Recruiting sufficient physics teachers has been a long-standing problem. The school workforce census published in 2013 showed that 26% of physics lessons are taught by a teacher without a relevant post A-Level qualification. The subject is often taught by ‘non-specialists’ usually qualified in chemistry or biology. Modelling by the Department for Education supports the Institute of Physics’ assertion that over 1,000 new physics teachers need to be recruited every year for the next ten years to meet demand.

In 2013 there were 3,060 physics graduates. We would need to recruit almost one third of these to fulfill the teacher training quota with just physics graduates.

The closure of some university teacher training providers is resulting in a potential permanent shortage of provision. The diversification of training provision is creating a confusing landscape that is beginning to have an effect on quality and consistency.

In order to reverse the trend we need to work together to ensure that there are sufficient high-quality training options and that trainees who have the potential to become excellent teachers are not lost from the system.