



Specialist leaders of education (SLE) Toolkit 2015-16

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Introduction

There are currently over 6,000 SLEs within the school system. SLE designation is becoming increasingly recognised as a vital role in school-to-school support and will play an influential part in the self-improving school led system.

This guidance document provides teaching school alliances with all the information that they will need in order to deliver the SLE programme effectively. It contains guidance and exemplars for elements of the SLE programme, from recruitment to deployment. Teaching school alliances may use or adapt the guidance provided in this document to support their SLE processes in their own schools and for their own contexts. However it also contains important information, including links to the eligibility and designation criteria that teaching schools will need to follow and some standards that the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) strongly recommends.

All forms and templates relating to the SLE programme are listed within this toolkit with links to access them.

We hope that you will find the guidance helpful and informative and also that it gives you more flexibility to manage the SLE programme yourself.

We look forward to working again with teaching school alliances and also with the newly designated alliances to designate more SLEs in 2015/16.

For further support and guidance you can also contact the SLE team at sle.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk.



Signpost to documents

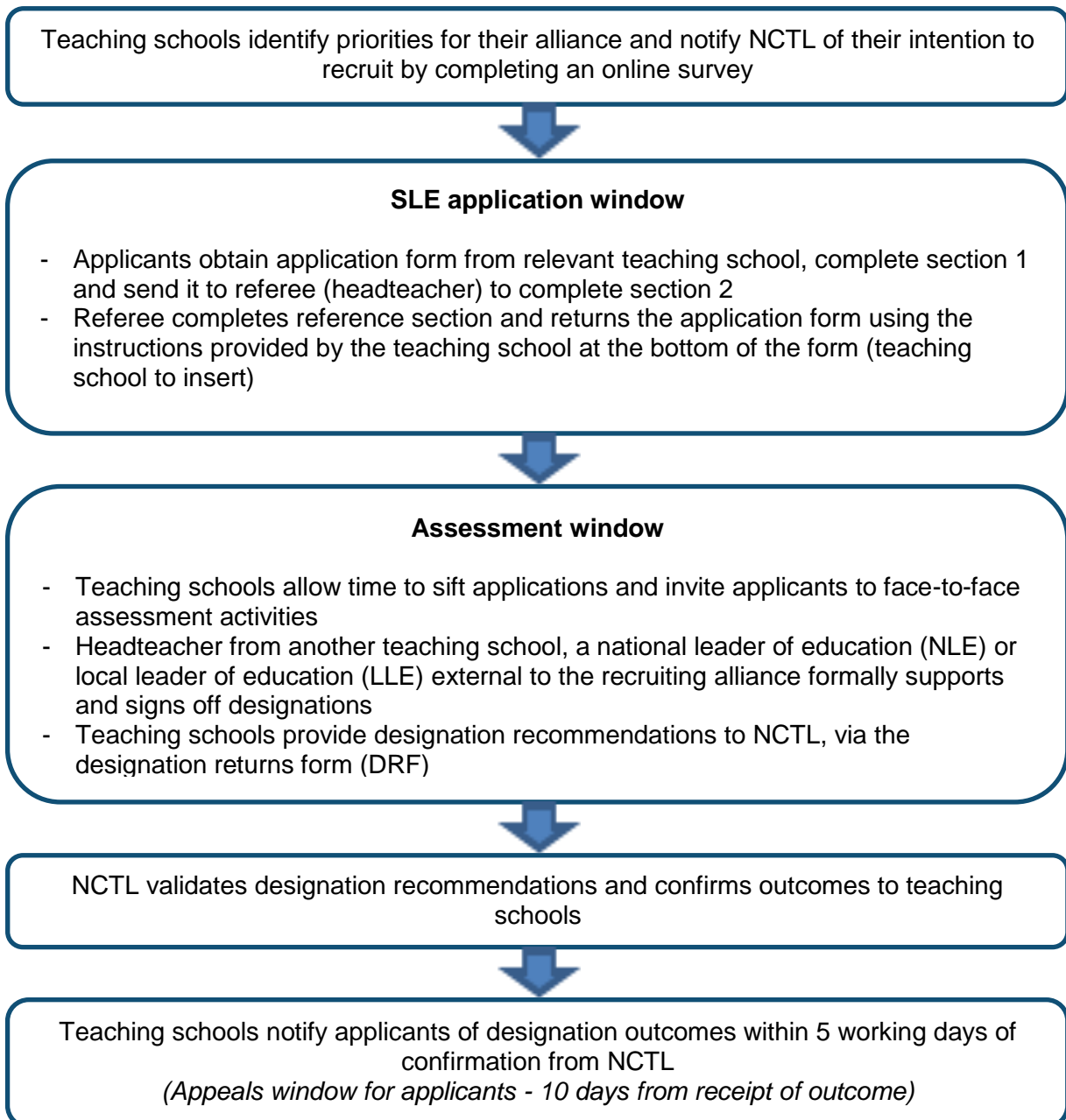
This section is intended to support teaching schools identify where documents can be found to support them in the recruitment, designation and deployment of SLEs.

