



National College for  
Teaching & Leadership

# Application guidance

for

## Cohort four

## Specialist leaders of education (SLE)

# Summary

**About this guidance** This is non-statutory advice from the National College. It has been produced to support potential applicants by explaining the application and reference requirements and the SLE assessment process.

**Who is this guidance for?** School leaders, staff and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies and early years settings who meet the eligibility criteria

## Key dates and points

Application form available on website	2 October 2013
Application round opens	2 October 2013
Application round closes	Midnight at the end of 23 October. Applications received after this time will not be considered.
Applicants are invited to attend face-to-face assessment activities	4 – 28 November
Teaching schools communicate decisions to applicants	By 6 December
Designation appeals window	9 December – 31 January
Designated SLEs access training	January – March 2014

*Dates are subject to change. For the latest information, please check the website (cited below)*

1. Allow time for your headteacher referee to complete and upload the application form.
2. Allow approximately one week to provide significant evidence about your eligibility for the role of SLE. You will need this time to think about, discuss, and complete the application form.
3. You should allow a minimum of one week to complete the application.

**Contact information** If you have any questions about the application process, please visit the FAQ section on the website [www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle](http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle) or contact us at [sle.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sle.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk)

## Related documents

- Website: [www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle](http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle)

The following documents are available on the web pages above:

- System Leadership prospectus
- Teaching School alliance and their priorities for recruitment of SLEs
- Guidance for referees

# Specialist leaders of education (SLEs)

## Cohort 4 SLE application guidance

### What is an SLE?

SLEs are outstanding middle and senior leaders in positions below the headteacher, with at least two years' leadership experience. They have a particular area of expertise (such as a subject area, early years, behaviour or school business management) and a successful track record of school improvement.

SLEs support leaders in other schools. They have excellent interpersonal skills, are able to work sensitively and collaboratively with others and have a commitment to outreach work. They understand what outstanding leadership practice in their area of specialism looks like and can help other leaders to achieve it in their own context.

The SLE role is about developing other middle and senior leaders so that they have the skills to lead their own teams and improve practice in their own schools. This may be done through one-to-one peer coaching or facilitated group support and could involve a variety of activities, such as data analysis, coaching or joint action planning.

SLEs can come from any school or academy, including nursery, primary, secondary, special, pupil referral unit, independent or free school, or sixth form college. Whilst the individual must be outstanding, his or her school does not have to be.

Just over 2500 SLEs have been designated to date: the aim is to designate around 5000 SLEs by 2014-15.

### How it works

Models and types of deployments will vary. For example, one deployment might be a two-day diagnostic exercise, whilst another might require a three-month, full-time support role. Time may be taken as a block of consecutive days or spread over a longer period. There is no defined time commitment for deployments as time should be agreed between parties. However, SLEs and schools will need to think carefully about the likely commitment and capacity.

SLEs will meet the needs and demands of the system and are being actively deployed. We would like to see at least half of SLEs deployed within three months of designation. SLEs will be expected to show evidence that their work has had a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people by developing leadership capacity in other schools.

Teaching schools are responsible for the recruitment, designation, brokerage, deployment and quality assurance of SLEs. Each teaching school has a number of SLEs that it is responsible for. Teaching schools alliances may choose to network and join their SLEs together to offer an even wider range of expertise.

More information about the eligibility criteria, what's involved and who can become an SLE is available on the National College website at [www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle](http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle).

### Headteacher support

Applicants who apply for the programme **must** have the support and agreement of their headteacher, who will confirm that the school has the capacity to release them. The headteacher will act as the applicant's referee and will complete a reference section in the application form. They will need to provide a supporting statement showing evidence of how the applicant meets the criteria and how he or she has supported a middle or senior leader from another school or academy.

## Funding, training and support

SLEs will need to attend a one-day core mandatory training session. This will be delivered by selected teaching schools (SLE training schools) around the country. The training day provides an introduction to the SLE role and equips SLEs with the tools and techniques to deliver effective school-to-school support. SLEs are also entitled to attend two enrichment modules. All of the above training is fully funded by the National College.

There may be payment for specific SLE deployments either from schools receiving support or from other sources or commissioning bodies to help the SLE's own school with reimbursement for backfill or supply cover. Any such payment will be agreed and managed at the local level by the teaching school and/or other schools involved.

