

Moving Forward with Teacher Professional Learning

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MOVING FORWARD WITH TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

EDUCATION SCOTLAND

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper is provided in response to the Cabinet Secretary's request in his Parliamentary statement of 8 February 2012 that Education Scotland would 'work closely with key education stakeholders including the Association of Chartered Teachers, the National Partnership Group and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) to identify the most successful elements of the current scheme and consider the development of masters-level courses.'

1.2 The report outlines the background and context for this task; discusses and identifies the most successful elements of the Chartered Teacher Scheme; analyses views, evidence of emerging practice and issues which may guide future development of masters-level provision; and offers recommendations.

1.3 In undertaking this task, Education Scotland has engaged with representatives of professional associations and national bodies ([see Appendix A](#)). In addition, Education Scotland has reviewed and drawn upon relevant research and submissions and has analysed evidence from inspections undertaken by HM Inspectors and from District Inspectors' engagement with local authorities.

2. Background

2.1 *Teaching Scotland's Future*¹ sets out much higher expectations for career-long professional learning for teachers and advocates the wider use of accreditation of masters-level learning. The National Partnership Group is developing models and plans to convert these proposals into actions. This short task complements the work of the National Partnership Group.

2.2 *Advancing Professionalism in Teaching*² made recommendations regarding the future of the chartered teacher scheme. Further to the announcement that the scheme would cease, the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) has reached agreement regarding pay and conditions for existing chartered teachers. They have also agreed that chartered teachers should continue in their advanced professional role.

2.3 A new professional Standard for career-long learning is being developed by the GTCS. This sets out aspirational standards for the professional knowledge, skills and abilities which teachers will develop during the period beyond the early phase of their careers. The standard has the potential to support the translation into practice of many current developments in teacher professionalism.

¹ Donaldson, G., (2010) *Teaching Scotland's Future, A Report of the Review of Teacher Education in Scotland*, Edinburgh: The Scottish Government

² McCormac, G., (2011) *Advancing Professionalism in Teaching: The Report of the Review of Teacher Employment in Scotland*, Edinburgh: The Scottish Government

3. Identifying the most successful elements of the chartered teacher scheme

3.1 There is widespread international agreement that high quality classroom teachers and teaching are fundamental to effective learning, raising achievement and bringing about improvement in the quality of education. The chartered teacher scheme in Scotland can be seen as part of an international focus on recognising and spreading 'accomplished teaching'. Evidence of added value arising from such schemes is elusive, although research by Reeves et al³ supports other evidence, such as practitioners' testimony, that chartered teachers programmes support:

- greater awareness of research literature and learning theory
- more rigorous forms of reflection and improved analytical skills
- a sharper focus on evidence and on pupils' learning.

3.2 This goes some way to support chartered teachers' own perceptions described in McMahon and Reeves⁴ (2007) that they had become:

- more confident professionally
- more responsive and sensitive to individual pupils and adopted more inclusive approaches through more differentiated responses to pupils' needs
- better at supporting underachieving learners
- more effective at providing and using feedback
- more able to engage pupils effectively in their learning
- more effective in making use of pupils' prior knowledge and understanding.

3.3 In March 2009, HMIE reported on its monitoring of the impact of the Teachers' Agreement across all of Scotland's councils, including the impact of the chartered teacher scheme. Examples of individual good practice were identified although there was no consistent pattern across the country. These included:

- the formation of networks of chartered teachers which encouraged continuing professional learning, sometimes involving learning representatives of professional associations;
- some chartered teachers feeling that their status had been enhanced in the eyes of colleagues and they had become sources of professional advice; others felt 'professional and trusted' (much, however, depended on the attitude of school leaders);
- some chartered teachers contributing to continuing professional development (CPD) at school, local authority and national levels; and
- evidence of 'momentum and energy', with chartered teachers described as 'dynamic' and 'change agents', particularly where there was more than one chartered teacher in a school.

