

Professional Update Guidance

Contents

	Page
PROFESSIONAL UPDATE	5
COMPLETING THE PROFESSIONAL UPDATE SIGN-OFF	6
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	6
LOCAL PROFESSIONAL REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	7
RECORDING SYSTEMS INCLUDING MyGTCS	7
SUPPLY TEACHERS	8
RETIREMENT AND SUPPLY	
Teachers who retired prior to the start of the 2014-15 school session	9
Teachers retiring after the start of the 2014-15 school session	9
ASSOCIATE AND GENERAL STATUS	10
CHANGING ASSOCIATE TO GENERAL	11
INDEPENDENT SECTOR	11
THOSE WORKING OUTWITH EDUCATION OR OUTWITH SCOTLAND	12
CENTRAL STAFF/NATIONAL BODIES	12
DEFERRAL	13
FITNESS TO TEACH	14
GUIDANCE	16
CONCLUSION	17
HELP, ADVICE AND SUPPORT	17

In August 2014, engagement in the Professional Update process became a requirement of General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) registration for fully registered teachers.

The GTCS states that the key purpose of Professional Update is 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;
- support, maintain and enhance teachers' continued professionalism and the reputation of the teaching profession in Scotland.

The founding principles of Professional Update are:

- a responsibility for teachers to consider their development needs;
- an entitlement for teachers to a system of supportive professional review and development (PRD) which will:
 - assist them to identify constructive ways to engage in self-evaluation and professional learning in order 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 addressing those areas identified as requiring support and help them to manage change; and
 - offer a focus on ways in which they can enhance their careers;
- confirmation that they have maintained the high standards required of a teacher in Scotland's educational establishments.

PROFESSIONAL UPDATE

Professional Update is a continuous process which requires the following:

- an annual update of contact details to the GTCS;
- a career-long commitment to, and engagement in, professional learning, including continuing engagement in PRD;
- opportunities for all teachers to engage in ongoing self-evaluation against appropriate GTCS Professional Standards;
- maintenance of a reflective record of professional learning and associated evidence of impact of thinking and professional actions, discussed with a line manager as part of the PRD process;
- five-yearly confirmation of engagement in the Professional Update process with the GTCS.

Teachers will not, however, be asked to provide retrospective evidence of engagement in professional learning and the PRD process prior to August 2014.

COMPLETING THE PROFESSIONAL UPDATE SIGN-OFF

Registered teachers will normally be required to complete the Professional Update sign-off on a five-yearly cycle as follows:

2014/2015 – teachers with registration years ending in 9 and 4;

2015/2016 – teachers with registration years ending in 0 and 5;

2016/2017 – teachers with registration years ending in 1 and 6;

2017/2018 – teachers with registration years ending in 2 and 7;

2018/2019 – teachers with registration years ending in 3 and 8, etc.

Teachers who have participated in the pilot programmes of Professional Update in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 and already completed the Professional Update sign-off will not be required to repeat the sign-off process for a further five years following that initial sign-off.

It is anticipated that the Professional Update sign-off process will be completed by the end of the academic session in which you are required to do so, normally by 1 July. However, it is accepted that there may be unforeseen circumstances which delay the completion of this process until the start of the next academic session. Therefore, at the start of the next academic session, registered teachers 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 will also be notified of the details of teachers in their employment who have still to complete the Professional Update sign-off process at that point.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Professional Update requires teachers to reflect against the appropriate Professional Standards. The GTCS standards include:

- the Standards for Registration;
- the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning; and
- the Standards for Leadership and Management.

While full registration continues to be the benchmark of teacher competence, the other standards move beyond this baseline to support teachers' skill development throughout their careers. It is anticipated that teachers will be able to dip in and out of these standards to allow them to consider how to develop their professional knowledge, skills and action through engagement with ongoing self-evaluation and professional learning. Further information on the Professional Standards is available at www.gtcs.org.uk/standards.

LOCAL PROFESSIONAL REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Schools and local authorities should be operating a PRD system which is supportive and developmental, not punitive.

A positive PRD system should:

- be a continuous process, not just an annual review;
- allow teachers to take responsibility for their own development needs;
- support discussions to take place in an atmosphere of trust;
- offer training for both those participating in and undertaking a review;
- be based on a clear and non-bureaucratic recording system for PRD;
- support reflection using the new GTCS standards;
- include a suitable appeals process.

In local authorities, PRD policies will have been discussed and agreed through the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT). All local authority schemes have also gone through a process of validation, whereby a GTCS panel, including representatives from the Professional Update Working Group (PUWG), on which the NASUWT was represented and assessed whether the proposed scheme was sufficiently robust, would enable teachers to engage with and complete Professional Update.

