

National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)

Application Guidance

Revised version

(To be read by both applicants and sponsors)

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About NPQH

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) is the first-choice qualification for anyone aspiring to become, or already a headteacher or principal. Designed in collaboration with some of the country's leading headteachers and academics, NPQH will develop talented leaders from all backgrounds who can deliver educational excellence in a self-improving school-led system, as well as high-quality outcomes for pupils and students.

NPQH will give you the confidence, skills and professional knowledge you need to deliver the best for pupils and all members of the school community in your first headship post.

NPQH:

- takes account of your professional development needs, prior learning and achievements
- improves and develops your strategic leadership expertise
- develops key leadership and management skills
- provides opportunities to work in another educational context
- gives you the confidence and competence to take up your first headship so you will make a positive impact on your school, and on the lives of children, young people and their families.

NPQH is a practical qualification, which involves improving practice in your own school or organisation as well as working with another school to give them good advice. It is complementary to a higher-level degree, such as a M.Ed. which has a more academic focus.

The NPQH programme is designed for current or aspirant headteachers.

Examples of 'headteacher':

- Headteacher of a standalone school – maintained, independent or academy, for example;
- Headteacher of a federation of two small schools, for example (of more than this, or of larger schools, NPQEL might be more suitable);
- A 'head of school', such as Head of secondary in an international or independent school, or head of a federated school;
- etc.

Examples of aspirant leaders, for whom the NPQH is suitable:

- Deputy headteacher;
- Assistant headteacher who has whole-school responsibilities in a reasonably large school (otherwise, NPQSL may be more suitable);
- National Leader of Education (NLE);
- etc.

The context of NPQH in relation to other national leadership qualifications:

The Levels and Qualifications Framework

The Levels and Qualifications Framework ensures that the reformed NPQs provide a coherent suite of professional development opportunities for aspirant and serving leaders at all levels of leadership within the school system.

The new NPQs are a set of four qualifications covering different levels of school and/ or organisational leadership:

Qualification	Level	Target audience
National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML)	Leading a team	Those who are, or are aspiring to become, a middle leader with responsibility for leading a team e.g. a key stage leader, a curriculum area leader, a pastoral services leader, a subject leader, a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), or a head of department. This includes those who are, or are aspiring to be, a middle leader with cross-school responsibilities e.g. a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE).
National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL)	Leading across a school	Those who are, or are aspiring to become, a senior leader with cross-school responsibilities e.g. an experienced middle leader, a deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, or other senior staff. This includes those who are, or are aspiring to be, a senior leader with cross-school responsibilities e.g. a Director of a Teaching School Alliance (TSA).
National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)	Leading a school	Those who are already a headteacher, or are aspiring to become, a headteacher or head of school with responsibility for leading a school This includes those who are, or are aspiring to be, a head or head of school with cross-school responsibilities e.g. a National Leader of Education (NLE).
National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL)	Leading across several schools	Those who are, or are aspiring to become, an executive headteacher or CEO of a MAT with responsibility for leading across several schools

Who can apply for NPQH?

NPQH is the final stage on the pathway to your first headship. It is not for those just seeking really good professional development. You should be highly motivated to headship, and be ready to apply for headship posts on graduation. In other words, when you apply for NPQH:

- **you should be no more than 18 months from being credibly able to apply for a headship post**
- **your aspiration should be for your next job to be a headship**

You do not have to be currently working in a school to apply for NPQH. Applications from those working in other organisations will be assessed in exactly the same way as others, and if you are in this situation you should provide evidence of your competencies that you consider to be transferable to the school context.

How do I know whether I'm ready to apply?

If you are already working in a school leadership role, as part of your ongoing performance management you will be discussing your career aspirations with your current headteacher or line manager. Whatever your circumstances, seeking feedback from others and reviewing evidence associated with your performance management will help you to think about your achievements, strengths and areas for development.

As well as talking to your headteacher or line manager, you should look at the information and resources available on the website of your chosen licensed provider or on the DFE/NCTL website.

How to apply

Making your application - General guidance

To apply for NPQH you will need to obtain an application form from your chosen licensed provider to use alongside this guidance document for applicants and sponsors. The guidance document is also available on the NPQonline website at www.neonlearning.co.uk. The application form should be completed by both applicant and sponsor and returned by according to the instructions set out by the chosen provider. This may include given deadlines.

The application form to be completed by you and your NPQH sponsor.

Section 1&4: Complete the relevant registration sections with your personal and contact details. In section 4, set out your roles across the last three years, particularly those relating to leadership. Section 4 is not assessed but provides background information to the examples you cite in sections 5-8.

Sections 2&3: This is to be completed by your sponsor.

Sections 5-8: are to be completed by both you and your sponsor. For all of the sections 5-8 you should complete the first part and the sponsor the second part. It is important that you address all of the instructions in the specific guidance on what is to be included in each section of the application form.

