

DRIVING FORWARD PROFESSIONAL  
STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS



## Accreditation of Programmes leading to Professional Recognition

### Guidance for Providers

July 2020



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The Award of Professional Recognition

GTC Scotland's Professional Recognition recognises the enhanced, significant and sustained enquiry a teacher has undertaken and the development of their professional learning in a particular area. The award of Professional Recognition recognises the teacher as an accomplished practitioner in a particular area, whose practice is underpinned by ongoing reflective enquiry.

The award of Professional Recognition was established by GTC Scotland in 2006 for individual teachers to apply for recognition in particular areas of expertise developed by the teacher through sustained professional learning and development. From 2012, GTC Scotland introduced the Professional Recognition Award for professional learning and development programmes, which meet the required guidelines for accreditation and ensure that high quality of teachers and teaching is maintained and enhanced.

Professional Recognition aligns with the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL). This Standard is closely matched to features of the Scottish Framework for Masters in Education and describes the advanced professional knowledge and pedagogical expertise that registered teachers develop and maintain as they continue to progress in teaching and across the education profession. A teacher may also choose to reflect against aspects of the Standards for Leadership and Management (SLM) and, for lecturers in the college sector, the Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges (Scottish Government 2019).

The Standard for CLPL provides an opportunity for teachers to progress, enrich, develop and enhance their practice, expertise, knowledge, skills and professional values. It supports teachers as they develop as reflective, accomplished and enquiring professionals who are able to engage with the complexities of teaching and learning, the changing contemporary world of their learners and the world beyond the profession and its institutions, in order to enhance the learning experiences for all learners. The Standard for CLPL and the criteria for the award of Professional Recognition closely aligns to the features of [the Scottish Framework for Masters in Education](#).

These ensure that learning:

- ❖ is grounded in practice;
- ❖ is research informed;
- ❖ is personally and professionally transformative;
- ❖ is collaborative in nature;
- ❖ challenges assumptions and widens perspectives; and
- ❖ aspires to make a positive impact on Scottish education.

and enquiry is structured around the following characteristics:

- ❖ knowledge and understanding;
- ❖ practice, i.e. applied knowledge and understanding;
- ❖ generic cognitive skills;
- ❖ communication, digital literacy and numeracy skills; and
- ❖ autonomy, accountability and working with others.

Additional background information on Professional Recognition can be found at the following link: <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update/professional-recognition.aspx>

## 2 Accreditation Process

GTC Scotland defines accreditation as the process of ascertaining the professional acceptability of a learning and development programme leading to the award of Professional Recognition for course participants. Accreditation applies to programmes which will be accredited on an individual basis.

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## 3 Programme Documentation

### 3.1 Required Documentation

GTC Scotland requires a variety of documentation about the professional learning programme in order to assess its suitability for Professional Recognition accreditation.

Whilst GTC Scotland would expect the programmes with Professional Recognition to be sufficiently flexible and diverse to enable the profession to grow and develop, there are specific features required to achieve Professional Recognition that must be embedded within the programmes to be accredited successfully.



**National model of professional learning**

The national model of professional learning identifies the key principles and features of effective learning that build capacity and promote collaborative practice. The model provides a shared language and aspiration, informing the provision, structure and nature of learning. It also outlines the kind of learning that will empower and enable to education professionals to best meet the needs of learners. The required documentation is expected to be informed by this model in terms of the nature and purpose of the professional learning and in how it is structured, mediated and planned for.

