

Case Study

English & Maths Tests for Qualifying School Teachers



Background

Until 2018 The National College of Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) were responsible for the standards of teaching staff in England. As part of this process, the NCTL set skills tests in English and mathematics that had to be passed by all trainee teachers prior to entry to the profession. The tests began operation in 2001.

Our Role

AlphaPlus, along with BTL (www.btl.com), was commissioned by the NCTL to develop new skills tests in maths and English for newly qualifying teachers, with the intention of introducing them in Autumn 2013. The new tests were based on recommendations made by the skills test review panel established by the Secretary of State for Education and led by Dame Sally Coates.

AlphaPlus developed a new test specification, reflecting the wishes of the test review panel and produced five tests-worth of items in both mathematics and English. These items were trialled with over 1,000 volunteers and the items

performance modelled using IRT. Three candidate tests in each subject were then compiled, using the IRT data to ensure that (within the error of measurement) the tests were balanced across the pass mark range. Test performance modelling was also undertaken to provide NCTL with an estimate of the expected pass rate for the proposed pass mark on each bank of tests.

Each subject was taken by around 90,000 candidates each year on-screen, with a requirement to pass both subjects within three attempts to progress to the teaching profession.

In 2018 the Department for Education announced that the move to a 'three failed attempts and you're barred for 2 years' testing model had achieved the required lift in entry standards and the regime would be relaxed. The skills tests were discontinued in June 2020, replaced by internal assessment undertaken within Initial Teacher Training settings.



We help make educational assessments better

AlphaPlus is an education service business that specialises in **standards, assessment and certification**. We help our clients design, develop, deploy and evaluate **qualifications** and their **underpinning assessments**.

Our work spans the public and private sectors, schools, colleges, vocational and professional learning.

www.alphaplus.co.uk

[Read more of our case studies here](#)

Our role

- Producing five tests-worth of items in both mathematics and English
- Trialling items with over 1,000 volunteers
- Using IRT to model item performance

We make educational assessments better