³ Reeves, J., et al., (2010) *Evaluating Accomplished Teaching: Report of a Pilot Study into Means of Investigating the Impact of Accomplished Teaching in Pupils' Learning in the Context of the Chartered Teacher Initiative in Scotland*, Edinburgh GTCS

⁴ McMahon, M., and Reeves, J., et al., (2007) *Evaluating the Impact of Chartered Teacher – the perceptions of Chartered Teachers: Final Report*, Glasgow: University of Glasgow

3.4 In *Learning Together: Improving teaching, improving learning* (2010)⁵ HMIE provided examples of teachers 'on the chartered teacher programme (who) have become more reflective practitioners' (p. 24). The publication identified encouraging examples of chartered teachers making effective contributions to CPD programmes and modelling good practice. However, publications such as *Teaching Scotland's Children* (2007)⁶ found that there was generally only a loose connection between the work of chartered teachers and the growth of collegiate working in schools.

3.5 In its evidence to the Review of Teacher Employment in Scotland in 2010, HMIE indicated that there had been little change since its survey in 2009. There were continuing examples of schools where chartered teachers, individually and collectively, were having a marked impact through professional development activities and modelling good practice. Some councils had been successful in supporting chartered teachers to make positive contributions to development priorities and professional learning, but this was not widespread and the potential impact on learning was not being realised. Subsequent evidence from inspections has confirmed these overall findings.

3.6 The research and professional learning led by chartered teachers has not been effectively shared, and schools, local authorities and teachers would benefit from sharing the outcomes of professional enquiry more effectively.

3.7 In the evolution of the scheme, the revised GTCS Standard for Chartered Teacher (2009) and SNCT Guidance were widely seen as helpful in clarifying expectations relating to chartered teachers.

3.8 In its comments about the proposed discontinuation of the chartered teacher scheme, GTCS felt that changes made to the scheme in recent years had improved its rationale and operation. It also stated that there is international evidence that 'accomplished teachers do make a difference to educational outcomes.'

'We have therefore argued that there is emerging evidence to suggest that Chartered Teachers are now making a difference to learning practices and pupil success, not just in their own schools but across their schools.' (GTCS, 2011)

3.9 The chartered teachers who engaged with Education Scotland individually and collectively through the Association of Chartered Teachers Scotland (ACTS) were highly committed to the scheme and were very positive about their contributions to children's and young people's learning and achievement. Some were critical of the way in which the scheme had been implemented at their local authorities and schools, whilst others felt that they were making enhanced contributions to improving learning and teaching as a result of the support of senior leaders within their school. Many identified strongly with the role of chartered

⁵ *Learning Together: Improving teaching, improving learning: The roles of continuing professional development, collegiality and chartered teachers in implementing Curriculum for Excellence* HM Inspectorate of Education (2009)

⁶ *Teaching Scotland's Children : a report on progress in implementing 'A Teaching Profession for the 21st century'* HM Inspectorate of Education (2007)

teacher and were very active through their own professional body, ACTS, which serves as a national peer group and has fostered new professional learning communities. Members of this group had continued to use their enhanced skills in research and enquiry to continue to improve learning within their own classrooms, schools and further afield.

3.10 The findings suggest that the most successful elements of the chartered teacher scheme are:

- the **impetus and professional refreshment** it has provided for teachers as they engage in additional deep, rigorous, learning which is linked directly to the job of teaching
- **enhanced skills, knowledge and dispositions** arising from being part of local and/or national communities of practice which foster professional dialogue about learning, both face-to-face and online
- **deeper understanding of pedagogy through direct links between theory and practice**, contributing to a stronger focus on identifying and addressing the learning and pastoral needs of children and young people
- **increased confidence and skill in critical reflection and self-evaluation**, leading to impact on classroom practice
- **increased commitment to, and improved skills in, practitioner enquiry and learning**
- **a capacity to promote and sustain the professional learning of other teachers** within and beyond individual schools.

