

A CONSULTATION ON THE COMMON CORE OF SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING AND VALUES FOR THE CHILDREN'S WORKFORCE IN SCOTLAND

commoncoreofskills@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Government is seeking views on the common core of skills, knowledge & understanding and values for all those working with children, young people and families. Once implemented the common core will support the development of more effective and integrated services which in turn will promote more flexible development and career progression for the workforce and will make communicating across organisational boundaries and cultures easier.

A Consultation on the Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the Children's Workforce in Scotland



RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

General Teaching Council for Scotland

Title Mr Ms Mrs Miss Dr *Please tick as appropriate*

Surname

Hamilton

Forename

Tom

2. Postal Address

General Teaching Council for Scotland

Clerwood House

96 Clermiston Road

Edinburgh

Postcode EH12 6UT

Phone 0131 314 6051

Email

tom.hamilton@gtcs.org.uk

3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

/ Group/Organisation

Please tick as appropriate

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis
Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes

No

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Workers need to intervene early, tackle inequalities and build the capacity of children, young people and families.

To what extent do you agree that the proposed common core equips our workers to do this?

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) is the professional, regulatory body for teachers in Scotland. Currently a Non Departmental Public Body (although funded by teacher subscriptions rather than by the Government), from April 2012 the GTCS will be reconstituted as a fully independent body.

The principal aims of the GTCS are:

- to contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning, and
- to maintain and improve teachers' professional standards.

All teachers working within the State system in Scotland must be registered with the GTCS. The GTCS has a strong gate-keeping function in terms of accrediting programmes of initial teacher education, setting the Teacher Education Standards, administering the Teacher Induction Scheme and, in the future, running a system of Professional Update which will apply to all registered teachers both to ensure and assure their ongoing capability as teachers.

The GTCS acts as the guardian of the Teacher Education Standards and also publishes a Code of Professionalism and Conduct (CoPAC) for teachers. These two elements are both strongly linked with the proposed Common Core of Knowledge and Understanding and Values for the Children's Workforce in Scotland.

Therefore GTCS would strongly endorse the need for workers to intervene early, tackle inequalities and build the capacity of children, young people and families.

Teachers are nevertheless teachers and for them the endorsement of these imperatives would be premised on them being taken forward within an educational sphere.

That said, support for all three of these elements will be found in the current Teaching Standards and CoPAC. The values from Getting it Right for Every Child are entirely consonant with the values espoused in the Standards and CoPAC and there is a very clear professional expectation that teachers will take on these very significant tasks or approaches.

The Common Core will help equip workers to take forward these areas but it has to be recognised that different professional areas will need to develop very considerably for their own purposes what is provided in the Common

Core.

The Common Core is endeavouring to cover a very disparate workforce in very different professional fields and it has to be acknowledged that there will also be a wide variation of roles, responsibilities and levels of post.

The Core is therefore acceptable and the principles espoused are entirely appropriate but by trying to cover such a wide range it becomes all things to all people meaning that its level of generality broadens the focus so much that its message may be lost.

The level of generality means that the Common Core might be perceived to lack substance and simply be seen as well-meaning words. The GTCS would therefore urge that thought should be given to how to ensure that the purpose of the Common Core is more robustly stated and its possible emphasis for influencing professional standards more clearly articulated.

Greater advice would also be useful on how the Common Core might be used to set the scene on various roles but then encourage the explicit focusing in on more specific roles, remits and requirements.

How is it going to help encouraging both continuity and progression in professional areas?

How is it going to help the designing of initial professional education programmes?

How is it going to inform, where appropriate, transferability of staff from one professional area to another or from one post to another within a job family?

The GTCS notes the references to 'flexible jobs, where appropriate' and 'certain roles' (para 25) and accepts that there is a tentativeness about the expression of these points but would argue that there is nothing paradoxical about having a strong professional commitment to a specific role (probably involving mandatory qualifications) and also being committed to the GIRFEC values or the areas identified in the header question for this section of the consultation. There is however (particularly in financially straitened times) a danger that professionalism and the quality of provision delivered might be undermined by employers wishing to amalgamate professional roles in efforts to save money.

The GTCS would fully support the need for well-qualified experts in specific fields but also clearly recognise the benefits of such professionals working in conjunction with staff from other disciplines or professional areas. This does not undermine professionalism but should through recognising particular strengths and expertise actually enhance the quality of what is delivered.

2. What specific comments do you have around the skills, knowledge & understanding associated with “sound observation, judgement and decision making?”

As above.

The level of generality is understandable in something endeavouring to be so all-encompassing but it is also problematic.

One suggestion would be to have the Common Core elements provided as they are but then to have further more detailed expositions of what they might say in the different professional or disciplinary areas, perhaps even linked to the relevant SCQF levels. In printed form this would be cumbersome (perhaps even impossible) but in electronic form with links easily put in and perhaps the provision of a search function it might be that the ‘sound observation, judgement and decision making’ elements could be more meaningfully spelled out in relation to specific disciplines, posts or levels. This might give the reader a much greater sense of how the Common Core elements relate to his or her specific interests.

3. What specific comments do you have around the skills and knowledge associated with “appropriate and effective communication”?

As above.

4. What specific comments do you have around the skills, knowledge & understanding associated with “effective partnership and multi-agency working?”

As above.

The GTCS would point out just how challenging the final element in this column area is – ‘know how to show leadership in any role in any organisations’.

This polymath and paragon of leadership surely has a wider role than being part of the Children’s Workforce?

The posts of American President, British Prime Minister and Scottish First Minister are all currently taken but no doubt other opportunities exist!

More seriously the GTCS would suggest that the leadership element might be made more appropriate through reference to collegiality and forms of leadership such as distributed (or distributive) leadership.

5. What if anything is missing from the skills, knowledge & understanding or values?

See immediately above.

What is provided is a good list of relevant features which covers the relevant areas.

One presentational improvement might be to provide the Values and Principles before the Common Core. This would allow the reader to have a clear notion of these important underpinning features prior to reading the Common Core and hence read it with greater insight and understanding.

Implementation of the proposed Common Core

6. Describe briefly how, your organisation, or your sector might implement the common core of skills, knowledge and values?

The GTCS is currently reviewing CoPAC and will in the near future be reviewing the various Professional Standards for teachers.

The GTCS sees no particular issues in continuing to match in the key principles and points of the Common Core to the Professional Standards for Teachers.

Such matters will also feed into the accreditation of teacher education programmes as and when they occur.

Implementation of the proposed Common Core

7. What opportunities are there in your organisation or service for the proposed common core to be implemented at the following 3 levels?

- Strategic management
- Operational Management
- Day to day working with children, young people and families

Clearly as a professional regulatory body these areas are not directly applicable to the GTCS. The principal implementation areas for GTCS will be those outlined in section 6.

8. What opportunities do you see for working collaboratively with other organisations/sectors to implement the common core?

The GTCS talks productively to other regulatory bodies on an ongoing basis and will continue so to do.

Anything which helps to encourage 'better partnership and multi-agency working' (para 20) is to be welcomed.

9. What challenges can you identify around implementing the common core, and how might these be overcome?

Various challenges have been identified above and some possible ways forward already suggested.

The GTCS will be happy to play its part in developing this area.

Council Members were particularly keen to make things happen not just say that things should happen. They also wished to narrow the gap between existing current practice and what should be happening if consistently good practice was being delivered across Scotland.