Consultation on proposals for a national framework of approved SENCO training

1 Introduction

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) undertook a consultation on proposals for a national framework of approved training for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) between July and October 2008. An online consultation was supplemented by three national events organised by the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN) on the TDA's behalf, a focus group of training providers and a meeting with the National Governors' Association (NGA).

There were 105 responses to the online consultation, from a range of organisations including around 40 schools, 20 local authorities, 10 training providers, six parents' groups/organisations, six voluntary bodies, four professional associations/organisations and a number of individuals (mainly SENCOs and support staff).

1.1 Online consultation

The majority of the people who responded to the online consultation welcomed the proposals. They supported the key features of the proposed training model, including the flexible model and local provision with accreditation for prior experience and learning (APEL). They also supported the suggestion that training should be at masters level, and take about a year to complete from scratch. There was a similarly positive response to the requirements for providers and the outcomes that teachers would need to meet to complete the training successfully.

A number of suggestions were made for amendments to the specification – these will be considered and reflected, as appropriate, in a revised specification.

The key issues raised in the online consultation were:
- how national consistency could be assured in a flexible local model
- how to make sure the courses are practically based and also develop critical thinking and reflective practice
- the need for headteachers to release and get cover for staff on these courses
- how the costs of teachers undertaking the courses would be funded
- the time needed for providers to develop, validate and recruit for the courses

- remuneration for SENCOs and making sure they have influence at senior level in their schools, and

- how SENCO training would relate to the masters in teaching and learning (MTL).

1.2   *Events organised by NASEN*

The three NASEN events were attended by around 300 people. These included primary and secondary SENCOs, headteachers, teachers and support staff, staff from independent schools, local authority staff, consultants and training providers.

The response to the proposals was again broadly positive. Delegates welcomed and supported the flexible model, local provision, APEL and the suggestion that training should be at masters level and take about a year to complete from scratch. There was a positive response to the criteria for providers to meet to be approved to offer SENCO training, and to the outcomes teachers would need to meet to complete the training successfully. However, some concerns were expressed by teaching assistants, some of whom opposed the draft regulations requiring SENCOs to be qualified teachers.

The key issues were:
- how to ensure national coverage – that courses are available in all areas

- how national consistency could be assured in a flexible local model

- how to ensure the courses are practically based and also develop critical thinking and reflective practice

- the tight timetable for approving providers to develop and recruit for the courses by September 2009

- how SENCO training would relate to the MTL

- how the training would relate to the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) leadership standards

- who would provide funds to cover the costs of teachers on the courses

- the potential difficulty of arranging for suitable people to cover as SENCO for teachers while on the courses

- whether the training would be open to existing SENCOs, and

- creating a career pathway with appropriate remuneration for SENCOs and how to ensure they have influence at senior level in their schools.

A number of suggestions were made for amendments to the specification, which will be considered and reflected, as appropriate, in a revised specification.

1.3 Governors

The NGA was very supportive of the proposals. Governors had some concerns about the requirement in the draft SENCO regulations for the governing body to monitor the actions of the SENCO in schools where the headteacher was also the SENCO. They wanted DCSF and the TDA to work with them on a leaflet for governing bodies about the role of the SENCO and the new national training.

1.4 Providers

The TDA held a meeting with about 15 training providers, including higher education institutions (HEIs) and local authorities. The training providers supported the proposals, the flexible model set out in the draft specification and the suggestion that the training should carry 60 masters-level credits. They welcomed the idea of encouraging local authorities and groups of schools to apply for approval to run courses with HEIs, and felt that a highly practical course, offering substantial APEL, was both desirable and feasible.

The key issues they raised were:
- how to ensure the courses are practically based and also develop critical thinking and reflective practice at masters level
- how the SENCO training would relate to the MTL
- the tight timetable for approving, establishing and recruiting for the courses from September 2009, and
- how to make sure that all potential providers would be given the full information they need to understand the nature of the model, the objectives of the training, what would be required of them and when and how the approved courses would be advertised.

1.5 Comments and issues raised

A summary of the comments made and issues raised during the consultation is set out in the following sections:
- overall response – 2.1
- response to aspects of the training model – 2.2 –2.15
- response to each of the proposed criteria that all providers of SENCO training must meet – section 3, and
- response to the proposed outcomes that all new SENCOs must reach – section 4.

2 Response to the SENCO training model

2.1 *Overall response*

The majority of respondents (approximately 77 per cent) supported the proposed training model. In particular, it received support from headteachers and SENCOs. Approximately 19 per cent of respondents had concerns about some aspects of the proposal and approximately 4 per cent did not support it.

Respondents emphasised the importance of the qualification having the same name across the country, so that it is recognised nationally.

Reasons given for supporting the proposed training model included that:

- it would enhance the status and professionalism of SENCOs and increase their competence, confidence and self-esteem
- it reflected current good practice in training, ie setting out a core of required knowledge, skills and attributes, along with opportunities to personalise the training and accumulate credit
- it allows for both local provision and national consistency, and
- the proposed content is sufficiently rigorous and challenging.

The main areas of concern for people who did not support the training model included:

- that it could only be taken by qualified teachers and new SENCOs
- local delivery, especially in relation to issues of national consistency
- accreditation at masters level, and
- the focus on SENCOs, rather than inclusion more generally.

An analysis of these responses for each aspect of the proposed model is set out in 2.2–2.15 below.

2.2 *Flexible model*

Most respondents supported the flexible approach to training, in which participants could take different routes to reach the same set of outcomes, especially because it would enable participants with different levels of prior knowledge and experience to gain maximum benefit from the training.

There was some concern that the proposed model might be expensive, and that tailoring courses might lead to variation in the quality and rigour of programmes in different areas.

2.3   Local development and delivery

Some respondents commented on the benefits of the training being delivered by local consortia/partnerships (eg schools, local authorities, HEIs and other agencies in partnership). These included:

- preserving the right balance between practical activity and academic learning
- keeping the training up to date, with the right amount of specialist input
- preventing training becoming narrowly focused, eg on local issues or theory, and
- increasing choice, cost-effectiveness and peer support through local networks, regional partnerships and collaboration among local authorities.

Concerns about the local development and delivery included:

- accountability – Ofsted felt that the TDA should require consortia/partnerships to identify clearly who is accountable for the breadth and quality of their training
- inconsistencies in quality across the country – one respondent favoured a more 'comprehensive and structured' national programme – and
- accessibility – there was some concern about national coverage, and some respondents felt that having to travel any significant distance would deter participants from attending or completing the training.

2.4   Approved training

Several respondents described what they saw as the benefits of nationally approved training, including:

- greater consistency of SEN provision in different schools and local authorities
- raising the professional standing of the SENCO role in all schools
- increasing the professionalism of SENCOs by enhancing their professional attributes, knowledge and skills to a recognised level
- helping SENCOs to operate effectively in a role that has changed and continues to change
- reducing the amount of help and support SENCOs need from others – which can be difficult to find – and
- increasing the confidence of parents and carers in the provision the school makes for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

There was some discussion about the qualification being accredited at masters level. The people who favoured masters-level accreditation commented that:

- it would give the SENCO role status

- it would be 'odd' to accredit the qualification below masters level, considering the move towards an masters-level profession
- it should give SENCOs credit towards the MTL
- without masters-level accreditation the training might 'lose sight of theoretical perspectives', and
- national consistency would be assured through the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

Several respondents, while they supported a national qualification, either did not support accreditation at masters level, or felt that it should not be compulsory to complete a masters-level course to meet the outcomes (although meeting the outcomes should be compulsory). At some consultation meetings, the idea of splitting the SENCO qualification from the masters-level accreditation was discussed.

Concerns about all new SENCOs being required to study at masters level included:

- that masters-level accreditation might be 'setting the bar too high' and might discourage people from applying for SENCO posts
- that some SENCOs might struggle to study at masters level and therefore might fail the course or fail to complete the training
- that some SENCOs might not wish to take advantage of masters-level accreditation, including those who already have a masters-level qualification
- completion rates for teachers taking accredited training where 'academic' assessment tasks are required may be lower than otherwise might be expected, and
- the 'shelf-life' of the credit obtained.