Item	Place located
SLE role and overview	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme overview, eligibility criteria and SLE responsibilities - Frequently asked questions (FAQs) 	GOV.UK
SLE application process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application guidance - Application form (for teaching schools) - Application form (example for applicants) - SLE assessment and designation guidance - SLE scoring matrix - Designation returns form (DRF) 	GOV.UK GOV.UK (Emailed to Teaching Schools)
Deployments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commissioning and SLE deployment guidance and forms - Quality assurance and evaluation - Case studies on deployments 	GOV.UK
Designation review and appeals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designation review guidance and forms - Transferring SLE designation guidance - Review of designation policy - SLE appeals policy for applicants - School-to-school support directory 	GOV.UK GOV.UK



Recruitment and designation process diagram

Teaching school alliances are responsible for the recruitment, designation, brokering, deployment and quality assurance of SLEs. The following diagram illustrates the recruitment process.





Application process guidance

This section outlines the processes that will support teaching schools to manage the application, assessment and designation of SLEs.

Separate guidance is also available for applicants to support their completion of their application form. This is available on the GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/specialist-leaders-of-education-a-guide-for-potential-applicants>.

Application process

Applicants should contact the teaching school/alliance directly or refer to the school's website to view their recruitment priorities. Teaching schools should also inform their local Teaching & Leadership Advisors (TLA) of their intention to recruit. The TLAs will then be able to cascade this information to any potential applicants. This can include providing further information (recruitment priorities for example) so the TLA can provide informative responses to applicants in their local area.

The SLE application form consists of 2 sections; section 1 is completed by the applicant and section 2 is completed by the referee. Teaching schools will have an editable copy of the application form to distribute to their applicants and must provide clear instructions on how the referee must return the completed application to the teaching school.

Application form

The SLE application form is a Word document that contains 5 key questions and the applicant's headteacher reference. A [PDF copy of the application form](#) can be downloaded at any time from [GOV.UK](#) prior to and during the application round, however applicants must contact the teaching school they wish to apply to obtain an editable Word copy.

Once completed, the applicant will need to send the application form to their headteacher referee. After the headteacher has completed the reference section of the form, he/she must return it to the teaching school in order to be submitted:

- applicants are required to confirm their name, school and contact details (teaching schools will need to provide this information on the designation returns form)
- there is a maximum of 300 words for free text boxes
- applicants are required to complete all fields in the application form

The SLE application guidance for applicants contains more information on the application process, the questions and how they link to the SLE eligibility criteria.

Firstly, in order to be eligible, an applicant must be a school based practitioner and work a minimum of 3 days per week at the school where they are employed.

Applicants **must** have the support and agreement of their headteacher in order to be considered. The headteacher acts as the applicant's referee and should complete a reference section in the application form which includes confirming that the school has the capacity to release them. The headteacher will also need to provide a supporting statement showing evidence of how the applicant meets the criteria and how he or she has supported a middle or senior leader from another school or academy. Where it is not possible to draw



on an example of outreach work, the headteacher can provide evidence of how the applicant has supported a middle or senior leader within their own school and what impact this has made.

Teaching schools are responsible for the initial sift of SLE applications and for reviewing the application form and reference. Applicants should be invited to a face-to-face assessment activity if it is clear that the applicant meets the [SLE eligibility criteria](#) and the priorities of the teaching school alliance.