3.11 It is important to emphasise that the extent to which these features have applied in the case of individual chartered teachers has varied considerably. There has been a range of reasons for this variation. Evidence, including that from HMI and the experiences of ACTS members, suggests that a chartered teacher's influence on learning in a whole-school context is determined by a number of factors that include:

- the climate and culture within a school e.g. levels of awareness and support demonstrated by senior leaders, the perception that chartered teachers can act as change agents and the extent to which professional learning is prioritised;
- the chartered teacher's own approach to the role; and
- in some cases, the presence of other chartered teachers within a school.

3.12 Within a school, a prerequisite for beneficial impact is therefore:

- both **individual and collegiate commitment to career-long professional learning** and to **applying that learning for the benefit of the whole school**. Establishing this culture is a prime purpose of leadership.

3.13 The next part of the paper considers factors which need to be considered to ensure that the most successful elements of the chartered teachers scheme are retained and extended in the next phase of development of teacher professional learning and, in particular, in a move towards masters-level provision. Within that context, there is a desire to harness the skills and attributes of the current cadre of chartered teachers as fully as possible in future.

4. Increasing the impact of professional learning – the basis for a move towards increased masters-level provision for teachers in Scotland

4.1 There is a relationship between high performance of a national education system and a masters-level teaching profession. Although it is not possible to demonstrate a direct causal link, there is nevertheless a clear rationale for moving in the direction of a masters-level profession in Scotland. The high expectations which are being placed upon teachers now and in the future have been well described elsewhere, and include their roles as co-creators of the curriculum and the need for them to be experts both in pedagogy and in their areas of specialism. As is being considered under the National Partnership Group, teachers will need to continue to extend build on their learning from their early phase throughout their careers in a critical, informed and coherent manner. These factors point to the need for a move towards increased masters-level learning within the profession.

4.2 The generic characteristics of masters-level learning and the intended outcomes are set out in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework at level 11 ([see Appendix B](#)). Scotland's universities currently offer a diverse range of taught masters programmes and modules which include sector specific and subject specific options. These are offered through a range of methods of study, including distance learning, attendance at taught classes and through blended approaches. All of Scotland's universities have arrangements to accredit prior learning. However, these procedures can be complex and difficult to navigate.

4.3 Universities have begun to make significant changes to the masters programmes that they offer and are engaging in new ways with schools, taking account of the recommendations of *Teaching Scotland's Future*.

- The University of Aberdeen is working with the Tapestry Partnership to accredit practice-based learning in teacher learning communities at masters-level through a portfolio of evidence and other approaches. The programme to be accredited focuses on the development of *assessment is for learning* across teacher learning communities. The model involves peer-to-peer support, professional reading and the development of classroom-based techniques and strategies. Teachers have reported that the impact of this programme on improving their practice has been very positive. This approach has the potential to involve large numbers of teachers in Scotland in accreditation, as several thousand teachers have been involved in Tapestry programmes.
- A number of 'hub-school' pilot projects which adopt a clinical model of professional learning have been established through collaboration between universities and local authorities. They involve staff from the Universities of

Glasgow and Strathclyde working closely with school staff to support teachers in the early phase, and they aim to develop educational theory through practice. The developments include very productive partnership working between Glasgow University and Glasgow City Council, including the joint appointment of a teacher education coordinator. Teachers involved in the Glasgow pilot are very positive about their ownership of their professional learning and its impact in the classroom. Glasgow is extending the hub school pilot to three other secondary schools and their associated primaries in addition to the first two. An independent evaluation of the impact of this initiative is due to be carried out, with a report due over the summer. These models currently focus upon the early phase of teacher education, but there are plans to accredit the learning of the teachers who have been working with the early-phase teachers, and there is scope to apply similar methodology for masters-level learning more broadly.

