

INSPIRING WORLD-CLASS
TEACHING PROFESSIONALISM



Policy statement

Professional Update

(Revised October 2020)

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1 Background

In 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 (Article 31), the Government placed GTC Scotland under a duty to introduce a scheme "*setting out measures to be undertaken for the purposes of allowing it to keep itself informed about the standards of education and training of registered teachers*".

Following a consultation exercise, and in discussions with national partners, GTC Scotland adopted the title "Professional Update" for this process. Professional Update (PU) is premised on the impact of a teachers or lecturers professional learning and how this contributes to the future quality of the education profession. This required supportive and rigorous professional review and development processes which support sustained professional learning.

PU confirms that teachers and lecturers have maintained high standards and helps to ensure the future quality of professional learning teaching skills across Scotland's schools, colleges and more widely across the education profession.

Engagement in the PU process has been a legislative requirement of registration for fully registered teachers and lecturers since August 2014.

As with all its functions, GTC Scotland is committed to working with regards to the interests of the public in the development and implementation of the PU process.

2 Purposes and Principles of Professional Update

2.1 Key purposes

The **key purposes** of Professional Update for teachers and college lecturers are:

- ❖ to maintain and improve the quality of our teachers and college lecturers as outlined in the relevant Professional Standards and to enhance the impact that they have on the learning of children, young people and adults;
- ❖ to support, maintain and enhance teachers' and college lecturers' professionalism and reputation in Scotland.

2.2 Key principles

The **key principles** of Professional Update for teachers and college lecturers are:

- ❖ a responsibility to consider their own development needs;
- ❖ an entitlement to a system of supportive professional review and development (PRD) which can:
 - assist them to identify constructive ways to engage in self-evaluation and professional learning to maintain and enhance professional knowledge, skills and practice;
 - provide access to professional learning experiences which can develop and enhance professional practice as well as supporting next steps in professional learning identified through self-evaluation; help them to manage change; and
 - offer a focus on ways in which they can enhance their careers.

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- ❖ confirmation that they have maintained the high standards required of a teacher, college lecturer, or positions with responsibility for judging the quality of learning and teaching, in Scotland's educational establishments.

3 Features of Professional Update

Scottish local authority employers, colleges, independent schools and national education organisations have developed local systems to support employees with Full (General) registration through the Professional Update process. These local systems are subject to validation by GTC Scotland, with a further revalidation process five years thereafter. Within local authorities, the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT) plays a key role in the development and review of local policy for PU and PRD.

Professional Update is a continuous process which builds on the key purposes outlined above and which includes the following interlinked features:

- ❖ **An annual update of contact information by registered teachers and lecturers**, involving the submission to GTC Scotland of address and personal details, as appropriate. This can be done through the creation of a MyGTCS account. It is a condition of registration with GTC Scotland that all registered teachers and lecturers ensure that address contact details are up to date.
- ❖ **A career-long commitment to, and engagement in, professional learning, including continuing engagement in PRD.** Teachers and college lecturers engage in professional learning to stimulate their thinking and professional knowledge and to ensure that their practice is critically informed and up to date. By undertaking a wide range of high-quality, sustained professional learning experiences, teachers and college lecturers are more likely to inspire children and young people and adult learner and provide high-quality teaching and learning experiences, enabling learners to achieve their best. It is important that professional learning provides rich opportunities for teachers and college lecturers to develop and enhance their professional knowledge and practice, to enhance the quality of learning and teaching and school/college improvement.
- ❖ **Opportunities for all teachers and college lecturers to engage in ongoing self-evaluation against appropriate GTC Scotland Professional Standards** in order to reflect on their professional knowledge, skills and actions, and plan their development needs and relevant future professional learning.
 - **Professional Standards for Teachers**
Teachers should make use of the revised GTC Scotland Professional Standards which came into effect on 1 August 2013 for this process. It should be noted that the Standard for Full Registration continues to be the baseline Professional Standard for competence for the teaching profession in Scotland.
 - **Professional Standards for Lecturers**
Professional Standard for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges have been developed through partnership working between the College Development Network and GTC Scotland. They are designed as a benchmark for learning and teaching, and to enhance and promote professional learning. GTC Scotland has been given responsibility for these Professional Standards by the Scottish Government since January 2020.
- ❖ **Maintenance of a reflective record of professional learning and associated evidence of impact on thinking and professional actions, discussed with a line**

manager as part of the PRD process. Teachers and college lecturers should use either MyPL (My Professional Learning), accessed through a MyGTCS account, or alternative way of recording recommended by their employer.

GTC Scotland requires the recording of only the most significant pieces of professional learning undertaken, that have had an impact on thinking, practice or leadership. Entries to the learning record should be a brief synopsis and considered as an aide memoire to stimulate the PRD coaching conversation. As part of the GTC Scotland PU revalidation process it is a requirement that employers provide clear guidance demonstrating commitment to reducing unnecessary bureaucracy.

