

# National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL)

**Application Guidance**

**Revised version**

**(To be read by both applicants and advocates)**

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## Glossary

Several schools: three or more; A number of schools: two or more

Advocate: A person who puts a case on someone else's behalf, or publicly recommends or supports

## About NPQEL

The National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) is the first-choice qualification for anyone aspiring to become, or already an executive headteacher or principal, or a CEO. Designed in collaboration with some of the country's leading executive headteachers, CEOs and academics, NPQEL will develop talented leaders from all backgrounds who can deliver educational excellence in a self-improving school-led system, as well as high-quality outcomes for pupils and students in all schools across an organisation.

NPQEL will give you the confidence, skills and professional knowledge you need to deliver the best for pupils and all members of your organisation in your executive leadership post.

NPQEL:

- takes account of your professional development needs, prior learning and achievements
- improves and develops your strategic leadership expertise
- develops key leadership and management skills
- provides opportunities to work with another educational setting within or beyond your own organisation
- gives you the confidence and competence to take up or develop executive leadership so you will make a positive impact on your organisation, and on the lives of children, young people and their families.

NPQEL is a practical qualification, which involves improving practice in your own school or organisation as well as working with another school to give them good advice. It is complementary to a higher-level degree, such as a M.Ed. or a Ph.D., which have a more academic focus.

The NPQEL programme is designed for current or aspirant executive leaders.

Examples of an 'executive leader':

- Headteacher of a more than one school – in the maintained, independent or academy sector, for example;
- Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent role) of an organisation which includes at least two schools;
- Chief executive officer (or equivalent role) of an organisation outside of the educational sector.

Examples of an executive headteacher:

- Headteacher of a federation of two or more schools;
- Headteacher of an international or independent school, which includes other schools with heads of school, such as Upper, lower and Kindergarten;
- Headteacher who is acting in an interim position in a second school;
- etc.

Examples of aspirant executive leaders, for whom the NPQEL is suitable:

- Headteacher of a standalone school;
- Deputy headteacher or Head of School of a very large school who acts with autonomy and independence;
- etc.

## The context of NPQEL in relation to other national leadership qualifications:

### The Levels and Qualifications Framework

The Levels and Qualifications Framework ensures that the reformed NPQs provide a coherent suite of professional development opportunities for aspirant and serving leaders at all levels of leadership within the school system.

The new NPQs are a set of four qualifications covering different levels of school and/ or organisational leadership:

Qualification	Level	Target audience
<b>National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML)</b>	Leading a team	Those who are, or are aspiring to become, a middle leader with responsibility for leading a team e.g. a key stage leader, a curriculum area leader, a pastoral services leader, a subject leader, a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), or a head of department.  This includes those who are, or are aspiring to be, a middle leader with cross-school responsibilities e.g. a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE).
<b>National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL)</b>	Leading across a school	Those who are, or are aspiring to become, a senior leader with cross-school responsibilities e.g. an experienced middle leader, a deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, or other senior staff.  This includes those who are, or are aspiring to be, a senior leader with cross-school responsibilities e.g. a Director of a Teaching School Alliance (TSA).
<b>National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQEL)</b>	Leading a school	Those who are already a headteacher, or are aspiring to become, a headteacher or head of school with responsibility for leading a school  This includes those who are, or are aspiring to be, a head or head of school with cross-school responsibilities e.g. a National Leader of Education (NLE).
<b>National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL)</b>	Leading across several schools	Those who are, or are aspiring to become, an executive headteacher or CEO of a MAT with responsibility for leading across several schools

## Who can apply for NPQEL?

NPQEL is the final stage on the pathway to your executive leadership. It is not for those just seeking really good professional development. You should be highly motivated to executive leadership, and be in, or ready to apply for executive leadership posts on graduation. In other words, when you apply for NPQEL:

- **you should be no more than 18 months from being credibly able to apply for an executive leadership post**
- **your aspiration should be for your next job to be executive leadership**

You do not have to be currently working in or with schools to apply for NPQEL. Applications from those working in other organisations will be assessed in exactly the same way as others, and if you are in this situation you should provide evidence of your competencies that you consider to be transferable to a school organisation context.

