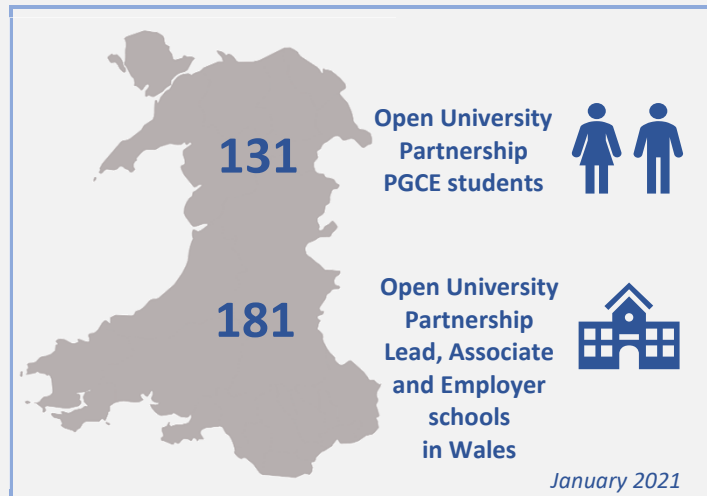


# The Open University Partnership in Wales: The theory behind the new PGCE Programme

The Open University Partnership in Wales PGCE Programme enrolled its first cohort of student teachers in 2020.

**Partnership working between universities and schools** position schools at the forefront of training the future teaching workforce in Wales. The Open University Partnership PGCE Programme is supporting the diversification of the workforce and helping to address the shortage of subject specialist teachers.



## Of the 131 PGCE students on the Programme:

- **90** are training to teach in primary schools and **41** in secondary schools;
- **51** of these are on the part-time PGCE and **80** on the salaried PGCE
- **24** student teachers are training through the medium of Welsh

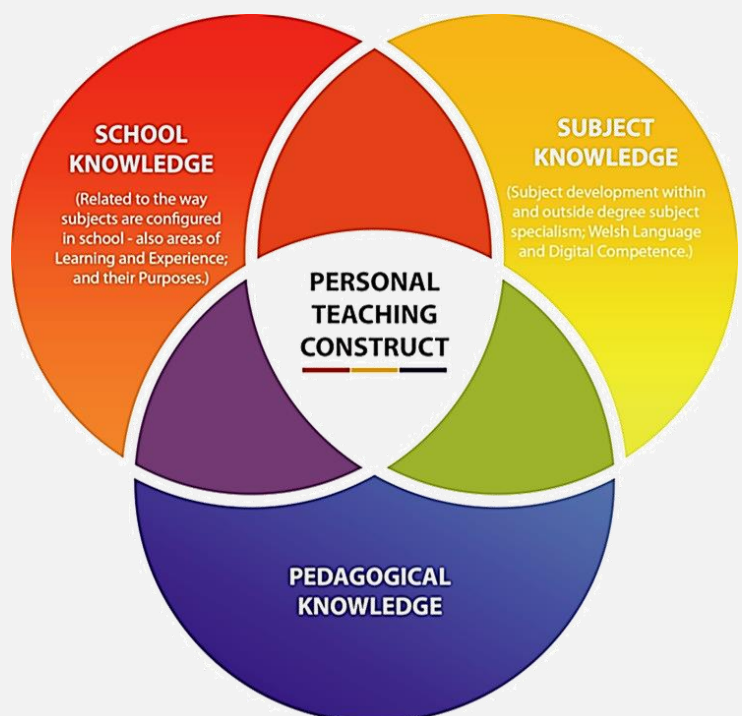


## What do teachers need to know?

**Teachers** need to acquire different kinds of knowledge, including a deep subject knowledge.

**Acquisition of knowledge** takes place over time and opportunities to link prior learning to new understanding are needed. For example, knowledge of practice focuses on exchanges with the mentor, practice tutor and student teacher peer group.

