



Department  
for Education

# Centres for Excellence Programme

**May 2018**

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## Introduction to the Centres for Excellence Programme

In the 2017 Industrial Strategy and in response to the Sir Adrian Smith review of Post-16 maths education, the government committed to improve basic maths for people over the age of 16. To achieve this commitment, we will establish Post-16 Centres for Excellence across the country to build teaching capacity and spread best practice on what works to improve basic maths.

The purpose of the Centres for Excellence programme is to enhance maths teaching (up to GCSE or equivalent) so that students over the age of 16 with low prior attainment can improve their skills and secure valuable qualifications. This will be achieved by developing and testing pedagogical approaches that focus on teaching maths to students with low prior attainment and sharing this mathematical expertise across the post-16 sector over the next five years.

The ambition of the programme is to increase the number of young people leaving compulsory education with the necessary maths skills for work, learning and life and to see a marked increase in the numbers of students passing their maths GCSE resit and equivalent level 2 maths qualifications.

Each Centre for Excellence will be led by an exceptional Post-16 institution with the commitment, capacity and system leadership skills required to drive innovation and improvement in both their institution and beyond. The Centres and their networks will be supported by a central delivery partner with mathematical and programme management expertise to develop improved teaching methods for this cohort.

## Delivery Approach

The Department for Education (DfE) will run the selection process and directly grant fund the successful Centres for Excellence. DfE will also procure and manage a central Delivery Partner to oversee the Centres for Excellence programme and lead the development of mathematics teaching approaches. This approach is mapped out below:

