

Information for head teachers, mentors and other colleagues involved in the HLTA process

Since 2003, HNAP (the HLTA National Assessment Partnership) has been the only awarding body for HLTA status in England. It oversees the quality assurance of assessments against national HLTA standards and approves partner organisations to manage and moderate assessments on its behalf regionally and nationally. Its current regional partners are HLTA North (Leeds Trinity University, Northumbria University), Northampton University and HLTA South of England.

How is it of value?

Support staff who achieve HLTA status are able to offer proven skills to support teachers and learners more effectively and make a valuable contribution to improving standards in schools.

How does it work?

HNAP currently supports two routes for candidates wanting to gain the National Status; regional preparation courses and a new assessment only route for staff completing the Level 5 ST Apprenticeship. Preparation for Assessment courses are offered regionally throughout the year; the three RPAs above can direct potential candidates to approved courses in their area.

How are candidates assessed?

Candidates on either route must submit a portfolio of evidence, cross referenced to HLTA standards, to an independent assessor appointed by one of HNAP's assessment partner. The assessor follows this through by carrying out a series of online interviews with candidates and school staff. To be awarded HLTA status, candidates must demonstrate they meet **all 33 HLTA Standards**

What does the assessment process involve for those opting for a Preparation Course?

Attendance at all sessions is mandatory. During the course experienced tutors help candidates identify how the standards link to their role and the work they do in school to support learning; they provide guidance and support as candidates compile the evidence for their portfolio, (Tasks and Documents); and they prepare candidates for the online assessment.

Evidence for Standards: Tasks and Documents

Tasks 1 to 3 require candidates to describe and evaluate their experiences of working within everyday teaching and learning sessions with an individual learner (Task 1), a small group (Task 2), and a whole class without any 'designated' teacher present (Task 3)

Tasks 4 to 8 give candidates an opportunity to write about five situations or events that provide evidence for standards that have not been evidenced in the main tasks and/or an opportunity to strengthen standards already claimed. These situations may relate to candidates' wider professional roles, experiences and responsibilities when working with learners, teachers and/or other adults in or out of the classroom, e.g. school trips, lunchtime activities, attendance at courses, work with parents or responding appropriate to incidents.

The tasks are written snapshots of the candidate's work in school and are completed on nationally agreed HLTA templates. Each account must include a description of the activity, the actions taken by the candidate, the impact of those actions and a brief reflection.

Candidates are required to present a range of **Documentary evidence** to support the written task, adding additional evidence for each standard. This could be lesson plans, assessment sheets, certificates from training, observation notes, pupils' work, resources etc. Preparers will advise candidates how to submit this electronically.

The Assessment

All assessments are carried out online over the course of one day. This may be extended to two days to accommodate exceptional circumstances that may arise. The duration of an assessment is approximately three hours to allow time for assessors to carry out the interviews and look at the candidate's documentary evidence. Scrutiny of the documentary evidence can be done before the assessment interviews at the discretion of the assessor. The time allocation for online interviews is as follows:

1st interview (candidate): 20-40 mins

2nd interview (teacher or teachers): 30 mins (if 2 teachers are nominated, they are interviewed separately within the 30 min)

3rd interview (head teacher or Head teacher rep): 15 mins

Final interview (candidate): 30 mins

Assessors negotiate the date and times of the interviews with individual candidates and school staff. Once this is agreed, the specific details are confirmed by letter with a schedule for the assessment. It is possible to reorder the 2nd and 3rd interviews if needed.

It is essential that those interviewed are familiar with the candidate's tasks and every day working practice and can provide specific examples of occasions when the candidate has demonstrated each of the standards, including taking whole classes without the presence of a teacher (S31) and using their chosen area(s) of expertise (S10). At least one of the teacher colleagues (2nd interview) and the HT or their representative who is interviewed must have Qualified Teacher Status.

The Assessor submits the candidate's tasks and evidence collected from the interviews to the Regional Provider of Assessment (RPA) for Moderation with a recommendation for the outcome based on the evidence found. The RPA makes the final decision re the outcome on behalf of HNAP.