- ❖ **5 yearly confirmation of engagement in the Professional Update process with GTC Scotland** (referred to as PU sign-off). Like the professional learning record, this will be done in several ways depending on locally agreed systems. The teacher or college lecturer makes the following confirmation, which is endorsed by their line manager:

'I confirm that I have engaged in ongoing professional learning and reflected against the appropriate GTCS Professional Standards. I have maintained a reflective record of professional learning and evidence of its impact on my thinking and professional actions. I have discussed this with my line manager as part of my Professional Review and Development process.'

Where a teacher or college lecturer is working within a system which has been validated by GTC Scotland, but their line manager is not a fully registered teacher or lecturer, non-registered manager status should be requested to facilitate the Professional Update sign-off.

Where a teacher or college lecturer is working within a system which has not been validated by GTC Scotland, the PU sign off will be completed by Direct Submission.

This would apply to registrants within the following categories:

- ❖ Living and/or working in England, Ireland, Wales or overseas
- ❖ Working in an Early Learning and Childcare context
- ❖ Working in education services within non-traditional contexts such as museums, NHS etc.,
- ❖ Working for a professional association or trade union
- ❖ Not currently working, but wish to retain Full (General) registration

Where GTC Scotland is not able to validate a scheme, or there is no scheme in place, individual registered teachers and lecturers can complete the Professional Update sign-off by direct submission to GTC Scotland. Registrants working within this context should record their professional learning on MyPL accessed through their MyGTCS account.

4 Who is Required to Engage in Professional Update?

4.1 Fully registered teachers and lecturers

Engagement in the Professional Update process is a requirement of all fully registered teachers and lecturers. The designated year of completion of the Professional Update sign-off is determined by a teacher's or lecturer's year of initial registration with GTC Scotland and

follows on every five years from that point, the year that PU is due is clearly shown in the teachers/lecturers MyGTCS record.

All lecturers and teachers, including temporary or supply staff, are required to engage in the Professional Update process. This includes:

- ❖ those teachers and lecturers that who may are no longer engage in day-to-day-teaching and learning, although some retain a direct engagement with learners and/or a responsibility for the assurance of its quality;
- ❖ those teachers and lecturers who have retired from their substantive post and continue to engage in supply work (Teachers who are planning, on retirement may choose to complete the Professional Update sign-off process in their last year of teaching prior to retirement in order to maintain Fully Registered (General) status for a further five years.); and
- ❖ those involved in Initial Teacher Education and Teaching Qualification (Further Education), who engage with student teachers/student lecturers and lecturers on matter of pedagogy, curriculum and professional practice.

4.2 Provisionally registered teachers and lecturers

Completion of the Professional Update sign-off is not a requirement of teachers and lecturers holding provisional registration with GTC Scotland. However, as teachers and lecturers holding provisional registration are generally working towards full registration, it is important that provisionally registered teachers and lecturers are engaging in self-evaluation, professional learning and PRD as they work towards achieving full registration.

4.3 Lapsed teachers and lecturers

Where a teacher or lecturers has lapsed from the GTC Scotland Register of Teachers and subsequently re-joined, the year of initial registration with GTC Scotland will determine the designated year of completion of the Professional Update sign-off.

4.4 Associate category of registration

Since August 2014, *Fully Registered (General)* has been the default status for teachers and lecturers holding full registration. The status of *Fully Registered (Associate)* is available as an option for those holding full registration who do not wish to remain in the Fully Registered (General) category because of their employment circumstances e.g. not working, working in a non-education related environment or retired.

Please note, registration with GTC Scotland is a requirement for all lectures as part of their terms and conditions of employment.

Teachers and lecturers with *Fully Registered (Associate)* status will be exempt from the five yearly Professional Update sign-off process. As fully registered teachers and lecturers however, they will still be expected to meet the Professional Update expectation of updating contact details annually and will have access to the MyGTCS on-line professional learning record to record their professional learning and associated evidence if they so wish.

A teacher and lecturers who opts for *Fully Registered (Associate)* status due their circumstances then they may transfer to *Fully Registered (General)* status as follows:

- ❖ If it is less than five years since moving to *Fully Registered (Associate)* status this can be change to Full (General) status at any time by contacting GTC Scotland.
- ❖ If it is between five and 10 years since moving to *Fully Registered (Associate)* status then changing to *Fully Registered (General)* status involves the registrant meeting a quality threshold through agreeing a professional learning plan with an employer, seeking confirmation of the change from *Fully Registered (Associate)* status to *Fully Registered (General)* status (after a minimum of 20 days teaching) and then contacting GTC Scotland.
- ❖ If it more than 10 years since moving to *Fully Registered (Associate)* status, this involves the registrant meeting a quality threshold through undertaking an accredited return to teaching course or equivalent, seeking confirmation of the change from *Fully Registered (Associate)* status to *Fully Registered (General)* status(after a minimum of 20 days teaching) and then contacting GTC Scotland.