- Edinburgh University lecturers are working alongside staff in two schools to support year-long enquiry-based improvement projects, supported by the GTCS. Early indications suggest that the teachers' capacity to engage in research and critical analysis is increasing significantly through working closely with university staff. The GTCS and Edinburgh University plan to publish the outcomes of this work jointly, to inform future developments in schools.
- More generally, Scotland's universities have a long tradition of providing masters-level programmes (MSc and MEd) which are available to teachers. A good range of courses and programmes is available, and they have recently become modular, enabling teachers to tailor their professional learning to meet their needs and obtain qualifications in advanced professional studies. Universities are reviewing their ranges of sector specific and subject specific modules in light of *Teaching Scotland's Future*. New modules in aspects such as mentoring and teacher education are being developed. A few universities are proposing to replace their chartered teacher programmes with masters provision in professional enquiry; others are considering.
- At the same time, local authorities are supporting teachers to engage in professional learning at masters degree level. For example, a few local authorities work with universities to offer masters degree modules to teachers who are aspiring school leaders. One local authority works with a university to offer new teachers the opportunity to build on their initial teacher education and work towards a masters degree within the first few years of their career.

4.4 These and similar developments provide points of growth for the extension of masters-level learning.

5. Emerging themes

5.1 Several common themes emerged from the discussions with individuals and groups about future masters-level learning. Some wished to record their opposition to the cessation of the chartered teacher scheme. Overall, however, there was a

view that the time is right to extend masters-level learning for teachers. In particular, there was:

A. Support for teacher professional learning for what might be termed ‘accomplished teaching’, for the benefit of all children and young people

As has been discussed earlier, research into the impact of accomplished teaching on pupils’ learning and achievement is at a relatively early stage both in the UK and internationally. There is agreement, however, that accomplishment goes beyond competence and represents enhanced engagement with children. Forde and McMahon (2011)⁷ describe accomplishment as a process, not a destination or event, arguing that it represents more than experience and implies depth and quality. They identify a set of ‘dispositions and actions’ associated with accomplished teaching:

- skill in self-evaluation
- openness to professional review
- exemplifying readiness for change
- demonstrating leadership in a collegiate context
- leading continuing professional development

It is important that, in the future, teachers’ career-long professional learning enables them to continue to develop in these directions, so that their teaching becomes increasingly accomplished. A significant number of teachers, including chartered teachers, have skills self-evaluation, professional enquiry and critical analysis which they can use to improve the learning and achievement of children and young people.

B. Support for professional learning which links theory and research with classroom practice and can produce evidence of impact on the learning of children and young people

Such approaches model the research-informed practice initially proposed in the Sutherland Review in 1997⁸ and subsequently reinforced in *Teaching Scotland’s Future*. Professional enquiry implies engagement with theory, policy and practice and the influences and relationships between them. It involves using research and other evidence to illuminate one’s own and pupils’ performance and taking action to ensure the best outcomes for learners. Features can include:

- high levels of professional collaboration to interpret the outcomes of research or international comparative studies across a range of policies, and see practical implications in their own contexts.
- being self-evaluative, gathering and using rigorous evidence of impact and continually reflecting upon about what they are doing and why
- observing, supporting, coaching and critically analysing the work of fellow professionals and the outcomes for learners

⁷ Forde, C., and McMahon, M., (2011) *Accomplished Teaching, Accomplished Teachers in Scotland: A Report Submitted to the Committee Reviewing Teachers’ Employment in Scotland*, Glasgow: University of Glasgow

⁸ Teacher Education and Training: A Study (Sir Stewart Sutherland, HMSO 1997)

- being an adaptive expert who is open to change through questioning, challenging, knowledge and deep understanding
- critically questioning educational beliefs, assumptions, values and practices from informed viewpoints.

Ideally, teachers will adopt an enquiring stance to their work, not only applying such approaches to projects or one-off exercises. This implies a need to build on teachers' strengths as reflective practitioners and support them also to be enquiring practitioners. Early drafts of the GTCS standard for career-long professional learning include these features as an integral part of the skills and competences for this phase.

C. A clear view that a masters degree should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather that 'masters-level' should be a benchmark for much of teachers' learning

A recurring point made by those who took part in the discussions for this task was that the prime purpose of masters-level learning is to bring benefits to the children and young people with whom teachers work. Achieving a masters degree should not be the primary target.