Teaching schools should set out their criteria for sifting application forms at the 'review of application form' stage to ensure a fair and robust process is undertaken.

Assessment process

Teaching schools should assess and designate SLEs during the assessment window. It is recommended that teaching schools set out a prioritisation plan prior to assessing applicants to support their designation recommendations. This is particularly important for audit purposes and can be used as evidence against an appeal.

Applicants should be invited to undertake some form of face-to-face activity as part of the assessment process if they have met the SLE eligibility criteria. Assessment activities should enable applicants to demonstrate their interpersonal skills, including communication and collaboration. This may include an individual presentation, interview and/or group discussion. Teaching schools will have the flexibility to define the assessment model themselves. Guidance and examples are available to support you. See *page 8*.

Applicants must be assessed by a panel and in line with the SLE designation criteria. It is recommended that the panel consists of headteacher representation from primary, secondary and special schools to provide sufficient contextual and expert knowledge to assess SLE applications from all phases. Where this is not possible, a school may deputise to another senior leader although peer-to-peer assessments are not recommended. Where roles are deputised it is important to note that the headteacher of the school will be accountable for recommendations and decisions made.

A headteacher from another teaching school, a NLE or LLE external to the recruiting alliance is a formal requirement of the panel composition. This person has a formal role in ensuring consistency and moderation and will be responsible for supporting and signing off all designations. They should represent at least 1 of the 3 panel roles mentioned above. This is particularly important if there are applicants from within the recruiting teaching school that are being assessed.

Panels can choose to access support from teaching schools that have the lead in particular areas of expertise to help in assessing applications from applicants with certain specialisms. In these cases an individual from the lead school will provide technical advice on the applicant's evidence as an outstanding leader in that field.

Designation outcomes

Once teaching schools have completed their SLE assessments they will need to make designation recommendations to NCTL using the designation returns form (DRF).

The designation returns form is an online form which will be returned directly to NCTL once the 'submit' button has been pressed. It is recommended that the teaching school saves a



copy of the completed form in case of any validation queries. (Further guidance is provided on the DRF document)

Teaching schools will need to provide the following information:

- applicants who have met the required standard and have been recommended for SLE designation (name, RAG rating, Successful Y/N, school URN, Teacher Reference Number (TRN) and specialism(s))
- applicants who have not met the required standard and have not been recommended for designation (name, school URN, reason (a, b or c))

NCTL will validate the designation recommendations as part of the SLE quality assurance process to ensure consistency is maintained across the country and will confirm outcomes to the teaching school. Teaching schools are responsible for informing successful and unsuccessful applicants of their outcome within **5 working days** of being notified by NCTL.



Assessment and designation guidance

This section provides guidance to help support teaching schools to assess SLE applicants. The guidance is not intended to be prescriptive but highlights processes that NCTL strongly recommends as part of the designation process.

Teaching schools assessment process

Teaching schools will provide guidance to applicants in order for them to return their application forms directly to their chosen alliance. Upon receipt of the SLE applications, teaching schools will:

1. **Review the applications, including the reference section.** A [scoring matrix](#) is provided as a guide and you can use this as a basis for your assessment criteria. You do not have to use it, although it outlines some points that you may wish to consider and to keep for your records and/or possible referral at a later date:
 - a. For each of the eligibility criterion, the scoring matrix outlines the evidence that needs to be assessed (specific application form questions, headteacher reference and/or face-to-face assessment).
 - b. The RAG rating allows you to rate the criteria red, amber or green. A definition for each rating is provided in the scoring matrix.
 - c. Where there is more than 1 method of assessment, rate the criteria after all the methods have been assessed to provide one overall rating.
 - d. Each element of the eligibility criteria has a 'notes' section to document justifications for ratings, particularly if the rating is red or amber, as you may need to review these again in line with the prioritisation matrix or to provide an applicant with feedback if his or her application is unsuccessful or an appeal is made.

Full and abridged versions of the scoring matrix are provided. Alternatively, teaching schools may prefer to develop their own, based on the criteria listed.