**The intersection of content and pedagogy** allows the teacher to create their personal knowledge construct for teaching knowledge for practice, alongside knowledge in practice and knowledge of practice provide the basis for the development of effective pedagogy.<sup>1</sup>



*The aspects of teacher professional knowledge.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Cochran-Smith, and Lytle, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Banks, Leach and Moon, 2005, p. 338.

## Teachers' knowledge

Teachers with **deep understanding** of an Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE)<sup>3</sup> are likely to be more creative in their approach to teaching.

PGCE **Programme mentors and curriculum tutors** support the student teacher's knowledge development and direct them to appropriate resources.

**Pedagogical knowledge** is a major component of the Professional Standards.<sup>4</sup>

The understanding of aspects of each AoLE, and the relationship to the 'four purposes' of the new **Welsh curriculum**<sup>5</sup>, are developed during the student teacher's interactions with the mentor and others during school experience, through online study and seminars.

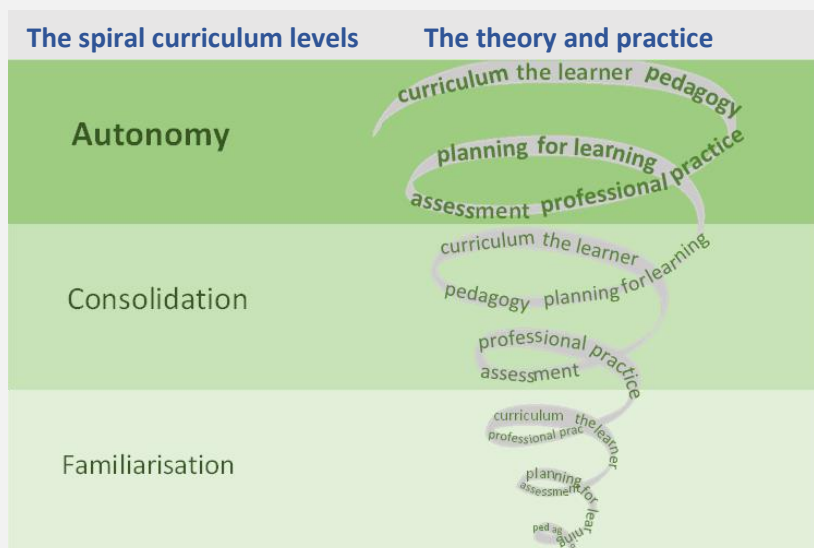
At the beginning of the PGCE student teachers develop an **Individual Learning Plan**. One key element of this is linked to the level of their subject knowledge, other aspects include a **Welsh language audit** and **digital technology requirements**. Ongoing support will develop student teachers' Welsh language skills and those of their learners too.

The very nature of the PGCE Programme's **remote flexible delivery**, along with the **course content which has digital technologies and information literacy** at its core contributes to preparing teachers effectively.



## How do teachers gain their knowledge?

**The spiral curriculum:** Student teachers on the PGCE Programme progress through a 'spiral' curriculum, as they move from Level 1 – 'familiarisation' to Level 2 – 'consolidation' to Level 3 – 'autonomy', with an allowance to return to address their professional knowledge in increasing depth.



**This approach** can result in powerful programmes that ensure teachers are prepared successfully to teach and support a wide range of learners.<sup>6</sup>

**Critical thinking** or reflective thinking is believed to be central to education, with teachers required to be reflective of their actions.<sup>7</sup>

**Creativity** is proposed to be an ability to view an issue in a new way and recognise when such new ideas are worth following up.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The **six Areas of Learning and Experience**: Expressive Arts; Health and Well-being; Humanities; Languages, Literacy and Communication; Mathematics and Numeracy; and Science and Technology.

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government, 2017, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> **The four purposes**: the shared vision for the new curriculum.

<sup>6</sup> Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 304; 2017, p. 299

<sup>7</sup> Dewey, 1910, p.6.

<sup>8</sup> Sternberg and Williams, 1996, p. 3.

