

A self-evaluation questionnaire to assist aspiring Cambridge history mentors

This document was prepared by the History Subject Lecturer (Christine Counsell), the History Seconded Mentor (Kath Goudie) and the History Mentor Panel (senior history mentors in Partnership schools). It is regularly revised and updated by the History Mentor Panel, a group of senior mentors that meets every term to review and plan the full, integrated training course and to plan the two annual, compulsory, history training days that all Cambridge history mentors attend.

Joining the Cambridge history mentor team (i.e. having a history trainee) is an exciting, but very big, commitment. Christine, Kath and the panel have prepared this document to help aspiring history mentors decide for themselves, in an informed way, if they really are keen to join the Cambridge history mentor team and/or to prepare for the role.

Introduction

Thank you very much for your interest in serving as a history mentor in the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education Partnership. We receive many enquiries from history teachers wanting to become mentors, and we are very pleased to do so. This also gives us a happy problem: *we currently have many more history teachers expressing an interest in mentoring than we have trainees to give them.*

This questionnaire is a tool to put more information in the hands of aspiring history mentors. It is designed to help *you* to make a more informed decision about whether to request a history trainee now or whether to wait and first build up more expertise. If you choose the latter, then it gives you clear ideas on how you and your department might prepare in the meantime.

Who is this self-evaluation questionnaire for?

This questionnaire will be useful to a prospective mentor *or* (if the mentor is not the Head of History) the mentor and Head of History together.

No one need see this completed questionnaire except you. It's not for handing in or checking. It's just a tool to help *you* decide if you are ready and/or what you need to do to get ready. You might also choose to use it as a basis for discussion with the History Seconded Mentor (Kath Goudie) or history Subject Lecturer (Christine Counsell) or any member of the History Mentor Panel (senior history mentors in Partnership schools) in order to explore what you and your department need to do to prepare for joining the history mentor team. Aspiring history mentors always get in touch with Christine or Kath informally anyway, and parts of the questionnaire might form a useful agenda, helping you to define where you feel ready and where you would like more support or time.

Why join the history mentor team?

Being a history mentor is exciting, challenging, practice-changing and great fun. It is also something that will benefit your own professional development beyond measure. One mentor commented in April 2008:

“delivering the Cambridge history PGCE course as a mentor is like having free professional development of the highest standard, every single week.”

If you join the team, you will be part of a dynamic group of history teachers who, together, shape the Cambridge history course, in its university and school-based elements. Many Cambridge history mentors have been influential within the national history education community, advising policy-makers or OFSTED, carrying out projects for national bodies and writing articles based on innovation in and evaluation of their own practice that are now used by history teachers throughout the UK and beyond. Cambridge history mentors are now an increasingly vibrant, scholarly community, raising questions and strengthening debates about all aspects of pupils' historical learning. The current and former Cambridge history mentor/trainee teams are full of national history 'names' such as Nicolas Kinloch, Geraint Brown, Sally Burnham, Michael Fordham, Rachel Foster, Kate Hammond, Hywel Jones, Oliver Knight, Maria Osowiecki, Steve Mastin, James Woodcock, Rachel Ward/Mills and Paula Worth/Lobo, all of whom have had an impact on the practice of history teachers nationally and internationally and have helped to keep dynamic development and innovation in the hands of history teachers (rather than in the hands of the bureaucrats). A mentor commented in January 2007:

"working with the other history mentors changed my approach to professional development. It put me in touch with a whole new world - the wider subject education community - history teachers and history teacher-researchers all over the country."

Since then, we have substantially developed our shared practices, statements of expectation and shared knowledge of history education and history ITE mentoring. A history mentor commented at the History Mentor Afternoon in December 2013:

"Cambridge history mentor training is the only time in the year when I feel as though I am doing CPD that really matters. This is the real thing: the substance of what pupils learn in the classroom and the complicated business of gradually lifting pupils into rigorous history."

An integrated course

The history course integrates training carried out in schools by mentors and training carried out in the university. During serial placements, there is a symbiotic relationship between what happens in school on Wednesdays/Thursdays and what happens in Subject Studies on Tuesdays/Fridays. During block placements, this interplay continues, but in the context of increasingly personalised learning for the trainee. *A key feature that our trainees value is that all mentors know exactly what is taking place in university sessions, are familiar with all the readings for them and can build on them directly and immediately, usually in the same week. This is because the history mentor team itself contributes to the content of those sessions. This is truly a school-owned course: school-owned at the subject level.*

There is no divide between theory and practice in the history course. What happens in the university is usually high practical; what happens in school always involves reflection, theorising and consideration of the practices of the wider history education community, frequently accessed through reading teacher-authored literature. Cambridge history mentors are not only familiar with literature, materials, practical activities and principles presented in the university, *they continue these approaches in school and the university sessions - which are often led by mentors - then feed directly off school-based classroom work.* Mentors achieve this by:

- inviting critical reflection on content and practices of history teaching beyond those of their own departments and evident in wide range of professional and academic literature written by history teachers and former history teachers;
- training trainees to experiment in the classroom and to evaluate their own practice, preparing them for structured research into their own and others' practice;
- requiring the trainee to engage in critical reading of historical scholarship and history education scholarship and, in addition to the entitlement readings, selecting readings and setting these as training activities.

Many history mentors also contribute to the evaluation and revision of the course through the mentor panel, mentor training days and numerous *ad hoc* collaborations with the Subject Lecturer (Christine Counsell), Seconded Mentor (Kath Goudie) and, since 2013, the Faculty of Education's Senior Teaching Associate (Michael Fordham).