Programme providers should provide documentation to cover the following:

- ❖ Programme specifications, structure and content.
- ❖ Assessment arrangements:
  - Assessment of the learning across the programme should provide opportunities for participants to demonstrate critical reflection on the learning and their development through this programme of study. This should include how their learning links with current research and/or policy and an analysis of the evidence of impact of this learning on themselves/learners/colleagues.
- ❖ Partnership arrangements:
  - An outline of the partnership arrangements in place to support the learning of participants.
- ❖ Relevant information to demonstrate how the required specific features set out below are embedded within the programme:

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- **Education Professional as Learner**  
A clearly articulated rationale for the programme that demonstrates the importance of this professional learning opportunity for teachers and how this programme offers a professional learning opportunity that has aspects of learning that aligns with the Scottish Framework for Masters in Education.
  - **Professional Standards & Policy**  
Outline how the programme of learning aligns with the Standard for CLPL (or Standards for Leadership and Management or Professional Standards for college lecturers), current policy or initiatives and how these aspects of the Professional Standards and policy are enacted through this learning.
  - **Learning that deepens knowledge and understanding**  
Describe the professional learning which enhances the academic and professional knowledge of participants, including the theoretical underpinnings for this learning and how the programme supports participants to critically reflect on the impact this has had on their thinking and practice, colleagues and their learners.
  - **Learning by enquiring**  
Outline how the programme supports participants to adopt an enquiring stance to understand and to evidence the impact of this professional learning on themselves, colleagues and learners. Additionally, outline how the programme supports reflective practice to support teachers to evidence how this learning experience has changed them as a professional and learner.
  - **Learning-as-collaborative**  
Describe opportunities through this programme for sustained collaborative practice, learning with and from colleagues, partners and learners and the impact of this.
  - **Leadership of, and for, learning**  
Outline how participants can undertake leadership through this professional learning and lead the learning of others, including the use of professional learning conversations underpinned by coaching approaches to stimulate, challenge and support learning.
  - ❖ **Self-evaluation:**
    - Outline how the programme supports critical reflection on impact and informs next steps in learning, including links to the appropriate Professional Standard(s).
  - ❖ **Professional dialogue as part of PRD:**
    - Outline the expectations that participants will engage in professional dialogue with their line manager as part of ongoing PRD dialogue. This should include a critical reflection on the impact of their learning, practice and how this informs next steps in learning.
  - ❖ **Quality assurance:**
    - Describe internal (and any external) quality assurance processes, including aspects of:
      - diversity and equality
      - effective communication with participants before, during and after the programme
      - evaluation of learning provision, collection and use of participant feedback for continuous improvement
      - how the knowledge and skills of programme facilitators are developed
      - other possible accreditation or quality assurances processes that are applied to the programme.
  - ❖ **Professional profiles of the staff responsible for delivering the programme.**

Please see the Professional Recognition application form designed to support the programme submission. This follows a similar structure to the Accreditation Criteria the panel use to assess the programme (see appendix). Using this to support a submission is helpful to enable the panel to readily

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find information. Please make sure the submission is accessible, easy to navigate and as concise as possible.

[Download link for PR application form](#)

### 3.2 Initial Assessment of the Documentation

Once this documentation has been received, it is initially assessed by a member of the Education team to ensure the above have been covered and that the specific features have all been included.

If the programme is deemed to be appropriate after this initial assessment, the programme provider will be invited to a Programme Accreditation Panel, which is the next stage in the application process. Programme Accreditation Panels are usually held monthly, with all programme documentation being submitted six weeks prior to the Panel date. Programmes will be allocated the first available time slot on the next Panel and a list of Panel dates can be found on the GTC Scotland website.

## 4 The Panel Process

### 4.1 Panel Composition

GTC Scotland's Education Committee delegates the scrutiny and evaluation of programmes to Programme Accreditation Panels. Panels consist of a minimum of three individuals, including a GTC Scotland Education Panel Chair and registrants who are drawn from a pool of external experts from the relevant educational context. The Panel has the authority to make decisions about the appropriateness of learning programmes and to advise the providers of these programmes of their decision.

### 4.2 Panel Process Summary Overview

The submitted programme documentation is circulated to Panel members well in advance to the Panel date for them to consider. The **Accreditation Criteria** (see Appendix) is used to gather comments and discussion points on each submission based on the documentation provided.