## Co-constructing knowledge

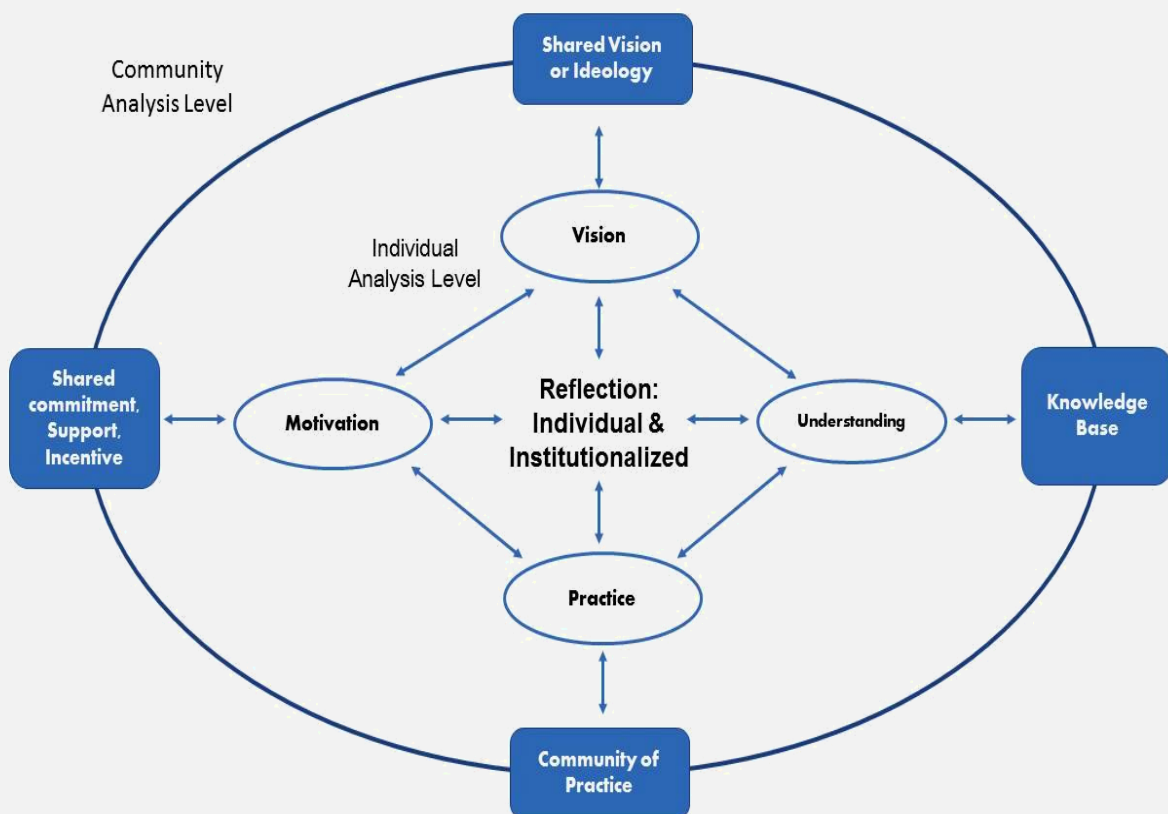


The student teacher's professional knowledge is co-constructed through **interaction** with their mentor, curriculum tutor, practice tutor, fellow students and pupils.

Each member of this community brings a **different perspective** drawn from different evidence and understanding of teacher expertise and knowledge.



The student-teacher's learning is a **complex and individual process** supported by the community, and as the student teacher works within a community the community has potential to learn and develop too.



*The interconnections of the student teacher's learning communities.<sup>9</sup>*



These social interactions help student teachers make sense of their learning and results in better outcomes than working in isolation. The collaborative approach to learning **fosters inquiry and meaningful reflection**, which are critical for effective teacher education to be intellectually challenging.<sup>10</sup>

This reflects student teachers' development of knowledge within a **community of practice**, as their school community and the professionals help student teachers to link theory and practice, and at the same time deepen their own understanding.<sup>11</sup>

The student teachers' journey begins at the edge of the community and effective learning moves them to fully participate.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>9</sup> Adapted from Shulman and Shulman, 2004, p. 266.