The course is therefore a dynamic product of an active history mentor team. As the mentor team is also involved in the selection of candidates for the course, mentors therefore feel ownership of both the history course and its trainees.

Crucially, be very clear on this: THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A 'TRAINING COURSE' THAT IS SEPARATE FROM WHAT HAPPENS IN SCHOOL. THERE IS ONE COURSE - THE MAJORITY OF IT IS DELIVERED IN SCHOOL, BY HIGHLY TRAINED SUBJECT MENTORS WHO OWN THAT COURSE.

Passionate about historical knowledge

Cambridge history mentors regularly discuss and seek to improve ways of ensuring that trainees plan for, teach, evaluate and assess pupils' substantive historical knowledge. Our culture is one of passion for ensuring that all pupils - *including and especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds where reference points in abstract knowledge, high culture and political complexity may be thin or absent* - are gradually helped to become fluent in the structures and vocabulary that make the past intelligible and history's academic discourse meaningful.

We unashamedly passionate about bringing cultural capital to pupils from all backgrounds. Secure, broad, confident historical knowledge of the full sweep of **British history** and is vital to this. Secure, broad, confident historical knowledge of a good range of **world history** topics and themes is also vital. This knowledge cannot be taught quickly or cursorily.

The construction of content-thorough curricula is challenging and on the history mentor team we all work together to make sure that the new generation of history teachers is well-equipped to construct such curricula, especially at **the all-important Key Stage 3 which is the only specialist history education many students will get.** We also aim, by the end of the course, to equip them to argue, in constructive ways, with those who imagine that genericist approaches to curricula or skills-led models of curricula are adequate or that a heavily reduced Key Stage 3 is adequate to teaching the NC for history properly. For us, we are clear: they are not.

Passionate about historical scholarship

As Cambridge history mentors we take as our reference point the writings of academic historians. We regularly read historical scholarship in order to build our own subject knowledge, to expand our grasp of historiographical debate and to renew our thinking about rigorous historical questions which might shape students' learning sequences. As a team, we take this very seriously, marking that commitment by carving out a slot on our mentor training days purely to discuss historical scholarship.

We believe that we must model a culture of scholarly reading, as part of normal, routine professional activity, to our trainees, *especially* if this is not encouraged or valued by our senior leaders. Only thus will trainees gain an activist mentality on this crucial issue, fighting for a scholarly culture in their future departments and showing its power in deepening their conceptions of rigour in the history classroom.

Getting to grips with the intellectual structure of the discipline

A distinctive feature of the Cambridge history PGCE is the way in which trainees are introduced to the conceptual structure of the discipline of history, relating it to pupils' learning at the same

time. Subject Lecturer and history mentors together show trainees how second-order concepts help us to talk about the types of historical thinking that pupils are asked to do.

The second-order concepts of **change/continuity**, **causation** and **similarity/difference** explicit within the 2014 NC (and central to every history NC since the first in 1991) are introduced in Term 1 through reading scholarship, through practical classroom activities, through analysis of diverse types of planning and assessment, through discussion in university-based Subject Studies, through varied readings and through structured reflection on those readings. At the same time, in school, mentors continue and sustain these discussions, using readings to place their own classroom-based practice in a much wider context and encouraging the trainee in classroom-based experimentation and evaluation of their own. All this is followed up by mentors throughout Terms 2 and 3 in an individualised programme that suits the trainee's development.

A fourth second-order concept - historical **significance** - *is introduced by mentors alone*, during one of the pre-structured "fortnightly reading themes" in Term 2. This becomes a basis for mentor-led planning, classroom practice, evaluation and discussion on historical significance, all in the context of the teacher-authored history education literature from the last 20 years. As a history mentor you would therefore need to be fully familiar with all the key articles, debates and research into how historical significance can or might be taught in the history classroom.

As in all subjects in the Cambridge PGCE, history mentors have a detailed subject handbook. This History Handbook helps them to:

- navigate the pre-structured elements of training and ensure all trainees have had their entitlement in the context of the history course;
- make good choices of training activity or to design creative training activities of their own for the tailor-made, personalised aspects of training.

Why use a self-evaluation questionnaire?

New history mentors want to know what they and their departments are taking on and to be ready for it. The History Handbook - the result of years of collaborative work among the history mentor team - can also seem daunting at first. New history mentors could come on board enthusiastically and then find they have bitten off more than they want to chew. This could create problems for their trainees. Trainees want the same level of professional discourse and classroom experimentation as their peers. Trainees develop high expectations, quite quickly, when they compare experiences with one another. The course therefore needs to be consistent in its demands and well co-ordinated across its 25 local history departments. We also want mentors who will not only maintain our high standards but will challenge us to raise them higher *and take shared responsibility for the performance of the entire history mentor team.*

We have therefore prepared this questionnaire to help ***you*** decide if you are ready and/or to think carefully about how you might prepare. The questionnaire is a purely informal tool. It is not a way of 'assessing' you. It is simply an opportunity for you to think through the nature of the role, well in advance. One might call it a self-study questionnaire.

The questionnaire can also be used as a basis for informal discussion between you and the relevant history Cambridge Partnership staff (Christine Counsell, Kath Goudie, Michael Fordham, members of History Mentor Panel) about what to expect and to help you consider questions you might want to ask before coming on board. Rather than just giving you a 160-page handbook and expecting you to read the whole thing, some targeted questions give you a speedier way of accessing that handbook.

