

# ECT training overview for Module 6

2-hour session (Week 2)

## How to use this overview

This training session outline aims to provide the training facilitator with a detailed overview of how to facilitate the training. All materials are either embedded here or provided as a resource on the online learning platform.

This session supports Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in forming an evaluative inquiry question in a topic they have chosen with their mentors to focus on during autumn half-term 2 (from ECF Standards 2 and 3). It also gives ECTs the opportunity for shared peer reflection on the initial exploratory enquiries they have been conducting into their own practice (related to ECF Standards 1 and 7) with support from their mentors this half-term, following the Year 2 Conference. The shared reflection will inform the way they conduct their second small inquiry.

## Preparation for the facilitator

You should familiarise yourself with:

The Year 2 Conference Training Outline as this session develops principles and practices of practitioner inquiry introduced during the Year 2 ECT Conference.

## Preparation for the ECTs

ECTs should:

- discuss the evidence they have been collecting about their practice in relation to their chosen focus in Early Career Framework (ECF) Standards 1 and 7 with their mentors
- be prepared to offer reflections on their experience so far of conducting their first short, exploratory inquiry.

## Learning intentions for this session

Session 1 will enable the ECT to learn:

- the relationship between exploratory and evaluative questions in practitioner inquiry
- how an inquiry approach can allow ECTs to contextualise the topic within ECF Standards 2 and 3 on which they have chosen to focus next half-term, based on individual priorities and the needs of students in the class/classes they teach
- through a case study, how the skill of anticipating and addressing misconceptions (ECF Standard 3.4) through explicit teaching of the key knowledge and skills needed by students (ECF Standard 3.5) may be developed by a teacher through using an inquiry approach
- how to form an evaluative inquiry question that will allow them to judge the success of an attempt to improve their classroom practice within their chosen topic from ECF Standards 2 and 3.

## Introduction

This session takes place towards the end of autumn half-term 1. ECTs have completed their initial exploratory inquiry and should be ready to begin planning their small, improvement-focused inquiry for autumn half-term 2, which begins with the exploratory questions and evaluative question they develop during this session.

## Research summary for this session

The research underpinning this session is summarised within Standard 8 (Professional Behaviours) of the Early Career Framework.

In particular, the ECT will learn that:

- 8.7** Engaging in high-quality professional development can help teachers improve.

And that the ECT will develop as a professional by:

- 8a.** Engaging in professional development focused on developing an area of practice with clear intentions for impact on pupil outcomes, sustained over time with built-in opportunities for practice.
- 8d.** Engaging critically with research and discussing evidence with colleagues.
- 8e.** Reflecting on progress made, recognising strengths and weaknesses and identifying next steps for further improvement.

The research related to practitioner inquiry, which provides the basis for this and every training session in Year 2, will show ECTs how they can use inquiry to deepen and extend their engagement with each aspect of the Early Career Framework.

During this session, the messages from research summarised in ECF Standards 2 and 3 (How Pupils Learn/Subject and Curriculum) will be particularly relevant. ECTs will be asked to consider which topic within ECF Standards 2 and 3 they would like to deepen their understanding of next half-term in preparation for a discussion with their mentor. All case studies and exemplifications of best practice will be based on 'learn that' and 'learn how to' statements from ECF Standards 2 and 3.

## **Use the following as a guide**

### **Review 30 min**

This part of the session will allow ECTs to build on the reflective discussions they have had about their first exploratory inquiry in their last mentor meeting. They will have the opportunity to reflect collectively, learning from each other, and will be ready to apply this learning in their design of their new, improvement-focused inquiry.

Ask ECTs to share their experience so far of conducting their first exploratory inquiry, including:

- challenges
- benefits of the approach
- key learning points and impact on practice.

Encourage ECTs to connect their reflections explicitly to the topic areas of ECF Standards 1 and 7 on which they chose to focus. You may wish to facilitate this discussion as a 'speed dating' activity with everyone on their feet and sharing with

peers through rapid-fire 3-minute discussions. Or you could ask ECTs to reflect in pairs to ensure full participation, before moving to table discussions.

You should end this part of the session by drawing together and recording key learning points from the whole group which they will consider when planning their next small-scale inquiry.

