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Trying Out Teaching: Mapping and understanding undergraduate teaching experience modules in the UK

Main Report
Study Information

The ‘Trying out Teaching’ study aims to understand undergraduate teaching ‘taster’ modules as a potential strategy for supporting more graduates to enter the teaching profession. The study is funded by the University of Warwick Policy Support Fund.

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The University of Warwick (UoW) is a world-leading University, based in Coventry, UK. It is ranked in the top 10 UK universities by the Times Higher Education guide and Guardian, and 61st globally by the QS World University Rankings 2022. Education Studies was ranked 4th in the Times Good University Guide 2021. Warwick’s Department for Education Studies (DES) is committed to high quality, rigorous interdisciplinary research and scholarship in the broad and diverse field of Education and has strong ties to departments across the Faculty of Social Sciences and University. For REF 2021, Warwick was ranked 18th for GPA and 10th for research power. Research in the Education unit of assessment is characterised by many disciplinary interactions including linguistics, psychology, sociology, economics, philosophy, and health sciences, including 148 externally funded projects with a value of £34.12 million.
### Definitions and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITE</td>
<td>Initial Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGCE</td>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCITT</td>
<td>School Centred Initial Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>Trying Out Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAS</td>
<td>University Ambassadors Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

Background

This project investigates undergraduate teaching ‘taster’ modules. These modules develop undergraduate students’ understanding of school teaching, and usually provide some school-based experience through a school placement and/or classroom observation. Modules are therefore developed to provide a combination of practical engagement in the classroom placement alongside university-based activities designed to promote a wide range of skills linked to teaching, employability, and communication. Throughout, we will refer to all undergraduate modules that provide an introduction to teaching and/or teaching experience collectively as ‘Trying Out Teaching’ (TOT) modules.

TOT modules can be found in many universities across the UK. Some have been established out of the Undergraduate Ambassadors Scheme (UAS), while others have been developed independently by university staff members. Research into TOTs, their design, implementation and impact is relatively limited. However, where there have been evaluations of the programmes, perceptions from students and staff have generally been very positive. This study maps the provision of TOT modules across the UK, examines the models and curricula used to deliver them, and considers the experiences of those involved with them (both students and staff).

Methodology

In overview, this research employed the following methods:

- **Documentary analysis of university websites** to produce a database of TOT modules across the UK and key information about their aims, activities, assessment and intake.
- **Questionnaires with university staff involved in the UG modules** to develop the module database and understand attitudes and experiences of key module staff and HEI leaders.
- **Interviews with university staff** to gather detailed information on TOT modules, and explore a range of questions relating to their nature, role and future.
- **Questionnaires with undergraduate students participating in the modules** to gain a student perspective on the value of the modules and their reasons for taking them.

Summary of Key Findings

1. **Teacher supply**
   - Students and staff involved with ToT modules report positive outcomes in terms of supporting students to make a decision about applying to initial teacher education courses. Our data suggest that this is often a confirmatory decision as many students have already put serious thought into joining the teaching profession prior to enrolling on the module.
   - There is limited evidence that ToT modules are responsible for increasing the supply of undergraduates into teacher education programmes. The lack of data available on
students’ progression to ITE (or other destinations) after completing their studies means that it is difficult to assess the extent to which ToT students apply for and join ITE courses.

- Despite often being closely linked to issues teaching or working in school settings, many ToT modules do not promote prospective entry into teaching as a main aim or outcome. Instead, many modules are designed with a much broader set of aims in mind – often linked with student employability, skill development and/or engagement.

2. **Student employability**
   - Developing student employability is a key aim and outcome for the majority of ToT modules.
   - Participation in the modules is designed to support and develop a range of generic ‘soft’ skills (such as communication, organisation, leadership). These skills are frequently linked to an overarching theme of employability and future careers.
   - For many students, ToT modules are their first experience of entering a workplace (via the module placements). The modules provide a safe and managed introduction to the world of work for these students.

3. **Contribution to student experience and engagement**
   - Most students enjoy ToT modules and place particular value on participating in the placement or school experience opportunities.
   - Modules are often designed with a careful focus on innovative and engaging pedagogical practices, and encouraging students to apply their prior learning in ‘real world’ settings.
   - Staff colleagues who run these modules tend to be very committed to teaching and learning within higher education, and are keen to develop high-quality practice to support and engage students.

4. **Partnership and civic engagement**
   - Where school-based placements are offered, many ToT modules are designed as a way of promoting engagement with local schools and communities. This was often in line with university’s civic engagement or widening participation aims.
   - In some cases, the modules are viewed by university staff as ‘outreach’ opportunities. They see the modules as facilitating connections to the local community, highlighting the role and value of the university to children, young people and school colleagues.
   - Module leaders emphasised that the school-university partnership should be mutually beneficial. Some suggested that more support and/or incentives would help to develop and sustain strong relationships with schools.

**Next Steps**

Below we outline some potentially fruitful areas for further development and research in relation to TOT modules. These suggestions align with findings, and indicate where additional
input and support could be beneficial, both in terms of developing the modules within a higher education context, but also in relation to contributing to the work of schools and the wider education system:

- **Organisational models and support** – there may be potential to support and streamline delivery of multiple modules in universities through an adaptable model of module delivery. University or faculty/department level support for developing, organising and monitoring placements would also be valuable.

- **National/system level models and support** – the UAS legacy is still keenly felt across many of the TOT modules that we examined in this study. The materials provided and support offered by the scheme was viewed very positively and many tutors suggested that reviving this national-level approach would be beneficial. In line with the UAS approach, we would suggest a flexible scheme which can be responsive and adaptable within university and local contexts.

- **Involving more departments and students** - there may be scope for better coverage of these modules across universities. In some institutions, there are examples of large-scale offers of the modules, but this is quite rare.

- **Supporting schools to participate** - universities could provide better support, incentivisation and recognition for schools wishing to host students on TOT modules.

- **School-university partnerships** – TOT modules are arguably a good vehicle for facilitating these relationships. There is scope for more in-depth examination of these kinds of partnerships and the potential benefits they offer to the various actors and organisations involved.

- **University based engagement with teaching and teachers** – placements are often one of the ‘selling points’ of the modules but they are also time-consuming and resource-heavy to organise and maintain. An alternative model could also see teachers and children/young people coming in to universities to work alongside undergraduate students.

- **Further research and evaluation** - further evaluation of TOT modules and their impacts would be useful. It would be particularly helpful to know more about their influence on undergraduates’ decisions to apply for and join teacher training programmes. There are also a wide range of other aspects connected to the modules which would warrant further study, including their role in promoting employability and student/civic engagement. More in-depth comparative approaches across subjects, universities or nations could also yield interesting and important insights.
1. Introduction

Background

This project investigates undergraduate teaching ‘taster’ modules. These modules develop undergraduate students’ understanding of school teaching, and usually provide some school-based experience through a school placement and/or classroom observation. Modules are therefore designed to provide a combination of practical engagement in the classroom placement alongside university-based activities designed to develop a wide range of skills linked to teaching, employability, and communication. As we shall explore in this report, these modules are diverse in their design, operation and aims. Throughout, we will refer to all undergraduate modules that provide an introduction to teaching and/or teaching experience collectively as ‘Trying Out Teaching’ (TOT) modules.

TOT modules are common across the UK and come in many forms. In many HEIs they are a well-established part of undergraduate courses, often drawing upon the Undergraduate Ambassadors Scheme (UAS) framework. The UAS began in 2002 and provided an approach for universities to offer an academically credited, school-based module to undergraduates on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses. The aim of the programme was that university students would gain some experience of working with teachers in local schools, introducing them to teaching as a possible career and helping them to gain a range of valuable transferable skills. It was also hoped that schools hosting the students would benefit from having knowledgeable undergraduates able to offer practical support and engage pupils in STEM subjects. The UAS provided (and still does provide via its website) information packs, resources and support for universities and schools involved in the programme. Universities also have autonomy with the programme, however, and considerable flexibility with the design and delivery of the modules that they run. The most recent figures (from 2016) indicate that 170 departments in 56 universities were running UAS modules (UAS, no date).

Despite the far-reaching nature of the UAS, there has been relatively little research carried out into the extent and nature of ToT provision nationally or to assess its impact. In some universities, module leaders have sought to describe and evaluate the schemes that they are involved with, often sharing insights into the perceived value of the programme for the staff, students and schools involved (see Harrison et al., 2009; Moller and Powell, 2019; Sinclair, 2008; Webster-Deakin, 2019). These reports provide really helpful detail around the content, delivery and outcomes of the modules, and also highlight some of the practical challenges associated with running these kinds of programmes. In many cases, the authors also highlight the broader set of skills which students potentially develop while participating in the modules. Webster-Deakin (2019), for example, describes the professional competencies that are developed; Harrison et al. (2009) explain that while all final-year Chemistry undergraduates are encouraged to develop a range of transferable skills (such as communication, problem-solving, time management), those involved in the school-based module are also exposed to and supported with opportunities to become more reflective, participate in educational research and presentations, and to become more proficient at working independently and as part of a team.

The positive outcomes reported by module leaders have led to UAS-style modules continuing to be delivered in UK universities, despite momentum for the UAS programme itself dipping in recent years. Many academic departments expanded or developed the original UAS model, with a number of
universities now offering modules in subjects beyond the original STEM focus. While the studies noted above provide helpful accounts for understanding how these modules ‘work’ in practice in particular institutions, we have not been able to locate any studies or evaluations which examine teaching-related undergraduate modules on a regional or national level. These modules, which we more-broadly conceive as ‘Trying Out Teaching’ (TOT) modules, are organised and described on different lines and are motivated by a range of influences including boosting teacher recruitment, the employability agenda, and fostering university-community connections via local schools. Given that these modules have potential to influence policy and practice both institutionally (e.g., university involvement in supporting employability, transferable skills, student engagement, community partnerships) and nationally (e.g. links with teacher recruitment and supply), it is vital that we are able to map and understand these programmes and how they operate, and to consider their value at a system level. This is the rationale for carrying out our UK-wide study of this topic, and we continue by describing the research questions and methods employed in the next section.

Research Questions and Methods

Research Questions

A core question for this research is whether TOT modules are a feasible and effective approach to encouraging diverse and high-quality applications to initial teacher education programmes. With the current state of knowledge of TOT modules however, more preliminary questions were needed about the current prevalence of the modules, their designs and the experiences of those involved with them. This need for greater situational awareness and a mapping of current provision led us to pose the following research questions:

1. Which universities offer UG teaching-related ‘taster’ modules/programmes?
2. What models of these modules exist?

TOT modules have the potential to support teacher recruitment, as well as numerous other benefits, including student employability skills and fostering university-school partnerships. At the research design stage, however, we were aware that the aims of the modules vary, and data were unlikely to be available to conduct a robust impact assessment in particular outcome areas. The more preliminary step along these lines was to conduct scoping work to explore areas and possible data sources for evaluation. To these ends, we posed the following questions:

3. What data are currently available to understand the impact of these modules?
4. What are the views of staff and students on the impact, opportunities and challenges associated with these modules?

Finally, with TOT modules already being in widespread practice, and their potential to support current policy priorities around teacher recruitment, we included one further research question to explore what direction the modules might be taken:

5. How could the government and universities develop this approach to facilitate more opportunities for ‘trying out teaching’? What recommendations can be made?
Research Methods Overview

To address our multiple research questions above, we use a mixed methods approach. This was designed to gather evidence on a national scale while also providing depth on the current situation via detailed qualitative data for selected institutions.