<sup>10</sup> Livingston and Shiach, 2010, p. 85; Welsh Government, 2018, p. 9; Furlong, 2020, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Wenger, McDermott and Synder, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29.

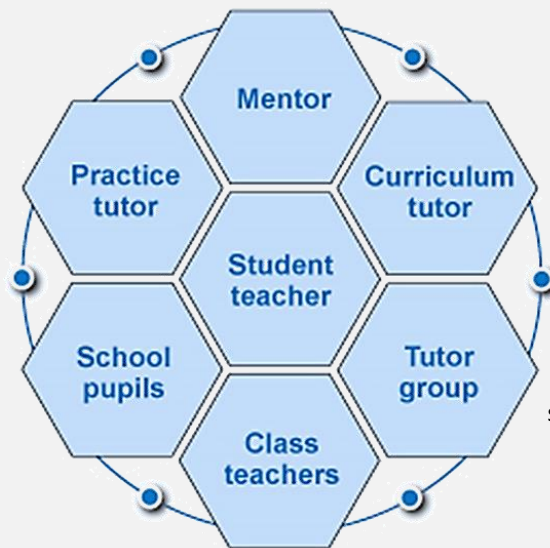
## The student teacher's access to professional knowledge

### Knowledge of practice and knowledge in practice

Support in school, mediates school-based activities, regular observation, co-construction of knowledge about teaching.

**Knowledge of practice and knowledge for practice**  
Visits student, observes teaching with mentor. Co-construction of knowledge about teaching and how it links with theory.

**Knowledge in practice**  
Experience of teaching, reflection on practice, student responses to teaching.



**Knowledge for practice**  
Regular tutorials – how does educational theory play out in your subject in the Welsh context? Mark portfolios.

**Knowledge of practice**  
Regular discussions in tutorials, sharing experiences, reflecting on experiences, forums.

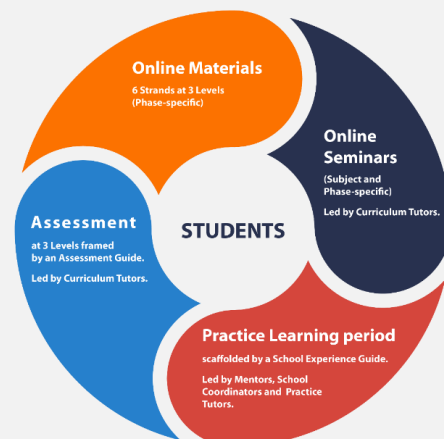
**Knowledge in practice**  
Feedback on teaching, co-construction of knowledge about teaching in context.

### Accessing different professional knowledge<sup>13</sup>

The **blended distance learning** approach offered by the PGCE Programme means that learning is accessible; with the student teacher at the centre of an adaptive learning system where there is access to formal and informal face-to-face contact along with online support from tutors, mentors and peers.<sup>14</sup>

**Also**, high performing education systems are reported to develop the research capacity of practitioners and research-based knowledge informs practice; **embedding research practice** throughout an education system is a critical success factor.<sup>15</sup>

The **'clinical practice'** means that student teachers will have opportunity to 'interpret and make sense' of their students' needs, develop and implement in practice and evaluate the outcomes.<sup>16</sup>



### The blended distance learning approach

This forms an integral part of the Open University Partnership PGCE Programme.

**Engaging in research** strengthens reasoning skills and offers insight into the intricacies of the practice of teaching and this is woven throughout, with opportunities to undertake **inquiry and research** a central element for all those involved.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999

<sup>14</sup> Park, Perry, and Edwards, 2011, p. 42; Weller, van Ameijde, and Cross, 2018, p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> BERA-RSA, 2014, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Burn and Mutton, 2015, p. 219.

<sup>17</sup> Boylan et al., 2017, p. 10

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*The Open University Partnership in Wales  
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