

SEEL Placement Panel 8th June 2023

I attended the SEEL (South East, East and London) Placement Panel 2023 as the Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) representative. The purpose of my role was to observe the placement panel process and, alongside other panel members, to ensure the fairness of the process, including maintaining trainee anonymity and lack of bias of Principal Educational Psychologist's (PEP) in decision making. The panel was held in person at University College London (UCL) and was made up of six PEPs representing different regions of SEEL, the Bursary Bank lead, and the TEP representative. One of the PEPs was the chair of the panel and led the process.

The panel chair began by explaining the placement panel process and the principles that guide the process. It was explained that the process aims to balance priorities with the highest placement preferences for as many TEPs as possible, with ensuring that all local authorities have at least one of their pledges for a TEP filled in the past,

A challenge of this year's panel was that there were specific groupings of placements that were chosen often by TEPs, resulting in it being very difficult to place all of the TEPs who had the same placement preferences. This was difficult for the panel due to their simultaneous duty to the TEPs to allocate a placement of their preference, and also their duty to placement providers to fulfil a spread of pledges. The panel engaged in lots of discussion regarding how to solve this issue in a fair way. After discussion, the panel agreed to contact a cluster of popular local authorities to request one additional pledge, to which one local authority responded and agreed. The panel reflected on the difficulty of this issue and noted that more time should be dedicated to the overall panel process moving forward to decrease the time pressure that was felt this year. Furthermore, there was discussion about the potential role of AI or ICT in supporting the allocation process and it would be interesting to explore this further.

Overall, I felt the panel showed reflectiveness, collaboration, empathy and transparency throughout the process. The process felt fair and objective and the decisions made were considered carefully. All panel members contributed to decision making and I was also encouraged to ask questions and clarify the process where needed. I was satisfied that the decisions made were effective and fair and were made with the aim of supporting both TEPs and placement providers as much as possible. The panel chair acknowledged that there will need to be dedicated time for reflection and consideration of decisions made following the panel. The panel chair also shared that there will be a Task and Finish group to review the SEEL guidelines and terms of reference.

Ella Cummins

University College London