Figure 1 – Overview of methods used across the study

In overview, this research employed the following methods:

- **Documentary analysis of university websites** to produce a database of TOT modules across the UK and key information about their aims, activities, assessment and intake.
- **Questionnaires with university staff involved in the UG modules** to develop the module database and understand attitudes and experiences of key module staff and HEI leaders.
- **Interviews with university staff** to gather detailed information on TOT modules, and explore a range of questions of issues about their nature, role and future.
- **Questionnaires with undergraduate students participating in the modules** to gain a student perspective on the value of the modules and their reasons for taking them

Further details of each of these methods, in connection with our 5 research questions is provided in Table 1, below.
## Table 1 – Methods and design details mapped against research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Methods and Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Which universities offer Undergraduate teaching-related ‘taster’ modules/programmes? | • Database compilation  
  o Documentary analysis of all UK university websites  
  o Email follow-on clarifications/enquiries  
  • Producce map and descriptive statistics |
| 2. What models of these modules exist? (e.g., subjects, phases, activities, leadership, assessment, placements, incentives). | • Database compilation  
  o Documentary analysis of UK university websites  
  o Short questionnaire to all universities offering a relevant module. Contact details of programme/module leaders collected via the documentary analysis described above.  
  o Semi-structured interviews with a range of case study university staff (n = 10 universities). |
| 3. What data are currently available to understand the impact of these modules on a) students’ likelihood of applying to postgraduate teacher-training and b) starting a teacher-training programme? | • Semi-structured interviews with case study university staff (n = 10 universities)  
  • Short questionnaire to all universities offering one or more relevant module.  
  • Opportunistic – sourced from interviews/questionnaires (e.g., documents/reports/data) |
| 4. What are the views of staff and students on the impact, opportunities and challenges associated with these modules? | • Short questionnaire to all university staff involved with modules.  
  • Short questionnaire to students taking a TOT module  
  • Semi-structured interviews with case study university staff (n = 10 universities) |
| 5. How could the government and universities develop this approach to facilitate more opportunities for ‘trying out teaching’? What recommendations can be made? | • Triangulation of all datasets above.  
  • Map sources of data and procedure for large-scale/robust impact evaluation.  
  • Recommendations in the policy brief  
  • Describe models |

### Sample

This research has drawn on multiple sources of data and stakeholder perspectives. Below we briefly describe the samples for the interviews, student survey and staff survey.

- **Staff Survey** – We received 75 responses to the ToT staff survey, representing 51 different institutions. In most cases, there was one individual responding on behalf of their institution, although there were multiple instances of 2 or more colleagues responding about one or more module at their institution. Respondents represented a range of roles and levels of seniority, from teaching fellows to professors. 59 of the respondents were a module leader, and 26 were a module tutor (note that there is some overlap between these categories). We also heard from one individual in a professional services role, 8 university leaders with module oversight, and 5 school teachers/placement links/leads. Again, note that there is some overlap between these roles comprising the 75 overall responses. In sum, our staff survey provides a good picture of ToT...
modules across the UK (all 4 UK nations were represented) from the perspective of modules and, to some extent, other module staff.

• **Case Study Institutions and Interviews**

A total of 10 universities were invited to be ‘case study’ institutions for this study. These institutions were identified and selected through two main approaches. First, we contacted three universities where we knew that TOT modules were running and had been established for some time. Module staff in all three universities agreed to share information about their modules and to participate in interviews. Second, following dissemination of the staff survey we selected a range of other universities who were offering TOT modules. In some cases, staff had contacted us to express interest and enthusiasm in the project and were keen to contribute further through the interviews. In order to ensure some range across regions, university types and statuses (Boliver, 2015 – see below), and subject areas, we also contacted module leaders directly and asked for their support and participation.

The aim of the case study universities was to provide more in-depth data about the TOT modules, the staff and students involved. Staff were asked to participate in interviews, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Details of the 10 case study universities are below, along with the pseudonyms which are used throughout the report when referring to data from these institutions. Information about number of interviews per university is also noted (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study University</th>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No. of interview participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>Elite/Higher Tier</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University B</td>
<td>Lower Tier</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td>Middle Tier</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University D</td>
<td>Middle Tier</td>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University E</td>
<td>Elite/Higher Tier</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University F</td>
<td>Middle Tier</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University G</td>
<td>Elite/Higher Tier</td>
<td>South East</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University H</td>
<td>Elite/Higher Tier</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University J</td>
<td>Elite/Higher Tier</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University K</td>
<td>Middle Tier</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of our 20 participants were TOT module leaders (n=13), alongside having a range of other academic roles too. Other participants were colleagues who worked on the modules as tutors or who had leadership roles in their departments (e.g. Head of Department, Director of Education) and offered oversight in relation to the modules and programmes offered to students.

• **Student survey** – Finally, we shared a student survey with module leaders to pass on to students. Our ability to reach students was highly influenced by what opportunities there were for students to complete the survey. Many module leaders passed on the survey, but uptake was fairly low (given the number of potential students). The highest responses were achieved where module leaders were able to incorporate and/or promote the survey in a group session, providing the time for students to complete the survey together. In total we received 78 student survey responses from across 13
different higher education institutions. Comparing this to the main database, students attending a Russell Group institution were over-represented in the sample (78.2% of responses), with about 70.5% of responses coming from four Russell Group institutions. Most students (65.4%) were in their 3rd year of undergraduate study, with 24.4% being in their 2nd year and 10.3% being in their 4th year. In line with the general student populations for the courses represented, there were more female (73.1%) than male respondents (25.6%). The vast majority of students were home/UK students (93.6%). In sum, the student survey provides us with a range of perspectives on modules across a range of institutions, albeit with Russell Group universities over-represented in the sample.
2. Overview of Trying Out Teaching Modules

Introduction

In this section we provide an overview of the provision of ToT modules. Prior to this research, there was no national picture of the extent or nature of ToT modules across the UK. As described above, an early task for the project was to compile a database of ToT modules from searching module websites and direct email enquiries with university staff. Within our figures, there will be some modules that are not currently running or have been discontinued. There will also be modules running that were not listed on university websites or that we were made aware of in our enquiries. Whether these two factors off-set each other is unknown. We are reasonably confident that the figures presented below are a good estimate of the number of modules currently operating.

Module Numbers and Locations

In total, we located 206 ToT modules across 86 different institutions. Just under half of these institutions (n=41) had a single module; just over half had 2 (n=20), 3 (n=10) or more (n=15). Four universities had a suite of nine modules from across different subject areas and departments. In cases where there were multiple modules in a single university, often these were subject variants of a very similar module. In a smaller number of cases, we saw very varied provision across modules within the same institution.

Geographically, ToT modules are spread across the UK. Figure 1, right, marks the location of all ToT modules in our database on a map of the UK. Table 2, below, provides the number of ToT in each UK region. These figures approximately reflect the population density in each region.

Table 2 – Regional Location of ToT Modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England - East Midlands</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England - East of England</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England - London</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England - North East</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England - North West</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England - South East</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England - South West</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England - West Midlands</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England - Yorkshire and Humber</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 - Location of ToT Modules in the UK
We also drew on Boliver (2015) to categorise all institutions in our database into university status clusters: Elite and Higher Tier (Boliver’s Cluster 1 and 2), Middle Tier (Cluster 3) and Lower Tier (Cluster 4). This revealed that a slight majority of the ToT modules were operated by elite and higher Tier universities (n=106, 51.4%), many by the middle tier (n=71, 34.5%) and a smaller number (despite their reputation for offering vocational courses) by the lower tier (n=27, 13.1%)\(^1\).

Subject Areas and Educational Phases

A key aspect of ToT module provision is the home department and subject of the modules. With the origins of many modules in the UAS, and the focus on STEM, we examined the extent to which ToT modules were concentrated in STEM subjects. With incomplete data in this regard, we included items in the student survey, staff survey and searched for this information within online documents and in our enquiries as we created the database. These all gave very similar estimates for the subject areas of the modules. The student survey suggested a 50% split between modules targeted at students taking STEM subjects. Similarly, the staff survey estimated that 50.8% of modules were for students studying a STEM subject area, 38.1% were studying subjects in the arts, humanities or social sciences, and 9.9% were modules open to students across subject areas. Estimates from the database were similar, albeit with a higher proportion of modules offered to STEM students at 63.4%. Related, and with similar proportions in the database, were the ‘home’ subject department from which the ToT modules were operated. Table 3, right, gives the estimated proportion of modules by home subject department for the 153/206 modules for which we could locate this information. Again, we see that about 50% of the modules are focused on STEM subjects. There are just under a quarter of modules located in education departments, 16.3% in areas of art, language and humanities, 2.6% in other areas of social science, and 4.6% having an inter-disciplinary or cross-subject (or general) focus.

One final area we looked at in relation to overall ToT module provision was the school age range/phase on which modules were focused. Again, we triangulated the data we had from surveys and the database to reach the best possible estimate of the national picture. In the database, 37.7%, 46.2% and 6.6% of modules were focused on all school phases (primary and secondary), secondary and primary phases respectively. The corresponding figures in the staff survey were 52.1%, 36.6% and 11.3%. Overall, these data suggest that a minority of modules (approx. 10%) are focused solely on the primary phase, and the remainder focus on either secondary provision (approx. 40%) or both primary and secondary (approx. 45%).

\(^1\) 2 institutions in our database were not included in Boliver’s (2015) analysis, so were left as unclassified and not included in the figures above.
3. Design and Characteristics of Trying Out Teaching Modules

Introduction

In this section we report findings on the design and characteristics of the Undergraduate ‘Trying Out Teaching’ modules. These findings respond to Research Questions 2-4, which ask the following:

- What models of these modules exist?
- What data are currently available to understand the impact of these modules?
- What are the views of staff and students on the impact, opportunities and challenges associated with these modules?

Data from across different sources have been triangulated to inform the findings here. We have organised the section into four main themes:

1. Aims and purposes of the modules
2. Module design and delivery
3. Organisation and management
4. Perceptions of impact

In the final section, we then draw these data and themes together, and discuss the implications for future research, policy and practice in this area.

Aims and Purposes

What are the modules for?

Our analyses of module documentation and websites along with the responses from university staff highlight the multiple aims and objectives associated with Trying Out Teaching modules. Those responsible for running and leading the modules indicate that they offer significant potential for developing a whole range of skills and knowledge relevant to both students’ current degree programmes and their broader career aspirations and interests. While the modules are ostensibly linked to working in schools and teaching as a profession, our analysis highlights the foregrounding of transferable skills and employability as aims set out by module leaders and departments. In explaining the benefits and outcomes of the modules, the documents reiterated to students the opportunities for developing new skills and attributes, and experiencing a professional work environment. A number of universities also situated the module (and the associated skills/knowledge to be gained) with broader context of a competitive jobs market. The excerpt below from a student-facing module handbook at University H exemplifies this emphasis:
As noted above, transferable or ‘softer’ skills such as communication, organisation, problem-solving, independent working and team work were noted as aims by majority of universities offering these modules. While some documentation and survey responses indicated that these were also skills which students would develop in other more ‘traditional’ modules, university staff were clear to point out that the Trying out Teaching modules provided a more practical, ‘real world’ opportunity for experiencing and advancing these attributes. Where time in school and/or working with young people forms part of the module, there tended to be substantial focus on the value of participating in a professional work environment and this was seen as important preparation for the ‘world of work’. A Head of Department and module co-leader from University A commented that the modules are often “their [students] first experience of a work environment and as such developing these transferable skills helps to prepare the students for their professional work life.” As such, the modules with school placements often place significant emphasis on the work experience elements offered, noting that this provides students with something valuable to add to their CVs as well as providing a point of distinction from other modules they could select.