In sections 5 and 6 choose one of the two options to provide evidence for. Do *not* provide evidence for the other, or for both areas in each of these two sections.

Please ensure that you provide evidence for each of the four questions which head each section.

Assessment criteria for NPQH are set out below. You may already be able to provide some evidence towards these within your application, to further demonstrate your readiness to begin the NPQH programme. Take time to choose your best example(s) for each section. **You have up to 450 words for each section – you must not exceed this total and must indicate the number of words used at the end of each section. Make sure you use the available word count to the full.**

Your sponsor's evidence is equally important as it will be used to verify and add to the evidence of your experience, performance and competence and will be assessed alongside what you write. You should therefore take an early opportunity to discuss your application with your sponsor. The sponsor is asked to confirm your evidence and give further evidence of **impact** of your leadership experience.

In writing your responses, a narrative style, rather than using notes or bullet points, will be more likely to convey the extent of your experience, performance and competence in the areas being tested.

Content Areas and Assessment Criteria

There are 6 content areas for each NPQ level, which set out *what* a leader should know or be able to do. The 6 content areas are common to each NPQ level, but the knowledge and skills within them increases in sophistication, depth and breadth progressively through the NPQ levels. The final assessment criteria for NPQH are set out below. For Gateway, a lower threshold is required against the same standards.

NPQH Strategy and Improvement

1.3.1 Analyses the implications of changes in the external and strategic environment and applies findings to own plans

1.3.2 Deploys critical thinking and statistical and/or data analysis tools, techniques and concepts during the design of own plans

1.3.3 Collaborates with the governing board during the design and implementation of plans, describing the benefits of doing so

1.3.4 Analyses research into, and examples of, the leadership of change, drawn from a range of schools and non-school contexts, and applies findings to the design and own leadership of plans

NPQH Teaching and Curriculum Excellence

2.3.1 Analyses a range of domestic and international research into, and examples of, the leadership of teaching and applies findings to own plans

2.3.2 Designs, leads, implements and evaluates an evidence-based change programme that improves pupil progress and/or attainment at whole-school level

2.3.3 Evaluates, monitors and responds to the needs and performance of all pupils in a school, including through provision for groups of pupils with particular needs

2.3.4 Assesses the impact of new initiatives on teacher workload, implementing options to minimise or mitigate this where necessary

NPQH Leading with Impact

3.3.1 Analyses the effectiveness of different models of leadership, drawn from schools and non-school contexts, including the distribution of accountability and responsibility

3.3.2 Adapts or tailors their leadership style to lead effectively in different situations

3.3.3 Analyses stakeholder views systematically and applies this understanding to communicate, negotiate or persuade

3.3.4 Evaluates different communications/ stakeholder engagement strategies and applies findings to the design and implementation of own communications/ stakeholder engagement strategy

NPQH Working in partnership

4.3.1 Analyses the school's strengths and weaknesses and initiates relevant partnerships/collaborations to improve school capability

4.3.2 Analyses different models of partnership working/opportunities for collaboration and their relevance to own plans

4.3.3 Exploits opportunities to support other schools, through collaboration and partnership in own school's area(s) of expertise

NPQH Managing Resources and Risks

5.3.1 Analyses school's resourcing challenges in terms of finances, staffing, teacher workload and educational resources and designs plans to address these

5.3.2 Formulates a curriculum-led budget aligned to plans

5.3.3 Evaluates the effectiveness of school's accountability arrangements for managing resources and risks, recommending improvements where necessary to deliver plans successfully

NPQH Increasing Capability

6.3.1 Designs systems to evaluate, manage and reward staff performance effectively

6.3.2 Evaluates research into, and examples of, high-quality professional development within and outside of the school, and applies findings to own plans

6.3.3 Analyses current and future organisational capability challenges and designs plans to address these

Tips for completing your application

1. Set time aside

Application for NPQH is a thorough and rigorous process, requiring you to provide appropriate evidence about your readiness and aspiration for headship. Completion of the form is also a key part of the self-assessment and development planning process for NPQH. As a result, the process requires a significant time commitment. You are encouraged to set aside sufficient time to complete the application.

2. Talk to your sponsor

You should discuss your application with your sponsor. It is important that the dialogue is open and honest. You should ensure he/she is aware of the application process and that he/she knows that the providers will be requesting completion of the reference and statement of sponsorship sections of the application form. This is an integral part of the application process. Please share this full application guidance with your sponsor.

3. Have your personal information to hand

When you begin the application you should have the following personal information to hand:

- **email address:** this should be a personal email address, as we may need to contact you outside term times to arrange activities and graduation dates
- **home address:** we prefer to use this address to maintain confidentiality when advising you of the outcomes of any assessments
- **contact telephone number(s):** particularly a mobile number should we need to send you a text message
- **school or employer's name, address and postcode and the school's URN**
- **your teacher reference number** (also referred to as DfEE, DfES or DCSF number, eg 70/12345). If you are applying from outside the education sector and do not have a TRN, one can be generated for you.

