

# Post-16 GCSE/FSQ Mastery Specialist Programme

## 2025/26 Cohort 3 – Information

Maths Hubs, working in conjunction with the NCETM, are seeking applications from Further Education establishments that wish to nominate 'lead teachers' to take part in an important two-year professional development programme leading to the designation of *Post-16 GCSE/FSQ Mastery Specialist* aimed at those who teach GCSE re-sit and/or Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQs).

Establishments nominating teachers for this role would be committed to the development of teaching for mastery in the lead teacher's classroom and, in the second year, enabling collaborative development across the maths department/faculty.

### Background

Post-16 maths is compulsory for students who fail to achieve a grade 4 or above in GCSE Mathematics. Supporting GCSE resit/Functional Skills maths is now a specific remit of the NCETM and Maths Hubs Programme.

The FE Centres for Excellence in Mathematics (CfEM) programme ended in March 2023, having demonstrated that teaching for mastery approaches are effective in improving learning outcomes for post-16 GCSE Mathematics and Functional Skills students.

The Post-16 GCSE/FSQ Mastery Specialist Programme has been developed especially for teachers of post-16 compulsory mathematics. It builds on CfEM's research, whilst aligning with the NCETM's Five Big Ideas and the Essence of Mathematics Teaching for Mastery principles.

Since 2014, Maths Hubs and the NCETM have been working together to develop approaches to teaching for mastery. Teaching for mastery is a pedagogical approach which aims to develop a deep and connected understanding of maths for all learners, enabling them to enjoy maths and demonstrate high achievement (including in examinations), giving them a sound basis for future learning and preparing them for their future employment. In the NCETM's [Mastery Magnified](#) pages you will find case studies, interviews and podcasts with some of the teachers we have been working with.

### What will participation in the programme involve?

Participating FE establishments will nominate a lead teacher to develop as a Mastery Specialist and follow a minimum two-year programme.

#### Year 1 – starting autumn 2025

During the first year, emphasis will be on the lead teacher developing their knowledge, understanding and skills of teaching for mastery in their own establishment.

They will need to spend 15 days on the following activities:

- six days attending central events (dates and locations to be confirmed, some will be face-to-face and some online). This also includes time to prepare for the central events by, for example, reading a set article or watching a shared classroom video.
- nine days practice-based work and collaboration.

The FE institution will be funded at £400 a day for this time.

A representative from the FE establishment's senior leadership team will also be required to attend an online launch event for a half-day alongside the lead teacher.

### **Year 2 – starting autumn 2026**

Upon completion of the first year of the Post-16 GCSE/FSQ Mastery Specialist Programme, participants will join a collaborative cohort of Mastery Specialists according to their provision type. Participants will continue to develop teaching for mastery approaches in their own institutions, working with their colleagues whilst being supported by peers in the collaborative cohort.

This work will amount to 15 days funded at £400 per day and will include the following activities and tasks:

- three days attending central events (dates and locations to be confirmed). This also includes time to prepare for the central events by, for example, reading a set article or watching a shared classroom video.
- eight days development which includes working within their own department to enhance teachers' knowledge and classroom practice, as well as collaboration between establishments of similar provision type
  - Examples of provision types include: Land-based colleges, General FE Colleges, Sixth Form colleges, Specialist colleges.
- four days to participate in, write up and complete the NCETM's PD Lead Development Accreditation Programme to acquire accredited PD Lead status to support the development of their own skills in leading professional development.

## **What are the benefits of participating in the programme?**

The benefits for FE establishments that apply to be part of the programme include:

- the department developing a curriculum informed by a clear set of principles, policies, practices and systems which support a Further Education teaching for mastery approach.
- the teachers in the department (including the specialist) developing a deep understanding of the principles and pedagogies underpinning teaching for mastery, and acquiring enhanced maths subject knowledge with a particular emphasis on progression within key areas of maths
- the growth of teachers' collaborative work, through which planning, teaching and assessment practices are developed
- the specialist developing their own understanding and practice in supporting collaborative professional development within and beyond their establishment
- the department making effective use of materials and resources to support the design of well-crafted lessons

Developing teaching for mastery approaches takes time and is not a 'quick fix', but the ultimate goal is that students develop a deep understanding of the mathematical ideas they are taught so that they fully meet the aims of their Further Education compulsory mathematics programme.

## **Who can apply?**

For teachers being nominated by an establishment for the programme, the criteria outlined in the table below should be addressed in the application form, in the lead teacher's statement, and in the senior leader's statement.

Essential	Desirable
A minimum of two years' experience teaching maths	Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS)
Employed as a teacher in a Further Education setting, regularly delivering maths to students who come under the <a href="#">Condition of Funding policy</a> (GCSE Resit or Functional Skills maths or both)	Additional status, e.g. Lead Practitioner; Mathematics SLE; NCETM Accredited PD Lead, CfEM PD or Action Research Lead
Good teaching skills in maths as evidenced by internal/external/Ofsted observation	Maths subject leader or responsibility within a maths department
Passion and enthusiasm for improving student outcomes in mathematics	Experience of developing a department's maths curriculum
Ability to work collaboratively with others	The ability to grow leadership capacity in others
Successful track record of working effectively with other professionals within own establishment	Experience of leading collaborative professional development
Excellent communication and interpersonal skills	
An understanding of what constitutes effective learning in maths, and the ability and confidence to communicate this	

## What are the expectations of participating FE establishments?

Establishments that are selected to have their nominated teacher participate in the programme would commit to the following expectations:

- the lead teacher will participate fully in the development programme and work on developing both understanding and practice
- working with the support of the subject leader, the lead teacher will support the department in developing its approach to teaching for mastery
- the FE establishment's senior leadership will support the department in its teaching for mastery development work, including ensuring the lead teacher receives the required release time, and will also attend a half-day launch at the start of the programme.

## What is the funding for the programme?

In 2025/26, the Maths Hub will cover the cost of the 15 days' release time for the nominated lead teacher.

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## How do FE Establishments nominate a teacher to take part?

An application form including senior leader consent form will be published on the NCETM website in December 2024. Establishments applying then undergo a selection procedure undertaken by their local Maths Hub, which may include an interview or other activities. Hubs will notify successful applicants/establishments following the selection process.