## Before you begin your application

- **Check that you are eligible to become an SLE.** The current criteria and approved areas of expertise are available at [www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle](http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle). You will need to give evidence that you meet all areas of the SLE eligibility criteria and are outstanding in at least one of the approved SLE areas of expertise. You may find it useful to refer to the table on page seven of this document, which details how the application questions link to the eligibility criteria.
- **Choose a teaching school alliance.** Teaching school alliances have identified the priorities of their alliance or area and will be recruiting SLEs in accordance with their needs. You can apply to any teaching school alliance, but it is recommended that you apply to one that has identified your specialism as a priority for recruitment and that you are close enough geographically to undertake deployments that may be assigned to you. You can view **teaching school alliances and their priorities for recruitment at [www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle/sle-apply](http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle/sle-apply)**. If a teaching school alliance does not have your specialism as one of its priorities, you may wish to contact the teaching school to discuss this further. You **must** select a named teaching school alliance on the online section of your application. The National College will forward your application details to the teaching school alliance you have selected, at the end of the application round.
- **Read through the application questions.** Part 2 of the application form can be downloaded from the website during the recruitment window. An [example version](#) is available on the website. Guidance to help you complete your application form is provided in this document, along with a table showing how the evidence provided in your application will be assessed against the SLE eligibility criteria.
- **Talk to your referee.** Your application must be supported by your headteacher or principal. The reference is an essential part of your application and we strongly recommend that you discuss your application with your headteacher, before applying, to ensure that you have his or her support. Share the application guidance with your headteacher and be sure to allow sufficient time for him or her to complete your reference and upload your application before the deadline.
- **Set sufficient time aside.** The SLE application process is rigorous and requires you to provide significant evidence about your eligibility for the role. You should set aside sufficient time to think about, discuss and complete the application form.
- **Have your personal and school information to hand.** When you start to complete the application form, you will need to enter or verify certain information about yourself, your school and your referee. Details can be found in the next section of this document.

## The application form

The SLE application form consists of two parts, and is accessible from the National College website at [www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle/sle-apply](http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle/sle-apply).

### Part 1

Part 1 of the application is completed online. You need to be registered as a member of the College in order to complete the form. If you are not a member, you will be prompted to register before you can continue.

Part 1 of the application form asks for the following information to confirm that you are eligible to apply to be an SLE.

- Identify your headteacher referee and supply your referee's email address. Once this is completed, an email is immediately sent to your headteacher informing him or her of your nomination. The email will include a link that your headteacher will need to retain in order to upload your application form once it is complete.
- Select the teaching school alliance that you would like to apply to. See *choose a teaching school alliance* above for more details.
- State how you heard about the SLE programme.

We recommend that you start the online section of your application at the earlier stage of the application window opening. This is to ensure that your referee has sufficient time to complete the reference and upload the form before the deadline.

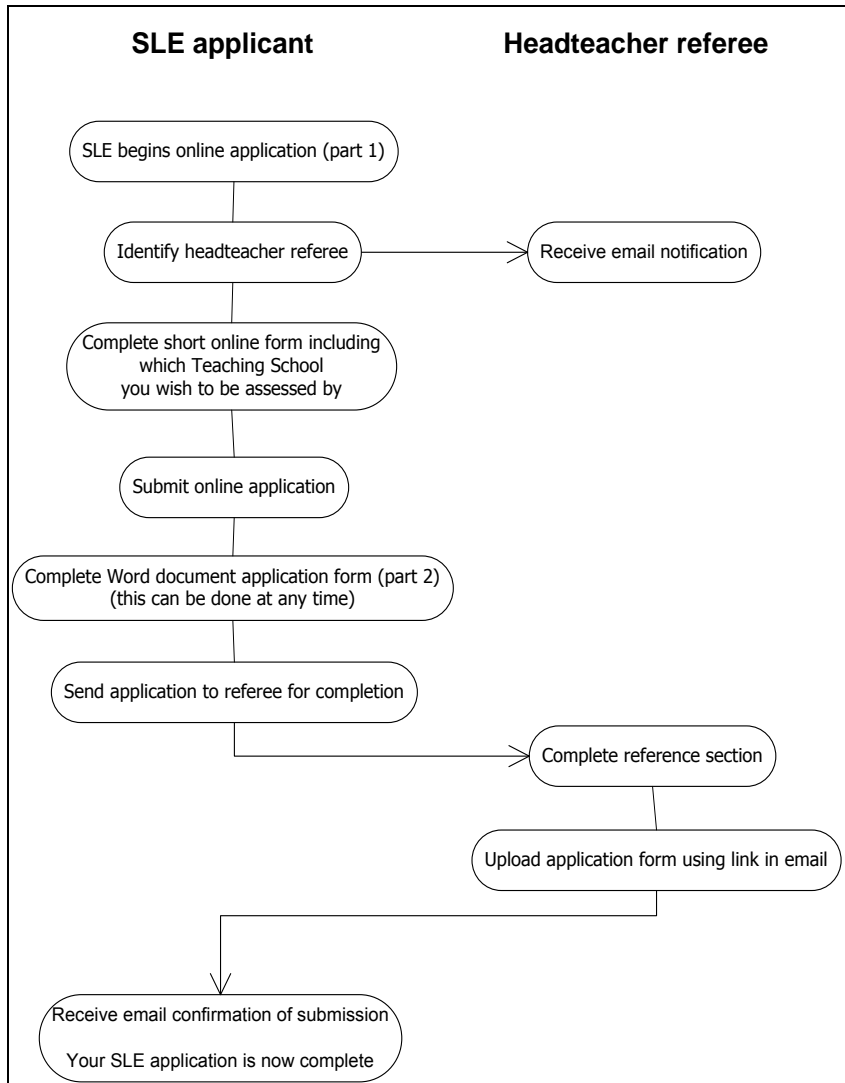
It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete this part of your application.

