



Department
for Education

Terms of reference: Multi-academy trust leadership development expert advisory group

Context

As part of the Schools White Paper, the department announced that by 2030 all schools will be in strong multi-academy trusts (MATs) or have plans to join or form one. We anticipate both growth in the number of academies and consolidation in the sector in terms of the number of trusts. This will require strong leadership in the executive and in the board, as well as creating a pipeline of new leaders. To support this, the White Paper committed to introducing training and support for trust leaders to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to be highly effective in their role.

The leadership offer will form a new, distinct, part of the golden thread of teacher and school leader development, enabling participants to make the step up from the National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) by preparing them to provide effective leadership of large trusts. The programme will seek to increase the quality of leadership in large trusts as part of our ambition to deliver a fully trust-led system.

Formation of an expert advisory group

To ensure that our offer meets the requirements of the sector, it will be designed in collaboration with an expert advisory group (EAG) with expertise in leading schools and businesses. The group will provide advice and guidance to the department in the form of recommendations made to ministers.

Target audience

The professional development offer will equip people to lead large trusts of 10+ schools or 7,500+ pupils successfully. In this respect, it is distinct from the NPQEL, which is designed for those looking to lead smaller groups of schools. Engagement with the offer will be voluntary and the group will decide whether to create a national qualification.

The new offer will initially target the [priority Education Investment Areas](#). Where there is capacity, candidates will be able to apply from other places nationally. We envisage that the first cohort enrolling onto the programme will consist of existing school and MAT leaders.

For future years, the EAG will consider if and how potential offers for chief financial officers (CFOs) and chief operating officers (COOs) could be developed. This programme will pivot towards the remaining Education Investment Areas and national rollout thereafter.

The EAG will evaluate the most effective means of building CEO expertise, including whether the offer should include opportunities for candidates to gain direct experience of working in strong trusts, alongside any other support such as taught content.

Scope of the department's role

Officials from the department will:

- Provide ongoing updates to the ministers.
- Extend invitations, if required, to expert third party advisors for specialist expertise or skills.
- Support the Chair of the EAG as required, for example by: providing the secretariat function; assigning and monitoring resolution of actions; monitoring attendance of members; deciding quoracy; and creating a process through which the group will reach a consensus for decisions.
- Commission a separate lead to draft the outputs of the EAG into a concise and coherent content framework for delivery. The nominated lead will attend all EAG meetings.
- Assist with the evidence-base and analysis, providing the EAG with relevant material related to the expertise that a MAT CEO requires. Officials will ensure that the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) provides oversight of the relevant areas of the evidence-base.

Scope of the expert advisory group role

The EAG will:

- Develop a content framework to equip participants with the required knowledge, skills, and behaviours to successfully perform the role of MAT CEO (drawing on the Confederation of School Trusts' (CST) 'areas of responsibility' document) in large trusts.
- Ensure content recommendations align with the existing suite of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) – for example, ensuring clear progression from the NPQEL by equipping participants to operate effectively at greater scale.
- Advise and support the content framework lead drafter, including reviewing iterations and signing off the content framework.
- Advise on the target audience for the programme in year one to ensure clarity for subsequent programme development. Including consideration of whether future programmes could be tailored by providers to deliver for participants with both education and non-educational backgrounds.
- Consider evidence and practice from the UK and similar models internationally, including:
 - Reviewing the current landscape of MAT CEO programmes.
 - Assessing best practice in professional development.

- Develop the parameters for the new professional development offer, including advising on the length and design, the type of delivery (e.g., synchronous vs. asynchronous) and the intended outcomes of any training.
- Input on a sustainable delivery approach, providing a recommendation on whether a mix of existing providers might be able to meet the identified needs or whether a new programme should be created and delivered through one or multiple providers. This should include consideration of:
 - The evidence-base for effective professional development and the ‘golden thread’ running from Initial Teacher Training to MAT leadership.
 - Existing best practice.
 - Innovation in the market.
 - The differing needs of segments of the cohort (e.g., existing education professionals versus business leaders with aspirations to work in trusts).

Outputs of the expert advisory group

The EAG will produce:

- Recommendations on the target audience for the MAT professional development offer.
- A content framework – via a lead drafter – setting out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required of all MAT CEOs, based on available evidence.
- Recommendations on an appropriate model for delivery – either through a provider adapting a programme they already deliver to fit the requirements of the agreed content framework, or through the procurement of a suitable new provider(s) to design and deliver the offer.
- Estimated costings on the cost of both development and delivery.

Meetings

Meetings will include remote and in person participation.

The group will first convene at the end of August 2022.

The group will confirm how frequently it needs to meet and agree a final delivery date. This will depend on whether new content needs to be created. The department would expect it to be launched in September 2023.

During initial implementation, subsequent meetings may be held on an ad hoc basis at the discretion of the Chair with support from the department.

All members will be expected to attend agreed meetings, contribute to all meetings where possible, and contribute to provide interim updates as required. The department recognises that there may be occasional pressures on availability in unforeseen circumstances.

Membership

The EAG will consist of members drawn from leading MATs and business. The department will make the final decision on appointments to the group.

The Chair of the EAG will be a sector expert and member of the EAG. The Chair will be accountable for the engagement between the EAG and the department in respect to the development and delivery of the new MAT leadership development offer.

Members of the group will not be remunerated.

All members must abide by the Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure agreement and Conflicts of Interest policy.

Group members may be removed in the event of a breach to the terms of reference – this is at the discretion of the department.

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