The validation criteria and reports of completed validations are available at www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update. The GTCS will validate employer PRD schemes every five years to provide a quality assurance check and ensure appropriate support is continuing to be provided to teachers.

RECORDING SYSTEMS INCLUDING MyGTCS

Professional Update recording systems will vary depending on where you are currently working.

When you log onto MyGTCS, it will alert you if your employer uses another system for recording. You will also receive further information from your employer.

Where your local authority has an existing system in place, there is no requirement for you to duplicate information on the MyGTCS professional learning record. Please be aware, however, that the MyGTCS account has a number of additional features which can support teachers with Professional Update, in conjunction with other local systems:

- view and update your personal details;
- access over 1,700 education journals and a wide selection of eBooks;
- sign up to receive one of the GTCS newsletters;
- gain access to additional services provided by the GTCS;
- view and contribute to your professional learning record;
- keep a reflective journal.

Some registered teachers will participate in PRD schemes that will not have been validated by the GTCS, or have no access to a PRD scheme. Where the GTCS is not able to validate a scheme, or there is no scheme in place, individual registered teachers can record their professional learning through MyGTCS and, at the time of completion of the Professional Update sign-off, can submit their professional learning record with further information about engagement in the process directly to MyGTCS.

The GTCS will assess the information provided and may sample the submissions and associated evidence. Further information on specific categories of teacher is provided below.

SUPPLY TEACHERS

The NASUWT has pressed the importance of ensuring that teachers who may have difficulty accessing professional development and the PRD process, such as supply teachers, are not disadvantaged as a result of Professional Update.

Each validation of local procedures involved a specific focus on the provision for supply teachers and every employer must have processes in place which meet the needs of their supply teachers.

Many aspects of Professional Update, such as recording systems, guidance materials, professional learning opportunities and specific support for supply teachers, will vary depending on where you are currently working and supply teachers are advised to check locally to see what information, handbooks, networks, meetings, policies etc are in place for supply teachers and how best to access them.

Where a supply teacher is working in more than one local authority, they can nominate one local authority as their employer and, following a dialogue with each employer, notify the others that they will be following the Professional Update process in their chosen local authority.

Supply teachers engaging in ad hoc work who have no access to a local authority system can record their professional learning on the MyGTCS online profile.

Where a teacher does not have access to a designated line manager at the Professional Update sign-off point, they are able to submit their professional learning record directly to the GTCS using the MyGTCS online profile system. Examples of professional learning for supply teachers are explored by the GTCS at www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update/supply-teachers.aspx.

RETIREMENT AND SUPPLY

Teachers who retired prior to the start of the 2014-15 school session

Teachers who retired before the school session 2014-15 did not have the opportunity to engage in the Professional Update process and therefore could not undertake the sign-off procedure. In recognition of this, all teachers who retired prior to the start of the 2014-15 school session will be considered to hold Fully Registered (General) status until the end of session 2018-19 unless they opt for Fully Registered (Associate) status or request removal from the Register.

Teachers retiring after the start of the 2014-15 school session

From August 2014 onwards, all teachers have been required to engage in the Professional Update process and will have an allocated school session for the sign-off procedure which is part of that process. There will be a general facility for teachers to choose to sign off in the school session during which they retire, in addition to and irrespective of the allocated sign-off year.

Teachers will retain Fully Registered (General) status for the five school sessions which follow. There are three possible scenarios for teachers approaching retirement who wish to engage in supply work:

- (1) teachers who will retire before their allocated sign-off year should choose the facility to sign off in their retirement year if they wish to undertake supply work, effectively bringing their sign-off year forward;
- (2) teachers whose sign-off year coincides with their retirement year should sign off as planned; and
- (3) teachers who retire after their sign-off year can opt to sign off again in their retirement year in addition to their previous sign off, giving a further five years of Fully Registered (General) status. Otherwise they can continue to hold Fully Registered (General) status for the remainder of the five years since their previous sign off.

Retired teachers who decide not to engage in supply work but wish to remain on the register with the GTCS may opt for Fully Registered (Associate) status.

ASSOCIATE AND GENERAL STATUS

The default status for all currently Fully Registered teachers will be Fully Registered (General). This will be required to teach in schools (other than new/returning teachers working towards that status).

However, the GTCS has formed a new, additional status of Fully Registered (Associate).

Fully Registered (Associate) is available as an option for those holding full registration who do not wish to remain in the General category because of their circumstances, e.g. they are not working, working in a non-education-related environment or retired.