### Part 2

The second part of the application form is a downloadable Word document, available on the website or via part 1.

- This part of the application form will be added to your online application once it is uploaded by your headteacher referee.
- **All the questions are mandatory.** It is not possible for your application form to be considered unless all the questions are completed.
- Some parts of the application form have character limits (stated on the form) that will include spaces and bullet points.
- Once you have completed your application form, you will need to send it to your headteacher to complete the reference section. Once complete, your headteacher will need to upload the document using the link provided in their referee invitation email. Once part 2 of the application has been uploaded, it will be matched with the information you submitted in part 1.
- The document uploaded must be in Word format (.doc or .docx), not a PDF or any other format.

The diagram below outlines the process for application.



**It is your responsibility to ensure that your headteacher receives, completes and submits your application form before the application window closes.**

Part 1 (the online application) must be submitted and part 2 (the Word document) must be uploaded before **midnight at the end of 23 October 2013**.

## Application questions

The table below details the application questions and shows how they link to the eligibility criteria. This will help applicants ensure that they provide the appropriate evidence in each response.

Application question	How the question links to the eligibility criteria
<b>Specialist area(s) of expertise</b>	
Please indicate your specialist area(s) and the length of time you have been a specialist within that field	You can list as many specialist areas as you feel are necessary. However, they must take into account the priorities of the teaching school and the areas of expertise.
<b>General</b>	
Do you hold a leadership role or responsibility within your school?	<b>Experience:</b> SLEs will have a minimum of two years' experience in a leadership role within a school or academy.
Please indicate how long you have been in this role. <i>If fewer than two years, please detail your previous leadership role or responsibility and the name of the school where you held this role.</i>	<b>Experience:</b> SLEs will be outstanding middle or senior leaders with at least two years' experience and excellent knowledge in a particular field of expertise. SLEs will have a minimum of two years' experience in a leadership role within a school or academy.
<b>Leadership experience and capacity</b>	
Question 1: <i>What motivates you to participate in system leadership?</i>	<b>Capacity and commitment:</b> SLEs will have a commitment to outreach work, and the capacity to undertake such work. <b>Track record:</b> SLEs will have a successful track record, supported by substantial evidence of impact of working effectively within their own school and/or across a group of schools or working with a range of leaders within a single school.
Question 2: <i>Please outline the significant impact of your contribution as a leader to supporting leaders in other schools or to your own school's performance. Please detail the impact and demonstrate clear evidence of your outstanding practice within your area(s) of expertise or specialism.</i>	<b>Experience:</b> SLEs will be outstanding middle or senior leaders with at least two years' experience and excellent knowledge in a particular field of expertise. <b>Track record:</b> SLEs will have a successful track record, supported by substantial evidence of impact of working effectively within their own school and/or across a group of schools, or working with a range of leaders within a single school. <b>Skills:</b> SLEs will have an understanding of what constitutes 'outstanding' in their field of expertise and the ability and confidence to articulate this. SLEs will have an appreciation of how their specialism and skills can contribute to the wider school improvement agenda.