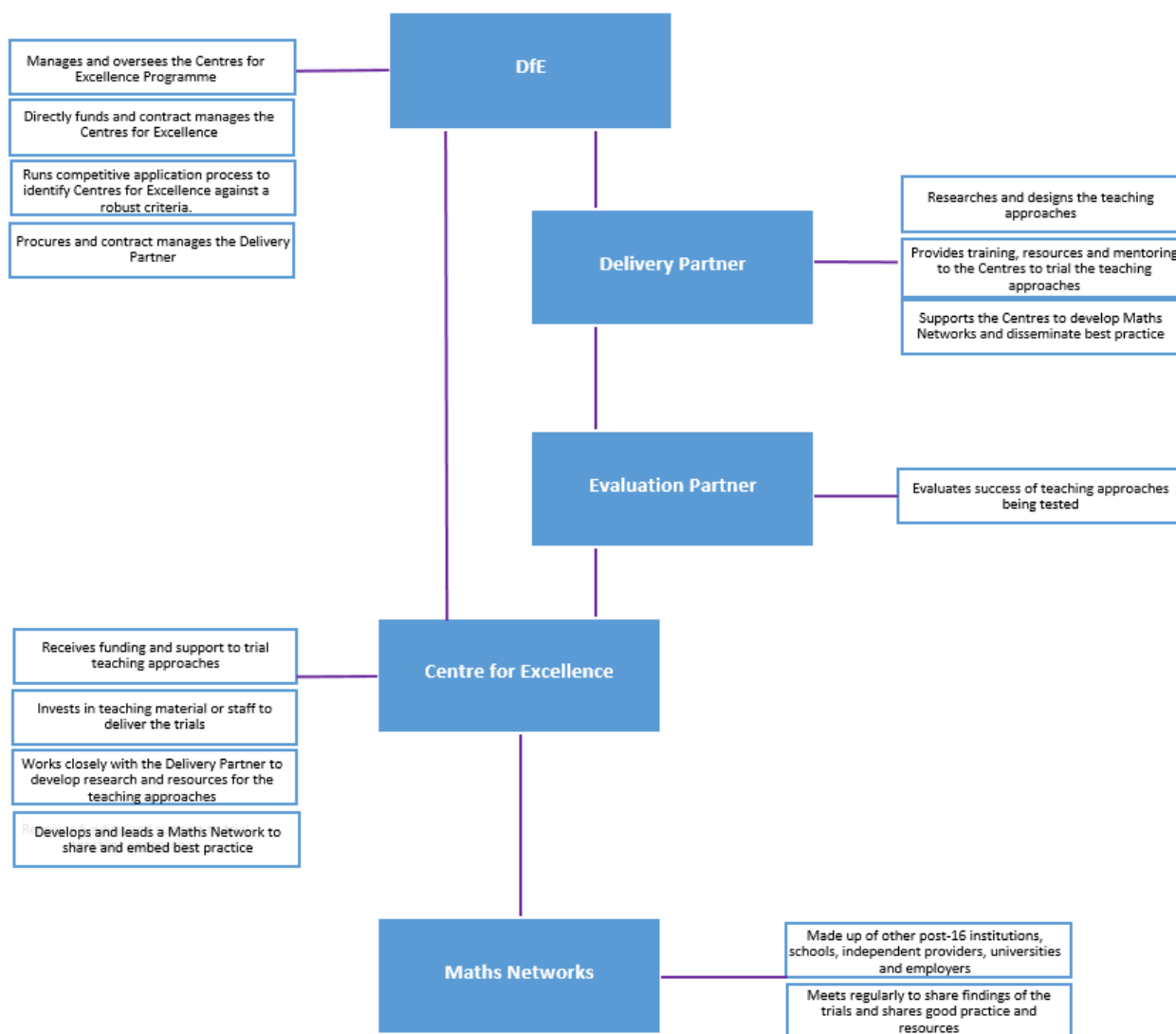


Figure 1 – visualisation of the Centres for Excellence programme

## The Role of the Delivery Partner

DfE will procure a Delivery Partner to research, develop, implement and disseminate high quality basic maths teaching approaches that focus on students aged 16+ with low prior attainment.

The Delivery Partner will be responsible for researching and developing the teaching approaches and training, mentoring and supporting the Centres for Excellence to trial the approaches within their institution.

The Delivery Partner will support the Centres for Excellence to network and disseminate the new or improved ways of teaching maths to those aged 16 and over. They will also commission an Evaluation Partner to conduct an ongoing evaluation of the trialling of the teaching approaches, to determine whether they are having an impact.

## **The Role of the Evaluation Partner**

The Evaluation Partner will identify robust measures of success for the programme and will provide an ongoing and end-point analysis of the impact the teaching approaches being trialled are having an impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

## **The Role of the Centres for Excellence and the Maths Network**

The role of the Centres for Excellence will be to work with the Delivery Partner to develop and trial the maths teaching approaches, and to spread this good practice across their network. The aim of a Centre's work is to ultimately improve maths attainment – through improved teaching approaches – in their Centre and Maths Network. The Centres and their Maths Networks will be supported by research, good practice case studies, high quality resources, training, mentoring and ongoing evaluation.

An individual Centre will use existing or develop a new Maths Network as a platform for sharing good practice. The Delivery Partner will support the Centre for Excellence in building and managing this network.

Whilst providers in a network are likely to be geographically-connected, we are also openly exploring the concept of non-co-located networks. However, to ensure the programme covers the breadth of the country we will aim to select at least one Centre for Excellence per English region, with no more than three Centres for Excellence in any region.<sup>1</sup>

We will select the Centres for Excellence through a competitive application process. The Centres will be directly grant-funded and managed by the DfE. We anticipate that, in many cases, a single institution will serve as the Centre for Excellence. However, we are also prepared to consider applications where one or more providers will join with the lead institution to act jointly as the Centre for Excellence. To facilitate the research, testing and dissemination, in all cases the lead institution will have a reasonable number of students (minimum 250) with low prior attainment in maths. This is to ensure that the

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<sup>1</sup> We will use the former Government Office for the Regions definition for the 9 English regions - <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160129234600/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/beginner-s-guide/administrative/england/regions--former-gors-/index.html>

trailing of the teaching approaches are carried out on a sufficient volume of students in the lead institution, whilst ensuring value for money. Institutions below this threshold can still apply to be Centres for Excellence by forming consortia with lead institutions that meet the eligibility criteria.