If you - or you and your colleagues - spend an hour or so working through this questionnaire you will gain a sense of whether you want to:

- a) request a history trainee in the coming year (or as soon as there is an opening for a new mentor);
- b) spend a year or more getting ready: e.g. attend history mentor days, catch up on history education literature, do more subject-based CPD, visit another school to observe a history mentor meeting or other experiences that we are happy to fix up for you (e.g. a day observing Subject Studies in the Faculty so that you know exactly how school and university work interrelate). Kath, Christine and Michael are delighted to support you as ‘aspiring mentors’. We will send you regular e-mail updates and keep you informed throughout the year.
- c) decide not to request a history trainee after all.

You, not we, are best placed to decide between these three options. ***To make that decision, however, you need to be fully familiar with the course and its demands.*** The questionnaire will help you to do that efficiently.

How is the questionnaire best used?

You will need both the History Handbook and the Section 1a assignment with you as you complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire invites you to look closely at examples of what history mentors typically do, using each of these documents.

To how many questions to I need to answer “YES”?

We wouldn’t want to be that precise. The questionnaire is a tool for you to gauge the ethos of the history mentor team and trainee expectations. That’s all. A rough rule-of-thumb might be that if you can answer ‘YES’ to 60% or more of the questions, and if you feel positive and excited about working towards the remainder, then you are probably ready to offer yourself as mentor. If you answer ‘YES’ to fewer than 60% and have doubts about how soon you could work towards a ‘YES’ in the rest, then you may want to consider option (b) above - that is to become an ‘aspiring mentor’ and to take a year or two to prepare yourself and your department.

The best way to do this is, first, to observe a day of Subject Studies in the university and to notice how the trainees’ learning feeds off their learning in school the previous week and feeds into their learning in school the very next day. Because your school is a member of the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education Partnership, you may roll up to any of these days, for free; second, to observe a history mentor meeting in a Partnership school; third, to read, read, read. Use the History Handbook as your starting guide.

Is the history mentor team looking for a certain style of history teaching?

An emphatic ‘No’. We are not trying to find departments where a particular type of teaching prevails. The course thrives on the diversity of the history mentors’ teaching styles and the richness of the knowledge from research and experience. Our non-negotiable baselines exist more deeply than surface style. They are the following:

- historical knowledge first;
- historical rigour in planning and evaluation;
- lower-attainers need not be lower-attainers for ever (no dumbing down);
- no re-inventing wheels (know the history-teacher-authored literature backwards).

How you get your trainee there will vary. During Term 3 history mentors encourage trainees to spend a day or two in other Partnership history departments, making sense of other history teaching content, planning and methods. Typically in Term 3, history mentors build a “training activity” (structured observation, analysis or evaluation, with associated discussion or reading) around a visit to a colleague in another school, precisely *because* that colleague’s approach is

different from their own. Sometimes history mentors will even accompany a history trainee on that visit in order to enjoy enriching their own thinking, as well as that of the trainee.

So giving you a self-evaluation questionnaire is definitely not a ruse to look for a ‘type’ of history teacher. It is about ensuring a certain level and quality of *discourse about* history education, not about fostering a particular style. What matters is that you would be knowledgeable and comfortable about leading a sophisticated discussion, grounded in diverse research literature (especially and crucially TEACHER-authored literature) on how to build historical knowledge and substantive concepts, on how to use second-order concepts in planning and/or other ways of thinking about disciplinary approaches.

What matters most?

Don’t let specific items of the voluminous detail in the History Handbook put you off. There is bound to be a reading here or a debate there that is unfamiliar. Provided you are positive about the value of history teachers reading widely and provided you are aware of major debates and the pattern of history education policy and practice, of history education scholarship and professional discourse across the last 20 years, then you can catch up with isolated items in due course. More important than isolated specifics are the general principles that inform the ethos of the course that Cambridge history mentors have developed. These things matter most:

- **A mentor with broad, up-to-date knowledge of history education literature** (i.e. literature on *pupils’* historical thinking/learning) and accompanying debates within the history education community, especially those core pieces that all trainees and mentors will read together, as specified in the History Handbook. In each mentor meeting your trainee will want and need to discuss influential articles written by other history teachers. All trainees will assume that all mentors are familiar with all this material, so you need to be well-read, and up-to-speed with all the driving curricular thinking that history *teachers* are doing nationally and publishing for other history *teachers*.
- **A commitment to reading historical scholarship** (as distinct from and in addition to history *education* scholarship), to encouraging the trainee to develop a passion for reading real history and to showing the trainee the role of such scholarship in curriculum design, from entire workschemes and progression models to detailed choice of content for a ten-minute story-telling episode. See Section D of the History Handbook which details our journey in this area.
- **A departmental culture of informed debate and critical enquiry about how pupils learn history, what order they should learn things in order to embed knowledge and what amounts to an adequately broad and rigorous curriculum.** This is a culture into which the trainee can be inducted and to which strong trainees can increasingly contribute, especially during Terms 2 and 3.
- **A departmental culture positive towards research, seeing research as part of teaching and not as a bolt-on extra.** Where both consuming and producing research are a normal part of a department’s approach to developing its knowledge and practice, mentoring fits in easily. “Consuming” research might mean using history education literature to inform debate about practice. “Producing” research might mean the department’s own innovation, reflection or evaluation, it might mean a full-blown research project or it might mean theorising new ways of defining or strengthening pupils’ historical learning.
- **Flexibility and openness: a willingness to see each trainee as an individual rather than to clone them in the department’s or mentor’s style.** Sometimes an outstanding trainee will emerge from an outstanding mentor and the former will be quite different from the latter in their history teaching style.