## Plan

ECTs will be aware that they will have further time for supported planning with their mentor during their next meeting. The planning in this session is focused on the preparation of several exploratory questions and one evaluative inquiry question focused on a topic from ECF Standards 2 and 3.

## Theory to Practice 80 min

### A. **Reminder of the 4 stages of the practitioner inquiry cycle: 10 minutes**

- First, you will ASK. What questions might we ask about our practice? What baseline data do we need to collect in order to form a clearer picture of the current situation? At this stage, we will write an exploratory research question or questions to guide our thinking.
- Next, you will INVESTIGATE. What is already known about this issue? (Point ECTs towards the research summaries they have explored in Year 1 ECF modules as good sources to consult, as well as gathering evidence of practice as it exists in their school/college currently). What does our baseline data tell us about our chosen area of practice? What does it not tell us? To what extent does our baseline data help answer or refine our research question? At this stage, we write an evaluative research question to guide the next part of the cycle. We will be practising this today, although you will then have to gather some real data!
- Following this comes the INNOVATION phase. Informed by the relevant research summaries and by our analysis of baseline data, you will decide on an aspect of teaching and learning from ECF standards 2 and 3 that you would like to trial – to implement and evaluate the impact of. During this time, you will collect impact data, which in the case of this short inquiry should be naturally occurring data, where possible. As you review this

evidence of impact, you may decide to adapt and re-implement your teaching strategy, informed by ongoing data collection and analysis.

- Finally, we REFLECT. What was the impact of our innovation on pupil outcomes? How does this connect to what is known in the published literature? Perhaps most important is the question of knowledge mobilisation: what will we do differently in the future, as a result of this process of practitioner inquiry? How will we share the findings of our inquiries with other ECTs, other colleagues and the wider education community? What new questions do we have which might be explored through future cycles of inquiry?

Remind ECTs that the inquiry they will be conducting next half-term will need to be very narrowly focused on a topic within ECF Standards 2 and 3, as that they will have only 7 weeks to complete the inquiry cycle in a way that does not add to their workload but rather supports them in adapting their teaching in a responsive way as part of their normal practice.

**B. Shared engagement with a case study exemplifying ECF Standard 3.4, 3.10: 30 minutes**

This part of the session will allow participants to develop their understanding of how an evaluative inquiry can be planned in a way that deepens their understanding of an aspect of the ECF and leads to improved practice.

ECF Standard 3.4 states the importance of learning that: anticipating common misconceptions within particular subjects is also an important aspect of curricular knowledge; working closely with colleagues to develop an understanding of likely misconceptions is valuable.

ECF Standard 3.10 states that: every teacher can improve pupils' literacy, including by explicitly teaching reading, writing and oral language skills specific to individual disciplines.

Share this case study:

A secondary school English teacher, Jade, wants to effectively prepare her class to write an essay analysing the character of Lady Macbeth in

Shakespeare's play, Macbeth. Jade has been disappointed with previous essays written by a group of 10 students in her Year 9 class and wants to ensure that she has anticipated possible misconceptions related to both the content of the play (subject knowledge) and writing analytically (subject skill) before they write this one. Jade is teaching Macbeth for the first time, but more experienced colleagues in her department have been teaching the play for years and other classes in the same year group have already written the essay. She has decided to conduct an improvement-focused evaluative inquiry to support her in understanding and pre-emptively addressing key misconceptions her students may have that could affect the standard of the essays they will write.

Jade's first task is to very clearly explain the aim of her improvement-focused inquiry to her mentor. She does this as follows:

'I aim to enable a group of 10 students in my Year 9 class to produce sharper, more analytical written responses in their next essay about characterisation in Macbeth by identifying and addressing their misconceptions about Lady Macbeth and about analytical writing'.

Her second task is to develop a clearer picture of the situation as it is now in relation to her inquiry focus. This will be her baseline. Invite ECTs to consider, based on their recent experience of developing exploratory questions and collecting naturally occurring data (data which already exists, such as SEND information, assessment data, pupils' work, etc.):

1. What initial exploratory questions might Jade wish to ask?
2. What sources of naturally occurring data might she draw on?