Using the Accreditation Criteria, Panel members draw up a list of questions based on the documentation they have received and bring these to the Panel meeting. At the Panel the programme providers are invited to firstly give a short 10-minute presentation to the Panel about their programme. Programme providers are requested to ensure a copy of any presentation is sent a week in advance of the panel date. This is followed by a professional discussion with the Panel based on the questions raised from the documentation submitted and the short presentation on the day.

At the conclusion of the Programme Accreditation Panel, Panel members have a private meeting to determine the outcome of each programme. The programme providers are then invited to re-join the Panel to hear the outcome from the Panel which is then followed up by a written report.

### 4.3 Panel Outline Programme

The panel will normally take place in the morning with two (occasionally three) programmes coming forward for Accreditation. The programme for the day is as follows:

#### Programme for the day

09:30	Private meeting of the Panel/coffee
10:00	Presentation from Programme 1
10:15	Professional discussion
10:45	Private meeting of the Panel
11:00	Communication of decision to programme 1
11:15	Private meeting of the Panel/coffee

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- 11:45 Presentation from Programme 2  
12:00 Professional discussion  
12:30 Private meeting of the Panel  
12:45 Communication of decision to Programme 2
- 13:00 Panel concludes with reflections on panel process, however in exceptional circumstances should there be a need for a 3<sup>rd</sup> programme the panel will continue as follows:
- 13:00 Lunch with a private meeting of the Panel  
13:45 Presentation from Programme 3  
14:00 Professional discussion  
14:30 Private meeting of the Panel  
14:45 Communication of decision to Programme 3  
15:00 Panel concludes, reflection on panel process

#### **4.4 Panel Outcomes and Reporting for the Award of Professional Recognition**

At the conclusion of the Programme Accreditation, Panel members have a private meeting to determine the outcome of each programme. The Chair helps summarise the decision-making process, drawing together the summary of findings (normally done in conjunction with the GTC Scotland Senior Education Officer).

There are four possible outcomes:

- (i) to accredit unconditionally;
- (ii) to accredit with recommendation for action;
- (iii) to accredit conditionally;
- (iv) to suspend the Panel.

##### **Accredit unconditionally**

This accredits the programme and awards the GTC Scotland quality mark for Professional Recognition. It also offers the Panel the opportunity to highlight the key strengths of the programme and where appropriate offers recommendations for consideration.

##### **Accredit with recommendation for action**

This accredits the programme and awards the GTC Scotland quality mark for Professional Recognition. Recommendations for action set by the Panel are expected to be followed up by an agreed date. The response to the recommendation for action is circulated round the Panel for comments which is then shared with the provider.

##### **Accredit conditionally**

The Panel sets conditions that must be met by an agreed date before the award can be made. The response to the conditions is circulated to the Panel members who must decide if they feel the conditions have been overtaken satisfactorily or if it needs to go back to the programme provider for further consideration. Once all the Panel members are in agreement, the programme can be fully accredited and the GTC SCOTLAND quality mark for Professional Recognition awarded.

##### **Suspend the Panel**

In some cases, the Panel will decide to take no formal decision on the programme and suspend the Panel. This is usually when the Panel feel there are significant omissions in the requirements for Professional Recognition that go beyond the scope of conditions and recommendations. Where accreditation is not awarded, and the programme provider will be given feedback from the Panel and may wish to submit revised proposals to a future Panel if appropriate.

The programme provider is invited back to join the Panel for an oral report of the Panel findings, The Chair gives an overview of the decision which is followed up in more detail by the Senior Education Officer who outlines key strengths, recommendations and recommendation for action/conditions as appropriate.

A formal letter is sent confirming the Panel's decision, normally within 10 working days. The letter, if required, will indicate the timescale involved for any recommendation/s for action or conditions set.

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## 4.5 Education Scotland Automatic Programme Endorsement

Programmes with GTCS Professional Recognition are automatically awarded Education Scotland Endorsement. The Endorsement Application form sections 1, 2, 3, 9 and 10 need to be completed and submitted along with a copy of the GTC Scotland panel report confirming the period of Professional Recognition.

