation feedback more specific to the subject content
- Reflect on what resources might be available to you and your trainee
- Identify some tasks to use with a trainee to help them develop their subject knowledge and teaching skills
- Realise the importance of dialogue (learning conversation) in helping the trainee develop

## Subject Specialism

The majority of students who enter teacher training in the lifelong learning sector are employed because of their vocational knowledge and experience, for example, hairdressers and mechanical engineers. They will arrive with a good knowledge of their subject. They will also unconsciously, be 'influenced' by their own past personal experiences of the best way to be taught as well as individual learning preferences. Initially they may well adopt these practices when teaching, as this is what they know. It is important as a mentor, to advice/ discuss/ guide, your trainees towards developing a variety of teaching and learning methods. Trainees sometimes are so busy thinking about what they are teaching, they forget to observe and listen to their group, reflect on this, and then adapt appropriately. These two simple skills will inform the trainee immediately whether individuals/ the group, have understood what they are doing.

The past three Ofsted inspections, see slide 1 of powerpoint, have expressed concern about the lack of training in developing teaching skills linked to the trainee's subject/ vocational area. As a subject mentor, you are in an excellent position to support them.

**TASK 1:** This task can be done as a group or individually.  
For this exercise it is best if you have some post it notes.

Imagine you are in the process of doing an observation\* of your trainee, teaching. Produce a list of all the aspects you could comment on, for example planning, room layout, etc. If you have the post it notes available, jot each aspect onto a separate post it note, for example, planning on one, room layout on the second and so on.

\*In another learning segment (Mentoring Process) you will have discussed and read through some guidance on observations.

# Subject Specialism

Categorise the post it notes under the following three headings:-

**Subject specific**

**General Teaching  
and Learning**

**Both**

**TASK 2:** Where you able to identify aspects to go under the subject specific heading? Compare your list against slide 2 of the powerpoint titled 'What can I comment on?'.

What percentage of aspects related to subject content matter as opposed to general learning and teaching?

It is quite possible that you ended up with aspects under the headings of both. There is not necessarily a right or wrong answer, the importance is the dialogue and discussion justifying choices made.

**TASK 3:** Read through the next 3 slides of the powerpoint. List down what you feel are the key messages, for you, as a mentor!

**TASK 4:** Produce a list of tasks that you could do or use, with a Trainee, to help them develop their subject knowledge.

For example, trainee to mark a learner's piece of assessed work, mentor to check has the trainee marked against:-

- relevant assessment criteria,
- provided clear & constructive feedback given,
- assessed at the right level and grading,
- if work is referred a new deadline suggested,
- signed and dated with feedback.

Read the short booklet called: -

**'Mentor Guidance – Ideas on how to develop  
subject knowledge'.**

Are there any ideas different to the ones you had noted? Is it worth just noting them down as a reminder and prompt to help you, when working with your trainee?

What is important, is you **agreeing** with you trainee some **targets**, which will enable the trainee to **develop** and **widen** their experience and skills.

**TASK 5:** Complete the following list of potential resources that you could use or guide your trainee towards for further support and knowledge.

B \_ \_ \_ \_

J \_ U \_ \_ \_ \_ S

Other C \_ L L \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ - internal & external

Standard Unit M \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

I \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ - specific w \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (*www.qia-excellence gateway*)

T \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ TV

CD/ DVDs

S \_ \_ \_ \_ D \_ \_ \_ L \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Please add any other resources you could use.

## Further Activities

Reflect on how effective you have been in the past supporting trainees developing their subject specialist knowledge as well as their general teaching skills. Could you improve this in any way? Note down what you can do.

Check your own ITT provider's guidance on subject development, plus current scheme of work for ITT programme

## Practical Idea

Prepare your own prompt sheet to use when mentoring: -

- 1) of possible tasks – subject specific to use with your trainees
- 2) list of subject specific resources that you could use or guide your trainee to, this could be done in consultation with your trainee.