## How do I know whether I'm ready to apply?

If you are already working in an executive leadership role, as part of your ongoing performance management you may be discussing your career aspirations or organisational opportunities with the Chair of your governance body or professional coach. Whatever your circumstances, seeking feedback from others and reviewing evidence associated with your performance management will help you to think about your achievements, strengths and areas for development.

**As well as talking to the Chair of your governance body or professional coach, you should look at the information and resources available on the website of your chosen licensed provider or on the DFE/NCTL website.**

## Glossary

**Several schools:** three or more; **A number of schools:** two or more

**Advocate:** A person who puts a case on someone else's behalf, or publicly recommends or supports. For NPQEL, a person who will support your application.

**Executive headteacher:** headteacher of two or more schools

# How to apply

## Making your application - General guidance

To apply for NPQEL you will need to obtain an application form from your chosen licensed provider to use alongside this guidance document for applicants and advocates. The guidance document is also available on the NPQonline website at [www.neonlearning.co.uk](http://www.neonlearning.co.uk). The application form should be completed by both applicant and advocate and returned by according to the instructions set out by the chosen provider. This may include given deadlines.

The application form to be completed by you and your NPQEL advocate.

**Section 1&4:** Complete the relevant registration sections with your personal and contact details. In section 4, set out your relevant qualifications and your roles across the last three years, particularly those relating to leadership at or above that of a headteacher. Section 4 provides background information to the examples you cite in sections 5-8.

**Sections 2&3:** This is to be completed by your advocate.

**Sections 5-8:** are to be completed by both you and your advocate. For all of the sections 5-8 you should complete the first part and the advocate the second part. It is important that you address all of the instructions in the guidance on what is to be included in each section of the application form, and provide relevant evidence for each of the statements in the blue boxes.

In sections 5 and 6 choose one of the two options to provide evidence for. Do *not* provide evidence for the other, or for both areas in each of these two sections.

**Please ensure that you provide evidence for each of the three or four questions which head each section.**

Detailed assessment criteria for NPQEL are set out below. You may already be able to provide some evidence towards these within your application, to further demonstrate your readiness to begin the NPQEL programme. Take time to choose your best example(s) for each section. **You have up to 450 words for each section – you must not exceed this total and must indicate the number of words used at the end of each section. Make sure you use the available word count to the full.**

Your advocate's evidence is equally important as it will be used to verify and add to the evidence of your experience, performance and competence and will be assessed alongside what you write. You should therefore take an early opportunity to discuss your application with your advocate. The advocate is asked to confirm your evidence and give further evidence of **impact** of your leadership experience.

In writing your responses, a narrative style, rather than using notes or bullet points, will be more likely to convey the extent of your experience, performance and competence in the areas being tested.

## Content Areas and Assessment Criteria

There are 6 content areas for each NPQ level, which set out *what* a leader should know or be able to do. The 6 content areas are common to each NPQ level, but the knowledge and skills within them increases in sophistication, depth and breadth progressively through the NPQ levels. The criteria listed here will be tested at final assessment, and a lesser test is applied within your application. For NPQEL the content areas and criteria are:

### NPQEL Strategy and Improvement

- 1.4.1 Analyses the external and/or strategic environment, identifies implications for relevant organisations, and applies findings to own plans
- 1.4.2 Analyses research into, and examples of, successful business development and business failure, drawn from schools and non- school contexts, and applies findings to own plans
- 1.4.3 Analyses research into, and examples of, delivering change across a number of organisations, drawn from schools and non- school contexts, and applies findings to own plans