The self-evaluation questionnaire

This selection of scenarios will help you gain a feel for what is required of a mentor.

Issue and question	YES	NO
<p>1</p> <p>In the first three weeks of the course, trainees will be interested in where you stand in relation to how the history education community has changed its thinking on sources and evidence since the 1980s, and in particular the way in which history teachers in the 1990s criticised and reformed some of the 1970s/80s practices, making knowledge central. It does not matter what view you hold - these are bound to be diverse - just so long as you can talk about key developments in history teachers' debates and the collective efforts over the last 30 years to tackle the problems an informed way, using enough history teacher-authored literature to explain the contrasts.) See pages 14, 17 and 19 to and 23 of the History Handbook for examples of the issues history teachers such as Lang, McAleavy and LeCocq have raised and their influence on shifts in classroom practice and teacher thinking over the last fifteen years. These practical issues have implications for what pupils do and think in work with historical evidence.</p> <p>a) <i>If your trainee were to question you about your views on the writings of influential history teachers such as Lang, McAleavy or LeCocq, would you feel confident in relating your own practice and perspectives to the these teacher-thinkers?</i></p> <p>b) <i>Would you be confident to situate your own practice within historical sources in a narrative of the last 30 years? For example, are you aware of the knowledge revolution in the early 1990s which saw history teachers critique and transform the original SHP-inspired use of tiny and decontextualized sources, returning to more contextualised, knowledge-rich activities? Would you be able to critique current GCSE history examinations in the light of history teacher debates over the last 30 years? Would you be able to help your trainee build their own vision of more rigorous gold standards for 16-year-olds than we have at present?</i></p> <p>c) <i>Once knowledge reference points in the last 30 years, and especially knowledge of history teachers' recent writings on this, are secure, would you be comfortable in encouraging your trainee in open discussion and debate about this area of practice so that your trainee will enter the profession continuing to ask hard questions about how the communities of current history education practice can improve?</i></p>		
<p>2</p> <p>During the first few weeks of the course you will be helping the trainee set up Exercise 1 of their first assignment (Section 1a). This is all about the use of evidence and sources in history. History mentors use this exercise as a framework for devising their own creative training activities concerning knowledge, sources and evidence. Pages 13/14 and 19-23 of the History Handbook show the background knowledge you will need. Then take a look at Exercise 1 of Section 1a. Would you:</p>		
<p>a) <i>feel comfortable answering trainees' questions about your practice in relation to the demands of Exercise 1?</i></p> <p>b) <i>be able to find sufficient lessons (taught by either you or your colleagues) for trainees to observe that will allow them to discuss and openly explore the range of issues raised by the literature on evidence/sources?</i></p>		
<p>3</p> <p>Page 30 is an example of a Subject Studies day built around a second-order concept - in this instance causation. The whole day will be highly practical, with many classroom activities illustrating different approaches to helping pupils reason with causes and make sense of historical causation. This will be blended with the usual emphasis on knowledge and a constant emphasis on how to build efficient classroom discussion in disciplined ways. Take a look at the range of issues and practices introduced on that day and at the follow-up training on causation you, as mentor, would do on Weds/Thurs on page 32. Are you:</p>		
<p>a) <i>confident to discuss, debate with and question the trainee about the range of issues set out on page 32?</i></p>		

	<p>b) sufficiently familiar with Chapman's article on causation (<i>Camels, Diamonds and Counter-Factuals</i>) and the later pieces by Woodcock on extended essay writing and causation and by Chapman and Woodcock to use these in discussion with the trainee, as set out on page 32?</p> <p>c) able to explain where Chapman's work comes from? In other words, do you understand what, in the early NC and some GCSE and A Level courses he is reacting against and what research he would have been drawing on in addition to his own classroom practice?</p> <p>d) able to refer to several examples of historical scholarship which illustrate historians building causal arguments? e.g. last year all trainees debated with their mentors the introduction to Christopher Clark's <u>Sleepwalkers</u>. As a starting point, would you be able to suggest contrasting examples of scholarship with which they could compare Clark's argument?</p>	
4	<p>Look at Exercise 2 of Section 1a and at the guidance for mentors on setting up Exercise 2 on page 37 of History Handbook. Would you:</p> <p>a) feel confident to support a trainee in choosing a second-order concept or historical issue to focus on for Exercise 2?</p> <p>b) be able to help your trainee to design and lead their own classroom activity and evaluation by suggesting suitable readings on each of the second-order concepts (especially practical articles on particular conceptual areas written by history teachers)?</p>	
5	<p>The Cambridge history mentor team places historical knowledge at the centre of its training in planning, teaching, evaluation and assessment. Trainees therefore need a language for talking about many types of historical knowledge and for analysing its incidence and role in their lesson plans, as well as function as disciplinary building blocks across compulsory schooling. This underpins every training session in school and university, whether a conversation with a mentor in school or a broader discussions with other trainees in the university. Would you be able to:</p> <p>a) help a trainee to break down the layers of knowledge necessary in a particular lesson sequence, to analyse their potential interaction in students' learning and to discriminate among knowledge that needs to be embedded as a continuing structure and knowledge that is temporary 'fingertip' knowledge for that lesson only?</p> <p>b) plan an 'enquiry' (in Riley's 2000 sense; here, we <u>do not</u> mean 'independent enquiry' and we <u>do not</u> mean 'enquiry-based learning') with regard not only to the rigour of the historical question but to the forms and patterns of knowledge that must be taught and retained?</p> <p>c) show the trainee how to build medium- and long-term plans that work towards knowledge 'readiness' for the following year?</p>	
6	<p>Cambridge history mentors keep up with the latest debate, especially that in publications, by history teachers. This is particularly important in those areas where history teachers are trying to solve longstanding problems such as how to shape learning about historical change and continuity, the ways in which change and continuity informs substantive knowledge and its role as a second-order concept. During October and November in particular, you will need to support your trainee in practical teaching and in preparation for and discussion of that teaching using recent works on change and continuity by teachers. Would you be confident to:</p> <p>a) explain to trainees how Rachel Foster's 2008 and 2013 articles re-shaped the earlier work of history teachers on change/continuity?</p> <p>b) explain to a trainee, with reference to your own practice and that of other history teachers, why an 'enquiry question' or 'big question' entitled, 'Why did Russia change so much in 1917?' is not a question about change and will inevitably result in a causation essay that bypasses change altogether?</p> <p>c) give a trainee examples of how Level Description based assessment distorted the focus on historical change? Help a trainee devise, implement and evaluate alternative approaches to helping pupils build</p>	