Even modules without a school-based placement or experience were found to promote the transferable and employability skills that would be gained from their university-based study. Modules sought to teach these skills through opportunities for practical engagement with content, for example, making teaching resources, teaching mini-lessons, creative activities and participation in oral presentations. These more applied pedagogies were integrated with a range of more traditional activities and assessments (as we discuss further below).

Despite this focus on transferable skills and employability, the modules that we have examined were not presented as generic teaching-focused programmes. Instead, there is a clear focus on the subject-specific nature of the students’ undergraduate programmes and the development of relevant subject-relate knowledge (in addition to and in tandem with the skills described above). In many instances, the modules are aiming to support students with the communication of their subject to a new audience in a new context (e.g. school children). This excerpt from module documentation from a mathematics ToT module in a non-case study university highlights the focus on the subject itself:

To allow students to apply their knowledge of mathematics in an educational environment, to enable students to develop personal transferable skills, to conduct a practical task of relevance to mathematics education, to increase student awareness of the demands of a career in education.

Maths module, Middle Tier University, South West England
We see a similar focus on subject-related knowledge and skills in this summary of aims from an English-focused module:

Demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of English in education; Demonstrate understanding of a range of issues connected government policy around English as a subject and how this has influenced its framing in schools together with critical analysis of the impact both of policies and more grass roots led reform; Show an understanding of the kinds of reading practices that take place in school and how these relate to reading in other contexts; Demonstrate skills in responding to literature written for children.

Language and Literature module, Middle Tier University, West Midlands

In both of these excerpts, we also see that while there is an intention to support students to better understand the education system and the role of those working in it, there are no explicit aims using the word ‘teaching’ or relating to promoting a career in teaching. This was common across the modules that we examined, with most placing a limited or no emphasis on teachers or teaching. One notable exception relates to modules aimed at students studying on an Education Studies degree. For these programmes, it was more typical to see an emphasis using and applying skills and knowledge gained from the degree thus far to inform teaching skills or understanding of what it is to be a teacher.

Through the case study interviews (rather than via the survey or on the module documentation), however, some module leaders described more informal aims of the module, which sometimes included the potential for modules to ‘select in’ and ‘select out’ certain students who were considering entering teaching. The modules were viewed as an opportunity to ‘try out teaching’ and to provide students with helpful information to influence the next steps in their career. This excerpt, for example, shows the views of a module leader once students make the decision, after completing the module, not to pursue teacher training:

“We've prevented that student applying for teacher training ...but actually, we've stopped them being withdrawn. We stopped them potentially breaking down through you know, we've seen it so many times in teacher training. It's a hard year...it is the hardest degree in my opinion and having done one I can, I think I've got grounds to say that, and...it's also prevented the DfE paying for that student to go onto a course and not go into teaching...”

Senior Lecturer/Module Leader, University D

In addition to being concerned about students’ wellbeing in relation to whether they apply for teacher education, module leaders also described their aims of providing students with a realistic experience of working in schools. This, they felt was vital for ensuring that those who wanted to go on to teach were aware of the kind of role and environment that they would be working in, and they could make informed decisions about this:

“Sometimes they realise that a primary school placement isn’t what they thought or a secondary school placement isn’t what they thought ... It is important for them to have that experience ... because there’s a danger of looking through rose-tinted glasses, based on personal experience.”

Head of Subject and Professor, University F
A final aim of the modules relates to issues of university and community engagement and partnerships. This focus was mentioned less in the module paperwork but came through more strongly in the survey and interviews. Module leaders were keen that their modules would provide a vehicle for positive connections to be made between the university, its students and local schools. For some, this was framed within a widening participation context: module leaders sometimes felt that they had a duty to support and engage with the educational aims of schools, particularly those which served less advantaged communities. In these cases the modules, were sometimes linked with outreach activities (such as UG students participating in assemblies or contributing to careers talks in schools). A number of module leaders talked about the intention to provide role models for young people in school and to inspire them to consider studying their subject and university level. In this Chemistry-focused module handbook, for example, one of the stated aims was “to inspire a new generation of prospective undergraduates by providing role models for school pupils...” (Chemistry module, Elite and Higher Tier University, South East England). Details were provided about the aims of other modules to foster new links with community partners and to support the provision of teacher education programmes in the local community. A small number of module leaders also referred to their universities’ civic engagement missions and the potential for ToT modules to contribute meaningfully to these.

The discussions above indicate the range of aims and purposes that have emerged from our examination of these modules. We highlight where particular emphases have been placed on, for example, transferable skills and employability, and to a lesser extent subject knowledge, teaching as an activity/career, and community partnerships. In reality, it is also clear that the majority of these modules have multiple and often interconnected aims. This excerpt from a module handbook at University C, effectively captures the multiple intended purposes and outcomes while also highlighting the potential range of beneficiaries involved (students, school pupils, teachers).

“This module provides an opportunity for Level 6 students to gain first-hand experience of teaching computing through a mentoring scheme with computing teachers in local schools and colleges. It is designed to help final year students gain confidence in communicating their subject and develop strong organisational and interpersonal skills that will be of benefit to them in employment and life. It will enable students to understand how to address the needs of individuals and devise and develop computing teaching materials appropriate to engage the relevant age group they are working with. This module provides the skills and opportunity to allow the student to act as an enthusiastic role model for pupils interested in computing and to offer the student a positive experience of working with pupils and teachers.”

Computer Science module, University C

We can also look at the module aims from the perspective of students, and what they hoped to get out of the module. This was a question we asked on the student survey, where we gave students a list of options for why they choose to take the module. The results of these, with the percentage of students selected each reason are provided below in Table 4. These figures suggest that the most important reasons for taking ToT modules from a student perspective were linked with them considering teaching and/or working with children/young people as a career. Students also cite the module being perceived as fun, different and building employability skills as reasons. For some, the
module was selected as a challenge, but for others the module was perceived (at least prior to selection) as an easier option compared to their regular studies.

Table 4 – Student Survey Item: Why did you choose this module? (select all that apply) (n=78)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am considering a career in teaching</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was interested in working with children/young people</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to do something new/different</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It sounded fun</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was interested in the school placement experience</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assessment methods were appealing to me</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to improve my employability skills</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to challenge myself</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It seemed like an easier option</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also asked a follow up question about which of these reasons was the most important. 50.6% cited ‘Considering teaching as a career’ as being their most important reason, 20.0% cite ‘working with children/young people’, 10.7% cited ‘something new/different’, 6.7% cited developing ‘employability skills’ and 8.0% cited the appeal of the assessment methods. In sum, our evidence suggests that many students are selected ToT modules as a way to gain work experience to support and confirm an emergent choice of teaching as a career. Students are also recognising the potential to develop employability skills more generally and valuing ToT modules being something different, in focus, assessment and activity. This latter point was something recognised by module staff and reflected upon in more detail by a number of students in the survey:

“... I think they find it quite fun and interesting. It's very different from their normal, their day-to-day routine.... And I think that's part of the of the appeal.”

Module Leader and Associate Professor, University J

“It’s a great module; but it’s important to remember that not everyone does it because they want to be a teacher. There’s a lot of reasons why I chose this module; and I mostly want to get good grades and experience out of it rather than learn about teaching.”

Geography Student, University A

Module Design and Delivery

Module Numbers

Responses from the questionnaire data indicate that where these modules run, they are popular and often full to capacity. However, these was considerable variation reported in relation to the numbers of students that modules could accommodate. When asked to report approximate numbers per cohort for each year of the module (Table 5, below) we can see that nearly 50% of modules have under 20 students while nearly a quarter are working with a much larger cohort of 40+ students per year. There is a suggestion in these data that modules are commonly designed to run either with a single seminar group size of around 10-25 or be a module which is offered to larger or entire cohorts,
engaging more than 40, and in some cases over 100 students. There were fewer modules in the 30-39 size bracket, suggesting that this falls between these two options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 or more</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A related consideration is the number of credits offered for the module. This gives a rough indication of the weight and size of the module in students’ overall programmes. Our data on this are difficult to interpret given differences in credit equivalence across universities and UK nations. These issues of comparability notwithstanding, the data suggest that about two thirds of modules are worth between 15 and 20 credits, the equivalent of about 1/10th of a typical UG module load for an academic year (180 credits). Around 10% offered smaller 10 credit modules, 7.1% larger 30 credit modules, and 8.6% offered more than one option. For ToT with more than one credit option, there were several examples of universities offering either 10/20 credits or 15/30 credits where students had the option of taking a shorter or a longer version of the module, the latter usually including the placement in addition to the university-based activities of the shorter option.

Home Departments

In the module subject areas overview above (e.g., see Table 3) we provide details of the home subject department and subject focus of the ToT modules in our database. One key point from this was the relatively high percentage, around half or more, of modules with a STEM focus. In this section we discuss this result further, linking it with other evidence about module design and delivery.

The relatively high percentage of modules based in STEM departments is likely to be a historic legacy from the UAS scheme. This focused on supporting STEM undergraduates into placements in local schools to support with the development of transferable skills and to potentially increase the number of qualified teachers in STEM subjects (UAS, no date). The UAS legacy was evident across the websites and documents that we examined and in the staff questionnaires and interviews too. Despite being relatively dormant for the last decade, it is clear that a number of staff working on existing STEM-based modules were also involved in the UAS programme too. Through the questionnaires and interviews they shared positive reports of the framework that the UAS provided and the resources which were made available to support with module delivery. These have arguably contributed to sustainability of the modules in some institutions.

Unsurprisingly, we tended to find that the majority of modules aligned with the subjects taught in compulsory-aged schooling in the UK. As we note above, the Sciences were particularly prevalent here, but we also saw modules focusing on, for example, modern languages, history, religious education, English, and music. This direct alignment offers mutual benefit to both universities and schools alike. It allows university students with advanced knowledge of these fields to explore what it is like to communicate their subject area to a different audience and also provides schools with a direct
link to a different source of subject knowledge and expertise. This is exemplified well with the relatively new National Curriculum subject of Computer Science. Given the challenges of training and recruiting the required number of Computer Science teachers in recent years, the module leader felt that schools (and pupils) benefited from having the input of the undergraduate who had current understanding of the subject:

“A lot of the teachers don’t have computing degrees so they get a computer science student that’s got two years’ worth of up-to-date knowledge and training ... an extra pair of hands.”

(Professor and Module Leader, University C)

In a small number of examples, modules from STEM-related subjects (particularly Physics and Chemistry) explained that they were required to include a certain amount of content relating to their subject in order that the degrees would be accredited by external subject bodies or associations. This meant that primarily locating the module in the subject department or having input from a subject specialist in initial teacher education was important for delivery. In University J, for example, the Chemistry ToT module (and all other modules on the BSc Chemistry course) had to contain a substantial proportion of specifically chemistry-focused content in order for the wider degree programme to be accredited by the Royal Society of Chemistry. As such, the module leader (a Chemistry specialist on the ITE programme) had to ensure that he worked closely with colleagues in the Chemistry department to ensure that the relevant amount and type of content was included. While not an issue for all modules and universities, this issue of external accreditation or validation is important to be aware of in terms of the wider contextual factors affecting the aims and delivery of the programmes.

How are the modules delivered?

