





Astra Assessment Only Route TO QTS Partnership Agreement (2025/26)

*** Please DOWNLOAD the form as a Word doc or create a copy in Google docs to fill out the application.**

This Partnership Agreement sets out the agreement between Dr Challoner's Grammar School ("Astra" or "the Provider") and the Partner School named in the table below ("the Partner School" or "the School") for both the:

- Initial assessment of a Candidate for suitability for the Assessment Only ("AO") programme
- The provision of the AO programme for Candidates that are assessed as suitable.

It clarifies the commitments (including financial) that the Partner School undertakes by entering the Partnership, and what they may expect from Astra.

Name of the candidate:	
Partner School Details:	
Name of Partner School:	
Headteacher of Partner School	
Signature	
Date	
Name of IITco of Partner School	
ASTRA	
Headteacher	Mr. David Atkinson
Signature	
Co-Principal of Astra	Mr Andrew Millar
Signature	

This Partnership Agreement sets out both the roles and responsibilities of each party (School, Candidate, Astra) in the delivery of the Assessment Only programme (Section 2) together with the commercial arrangements in place between the School and Astra for the delivery of the programme.

Please read and consider the roles and responsibilities carefully before signing.

After signing the application form, signing and returning the partnership agreement and agreeing the initial visit date, you are agreeing to conditions outlined in this Partnership Agreement.

2.0 Roles and responsibilities of each party in the delivery of the programme:

2.1 Responsibilities of the school

As part of the role for schools as set out in the national AO Criteria, Astra identifies the following expectations.

2.1.1 The Headteacher of the Partner School and/or representative of the Senior Leadership Team's responsibilities:

- Interview the candidate for entry to the Assessment Only Route, including determining suitability to teach. Ensure that equal opportunities are provided for all candidates
- Ensure that the candidate has the right to work in the UK (Overseas School for overseas AO candidates), a valid enhanced DBS check as a teacher, and a police check for periods spent overseas (if appropriate), has completed an Occupational Health questionnaire (fit to teach) and is not subject to any Prohibition Orders and provides Astra with evidence of this.
- Check the accuracy of the information provided by the candidate and recorded by Astra. Ensure that the candidate provides the necessary certificates, including relating to academic qualifications, and verify eligibility to take part in the programme. Where available a statement from UK ENIC should be provided to confirm equivalency for overseas qualifications. Astra may be able to check the UK ENIC database as required.
- Ensure that the candidate has been provided with the employing school's: Child Protection Policy, Staff Behaviour Policy (sometimes called a Code of Conduct), information about the role of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), up to date statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Ensure that the candidate has received training on the Prevent duty and Level 1 Safeguarding.
- Ensure that the school has appropriate insurance cover for employment of the candidate or for teaching on a voluntary basis, including both Professional Indemnity and Public Liability.
- Appoint a representative from the senior leadership group and a suitably qualified mentor to provide guidance and support needed by the candidate, including in the specialist subject, and ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for them to carry out these roles effectively.
- Provide the candidate with access to ongoing professional development opportunities available to other staff, and facilitate any additional training needs identified by Astra in advance of initial registration.
- Contribute to and monitor the work of the mentor appointed to support the candidate's preparation for assessment via the AO.
- Meet the candidate as required, to review his/her progress towards meeting the Standards, the quality of the portfolio evidence, and the timeline for the assessment process.
- Observe the candidate teaching to inform discussions about the teacher's skills and to quality assure the observations by other staff.
- Arrange for any additional visits to other schools that are required.
- Participate in the final assessment, following Astra guidance.
- Liaise with Astra, including notifying Astra of any potential or actual difficulties so that a solution may be found. Act promptly on the advice or guidance provided by Astra to remedy any problems.
- Contribute to the quality assurance of the programme, based on guidance provided by Astra and linked to existing monitoring and evaluation. Give Astra feedback on the quality of the assessor visits and reports, the management of the programme and guidance and support they have received, and suggest improvements.
- Notify Astra immediately if the outcome of an Ofsted inspection is that the school is placed in Special Measures or is given a Notice to Improve, so that appropriate arrangements may be made to protect the quality of the candidate's experience.