<p>Question 3:  <i>Please provide examples of where you have worked sensitively with peer colleagues using coaching or facilitation skills to grow leadership capacity in others leading to sustainable improvements.</i></p>	<p><b>Track record:</b> SLEs will have evidence of successfully using coaching and/or facilitation skills to bring about sustainable improvements.  SLEs will have excellent communication and interpersonal skills.  SLEs will have the ability to utilise high levels of emotional intelligence to work sensitively and collaboratively with peer colleagues.</p>
<p>Question 4:  <i>Please provide a clear example of a time when you have significantly challenged, collaborated, motivated and/or inspired your colleagues to establish new, innovative working practices. What was the impact?</i></p>	<p><b>Skills:</b> SLEs will have excellent communication and interpersonal skills.  SLEs will have an analytical approach in identifying needs and the ability to prioritise accordingly, including the ability to set and establish new and innovative working practices.</p>
<p>Question 5:  <i>Please give excerpts from Ofsted reports if your practice has been cited there and/or performance results/outcomes you have been accountable for in your area of work have been commented on. Please reference clearly the Ofsted report(s) where these comments are made as these may be verified</i></p>	<p><b>Track record:</b> SLEs will have a successful track record, supported by substantial evidence of impact of working effectively within their own school and/or across a group of schools, or working with a range of leaders within a single school.</p>
<p><b>Additional information</b></p>	
<p><i>Please provide any other information that demonstrates your expert knowledge in your field of expertise in support of your application.</i></p>	<p><b>Experience, skills, track record, capacity and commitment:</b> SLEs will be outstanding middle or senior leaders with at least two years' experience and excellent knowledge in a particular field of expertise.</p>

## Technical support

If applicants or referees have technical issues or queries regarding the process, please contact the help desk on 0845 609 0009 or email [college.enquiries@bt.com](mailto:college.enquiries@bt.com).

## General support

For general queries, please refer to the information on the National College website, including the FAQs at [www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle](http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/sle). If this does not answer your query, please email the SLE team at [sle.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sle.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk).

## Confidentiality and data protection

By submitting your online application form, you are giving your consent to the following conditions in relation to confidentiality and data protection:

- National College data-sharing** SLE applicants understand that their application forms will be shared with an identified teaching school or teaching school alliance for review as teaching schools hold core responsibility for SLE recruitment and designation. Applicants can choose to opt out of this process, however, this would prevent their application forms from being taken further. Should applicants wish to opt out of this



process, they will need to contact the SLE team by email at [sle.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sle.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk).

**School to School Support Directory** Details of SLE specialisms via a teaching school alliance will be added to a national register of system leaders. This will be available to the public and easily accessible by National College staff, the Department for Education, relevant local authority school improvement personnel, schools and other such trusted individuals or organisations who may wish to commission SLE services. Information on when and where an SLE is deployed may also be shared with individuals and organisations if agreed by the SLE and/or teaching school in order to:

- o help monitor supply and demand for SLE deployments
- o help to prepare case studies and good news stories
- o provide national and regional statistics on the number of types of deployment
- o help the National College to monitor the impact of the programme

### **Declaration and final submission**

At the end of part 1 (the online section) you will find a 'Final submission' page. By submitting your application form you are declaring that the evidence you have provided on the form is true.

You will not be able to review or amend any of your answers once you have submitted your application form and therefore you are strongly advised to review all of your answers at this point. You must ensure that you have answered all of the questions, otherwise your application may not contain sufficient evidence to be assessed.

## **The assessment process**

### **Assessment**

Teaching schools will be responsible for assessing applicants. This includes carrying out the initial sift, selection, assessment activities and final designation. Teaching schools have an agreed allocation of SLE places and they are committed to ensuring that they manage a fair and open process.

### **Face-to-face activities**

Teaching schools will invite successful applicants to undertake some form of face-to-face assessment activities. Assessment activities may include an individual presentation and/or interview and/or an observed group discussion. The teaching school will provide details and requirements before your assessment.

A panel from the teaching school will assess applicants against the agreed SLE designation criteria. A headteacher from another teaching school is required to form part of the panel and will have a formal role in ensuring consistency and moderation throughout the assessment process. The headteacher of another teaching school will be responsible for formally supporting and signing off the designation process.

Teaching schools will submit their designation recommendations to the National College for validation. We will confirm outcomes to the teaching school, which will then communicate designation outcomes to applicants in writing.