5 Professional Update Deferral Processes

GTC Scotland recognises that there are a number of circumstances which may make completion of this process within the designed timescale difficult, including career breaks, extended periods of illness, maternity / paternity / adoption leave, unemployment, recent change in employment circumstances, engagement in only occasional and sporadic supply work or other exceptional circumstances. If a teacher or lecturer is genuinely unable to undertake the Professional Update sign-off process in the designated year, then they should request a deferral of the sign-off process.

5.1 Request for deferral

Deferrals will normally be granted for a period of one year. If a deferral request is successful, the teacher or lecturer will normally be expected to complete the Professional Update sign-off process during the following academic session. Where a teacher or lecturer knows in advance that a deferral period greater than one year will be required e.g. an extended career break, they should discuss this with their employer in the first instance, and in conjunction with their line manager, notify GTC Scotland of the planned deferral period and the related reasons.

If a teacher or lecturer is unable to instigate a request for a deferral of the Professional Update sign-off process, for example during a period of extended absence through ill-health, the teacher's or lecturer's line manager can notify GTC Scotland directly of the requirement for a deferral.

The decision to grant a deferral from completion of the Professional Update sign-off process sits with the employer in the first instance. Local processes will outline any requirements to submit evidence as part of the deferral process. Existing employers' appeals and grievance procedures should be implemented if an individual teacher or lecturer disagrees with a decision regarding a deferral of the Professional Update sign-off process.

Registered teachers or lecturers not currently in employment and seeking deferral of the Professional Update sign-off process will be required to notify GTC Scotland directly, outlining the reasons for the proposed deferral, and the expected length of the deferral.

If the deferral request is unsuccessful, the teacher or lecturer will be given the option to complete the Professional Update sign-off process in the designated year, to select *Fully Registered (Associate)* as their GTC registration category (noting that teachers selecting this category are not able to teach in a Scottish school or college) or to notify GTC Scotland in order to have their details removed from the GTC Scotland register of teachers.

Note

GTC Scotland cannot consider or address employment contract, occupational health or any other employment related issues. Such matters should be addressed by the teacher or lecturer and their current employer.

6 Communication with Registered Teachers and Lecturers

GTC Scotland will send an e-mail to each registered teacher and lecturer at the beginning of the academic session in which they are required to complete the Professional Update sign-off process to alert them of this requirement. The planned date for this communication is **1 September** each year. Text messaging may also be used where email communications have been undeliverable.

GTC Scotland expects teachers and lecturers to undertake the Professional Update sign-off process by the end of the academic session in which they are required to do so, normally by **1 July**. However, it is recognised that, due to unforeseen circumstances, completion of this process can sometimes be delayed until the start of the next academic session. Therefore, at the start of this next academic session, registered teachers and lecturers who have not yet completed the Professional Update sign-off process will be reminded of the immediate requirement to do so by no later than **31 October**. Local authorities, colleges and other employers will be notified of the details of teachers and lecturers in their employment who have still to complete the Professional Update sign-off process at the start of each academic year.

7 Partnership with Employers

Teacher and lecturer employers have a responsibility to produce, in association with their employees, a PU process which can be validated by GTC Scotland as fit for purpose. This includes having a system in place to support registrants to record their professional learning, a supportive PRD system, information to support the deferral process and appeals processes and a quality assurance mechanism for PU.

In local authorities, local plans should be discussed and endorsed by Council LNCTs. Agreed validation criteria is used in the process of validation and re-validation. This ensures that local authority and employer PRD systems are robust and that registered teachers are enabled to engage with and complete the Professional Update sign-off process.

In colleges, the ITE sector and national bodies, validation criteria is used in the process of validation and re-validation. This ensures that local authority and employer PRD systems are robust and that registered teachers and lecturers are enabled to engage with and complete the Professional Update sign-off process.

7.1 Revalidation

Revalidation takes place after a period of five years, and also where significant changes are made taking account of local circumstances and nationally published guidance, including that which may be published by GTC Scotland. This revalidation process requires local authorities, colleges and employers to submit written documentation outlining agreed PRD systems to GTC Scotland prior to a revalidation event taking place. The event then includes consideration of the submitted information, a meeting with staff responsible for the strategic implementation of PRD and focus group discussions with teachers, lecturers and other educators.

The revalidation process in local authorities will seek to establish arrangements regarding registered teachers employed centrally who participate in corporate PRD schemes. However, GTC Scotland will not seek to validate corporate PRD schemes as part of the revalidation process. Link officers from GTC Scotland will continue to engage with identified local authority officers and employers on an on-going basis to ensure appropriate support and regular quality assurance.