	<p><i>knowledge-rich and rigorous arguments about historical change?</i></p> <p>d) notice when a trainee is using ideas about change/continuity that relate to educational research such as that by Blow (2011) and when they are using ideas that relate to types of argument about change such as that found in work by Counsell (2011), Foster (2013) or Jarman (2009)? Could you spot that distinction in their planning, teaching and evaluation and help them to use it to think about making their goals for learning more precise?</p>		
7	<p>Various examples of readings associated with “the Kinloch debate” on teaching the Holocaust are mentioned on pages 51 to 54. This is part of wider history teacher debates on teaching emotive and controversial issues. Trainees usually have widely contrasting views in this area. History mentors encourage them to read and debate, to experiment and evaluate, in order to challenge their preconceptions in this area and to consider pupils’ practical learning needs. Mentors usually enjoy becoming involved in these debates.</p> <p>a) <i>Have you read any of the literature in the Kinloch debate mentioned on pages 51 to 54?</i></p> <p>b) <i>Would you be comfortable challenging the trainee to consider critically the implications on any position in the debate, even if this meant enabling them to develop and defend a position different from your own?</i></p>		
8	<p>Take a look at pages 57 to 60 on “interpretations of history”. During Terms 2 and 3, you and your trainee will be building upon this work whenever practical opportunity to explore interpretations of history arises in your workschemes.</p> <p>a) <i>Are you familiar with McAleavy’s original work on ‘interpretations of history’ as a technical curricular concept (McAleavy’s work influenced some history teacher’s practice via the 1993 National Curriculum non-statutory guidance which he also wrote)?</i></p> <p>b) <i>Drawing upon the range of readings, practical ideas and issues on pages 57 to 60 do you think that you and your department are ready to foster a trainee’s reflection on ‘interpretations of history’ within a sufficiently wide context (i.e. relating it to the practice of other history teachers in the UK, to research and to other related literature such as that by academic historians)?</i></p> <p>c) <i>Could you help a struggling trainee to see what was wrong with a scheme of work that purported to be about ‘interpretations of history’ but actually just collapsed into ‘source work’? (a very common problem with weakish trainees!).</i></p> <p>d) <i>Look up the “Move Me On” in Teaching History 155 (June 2014 Edition). Would you be able to advise on the sample problem shown there?</i></p>		
9	<p>Pages 65 to 72 set out a school-based task on extended reading that all history trainees carry out with their mentors during the first three weeks of Term 2. Trainees might choose a work of historical scholarship or an extended original source - anything that requires pupils to read considerably more than they ordinarily would. (Short, doctored or decontextualised sources are strongly discouraged). Study the requirements of this school-based task carefully (pages 68-9) and the preparatory reading that will take place over Christmas (pages 65-7):</p> <p>a) <i>Do you have any existing models (e.g. departmental developmental work that you have already evaluated and debated) of getting pupils to read a few paragraphs through a focus on the rhythm, energy and atmosphere of a significant chunk of high-quality text?</i></p> <p>b) <i>Are you and/or your department familiar with at least three of the items of reading listed on pages 65-6? Could you help a trainee to distinguish between the different lines of argument about each?</i></p>		
10	<p>The first “fortnightly reading theme” (teaching managed solely by the history mentors) is on extended writing (see pages 83-4). In order to avoid being prescriptive and in order to introduce trainees to the wide range of practice, research and teacher-led debates in this area, Cambridge history mentors encourage trainees to read widely, accessing contrasting principles and practices and experimenting with these in the classroom. The suggested activities in the</p>		

