

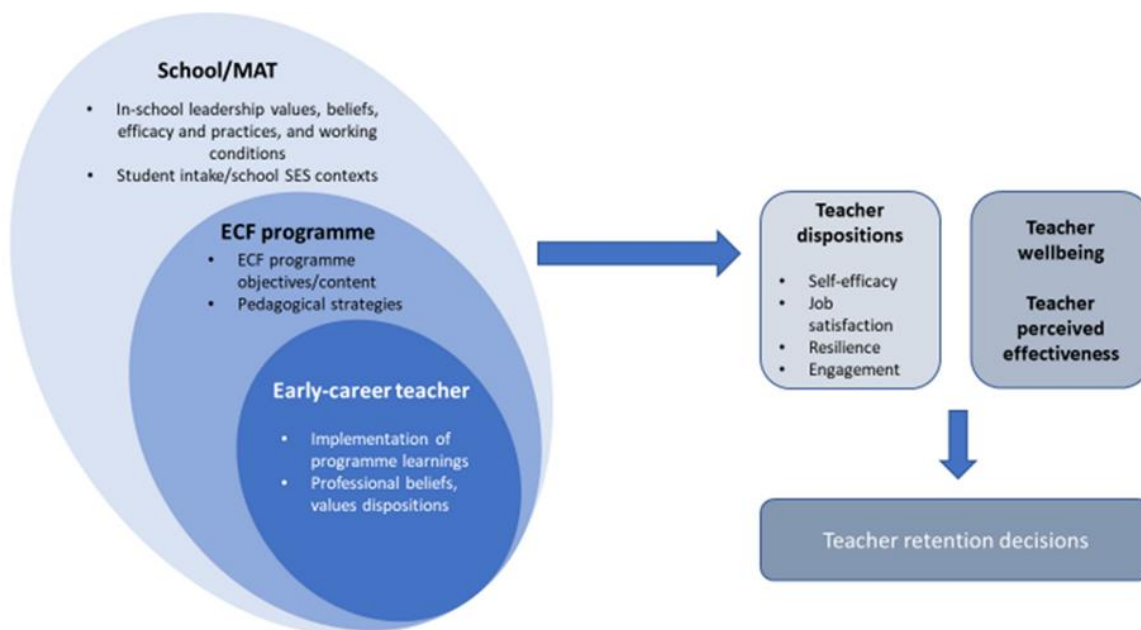
The impact of the ECF programme on the work engagement, wellbeing and retention of teachers: a longitudinal study 2021-2026

Executive summary

Research Purpose

Research is an integral part of the UCL-led Early Career Framework (ECF) programme. The purpose of this research is to fill an important evidence gap on the impact of related **programme-level**, **school-level**, and **system-level** factors on the professional capabilities, wellbeing, and retention decisions of early career teachers (ECTs) and their mentors over time. This mixed methods research will provide robust evidence to enable us to understand:

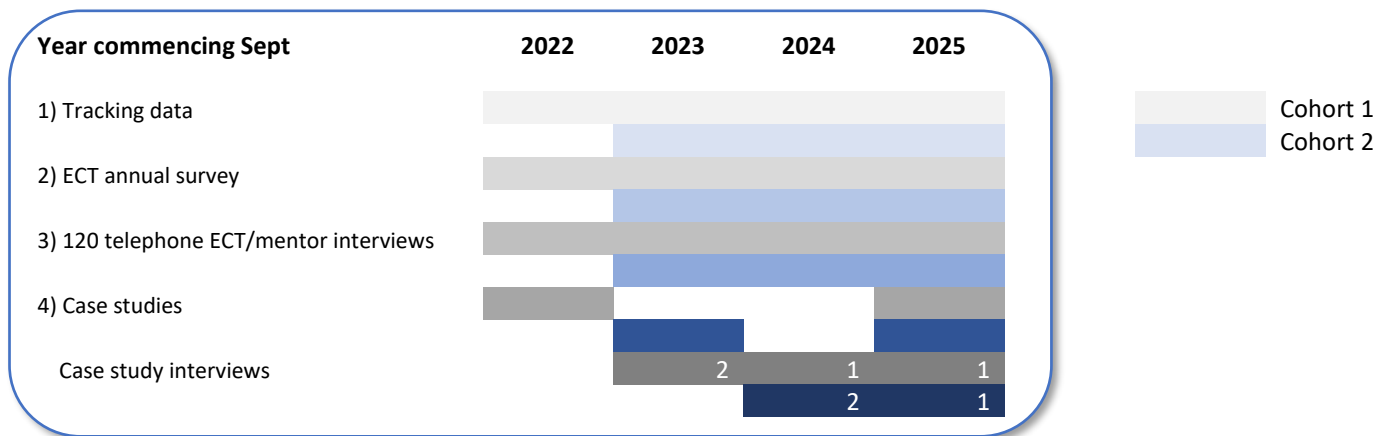
- **Who** the intended leavers, movers and stayers are over time.
- **The extent to which** and **how** their experiences on ECF programmes have influenced their professional dispositions and qualities, **how effective** they perceive themselves as teachers, and **why** they intend to leave, move (schools), or stay (in teaching).



This report documents emerging findings from the initial ECT and mentor survey and is the first of a series of research reports and briefings that we will produce from this study.

Research Methodology

There are four core elements to the ECF programme research.



The ECT and Mentor Survey 2021

The survey investigation explored ECTs' and their mentors' ECF programme experience – especially regarding *mastery* and *use* of their learning in context; the organisational conditions and culture of their schools; and their professional dispositions, wellbeing and retention trajectories.

All ECTs and mentors registered on the two-year UCL ECF programme ($\approx 12,000$) were invited to participate in the end of Year 1 survey and more than 1,700 responded between June and October 2022 – a response rate of 14%. The sample appears representative of national ECT and mentor populations for gender, ethnicity, school phase, and contract type – which gives us confidence about the relevance of our ECTs' and mentors' learning and career experiences to their peers nationally.

Our ECF programme has engaged a greater proportion of schools with more than the national average of pupils receiving free school meals (22.5%), and ECTs with older age profiles (mostly career changers) – with 38% aged 30 and older, compared to 27% in the national ECT population.

Emerging Research Findings

- **96%** of ECTs and mentors were intending to remain in teaching next year. This appears to be higher than the most recent national retention statistics indicating that 87.5% of teachers who qualified in 2020 (under the previous statutory guidance) were still teaching one year later.
- Most ECTs intended to stay in the same school the following year (761, 84%), but a greater proportion of ECTs (109, 12%) than mentors (35, 4%) intended to move schools next academic year. Almost all mentors reported that they were staying in the same school (742, 92%), with 94 (12%) having been promoted to a higher level of responsibility.
- **Structured mentor meetings** were the most valued strategy contributing to ECT learning.
- The vast majority of ECTs agreed that the ECF programme was based on sound research about teaching or pupil learning ($n=788$, 87%), and that the practice suggested on the ECF programme would make a difference to the learning of their pupils ($n=745$, 82%). Importantly, around 1 in 5 ECTs had *used* their learning in context significantly.
- More than 70% of ECTs felt confident (ranging from 'confident' to 'completely confident') in relation to what they had learned on programme against each of the eight Teachers' Standards, with close to 80% reporting that they were confident about **setting high expectations**, and **planning and teaching well-structured lessons**. The Standard which the fewest ECTs in our sample were confident in demonstrating – albeit still above 70% – was **good curriculum knowledge**. However, as some ECTs had commented, the reported confidence could not be entirely attributed to the ECF programme.

Next Steps

Further statistical analyses of the survey and qualitative interviews and case studies will investigate, in detail, how different individual, school, and systems factors interact to influence ECTs' and mentors' wellbeing, career trajectories and retention destinations over time.