The modules were delivered using a range of different approaches; typically a variety of delivery methods were used across each module. Table 6, below, shows the approaches reported by university staff questionnaire respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module activities reported on staff survey</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placements or school visits</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-medium group lectures or seminars</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one or small group tutorials</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice-focused workshops or demonstrations</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research or enquiry projects</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-group lectures</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Placements or school visits were employed by nearly 80% of questionnaire respondents as part of the modules that they work on. In the ‘other’ section some module leaders also reported participation and delivery in outreach workshops or masterclasses with school/college pupils as further examples of direct engagement with children or young people. We discuss placements and school experience further below.

The majority of modules also use small-medium size group lecturers or seminars and/or one-to-one or small group tutorials. These approaches were more common than large-group lectures, perhaps
reflecting the smaller cohorts that tend to be involved with these modules alongside a commitment
to using more active, student-centred approaches to teaching and learning. Research or enquiry
projects were also used by a third of respondents. In some instances, these also formed part of the
assessment requirements for the module but a number of tutors were very clear in their comments
that completing the research or enquiry work was a key mode of learning for the students, and often
related to wider aims and outcomes associated with the module. This module leader also explained
how, in the absence of a school placement, the research activities provide an important opportunity
for students to develop a range of transferable skills and explore the wider theoretical issues
associated with their subject and its place within the school curriculum.

The module does not include school placement...The module is mostly on the introduction to
mathematics education theory with reference to school and early university activities. Some
of the students who take the module continue with a teacher training course. Other students
are interested in maths education research as a discipline and find the module useful beyond
school teaching (e.g. students who proceed with MA or PhD in mathematics or jobs in
accounting, etc.). Skills such presentation, writing essays are developed in the module.

Maths module, Elite and Higher Tier University, East of England

In another approach, a module leader based in an English department explained that their module
allowed students to “explore areas of education which they are interested in most through guided and
independent research” (English and Education module, Lower Tier University, East of England). This
module leader also commented that during the pandemic, research activities such as carrying out
interviews and questionnaires with teachers were used as an alternative to the school-based
placement.

During the case study interviews, staff described the rationale for the varied approaches to teaching
and learning as two-fold. First, there was a commitment to offering something ‘different’ to what
students experienced elsewhere in their university courses. As such, the teaching modules tended to
move away from solely focusing on lecture or seminar-based delivery. While these approaches were
often used, they tended to be supplemented with other methods too, making them distinct from more
traditionally academic modules. Linked to this, there was also an interest in connecting aspects of
theory or academic learning with more practice-based/vocationally focused activities, as discussed in
the ‘aims’ section above. This often manifested itself through the use of placements and school
experiences or workshop-style/creative approaches. Some staff also spoke about an intention to
model various teaching and learning methods for students, introducing them to strategies which
perhaps they were less familiar with through their university learning but which may be helpful for
use in a school-based classroom. In the section below we discuss the module personnel and activities
further. We discuss the delivery of university-based activities followed by the role of school
placements/experiences. Finally, we look to the assessment approaches used across these modules.

University-Based Teaching and Learning

Module leaders were usually academic staff based in subject departments within the university,
sometimes with collaborating from initial teacher education departments. Information from our
module database showed just a small number of exceptions to this where staff from the university’s
Student Union were involved in leading the modules (n=2). In our questionnaire, we also asked staff
if in-service schoolteachers were also involved in module delivery. Just over half of respondents (n=36; 50.8%) reported that they were. The teachers are involved in a range of module-related activities including the delivery of guest seminars (either online or face-to-face) and leading workshops:

“...we have the two components to the module...we have the seminar which will be focused on more of the theory side of pedagogies within the subject and then we have the workshops, which is more focused on their practice. The workshops are delivered mainly by practising teachers...and the seminars by the university tutors.”

Module Leader, Associate Professor, University J

We are also aware from further information on the database and questionnaire that schoolteachers play an integral part in the school placement/experience activities and are often involved in assessments relating to these. In University G, a module leader also described the practice of inviting some trainee teachers to join one of the later module sessions and to share their experiences of their PGCE course with the undergraduate students. He felt that this was beneficial for encouraging students to think about their next steps following completion of the module and to ask questions from peers who were going through the training process at that time.

University-based taught sessions mostly appear to include a mix of more theoretical or philosophical elements relating to education and teaching combined with more practical workshop-style or creative approaches. Module leaders generally reported that this combination approach was important as it allowed students to learn some knowledge about the foundations of the education system in this country, allowing them to reflect, critique, evaluate and debate these issues (e.g. curriculum, assessment, pedagogical approaches, behaviour, inclusion) alongside seeing and experiencing them ‘in action’ (e.g. via a placement or workshop).

This module leader from University E, exemplified the kind of discussions regarding the module content and approaches to teaching and learning:

“...[it] was really important for me to be about mathematics, not about education in general and that’s why we got an introductory session about the National Curriculum, because some of them will have had the National Curriculum done to them. But it’s unlikely that they’ve heard the philosophy behind it. So, we do a little bit of the history of the national curriculum...Second session is on theories of learning...And then we have a session that is on misconception, which is purely Mathematics... and then we have a session about assessment again because that is one of the things that worry teachers in school. And then the last session is on the mastery curriculum because I feel they, they need to be aware of recent developments.”

Module Leader, Lecturer, University E

In line with the focus on the development of communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork, leadership, and reflection, many of the activities in university sessions were group and/or discussion based. Activities involving group planning of lessons or teaching activities, peer critique, and group presentations were commonly discussed by our interviewees. University-based teaching and learning varied considerably depending on the presence of a school experience or placement on the module. Where there was opportunity for students to visit schools, this placement/experienced tended to be
used as a basis for informing some of the content and activities back in university. Further details of the school experience and placement elements are discussed below.

**School placement or experience as part of ToT modules**

For many ToT modules, the school experience or placement is one of the major ‘selling points’, enabling students the opportunity to attend a local school and participate in a range of interesting activities with pupils and teachers. We are clear to note that there is variation in the language used to describe the school-based placements, including school experiences, attachments or visits. In some cases, this was determined by standardised language used in the institution where certain criteria had to be met in order for the activities to be classified as e.g. a placement. It was clear that some institutions were wary of ‘over-promising’ in terms of the school experience and did not want to align the school experience on the undergraduate modules with the much more in-depth and long term placements found on initial teacher education programmes. There had also had to be further changes in some universities due to Covid-19. At University A, for example, the Geography module lead amended the language in order to reflect the shift to online engagement with schools and to manage students’ expectations of what they would be doing as part of the module:

“Last year in Covid, we really had to switch around the language that we were using. Instead of being a placement school, it was an attachment school. If they got to spend three hours on Zoom with their school, then that was a bonus. We had to create a whole set of other kind of attachment activities that they could do without actually getting into a school. That was stressful and a challenge.”

*Module Leader, Senior Lecturer, University A*

For the purposes of this report, we use the terms ‘placement’ or ‘school experience’ to refer to the broad range of school-based activities which occur as part of ToT modules. According to our module database, of 142 modules we had information for 129 modules (90.8%) included a mandatory school placement/experience element; 11 of the modules did not include a placement (7.7%), and two modules had an optional placement (1.4%). Some universities were tentative about the possibility of in-school experience for students due to the recent Covid-19 restrictions. This was sometimes noted on module websites with a suggestion that there may be a need for an online alternative. It is also possible that the high number of modules with missing information about placements may also be due to uncertainty around Covid restrictions during the period when we were collecting our information (December 2021-February 2022). Universities may have been unwilling to state that a placement was part of the module if there was the possibility that they could not deliver this.

The amount of time that students were required to attend school-based placements varied considerably across different universities and modules. Accurate details on this were hard to come by on university module websites, again possibly due to Covid-related challenges with planning and guaranteeing this element for students. Some websites provided an approximate number of hours or days that would be required. Many included no information on this, perhaps waiting for further details before confirming placement opportunities in the current and upcoming academic year. From the staff

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2 We could not find information about placements for 64 modules (31%). There are 206 modules listed in the database in total.
survey, however, we were able to gain some more concrete details about placement length for a subset of the modules. Table 7, below, indicates the variation across different modules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement length</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 day</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 days</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 days</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 days or more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data largely echo the picture that we see in the more incomplete and ambiguous information collated on the database. The majority of modules with placements expected students to attend a school for somewhere between 1-10 days in total. This figure has been reached by multiplying the number and length of visits across the module (e.g., 2hrs x 10 weeks = 20 hrs = approx. 3 days) to reach an overall figure. Modules organised this in different ways with some having a ‘block placement’ of a number of consecutive days in a row. It was more common, however, for students to be expected to attend for a half day over a period of weeks e.g., 10 half days across a 10-week university term. Through the interviews, a number of module leaders reported that they had recently reduced the amount of time students were required to spend in schools. One module at University J, for example, has reduced the school commitment from 10 days down to seven. The module leader reported that students sometimes find it difficult to fit the school experience in around other academic commitments and wider student life (e.g., part time jobs). This could result in poor attendance at school and difficulties with completing the module well. In order to ensure a meaningful school experience and to help maintain good relationships with schools, time commitment was reduced and students were given more flexibility with the times when the placement could be completed.

In a small number of modules, students were only required to spend a very limited amount of time in schools. This could be just a single lesson or a half/whole day. Even where it was a longer period than this, module leaders repeatedly explained that the purpose of engagement with the schools was to give students a ‘flavour’ of what it was like to be in a school and to work with children and young people. The intention was not to have them involved in longer-term teaching practices as they might on an ITE programme. The placements were generally conceived by module leaders as important stimulus and experience for engaging with the wider aims of the module. In some of our case study institutions, module leaders shared the value of more sustained placements in schools. In University H, the 20-30 hour placement across a term was viewed as an important vehicle for skills development and challenging students’ perceptions about education, teaching and their subject area. In University A, where students completed half a day a week over seven weeks, this module leader noted the impact that the placement could have on students’ understanding of being in a professional environment:

...being in a different sort of environment and having more responsibility, so it really does feel like that next part of the students’ journey into adulthood and professional life...it’s surprising that you can get a lot of the benefits in just a seven week placement...suddenly you’re not a student anymore, you know, you’re in this working environment with the grown ups and you’ve got to start to behave like them.

Module Co-Lead, Head of Department and Senior Lecturer, University A
Whilst on placement, students participate in a range of activities which contribute to the classroom and the wider school environment. The language used in module handbooks and on websites often suggested flexibility and breadth with the kinds of activities that students would participate in. Module leaders reflected that this allowed schools to determine activities that were most suitable at the time when students would be visiting. Initial activities predominantly involve observing and shadowing teachers. With longer-term placements, and as students’ confidence and understanding developed, they are generally encouraged to take on more supporting and assisting roles, working with small groups or leading parts of lessons. Beyond the classroom, students also contribute to a range of school enrichment activities including assemblies, open mornings and extra-curricular activities.

In some universities, it was clear that the placements and university-based sessions were closely interlinked. Placement experiences would inform activities or be used as discussion points in university, allowing students to reflect upon their time in school with their peers and module staff. This was sometimes supported by standardised materials or activities that students were expected to engage with while out in schools. In University D, for example, students all had a placement handbook which provided foci and tasks for each of their weeks in school. One week would focus on curriculum, another on assessment, another on teaching strategies, and so on. This resource was helpful for ensuring that schoolteachers were also familiar with students should be working on during their placement. It also provided helpful preparation tasks for one of the module assignments.

Students and staff were positive about school-based provision as part of the module. Many students commented that they were drawn to the module because of its practical components and how its structure varied to other modules. Module leaders commented that students initially required a lot of support in school as they sometimes felt out of their comfort zone or found the experience in school to be quite different to what they remembered of their own school careers.