8 The Use of the Professional Standards and the Professional Update Process

The Professional Update process requires all registered teachers and lecturers to reflect against appropriate GTC Scotland Professional Standards. GTC Scotland offers a suite of Professional Standards which offer constructive support for teachers as a reflection tool to consider how they might develop their professional knowledge, skills and actions through engagement with on-going self-evaluation and professional learning. The revised suite of Professional Standards, which came into effect from August 2013, includes The Standards for Registration, the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning and the Standards for Leadership and Management.

Professional Standards for College Lecturers have been developed through partnership working between the College Development Network and GTC Scotland. They are designed as a benchmark for learning and teaching, and to enhance and promote professional learning. GTC Scotland has been given responsibility for these Professional Standards by the Scottish Government since January 2020.

Further information about the Professional Standards and related support materials can be found at: www.gtcs.org.uk/standards

9 Professional Update and Fitness to Teach

Professional Update focuses on professional learning and *continuous improvement* rather than determining whether or not a teacher or lecturer is, or has remained, competent. In line with the GTCS Framework on Teacher Competence (FTC), competence cases will continue to be handled by local authorities and employers in the first instance, with cases of alleged professional incompetence referred subsequently to GTC Scotland for resolution.

9.1 Failure to complete PU

The failure to complete Professional Update is a relatively rare occurrence. However, if a registered teacher or lecturer were to make a deliberate and conscious decision not to meet the requirements of the Professional Update through non-compliance with contractual requirements for Continuing Professional Development or PRD this would be an employment matter and dealt with as such by the teacher's local authority/employer or college employer in line with existing processes in the first instance.

GTC Scotland monitors completion of the Professional Update sign-off on a monthly basis. Every April, registered teachers and lecturers who have not yet undertaken the sign-off process in their year of Professional Update will receive a reminder e-mail, setting out the requirements and timescales for completion of the sign-off process. This PU completion data is also shared with employers of teachers and lecturers working in Scottish educational establishments.

Within existing Rules, GTC Scotland has the power to remove teachers and lecturers from the register if they fail to pay their annual fee or do not have an up-to-date personal details and address on the Register. The same power of removal will apply to any registered teacher or lecturer failing to notify the GTC Scotland that Professional Update has been completed by the required date.

Any teacher removed from the Register in this way can use the existing process to apply for re-admission to the Register. This involves their application being considered by a Registration Panel.

9.2 PU and competency issues

As Professional Update is an ongoing process which includes reflection against the appropriate GTC Scotland Professional Standard(s) and continued engagement in professional learning and the PRD process, a teacher or lecturer who is undergoing competence procedures should still be engaging in these components of the process. However, if the Professional Update sign-off process is due to be completed whilst the teacher is engaged in competence procedures from stage 2 onwards, GTC Scotland considers that it is not in the teacher or lecturer's best interests to complete the sign-off process. Therefore, the employer should notify GTC Scotland at professional.update@gtcs.org.uk in order to suspend this until the conclusion of the competence procedures. This information will be flagged against the individual registrant's entry on the GTC Scotland register.

9.3 PU and Fitness to teach

Registered teachers or lecturers subject to sanctions as a result of GTC Scotland's Fitness to Teach processes should continue to engage in the Professional Update process. If the teacher or lecturer feels that there are specific circumstances which would make completion of the sign-off process difficult, the registrant has the right to request a deferral. This deferral will be added to the individual teacher or lecturer's entry on the GTC Scotland register.

Registered teachers or lecturers subject to a Temporary Restriction Order (TRO) and still in employment should continue to engage in the Professional Update process. If the registrant feels that there are specific circumstances which would make completion of the sign-off process difficult, they have the right to request a deferral. This deferral will be added to the individual teacher or lecturer's entry on the GTC Scotland register.

Where registered teachers or lecturers are subject to a TRO and not in employment the requirement to complete the Professional Update sign-off process should be suspended. This information should be flagged against the individual registrant's entry on the GTC Scotland register.

Where a teacher or lecturer has been removed from the register and has subsequently appealed this decision to the Court of Session, the requirement to complete the Professional

Update sign-off process should be suspended. This deferral will be added the individual teacher or lecturer's entry on the GTC Scotland register.

10 Appeals against Panel Decisions

While it is recognised that if a panel is suspended providers have an opportunity to request a rescheduled panel, 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 GTCS Professional Standards Panel.

11 Quality Assurance

It is essential that the Professional Update quality assurance process like any other quality assurance process is, by its nature, robust and rigorous; simple yet credible; manageable and consistent. It is also critical that the GTCS through its quality assurance process seeks to explore, understand and evaluate the on-going implementation of Professional Update. The process also requires to be inclusive in order that all those registrants who on a daily basis are working in and contributing to a variety of educational setting such as colleges, universities, the independent sector and national organisations also feel recognised and involved.

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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