### NPQEL Teaching and Curriculum Excellence

- 2.4.1 Evaluates teaching quality across several schools accurately, using a systematic and rounded approach, and applies findings to own plans
- 2.4.2 Analyses domestic and international research into, and examples of, school improvement strategies in relation to progress, attainment and behaviour, including interventions targeted at disadvantaged pupils or those with particular needs, and applies findings to own plans
- 2.4.3 Analyses research into, and examples of, effective school-to-school support systems in relation to teaching quality, pupil progress and attainment and applies findings to own plans
- 2.4.4 Designs, implements and evaluates an improvement strategy that improves pupil progress and attainment across several schools

### NPQEL Leading with Impact

- 3.4.1 Analyses the motivations and/or priorities of colleagues/stakeholders, integrating these in the design and communication of plans
- 3.4.2 Secures colleague and/or stakeholder support for visionary or challenging goals
- 3.4.3 Analyses their own motivations and moral purpose and integrates these in own design, communication and leadership of plans
- 3.4.4 Evaluates different strategies to publically promote and/or defend plans, including in the media, and implements recommended approach

### **NPQEL Working in partnership**

4.4.1 Exploits expertise, professional advice and/or best practice from beyond the education system and applies it to own plans

4.4.2 Analyses research into, and examples of, successful school-to- school support partnerships and collaborations applies findings to own plans

4.4.3 Analyses research into, and examples of, expanding and/or joining a school partnership successfully, including an academy chain, and applies findings to own plans

### **NPQEL Managing Resources and Risks**

5.4.1 Analyses the benefits, risks and costs of different business development strategies in resource terms (for example, in terms of finances, staffing, workload and educational resources)

5.4.2 Analyses opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of resources deployed sustainably and applies findings to the design of plans

5.4.3 Evaluates the effectiveness of different accountability arrangements for managing resources and risks and defines appropriate financial accountability and risk management arrangements for own plans

### **NPQEL Increasing Capability**

6.4.1 Analyses the organisation's capability to meet current and future requirements and applies findings to own plans

Evaluates the benefits and risks of different strategies in terms of:

6.4.2 professional development opportunities, including for new and the most talented staff

6.4.3 the supply and demand of staff, including in key posts

6.4.4 the organisation's responsiveness and resilience to change



## Tips for completing your application

### 1. Set time aside

Application for NPQEL is a thorough and rigorous process, requiring you to provide appropriate evidence about your readiness and aspiration for headship. Completion of the form is also a key part of the self-assessment and development planning process for NPQEL. As a result, the process requires a significant time commitment. You are encouraged to set aside sufficient time to complete the application.

### 2. Talk to your advocate

You should discuss your application with your advocate. It is important that the dialogue is open and honest. You should ensure he/she is aware of the application process and that he/she knows that the providers will be requesting completion of the reference and statement of advocateship sections of the application form. This is an integral part of the application process. Please share this full application guidance with your advocate.

### 3. Have your personal information to hand

When you begin the application you should have the following personal information to hand:

- **email address:** this should be a personal email address, as we may need to contact you outside term times to arrange activities and graduation dates
- **home address:** we prefer to use this address to maintain confidentiality when advising you of the outcomes of any assessments
- **contact telephone number(s):** particularly a mobile number should we need to send you a text message
- **organisation or employer's name, address and postcode and the lead school's URN**
- **your teacher reference number** (also referred to as DfEE, DfES or DCSF number, eg 70/12345). Note, even if not qualified as a teacher, a TRN can be generated for you.

## Complete your part of the application form

### Pay attention to the word limits.

In each section word limits are given. There is an upper word limit of 450 words for applicant sections and 100 words for the advocate sections. The word limits are clearly marked on the form and must be strictly adhered to. You are advised, however, to ensure you use the given word limits to the full. **Please indicate the number of words used at the end of each section in the space provided on the application form.**

### Complete your application in stages

You may find it helpful to complete the form in stages, giving you time to consider your responses as you go along. You can also print off a copy of your application if you find it helpful to review your answers on paper.

**You must ensure that you have responded to all of the sections,** otherwise your application may not contain sufficient evidence to be deemed successful.