One of the recurring issues through the staff survey and interviews was the complexity of organising and maintaining placement opportunities for students in schools. We discuss this in more detail below in relation to the administration and management of the placements. However, in relation to the content of placements, a number of module leaders also highlighted the varying experiences that students could receive in schools, especially where there was a less structured approach to the placements. This Geography module leader explained the importance of students engaging with the school experience as a whole and avoiding comparisons between experiences in different schools:

‘They are all going to have a different experience. They find that a bit of a struggle. Every week I do a round robin around the class of who has been doing what, how are you getting on, any problems... if you’re in school that the teachers are really busy, and you feel like you haven’t had much engagement compared to someone who has been asked to do an assembly or go on a fieldtrip... Just because they are all going to a placement school, doesn’t mean that they are going to be getting the same experience. We ask them to flip that around and reflect on it in their log books. Whatever their experience is, it is not going to impact on their mark, it is what they do with that experience that is that important thing.’

_Module Leader and Associate Professor, University A_

This point raises important questions about students’ parity of experience on the modules and via the school placements. Of course, some variation would be expected due to the diversity of schools, teachers and undergraduate students involved. However, in terms of students’ expectations and the
quality/equality of their experience, this may be something which universities have to consider in partnership with the schools they are working with.

**How are the modules assessed?**

Information collated in the database and staff survey indicates the range of assessment approaches used in these modules. Table ... shows that of the 206 modules, 127 (61.7%) used some form of written assignment to assess students; 79 (38.4%) used an oral presentation; and 62 (30.1%) required students to complete a placement. Many of the modules included multiple assessment approaches, often combing different methods (e.g. a written assignment and an oral presentation). Information regarding assessment was not available for 79 of the modules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment approaches used in TOT modules (Database)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written assignment</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement completion</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further details were provided via the staff survey which provide staff with additional options regarding assessment methods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods of assessment as reported in staff survey (n=76)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written report/project write up/essay</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective written assignment</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at school experience/placement</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio/evidence gathering</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based assessment e.g., by teacher in school</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, we can see that many modules were reporting use of more than one assessment approach. Written approaches were common, whether that be in the format of essays, reports, reflective pieces or portfolios. Over half of staff (57.3%) reported using oral presentations. Interestingly, nearly a third of the modules included here also had a school-based assessment element. This suggests that rather than being assessed just for attending the school placement, teachers in these schools were also being asked to make a judgement on the quality of students’ contributions during their time there. In the ‘Other’ category, staff reported a number of other, often innovative approaches including creating teaching resources, teaching a micro-lesson at university, completing a teaching diary, and in two cases, a viva-style oral exam.

When looking more closely into the module documentation and through discussions with university staff, we found that the majority of assignments were designed to connect theoretical and academic work (usually conducted in universities) along with more practical application of learning (via the school placement or university-based opportunities).
It was also evident that the assessments were often closely connected to the aims of the module, particularly those associated with transferable skills. A number of module leaders described the value of assessing students via oral presentations and teaching activities, for example, to support with communication, reflection and use of IT skills (i.e. PowerPoint):

*So, one of the things that I encourage for that presentation is that they’re not allowed to do a PowerPoint presentation, so they have to think creatively and erm, do a poster or a poem or a video, etc. So so that one of the taught elements is, I sort of go through early on what they need to gather while they’re on placement. And then the written element is linking in learning theories with what they see happening in the classroom.*

*Module leader and Senior Lecturer, University B*

Staff from a number of case study universities reported the challenges that some students, particularly those from STEM backgrounds, faced with the assignments. For many students, essay writing, reflective practice and oral presentations were not familiar assessment approaches. In these subjects, students are generally more likely to complete exams or scientific reports, and so a number of module leaders explained that additional support was sometimes required to build their confidence and to teach them the expectations associated with these kinds of approaches. There was also an acknowledgement that sometimes students did not achieve that well via these approaches, but that having a hybrid or mixed approach to assessment could help with this:

*Some of the students don’t like writing. They are physicists so they don’t really enjoy the written assignment and don’t do very well on it but they can actually still pass the module because they can do the other things. Some of them may really love the writing but are a bit shy and not very good at presenting. We feel that variety of assessments also enables all students to be successful on the module regardless of their personality or preferences.*

*Module Co-Leader and Lecturer in Initial Teacher Education, University A*

Assessments as part of the school placements were also noted as a potential challenge, particularly if teachers in schools were carrying these out. Ensuring a standardised, quality-assured and fair approach to this could be particularly difficult where multiple schools and teaching staff were involved in assessing the students. Even where clear criteria were provided for teachers, module leaders expressed concern that other factors or biases might influence the grades that were students were being awarded.

Assessment diversity emerges as both a strength and a potential challenge with the TOT modules. In our student survey, 30/78 (38.5%) of students reported selecting the module because the assessment methods were appealing to them. Some university staff also indicated that the different approaches could support students with their skills development and maximise their chances of success, even if they found some of the assessment approaches unfamiliar or difficult. Given the importance of
assessment for students’ experience and engagement with their studies, this could be a valuable area to explore further in relation to ToT modules.

**Organisation and management**

Our analyses of module website and documentation highlighted the variation of how modules were organised within universities and across different departments. As shown in Section 2 (overview), the majority of modules were located in and led by subject-specific departments. In some cases, there was evidence of partnership working with initial teacher education (ITE) departments, and in a small number of contexts, ITE departments were responsible for running the modules.

Our interviews with staff from case study institutions noted that the existence of the modules in subject departments, was sometimes a legacy of previous work through the Undergraduate Ambassador Scheme. There were references to the support and resources that were provided by UAS, and how these continued to be influential for delivering the module, even if some elements had required updating or amending in more recent years. Often colleagues in these institutions had been involved with the module since the introduction of the UAS model and were committed to continued leadership of the module due to the value that they saw in it. The staff questionnaires and interviews indicate that module leaders are often running these modules independently and with limited input from other academic or professional services (administrative) colleagues. While clearly committed to the modules and the opportunities and benefits that they present for students and local schools, it was also clear that module leaders felt considerable pressure in terms of managing the often-complex, multi-faceted elements and requirements of the programme. Frequently, these were considered as ‘above and beyond’ the usual teaching and learning responsibilities of a ‘desk-based’ module, such as selection and recruitment of students, management of school placements, module administration, liaison with other academic departments, and correspondence with schools. In the staff survey, nearly two thirds of colleagues (n= 44; 64.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that TOT modules are complex to organise and deliver effectively. These issues are discussed in more detail below with consideration of their implications for module sustainability, staff workload and student opportunity and outcomes.

**Recruitment and selection to the modules**

In the majority of universities, the UG modules described here were optional courses which students could take in their second or third year of undergraduate study (or fourth year in some institutions in Scotland). There were a small minority of Education-focused Undergraduate courses where a placement/school experience module was a core element of the degree programme and thus was mandatory for students to participate in.

Optional modules tended to be open to all students who were part of a particular subject-specific degree programme or who belonged to a particular department or faculty. Documentation shows that students tended to be informed of the modules in the Summer prior to the module running (which usually took place in the Spring term of the following year) and were asked to register interest in order to allow for relevant administration processes to take place (e.g. DBS checks, securing school placements). In a small number of cases, departments also carried out further recruitment and selection processes in order to determine which students could take the module. Staff reported that these approaches were used for a variety of reasons. In some instances, it was necessary for managing demand: numbers on the module were capped and so there were limited spaces available, often due
to ensuring school placement opportunities and staff capacity. In some cases, applications and interviews were used to help assess and determine students’ commitment and suitability to the module. For 35 modules (17.0%), students were requested to complete an application form as part of their selection to the programme. A total of 35 modules (17.0%) (not all the same as those using the application forms) used interviews for their recruitment process, and 16 modules (from eight different universities) required both an application form and interview. All of these modules included school-based experiences and the majority were based in STEM-focused subject areas. While these figures seem relatively low, it is important to acknowledge that nearly half of the modules (n=96; 46.6%) provided no information about recruitment or selection processes. We might assume that this means they are not using them but we cannot be certain about this.

Colleagues who used these recruitment approaches felt that they were important for securing high-quality applicants who would represent the university well in a professional environment. As the participant below highlights, the interviews were also an opportunity to understand students’ interests and intentions too:

“We just want to make sure that they know that they’ve agreed to do a placement and this isn’t a module that they can change two weeks in unlike other kinds of module. It gives us a space to talk about their intentions.”

Module Leader and Professor, University G

A module leader in a different institution explained that they do not have selection processes for the module, but she feels that introducing them could be helpful for assessing students’ suitability for the school-based element.

“We don’t do any form of interviewing or other kind of selection, although, I think I would prefer that, but the department says no. I think my main worry about a module like this is if you don’t really know the students and you’re sending them into a school you want them to be good and you want them to be professional.”

Module Leader and Associate Professor, University A

The use of recruitment and selection processes highlights potential tensions around equality of access to these modules and, in turn, to the type of school experience which would be helpful for students either considering a career in teaching or in other professional roles. Module leaders felt that the application forms or interviews were a good opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of the professional environment of schools. However, for those with limited work experience or familiarity with schools, it is possible that they could be disadvantaged from the outset by these approaches.

Organising Placements

On the staff survey, 59/76 respondents reported that their TOT module included school placements or experience. Of these 59 respondents, 48 (81.4%) noted the complexity and difficulty of placement organisation when asked a general question about any challenges that they experienced on the module. These views and the further details provided by staff involved in the modules are important for understanding how the modules can be developed and the support that staff might need for ensuring effective delivery. The key concerns and challenges that were noted in the survey include:
• Finding and maintaining enough placements to meet student demand for the module
• Matching students to placements and ensuring that they can travel easily and feel comfortable in their school
• Administrative issues associated with placements (e.g. DBS checks)
• Ensuring regular communication with school teachers in order to monitor students’ progress and ensure quality of provision/support in schools.

Through our staff interviews, the issue of university timetabling was also noted as an important factor. Ensuring that students could fit their placement around other lectures and attend school on a regular basis (e.g. the same afternoon each week) could be challenging.

In the majority of modules with placements, staff explained that the university were responsible for securing and allocating students to a local school. In many cases, this was the responsibility of the module leader although occasionally there was support from administration staff. In a number of other modules though, the onus was on the students to secure their own placements and sometimes this was a pre-requisite for the module.

In University J, students source their own placements for one of the modules on offer, and module leaders have very little input in this process. The module leader reported that this reduces the administrative burden for colleagues who would otherwise be trying to source and match students to schools. But it also creates potential challenges because the university have little understanding of the schools that students are going in to nor the type or quality of experience that they are getting. The only assessment for this part of the module is for the school to sign a document to confirm that the student attended, and so there is also no element of monitoring or contact between school and university at any point during the placement experience. Interestingly, another module at this institution offers quite a different approach whereby all UG module placements are organised and co-ordinated by the ITE partnership office and module leader.

In other institutions additional factors also play a role in the challenges associated with placement organisation. At University H, for example, students have some degree of choice about whether they would like a primary or secondary phase placement. In addition, students are interviewed for specific placements which they have selected. On one of the modules at University J, students had the option to study a 15 credit module (without placement) or a 30 credit module (with placement), but in order to take the latter option, they had to secure their own 7-day placement in schools. This could sometimes lead to uncertainty for staff and students around which version of the module they would be taking, and sometimes this would change part-way through the term e.g., if students were unable to find a school placement.

Despite these challenges from the staff perspective, our small sample of students were positive about the support and advice that they received about placement organisation. Nearly three quarters (n=28;
73.7%) reported that they agreed/strongly agreed that they had received sufficient support with placement organisation. These views align with other generally positive responses from students regarding their placement and its role within the wider module (see Table 9, below). Students could see value in the placement element of the module with 71% of them (27/38) reporting that they enjoyed it.