There were further concerns about whether, as the proposed training is currently specified, it could be accredited at masters level. These included:

- Accrediting the current proposal at masters level could be seen as 'watering down' the value of both the SENCO qualification and masters-level study. One respondent said that in comparison with other 60-credit masters-level training, the SENCO training might be seen as an 'easy option'. Another compared the training to the national professional qualification for headship (NPQH), which is not accredited at masters level.
- The outcomes in the current proposal would need to be reworded to reflect the 'criticality', 'reflectivity' and 'enquiry' required in masters-level study, so that providers could feel confident to 'translate it into masters-level training'.
- The proposed number of release days (10–12) may not be enough for a masters-level course.

- For a masters-level course the number of hours of study and lengths of assignments should be prescribed, and that there should be a guaranteed minimum entitlement to tutorial time.

Some providers commented that the new masters-level postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) raised similar issues about a practice-focused course and masters-level accreditation.

Some respondents questioned how the proposed course would fit with the Masters in Teaching and Learning. A professional organisation suggested that it might become part of 'a specialism in SEN and disabilities, which would form a large part of the MTL'.

2.5   Manageability of the proposed training

There were some concerns about the manageability of the proposed training. These included:

- whether the outcomes could be met through a one-year part-time course, unless participants had substantial background experience
- whether SENCOs would be given enough time to meet the course requirements, including private study time (a teachers' union thought that all the training should take place during the working day, while some SENCOs seemed prepared to do some study outside their normal working hours)
- the practicalities of releasing/covering for SENCOs to attend training, even if funding was available, and
- whether new SENCOs could manage the training alongside their new SENCO roles and responsibilities, as well as other professional roles (teaching/headteacher/inclusion) and any personal responsibilities they might have.

Some respondents suggested ways of making the proposed qualification more manageable, for example:

- teachers could achieve some or all of the qualification before taking on the SENCO role
- making the provision modular, with some modules, eg those concerned with knowledge and understanding, being available by distance learning or e-learning, and
- allowing SENCOs a maximum of two/three years to complete the training, to allow for the pressure of a new role and for changing personal circumstances.

2.6 Compulsory nature of the proposed training

Some of those who supported the training in principle raised concerns about the training being compulsory for all new SENCOs. These concerns included:

- its possible effect on recruitment of SENCOs and the consequences for schools unable to recruit a SENCO because of this requirement
- the consequences for schools where the SENCO is judged not to be ready to join a masters-level programme, or where the SENCO fails to complete the training successfully (for 'academic' or personal reasons)
- the consequences for, or alternatives available to, SENCOs who struggle to study at masters level, and
- whether compulsory training would be practicable for small primary schools where the SENCO role is shared or where the headteacher is also the SENCO.

2.7 Eligibility for training

There was strong support for SENCOs having to be qualified teachers.

However, there were a number of questions and comments about eligibility for the new SENCO training, including:

- How would a 'new SENCO' be defined:
  - new to the role, having never been a SENCO before?
  - new to the post, perhaps having held a SENCO post in another school?
  - with, for example, fewer than two years in the job?
- Would new SENCOs in early years, special schools, units and hospital schools be included in this proposal, and, if so, how would trainers make provision for them?
- Could aspiring SENCOs join a course? Some respondents suggested that in a modular programme, some modules could be available to aspiring SENCOs, enabling them to build up credit in advance.
- Could 'non-SENCO' teachers and other professionals join a course, without gaining the qualification?
- What would be the position of the independent sector, non-maintained schools and academies in relation to this training?

A teachers' union cited research that identified the lack of training for existing SENCOs as a barrier to them carrying out their role effectively. This was supported by strong feeling from respondents (including a headteachers' organisation and Ofsted) that the accredited training should also be available to existing SENCOs, making use of APEL against the outcomes. It was felt that this would enhance the SENCO role and the professional capability of SENCOs in all schools. Several existing SENCOs were concerned that they would be disadvantaged in

the job market if they were unable to gain accreditation, because schools would prefer to recruit qualified SENCOs. One headteacher said that she would definitely favour better qualified candidates.

There were mixed feelings, however, about whether the training should be compulsory for existing SENCOs. For example, one respondent suggested that all existing SENCOs should be required to gain the accreditation within the next five years, while another was 'horrified by the thought' that existing SENCOs may one day have to prove they could meet the outcomes.

There was also strong feeling from well-qualified SENCOs (eg who already have masters-level qualifications in SEN) who do not have QTS, that they should be allowed to continue to work as SENCOs and have access to the training. They asserted that teaching assistants could meet the required outcomes without having QTS. Some respondents pointed out that SENCOs without QTS would not be able to meet some of the outcomes, eg managing others. A contributor from the Birmingham NASEN event suggested that teaching assistants were not in a position to observe and comment on the practice of teachers, and therefore cannot be effective SENCOs. One respondent suggested that excluding teaching assistants from becoming SENCOs would reduce the options for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and devalue their qualification. The Independent Schools Council cited an effective SENCO who was a speech and language therapist. The providers' meeting and some other respondents suggested that the TDA and DCSF might consider training and deploying 'SENCO assistants' to support newly qualified SENCOs, to retain and make the most of the commitment and expertise that exists across the school workforce.

2.8   Effect of the new qualification on existing training

Several respondents gave illustrations of existing high-quality training for SENCOs, and asked what effect the new training would have on this.

One respondent asked whether SENCOs who have already completed identified substantial SENCO qualifications (eg the Open University qualification) could automatically be awarded qualified SENCO status.

2.9   Support for SENCOs

Some respondents pointed out that accredited training for SENCOs could only ever have a limited effect unless headteachers and governors were committed to SEN and supportive of the SENCO. There was some concern that, in unsupportive schools, SENCOs could find it difficult to meet outcomes that might run counter to the school's practices.

Suggestions to help make sure SENCOs had the support of the senior leadership and governor included:

- guidance for headteachers and governors on the SENCO role and how to support SENCOs in carrying it out
- explicit reference to supporting SENCOs in the forthcoming leadership standards and training, and
- new or updated materials to support SEN Governors to carry out their role effectively.

2.10 Timescale

One of the greatest concerns expressed throughout the consultation was the feasibility of having arrangements in place for high-quality courses to start in September 2009.

While a few respondents felt that the proposed timescale was manageable, many raised concerns about the possible effects on quality of a September 2009 start.

Those who felt the timetable was manageable were mostly providers who already had partnerships in place and who believed that their courses substantially covered the proposed outcomes. These providers thought a September 2009 start would be possible, but only if they were approved to run courses in good time and if there was very good publicity to schools from DCSF and the TDA.

Other respondents felt that more time would be needed:

- for the TDA to amend the specification to reflect the outcomes of the consultation
- for providers to get new course programmes validated, although the providers' meeting suggested that they could be advertised as 'subject to validation'
- to consult and involve key stakeholders
- to plan delivery with HEI, local authority, school and other partners
- for schools to plan continuing professional development (CPD) within their performance management and financial cycles
- for schools to organise release time and cover for SENCOs
- to develop distance learning and e-learning elements
- to train tutors, mentors and coaches
- to advertise courses and interview applicants, and
- to develop arrangements for assessing the needs of candidates.

Some respondents felt the timescale might be manageable if the specification were finalised and published by the end of the year. Others suggested that it would be better to delay the start and make

sure the provision was of good quality and had the confidence of the system, rather than to go ahead immediately and potentially risk the programme's quality and reputation.

Some respondents suggested that the TDA should run a pilot for one year for current SENCOs. Participants at NASEN events were particularly keen on this option, to reward current SENCOs and create trained mentors and coaches for people new to the role in subsequent years.

2.11 Explanatory notes

There were some requests for:

- further guidance and examples on specific points in the specification, to make sure interpretation and assessment were consistent – Ofsted cited evidence of how useful additional guidance can be in helping to ensure consistent interpretation

- case studies showing SENCOs from different work contexts and with different levels of experience and prior knowledge, following the same training in different ways

- real-life examples of successful working SENCOs carrying out the role indicated by the training, to boost recruitment and dispel fears that the job is unmanageable, and

- a leaflet (produced with the NGA) for governors, to help raise awareness and provide information and guidance about fulfilling their role in relation to the SENCO, including where the SENCO is also the headteacher.