Teachers with Associate status will be exempt from the five-yearly sign-off process of Professional Update. As they are still professionals on the GTCS Register, they will be expected to meet the other professional update expectations with regard to participating in ongoing professional development, so access will be provided to the MyGTCS online portfolio, which will enable them to record their professional learning and associated evidence, should they so wish. Such teachers will be expected to maintain the appropriate Professional Values required of all teachers and they will continue to be subject to Fitness to Teach requirements. They will also still

complete an annual update for the GTCS. They will retain their professional status as fully registered teachers who are qualified to teach and it will be open to them to seek a return to the General Category at any time, following guidelines set by the GTCS.

CHANGING ASSOCIATE TO GENERAL

A teacher who opts for Associate status may transfer to General status as follows:

- Less than five years since becoming Associate, at any time by contacting the GTCS.
- Between five and ten years, by meeting a quality threshold through agreeing a professional learning plan with an employer, seeking confirmation of the change from Associate to General (after a minimum of 20 days teaching) and then contacting the GTCS.
- More than ten years, by meeting a quality threshold through undertaking an accredited return-to-teaching course or equivalent, seeking confirmation of the change from Associate to General (after a minimum of 20 days teaching) and then contacting the GTCS.

These quality thresholds will apply no earlier than 2016. In the first instance they will apply only to those without active engagement in teaching for more than seven years, and this limit will fall to five years, but not before 2019.

INDEPENDENT SECTOR

The GTCS has validated the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) and Education through Care Schools (EtCS) PRD and Professional Update frameworks to ensure that these meet the principles of Professional Update. SCIS members can access this information on the members-only section of the SCIS website. Independent schools not using either of these frameworks are able to submit their individual PRD systems to the GTCS for validation.

The system of recording that teachers will use to record their professional learning will vary depending on where they are currently employed. Individual teachers working in the independent sector should receive further information from their employer about the systems in place to enable them to record their professional learning and complete the Professional Update sign-off process.

THOSE WORKING OUTWITH EDUCATION OR OUTWITH SCOTLAND

If you are a teacher working outwith the education system or outwith Scotland and wish to maintain Fully Registered (General) status, you are required to engage fully in all aspects of the Professional Update process. Therefore, you should record your professional learning on the online profile available through MyGTCS.

If you do not have access to a designated line manager at the point where you are required to complete the Professional Update sign-off, you can submit your professional learning record directly to the GTCS using the MyGTCS online profile system. The GTCS will assess the information provided by you in relation to Professional Update and has reserved the right to sample this information and related evidence.

If you do not wish to maintain Fully Registered (General) status, you have the option to select Fully Registered (Associate) status, as outlined above.

CENTRAL STAFF/NATIONAL BODIES

It is recognised that not all registered teachers are involved in day-to-day teaching, although some retain a direct engagement with teaching and learning and/or a responsibility for the assurance of its quality. Roles such as Quality Improvement Officers, Education Officers, Directors of Education and registered teachers working in national bodies such as Education Scotland who are eligible for registration are being encouraged by the GTCS to maintain their registration. The Professional Update process for teachers in such roles will enable them to confirm their continued understanding of relevant aspects of the Professional Standards and engagement in appropriate professional learning. It will not, however, be necessary for those registered teachers to confirm this by active service in the classroom.

The GTCS validated local authority PRD schemes to ensure they met the principles of Professional Update. The validation process in local authorities sought to establish arrangements regarding registered teachers employed centrally, including those who participate in corporate PRD schemes. However, the GTCS did not seek to validate local authority corporate PRD schemes as part of the validation process.

The system of recording that teachers will use to record their professional learning will vary depending on where they are currently employed. If you are a registered teacher working centrally in a local authority, you will receive further information from your employer about the systems in place to enable

recording of professional learning and completion of the Professional Update sign-off. Where your local authority has an existing system in place, or if you are using a corporate system, there is no requirement for you to duplicate information on the professional learning record which can be accessed through MyGTCS.

Whilst the revised standards have been designed to meet the needs of teachers at all career stages working in Scotland's schools, aspects of these may not be directly relevant to teachers working outwith the school system, e.g. centrally based local authority staff, teachers working in universities or national organisations. Therefore, in addition to the revised suite of Professional Standards and the related support materials, the GTCS has committed to develop further guidance notes and support materials for teachers working outwith the school system.

DEFERRAL

It is recognised that there are a number of circumstances which may make engagement in the Professional Update process and completion of the five-yearly sign-off difficult, including career breaks, extended illness, maternity/paternity/adoption leave, unemployment or engagement in only occasional supply work, for which extensions to the five-yearly sign-off period may be required. If you are unable to undertake the Professional Update sign-off process in your designated year, you have the opportunity to request a deferral.

Employers should confirm the deferrals process for teachers they employ as part of local guidance and dissemination of information. The deferral process in each local context should include the arrangements for seeking approval and lines of communication, including, for example, whether the teacher seeking deferral is only required to communicate the request to the line manager with responsibility for confirming his/her Professional Update sign-off, or if additional local arrangements are required.