	<p>right-hand column of pages 83 to 84 are key. Take a look at these training activities (from which you would either make a choice or use them as a model to develop activities suited to your trainee's needs).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Would you feel confident to use the training activities in the right hand column on pages 83-4?</i> <i>Would you be happy to support the trainee in developing their own, practical teaching approaches, and to support them in trying out and evaluating a couple of them, <u>during this fortnight in mid-November?</u></i> <i>Would you feel confident in judging when to intervene and steer the trainee into more reading (by other history teachers) if you felt that they in their efforts to teach essay writing they were just re-inventing a wheel (whether round or square) rather badly?</i> 		
11	<p>Whereas the majority of second-order concepts are introduced first through practical activities in the university and then followed up with your action-research based activities and reflective discussion in school, in the case of "historical significance", history mentors actually <u>introduce this second-order concept themselves</u>, in February, via a "fortnightly reading theme". Take a look at the fortnightly theme on pages 85-6:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Are you conversant with both the recent <u>history-teacher-led literature on historical significance</u> AND some <u>international research literature on pupil's thinking about historical significance</u>?</i> <i>Would you be happy to support your trainee in linking their practice with the wider published theorising of history teachers along the lines of the suggested training activities in the right-hand column on pages 85-6?</i> 		
12	<p>As a history mentor you will develop the trainee's critical thinking and reflective practice about assessment. This will happen all through the year but we also have one fortnight dedicated to a special focus on it, just to make sure that all trainees have located their thinking within wider debates and contrasting traditions. In particular this fortnight of mentor-trainee discussion is designed to make sure that trainees know how to be constructively critical of <u>inappropriate</u> use of the Level Descriptions (e.g. common abuses such as using them for single pieces of work, using them to set targets, atomising their elements or sub-levelling) and to develop their own alternatives that draw upon the full range of research and practice that the history education community has generated.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Is your department familiar with the debates in the 2004 Teaching History 115, the Assessment Without Levels Edition? This contains a wide range of contrasting assessment approaches developed by history teachers who have consistently eschewed the abuse of Levels ever since they were introduced.</i> <i>Would you be able to discuss ways of assessing pupils' growth in or fluency in historical knowledge? Would you be confident to help your trainee design markschemes and progression models that, unlike the Level Descriptions, privilege historical knowledge?</i> <i>Would you be happy to encourage a trainee to design and experiment with assessment structures that are <u>different</u> from the ones your department currently uses, as per the suggested training activity on pages 89-90?</i> <i>Could you see your department making use of a trainee and mentor's experimental work, such as that outlined on page 90, in its own professional development?</i> 		
13	<p>Sheehan, Rogers, Booth, Husbands, Barton, Wineburg, Lee and Shemilt (mentioned on pages 19, 20, 34, 39, 40, 41 and 45) represent widely contrasting traditions of history education research.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Are you familiar with the research of two or more of these influential history education researchers?</i> <i>Would you be able to relate their work to practical, day-to-day considerations in pupils' historical learning?</i> <i>Would you <u>enjoy</u> studying the work of these and/or other history education researchers in order to find fresh ways to stretch and challenge your trainee's thinking as well as to reflect upon your own?</i> 		

14	<p>By Christmas trainees will be familiar with works by historians and philosophers of history such as Allan Megill.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="287 204 1247 265">a) <i>Are you confident to draw connections and contrasts between history education research and philosophy of history?</i> <li data-bbox="287 271 1247 399">b) <i>Would you be able to lead a discussion about whether or not a scheme of work for Year 9 was really tackling an historical question (as opposed to a moral question) and to refer your trainee to works of history and/or philosophy of history to help them think through the issues?</i> 		
15	<p>Pages 92 to 100 set out the rationale, process and many examples of the trainee's 1c assignment - an 8,000 word dissertation, involving research into the trainee's own practice and its impact on pupils' learning. This is one of the most important parts of the course and a central part of the mentor's training approach during Terms 2 and 3. Pages 99 to 100, for example, set out how the 1c can support and improve a trainee's teaching. It is key tool used skilfully by history mentors. The titles on pages 94 to 98 show the range of exciting titles possible. The trainee's research will benefit the department's thinking and practice as well as that of the trainee.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="287 698 1247 826">a) <i>Most of the titles on pages 94 to 98 involve giving the trainee a lot of freedom to experiment with new content areas and/or new conceptual angles. Would you be happy for a trainee to take over and transform about 4 weeks of one of your workschemes in this way?</i> <li data-bbox="287 828 1247 1125">b) <i>During the research period (usually mid-February to end-March), mentors may need to exercise great flexibility with the trainee's timetable, sometimes reducing direct teaching to 6 or 7 lessons a week only. The work of gathering data about the pupils' learning (listening to recordings, analysing videos, interviewing pupils, interpreting the results of innovative assessment) may benefit the trainee's teaching much more than merely teaching more and more lessons (especially when they do not have time to plan them thoughtfully with reference to wide reading). Would you be supportive of this kind of temporary flexibility with the timetable?</i> <li data-bbox="287 1127 1247 1233">c) <i>Would you be able to find creative ways of allowing the trainee's research activity to redound to the benefit of <u>both</u> department and trainee (see page 100 for examples)?</i> <li data-bbox="287 1235 1247 1340">d) <i>Do you have experience of conducting your own action research or other forms of systematic professional enquiry requiring knowledge of research methods and an ability to use research to improve your own teaching?</i> <li data-bbox="287 1343 1247 1493">e) <i>Have you had training (eg in your own PGCE or MEd training) in how to create research questions? Do you know what kinds of research questions shape an action research project or case study that is primarily about curricular theorising? (Mentors help trainees to construct research questions before advising them on research methodology and method).</i> 		
16	<p>One thing you will do in each weekly mentor meeting is to make the trainee's needs coalesce into two or three broad targets that will govern the training activities for the next week or fortnight. This process of devising targets and training activities is fully illustrated on pages 102 to 104. Examples of how history mentors record each week's decisions on targets and training activities are given in an appendix on pages 137-142. This process involves managing the work of the other history teachers who are contributing to the training process. All teachers in the department who are involved with the trainee will need to read the weekly Mentor Meeting Record Sheet (141-2).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="287 1792 1247 2001">a) <i>Study pages 102 to 104. Are you in a position to lead and manage your colleagues in keeping the focus of the trainee's teaching on the weekly targets, as shown in the examples on pages 102 to 104? [For example, in his/her written feedback, you may need to ask the Year 9 teacher to focus <u>only</u> on your trainee's explanation work, taking into account the specific issues you and the trainee discussed in the previous mentor meeting.]</i> <li data-bbox="287 2003 1247 2088">b) <i>Notice other ways in which the whole department is used on pages 102-4, and how their overall work with the trainee managed directly by the mentor. Can you foresee opportunities and mechanisms whereby the</i> 		