2. **Arrange and undertake face-to-face assessment activities during the assessment window.** Applicants should be invited to undertake some form of face-to-face activity as part of the assessment process, for example individual presentation, interview, group discussion or a combination of the 3. Teaching schools have the flexibility to define what this might look like but applicants will be expected to demonstrate their interpersonal skills, including communication and collaboration. Teaching schools will need to provide applicants with sufficient information in advance to enable them to prepare for the assessment activities.
 - a. The scoring matrix **may** be used to record outcomes against each of the criteria as per the instructions in section 1.
 - b. Whilst teaching schools have the flexibility to design the most appropriate assessment exercises for them, we have provided some examples of 2 types of activity that you may wish to consider; individual presentation and group assessment. The presentation and group assessment framework (below) sets out possible themes for presentations, and the questions that applicants could discuss as a group. The length of each applicant's presentation should be decided in advance and shared with



the applicant beforehand (on average this would not usually be more than 10 minutes). The assessment panel should review all assessment activities as these form part of the overall judgements against the criteria.

SLE assessment activity examples: presentation and observed group discussion

Teaching schools should inform each applicant of their assessment activities when confirming assessment dates.

Presentation

The assessment may include an individual presentation (10 minutes) to the panel on the theme below. The panel may wish to ask questions at the end of the presentation.

Suggested theme: Give an example of how you have supported other leaders beyond your own school in your field of expertise. Describe how you went about doing this, referring to key opportunities and challenges, and draw on evidence of the impact of this work.

Note: Where the applicant has no experience of supporting a leader beyond his or her school, it would be acceptable to give a presentation based on experience of supporting a middle and/or senior leader within his or her own school.

Observed group discussion

For maximum impact, groups should not consist of more than 6 applicants. The group can be asked to consider and discuss any or all of the following issues:

1. As an SLE, you may be placed in some difficult and challenging situations.
 - a. What qualities do you feel are needed to enable you to manage difficult situations successfully?
 - b. Draw on experiences you have had in supporting other leaders to illustrate and support your views.
2. Consider the following scenario and discuss the issues and challenges presented for an SLE deployed in another school. What strategies might you use to resolve these issues?

Scenario: You are asked as an SLE to support a leader in another school for which you have been given in advance some performance data relating to your field of expertise. Following introductions, you are given an informal tour of the school along with some short drop-in lesson observations. Through these observations it becomes apparent that some priorities are not consistently understood or may be misplaced, and some strategies for improvement seem unlikely to realise the desired outcomes. The leader you are supporting seems unaware of these issues.

Prioritisation and outcomes

Applications with a red rating against any 1 or more of the eligibility criteria **cannot be designated** as an SLE. Such applications will be considered unsuccessful at this stage.

Following assessment, teaching schools must provide all outcome recommendations to NCTL, using the designations returns form. The designations returns form will need to be completed and return to NCTL using the instructions provided in the document.



Once returned, all outcome recommendations will be validated by NCTL before decisions on overall designations are finalised. Teaching schools will need to inform all applicants of the outcomes in writing within **5 working days** of confirmation by NCTL.

Review of Designation

The purpose of this policy is to provide teaching schools with a fair and consistent process whereby teaching schools can implement de-designations, resignations or withdrawals of teachers from the Specialist Leaders of Education (SLE) programme.

We expect that SLEs will normally be designated for a period of four years after which time teaching schools will review their designations against a set criteria. This includes local needs and priorities.

However, a review may be undertaken at any time during the four year designation period, should a concern be identified and if either the teaching school or the SLE no longer meets the relevant criteria.

The criteria are set out within the NCTL's [review of designation](#) document.

If you have any further questions regarding this policy then contact the SLE team at sle.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk.



Application and de-designation appeals procedure for teaching schools

The purpose of the appeals procedure is to support a designated SLE/applicants' right to appeal against a decision made by the relevant teaching school. This is in respect to their application/review of designation and to ensure a consistent review is undertaken of how that decision was reached.

This document, which should be read in conjunction with the [SLE application and de-designation appeals procedure](#) for applicants and has been provided to give teaching schools further information about their role and the College's role in hearing an appeal.