The professional learning record accessed as part of MyGTCS includes an electronic process for deferral requests. Registered teachers working in local authorities who use the Gateway or SOPRA systems for the purpose of the Professional Update sign-off will receive further information from their employers about the operational aspects of the deferral process as contained in these systems.

Deferrals will normally be requested for a period of one year. If a deferral request is successful, the teacher will normally be expected to complete the Professional Update sign-off process during the following academic session. Where a teacher 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 notify the GTCS of the planned deferral period and the related reasons.

If a teacher 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 line manager can notify the GTCS directly of the requirement for a deferral.

Existing employers' appeals and grievance procedures are available where an individual teacher disagrees with a decision regarding a deferral of the Professional Update sign-off process.

The decision to grant a deferral from completion of the Professional Update sign-off process sits with the employer. Registered teachers not currently in employment and seeking deferral of the Professional Update sign-off process will be required to notify the GTCS directly, outlining the reasons for the proposed deferral, and the expected length of the deferral. The GTCS has stated explicitly that it cannot consider or address employment contracts, occupational health or any other employment-related issues; these matters must be addressed through the employer.

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

FITNESS TO TEACH

Professional Update focuses on professional learning and continuous improvement rather than determining whether or not a teacher is, or has remained, competent. In line with the GTCS Framework on Teacher Competence, 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 the GTCS for resolution.

The failure to complete Professional Update is anticipated to be relatively rare and for most teachers it will be due to reasons such as 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. For such circumstances, there is the deferral process as outlined above.

If a registered teacher 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 (CPD) or PRD, this would be an employment matter and dealt with as such by the teacher's local authority/employer in line with existing processes in the first instance.

As Professional Update is an ongoing process which includes reflection against the appropriate GTCS standard(s) and continued engagement in professional learning and the PRD process, a teacher 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, the GTCS considers that it is not in the teacher's best interests to complete the sign-off process. Therefore, in these circumstances the employer should notify the GTCS in order to suspend this until the conclusion of the competence procedures. This information will be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTCS register. The NASUWT strongly argued that such a suspension should not take place until stage 3 at which competence proceedings become formal; this view was not, however, shared by other stakeholders.

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

Registered teachers who are subject to Fitness to Teach processes in non-competence matters should continue to engage in the Professional Update process. If the teacher feels that there are specific circumstances which would make completion of the sign-off process difficult, the teacher has the

right to request a deferral. This information should be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTCS register.

Registered teachers subject to a Temporary Restriction Order (TRO) and still in employment should continue to engage in the Professional Update process. If the teacher feels that there are specific circumstances which would make completion of the sign-off process difficult, the teacher has the right to request a deferral. This information should be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTCS register.

Where registered teachers 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 teacher's entry on the GTCS register.

Where a teacher 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 information should be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTCS register.

GUIDANCE

The GTCS has published detailed advice on professional learning opportunities that teachers might engage with at: www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-development/professional-learning.aspx.

Education Scotland, in conjunction with stakeholders such as the NASUWT, has revised the national guidance which supports effective PRD and the positive engagement of teachers, headteachers and system leaders in the PRD process: www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/professionallearning/prd/index.asp.

The GTCS has provided some basic information on practitioner enquiry, a systemic, evidence-rich approach to critically informed thinking and practice: www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update/practitioner-enquiry/practitioner-enquiry.aspx.

CONCLUSION

The NASUWT has worked closely with the GTCS and other stakeholders to ensure that Professional Update, in conjunction with local authority procedures for PRD, will provide a consistent experience for teachers.

The NASUWT has been clear that:

- Professional Update must not pose an additional workload burden for teachers;
- it must offer teachers opportunities to participate in high-quality career-long professional learning which supports them to achieve their career aspirations and develop their skills;
- it must operate as a genuine dialogue between teachers and reviewers, in which teachers take ownership of their professional learning.

HELP, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

If you do not feel you are being appropriately supported to participate in the professional update process because your school or employer is failing to follow their local PRD policy or because you are experiencing difficulties in accessing relevant professional learning, it is critically important that this is raised and addressed with your employer timeously.

PRD is both an entitlement and the responsibility of all teachers, headteachers and system leaders as part of their commitment to career-long professional learning. As professional learning is a responsibility of the teacher, it will be insufficient to reach the Professional Update sign-off year and state that the appropriate professional learning record or professional learning has not been undertaken whilst pointing to procedural errors or requests for courses which have been denied. Support in approaching your employer to address any deficiencies will be provided by the NASUWT.

Should any member encounter any difficulty or require further information or advice, please contact the Scotland office on 0131 226 8480.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of each party, please see the following link: www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/professionallearning/prd/appendix.asp.



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