National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) – information document
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Introduction

The quality of school leadership is known to be second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil outcomes. This is because strong and effective leadership enables other improvements to happen.

In Wales the Head Teachers’ Qualifications and Registration (Wales) Regulations 2005 and their amendment in 2011 ensures the quality of headship by requiring all head teachers to hold the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) unless they were a head teacher before the Regulations came into force (see below).

Professional standards for practitioners in Wales were published on 1 September 2011. These contain the Leadership Standards (click here) which all head teachers are required to meet. Whilst the Leadership Standards have also been developed to serve as a tool to support leadership development for all practitioners, they are also integral to the NPQH assessment programme as the NPQH is awarded on the basis of a practice based assessment against the Standards.

The NPQH assessment programme determines whether the practitioner is ready for headship. The NPQH is not a course of training that prepares the practitioner for headship. The NPQH is a national assessment programme delivered regionally in partnership with the educational consortia. The focus is on the required skills and attributes of headship as articulated in the Standards. Practitioners will need to evidence how their professional practice to date meets the Standards in order to receive the Qualification. The NPQH ensures that all prospective head teachers meet the leadership standards and are therefore ‘ready’ for headship.

This document provides general information about the NPQH. For more information about the programme see the NPQH pages on Learning Wales.
The Head Teachers’ Qualification and Registration (Wales) Regulations 2005

The Head Teachers’ Qualification and Registration (Wales) Regulations 2005 came into force on 01 September, 2005.

The effect of the Regulations is that from this date to be a head teacher in a local authority maintained school, or a special school not so maintained in Wales a practitioner must:

- hold the NPQH or an equivalent qualification (see below);
- hold graduate teacher status; and
- be registered with the Education Workforce Council.

Equivalent qualification

For the purposes of the Regulations the following qualifications are equivalent qualifications:

- The NPQH awarded in England;
- The Scottish Standard for Headship;
- The Professional Qualification for Headship in Northern Ireland; and
- Equivalent qualifications from other member states of the European Union, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein or Switzerland under the European Communities (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) (First General System) Regulations 2005.

The Regulations do not apply to:

- anyone who was a head teacher, in the maintained or independent sectors or their equivalents in Wales or other countries, prior to the date that the Regulations came into force including those not currently employed as a head teacher for example due to a career break or on secondment;
- acting head teachers; or
- teachers in charge of pupil referral units.

Practitioners may apply for a headship post without the NPQH but cannot take up the post and serve as a head teacher until they have been awarded the NPQH unless the Regulations do not apply to them as detailed above.
Practitioners working abroad are treated as if they are employed in an equivalent school in Wales. Therefore the Regulations will not apply if they were appointed to a headship before the Regulations came into force but will apply if they were appointed after this date and they will need to hold the NPQH or an equivalent qualification to serve as head teachers in Wales.
Applying for the NPQH

The NPQH is specifically for practitioners for whom headship is a realistic next step and one that they are actively seeking. Practitioners, schools, local authorities, consortia and diocesan education authorities should plan their leadership development so that practitioners who are aspiring to be head teachers are prepared and ready for the step to headship when they undertake the NPQH.

The NPQH should not be viewed as a professional development opportunity for practitioners who are not ready for headship. In order to be considered for the NPQH candidates must be:

- qualified teachers and registered as teachers with the Education Workforce Council;
- suitably experienced practitioners who intend on becoming serving head teachers in the near future (acting head teachers who are not aspiring to a substantive headship post are not eligible to participate);
- at a stage in their career where they are able to provide strong evidence to demonstrate significant experience of leadership at a whole school level and competency against the Leadership Standards; and
- willing to share learning and development with professionals and colleagues, including examples and case studies of the experiences undertaken during their career that have prepared them for headship.

Before submitting an application, prospective applicants need to engage in a self-review of their practice against the Leadership Standards and discuss this and their career aspirations with their head teacher and other relevant professionals and colleagues.

To engage in this self-review, prospective applicants must use the Individual Leadership Review (ILR) – click [here](#). This should help prospective applicants decide whether they are ready to submit themselves for assessment. For some the ILR may indicate that they should defer application until they have addressed areas of the Leadership Standards that they have identified as requiring further development. The NPQH is for those that meet the Leadership Standards now.

If, based on the evidence of professional practice in the ILR, the prospective applicant believes that they are ready for headship then they must discuss their ILR, career aspirations and intention to apply for NPQH with their current head teacher.

Regional consortia are responsible for the application process and therefore prospective candidates should check the relevant website or contact them for more information.

Independent Schools
As the NPQH relates to standards of head teachers in the maintained sector and non-maintained special schools in Wales, and is not a statutory requirement for headship in the independent sector, the NPQH process is not available to practitioners currently employed in independent schools.
NPQH assessment

The assessment for the NPQH is composed of two parts: a written submission of evidence of professional practice and attendance at an assessment centre. Consortia will organise support for candidates during their preparation for NPQH assessment.

Data and evidence pack for assessment (DEPA)

Prior to their attendance at an assessment centre candidates must submit written evidence of their professional practice in the form of a Data and Evidence Pack for Assessment (DEPA). The DEPA has a strict word limit of 5,000 words and it should be concise and accessible with a focus on practice and learner outcomes.

The purpose of the DEPA is to capture evidence of how a candidate’s practice meets the Leadership Standards. It will include evidence of regular engagement in reflection and self review of practice against the Leadership Standards; demonstrate the impact of professional development; and identify further appropriate professional development priorities.

The regional assessment panel will then assess the DEPA prior to the candidate’s attendance at an Assessment Centre where evidence included in the DEPA will be subjected to further scrutiny.

Candidates should be aware that submitted DEPAs may be used for future training purposes by the Welsh Government and Consortia. DEPAs used for this purpose will be anonymised.

Regional assessment panels

The regional assessment panels are made up of experienced head teachers and senior local authority or consortia school improvement officers and challenge advisers. Before they meet to assess the candidates the panel chairs will have attended national training. Following this they will lead regional assessment panel training to further ensure the quality and consistency of the assessment panels across the consortia.

The assessment centre

The assessment centre will assess whether candidates have provided sufficient evidence of their readiness for headship and that they meet the Leadership Standards. In order to do this, there will be a series of rigorous and discrete elements designed to scrutinise DEPA evidence and assess leadership skills in greater depth. The assessment centre itself is made up of two key elements:
- a professional interview including a personal statement; and
- an analytical interview that includes responding to a case study activity.

Each assessment panel will be made up of a panel chair and two panel members and the work of each panel is moderated regionally to ensure quality and consistency among all of the panels in that region.

**National moderation**

Following the conclusion of the assessment centres a National Moderation Panel composed of panel chairs from each region is convened by the Welsh Government. The Panel moderates the work of the regional panels to ensure consistency across Wales and confirms the results of the assessment.

**Assessment outcome, feedback and appeals**

Following the National Moderation Meeting candidates will receive notification of the outcome which will be accompanied by summary feedback that will state the candidate’s strengths and areas for further development. This feedback will be shared with the consortium, the candidate’s head teacher and others involved in the application process.

Candidates deemed to have not yet met the requirements to be awarded the NPQH will be eligible to re-apply in the future but their feedback will be taken into account in ascertaining the professional learning required before undertaking NPQH assessment again.

**Misrepresentations**

Candidates should be aware that the Welsh Government and consortia will refer any deliberate misrepresentations or falsifications that come to light during the process to the appropriate authorities.