You may wish to invite ECTs to discuss these questions in pairs and ask each pair to record one response to each question and use post-it notes to stick these on different walls, allowing you to select good examples to share. Alternatively, you could set up a more straightforward table discussion.

Good exploratory questions for Jade to ask could include:

- what is missing from my students' previous analytical essays?
- what strategies have other teachers in the department used to successfully teach analytical writing with similar groups?

Share these or other examples with ECTs and consider the types of naturally occurring data for Jade's class that could provide evidence of commonly held misconceptions in related to *Macbeth* or analytical writing.

For example, you may say that Jade chose to

- carry out a review of a sample of 5 students' previous essays focused on characterisation
- speak with a focus group of the same 5 students from her class during a break time
- and speak to an experienced departmental colleague during a department meeting

and she found that:

- a shared misconception amongst students in her class was that analytical writing needs to focus only on language at individual word level, picking out single words from a text and explaining their effect on the reader.
- her experienced departmental colleague has found that carefully structured classroom discussion, including pre-prepared questions and prompts in the form of key scaffold phrases which 'unlock' analytical responses from students, has successfully raised the level of her students' written work.

Jade also reviewed relevant research summaries from Year 1 of the ECF programme on Misconceptions and on Metacognition, which suggest some other practical strategies she might like to try with her class.

Jade now has a clear baseline picture (the situation as it is now for her students) including a common misconception she hopes to address. She also has a range of strategies, one of which she needs to select to trial as her innovation in her improvement-focused evaluative inquiry.

She is pleased that the exploratory stage of her inquiry has given her a clear and specific understanding of the main misconception limiting her students' analytical writing about *Macbeth* and having worked closely with her experienced department colleague, she is now confident that she knows

which strategy she will use to explicitly teach her pupils to write more analytically. The discussion with her department colleague enabled her to understand more fully how spoken language underpins the development of writing. The strategy will be to use 'talk for writing': after sharing and annotating some exemplars of strong analytical writing, she will facilitate extended classroom discussion where students will practise using key scaffold phrases from the exemplars to introduce their own (spoken) analytical responses to Lady Macbeth's character and will extend/develop these when prompted to by Jade.

Invite table groups to co-construct a possible improvement-focused evaluative question for Jade, using this frame:

How can I develop my use of [input variable/strategy], implemented for [duration of intervention], in order to improve [outcome variable] among [target group of pupils]?

A good example might look like this:

How can I develop my use of key scaffold phrases in classroom discussion, over the course of 3 weeks, in order to improve analytical writing about Shakespeare's play Macbeth among a sample of 5 students in my Year 9 class who have struggled to develop this skill?

Share example evaluative questions around the room and agree on a good shared question that Jade might ask. Use the discussion to tease out the key characteristics of a good evaluative inquiry question and display these in the room. ECTs should identify that good evaluative inquiry questions are:

- improvement-focused (aimed at making a difference to student learning)
- specific in precisely naming an innovation or strategy to be trialled – a new practice
- time-bound
- focused on a size of target group (a small group of 5–6 students in a class would be perfectly acceptable for this scale of inquiry).



Explain to ECTs that by the end of this session, they will have each formed their own evaluative questions for their chosen area of focus related to ECF Standards 2 and 3.

Case study continued:

Jade implemented her new strategy for 3 weeks. At the end of this period all students wrote their essays on the characterisation of Lady Macbeth. Jade was able to review her target sample of 5 students' essays alongside their previous work that she used to provide a baseline to her study. 4 out of the 5 students used the key phrases from classroom discussions to scaffold more complex written analytical responses. This gave Jade a good picture of the impact on these students of the strategy she introduced, which she decides will now also become part of her teaching with Years 7 and 8, anticipating and addressing the misconception that had held so many of her Year 9 students back.

She also resolved to repeat the small-scale inquiry cycle for the 1 student in her Year 9 class who once again produced disappointing work, with guidance from her experienced department colleagues about a different strategy which might support this individual student.

**C. ECTs begin the design of their own improvement-focused evaluative inquiry: 40 minutes**

Give ECTs some time to review Standards 2 and 3 of the ECF and consider:

1. Which topic within Standards 2 and 3 might I like to deepen my understanding of next half term?
2. Thinking about my class/classes, is there a student or group of students making less progress than others or struggling with a key concept, element of subject knowledge or skill?
3. How might my own practice in relation to ECF Standards 2 and 3 support this student/group of students?