2.12 Funding

There was considerable discussion about funding, at the consultation events and online. In particular, respondents expressed views about the costs associated with the training – for instance, who would be eligible for funding, and how the funding mechanism would operate.

Schools that send SENCOs on training courses identified various costs, including:

- course fees
- supply cover for release and study leave
- travel and subsistence
- liaison between schools and with the training provider, and
- training mentors or coaches and release time for them.

Training providers identified a number of costs, including:

- course development, including consultation with stakeholders, and validation costs

- advertising
- interviewing, needs assessment of candidates and assessing their prior experience and learning
- tutors (staff, visiting contributors, school-based mentors)
- travel and subsistence for off-site visits
- materials
- research, and
- facilities costs.

Three main funding options were discussed at the NASEN consultation events:
- funding schools
- funding local authorities, and
- funding training providers.

On balance, respondents favoured channelling the funding through training providers.

A number of concerns and questions about funding were also raised, including:
- Concerns about the future of the qualification, as the funding might only be guaranteed for a limited period.
- A request for funding well in advance to cover development costs.
- A request for 'qualified SENCO status' to be recognised financially.
- A request that, once trained, SENCOs should be required to commit to the job for two years.
- A request for grants for small independent schools which would not be able to fund their SENCOs to train.
- A request for existing SENCOs to be funded or at least part-funded. Some respondents said that training their existing SENCO, although desirable, would 'eat up their CPD budget'. Some felt that schools might perhaps make a contribution in recognition of the benefits to the school as a result of the training.
- Questions about funding for aspiring SENCOs – eg training a SENCO in advance to replace one retiring in two years – and about whether more than one SENCO per school could be funded – eg if a SENCO left for a job at another school.

2.13 National consistency

Teachers and headteachers were concerned about how a consistent quality of courses could be assured so that SENCOs in all parts of the country would know they were getting a good deal.

In consultation meetings, there was support for the TDA's suggestion for a system of quality assurance (QA) in addition to providers' own QA mechanisms involving the TDA, plus a thematic review of courses by Ofsted after two years.

Ofsted welcomed a role in reviewing the SENCO courses. Recent Ofsted publications have identified too much variability in quality between different training providers where there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation. Ofsted pointed out, however, that it does not look at the academic equivalence of courses (this is carried out by QAA). Its role would be to look at the training outcomes, ie SENCOs' ability to carry out their roles and the impact on schools and pupils.

2.14 Content

One teachers' union felt that some of the skills in the proposed outcomes were 'beginning to stray away from the skills required for a SENCO' in the SEN Code of Practice and that the brief references to the Code of Practice in the document did not fully convey the Code's significance. This union, along with other respondents, commented on some differences in content between the specification and the national SENCO standards.

One respondent said that some of the required outcomes go beyond SENCOs' teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) for coordination.

2.15 Information and publicity

Respondents thought that the success of the training would depend on how well it was explained and marketed. Providers emphasised the need for the TDA to ensure that potential providers were given full information, and that they understood the nature of the model, the objectives of the training, what was required of them and how the approved courses would be advertised.

Suggestions for marketing the courses and keeping everybody informed included:
- including more of the rationale, summarising how the scheme would work, at the beginning of the specification
- information in SENCO Update and NASEN publications, and
- a web page set up by the TDA so that accurate information and reliable advice, case studies, etc could be made available to everyone.

3 The criteria for assessing expressions of interest in running training courses for new SENCOs

3.1 Criterion 1

> **Programmes should have as their main objective and outcome the raised achievement of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities, through improving participants' professional knowledge, understanding and skills.**

Most respondents agreed that the introduction and guidance to this criterion was clear and provided a good understanding of what is expected.

A number of respondents commented on this criterion. Their comments are summarised below.

3.1.1 Wording of the main criterion
There were some comments on the wording of the main criterion:

- A professional organisation questioned the use of the term 'SEN and/or disabilities' both in the wording of this criterion and elsewhere in the document. They wanted clarification about the role of the SENCO in relation to pupils with disabilities, who might or might not also have SEN.
- Two respondents suggested including achievement 'in relation to Every Child Matters' (ECM) in the main criterion.
- One respondent suggested replacing 'improving' in the main criterion with 'enhancing' or developing'.

3.1.2 Guidance paragraph 1 – ECM and raising pupils' achievement
ECM focus
Respondents welcomed the requirement for the training to reflect the principles of ECM. One organisation stressed the importance of providers demonstrating *how* ECM will be addressed in their programmes.

Raising pupils' achievement
The concept of SENCO training raising the achievement of pupils with SEN generated a lot of discussion. Ofsted commented that effective monitoring and evaluation of SENCO training programmes must include outcomes for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

Respondents generally welcomed the focus on pupils' progress and the emphasis on raising 'achievement' rather than 'attainment'. One respondent felt that SENCOs should be seen as raising the

achievement of all pupils, rather than just those with SEN and/or disabilities.

Concerns about this part of the criterion included:

- that it was inappropriate or difficult to require SENCO training to demonstrate an effect on pupils' progress, because this progress can be small, slow or non-existent
- that judgements about raised achievement would be difficult without reference to nationally agreed indicators of 'good progress' for pupils with SEN, and
- that it is impossible to attribute raised achievement to one training course and one practitioner – for example, some respondents pointed out that many SENCOs manage rather than implement 'interventions', so any improvement in pupils' achievement, or lack of it, could be attributed to the skills of a number of staff, rather than to those of the SENCO.

Some respondents welcomed this aspect of the criterion, but wondered how the impact of the training on pupils' achievement might be established. One respondent offered an example of the way in which an existing SENCO course successfully evaluates the impact of its training on pupils' achievement.

3.1.3 Guidance paragraph 2 – training rooted in practice

Respondents welcomed the idea of the qualification being rooted in practice. Ofsted suggested adding 'effective' in bold, to read: '… strongly rooted in **effective** practice …'.

Given the focus on practice, there was some discussion of who would be best placed to deliver the training. Several respondents cautioned that HEI-run courses could become too academic and distanced from practice. Others were concerned that courses run by local authorities or schools might allow a local agenda to dominate. Several respondents favoured a consortium or partnership approach (eg between HEIs, local authorities, schools and other organisations and agencies) that could take advantage of the strengths of each member. It was felt that the TDA should require expressions of interest to deliver training to set out explicitly the qualities and roles of each partner or consortium member, and how they would work together.

Respondents welcomed the requirement for those delivering courses to have the necessary expertise, experience and skills. Some requested that 'current' should be added. They wished to avoid the kind of poor training that they had experienced in the past, where trainers did not have appropriate knowledge or recent school experience, or where practice was not up to date. It was suggested that the TDA should require expressions of interest to deliver training to give details of the recent and relevant school-based experience of the people who would deliver the programme.

One organisation suggested that it might be useful to require that all courses must give participants the opportunity to meet pupils in both mainstream and specialist settings.

One respondent thought that there was too much emphasis on practice, at the expense of 'critical reflection and developing a wider understanding of policy/provision/practice that places the role of the SENCO in a broader context'.

3.1.4 Guidance paragraph 3 – leading teaching and learning
Respondents thought that being able to 'lead teaching and learning' was essential for a SENCO, but some wondered whether all SENCOs had or would be given sufficient status in their school to enable them to lead. This was an area that some respondents felt would be difficult for aspiring SENCOs to achieve.

3.1.5 Specific additions or changes to the guidance
A range of additions or changes to the guidance was suggested. These are set out in annex A.

3.1.6 Comments on the numbered criteria
A range of responses was received in relation to the numbered points under criterion 1. These are listed in the table in annex B.

3.2 Criterion 2

> **Providers should respond to participants' identified needs by offering appropriately differentiated provision that is of high quality, matched to participants' training and development needs, promotes progress towards the programme outcomes and makes the best use of available resources.**

Most respondents agreed that the introduction and guidance to this criterion were clear and provided a good understanding of what is expected. Some respondents emphasised the importance, in a national qualification, of all 'training routes' leading to the same set of required outcomes.