In all cases the Centre for Excellence will be expected to spread mathematical expertise for the benefit of students and teachers across their nominated network.

## Development of the Teaching Approaches

This programme aims to support the post-16 sector to develop, test, deliver and share pedagogical approaches to improve maths teaching for students aged 16+ with low prior attainment. Building on existing research supported by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)<sup>2</sup>, the Behavioural Insights Team<sup>3</sup> and CFE<sup>4</sup> and other evidence, we have identified a range of teaching approaches (see below) that we anticipate will form a core part of the Centres for Excellence work.

The Delivery Partner, based on its research and ongoing engagement with the Centres, will identify if any other themes are relevant. They will then use the themes to develop new or adapted approaches with the Centres to improve how students with low prior attainment are taught. The Centres will then trial these approaches before further rollout across their wider maths networks.

Applicants should indicate their current levels of understanding and activities in relation to these themes and how they would support the research and trialling of them within their institutions and their maths networks.

- i) **An adapted mastery approach for lower attaining students post-16** – Mastery is an approach used in Maths Hubs to ensure pupils achieve a comprehensive understanding of mathematical concepts and learn how to apply the maths to a variety of contexts using a Shanghai/Singapore approach to teaching maths. We anticipate the Centres for Excellence programme will trial an adapted mastery

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<sup>2</sup> Education Endowment Foundation – review of mastery in primary  
[https://v1.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Mathematics\\_Mastery\\_Primary\\_\(Final\)1.pdf](https://v1.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Mathematics_Mastery_Primary_(Final)1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Behavioural Insights Team – retention and success in maths and English -  
<http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/retention-and-success-in-maths-and-english-a-practitioner-guide-to-applying-behavioural-insights/>

<sup>4</sup> CFE Research – effective practice in the teaching and delivery of post-16 maths and English -  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/662470/English\\_and\\_Mathematics\\_to\\_16-18\\_year\\_old.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662470/English_and_Mathematics_to_16-18_year_old.pdf)

approach that is suitable for the cohort of post-16 students with low prior attainment and relevant to the post-16 timetable and teaching environment.

- ii) **Motivating and engaging learners** - Evidence suggests that some students find re-sitting maths and English qualifications to be a demotivating experience. It is a significant challenge to engage students with low prior attainment to attend classes and to motivate students with catch-up provision. This approach will research, develop and trial engaging approaches to teaching maths to demotivated learners and practical methods to supporting students to overcome any barriers to their engagement.
  
- iii) **Contextualisation of content towards vocational learning** - We know that students can improve their engagement and attainment when maths aligns to their vocational aspirations. In anticipation of the 15 technical routes for T-Levels, we will trial embedding route-specific numeracy content into students' study programmes. The Delivery Partner will also consider how this approach applies to 'Transition Year' students.
  
- iv) **Use of technology**: This theme will research, develop and trial the use of technology, exploring whether there are more efficient or intelligent ways to manage and support teaching and learning to improve attainment. This theme will explore the use of prior attainment data, diagnostics tools and online/virtual learning.

## Eligibility Criteria

Below are the eligibility criteria that the lead applicant must satisfy to be eligible to submit an application to become a Centre for Excellence:

Criterion	Measured by
The total number of students with prior attainment below grade 9-4 for maths in the lead institution to be a minimum of 250.	Measured by the number of students at the end of 16-18 study included in the 2017 maths progress measure
Institution's capacity to deliver the programme	Measured by a current Ofsted grade of Good or Outstanding for overall effectiveness
Prudent management of public funds	Measured by a current ESFA financial health assessment as either Satisfactory or above.