Invite ECTs to discuss their responses in pairs and then use these prompts to make a tentative statement about the area they wish to improve:

- the difference I want to make to my students is...
- in order to achieve this, the change I need to make in my practice is...

Invite ECTs to return to the case study of Jade for a model of how to begin thinking about and articulating their inquiry focus.

Be clear with ECTs that these statements are tentative at this stage, as they still need to gather evidence about their chosen group of students, practice elsewhere in the school and messages from research about effective practice in this area. This evidence will allow ECTs to develop a clearer picture of the needs of the students they are focusing on for their inquiry and a firmer 'hunch' about a strategy that might constitute an effective intervention.

### **Developing exploratory questions**

Remind ECTs that exploratory questions should help them to find out more about the current situation in relation to their chosen area of focus within ECF Standards 2 and 3. In other words, finding answers to their exploratory questions should help ECTs gain a sharper sense of exactly what needs to be improved and what is already known to be effective practice in their chosen area. They will be familiar with these possible question stems from the Year 2 Conference (they can also be found in the ECF Year 2 Handbook, Practitioner Inquiry:

- what is the current state of play **regarding common misconceptions in my subject area?**
- what do pupils say about ... **how much they read for pleasure?**
- why does ... happen?
- to what extent do pupils ... **focus their thinking on key ideas in my subject?**
- to what extent do I ... model and require high-quality oral language with my students?
- in what conditions do pupils ... **best build on prior knowledge?**
- when are pupils more likely to ... **struggle to transfer what has been learnt in one context to another?**
- how can I find out more about ... the best way **to break complex material into smaller steps?**

Ask ECTs to use these stems to develop 2 or 3 exploratory questions of their own. They should be able to draw on their immediate experience from autumn half-term 1 here, their reflections at the start of this session, and on the similar exercise that they completed during the Year 2 Conference.

### **Developing an evaluative inquiry question**

Emphasise that the formation of a good evaluative question is an iterative exercise and that only after gathering evidence which answers their exploratory questions will each ECT be able to confidently write their evaluative question. That said, at this stage ECTs already have their knowledge of their classes and relevant ECF Year 1 module content relevant to Standards 2 and 3 to draw on, which should be sufficient to draft an evaluative question similar to the one they have just co-constructed for Jade.

ECTs in pair discussions:

- what do I already know about the students and area of subject knowledge I have chosen to focus on that helps me describe the current situation?
- what do I know from previous ECF module content related to my focus area from Standards 2 and 3 that could help me to decide on an appropriate strategy/innovation/intervention to trial?

ECTs individually:

Use this frame to draft your evaluative inquiry question:

How can I develop my use of [input variable / strategy], implemented for [duration of intervention], in order to improve [outcome variable] among [target group of pupils]?

Jade's inquiry question could be used as an exemplar here:

How can I develop my use of key scaffold phrases in classroom discussion, over the course of 3 weeks, in order to improve analytical writing about

Shakespeare's play Macbeth among a sample of 5 students in my Year 9 class who have struggled to develop this skill?

You might invite ECTs to engage in some peer critique of their evaluative questions.

Use the checklist to gauge whether you have developed a good evaluative question.

Is it:

- improvement-focused (aimed at making a difference to student learning)
- specific in precisely naming an innovation or strategy to be trialled – a new practice
- time-bound
- focused on a size of target group (a small group of 5–6 students in a class would be perfectly acceptable for this scale of inquiry).

### **Next Steps 10 min**

You may wish to give ECTs some time at the close of this session to record next steps specific to their inquiries in their Learning Logs. Remind ECTs that they should consider how they will:

- gather the baseline data (evidence) you need to answer your exploratory questions, once you have confirmed your focus from ECF Standards 2 and 3 for next half-term with your mentor. Use guidance in the ECF Year 2 Handbook, Practitioner Inquiry to support this
- discuss any data you gather with your mentor
- share any baseline data you have collected with your peers at the beginning of your next training session, or be ready to explain what baseline data you hope to collect.