



Professional Update: A GTC Scotland Position Paper

1 What is this paper for?

This paper, together with the advice notes attached, provides a summary statement of GTC Scotland's proposals for the introduction of Professional Update for the teaching profession in Scotland.

The paper has been produced by a working party representing all key interests in Scottish Education and is built on principles agreed by the GTC Scotland. It is intended to provide information about the introduction of Professional Update, with a view to ensuring that Professional Update will be able to offer benefits to teachers and help to improve the learning of pupils.

2 Why is GTC Scotland planning to introduce Professional Update?

On 17 March 2011, the Scottish Parliament approved the Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland) Order 2011 which set out the Government's plans for the granting of independent status to GTC Scotland from April 2012. As part of this legislation (Section 31), the Government placed the GTC Scotland under a **duty** to introduce a scheme of re-accreditation for teachers.

In its response to the consultation on the future of GTC Scotland, Scottish Government had anticipated that re-accreditation (*sic*) would "build on those aspects of current good practice which can help teachers to keep their skills up-to-date as their careers develop and school curriculum and learning patterns change". In addition, the Government recognised that a "supportive but rigorous system of professional review and development" can help to confirm that teachers have maintained high standards and to ensure the future quality of professional teaching skills across Scotland's schools, colleges and more widely across the education profession.

GTC Scotland has now adopted the title "Professional Update" for the process described by Government as "re-accreditation". The working group believes that this name (which has been endorsed by 85% of respondents to our February 2012 consultation on Professional Update) reflects a clear emphasis on the potential benefits to teachers of a positive process which can assist them to keep their professional skills up to date.

3 How has GTC Scotland taken this matter forward?

A working group (comprising representatives of unions, employers, government, parents, universities, Education Scotland and GTCS) has met regularly over the last year to agree a way forward and to produce guidelines.

From the outset, the working group has believed it to be very important that planning for Professional Update should be influenced by comment from stakeholders including professional associations and teachers. Consequently, GTC Scotland has worked closely with other members of the educational community, listening to concerns and seeking balanced, sensitive and practicable ways forward. GTC Scotland has also learned from the experiences of other comparable professions (e.g. medicine, dentistry, accountancy) as well as teaching professions in other parts of the world which have already introduced similar schemes.

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GTCS arranged a series of briefing meetings for teachers across Scotland in Autumn 2011. These meetings and discussions informed the working group's thinking on this matter, leading to the production of a detailed position paper in February 2012, which was then published for consultation. A total of 185 responses were received (from teachers, employers, trade unions and other stakeholders), with the overwhelming majority of respondents indicating support for the approach proposed by GTC Scotland. Further information about the results of the consultation can be found on:

www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update

This paper now represents the agreed implementation plan for Professional Update. It will be supplemented in due course by further guidelines which will clarify details of validation and process. This work is currently in preparation.

4 What are the purposes of a system of Professional Update?

The GTC Scotland acknowledges that Scotland's teachers are already committed to maintaining high standards (as expressed in the Standard for Full Registration) throughout their career. We know too that teachers will take advantage of opportunities to develop their skills; and that they are committed to ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning and the standing of the teaching profession are maintained and improved.

The **key purposes** of a system of Professional Update for teachers can therefore be defined as follows:

- to maintain and improve the quality of our teachers as outlined in the relevant Professional Standards and to enhance the impact that they have on pupils' learning.
- to support, maintain and enhance teachers' continued professionalism and the reputation of the teaching profession in Scotland.

5 What are the key principles of Professional Update for teachers?

GTC Scotland recognises that many teachers will have concerns about Professional Update and that it is therefore important to secure a consensus on a suitable way forward. Tangible benefits for teaching, for teachers and for learners will only result from a system which is seen to be supportive of teachers and is introduced in a way which is acceptable to them.

The teaching profession is constantly changing. GTC Scotland therefore proposes that an effective system of Professional Update for teachers will ensure that teachers have:

- a responsibility to consider their development needs.
- an entitlement to a system of supportive Professional Review and Development (PRD) which can:
 - assist them to identify constructive ways to update their skills;
 - provide access to opportunities which can address those areas identified as requiring support;
 - help them to manage change;
 - offer a focus on ways in which they can enhance their careers.
- confirmation/...

- confirmation that they have maintained the high standards required of a teacher in Scotland's educational establishments. (The Standard for Full Registration is the baseline standard for all fully registered teachers. It is now normally attained at the end of the Teacher Induction Scheme but is maintained thereafter throughout a teacher's career).

GTC Scotland also recognises the need to ensure that proposals are practicable; supportive of teachers and not constrained by bureaucracy; and that they allow individual teachers the opportunity to identify and meet their future needs.