Complete your part of the application form

Pay attention to the word limits.

In each section word limits are given. There is an upper word limit of 450 words for applicant sections and 100 words for the sponsor sections. The word limits are clearly marked on the form and must be strictly adhered to. You are advised, however, to ensure you use the given word limits to the full. **Please indicate the number of words used at the end of each section in the space provided on the application form.**

Complete your application in stages

You may find it helpful to complete the form in stages, giving you time to consider your responses as you go along. You can also print off a copy of your application if you find it helpful to review your answers on paper.

You must ensure that you have responded to all of the sections, otherwise your application may not contain sufficient evidence to be deemed successful.

Give or send your completed application to your sponsor.

Before your application can be submitted your sponsor must complete the reference and statement of sponsorship sections of the application form. Further details about this are provided later in this document. **It is your responsibility to ensure your sponsor has received and completed your application and that it has been submitted by the deadline.** This is **VERY** important. You should ensure you allow sufficient time for your sponsor to complete his/her sections of the form. You should check with your sponsor that everything is proceeding as planned to enable the form to be submitted on time.

Please return the form in accordance with the instructions given by your chosen provider including any published deadline.

Sponsorship

Your application needs the section that provides the statement of sponsorship to be completed by your NPQH sponsor, together with the sponsor verification and evidence in each of Sections 5 to 8. This will be used to add to and validate the information provided in your application and establish your sponsor's support and confirmation of your readiness for headship.

Who should I nominate to complete the verifications and statement of sponsorship?

The purpose of the reference and statement of sponsorship is twofold:

- to verify that in your sponsor's judgement, your evidence is accurate and that you will be ready to take up a headship as your next job. The form should be completed by someone who knows you well and has a good knowledge of your recent leadership experience and expertise. The sponsor is asked to provide further evidence of the impact of your leadership in each content section.
- to confirm that your sponsor is willing to provide you with the support you need to complete NPQH, including time, development opportunities and if applicable, cost. The form should be completed by someone who is in a position to provide this support

To ensure that the reference and statement of sponsorship sections of the application form can provide the above please note the following:

- **If you work in a leadership position in school** the form should be completed by your headteacher.
- **If you are an acting headteacher** your chair of governors might be the most appropriate person to complete the form.
- **If you work in an organisation other than a school** please ask your line manager or employer to complete the form.

- **If you are self-employed** you will need to identify someone whom you will be able to work closely with. This person must be able to support you throughout the NPQH programme and may undertake the role of mentor to you.

What evidence needs to be provided?

In addition to the evidence requested previously in each section, your sponsor is asked to:

- **verify** the evidence you have presented in the application form and provide any relevant additional evidence
- give his/her assessment of your achievements and the **impact** of your leadership, **providing quantified evidence** of the positive difference your work has had in the organisation and on meeting its goals
- state that, in his/her professional opinion **you will be ready to take up a headship** as your next post
- commit to supporting you through NPQH, including allowing sufficient time for you to undertake relevant development activities

Additional evidence provided by the sponsor will be assessed as part of the application process.

It is therefore very important that you:

- ensure that your sponsor reads this application guidance for applicants and sponsors.
- discuss your application and sections of the application form which comprise the reference and statement of sponsorship with your sponsor. It is important that the dialogue is open and honest. The integrated reference and statement of sponsorship should not be treated as a confidential reference

How does my sponsor access the application to complete the form?

You will be asked to give or send your completed application form to your sponsor to enable him/her to complete the sections that comprise the verifications and statement of sponsorship and then return to yourself for submission.

You should ensure that your completed application form is emailed to your sponsor as soon as possible, giving your sponsor a generous amount of time to complete these sections of the form before any deadline.

How and when is the completed application form submitted?

Once your sponsor has completed the reference and statement of sponsorship sections of the application form, you will need to submit the application form by returning it to your chosen licensed provider in accordance with their published instructions.

You should note that your application will not be considered without the application form being complete including the sponsor's sections that comprise the reference and statement of

sponsorship. Late submissions cannot be accepted. You are therefore advised to talk to your sponsor as early as possible and ensure that he/she is fully aware of these requirements.

What happens next?

Application assessment

Applications will be assessed and submitted to rigorous moderation procedures. *A proportion of applicants may be asked to attend interview with providers to further explore the application evidence provided.* Once these processes are complete, you will be advised of the outcome of the assessment. If successful you will be invited by your chosen provider to join the programme. If you are not successful at this stage written feedback will be provided and an opportunity given to engage in a telephone feedback session with an accredited lead assessor, at an additional cost of £20 for a 15 to 20 minute call.