

Post-16 GCSE/FSQ Mastery Specialist Programme Cohort 4 –

Information Sheet

Overview

Maths Hubs, working in conjunction with the NCETM, are inviting applications from Further Education establishments for teachers to join the next cohort of the Post-16 GCSE/FSQ Mastery Specialist (FEMS) Programme. Now entering its fourth cohort, this two-year programme supports experienced FE maths teachers to develop deep expertise in teaching for mastery and to work collaboratively to strengthen practice across their department or faculty.

Settings nominating teachers for this role demonstrate a commitment to embedding teaching for mastery in the specialist's own classroom in year 1 and, in year 2, to creating the conditions for collaborative professional development across the wider maths team. Each specialist becomes part of a vibrant national community of FE practitioners who are collectively refining, testing and sharing approaches that make a real difference for post-16 learners.

Post-16 maths remains a requirement for students who have not yet achieved a grade 4 or above in GCSE Mathematics. Supporting high-quality GCSE resit and Functional Skills maths provision is vital to the NCETM and the Maths Hubs Programme.

The FE Centres for Excellence in Maths (CfEM) programme, which concluded in March 2023, provided compelling evidence that teaching for mastery approaches improve learner confidence, engagement and outcomes for post-16 GCSE and Functional Skills students. The FEMS Programme builds on this evidence, drawing on CfEM's findings while aligning with the principles of the NCETM's Five Big Ideas in Teaching for Mastery and the Essence of Mathematics Teaching for Mastery.

Since 2014, the NCETM and Maths Hubs have developed and refined teaching for mastery across all phases. The FEMS Programme extends this work into the FE sector, recognising the unique context and strengths of post-16 GCSE Resit and FSQ classrooms. The long-term ambition is to see a trained FE Mastery Specialist in every college campus enrolling students to GCSE and Functional Skills maths under the [Condition of Funding policy](#), ensuring consistent, high-quality teaching for learners across England.

FE Mastery Specialists engage in national training, collaborative inquiry and coaching, as well as supporting departmental development. This work helps them deepen their pedagogical understanding and connects them to a growing, supportive community of colleagues committed to improving mathematical outcomes for all learners.

You can read more about the impact of the programme on a post-16 setting in this NCETM Spotlight article, [Spotlight on LLMEs – Post-16 GCSE and FSQ Mastery Specialist Programme](#).

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 2026

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 of practice-based work and collaboration.

The FE institution will be fully funded for teacher release for this time.

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

Year 2 – starting autumn 2027

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 fully funded for teacher release and will include the following activities and tasks:

- four 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.
- 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.
- seven days of 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.

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.

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 England in a statutory Further Education setting (General FE College, Sixth Form College, Land-based College, Art/Design/Performing Arts College, or Specialist Designated College), or in a 16–19 Academy or 16–19 Free School, regularly delivering maths to learners who fall under the Condition of Funding (GCSE Resit, Functional Skills maths, or both)*	Additional status, e.g., Lead Practitioner; Mathematics SLE; NCETM Accredited PD Lead, CfEM PD or Action Research Lead
Good maths teaching skills, evidenced through internal, external, or Ofsted observation	Maths subject leader or responsibility within a maths department
Passion and enthusiasm for improving student outcomes in FE mathematics	Experience of developing a department's maths curriculum
Capacity and ability to facilitate professional development with colleagues in their home department in year 2 and beyond	The ability to grow leadership capacity in others
Successful track record of working effectively with other professionals within their own organisation	Experience of leading collaborative professional development
Excellent communication and interpersonal skills	
A clear understanding of effective maths learning, and the confidence to communicate this to others	

*If you are unsure of an organisation's designation, visit the [GIAS website](#), search for the setting, and check the "Further Education type" field to confirm whether the provider is eligible.

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 2026/27, 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 will be published on the NCETM website on **10 February 2026**, when the application window opens. Applicants, in conjunction with their headteacher, should complete and submit the application form by **25 June 2026 (this was originally published as 23 April)**. The Maths Hub will contact applicants once the selection process has been completed.