The Assessment Outcome

Candidates and school colleagues will **not** be given the outcome of the assessment until files are moderated. This is undertaken monthly by the Regional Provider of Assessment (RPA) on behalf of HNAP. The moderator's role is to:

- Moderate the assessors' judgements and recommendations
- Ensure that assessors' judgements are secure
- Ensure that there is consistency of judgement amongst assessors
- Confirm the threshold for meeting the standards has been achieved by the candidate

Approx 3 weeks after moderation, candidates receive an email and letter informing them of outcome from the moderation. This is followed by a certificate. The outcome letter can be used as proof of HLTa status for current and future employers.

There are three possible outcomes:

1. **Standards met:** all the standards met, and the candidate is awarded Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status.
2. **Partial reassessment:** some standards (up to a maximum of three) have not been fully met. This implies that the candidate is judged to have met all but a small number of standards, and the weaknesses in relation to these standards are modest in nature. The RPA advises the candidate on the most appropriate next steps to fully meet the standards, and a partial reassessment of those standards is carried out.
3. **Standards not met:** there is insufficient evidence that all the standards have been met and the candidate is not awarded HLTa status. Potentially this could relate to just one standard if the evidence provided suggests the need to undertake further training or development.

Please note: In accordance with data protection legislation candidates' assessment files are retained for one year before being destroyed. A candidate's status is recorded on a database, using their URN (Unique Reference Number). Assessors are required to delete all assessment information from the candidate once the file has been through moderation.

FAQS

Who does the assessor speak to?

The candidate, the HT or their representative and at least one teacher, nominated by the candidate.

Can the assessor speak to more than one teacher?

Yes - if the candidate nominates two teachers to provide evidence on their behalf. They must be interviewed separately, and the 30 minutes allocated is divided between them.

Do candidates need a HLTa mentor?

It is recommended that all candidates work closely with a colleague in school for advice and support throughout the preparation for assessment. The mentor does not need to complete any paperwork but may choose to observe the candidate to be able to provide more effective support. The mentor can be nominated as the teacher colleague or HT rep to speak to the assessor. If the mentor does not have QTS, then a teacher must also be nominated to speak to the assessor in the 30-minute interview in addition to the mentor.

In what circumstances would the assessor speak to a HT representative rather than the HT?

Sometimes it is more appropriate for the assessor to speak to a HT representative, e.g. in a large primary or secondary school or in a Foundation Unit. The HT representative can be another senior leader, a deputy head teacher, the SENDCo, a Key Stage Coordinator or a Head of Year. The HT representative must have qualified teacher status and be a part of SLT.

What is the purpose of the interviews?

The interviews enable the assessor to confirm the information provided in the candidate's tasks. They also give all those involved an opportunity to give additional examples of the candidate's work in school. The interviews are question led, each question focusing on a specific standard, and the examples given provide additional details for standards claimed by the candidate in Tasks or Documentary Evidence that enable the assessor to make an informed recommendation for the moderator.

What type of questions will be asked?

In all interviews, questions are asked that explore the candidate's work and each question will always focus on a specific standard. The assessor will always ask for specific examples of the candidate's practice and will not be satisfied by assertions that the candidate 'always does this'. Teachers should be sufficiently aware of the candidate's experience and practice to be able to give specific examples of the candidate's work. During the interview with the HT (or representative) the assessor may explore broader aspects of the candidate's performance in school, for example, the candidate's contribution to the overall functioning of the school or their professional values and practice. There is no predetermined format of questions; assessors prepare questions in advance based on their reading of the tasks. The questions will, therefore, vary from candidate to candidate.

Is there anything else I need to know?

Teachers and headteachers are specifically asked to verify candidate's evidence in relation to whole class teaching without a qualified teacher present (S31) and the candidate's expertise (S10).

The assessor will require confirmation and specific evidence from colleagues who have QTS that the candidate has taught whole classes without any qualified teacher present, that this is a 'normal' part of the candidate's role, or they have been given opportunities to do this on several occasions, and that during these lessons learning has been advanced for the children/students involved.

What is meant by the candidate's area(s) of expertise?

Candidates can select one or two areas of expertise, e.g. Maths, SEND, Early Years, Behaviour Management. Assessors require confirmation and specific evidence from a colleague with QTS that the candidate has sufficient knowledge of their area(s) of expertise to support the learners with whom they work. Where an area of expertise is not curriculum related then they must be using that expertise to support pupils to access the curriculum and support learning.

It is important that colleagues who speak with the assessor are fully prepared with specific examples.