Introduction

The College is mindful of its pledge to minimise bureaucracy for teaching schools, and so with that in mind, has provided flexibility around some of the timeframes within which teaching schools will need to respond to appellants. Nevertheless, given the need to ensure equity and quality across the system, as well as consistency with other appeals policies (NLE, LLE, and teaching schools) this standard appeals procedure has been provided to all SLEs. Teaching schools will therefore need to adhere to certain timeframes, such as the window within which appeals can be made.

If applicants have any queries regarding this appeals procedure, they are advised to contact the relevant teaching school.

When considering whether or not to appeal the decision made in respect of their application/review of designation SLEs should take into account the fact that all decisions are made against the published SLE eligibility criteria/review of designation criteria and by a panel of experienced school leaders including a headteacher from another teaching school, an NLE or LLE who will provide rigour and challenge and formally sign off the final decision.

Informal resolution

Before making a formal appeal, the applicant is advised to address concerns about the decision informally with the relevant teaching school.

This does not affect or limit their right to make a formal appeal where they are not satisfied with a decision made by the teaching school. However, they should be aware that all **appeals must be made in writing within 10 working days** of the date of the decision being communicated.

When is an appeal appropriate?

Applicants may feel that they have grounds for an appeal if they:

- feel that an incorrect decision has been made either;
 - a) against the published eligibility criteria in respect of their application
 - b) against the published de-designation criteria
- believe that the relevant teaching school has followed incorrect procedures or made mistakes which have resulted in:
 - a) their application being deemed unsuccessful
 - b) their de-designation



How does the applicant appeal?

If an SLE has confirmed their wish to make an appeal in respect of their review of designation, they should obtain a [de-designation appeal form](#) from the relevant teaching school and submit the form to the teaching school within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of their review of designation decision.

To ensure appellants are not treated unjustly, in special circumstances, for example ill health, the teaching school will have discretion to extend the 10 working day time limit.

All appeals must be presented on the appeal form, and must include:

- name and contact address
- the school at which they work
- the details and basis for their appeal
- details of any additional evidence to support their case

Appellants are advised that teaching schools will **not consider** any evidence that was requested as part of the application to the programme/review of designation, and which they had available to them at the time, but which they failed to provide.

The completed designation/de-designation appeal form must be signed and sent to the relevant teaching school.

The appeal form can be completed electronically and emailed to the relevant teaching school. Please ensure that your email address is added to the form where indicated. Submission by email will be deemed as the equivalent of a signature, where an electronic signature cannot be added. Appellants are advised that care should be taken that this is not sent from a general mailbox address.

What happens next?

The relevant teaching school will confirm receipt of the appeal form and the appellant should expect to receive acknowledgement, via email, within a reasonable timeframe. What is reasonable is **at the discretion of the teaching school. As a guide NCTL's policy for receipt of acknowledgement for NLE, LLE and teaching school appeals is 2 working days.**

The teaching school will arrange for the appeal to be reviewed and where necessary resume the original panel and make the relevant paperwork available. The teaching school will confirm the date of the review and when the appellant should expect to receive the outcome.

The paperwork associated with the original application/review of designation may be re-examined by the teaching school. The teaching school will consider all the evidence that was available along with any supporting documentation that ought to have been made available to the original panel, but the appellant believes that due to procedural error, was not.

The teaching school does not have to review evidence that was not available to the original panel for any other reason.

The appellant is entitled to view documentation from the appeal, should they wish to do so. Any request for such documentation must be made formally in writing to the relevant teaching school.



Questions

Queries regarding this appeals procedure should be directed to the team at college.appeals@education.gsi.gov.uk

Is the teaching school's appeal decision final and binding?

If the appellant is not satisfied with the decision reached by the teaching school's appeals panel, and has reasonable grounds for a complaint, then they have the option of submitting a formal complaint to NCTL.

The NCTL will review the case, and if it deems it appropriate, will arrange for the case to be forwarded to NCTL's independent adjudicator and assessed by an independent panel. The teaching school will be kept informed of progress with the case, and invited to submit its own reasons for reaching its decision.

The independent adjudicator, on behalf of NCTL, will:

- ratify the original decision; or
- overturn the original decision

The decision of NCTL's independent adjudicator is final and binding.