A number of respondents commented on this criterion. Their comments are summarised below.

3.2.1 Wording of the main criterion
There were some comments suggesting changes to the wording of the main criterion, including:
- replacing the term 'differentiated provision' because of its 'specific meaning in SEN terms', and

- removing 'minimum'.

There was some discussion about what differentiated provision might mean:

- One respondent commented that courses should not only be matched to individual needs but should also be 'phase-applicable' (relevant to their phase) where appropriate. Another respondent considered the needs of primary and secondary SENCOs to be different enough to justify having separate primary and secondary courses, while a contributor at the Leeds NASEN event thought that it was important for all SENCOs to know about phases and contexts other than their own.

- Various respondents commented that if courses were to be open to SENCOs from early years settings, pupil referral units (PRU), special schools, hospital settings and area SENCOs, considerable differentiation of the content would be needed.

3.2.2 Guidance paragraph 1 – matching provision to candidates' needs
One respondent was concerned that the term 'best use of available resources' might imply that the cheapest courses would be selected.

3.2.3 Guidance paragraph 2 – entry requirements
Some respondents were uncomfortable with the implication that there were 'entry requirements', but that these were not specified. The Birmingham NASEN event suggested that 'the entry requirements' should be changed to 'these entry criteria'. One organisation hoped that the TDA would give providers guidance on entry criteria to help ensure that practice on this was consistent.

Some entry criteria were suggested:

- There was some feeling that new or inexperienced teachers would not benefit fully from the course, and some respondents asked that the TDA and DCSF should specify a minimum number of years' teaching experience before SENCOs could be eligible for training. The Birmingham NASEN event suggested that one year might be appropriate, the London event suggested two years and the Leeds meeting suggested five years.

- It was suggested that some pastoral experience should be a pre-requisite.

- Some respondents felt that prospective SENCOs should be asked for references to prove their excellence as class or subject teachers before being accepted for the course.

There was some discussion around the implications for new SENCOs who are judged not to be ready to enter the course. In particular:

- The importance of providers liaising with schools to agree a clear 'learning pathway' to enable these SENCOs to develop further professionally, so that they can access SENCO training at a later date. One respondent pointed out that it might also be useful to involve

appropriate local authority staff and the SENCO themselves in these discussions.

- Concerns over the timescale – some respondents asked if there would be a maximum length of time for new SENCOs to complete the training and, if so, how this would affect people who needed further professional development before they could start the course.

Some respondents asked what incentive there would be for SENCOs to complete the course and there was concern over the implications for SENCOs and schools if:

- schools refused to allow their SENCO to train
- SENCOs refused to attend training
- SENCOs failed to complete the course or failed to meet the outcomes
- SENCOs moved to another school part-way through their training, or
- SENCOs became ill during their training.

3.2.4 Guidance paragraphs 3 and 4 – needs assessment

There was strong support for flexible training based on the assessment of participants' prior learning and experience and an assessment of their needs. However, one respondent was very concerned about the proposed approach. He agreed that an accredited scheme was needed, but felt that this criterion seemed to be 'a way of offering additional qualifications for minimum effort' and would ultimately devalue the qualification. Social Partners were concerned to ensure that the proposed needs assessment was not confused with or interpreted as assessment under performance management arrangements.

Respondents commented on the benefits of such flexibility, and in particular:

- the importance of catering for participants with very different levels of prior knowledge and experience
- the benefits of participants with different levels of prior knowledge and skill training together and sharing aspects of their knowledge, understanding and skills with each other, and
- the need to be responsive to local issues and individual circumstances.

Some respondents welcomed the flexibility but were concerned about:

- its effect on the coherence of the programme – a number of solutions were suggested, including:
  - having some elements of the training prescribed (a compulsory core), with a range of specialist options
  - using the assessment process to personalise the course rather than selecting the content
- the cost of delivering such flexible and individual provision

- the practical difficulties of running highly differentiated provision – one respondent suggested using the term 'reasonable personalisation' to manage expectations, and

- the needs assessment process becoming overly bureaucratic or requiring excessive amounts of evidence.

  Some respondents commented on the needs assessment process itself, for example:

- the need to exercise consistent and sound judgement when designing programmes to meet individual needs – there was some concern that this might vary between providers

- the need to manage expectations about the amount of flexibility that is possible – one respondent suggested including the phrase 'negotiating a package with candidates' to avoid assumptions that participants can define their own needs, which the training provider will automatically accept

- that exemption from training should not be given in respect of knowledge or experience that is out of date or partial (eg only gained in relation to a pupil with a particular kind of need)

- requests for guidance to support the needs assessment process, to help ensure a consistently good match between needs and provision – one respondent suggested that some case study examples to illustrate the process would also be helpful – and

3.2.5 Guidance paragraph 5 – assessment only
In general, respondents welcomed the possibility of an 'assessment-only' route, especially as a means of enabling existing (and possibly some new) SENCOs to gain the qualification without having to repeat training unnecessarily in areas where they are already competent. Social Partners were concerned to ensure that the assessment was not confused with or interpreted as assessment under performance management arrangements.

One respondent strongly opposed the assessment-only route, but gave no reasons. Another was concerned that offering a qualification through an APEL process alone might not be possible under some university regulations, although another provider thought that 60 credits at masters level was 'quite a nominal amount'.

Comments on the 'assessment only' route included:

- whether this should be described as an 'exceptional' route, given the number of experienced SENCOs who might wish to gain the qualification

- the importance of thorough and rigorous assessment against the outcomes at the right level (ie masters level), not a 'rubber-stamping exercise'

- that a 360⁰ evaluation might form part of the assessment process
- that a properly costed 'accreditation/assessment module' could be offered for this purpose, and
- a concern that the outcomes should be measured in the same way by different providers, that all providers should have a clear understanding of the scope and level of each outcome and that participants must demonstrate them all (some respondents felt that examples would help providers to make consistent judgements).

Some respondents expressed concerns about how consistently and reliably different providers use the APEL process, and, in particular, whether assessors would have the specialist knowledge and understanding to make sound judgements. Respondents suggested that consistency could be better assured by:

- clear guidance on what prior learning and experience could be accredited
- a nationally agreed scheme between providers, and
- training for assessors.

Some respondents asked for examples of what APEL might look like for a range of SENCOs with different backgrounds. However, those that attended the providers meeting cited their experience in this area and asked the TDA to trust them to handle APEL effectively. A professional association suggested that the TDA might ask some providers to bid for the 'assessment-only route', leaving others to concentrate on training new SENCOs.

3.2.6 Guidance paragraph 6 – further CPD
There was strong support for the idea of encouraging SENCOs to continue to develop professionally after completing the qualification. One respondent was concerned that there seemed to be no obvious career development pathways for SENCOst. Others suggested that qualified SENCOs could:

- progress through established school leadership pathways, especially if the SENCO outcomes were related to the forthcoming leadership standards
- specialise in particular areas of SEN through postgraduate study, or qualifications such as the British Psychological Society Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (CCET), or
- become 'leading SENCOs'.

Social Partners suggested that it needed to be made clear that any discussions about further professional development should be carried out by SENCOs with their managers in the context of performance management arrangements.

3.2.7 Comments on the numbered criteria
A range of responses was received in relation to the numbered points under criterion 2. These are listed in the table in annex B.

3.3 Criterion 3

> ***Programmes should be delivered flexibly, without compromising appropriate progression and quality of outcome, to maximise access for participants.***

Most respondents agreed that the introduction and guidance to this criterion were clear and provided a good understanding of what is expected. Once again, respondents pointed out the value of having one set of outcomes, so that the qualification would have the same value, regardless of the route followed.

A number of respondents commented on this criterion. Their comments are summarised below.

3.3.1 Wording of the main criterion
A teachers' organisation suggested that the criteria should require providers to show how their courses have been planned to take account of 'successive systematic reviews of research', which describe the characteristics of effective approaches to CPD as:
- having a clear focus on pupils' learning
- involving teachers in identifying pupils' needs
- using coaching and mentoring
- including observation, feedback and collaborative working
- providing opportunities for practice, research and reflective practice, and
- modelling preferred practice (eg active learning), both in classrooms and in adult learning situations.