<https://professionallearning.education.gov.scot/learning-providers/>

## 5 Appeals against Panel Decisions

While it is recognised that if a Panel is suspended providers have an opportunity to submit a revised proposal, it is also appropriate for there to be the possibility of appealing against a GTC Scotland Panel decision. Any such appeal will follow GTC Scotland processes and be heard by the GTC Scotland Professional Standards Panel.

## 6 Next steps for accredited programmes

Programmes are accredited with Professional Recognition for a period of five years with interim evaluations highlighting any developments and/or enhancements to the content, nature, duration, staffing or structure of the programme.

During this period, the accredited programme provider completes and submits the GTC Scotland Notification of Completion of Studies form for candidates who have successfully completed the programme and are to be awarded with Professional Recognition. The Certificates can then be either sent directly from GTC Scotland to the teachers or to the programme providers, should they wish to organise an event to celebrate with the teachers.

Programme providers can make use of the GTC Scotland Professional Recognition quality mark for this accredited programme. They will also be invited to become part of the list of GTC Scotland accredited providers for Professional Recognition and to send GTC Scotland a paragraph for inclusion on its website.

Please see list of Accredited Programmes: [www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update/research-and-practitioner-enquiry/professional-recognition/accredited-professional-recognition-programmes.aspx](http://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update/research-and-practitioner-enquiry/professional-recognition/accredited-professional-recognition-programmes.aspx)

The programme providers must notify GTC Scotland if there are any significant changes in staffing and/or to the structure of the programme during this five-year period.

## 7 Professional Recognition – Re-accreditation

At the end of each five-year period, re-accreditation of the award is required. The process is very similar, the application form asks for an overarching statement from the programme provider giving an update on the programme over the period of the award, including any changes and developments made. Providers have the option to begin the process of having their programme re-endorsed up to three months before the current endorsement expires.

Once this documentation has been received, it is initially assessed by a member of the Education team to ensure the criteria has been covered and that the specific features have all been included.

If the programme is deemed to be still be appropriate, the programme provider will be invited to a Programme Accreditation Panel as outlined in section 3.2.

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The panel process is set out in section 4 with one notable difference, the programme provider starts the panel by giving an overview of the Professional Recognised programme across the last 5 years, drawing attention to the impact to this award and any relevant changes and developments. This does not have to be done through a formal presentation.

## **8 Quality Assurance**

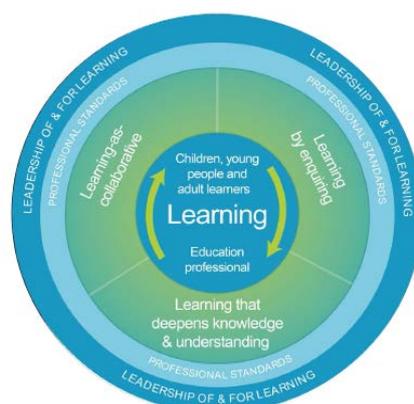
GTC Scotland will, as part of due process, conduct a sampling of successful applications on a twice-yearly basis to ensure consistency of standards within the assessment process. Programme providers, as part of the accreditation, agree to inform GTC Scotland of any changes to the programme e.g. any changes, developments and/or enhancements to the content, nature, duration, staffing or structure of the programme. When completing the GTC Scotland Notification of Completion of Studies form programme providers also provide a short update on the programme.

Quality assurance is in place as part of the accreditation process required by GTC Scotland Council and Committee processes. All accredited programme reports are brought before the Education Committee before going forward for approval by GTCS Council.

## Accreditation Criteria

### Accreditation of Professional Recognition Programme

Whilst GTC Scotland would expect the programmes with Professional Recognition to be sufficiently flexible and diverse to enable the profession to grow and develop, there are specific features required to achieve Professional Recognition that must be embedded within the programmes to be accredited successfully.