Table 9 – Students’ perspectives on the placement element of their module

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I received sufficient support and advice about the organisation of my placement</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The university-based taught part of my course was good preparation for my placement</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school-based placement fitted well with other parts of the module e.g. university sessions, assignments</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed the school-based placement.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Module administration and costs

Module administration was highlighted by staff interviewees as an ongoing challenge to effective module delivery. Those involved with modules which included some element of school-based experience were particularly keen to highlight the additional administration required compared with more traditional ‘desk-based’ modules. This included the need for someone to contact schools regarding placements (i.e. setting up the placements, maintaining them, and checking-in about students); ongoing monitoring and support for students who were attending placements (sometimes including school visits); organisation of DBS checks for students; plus for some institutions, managing the recruitment procedures described above. Some module leaders reported that they were responsible for the majority of this administrative work themselves. In some cases, professional services colleagues were on hand to help, but for both the academics and professional services staff involved, there was a sense that this workload was additional and not factored in as a core part of what the module needed and entailed. Some participants also spoke of the dynamic nature of the modules, particularly the school experience element, explaining that sometimes placements might become unavailable at very short notice (e.g. if relevant school staff were unavailable) and thus those working in university had to act quickly to find an alternative for the student.

The need for students to undertake enhanced DBS checks was also highlighted by participants as a significant administrative issue. Module leaders were very clear that it was important for students to have the checks but some participants explained that the process was made more difficult because different schools sometimes had different rules about DBS, and that keeping-up with this guidance could be difficult from year to year. In the majority of cases, universities appeared to manage this by organising and running up-to-date DBS checks in the academic year or term prior to them starting.
their module. Again, this required a number of complex administrative processes and ensuring that students were able to submit all of the required documentation in time.

“In terms of admin [there is] quite a lot that goes on behind the scenes that isn't accounted for and actually it's something to think about when universities run this. So the first of all is the DBS check, absolute nightmare in terms of administrative processes, but absolutely 100% required and I can't see any university keen on their students going into schools in such an environment without it. I think it would be silly if they did. Because obviously with safeguarding we just have to protect both our undergraduates and the schools that they go into. So that is difficult in that you have to get a member of staff who's officially trained to sign off the DBS checks...You know, we start our application process for this module and we start talking to them in term 2, which we're going into now... And for five days [in school] you feel like is it enough? Well, is it, is it too much? But absolutely, you know, I won't let them go in if they haven't got DBS Check. And you know, I'm very cautious of that because I don't want to put anyone into disrepute and I certainly don't want to ruin my relationships with the schools that we've got that work really well.

Senior Lecturer and Module Leader, University D

It was also noted that the DBS process presented particular challenges for international students who often had to obtain supply additional information about their criminal record status from their home country.

In University E, processing DBS checks was causing such high levels of workload for administrative colleagues in the Education department, that eventually the Maths department (the home department of the UG module students) was asked to financially cover the costs of this administrative labour. The cost of the DBS itself was also noted as another challenge by some module leaders. The majority of universities reported that they covered this cost for the students; however, in University K, the students were required to pay for it themselves. At a cost of around £40, this potentially represents a financial barrier to some students, particularly if they are also required to pay for transport to and from their school placement as well (as was the case in this institution).

A number of module leaders also reported that timetabling the module could be difficult. Again, this was particularly the case if the module included time in school. Sometimes students were required to be flexible around the days or times that they would visit schools, and this might clash with university-based sessions from this module or with other classes that they were taking. It was also sometimes challenging if modules were being led by departments where the students were not based for the rest of their degree. For example, if ITE departments were running the modules, they would have to liaise carefully with students’ subject departments to avoid clashes. Data from the staff survey suggests that approximately 1 in 5 ToT modules are run in conjunction with another department, usually the combination of a teacher education and subject department. As discussed in this section, both individual and joint ownership of a module pose organisational challenges.

A final administrative issue relates to external examination. This is the process whereby academic programmes are reviewed and quality assured by academics from external institutions. A small number of our participants noted that it could be challenging to adequately explain the aims, purposes and outcomes of the UG modules to external examiners, and that was especially difficult to demonstrate that students had achieved through placement experiences. In University H, colleagues
managed this by using an education-focused external examiner for their module rather than one from their specific subject area, in order to ensure that the appropriate expertise was in place for assessing and quality-assuring the module content and delivery:

“That’s another thing that makes us different. We don’t do it through the [subject] external examiner. We have an education list whose external examiner appointed specifically for these two modules, and that’s unusual in our university. But because of the element of practice and we don’t have school of education in [University H] and so that whole examination thing goes through a slightly sideways system.” (Module Leader and Lecturer, University H)

**Perceptions of Impact**

Our aim within this research has been to move our state of knowledge of ToT modules forward to produce a national picture of where they are offered, the form they take, and characteristics and issues relating to delivering them. This preliminary work was needed before any form of impact evaluation was possible. We have, however, sought to gather initial data to inform future impact assessment, predominantly in the form of perceptions data from staff and student surveys. In this section we report these data to develop the picture we present of ToT modules and to inform module evaluation and future evaluation research.

**General Student Perceptions**

Our cohort of student participants were generally very positive about their experience of the ToT modules. 67/78 (88%) of students reported that they enjoyed the module with the same percentage stating that they would recommend the module to other students. A number of students shared additional positive comments via the survey, often commenting on the quality of the module, the valuable experience in schools it had provided, and the support received from key university staff members (usually module leaders):

“I think I’m incredibly lucky to be offered such an opportunity to gain experience in schools prior to embarking on a teacher training course. I think more universities should have teaching modules as part of an undergrad degree.”

“I have loved it and think it is a great module. When I was in second year I noticed it was something that was offered and ever since was really excited about it. It didn’t disappoint.”

“[Name of module leader] made this course; an amazing lecturer and also a great mentor who was there when I needed.

A number of students also felt that the module had supported the development of their employability skills (Table 10).

**Table 10 – Students’ perceptions of module skill development (n=78)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has the module helped you to develop or improve any of the following skills (tick all that apply):</th>
<th>% agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in the discussion of module aims above, communication was one of the key skills which most modules set-out to encourage and support. It is clear that many students feel that the opportunities that they received to develop this area (through the university sessions, the placement and the assessments) have been valuable in terms of improving their communication skills. The figures relating to the other skills here perhaps do not align quite so positively with the aims outlined in module documentation. This is something that module leaders and those supporting students working in schools might seek to make more explicit in order to meet module aims from students’ perspectives.

Where students were less positive about the module, they often declined to provide further details via the survey. There were no clear, recurring themes with the comments that were offered but a couple of individuals noted that they would have preferred more choice with the phase of their school placement (i.e. they were placed in one key stage but wanted to work in another). One student felt that the module they had participated in was not well-organised and another commented that they would have liked some more support and instruction on working with children with Special Educational Needs. This is important feedback to receive.

**General Staff Perceptions**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, staff involved in ToT modules were generally very positive about their existence and about the outcomes that they support for students. Table 11 outlines responses to a number of items from our staff survey, highlighting a general feeling that the modules are popular with students and support a range of employability skills. 59/68 (86.8%) of colleagues felt that these modules were rewarding to be involved in and an even higher percentage (89.7%) reported that these modules should be widely available to undergraduates across the UK.

**Table 11 – Staff perceptions of ToT modules (n=68)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trying out Teaching modules...</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... are popular with students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... develop student employability skills</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...are viewed positively by senior leaders in the university</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>22.06</td>
<td>38.24</td>
<td>20.59</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A positive and recurring theme identified within staff responses in the survey and interviews was that the modules clarified perceptions of teaching and gave ‘real-world’ experience to students.

“What I like on the placement module is that they’re getting real world experience ... I enjoy talking to them about the experiences they get.”

*Module Leader and Lecturer, University K (interview)*

“This course historically attracted a small but passionate group of students who are interested in a career in teaching. To me, the module offers an important option for students to study a more ‘career’ oriented module within their degree, and it certainly develops employability skills that are transferable outside of teaching.”

*Module Leader, Elite/Higher Tier University, South East (survey)*

“You know, it means that some university staff know more about what’s happening in their discipline in local schools. It also means that some of the local schools know more about what’s happening in higher education in that discipline.”

*Module coordinator, University H*

Through the survey, a number of university staff described the benefits of having a school-based placement as part of the module. Some felt that postponement of this during Covid led to a very different module experience for them as tutors and for the students too. For these colleagues, having at least some face-to-face school experience was a core part of what the module should be all about.

“Anything I can do to share my passion for the vocation of teaching is positive! I firmly believe however, that courses should involve a placement in school, otherwise, it's just theoretical and not a true reflection [of what it is like to work in education].”

*Module tutor and Associate Professor, University J*
**Perceptions on ToT modules as a route into teaching**

A key aim of the ToT modules is to give students an experience of schools and school teaching. One possible impact, therefore, is to promote applications to teacher training courses from suitable applicants. To evaluate impact on teacher training application would require data linking students from the modules to destinations, with a suitable comparison group to rule out the likely scenario that students taking the module were already considering teaching and would have applied even in the absence of the module. As part of our staff survey, we did enquire as to whether staff monitored whether students go on to train as teachers. 75% of respondents reported that progression to teacher training was not monitored.

Where colleagues did note that information was being collected on progression to teacher training, this was described in a very ad hoc or informal way. A range of approaches and methods were described including: looking at the numbers of attend interview or join an ITE course at the same institution; noting when students asked for a reference for an ITE course, ongoing discussions and emails with some students after the end of the module; and emails out to students. One university noted that the alumni office contact students after the end of their course to find out their post-degree destinations. While all of these approaches produce potentially valuable information for module leaders and university staff, they are not providing suitable data for a robust assessment of ToT module impact on teacher recruitment. This is something which we discuss further below and which we believe warrants further consideration and research.

In lieu of this kind of information, our study sought to develop an indicative picture from staff and students’ perceptions of the role of ToT modules in promoting and preparing for teacher training applications. Table 12 indicates staff survey responses to questions about applications for teacher training programmes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trying out Teaching modules...</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... increase applications for teacher training programmes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... mostly attract students who are interested in pursuing a career in teaching</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trying out Teaching modules...</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... mostly attract students who are interested in pursuing a career in teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... increase applications for teacher training programmes</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>33.85</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While 60.3% reported feeling that the modules increase applications to teacher training, it is also interesting to see that nearly 20% are neutral on this question and a further 17.7% ‘don’t know’. The second question also reiterates one of the issues noted above: that the modules tend to attract students who are already considering a career in teaching (or perhaps more broadly, education/working with young people). These data highlight the uncertainty here and the lack of concrete information we have about the impact of ToT modules on entry to teaching, and whether they are likely to convert those who had not considered a career in the profession to start with.
Some staff provided further commentary about the role of the modules a route in to teaching. These were characterised by the range of views and uncertainty noted in the Likert questions above. Some felt that the modules were an important pathway for students considering teaching in the future. Others provided anecdotal stories of students who had decided that, as a result of the module, teaching was the career for them. And in a number of instances, teachers noted the value of the modules for ‘selecting out’ some students and providing them with the information to make the decision not to apply to teacher training.

For us, modules with placement are a key way of attracting applicants, to our Education degree without QTS. Most students come wanting to go on to teaching, but many like the idea that they don’t have to commit to that yet and it is an academic degree.

(Module Leader, Middle Tier University, South West)

It’s one of the most rewarding courses I’ve every been involved with. Seeing a student who was previously solely considering moving into the financial sector now consider moving into state education teaching is lovely.