3.3.2 Guidance paragraph 1 – promoting access
Two respondents wanted the reference to 'everyone' to be qualified to make it clear that there are eligibility criteria.

3.3.3 Guidance paragraph 2 – promoting equality of opportunity
Respondents commented on the importance of providers demonstrating how their training would be modified or adapted to meet a range of access requirements – not least because it would demonstrate the values that SENCOs should be promoting in their schools.

One respondent felt that providers should be required to make provision to support participants' emotional health and well-being, eg through online communities or a tutor, mentor or coach.

3.3.4 Guidance paragraph 3 – flexible provision/variety of study routes

There was general support for flexible provision as a way to:

- attract as many participants as possible
- make the training more attractive to under-represented groups, eg men, younger teachers
- make it manageable, alongside personal and professional commitments
- meet the needs and preferences of individuals and institutions, and
- facilitate the involvement of key stakeholders.

Some respondents wanted more information about the amount and type of flexibility required, or that would be available, while others suggested possible models that would enable new SENCOs to combine work and study.

Some respondents wanted to be reassured that:

- programmes need not include all the possible modes of study
- individualised programmes would not lead to isolated study (they stressed the value of collaborative learning and networking), and
- providers would have support strategies to ensure that under-represented and vulnerable groups or individuals were able to complete the programme.

One HEI respondent asked for the text to be amended so that it did not indicate complete flexibility. He felt that flexibility should be negotiated by key stakeholders at the level of course planning, and reviewed on a regular basis.

Some respondents commented on e-learning, for example:

- its importance in making the training accessible for SENCOs in isolated areas
- its value as a possible means for delivering 'off-the-shelf modules' covering the required professional knowledge and understanding
- its use as a vehicle for forums and tutor support
- that e-learning would be helpful, but might not suit everyone, and that 'blended' learning would be preferable, with e-learning as a component, and
- that it could take some time to develop distance or e-learning modules, which could make September 2009 an unrealistic start date for providers wishing to include this kind of provision.

3.3.5 Comments on the numbered criteria
A range of responses was received in relation to the numbered points under criterion 3. These are listed in the table in annex B.

3.4 Criterion 4

> **Programmes should take into account the needs of stakeholders and involve them in developing, delivering and improving provision.**

There was strong support for this criterion, and respondents stressed the importance of the local context being reflected in the programme. A few concerns were raised, however, about:

- the practicality of this criterion for providers of e-learning or distance learning modes or courses with wide 'catchment areas'
- the practicality and cost-effectiveness of this for courses covering a number of local authorities, and
- the danger of programmes becoming too parochial at the expense of wider, national concerns and issues.

A number of respondents commented on this criterion. Their comments are summarised below.

3.4.1 Timescale
Some respondents questioned whether providers would be able to deliver the requirements of this criterion in the time available, as they would need to collect the views of stakeholders. Another pointed out that it may take some time to train 'stakeholders' to coach or mentor participants, so a September 2009 start might be unrealistic.

3.4.2 Guidance paragraph 1 – collecting and taking account of evidence about the needs of stakeholders
Some respondents cautioned against giving stakeholders disproportionate influence. One felt that too much stakeholder involvement might jeopardise national consistency. Another respondent asked for clarification about how much consultation was required, who would decide which of their views to include and how often these consultations should be repeated. One respondent suggested that providers should be asked to say more about their mechanisms for responding to stakeholders' views.

Some drafting changes were suggested – these are set out in annex A.

3.4.3 Guidance paragraph 2 – involving stakeholders directly or indirectly in programmes
A range of possible stakeholder contributions was suggested, including:

- local authorities and other stakeholders could act as 'providers' – partners in consortia delivering the programme
- excellent practitioners could deliver high-quality training based on 'ongoing and contemporary experience', eg 'leading SENCOs' and 'pathfinders'
- experienced SENCOs or leading teachers, could become mentors or coaches
- experts on SEN law from one of the SEN legal advice charities, eg IPSEA or the Children's Legal Centre, could contribute as speakers
- parents or carers of pupils with SEN could be guest speakers, and
- SEN specialists, eg on autism and specific learning difficulties could speak on their specialisms.

One respondent pointed out the need for stakeholders participating in the programme in any way to be paid for their time.

Ofsted pointed out the importance of stakeholders (including schools used for placements or visits) involved in the programme being subject to QA to make sure they provide a 'balanced approach to issues'.

Another respondent felt that it was not always helpful to have 'distant stakeholders' involved in QA activities, particularly if they do not fully understand the course programme and its key purposes.

3.4.4 Comments on the numbered criteria
A range of responses was received in relation to the numbered points under criterion 4. These are listed in the table in annex B.

3.5 Criterion 5

> *Programmes should be of a consistently high quality, subject to rigorous quality assurance procedures, with mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and improving their impact on participants' competence and the achievement of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities.*

There was strong support for this criterion. One respondent pointed out that, if accredited at masters level, courses would have to be approved through normal HEI QA processes.

Most of those who commented approved of the proposed QA measures as a means of:

- maintaining high standards
- ensuring consistency of provision across the country
- raising the status of the SENCO role in schools, and
- giving schools and parents or carers confidence that all new SENCOs have received a minimum standard of high-quality training.

Some respondents suggested that additional external QA mechanisms would be needed, in addition to those put in place by providers, to ensure a common standard across all course providers, and to make sure the training is balanced and relevant. These suggestions included:

- inspection of courses by Ofsted – however, one professional association felt that the statement (in the introduction) that Ofsted *may* inspect after five years would not be sufficient
- school inspections – the Birmingham NASEN event suggested that where Ofsted's school inspections pick up weaknesses in SEN coordination, questions should be asked about the quality of the course that the SENCO was trained on (where appropriate)
- a review of the training model itself after a year or two to check its effectiveness, drawing on feedback from stakeholders, and
- that the TDA should approve courses for a shorter time and require providers to keep their courses up to date.

A number of respondents commented on this criterion. Their comments are summarised below.

3.5.1 Wording of the main criterion
A teachers' union felt that the focus on pupils' achievement only showed a narrow understanding of what a SENCO should contribute to a school or setting, and that this was at odds with the SENCO Code of Practice, which sets out a 'holistic vision for the role with all its complexities'. To broaden the measurement of impact, some respondents suggested that the main criterion should also include a requirement to demonstrate the impact of the training on schools. Examples of how this might be done were offered.

3.5.2 Timescale
Several respondents felt that a September 2009 start would jeopardise quality. Some favoured a pilot or a phased start, with feedback from this used to inform year 1 of the roll-out to the whole country. A contributor from the Leeds NASEN event suggested that the first year should be used as a 'pilot' to accredit existing SENCOs, who could then act as mentors or coaches to new SENCOs in regional school clusters. It was suggested that this would:

- be cost-effective succession planning
- be a valuable source of CPD for existing SENCOs
- be a good source of 'coaches' for the MTL, and

- prevent the possible 'dent to existing SENCOs' confidence' from this initiative.

3.5.3 Guidance paragraph 1 – rigorous QA: internal and external measures

There was a suggestion that the nature of the internal and external evaluation required should be set out clearly. One provider suggested including an example of the hierarchy of QA measures that providers should put in place.

Some respondents cautioned against the TDA introducing 'layers of bureaucracy' through the QA measures they required – they hoped that:

- providers' existing QA measures would be acceptable
- QA contributions from participants would be built into courses so that SENCOs' workloads were not increased, and
- QA procedures should not be too unwieldy or interventionist.

3.5.4 Guidance paragraph 2 – QA for specific areas of the programme

Several new requirements were suggested:

- requiring providers to assure the quality of their APEL/needs assessment
- requiring opportunities for peer moderation for programmes that are delivered collaboratively
- asking providers to demonstrate that they offer high-quality teaching and learning (rather than merely having a good reputation, largely based on research status), and
- requiring that the people delivering the course have suitable qualifications and experience, ie a history of being effective SENCOs.

3.5.5 Guidance paragraph 3 – evidence of having raised pupils' achievement

This part of the guidance generated a significant number of comments, and opinion was divided (see also 3.1.2 above).