Programme providers should offer evidence of the following:	
<b>Documentation</b>	
Programme Design	Comments and key areas for discussion
<b>Programme specifications, structure and content</b>	
<b>*Reaccreditation Programmes only</b> Overarching statement – what has changed over the period of the PR award.	
<b>Assessment arrangements</b> Assessment of the learning across the programme should provide opportunities for participants to demonstrate critical reflection on the learning and their development through this programme of study. This should include how their learning links with current research and/or policy and an analysis of the evidence of impact of this learning on themselves/learners/colleagues.	

<p><b>Partnership arrangements</b></p> <p>An outline of the partnership arrangements in place to support the learning of participants</p>	
<p><b>Relevant information to demonstrate how the required specific features are embedded within the programme</b></p>	
<p><b>Education Professional as Learner</b></p> <p>A clearly articulated rationale for the programme that demonstrates the importance of this professional learning opportunity for teachers and how this programme offers a professional learning opportunity that has aspects of learning that aligns to the Scottish Framework for Masters in Education.</p>	
<p><b>Professional Standards &amp; Policy</b></p> <p>How the programme of learning aligns with the Standard for CLPL (or Standards for Leadership and Management or Professional Standards for college lecturers), current policy or initiatives and how have these aspects of the Professional Standards and policy are enacted through this learning.</p>	
<p><b>Learning that deepens knowledge &amp; understanding</b></p> <p>Describe the professional learning which enhances the academic and professional knowledge of participants, including the theoretical underpinnings for this learning and how the programme supports participants to critically reflect on the impact this has had on their thinking and practice, colleagues and their learners.</p>	
<p><b>Learning by enquiring</b></p> <p>How the programme supports participant to adopt an enquiring stance to understand and to evidence the impact of this professional learning on themselves, colleagues and learners. How the programme supports reflective practice to evidence how this learning experience has changed them as a professional and learner.</p>	

	<p><b>Learning-as-collaborative</b> Describe opportunities through this programme for sustained collaborative practice, learning with and from colleagues, partners and learners and the impact of this.</p>	
	<p><b>Leadership of, and for, learning</b> Outline how participants can undertake leadership through this professional learning and lead the learning of others, including the use of professional learning conversations underpinned by coaching approaches to stimulate, challenge and support learning.</p>	
	<p><b>Self-evaluation</b> Outline how the programme supports critical reflection and informs next steps in learning, using the appropriate Professional Standard</p>	
	<p><b>Professional dialogue as part of PRD</b> Outline the expectations that participants will engage in professional dialogue with their line manager during their PRD. This should include a critical reflection on their learning, practice and their next steps.</p>	
	<p><b>Professional dialogue as part of PRD</b> Outline the expectations that participants will engage in professional dialogue with their line manager during their PRD. This should include a critical reflection on their learning, practice and their next steps.</p>	
	<p><b>Quality Assurance</b> Describe internal (and any external) quality assurance processes, including aspects of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diversity and equity</li> <li>• effective communication with participants before, during and after the programme</li> <li>• evaluation of learning provision, collection and use of participant feedback for continuous improvement</li> <li>• how the knowledge and skills of programme facilitators are developed</li> <li>• other possible accreditation or quality assurances processes that are applied to the programme.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Professional profiles of the staff responsible for delivering the programme</b></p>	

*GTC Scotland aims to promote equality and diversity in all its activities*

## GTC Scotland *Comhairle Choitcheann Teagaisg na h-Alba*

The General Teaching Council for Scotland is the independent professional body which maintains and enhances teaching standards and promotes and regulates the teaching profession in Scotland. We strive to be a world leader in professional education issues.

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### Direct web links

#### Professional Update:

[www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update](http://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update)

#### Fitness to Teach:

[www.gtcs.org.uk/fitness-to-teach](http://www.gtcs.org.uk/fitness-to-teach)

#### Probation site:

[www.in2teaching.org.uk](http://www.in2teaching.org.uk)

#### Latest news:

[www.teachingscotland.org.uk](http://www.teachingscotland.org.uk)

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