(Module Leader, Elite/Higher Tier University, South East)

I think they are generally good; a common comment from students is that the placement has made them realise that teaching isn’t for them. Which I suppose is a conclusion that’s it’s better to come to sooner rather than later.

(Module Leader, Elite/Higher Tier University, North West)

Similar perspectives were captured from the student survey (Table 13). Students generally felt that the module had helped them to develop a more realistic picture of what it was like to work in schools with 77.6% (n=59) stating that the module has made them feel more positive about teaching as a career. 73.6% (n=56) students noted that they were more likely, having completed the module, to consider a career in education or working with children/young people.

Table 13 – Student perceptions of the role of ToT modules in promoting teacher training applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trying out Teaching modules...</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through the module I feel that I have a realistic picture of what teaching and working in schools is like.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The module has made me feel more positive about teaching as a career.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The module has made me more likely to consider a career in education or one that involves working with children or young people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14 shows that when asked what their plans were following graduation, a smaller percentage (46.7%) stated that they intend to study for a professional qualification (such as teacher training). Over a fifth (21%) planned to enter employment. Others were taking a gap year, pursuing further study or were unsure about what route to take next.

When asked if they intend to become a teacher 56% of students (n=42) said ‘yes’ while 30.7% (n=23) of students said they were unsure. It would be valuable to learn more about this latter group of students in order to understand what this uncertainty relates to and to gain a picture of whether anything could realistically be done to encourage them to ‘take the leap’ in to teaching.

When asked about how the module had influenced their plans following graduation, most of the students who responded to this open question noted that it had confirmed or consolidated their interest in teaching. For a couple who had been considering secondary teaching, it had made them want to explore a primary teacher education route instead. For two other students, learning about and seeing the challenges of working in schools and the high workload of teachers had influenced them to take a gap year after university and to consider their options regarding their future career.

For schools and pupils

While schools and pupils were involved as participants within the Trying Out Teaching project, university staff in our case study institutions frequently commented on the benefits that they perceived for these groups. Many module leaders were motivated not just by providing a good experience for their undergraduate students, but also for the teachers and children in local schools. As discussed above, module staff often felt that the university students could take current knowledge of their subject into schools, and that teachers found it beneficial to incorporate some of this into their lessons. Teachers had also reported to module leaders that the UG students often brought enthusiasm and passion for their subject, which they felt was beneficial for the children to see.

In a number of modules, documentation and staff testimony suggests that the undergraduates were positioned as role models and that they had the power to support with inspiring and informing young people about their experiences of university life. This was sometimes encouraged through specific placement activities such as delivering assemblies or talks or running extra-curricular or enrichment sessions. Linked to this was a sense that schools appreciated having the opportunity for links with a local university and that these could sometimes lead to other forms of engagement too e.g. Widening Participation events, university visits, academics contributing ‘masterclasses’.

In addition to providing a much-valued “extra pair of hands” (Module Leader, Higher Tier University, South West England) to support teachers in the classroom, a number of module leaders also commented on the positive responses received from teachers about the opportunity to mentor and support undergraduates. This was seen as a valuable professional development opportunity by some and potentially laid the foundations for further mentoring and leadership roles.
Our participants were also aware, however, that there could be significant challenges for schools involved in TOT modules. Often teachers were concerned that they did not have enough time to adequately support undergraduate visitors. Moreover, managing the undergraduates could be difficult if staff were absent and if others were not aware of what role the university students should be undertaking. Colleagues from three of our case study institutions also described the challenges of school placements breaking down, for example if students did not attend, or did not behave professionally or meet the expectations of the school during their visits. In rare cases this could lead to placements being withdrawn and relationships between schools and university departments becoming less positive. All staff who discussed this explained that, in their experience, through careful planning and strong communication between module leaders and schools (and students too), some of these challenges could be mitigated and good relationships could be developed and maintained. They warned though that this was something to bear in mind should universities want to expand TOT module provision with school placements. In order for them to be a success, good support should be in place to foster and manage the placements throughout.

(Module Leader, Elite/Higher Tier University, Wales)

For schools it supports links with the university and encourages development of other related activities. It also provides schools with opportunity for less experienced staff to have opportunity to mentor students in a less formal way, prior to supporting students on formal teacher training programmes.
4. The Nature, Role and Future of ToT Modules

Introduction
In this section we briefly summarise key findings from the preceding sections. We follow this with several short discussions organised around the following questions and themes:

- What is the role of ToT modules as a route into teacher training and contributor to teacher supply?
- What is the role of ToT modules as an approach to develop employability and employment outcomes in HE?
- To what extent do ToT modules contribute to HE policy and practice in relation to student experience and engagement?
- How do ToT modules contribute to universities’ commitment to partnership approaches and civic engagement?
- What are the next steps for evaluation and development of ToT modules?

We close the report with a short summary of potential policy and practice development steps for ToT modules, as suggested by research participants and our data.

Summary of Findings

1. Teacher supply
- Students and staff involved with ToT modules report positive outcomes in terms of supporting students to make a decision about applying to initial teacher education courses. Our data suggest that this is often a confirmatory decision as many students have already put serious thought into joining the teaching profession prior to enrolling on the module.
- There is limited evidence that ToT modules are responsible for increasing the supply of undergraduates into teacher education programmes. The lack of data available on students’ progression to ITE (or other destinations) after completing their studies means that it is difficult to assess the extent to which ToT students apply for and join ITE courses.
- Despite often being closely linked to issues teaching or working in school settings, many ToT modules do not promote prospective entry into teaching as a main aim or outcome. Instead, many modules are designed with a much broader set of aims in mind – often linked with student employability, skill development and/or engagement.

2. Student employability
- Developing student employability is a key aim and outcome for the majority of ToT modules.
• Participation in the modules is designed to support and develop a range of generic ‘soft’ skills (such as communication, organisation, leadership). These skills are frequently linked to an overarching theme of employability and future careers.
• For many students, ToT modules are their first experience of entering a workplace (via the module placements). The modules provide a safe and managed introduction to the world of work for these students.

3. Contribution to student experience and engagement
• Most students enjoy ToT modules and place particular value on participating in the placement or school experience opportunities.
• Modules are often designed with a careful focus on innovative and engaging pedagogical practices, and encouraging students to apply their prior learning in ‘real world’ settings.
• Staff colleagues who run these modules tend to be very committed to teaching and learning within higher education, and are keen to develop high-quality practice to support and engage students.

4. Partnership and civic engagement
• Where school-based placements are offered, many ToT modules are designed as a way of promoting engagement with local schools and communities. This was often in line with university’s civic engagement or widening participation aims.
• In some cases, the modules are viewed by university staff as ‘outreach’ opportunities. They see the modules as facilitating connections to the local community, highlighting the role and value of the university to children, young people and school colleagues.
• Module leaders emphasised that the school-university partnership should be mutually beneficial. Some suggested that more support and/or incentives would help to develop and sustain strong relationships with schools.

Discussion

Teacher Supply

What is the role of ToT modules as a route into teacher training and contributor to teacher supply?

Our findings indicate that ToT modules make a potentially useful contribution to the teacher supply pipeline. Staff and students involved with running the modules generally reported that the modules encouraged students to consider a career in teaching and raised their awareness of what it is like to work in schools and how to apply to initial teacher education programmes. In many cases, it seems that the modules provided confirmation for students that teaching may be a career they want to pursue. Our participants indicated that due to the optional
nature of most of the modules, the majority of students who chose them were already considering a career in education or other people-centred roles. Those who were not thinking about these kinds of careers tended not to choose the module. In a small number of instances, we heard of instances where participating in a ToT module had made students realise that they did not want to become a teacher.

This study, however, was not designed to establish whether there is a causal relationship between participating in a ToT module and applying for teaching. Many module leaders were keen to point out that promoting progression in to teaching was not a primary aim of the modules. They felt that there was a much broader set of reasons for engaging students in these modules and in the opportunities that they afforded. If students did choose to apply for teacher training then this was often viewed by academic staff as a pleasing outcome, although they were also clear to point out that they rarely received information about students’ progression or next steps beyond the module. This is an area that module staff would be keen to know more about in order to evaluate their modules in relation to entry to teacher training, and also to offer support and further development opportunities to those who are interested in pursuing teaching.

Module leaders working in STEM-focused subject areas tended to be most optimistic about the role of ToT modules for inspiring undergraduates to consider teaching. They were acutely aware of the teacher shortages in these subjects and reported feeling a responsibility to encourage high-quality students to enter the teaching profession. While they were realistic about the extent to which ToT modules could improve the overall systemic shortages, there was optimism that their modules provided an opportunity to showcase teaching as a positive career option.

Our findings show that a small number of ToT modules select students for participation. This was usually a result of one or both of the following reasons: first, some modules have small student numbers (usually due to limited placement options and staff capacity) and therefore demand for them sometimes outweighs supply; second, some tutors felt that it was important to monitor the ‘quality’ and commitment of students joining the module. The recruitment processes (application forms or interviews) were framed as emphasising the professional aims of the module, particularly in relation to the placement in schools. In terms of supporting the pipeline of students through from undergraduate to considering teacher education, it is possible that a recruitment process could ‘select out’ students who are less familiar with the professional expectations of the module, or who have not yet had experience of working with schools or young people. These could be students who, if given the opportunity to explore teaching, may opt for it as a career.

Our findings highlight the important role that teacher education departments played in supporting and facilitating ToT modules in a number of universities. The ITE departments were often involved in the provision of placements for the undergraduate modules and colleagues were often responsibility for the leadership or delivery of the modules too. Collaborations between ITE and subject-focused departments in universities were often
described in very positive ways. Despite these connections though, colleagues from ITE departments did report that it was sometimes challenging to support undergraduate students through to ITE application. Once the TOT module finished, they tended to have no further contact with the students, and most did not have access to information about which students converted from the module on to teacher education (either within their institution or elsewhere). We discuss this further in the section below on further research and evaluation of the TOT modules.

**Employability**

*What is the role of ToT modules as an approach to develop employability and employment outcomes in HE?*

Employability emerged as a key theme across the datasets collated for this study. Module information for university websites, other documents and module staff emphasised the view that TOT modules were about supporting students to develop more general skills which were connected with future employment prospects and success. This was true of modules that included a school-based placement as well as those that did not. In general, the modules were presented as practical, skills-based programmes which focused on ‘real world’ application of knowledge. Skills such as communication, organisation, team work, creativity and time management are promoted and connected to employability and life after university. This emphasis is perhaps not surprising; the vocational nature of the modules means that they can be positioned as something distinct in terms of students’ wider module options, and something which is likely to assist them with whatever path they choose after university.

While these skills were emphasised throughout, module leaders and staff involved with subject-focused modules (rather than more generic education-focused modules) were very committed to the connection between subject knowledge and skill development. Students were supported to develop their subject knowledge and think about communicating and working with it in new contexts and with new audiences.

Modules with placement options provided an important experience of the world of work for many students. In some instances, this was the first experience of joining a ‘real world’ workplace and this was viewed by students as a valuable and exciting opportunity. These experiences meant that students did necessarily have to organise their own, unpaid work placements but could participate in a credited module within a safe and managed environment, and with ongoing support from university staff. This was an important consideration in choosing the modules and demonstrated the demand for these kinds of experiences from university students.

Overall, from the university perspective, employability tended to be placed front and centre of many of the modules’ aims. Connections between the skills described above, placement experiences, and teaching were clearly evident. However, the latter (teaching) was frequently
used as helpful vehicle for delivering and communicating the wider employability-focused intentions and benefits.