	<p><i>trainees' needs, targets and training activities can be effectively communicated, on a weekly basis, to your colleagues?</i></p>	
17	<p>This question is about critical dialogue in post-lesson feedback. The history mentor team has developed a tradition of keeping post-lesson oral feedback focused on two things: the quality and type of historical knowledge and historical thinking pupils' display. This requires considerable historical knowledge and also expertise concerning diverse issues in historical learning. The style of the feedback is dominated by questions: our feedback is always a challenging dialogue, not a lecture. Typical, high-quality questions used by history mentors during post-lesson discussion are illustrated on pages 109 to 112. Please take a close look at all these questions.</p> <p>a) <i>Are you confident that you and your colleagues could foster post-lesson critical dialogue by framing the kinds of conceptually probing questions you see on pages 109 to 112?</i></p> <p>b) <i>Do you have ideas on how you could support your colleagues' ability to question the trainee using the level and of conceptual challenge and historical rigour modelled on pages 109 to 112?</i></p> <p>Note: Question 14 is one of the most important for you to consider. In the past, the MOST COMMON CAUSE OF TRAINEE DISSATISFACTION was frustration with oral feedback that is (i) not <u>dialogic</u> or stretching (i.e. turns into a lecture or "this is how I would have done it"); and (ii) does not focus chiefly on <u>pupils' historical knowledge</u> as shown on pages 109 to 112 (i.e. collapses into advice on classroom management only, or into pedagogy only rather than <u>what pupils are actually learning</u>).</p> <p><i>(After the end of the questionnaire, there is a special note about this question. See pages 13 to 14 below).</i></p>	
18	<p>Pages 155 to 160 set out principles for written feedback after lessons. These are principles that have been developed by and with the history mentor team over 8 years. The principles are similar to those for oral feedback, but there are additional issues that history mentors consider important. Notice the underlying differences between the spoof feedback on Desperate Dan's lesson by Mandy Missthepoint on page 157 and the very good feedback on exactly the same lesson by Paul Positive on page 158.</p> <p><i>Mandy Missthepoint is neither analytic in her analysis of pupils' learning nor does she encourage and challenge Des to be analytic himself. Could you use these two sheets to run a training session for your colleagues on exploring principles underlying strong feedback?</i></p>	
19	<p>The trainee must make progress in his/her knowledge of the discipline throughout the course and you will be monitoring this (as well as provide training in it in the pre-structured moments which you already explored in questions above). Page 150-153 is a form the trainee uses to plan and review their progress in building subject knowledge as it relates to practical planning and pupils' learning. This becomes even more important as you start to get your trainee to plan lesson sequences rather than individual lessons.</p> <p>a) <i>Would you and your history colleagues be able to point trainees in the direction of particular works by historians and other resources by historians (such as podcasts or websites) in order to remediate the gaps in their subject knowledge, as required on the audit?</i></p> <p>b) <i>Does your department regularly discuss its enquiry questions (or lesson sequences built around a single big question) in terms of the type of historical thinking (e.g. causal reasoning, gauging change/continuity, evidential thinking...) that is expected across a lesson sequence?</i></p> <p>c) <i>Would you feel confident to discuss with trainees the complex issues surrounding how the second-order concepts (causation, change/continuity, difference or significance etc) can shape an enquiry question and to examine whether those concepts really are shaping the thinking required in the final activity of the enquiry?</i></p> <p>d) <i>Would you and your colleagues feel comfortable about strong trainees adapting or re-writing aspects of your workschemes in order to strengthen or clarify i) the content thoroughness; ii) the conceptual</i></p>	