**Figure 2 – eligibility criteria for the Centres for Excellence programme**

Institutions below these criteria can apply to be a Centre for Excellence by partnering up with a lead institution that does meet the eligibility requirements through a consortium.

If the applicant falls below these criteria at any point during the application process, they will become ineligible.

If there is a drop in criteria during the programme, this will trigger a review of the Centre to determine their suitability to continue to deliver the programme.



## Application Process

Applicants should submit a completed application form, which will ask for:

- Name and position of a lead contact
- Name of the institution and their details including URN
- System leadership information
- Details of who supports the application and evidence of existing networks and partners
- Evidence of previous initiatives to support maths improvement, support for maths workforce development and informed innovation in maths education
- Evidence of understanding of our teaching approaches and outline proposals for how the institution would help deliver the Centres for Excellence programme

We may invite institutions that are not successful in their application to work with institutions that are, if they wish. We would also expect successful institutions to engage with ones that were not.

Once the successful applicants are selected, the lead institution will establish their Centre for Excellence and Maths Network. The Centres will then develop full action plans, which will be submitted to the Delivery Partner and to the DfE for approval. Each Centre for Excellence will receive direct grant funding to deliver the agreed action plans.

## Assessment Process and Criteria

Applications will be assessed by officials from the DfE and the ESFA with support from an independent mathematics expert. Below are the criteria that applications need to evidence to become a Centre for Excellence. During the assessment process, applicants may be contacted by the DfE or ESFA for clarification of information related to their application. The DfE will also use a range of public data such as the maths progress measure and attainment data to evaluate institutions' suitability to become a Centre for Excellence.

Figure 3 – full application criteria for the Centres for Excellence programme

Criterion	Summary of evidence or examples required	Weight
<b>Maths credibility and capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Maths attainment and progress measure performance</li> <li>ii) Examples of previous maths improvement initiatives</li> <li>iii) Previous maths workforce development practices</li> <li>iv) Approaches to innovation in maths teaching</li> </ul>	25%
<b>Leadership credibility, capacity and commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Expertise of the nominated senior leader and track record of enhancing learning and teaching and financial accountability</li> <li>ii) Capacity of the provider to deliver the programme against other existing and proposed initiatives</li> <li>iii) Evidence of effective maths leadership skills</li> </ul>	25%
<b>Partnership and networking credibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Evidence of collaborative leadership across multiple providers</li> <li>ii) Evidence of existing networks and strategic partners</li> <li>iii) An outline of how the Centre proposes to run its Maths Network, including scope of activities, type of support and scale of reach (number of students and anticipated impact)</li> </ul>	25%
<b>Quality of the proposed approach, alignment to the teaching approaches and support for SEND and disadvantaged students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Evidence of understanding of the teaching themes and proposed pedagogical approaches</li> <li>ii) An outline of how the Centre might implement a trial of a teaching approach</li> <li>iii) Evidence of understanding the needs of SEND and disadvantaged students and successful and inclusive teaching practices</li> </ul>	25%

## Successful Applicants

We intend to notify successful applicants as soon as possible. Successful applicants will be expected to develop their action plans and begin their programme of work as soon as possible after receiving notification of the award of the grant.

## Timetable

All applications must be received by the deadline. Applications will then be assessed by the panel against the above criteria.

We expect to publicly announce successful institutions in September 2018.

We expect to notify unsuccessful applicants in September 2018. There will be an opportunity for these applicants to receive feedback as to why their application was not successful.

We expect the Centres to be operational shortly after they have been notified.

## Grant Funding

We expect to fund around 20 Centres over an initial 3-year period. We will have options to extend the Centres' grant funding annually, up to a total of 5 years.

At this stage, we expect that the Centres could be grant funded with a minimum of £140,000 per annum and up to a maximum of £300,000 per annum, depending on the total number of Centres that the panel wishes to fund and the quality of the agreed plans.