**Student experience and engagement**

*To what extent do ToT modules contribute to HE policy and practice in relation to student experience and engagement?*

Our findings indicate that TOT modules are popular with students. Tutors often reported that there was more demand for the modules than they could accommodate, and students tended to find the modules a positive experience. Prior to selecting the modules, they are often viewed as something different, fun, and useful. The placement is often perceived as a highlight and was often reported as a being a significant unique selling point for the module. In some cases, staff suggested concerns that the modules (and their assessments) were sometimes viewed as easier alternatives to other subject/department-focused options that the students had. The practical and employability or skills focus, was sometimes perceived as less challenging or intense. However, it was also noted that once beginning the module, the students did recognise that there was significant challenge as they were expected to demonstrate and develop new skills, work in different ways, and with different colleagues and peers.

Universities are committed to supporting students to engage with and enjoy their time on their degree. It is also in their interests to do this as students are asked to report on their student experience via, for example, the National Student Survey (NSS) which influences outcomes of national accountability measures such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Aside from these measures, however, it is arguably the case that universities should be thinking carefully about the role of engagement and enjoyment in the provision of a high-quality academic experience. Our findings suggest that TOT modules can potentially contribute to this, drawing together important academic aspects (subject knowledge, subject communication, rigorous assessment) with elements that students appear to find valuable, relevant and stimulating (e.g. work-based experiences, new approaches to teaching and learning).

The modules are also popular with staff too. Despite some administrative and resource-based challenges associated with running them, staff reported that they found involvement with the modules was a professionally fulfilling and positive experience. Many particularly enjoyed seeing the students’ personal and social development across the course of the module, and felt that there needed to be scope for more of these kinds of opportunities as part of university life. Unsurprisingly, the majority of staff involved in running these modules (whether based in teacher education or in subject departments) had a deep interest in developing and delivering high-quality and innovative teaching and learning. As such, they
were able to embed these interest and associated skills in to the TOT modules, and ‘model’ what they believed to be beneficial approaches for their students.

**Partnership and civic engagement**

*How do ToT modules contribute to universities’ commitment to partnership approaches and civic engagement?*

Our findings show that many TOT modules were rooted in a desire for civic engagement and connection with the world beyond the university. Module paperwork and reports from module staff highlighted the connections that TOT modules have with local schools, teachers and pupils. Partnerships with schools in the nearby community are viewed as important for fostering strong, mutually beneficial relationships. A number of the Russell Group universities within our study appeared to be attracted by the potential for outreach and widening participation activities, and saw the modules as a way of reaching more socioeconomically disadvantaged communities and presenting the university as an option for students attending those schools. Module staff felt that schools benefited from having high-achieving undergraduate students joining them through placements, and that their presence had the potential to raise aspirations of the children and young people they encountered. Our study did not, however, hear from school teachers or pupils. It is, therefore, difficult to know the extent to which these intentions or outcomes were felt by those based in the placement schools.

Exploring the impact of TOT students in placement schools is an area to develop for future studies. As we suggest above, the partnerships between university and placement schools should be mutually beneficial, but in order for this to be the case there needs to be acknowledgement that in providing a placement, schools are often needed to invest a considerable amount of time and energy in to supporting the student. Schools do not receive financial payment for this, and teachers involved in supporting or hosting the students rarely receive additional time to carry out this role. Given that a number of module tutors noted that it is sometimes challenging to secure placement opportunities, there is potentially an argument for providing some kind of incentive to the schools. This could take the form of a financial payment, which might be used to buy out teachers’ time or to contribute to resources/activities for the host departments. This incentive could encourage more schools to offer a placement, but may also improve the quality of the placement experience if teachers have some additional time to work with and mentor their undergraduate students. Additional time for teachers in schools could also support greater communication between them and the university module leaders.

TOT modules - with sufficient investment and high-quality delivery – could be a flagship connection between universities and the school sector. They have the potential to foster and facilitate wider partnerships and networks in the community, and to inspire and support
further academic research and impact and engagement work. Some modules that we observed are operating in quite isolated circumstances, perhaps delivered by an individual module tutor in a single subject area, with little opportunity for connection to wider university departments and limited acknowledgement of their impact. In other cases, we saw modules that offered partnerships between different departments, involved outreach or WP colleagues, careers departments, and that were celebrated by the wider university community. The modules may be something which universities could consider scaling-up across multiple department areas. If so, then more centralised support and administration (perhaps via initial teacher education departments) could assist delivery, consistency and quality assurance. This could also help with building and maintaining strong connections to the local community and the module partnership schools within it.

**Next steps for evaluation**

**What are the next steps for evaluation and development of ToT modules?**

At present, the impact of TOT modules on all outcomes is unclear. The data we have obtained in this study has been based upon documentary information from universities and self-report perceptions of experiences. Only a minority of modules collected data on progression to teacher training. Challenges with data collection and sharing potentially make robust evaluation of TOT modules difficult. There are timing and communication issues in terms of how TOT modules collect information from students about their post-module destinations. Moreover, we know that many of the students who opted for the modules were already thinking about a career in teaching, and so attributing the effect of the module on influencing attitudes towards teaching and application to teacher training is also a challenge. What would be particularly interesting to know is the extent to which the modules have introduced teaching as a career option to those who otherwise had not considered it. Identifying these students and the impact of the modules on them is not a straightforward or simple process.

Despite this, there are areas where evaluation and further data would help to create a clearer and more detailed picture. Universities already collect module review surveys and information on module activities and processes. These data could be used to better understand students and staff experiences and perspectives of the modules, across different universities and different student groups. There may be potential to extend or develop these existing processes to include relevant questions or data requests relating to students’ post-module destinations (including teacher training).

Engagement in a TOT module could also be ascertained via teacher training applications. Prospective teachers apply for ITE via the DfE’s ‘Apply’ website. The government could include a question on the application platform, asking applicants if they have participated in a TOT module, and if so, which module and where. This information would provide a helpful overview of numbers of ITE applicants with some TOT experience at university. Through this,
we could examine connections between TOT participation and application/acceptance to ITE programmes. There may also be processes for searching applicants’ personal statements for references to TOT modules too. This would be potentially time-consuming but again, could provide helpful qualitative evidence for the experiences of the modules and how they have influenced application to ITE.

Longitudinal data collection approaches (via a pre/post survey) would also be helpful for understanding undergraduates’ intentions to teach (or not) and the impact of a TOT module. A survey could, for example, be administered to second year students with questions about career intentions, views on teaching etc. Following the offer of a TOT module, and participation in the module by some (or all if compulsory), a post-survey could assess whether students’ views or intentions have altered. A further follow-up survey (perhaps at the end of the final year of undergraduate study) could then assess who actually applied for teacher training.

We also believe that it would be interesting to explore the recruitment processes of modules, particularly where selection approaches such as application forms and interviews are being used. Universities are using these approaches for a number of reasons and are permitted to do so. However, we think it is important to consider whether these may have an impact on the inclusivity of the modules, in terms of which students are made aware of them, which students choose to apply and how they go about this, the processes used for selection, and the characteristics of the students who are and are not chosen to participate.

Next Steps

Our findings from this study provide an emerging picture of undergraduate teaching focused modules. We have presented a national overview of the modules, where they exist and what they ‘look like’ and we have reported on the perspectives and experiences of students and staff involved with them. This is a larger scale and more in-depth analysis than has previously been conducted. Below we have outlined some suggestions and questions for further development of the modules, both on local and system/national levels. These are not recommendations, per se, as we acknowledge that our study still only provides a partial view of the varied and diverse landscape of these modules. As such, we recognise that context, local knowledge and the specific purposes, aims and interests of those involved with the modules are key for understanding their existence and future directions.

- Organisational models and support – as we note above, there may be potential to support and streamline delivery of multiple modules in universities through an adaptable model of module delivery. This could include template materials (module descriptions, handbooks, assessments etc) which module leaders could develop and adapt to align with their own subject areas or specific foci. In some instances, university or faculty/department level support for developing, organising and monitoring placements would also be valuable.
• **National/system level models and support** – the UAS legacy is still keenly felt across many of the TOT modules that we examined in this study. The materials provided and support offered by the scheme was viewed very positively and many tutors suggested that reviving this national-level approach would be beneficial. In line with the UAS approach (and our suggestion in the bullet point above), we would suggest a flexible scheme which can be responsive and adaptable within university and local contexts.

• **Involving more departments and students** - there may be scope for better coverage of these modules across universities. One of our staff participants felt that all students on undergraduate STEM courses should have the opportunity to complete a TOT module. In some institutions, there are examples of large-scale offers of the modules, but this is quite rare.

• **Supporting schools to participate** - universities could provide better support, incentivisation and recognition for schools wishing to host students on TOT modules. We discuss this in more detail in the above section. In short, we believe that this could increase the quantity of placements, the quality of support in schools, and could improve the partnerships between university and local schools.

• **School-university partnerships** – this is an area which has received some research and practical attention, particularly from an initial teacher education or outreach/widening participation perspective. We would suggest, however, that there is scope for more in-depth examination of these kinds of partnerships and the potential benefits they offer to the various actors and organisations involved. TOT modules are arguably a good vehicle for facilitating these relationships. Our study shows that university staff involved in the modules are outward-facing and keen to foster these

• **University based engagement with teaching and teachers** – placements are often one of the ‘selling points’ of the modules but they are also time-consuming and resource-heavy to organise and maintain. An alternative model could also see teachers and children/young people coming in to universities to work alongside undergraduate students. Workshops within inspirational teachers or activities with small groups of children/young people could provide excellent opportunities for students to fulfil module objectives but without the need to be placed in schools.

• **Further research and evaluation** - above we have noted directions for further evaluation of TOT modules, particularly in relation to exploring connections with joining the teacher profession. We would also add that there are a wide range of other aspects connected to the modules which would warrant further study, including their role in promoting employability and student/civic engagement. More in-depth comparative approaches across subjects, universities or nations could also yield interesting and important insights.
Acknowledgements

The Trying Out Teaching project team would like to thank the following for their support of this study: the University of Warwick Policy Support Fund, the Department for Education, participating universities, staff and students, the Teacher Education Advancement Network (TEAN) and the Universities’ Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET).
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UAS (2016) Which departments are running a UAS module, Available: https://uas.ac.uk/universities/participants-2/
Appendix

Attitudes Data
We have reported attitudes from staff and student surveys throughout in connection with relevant sections. Here we have brought together all results in one place:

Table A1 – Perceptions of ToT Modules from the Staff Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trying out Teaching modules...</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... are popular with students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... develop student employability skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... increase applications for teacher training programmes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.47%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... mostly attract students who are interested in pursuing a career in teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.47%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... are complex to organise and deliver effectively</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... are viewed positively by senior leaders in the university</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... are rewarding to be involved with as a member of staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... should be widely available to undergraduates in the UK</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
n. Note that Russell group are over-represented here. Link back to sample info section.

Table A2 – Perceptions of ToT Modules from the Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I received sufficient support and advice about the organisation of my placement</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The placement helped me to understand more about teaching as a career.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My placements have helped me to develop my employability skills.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The university-based taught part of my course was good preparation for my placement.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school-based placement fitted well with other parts of the module e.g. university sessions, assignments</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed the school-based placement.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this module to other students on my degree course</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The module is/was enjoyable</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The module has made me more likely to consider a career in education or one that involves working with children or young people</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through the module I feel that I have a realistic picture of what teaching and working in schools is like.</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found this module challenging</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The module has made me feel more positive about teaching as a career.</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>