

National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) Application Guidance

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 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 system, and 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 further your strategic leadership expertise
- develops key leadership and management skills
- provides opportunities to work in different educational contexts
- 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.

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 four levels:

Qualification	Level	Target audience ¹
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, 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 and the guidance documents for applicants and sponsors from Inspiring Leaders. 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 is set out in two parts: registration and sections 1-6. You will complete both parts and your sponsor will provide his or her reference and statement of sponsorship by completing the registration and sections 1-5.

Registration: This section needs to be completed first, following the guidance provided. Complete the relevant registration sections with your personal and contact details. You also need to complete the declaration. Please pay particular attention to the declaration you are making.

Sections 1-5: Sections 1-5 are to be completed by both you and your sponsor. For all of the sections 1-5 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.

Please read the detailed assessment criteria for NPQH in overall terms and for the application process shown below. Take time to choose your best example(s) for each section that will demonstrate your readiness to progress to NPQH and headship. **You have up to 500 words for each section – you must not exceed this total and must indicate the number of words used at the end of each section in the space provided on the application form. Do 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.

Section 6 is for you only to complete and comprises a brief outline of post(s) held and senior leadership roles/work experiences in the last three years. Section 6 is not assessed but provides background information to the examples you cite in sections 1-5.

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. These 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. For NPQH they are:

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

NPOH 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

Specific guidance (in the order in which they appear on the application form)

Section 1: Experience and performance as a senior leader with particular respect to improvement at a strategic level (Strategy and Improvement)

In this section, demonstrate your **readiness and aspiration for headship**. Please provide your best **two** recent examples of **senior leadership roles/work experiences** where you have led at whole-school/organisation level and **explain how they demonstrate your readiness for headship**. You should include **quantified evidence of your main achievements and whole school improvements** in these roles (e.g. your **personal impact and the positive difference** your work has had in the organisation. Please include your role, experience and skill in anticipating and leading change. Please use the available word count of 500 words to the full.

Entry assessment indicators for this section:

- Demonstrates sufficient experience of a strategic whole school nature
- Demonstrates significant contribution to change/improvement
- Evidence demonstrates readiness and aspiration for headship
- Personal impact is identifiable
- Impact evidence is quantified and verified by the sponsor

Section : Increasing Capability – Self and others

In this section, please provide evidence of how you have planned your development to prepare yourself for headship and to develop the knowledge and skills required for the role. You should outline your own professional development and demonstrate the impact on your leadership as a result. Please provide examples of how you have professionally developed and inspired others both as individuals and teams including through holding them to account and providing support. Please include your involvement in analysing need and deploying capacity and capability and the positive impact on the organisation. Please use the available word count to the full.

Entry assessment indicators for this section:

- Evidence of planning for headship
- Evidence of seeking appropriate knowledge and skills
- Demonstrates effective professional self development
- Demonstrates effective professional development of others
- Shows an ability to inspire individuals/teams
- Evidence of analysing and deploying capacity and capabilities of staff
- Impact on developing others confirmed by the sponsor

Section 3: Teaching and Curriculum Excellence

Utilising a maximum of two real in-role experiences please exemplify how you have led and grown excellent teaching including taking account of diverse needs of children. Please exemplify your experience in reviewing and leading curriculum initiatives having regard to any critical analysis of data. Please demonstrate involvement in assessment and improvement of the quality of teaching. Please show also your involvement in support and monitoring systems to improve teaching and learning.

Please ensure you make clear reference to the impact of your leadership on **teaching and curriculum excellence**. Please use the available word count to the full.

Entry assessment indicators for this section:

- Demonstrates effective leadership of Teaching
- Demonstrates acknowledgement of diverse needs of children
- Evidence of reviewing/leading curriculum initiatives
- Evidence of using appropriate data
- Involvement in assessing quality of teaching
- Evidence of involvement in monitoring quality of teaching and learning
- Personal impact confirmed by sponsor

Section 4: Working in Partnership

Utilising a maximum of two real in-role experiences please provide evidence of your understanding of the benefits of collaboration both within and outside your school/institution. Please outline how you have worked effectively with the following key stakeholders: Staff, parents, children/students, governors, local authority and other outside agencies. Please demonstrate your impact on collaboration and partnerships both inside the school and beyond. Please use the available word count to the full.

Entry assessment indicators for this section:

- Evidence shows understanding of benefits of collaboration either within or outside of the school or both
- Evidence of effective working relationships with a wide range of stakeholders
- Evidence of impact of team working within the school
- Evidence of actual/potential collaboration beyond own school
- Impact in this area confirmed by sponsor

Section 5: Efficient and effective management of Resources

Please exemplify how you have managed human, physical and financial resources effectively. Please indicate your contribution to balancing strategic priorities and financial effectiveness. Please demonstrate your accountability for the management of resources to the head teacher and governors. Please provide evidence of impact of your leadership on the organisation. Please use the available word count to the full.

Entry assessment indicators for this section:

- Range of experience in human, physical and financial resources
- Demonstrates understanding of balancing priorities and financial effectiveness
- Demonstrates accountability for resource management to the Head or Governing Body
- Impact on resource management verified by the sponsor

Assessment of Leading with Impact

Please note that evidence for this content area comes from all of the above sections and your sponsor is asked to verify and if appropriate provide additional evidence for this area. Assessors will assess this element both within the sections and separately as a section in its own right.

Section 6 is for you to complete to provide background information on your recent senior leadership roles/work experiences. This section is not assessed.

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, so you can still be contacted if you move schools or during holidays if necessary.
- **home address:** we prefer to use this address to maintain confidentiality when advising you of the outcomes of any assessments
- **contact telephone number(s)**
- **school or employer's name, address and postcode and the school's URN**
- **if you have qualified teacher status, your teacher reference number** (also referred to as DfEE, DfES or DCSF number, eg 70/12345)

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 500 words for applicant sections and 200 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.

At the beginning of the application form you will find the declaration statements. You should read these carefully. By submitting your application form you are declaring all of the statements to be true. **You must ensure that you have responded to all of the sections**, otherwise your application may not contain sufficient evidence to be deemed successful.

Email 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 sections that provide the reference and statement of sponsorship to be completed by your NPQH sponsor. 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. The reference is provided as an integral part of your application and forms the second part of the application form.

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

The purpose of the reference and statement of sponsorship is two-fold:

- 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 or multi-academy trust CEO or executive head 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 the 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 email your completed application form to your sponsor to enable him/her to complete the sections that comprise the reference 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 national 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 to join the programme. If you are not successful at this stage written feedback will be provided and you will be invited to interview to provide further details.