2.1.2 Responsibilities of the mentor

- Support the candidate in the initial weeks of his/her employment or voluntary experience in the school, while also beginning the process of assessing performance and identifying any outstanding training needs. This should take place over several weeks, and will inform the discussion with the Astra tutor at the initial visit.
- Ensure that the candidate has planned and taught lessons across the specified age phase (i.e. 5-11, 7-11, 7-14, 11-16, 14-19).
- Provide the candidate with good quality training, support, target-setting and feedback, based on the initial visit report, prior to the start of the AO.
- Carry out classroom observations as required and provide the candidate with written feedback, based on the Teachers' Standards, including specific targets for improvement. Follow up these targets at a subsequent meeting or observation.
- Monitor the candidate's progress towards meeting the Teachers' Standards and any targets set at the initial visit. Identify any additional needs as they arise and adapt accordingly, so that the trainee fully covers all that is required by the Standards. Record any changes, so that the school and the candidate are clear about what is required. Discuss any significant changes with the representative of the senior leadership team and visiting tutor, and ensure that the quality of provision is maintained.
- Review the candidate's subject auditing, to identify and deal with gaps in the candidate's subject knowledge per se, and skills in applying this subject knowledge in the classroom, including promoting the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- Where a second placement is required prior to the start of the AO, liaise with the second school, to ensure that this is a productive experience that enables the candidate to broaden his/her experience. This will include a statement from the Second placement school confirming all HR checks relating to safeguarding have been completed.
- Where necessary, support the candidate to enhance his/her skills in analysing practice. Review the candidate's portfolio, to ensure that good quality evidence of meeting the Standards is collected and is organised systematically; and give feedback.
- Monitor and evaluate all other aspects of the candidate's performance, from the completion of the application form to final assessment for QTS.
- Provide information on the statutory arrangements for induction of ECTs and help the candidate to prepare for the ECT induction.
- Meet the Astra tutor at each visit to review the candidate's progress towards meeting the Teachers' Standards.
- Seek the advice of the representative of the senior leadership team and/or visiting tutor if difficulties should arise, and alert the lead trainer and Astra if the difficulties are not resolved quickly and satisfactorily.

2.2 Responsibilities of the candidate

2.2.1 The trainee is expected to show commitment to the programme through the following:

- The candidate will need to demonstrate evidence of [Fundamental Proficiencies in English and Maths](#) as part of their QTS evidence portfolio.
- Teach lessons across the specified age phase (i.e. 5-11, 7-11, 7-14, 11-16, 14-19).
- Reading all Astra and national AO guidance, the Teachers' Standards and the tutor reports thoroughly.
- Being pro-active throughout the preparation for and period on the AO, seeking information from all available resources e.g. school staff, Internet, independent reading and study.
- Being fully prepared for all activities eg having questions ready for the mentor at the weekly sessions, regularly identifying own needs to assist in the target-setting process.
- Collecting relevant evidence for the portfolio, including reflective responses to training activities and teaching experiences; and identifying which Standards the evidence relates to. Keeping all the portfolio evidence safely, ready for the final assessment.
- Informing relevant personnel quickly of concerns and difficulties, and working with school staff and the visiting tutor to resolve problems.
- Responding quickly and appropriately to any concerns raised by the school about any aspect of his or her work.

- Providing Astra with feedback at the end of the AO.

2.3 Responsibilities of Astra

2.3.1 As appropriate, the Astra Principal and other nominated Astra staff will:

- Administer and manage AO. Liaise with DfE, as necessary. Quality-assure the programme, and ensure that findings are acted upon to improve practice where it is found not to be of the high standard that Astra and the DfE expect.
- Ensure equality of opportunity in offering and administering the AO route.
- Award places to good-quality applicants who meet the national criteria for the AO, and who are employed by or working voluntarily in schools that show they are able to provide good quality guidance and support.
- Appoint an assessor to work with the school in the initial assessment, setting of targets, feedback and drawing up of the timeline for the assessment process.
- Register candidates onto the AO once they are ready for this.
- Appoint an assessor, who will carry out the final assessment for the award of QTS.
- Recommend successful candidates for QTS, and notify the school and candidate of the outcome of the final assessment.
- Act promptly to resolve any difficulties or issues drawn to Astra's attention e.g through the cause for concern system, acting in the best interests of the candidate and school, within the national requirements for the AO.
- Maintain a constructive dialogue with all partners in Astra's provision for the AO, seeking to make improvements wherever possible, to meet the candidate's, schools' and local needs.
- Quality assures all aspects of the AO.
- Manage the Steering Group, which meets three times a year to discuss matters relating to ITT and AO provision; and contribute to the SCITT Governing Body which maintains a strategic overview of the provision including reviewing aspects of the provision for ITT and the AO and making recommendations for improvements.
- Implement Astra's complaints and appeals procedure.