From a QA point of view, some respondents pointed out that schools now had access to useful data and that local authorities could help to assess the impact of the training. One respondent wondered who would validate evidence of pupils' progress or whether participants' own reporting of evidence of improvement would be sufficient.

3.5.6 Guidance paragraph 4 – CRB checks

One respondent felt that this requirement should appear right at the front of the document, rather than as part of this criterion.

Another felt that it was important that providers should have good safeguarding procedures in place. However, others raised concerns, including:

- questioning the need for CRB checks because all participants would be teachers currently practising in school, so they would already be CRB-checked, and
- wanting reassurance that the requirement for checks would not be overly bureaucratic.

3.5.7 Comments on the numbered criteria
A range of responses was received in relation to the numbered points under criterion 4. These are listed in the table in annex B.

3.6 Criterion 6

> **The requirements for successfully completing the programme should include the minimum outcomes, so that participants who successfully complete nationally accredited training for SENCOs make maximum impact on practice.**

There was strong support for an outcomes-based approach that gave providers the opportunity to design flexible programmes.

A professional organisation pointed out that although national training must have common outcomes, training programmes must be flexible enough to prepare SENCOs to work in different settings.

Some respondents had reservations about the outcomes model, including that:

- an outcomes model was a little too flexible, and there should also be a core of specified content
- some of the outcomes were 'a little too general', and
- the outcomes would need to meet the criteria for masters-level study.

Respondents' comments on this criterion are summarised below.

3.6.1 Wording of the main criterion
One respondent was concerned that using the term 'minimum outcomes' in the main criterion would devalue the qualification, and asked for it to be removed.

3.6.2 Demonstrating performance
Some respondents commented on the process of demonstrating performance in relation to the outcomes:

- Ofsted commented that it must be made totally clear that teachers completing the course successfully would be required to show they had achieved all of the outcomes.

- One respondent cautioned against a 'tick-list' approach to assessment where participants 'did not feel the need to push for deeper reflection and understanding'. Another suggested a portfolio approach to collating evidence to support the outcomes.

- Respondents wanted it to be clear that a range of different forms of evidence could be acceptable to demonstrate achievement of the outcomes. Some indicated that specific types of assessment would be appropriate for a masters-level programme, eg action research projects and case studies which link theory to practice, are evidence-based and show evidence of reflection; or carrying out and evaluating a small-scale research project leading to an aspect of policy change within the school or setting.

- One respondent pointed out that other factors outside SENCOs' control can influence whether or how well a SENCO meets the outcomes, eg the school context, the pupil cohort or the commitment of the senior leadership team.

- Some respondents felt that aspiring SENCOs or SENCOs in small schools would be unable to meet several of the outcomes.

- Ofsted emphasised the importance of having minimum performance indicators to help providers make sound and consistent judgements against the outcomes, both through assignments and in the workplace. They commented that findings from published reports demonstrate that the moderation of minimum outcomes is aided by more detailed examples.

- Social Partners felt it important that the outcomes should not be seen as a further set of professional standards or interpreted or used as such

4 The proposed outcomes that SENCOs must reach

4.1 Professional attributes

There was very strong support for the proposed professional attributes (approximately 87 per cent of online respondents).

Those who did not support them gave the following reasons:

- They 'set the bar too low' and were merely 'the job specification for a SENCO'.
- They focus on pupils with SEN in isolation, rather than all pupils.
- They would sit better in the 'professional skills' section
- Some should be deleted because they apply to all teachers, not just SENCOs.

4.1.1 Comments on individual bullet points

A range of responses was received in relation to individual outcomes under 'professional attributes'. These are listed in the table in annex C.

4.1.2 Suggested additions to the required professional attributes

A range of suggested additions to the required 'professional attributes' was suggested. These are set out in annex D.

4.2 Professional knowledge and understanding

There was very strong support for the proposed professional knowledge and understanding (approximately 84 per cent of online respondents).

Some respondents questioned whether all the required outcomes in this section could be met in one year part time for someone starting completely from scratch with no relevant prior experience or learning. A few respondents expressed concerns about these outcomes, including:

- that some outcomes seemed more specific than others
- that the language used (know and understand) was intimidating, and suggested that all references to 'know and understand' should be changed to 'have a working knowledge of', and
- that they should focus more on requiringSENCOs to know where to find things out, eg using the resources available in special schools.

4.2.1 Order of the outcomes

Some reordering of the outcomes was requested, including:

- that the order of the bullets should be changed to put the child first, and

- (from Ofsted) to reorder the bullets so that the main human rights legislation reflected by disability equality laws is listed first.

4.2.2 Language

Some respondents pointed out that the language of the outcomes needed to be changed to reflect the criteria for masters-level study and to avoid possible confusion with the professional standards for teachers.

4.2.3 Examples

Some respondents requested more detail and examples to support each outcome, including specifying that a SENCO needs to know:

- what is meant by 'relevant laws' – this should include data protection and freedom of information laws because of the records SENCOs keep and have access to
- the implications of ECM for the SENCO role
- how Team Around the Child (TAC) works
- about the common assessment framework (CAF) and how to use it, and
- what working as a 'lead professional' entails.

4.2.4 Comments on individual bullet points

A range of responses was received in relation to individual outcomes under 'professional knowledge and understanding'. These are listed in the table in annex C.

4.2.5 Suggested additions to the required professional knowledge and understanding

A range of additions was suggested to the required 'professional knowledge and understanding'. These are set out in annex D.

4.3 Professional skills

There was very strong support for the proposed professional skills (approximately 84 per cent of online responses).

4.3.1 Order of the outcomes

Some reordering of the outcomes was requested to make clear the importance of the management, curriculum development and professional development role of a SENCO.

4.3.2 Language

Some respondents pointed out that the language of the outcomes needs to be changed to reflect the criteria for masters-level study.

4.3.3 Manageability

There was some concern about whether all the required outcomes in this section could be met in one year part time for someone starting completely from scratch with no relevant prior experience or learning.

4.3.4 Comments on individual bullet points

A range of responses was received in relation to individual outcomes under 'professional knowledge and understanding'. These are listed in the table at annex C.

4.3.5 Suggested additions to the required professional knowledge and understanding

A range of additions was suggested to the required 'professional knowledge and understanding'. These are set out in annex D.

4.4 General editorial points

- Standardise the use of terms – 'children and young people' or 'pupils'.
- Number the outcomes.
- Check the introductory preamble – it appeared to say the same thing in different ways.

Annex A – Specific comments received on guidance on the criteria that training providers must meet

Criterion 1	Criterion 4	Criterion 5
Paragraph 1 Reference 'participation and making a positive contribution' alongside achievement. Add 'actively' and 'meaningfully' to 'listen to pupils'.	**Paragraph 1** Make 'taken account of' more 'proactive'. Add 'children's services' to the list of stakeholders. Add 'social care and health' to the list of stakeholders. Bring 'voice of the child' out of the footnote, into the main body of the text. Replace 'pupils' with 'children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities'. Replace 'parents and carers' with 'parents and carers of children with SEN'. Move the list of possible stakeholders from the footnote into the main body of the text.	**Paragraph 3** Broaden the example to reduce the focus on 'interventions' and to include 'value added data and pictorial and videoed evidence'.
Other suggested additions Add a reference to 'inclusion and equalities'. Add a specific reference in the criterion to SENCOs supporting the development of pupils' literacy and communication skills to enable them to gain access to the curriculum.		