The majority of the grant will be core funding to the Centre. The Delivery Partner will manage a process to determine what additional funding the Centres can secure based on their action plans. This could include factors such as:

- The scale of ambition within the Centre and the Maths Network
- Regional variances in costs
- The size of the basic maths cohort within the Centre and level of resource required
- The size of the Maths Network and level of support required

## Grant Conditions

No applicant provider can be (or be part of) more than one Centre for Excellence. For these purposes, provider groups count as a single applicant: we will not accept applications from individual constituent providers that operate within a wider group structure. Furthermore, constituent providers will not be able to act as the partner provider for other providers within their own group.

Total eligible costs may include irrecoverable VAT. However, no grant funding in excess of the agreed payment amount will be provided in relation to any VAT.

## Grant Requirements

The Centres will not be restricted to a predetermined list of activities. Centres may, in principle, include proposals for a wide variety of activities and projects that can help improve the quality of maths provision and attainment at the Centre and within their maths networks, and that address key improvement needs. Some examples of activities could include:

- A diagnosis of the Centre and the Maths Network's quality challenges, and development of a programme of work to address these

- Professional development activities for teachers, managers, the senior leadership team, and governors
- Time release for teachers and staff at the Centre and Maths Network to allow them to participate in the programme of work (in such cases, funding may cover temporary replacement of that staff member)
- Hiring of additional staff members whose time will be fully dedicated to the Centres for Excellence programme
- The collation or development and trialling of new maths teaching resources in the Centre, and subsequent roll-out across the network
- The creation, coordination and management of a Maths Network, or expansion of an existing network
- Evaluation of the Centre's programme of work

However, a number of activities cannot be funded through the Centres for Excellence programme:

- Capital expenditures: spending on the purchase of assets (for example buildings, furniture, fittings) valued at £2,500 or more. The purchasing of information technology and software should demonstrate good value for money and be agreed by DfE and the Delivery Partner in advance.
- Restructuring recommended by an area review process
- Staff restructuring
- Independent business reviews
- Any activities that are not related to the provider's basic maths skills provision.
- Any activities that the Centre would otherwise be able to access free of charge

Formal grant conditions will be managed and monitored by ESFA Conditions of Funding Agreement for each institution.

## **Payment and Repayment of Funding**

All Centre for Excellence grant payments will be made by the ESFA to the Centre under a funding agreement schedule issued for this purpose.

The grant will become repayable (through a future reduction in ESFA funding) if:

- the grant funding is not spent by 31 July of each year of grant funding (or by an alternative date agreed in advance with the ESFA)
- the grant funding is not spent on eligible activities outlined in the application (or variants thereof agreed with the ESFA, using the process described)

- the Centre does not provide its required contribution
- reports on expenditures and outcomes are not submitted

## **Audit and Financial Assurance**

Accounting Officers at the Centres will be required to sign an assurance statement, a monitoring report and the final report on the 31 March of each year of grant funding to confirm that monies have been used for the purposes intended, and that expenditure complies with the terms and conditions of the grant.

The Centres will need to retain evidence of expenditure as this may be requested by the ESFA.

## **Monitoring**

Over the course of its grant-funded activity, the Centre will work with the Delivery and Evaluation Partner to monitor its programme of work.

Applications must include details on how an institution intends to monitor the impact of the work programme and how this will be measured. The Centres will be required to develop and submit these monitoring plans by a date negotiated with the DfE. They should be published in such a way that does not identify individuals (unless explicit permission is gathered in advance).

Grant recipients will be expected to work alongside the Evaluation Partner to refine and agree key performance indicators/measures of success. The Evaluation Partner will also conduct research with those involved in the project, to increase our understanding of the impact of the teaching approaches and to identify any lessons learned.

## **Contact details and further information**

If you have any questions about the Centres for Excellence programme and the application process, please contact [Centres.forExcellence@education.gov.uk](mailto:Centres.forExcellence@education.gov.uk)



Department  
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