



Researchers
in Schools



In Focus: Teacher Professional Development through Uni Pathways

Teacher Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is well established as an important mechanism for improving pupil outcomes and helping teachers increase their impact as education practitioners. This In Focus briefing explores how delivering Uni Pathways, a university access and revision intervention, has supported RIS participants' professional development and helped them develop their teaching practice in key areas.

CPD activities can range from attending conferences, working with a mentor to more intensive interventions. Teachers' perspectives on the CPD they receive is a useful way of evaluating its effectiveness and how it has changed their practice.

The RIS Programme

In their first year, Researchers in Schools (RIS) participants deliver Uni Pathways, a one-year university access intervention based on their PhD research. In the second year of the programme, participants have the opportunity to conduct a revision intervention (previously called Uni Pathways 2) for GCSE pupils. Both interventions comprise seven tutorials delivered to a small group of pupils, and Uni Pathways Year 1 includes a trip to a university. RIS teachers receive training on how to deliver their course and develop their own resources.

To understand how delivering Uni Pathways has contributed to RIS participants' professional development, we surveyed RIS teachers from the 2018, 2019 and 2020 cohorts. Four RIS participants were interviewed to elucidate more detail how delivering Uni Pathways played a part in their professional development.

Uni Pathways as CPD

Responses from participants suggest that Uni Pathways helped them meet Part One of the Teachers Standards (teaching). Through the experience, participants learnt and applied four key ideas to their own teaching and curriculum design:

How to pitch material to the pupils' ability

Implementing stretch and challenge and questioning strategies

The backwards planning approach

Utilising deliberate practice



Participant
Voice

"Backwards planning has helped me to think about the end goal of each lesson and the steps I need to take to support my students to achieve it."

"I have used the UP training as the core of my practice. I felt well-informed compared to my other colleagues who were not from RIS, and felt really privileged to be a teacher via RIS."

Teacher Professional Development through Uni Pathways

Participants talked about how Uni Pathways helped them to meet Part Two of the Teachers' Standards (Personal and Professional Conduct). They found that:



2. Personal & Professional Conduct

Uni Pathways' mission has helped them remain committed to teaching

By planning the launch trip, they gained responsibility outside of the classroom

"It made me realise the importance of specialist vocabulary and making ideas accessible to all students. I now actively encourage students to use the correct terminology."

For more information on the programme and how you can get involved, please email us via hello@researchersinschools.org or visit our website at thebrilliantclub.org/ris

RIS participants' experiences delivering Uni Pathways



Alex McGaw (Maths, 2018)

Alex recently overhauled maths curriculum and used the approaches he had learnt during Uni Pathways: he said, "**having designed a small curriculum really helped with overall lesson planning and curriculum design.**" Alex explained that the deliberate practice taught in Uni Pathways 2 has made a significant difference to his teaching. The deliberate practice methods he used with one of his maths classes this year "**massively boosted their performance and confidence.**"



Lauren Edwards (Physics, 2017)

Lauren used the structure for the Uni Pathways 2 revision booklet to design a range of similar revision booklets for different biology topics, and now shares them with the sector online. **Deliberate practice** "changed how I wanted to start curriculum sequencing. I completely re-sequenced the biology spec" and it "**has changed how the department works.**" Lauren described how she **gained responsibility outside of teaching** by planning a Uni Pathways launch trip and that this "helped with Part Two of the Teachers Standards."



Oliver King (Maths, 2017)

Oliver says "Uni Pathways **gives a kick to involve yourself in the wider school setting.** Planning the launch event, finding out how to do school trips, wouldn't happen without [Uni Pathways]...**Running a project elevates you to a step outside the department.**" The **deliberate practice** session was "a wow moment"... "**I still teach on [that] philosophy.**"