Annex B – Comments received on the numbered points for each criterion

Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Criterion 5
1.2 One respondent thought that this was particularly important as schools can learn a lot from SENCOs' practice in schools that are outstandingly successful. Another respondent felt this point was inappropriate because effective practice in one school cannot always be translated into another school, and therefore good practice in one school cannot be used as a model for others, although lessons can be learned. Add 'a range of' schools.	**2.1** Add 'relevant' before 'prior study'.	**3.1** Add 'all aspects', to read: '… fully in all aspects of the programme …' to ensure that this includes school-based elements and assessment.	**4.1** All references to stakeholders should be cross-referenced to the footnote that lists them. Include 'other agencies' in the list of stakeholders.	**Main criterion** Remove the 'should be' repeat.
1.3 Add more masters-level language ('critical'/'effective'). Consider adding text to highlight the expectation that programmes will not only provide up-to-date information about research, legislation and policy, but also include an expectation that participants will interpret and	**2.2** Needs to reflect the role of assignments in helping participants meet their individual goals.	**3.2** May need to define or replace 'blended learning' as a 'mixture of taught and distance learning'.	**4.3** Specify 'other aspects of the programme', to include 'delivery'. Add 'will', to read: '… have or will directly …', as most of these courses will be new.	**5.2** State that the candidate must be a qualified teacher with some years' experience. More information of what is required here would be helpful.

critically appraise these. Specific guidance is needed for this requirement. Add 'practice', ie to read: '… important developments and innovations in practice relating …'.			Specify that experienced SENCOs must be involved.	
1.4 Add more masters-level language ('critical understanding'). Consider adding text to highlight the expectation that programmes will not only provide up-to-date information about research, legislation and policy, but also include an expectation that participants will interpret and critically appraise these.	**2.3** Consider renaming – 'assessment-only' may be confusing. Define the 'exceptional circumstances' for which this might be appropriate. Avoid the word 'exceptional'. Avoid the word 'experienced' – some SENCOs can be 'experienced' but neither knowledgeable nor skilled. Replace 'experienced' with 'skilled/suitably experienced'. Add more detail about the assessment of prior learning. Define 'suitably experienced'. Some wanted to replace 'cost-effective' with 'value for money'. Some wanted 'cost-effective' to stay.			**5.3** Is the phrase 'any other appropriate background check' necessary? What does it mean?

1.5	2.4			5.4
The General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) suggested strengthening this to ensure that participants develop the skills and expertise needed for the 'engagement and participation of all children and young people with SEN'. Include the notion of recognising the human voice. Add the word 'appropriate'.	Unpick – too much for one criterion – break into separate points. Consider whether 'cost-effective' is needed if there is a national fee structure. Replace 'cost-effective' with 'provides value for money'.			Specify that experience must be drawn from a range of appropriate sources, eg advanced skills teachers (AST), local authorities, parents.
1.6 Add 'leading a team'. Subdivide to specify: a) colleagues, especially Senior Leadership Team, and b) agencies beyond the school, eg social services.				**5.5** Include shadowing colleagues. Local authorities should have a role in selecting placements. Participants must visit other settings to look at the role of the SENCO. Replace 'placements' with 'professional experiences'. Specify the range of 'placements', eg visits or exchanges. Replace 'placements' with a reference to opportunities to visit a range of settings (eg mainstream and special schools, further education colleges, support service centres and, where

				relevant, Children's Centres etc).
1.9 Needs to be more explicit – build in text from specification page 1. Guidance is needed to ensure it isn't a checklist. Perhaps also suggest other approaches, eg suggesting a portfolio might be better. Consider personalising 'rigorous assessment' to make it more relevant to individuals and their initial audit of needs.				**5.7** Add 'time', to read: '… understanding, skills and time to carry …'.
Other The Birmingham NASEN event suggested adding a point explicitly about coordinating SEN provision, and a requirement to share practice/influence the practice of colleagues. Add a specific reference to 'supporting and enabling pupils with SEN and/or disabilities to progress once they leave school'.				**5.9** This should include impact in the workplace/on staff. Give more guidance on the process of assessing impact on achievement – ways this might be done.

Annex C – Comments received on individual outcomes

Professional attributes	Professional knowledge and understanding	Professional skills
Bullet 1 Include 'the need to respect the professionalism of those working in the health service or in social care', as SENCOs will be dealing with people across these services.	**Bullet 1** Some of the work on disability equality is in the form of guidance – this might be better as: 'relevant laws and guidance on disability equality'. Consider adding a comment on local (authority) approaches to identification, assessment and provision, as there are many local interpretations of the national guidance. There is a need to include participants' understanding of current legislation and Government policies and initiatives related to ECM, especially as SENCOs are likely to be lead professionals involved in the CAF process and TAC.	**Bullet 1** • These skills are not attainable by an aspiring SENCO. • It should clearly reference the need to ensure that pupils are supported throughout the school day, including unstructured periods – eg transfer between lessons, break times and lunch times. This is implied by the phrase 'the wider life of the school', but this is not explicit enough and could be taken to refer to school trips and special activities. For pupils whose SEN or disability impacts on their behaviour or their ability to socialise or communicate, support may be required during break times to ensure that they can enjoy the same opportunities to make friends and play as other children. Also important that the SENCO understands that additional therapy for pupils shouldn't always be scheduled during break times so that they miss out on these opportunities. This bullet point could also refer to a need to work with senior colleagues and governors to help them to comply with their duty, under the Disability Equality Duty, to monitor the impact of their policies and practices on disabled pupils. • This is rather bland – it does not suggest the importance of the strategic emphasis as clearly as it might. • In larger schools it can be the SENCO's line manager who does this.

Bullet 2 • This outcome would be difficult to achieve for an aspiring SENCO. • The wording is poor. It suggests that headteachers are always opposed to SENCOs. No SENCO should have to 'gain the commitment of colleagues', including headteachers and senior leaders, to improve outcomes. If this is not happening it is the job of the governing body to act. • Consider a reference to governors here. It could be particularly important in relation to the draft/final SENCO regulations.	**Bullet 3** Add: 'the need to comply with the anticipatory planning duty, under disability discrimination legislation, to increase their capacity to include pupils with SEN/disabilities'.	**Bullet 2** • It needs to be clear that 'setting appropriately challenging targets' is done by SENCOs along with other colleagues or as part of school procedures. • Add: 'in consultation with the class teacher'. • After 'minimising barriers to learning', the words 'and taking part in the wider life of the school' should be inserted to reinforce the fact that the outcome of the training is not simply academic attainment. • A much stronger reference is needed to handling, using, managing and interpreting data. • The emphasis given to this bullet suggests that 'essentially, the SENCO's role is about individuals'. • It sounds like the SENCO does all the work rather than everyone doing the work it under the SENCO's leadership and management. • Give more weight to competence in professional assessment skills – because SENCOs will not only need to demonstrate their own competence, but will be responsible for supervising the practice of others. **Sub-bullet 1** Add a reference to the CAF. **Sub-bullet 2**

		• Add 'standardised' to national tests.
		• The Standing Committee on Test Standards commented that this bullet implies 'likely inappropriate use of summative assessments'. They suggested 'a more generic approach to this, which promotes exemplary assessment practice through the completion of a recognised national qualification'.
		• Add something about 'modifying classroom environments and teaching strategies in response to analysis of summative assessments'.
		Sub-bullet 3
		• This is vague.
		• Reword it as: 'to develop and use formative assessment'.
		• Add: 'working within the school assessment procedures, where applicable'.
		• Add: 'working with the assessment leader'.
		• Mention standardised tests (reading and spelling tests) as well as national tests, and that they give a much more accurate and precise figure than key stage tests.
		• Specify or recommend the inclusion of professional training in assessment and the use of psychometric tests (psychometric tests are widely used in schools but poorly understood).
		• It is not the sole responsibility of the SENCO to identify exam needs.
		• This is minutiae rather than a global statement

		of skill – the point should be about organisation and systems – the SENCO needs to set up and organise systems for doing lots of things.
Bullet 3 Some SENCOs will have no one to delegate to.	**Bullet 4** Expand bullet 4 to include a clear understanding of the causes of underachievement (to recognise when this is not a result of SEN and therefore should not be referred to the SENCO) and 'broker the appropriate support'. Add: 'and learning', to read: '… development and learning can be …'. Delete: 'for learning' at the end.	**Bullet 3** Emphasise provision mapping more emphatically. Consider adding a comment on financial management. It could include a reference to understanding how SEN support and provision are funded (transparency) and how effectively funding is deployed (Audit Commission SEN/AEN VfM tool).
Bullet 4 Strengthen this to include wording that ensures decisions and judgements are made from rigorous evaluation of the outcomes (in all five areas of ECM) for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. Define what problems the SENCO will be required to anticipate and solve – give examples?	**Bullet 5** Add speech, language and communication needs. It is unhelpful to single out dyslexia without mentioning other recognised specific learning difficulties (SpLD) – otherwise readers may think dyslexia and SpLD are the same thing. As knowing something about different conditions is central to the SENCO's role, it might be better to have a longer list, which could include sensory and physical difficulties. This would ensure providers know what needs to be covered. Use the term 'high-frequency disabilities' to be consistent with terminology in other government documents. Strengthen literacy and communication skills – SENCOs need to understand the specialist teaching required for children with speech and language difficulties.	**Bullet 4** This is not attainable for an aspiring SENCO.