6 Does Professional Update aim to measure teacher competence?

No. Professional Update will focus on *continuous improvement* rather than on determining whether or not a teacher is, or has remained, competent.

In line with the **GTCS Framework on Teacher Competence**, competence cases will therefore continue to be handled by authorities in the first instance, with cases of alleged serious professional incompetence referred subsequently to GTC Scotland for resolution. In addition, it is hoped that the small number of cases which lead to a formal review of the competence of an individual teacher may be assisted by the improvements in Professional Review and Development arising from the introduction of Professional Update.

7 What would Professional Update look like?

(i) Routine elements will include:

- an annual update of information by registered teachers, involving the submission to GTC Scotland of address and personal details, as appropriate.
- a career long commitment to professional learning, including continuing engagement in PRD and a five yearly Professional Update which builds on the **key purposes** set out in Section 4 above. It is anticipated that this might involve sharing of evidence to confirm that a teacher has maintained professional skills and understanding.

(ii) Operational elements

It is important to develop an open, supportive culture in which discussion and review of effective approaches to learning and teaching becomes the accepted norm in schools. In addition, Professional Update practice will promote:

- opportunities for all teachers to engage in ongoing self- evaluation against an appropriate Professional Standard to assess professional skills and needs.
- a constructive and helpful programme of PRD which offers support and advice to teachers and facilitates access to professional development opportunities. (See draft advice notes on good practice).
- the/...

- the importance of ensuring that CPD opportunities are relevant to a teacher's identified needs, in line with the key purposes listed above (Section 4). While recognising that CPD opportunities can be accessed and delivered in many ways, it also seems reasonable to assume that teachers should not be required to meet the cost of support necessary to their professional development.
- clarity in links to the relevant Professional Standard **and** to ongoing developments in education.

(iii) Partnership with employers

It is proposed that:

- employers would have a responsibility to produce, in association with their employees, a system which meets both national (GTC Scotland) principles and local needs. Local plans would be discussed and endorsed by Council LNCTs.
- GTC Scotland would engage constructively with employers in order to secure the validation of their schemes, allowing flexibility for local circumstances.
- separate arrangements would be devised for those currently not working as teachers.

8 Will Professional Update apply to all registered teachers? What about those who are working in education but outwith schools and those not involved in education?

Yes. All registered teachers will be included in the process of Professional Update, with the process adjusted to suit the needs of different types of teachers, including headteachers.

The GTC Scotland recognises that there are some teachers employed in education-linked posts who are not currently teaching; that others are working outwith education or are currently not in employment; and that some are working on supply contracts, often across different schools or authorities. Even for those teachers working in posts which do not normally require registration, the expectation is that they will wish to maintain GTCS registration and will therefore need to be able to demonstrate that they have kept their professional skills and knowledge up to date. The process used for this purpose will require to take account of the circumstances of these individuals and the relevance of recent classroom practice to their current and future employment.

In some cases, there will be a need to develop new categories of registration. This may be particularly relevant to those working in teacher education but could also be useful for teachers working in national agencies or in the management of local authorities.

In respect of those teachers who have **not** been employed within schools for some time, there will be a requirement to decide whether their registration status is that of a "practising" registered teacher or of a qualified, registered teacher who is not currently practising. This concept may also be of relevance to those teachers who have worked within the educational community, but outwith schools, for some considerable time.

Consequently, as part of our planning for the introduction of Professional Update, GTC Scotland will develop guidelines on:

- (i) the introduction of new registration categories suited to those teachers who are currently employed in education outwith schools.

(ii)/...

- (ii) the introduction of a “non-practising” registration category for teachers who have not worked in schools for an extended period of time (perhaps five or more years). All teachers in this category will still maintain their registration status as qualified teachers.
- (iii) a process which will allow non-practising teachers to have the right to apply to regain *practising* status, if their circumstances change. The precise requirements of this process will depend on the circumstances of each teacher and, in particular, on the length of time since he/she last taught.

9 What will happen next?

A pilot programme will be initiated in three local authorities in early summer 2012, with a view to all teachers being involved in Professional Update by 2014/2015.

The working group recognises that a number of local authorities already have systems in place to manage PRD. We will use the pilots to ascertain how effective these systems are and whether or not one system managed by GTC Scotland (for example, through the MyGTCS web portal) is required. What is clear is that the working group wants to avoid duplication of systems and unnecessary cost.

We also plan to carry out pilot programmes in a school in the private sector and in a University.

Further information about the pilots will be made available in due course at www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update

**GTC Scotland
April 2012**

Advice Notes:

- 1. Advice on Good Practice in PRD**
- 2. Advice on Coaching and Mentoring**