	<p><i>demand? Would you be keen for them to share the practical results of this work in a departmental meeting, for example?</i></p>		
20	<p>In 2007, the history mentor team, led by Giles Fullard, mentor at Hinchingbrooke School, developed a new entitlement for history trainees in the form of “Joint-mentor-trainee reading of historical scholarship”. The team is passionate about inducting trainees into a department that regularly reads historical scholarship (i.e. up-to-date literature by academic historians, as opposed to the history <i>education</i> literature referred to elsewhere in this questionnaire). Read Section D of the History Handbook (pp 125-129) to find out more about this entitlement and how and why the history mentor team developed it.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">a) <i>Having read Section D of the History Handbook, do you feel excited about joining and supporting the ethos and culture set out in that section?</i></p> <p class="list-item-l1">b) <i>Would you be able to commit to reading one substantial work of serious historical scholarship a year, and discussing it with your trainee?</i></p> <p class="list-item-l1">c) <i>Does your department ever discuss works of historical scholarship, just for the sake of delighting in recent academic historical advances, updating its knowledge and seeking out new material and debates?</i></p> <p>If you would like more ideas on how to get going with the kinds of discussion set out in Section D, take a look at one of the Polychronicon features in any edition of <i>Teaching History</i>. These Polychronicons are designed to help busy history departments to update their knowledge of historical scholarship and to make informed choices about what to read.</p>		
21	<p>This question concerns the atmosphere or ethos of the departmental community and its physical space. When trainees join a department, they become part of its intellectual culture, its professional community and its social dynamic. As well as working in a formal one-to-one mentor meeting each week, trainees interact regularly with members of the department, doing everything from discussing historical issues and exploring pedagogic or conceptual problems, to taking their turn at making coffee for colleagues, using the photocopier or discussing improvements to the departmental website, just like any member of your department. Of course, they need to observe all the usual courtesies surrounding use of scarce resources and to be sensitive to pressures on your time; equally, they will need to feel welcome in your base or resource room and not feel nervous about joining in departmental discussions (formal and informal), about asking for help or about using and contributing to your resources.</p> <p><i>Do you feel confident that you and your colleagues would be happy to have a trainee as a full part of your history department community? (e.g. involving the trainee in formal and informal discussion about history and historical learning that arises on a daily basis, inviting them to feel comfortable and welcome in normal daily social interactions and normal use of social resources and rituals [such as making coffee/tea, celebrating birthdays etc], encouraging them both to use your existing resources and to contribute collaboratively to new ones, having a physical space to work within your departmental community, and ensuring that trainees feel fully welcome within it etc).</i></p>		

Getting the whole history department to understand the history handbook and its implications for all interactions with the trainees

Finally, let's have a look at Question 17 in the questionnaire in a little more depth. Unless the whole history department actually reads pages 109 to 112 it is unlikely that they will realise what good post-lesson dialogue and feedback embodies. How might you achieve this with your department? Here we have reproduced an extract of that bit of the handbook (from page 111), together with an additional commentary for aspiring mentors. We suggest devoting a bit of a department meeting to looking at an extract such as this, and fostering self-evaluation and debate along the lines suggested in the italics we have inserted here:

Extract from History Handbook, page 111:

Questions that help the trainee to:

- evaluate lessons perceptively so as to inform future practice;
- demonstrate intellectual engagement with problems in the structure of the discipline;
- relate these to choice of learning objectives.

These pupils clearly enjoyed their activity on the abolition of the slave trade. But how, exactly, did their knowledge of abolition issues and narratives increase? Why was this? In what ways might you break up the components of attitudes towards abolition in order to strengthen their recall and comprehension of crucial parts of the narrative? What insights do you gain from this about how to adapt your introduction when you do this with the lower-attaining group?

How does your department currently reflect on how/whether/why substantive knowledge (as opposed to conceptual/second-order knowledge) has been augmented by a particular activity?

Was this lesson really about source evaluation or was it really about causation? What does their homework suggest that they thought it was about? You seemed to veer between the two in both your oral comments on their discussion and in your written comments in their homework. Nothing wrong at all with blending the two, but if this is really what you were trying to do, how might this have been reflected in your lesson objectives? Let's have a go, together, at rewording them. You start...

Is this an issue your own department ever engages in, in relation to its own practice? Can you think of examples of where linking source evaluation with causation is unhelpful, rather than appropriate?

Do you want pupils to know why the First World War is historically significant or do you want them to choose their own criteria for judging significance? Or did you want them to operate with criteria you had given? When you asked Year 9 to fill in a column on 'why the technology was important in the war', what did you mean by 'important'? Important for the war effort? Important in advancing technology? Relatively important in relation to something else? Historically significant? A turning point? What does 'important' mean in this setting? In short, you need to think much harder about what 'significance' as opposed to 'importance' is really about.

What knowledge did these pupils lack? How did this lack manifest itself? How did it get in the way of meaningful discussion of significance? From earlier sections of our workschemes, where do you think their knowledge was secure and where did it need either more reinforcement of their original learning or further expansion?

You say you wanted to put into practice what Hammond, Hunt, Phillips and Seixas were saying about historical significance, but these four history teachers differ profoundly! Which of them were you trying to experiment with? What is YOUR view about what we are trying to do when we get pupils to think about historical significance? Take a look at their work again and then come back to me and we'll have a think, together, about what sort of historical thinking your significance chart could help pupils undertake and how it intersects with supports thorough knowledge growth.

This is an aspect of subject work - historical significance - that mentors introduce in school in

Week 23 of PP2. In considering your answer to Question 17 of the questionnaire above, would you and your colleagues feel equipped to initiate dialogue with the trainee along these lines? An honest discussion with the department about this, now, might foster preparedness more effectively than just dishing out the relevant articles and hoping colleagues will read them.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Cambridge history course has benefited greatly from diverse practice and understandings of history mentors concerning historical significance. Does your department have any distinctive practice in teaching historical significance which you think might add to the sum of knowledge in our history mentor team? Mentors regularly enjoy sharing their latest practice with the full mentor team on our subject mentor days, and debating their (often widely contrasting) approaches. Through this sharing and debate, we continue to develop as a team.

* * *

Thank you for spending time thinking about the role of history mentor using this questionnaire. We hope you have found it stimulating. If you would like to discuss your readiness to take a history trainee, gain advice on anything you could do to prepare, or share a new way in which you might contribute, please feel free to contact Christine Counsell cc247@cam.ac.uk or Kath Goudie km432@cam.ac.uk and we will put you in touch with a member of the history mentor panel with whom you can discuss any of these issues.