Bullet 5 This will require some oral presentation if it is to be assessed. Will the term 'speech' present access issues? This needs examples to explain why this is a requirement, eg for statutory assessment panels, etc.	**Bullet 7** A phrase is needed about strategic planning – knowing and understanding self-evaluation alone is not enough. SENCOs need to be able to put the self-evaluation into planning priorities, monitoring, evaluation and review.	**Bullet 5** • This is not attainable for an aspiring SENCO. • This needs to reflect the range of multi-agency colleagues who work in all schools. • Monitoring staff performance/accountability. • Qualify 'colleagues' by making explicit mention of NQTs.
Bullet 6 Revise to read: 'Draw on research and inspection evidence and other sources of advice on good practice to improve their own and their colleagues' teaching'. This needs example.	**Bullet 8** Amend to read: 'know and understand the scope and role of external agencies, both local and national, how to get specialist support and resources for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities and how to support colleagues in making use of such advice and collaboration'. How is bullet 8 different from bullets 4, 5 and 6?	**Bullet 7** This is too long – too much in it.
	Bullet 9 Add at the end: '… and what to do with it and evaluate the impact.'	**Bullet 8** • Change 'liaise' to 'work with'. • It is not clear whose learning and development is being promoted. We believe it would be helpful if this bullet point reflected the fact that liaison should result in learning and development on both sides. It is very often the parent of the disabled child or the child with SEN who is the expert on their child and their needs. On the other hand, often for gains made in school to be generalised to home and other settings it is vital that parents understand what is happening in school and whether or

		not they should be reinforcing this at home. • Consider linking this to liaison with parent partnership services.
		Bullet 9 • This is not attainable by an aspiring SENCO. • See the SENCO Update take on the way that the SENCO might make a link between their own work in schools and the services they access on behalf of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities – possibly useful in examples, using the services improvement outcomes. • Consider distinguishing between education and other statutory services (eg speech and language therapy provision in the health sector) and voluntary organisations.

Annex D – Suggested additions to the required outcomes

Professional attributes	Professional knowledge and understanding	Professional skills
• Championing inclusion. • Commitment to equality, fairness, celebrating diversity, supporting a more inclusive society. • Challenging institutional practice that does not support ideals of current legislation and policy on SEN and/or disability. • Something about advocacy – on behalf of parents and children. • Commitment to listening to 'children's voices'. • Establishing fair, respectful and constructive relationships with staff in their school and with outside agencies. • Interpersonal skills of influencing and negotiating – 'upwards' to heads and the senior leadership team, 'sideways' to other teachers and 'downwards' to staff in the management chain and with parents/carers – bring out more clearly in the specification. • Valuing and recognising the diverse and distributed expertise across all staff. • Greater emphasis on the leadership function. • Whole-school strategy and leadership issues. • Flexibility and ability to influence and facilitate change. • The confidence to encourage reflective practice by colleagues.	• Something about inclusion and disability. • 'Know and understand their wider role', eg providing information for Disability Living Allowance forms. • Understanding of 'Aiming High for Disabled Children', the outcomes of the Children's Plan and 'Every Disabled Child Matters'. • Knowledge and understanding of school budgeting – understanding the systems/ways in which funding for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities is provided to their school and how this funding is used (this is important if they are involved in financial planning related to the effective use of resources in their school through provision planning/management – cross-reference to the Audit Commission 'tool'); how to apply for local funding arrangements, and how to access additional resources to support students with SEN; school and local authority mechanisms – manage money effectively. • Understanding the SEN budget – how much is available for SEN and what to do with it. • Knowledge of how to direct the work of teaching assistants and develop them professionally (observations, performance management). • Know and understand the range of	• Working with and supporting teaching assistants. • Directing the work of teaching assistants, liaising with outside agencies and coordinating the response of the school to the needs of the child. • Delegation skills. • Managing staff, eg conflict management, managing underperformance, line management and performance management of teaching assistants, learning mentors and admin staff. • Skills and ability for working with other professionals. • Working effectively in multi-agency teams. • Working effectively with senior colleagues to use data generated by the school and local authority to monitor pupils' progress and take appropriate action. • Disseminating information and data (eg CATs scores) effectively to staff, helping them to differentiate provision for pupils. • Using data analysis to investigate trends in pupil performance. • Understanding the need to narrow the attainment gap for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities.

• Acknowledging and coping with change.	professional development resources available for developing the expertise of all staff, including NQTs and support staff.	• Skills needed to develop the skills and expertise of other members of staff, and the ability to lead professional learning in school.
	• Know how to create a 'team around the child'.	• Identifying and running effective CPD programmes for staff.
	• More on leading and managing teams, including external professionals.	• Specify or recommend the inclusion of professional training in assessment and the use of psychometric tests.
	• Knowledge of the range of different support staff that might work with SENCOs, and of the professional parameters of different roles.	• Skills to take forward an inclusive culture and its associated practices within their school.
	• Something about transition/transfer. Ensure that SENCOs know they need to work jointly with Connexions in relation to transition planning and Section 140 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. They need to know about the role of Connexions and how it can support the school to meet objectives for children and young people with SEN. The statutory requirements placed on the Connexions service by DCSF and the LSC – to work effectively with young people and parents/carers to secure appropriate post-16 options – makes effective joint working with SENCOs essential. Distinguish between transfer (eg early years to primary or primary to secondary) and transition (secondary to further or higher education and collaboration with Connexions).	• Skills to distribute specialist knowledge throughout the workforce, so that the 'team' rather than an individual is equipped to deal with the range of SEN presenting within that school.
		• Greater emphasis on the leadership function.
		• Helping colleagues to understand that all teachers are teachers of pupils with SEN.
		• Encouraging a more social interactive model of SEN in their setting, engendering an inclusive ethos.
		• A commitment to championing the pupil's voice. It is vital that a SENCO is able to advocate on behalf of pupils with SEN within the school staff team.
	• Know how their work feeds into the school improvement plan and be able to work with the headteacher on the Self Evaluation Form and development plans.	• Ability to teach large classes – not just individuals or groups.
		• Ability to promote effective communication across all staff about the learning needs, behaviour and achievement of all children.
	• More about the strategic aspects of the role – the word strategic only used once.	• Ability to distribute leadership and support on

	- How to audit and what expected of a SENCO in preparation for/at an Ofsted inspection. - Something about 'engaging in discussion about the development of SEN provision, rather than simply maintaining the status quo'. - Understanding the processes and procedures. - Something about using/interpreting data with explicit mention of 'Raise online' in examples of how school, local authority and national data systems work. - Understanding of the SEN 'continuum' and where a child might be placed on it. - Looking at pupils with SEN as part of the whole – awareness that the same skills are needed for working with all pupils. - Understand cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities and their impact on learning. - Awareness of current and upcoming primary and secondary national strategy developments, eg Inclusion Development Programme (IDP. - Know and understand the latest approaches to whole-class teaching and learning and behaviour management. - Have a strong focus on current and emerging evidence, including published literature and research on disability and SEN. - Know the specialist techniques to support the development of literacy and communication through structured multi-sensory teaching – the minimum knowledge is in the IDP	both CPD and SEN work. - Overseeing access arrangements for national tests and public examinations. - Negotiating and influencing. - Planning for transition/transfer. - Helping children become independent. - Evaluating commercial schemes and materials.

	programme.	
	• Know and understand how to use nationally recognised standardised tests.	
	• Local knowledge, local authority support and line management structures.	
	• Health and safety – specific interpretation of things such as 'care and control' and 'handling'.	