2.3.2 The Assessor appointed for the candidate's Initial and Review Visits will:

- Work with the school on the initial needs assessment, draw up the targets and a time frame in discussion with the representative of the senior leadership team and mentor as appropriate, and submit it promptly to Astra for checking and approval.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the school as a training institution, and the quality of training it provides. Check that the mentor and other staff involved in the AO have the skills and understanding needed to carry out their role effectively.
- Be a point of first-call reference for school staff and the candidate, to support and guide him/her through the AO process.
- Visit the candidate once before the final assessment, to provide advice, support and guidance to the school and candidate, and monitor progress towards meeting targets set, observe the candidate teaching, and hold focused discussion with the candidate to determine his or her progress towards meeting the Standards, provide feedback (oral and written) to the candidate, and agree new targets for the candidate's next steps.
- Recommend a timeframe for the AO, including the date of official registration onto the AO (i.e. the opening of the 12-week AO window).
- Alert the school and Astra to any actual or potential difficulties or issues that may affect the candidate's successful completion of the AO.
- Provide the school with oral feedback and a copy of the visit reports.
- Ensure that Astra is alerted to any shortcomings in the support for the candidate's progress towards QTS at an early stage, and suggest suitable action to remedy matters.
- Send Astra a copy of all lesson observations and visit reports, as provided to the school and candidate, so that Astra can carry out its quality-assurance responsibilities.
- Respond quickly and appropriately to any concerns or complaints raised by the candidate or school, and keep Astra informed of these.
- Check that the candidate is prepared for their induction, including that suitable targets are set.

2.3.4 The assessor appointed for the Final Assessment Visit will:

- Observe the candidate teach a lesson in at least one of the age ranges and both if possible.
- Review all the documentary evidence.
- Ensure that the AO Criteria and Teachers' Standards have been met.
- Submit a final assessment report to Astra.

3.0 Commercial Structure: All invoices will be sent by Dr Challoner's Grammar School (DCGS) Finance team. Dr Challoner's Grammar School is the legal entity with responsibility for the leadership, management and running of the SCITT and all financial operations are processed by the school.

3.1 Summary of stages and financials:

Stages of Assessment	
Initial Eligibility Assessment	£0
Formal Eligibility Assessment- Initial Visit <i>*The Final Assessment visit will be conducted after we have received the payment for the initial visit</i>	£650
Final Assessment <i>*The QTS Award will be made after we have received the payment for the final visit.</i>	£2,600
Total Assessment Only Cost	£3,250

**** The QTS award will be made once we have received the payments.**

3.1.1 Initial assessment of eligibility for AO route: No charge-£0

Candidates will complete a free online self-evaluation form. If this indicates that the Candidate may be eligible for the programme then Astra will contact the School as to whether it wishes to proceed to the formal eligibility assessment stage.

3.1.2 Formal Eligibility Assessment (or Initial Visit): £650 fee

The candidate and school will fill in the formal application form (including lesson observations, copies of qualifications and UK ENIC statement if required) to confirm that it wishes for the formal eligibility assessment to commence. The partnership agreement should also be completed. At the point of agreeing the Initial Visit, the school becomes liable for the £650 fee and an invoice shall be raised.

Services from Astra include:

- Up to one hour telephone assistance during the application process.
- Initial Visit to interview and to provide advice, support and completion of the needs assessment of candidate against the Teachers' Standards

- Completion of visit report with targets.

If the school notifies Astra that it wishes to withdraw the candidate from the eligibility assessment at least one week prior to the Initial Visit then a £250 refund or credit note will be issued.

Where the school notifies Astra that they wish to withdraw the candidate less than 1 week prior to the Initial Visit or where Astra assesses the Candidate as not suitable for the course and a place is not offered no refund will be made and the full charge applies.

3.1.3 Final Visit Assessment: £2,600 fee (the remaining balance)

At the point of the Final QTS Assessment Visit being confirmed, Astra will invoice the school **for the remaining balance of £2,600.**

Services from Astra include:

- An Initial Visit by an Astra assessor
- Provision of Initial Visit report with targets.
- Final QTS assessment visit during the formal AO period
- Final report.
- Quality assurance reviews

Liability points on the main programme:

- The £2,600 becomes payable following the final QTS assessment visit.
- In the event that the school notifies Astra that it wishes to withdraw a Candidate from the Assessment at least one day prior to the final QTS assessment visit then a £500 refund will be made.
- No refund will be made in the events where either the School withdraws the Candidate after the final QTS assessment visit or where the Candidate does not meet the standards to be accredited.

3.1.4 Additional Support

During the programme the School may request from Astra to provide additional support to a candidate. Where this is agreed by both parties any additional tutor support visits will be charged at £500 per day. The candidate will receive a report with revised targets following this visit.

4.0 Where to send the completed form

Please read and then sign and return the front page of this Partnership Agreement to Astra. We will accept hard copies via post, or via scanned-in signed electronic copies to the following addresses:

Post: Co-Principal of Astra, Dr Challoner's Grammar School, Chesham Road, Amersham, HP6 5HA.

Email: ao@astra-alliance.com

Upload: Once you have filled out the form, kindly scan, and save it as AO_Firstname_Lastname_Partnership Agreement, and upload it [here](#)