### **Give or send your completed application to your advocate.**

Before your application can be submitted your advocate must complete the reference and statement of advocateship sections of the application form. Further details about this are provided later in this document. **It is your responsibility to ensure your advocate has received and completed your application and that it has been submitted by the deadline.** This is **VERY** important. You should ensure you allow sufficient time for your advocate to complete his/her sections of the form. You should check with your advocate that everything is proceeding as planned to enable the form to be submitted on time.

**Please return the form in accordance with the instructions given by your chosen provider including any published deadline.**

## **Advocateship**

Your application needs the sections that provide the reference and statement of advocateship to be completed by your NPQEL advocate. This will be used to add to and validate the information provided in your application and establish your advocate's support and confirmation of your readiness of and/ or skills for for executive leadership. The reference is provided as an integral part of your application and forms the second part of the application form.

## **Who should I nominate to complete the reference and statement of advocateship?**

The purpose of the reference and statement of advocateship is twofold:

- to verify that in your advocate's judgement, your evidence is accurate and that you are already working in an executive leadership role or that you will be ready to take up executive leadership as your next job. The form should be completed by someone who knows you well and has a good knowledge of your recent leadership experience and expertise.
- to provide further evidence of the impact of your leadership in each content section.

To ensure that the reference and statement of advocateship sections of the application form can provide the above please note the following:

- **If you work in an executive leadership position in an organisation or school** the form should be completed by a senior post holder within the organisation, or the Chair of your governance board.
- **If you are a headteacher in a standalone school** your chair of governors might be the most appropriate person to complete the form.
- **If you are an executive leader in an organisation other than a school** please ask your line manager or employer to complete the form.
- **If you are self-employed** you will need to identify someone whom you will be able to work closely with. This person may need to undertake the role of mentor to you.

## What evidence needs to be provided?

In addition to the evidence requested previously in each section, your advocate is asked to:

- **verify** the evidence you have presented in the application form and provide any relevant additional evidence
- give his/her assessment of your achievements and the **impact** of your leadership, **providing quantified evidence** of the positive difference your work has had in the organisation and on meeting its goals
- state that, in his/her professional opinion **you will be ready to take up executive leadership** as your next post, if you are not already an executive leader

Additional evidence provided by the advocate will be assessed as part of the application process.

It is therefore very important that you:

- ensure that your advocate reads this application guidance for applicants and advocates.
- discuss your application and sections of the application form which comprise the reference and statement of advocateship with your advocate. It is important that the dialogue is open and honest. The integrated reference and statement of advocateship should not be treated as a confidential reference. The term 'advocate' refers to a person who gives public support or recommendation.

## How does my advocate access the application to complete the form?

You will be asked to give or send your completed application form to your advocate to enable him/her to complete the sections that comprise the reference and statement of advocateship and then return to yourself for submission.

You should ensure that your completed application form is emailed to your advocate as soon as possible, giving your advocate a generous amount of time to complete these sections of the form before any deadline.

## How and when is the completed application form submitted?

Once your advocate has completed the reference and statement of advocateship sections of the application form, you will need to submit the application form by returning it to your chosen accredited provider in accordance with their published instructions.

**You should note that your application will not be considered without the application form being complete including the advocate's sections that comprise the reference and statement of advocateship. Late submissions cannot be accepted.** You are therefore advised to talk to your advocate as early as possible and ensure that he/she is fully aware of these requirements.

## What happens next?

### Application assessment

Applications will be assessed and submitted to rigorous moderation procedures. *A proportion of applicants may be asked to attend interview with providers to further explore the application evidence provided.* Once these processes are complete, you will be advised of the outcome of the assessment. If successful you will be invited by your chosen provider to join the programme. If you are not successful at this stage written feedback will be provided.

It is possible to have a telephone consultation with a lead assessor to discuss the reasons your application was unsuccessful. The cost for this is £22 for a fifteen to twenty minute call. Please book this through your provider.