

The National Award for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordination

Frequently Asked Questions for the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination

1 Does my Headteacher have to support my application?

Yes. You should discuss your application with your headteacher prior to applying. We will ask your headteacher to confirm support of your application as part of the application process.

2 Are there any pre-requisite programmes that I must complete prior to the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination?

No. However, it should be noted that the National Award is a Masters' level programme with a formal assignment attached to each of the three modules. It is expected that you will already have completed a degree or higher qualification and/or that you will have several years' experience of working in a SEN setting.

3 What happens if I miss the application deadline for the next cohort?

We will do our utmost to process your application so that you can join your preferred programme, but we can't guarantee it.

4 I have submitted my application. Does this mean I am registered for the next cohort?

An application does not guarantee a place on the programme. We will assess your eligibility and during this process we may need to contact you to clarify some details within your application. You will be formally offered a place on the programme approximately 2 to 3 weeks before it starts.

5 Do I have to attend all WebEx sessions?

Yes, there is a strict 100% attendance policy. In the event of unforeseen circumstances preventing you from attending any part of the programme, it is important that you phone or email the SENCO team, or contact your tutor as soon as possible.

6 Are there any assessed activities or pieces of work?

You will need to complete four work-based assignments, two per module, and prepare a portfolio of evidence for assessment. You must pass all elements of assessment to achieve the National Award.

7 Is the programme available to SENCOs in independent schools?

Yes, although it is not mandatory for independent schools.

8 Is the programme mandatory for SENCOs?

The programme is mandatory for all SENCOs appointed to mainstream schools (i.e. a community, foundation or voluntary school, academy, PRU, pre-school or a maintained nursery school) since September 2009 and the award must be achieved within three years of appointment. However, the programme has been evaluated as highly effective professional development for SENCOs and is therefore, strongly recommended for all SENCOs.

9 Is the programme available to aspiring SENCOs who do not hold QTS?

The National Award for SENCOs can only be awarded to students who have Qualified Teacher Status (including completion of the NQT year) and you will be asked to provide your 7-digit teacher's reference number (if you don't know your teachers reference number, please contact Teachers Pensions on 08456 066166, or contact your payroll department for QTS numbers). However, for those applicants without QTS, the same syllabus may be studied and, on completion, students will achieve the Postgraduate Certificate Education (Special Needs and Inclusion) from the University of Hertfordshire. Students with QTS will also achieve this PCGE.

10 Why do I need to find a partnering school?

Partnering with a local school (or schools) provides an opportunity to observe, discuss, evaluate and compare other SEN practice. The time spent in the partner school/s is arranged entirely between you and your partner school, so it is up to you how they are worked into your schedule.

11 What is the role of the mentor?

The role of the mentor is to provide support and to identify appropriate opportunities for the participant to work strategically with senior colleagues and governors as well as opportunities to provide professional direction to the work of others. Academic support will be predominantly provided by the facilitator, but the mentor will be a useful 'critical friend' to discuss ideas and plans with. The mentor will often be the student's head teacher or a senior SENCO within the school or cluster of schools. However, the mentor does not need to be from the same school and the student is free to select whoever they feel will give them the best support during their studies.

12 How long will it take to complete the programme?

The normal duration of the programme is 10 months which is split into two modules. Each module begins with a WebEx session led by the programme facilitator and involves completion of two written assignments per module. The assignments will equate to 4,500 words per module.

13 How many study hours per week?

The amount of time spent in study depends on previous study, experience and personal abilities but you should set aside 5 hours for each unit (there are 12 units per module). The programme is a post graduate qualification working within the assignment deadlines which is likely to require some time management.