There was also recognition that relevant masters-level learning could offer the potential to achieve, overall, much greater impact from the substantial investment in teachers' CPD. While there will always be a need for some collegiate time to be spent on operational or procedural matters, there was a desire to see a shift in the balance of CPD. Increasingly, teachers should have opportunities to engage in professional learning which displays the quality, depth and rigour which are characteristic of masters level study. This implies a strong emphasis on teacher enquiry and on 'accomplished' teaching, to achieve benefits for learners.

Many chartered teachers emphasised that they greatly valued the rigour and depth of the learning in which they had engaged. They expressed the view that the module they had studied on reflective practice would be particularly useful for other teachers as part of career-long professional learning in the future.

D. A need to consider what will motivate and encourage teachers to engage in appropriate professional learning

Many teachers in Scotland already choose to undertake advanced professional studies for their intrinsic value - for their own professional growth and because of their commitment to developing specialist skills or knowledge to benefit the children they work with. This intrinsic motivation will continue to be a powerful driving force.

In addition, teachers might be encouraged to undertake advanced professional studies where schools or local authorities chose to allocate funds from within their budgets to support studies in areas which they have identified as priorities for improvement. Similarly, teachers who are completing research or advanced professional study might be allocated a portion of time to enable them to focus on aspects of their masters work.

Teachers with skills in professional enquiry should be well placed to contribute to developments, improvements and the professional learning of their colleagues, through secondments or other roles such as becoming lead mentors within their learning community or local authority. Opportunities of these kind can provide motivation and professional satisfaction. Although it is not suggested that a masters qualification should be a prerequisite for progression and promotion, such work would be likely to enhance a teacher's professional profile.

E. A desire for new arrangements for accreditation and assessment which would be based on partnership, relevant, and as flexible and light on bureaucracy as possible while maintaining high academic standards

Masters accounts and qualifications could include a blend of taught modules (using different models and media) and accreditation of professional learning, tailored to the work of the individual teacher. In the move from the chartered teacher programmes into increased masters provision there is great potential to build upon the current range of specialist and sector based provision to address a wider range of priorities and interests.

There is a challenge here for universities to offer accessible ways of accrediting practice-based learning while maintaining their standards of academic excellence. Mutual recognition by universities of relevant masters-level credits gained by teachers at different stages and in different contexts would be very important to achieving maximum flexibility and accessibility.

F. A desire for alignment between masters-level accreditation, the emerging arrangements for teachers' professional review and development, the new GTCS standard, and professional update, and a simple narrative to explain the connections between them

The need for the partners in masters-level learning to work closely together to achieve alignment of purposes, principles and processes was frequently emphasised by those who engaged in the discussions leading to this report. Such alignment would help teachers and school leaders to chart clear paths through the various components and use them to the full. Some of the connections are summarised below.

- The GTCS standard for career-long learning sets out aspirations which can be used to shape each teacher's long-term professional learning and development.
- The standard for career-long learning and the descriptions of SCQF 11 (Masters level) are fully compatible with one another and provide benchmarks when teachers, schools, national bodies and other providers are planning and evaluating professional learning.
- Teachers should be able to have their learning at this level accredited through a range of options and routes. Many new teachers will have credit points at SCQF level 11 which will provide a good start to their 'masters account'. A

range of masters-level provision will provide both professionally relevant and rewarding learning and, if appropriate, accreditation.

- The annual process of professional review and development is based upon self-evaluation and evidence of young people's progress and learning. It uses the standard for career-long learning as a point of reference. Teachers' learning is informed by this professional review process and is planned both for the short and long term, including building towards masters-level credits.
- Professional Update allows periodic, five-yearly stocktaking against the Standard for Full Registration.

It should be noted that the chartered teacher scheme was initiated to provide two distinct career routes: for teaching and for leadership. More recently, there has been a greater recognition that all teachers play leadership roles, and also that those who occupy formal leadership positions need to give high priority to professional learning. Professional learning for teaching and for leadership will increasingly be intertwined. The extension of masters-level learning should support this and provide flexibility.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The knowledge and skills in professional enquiry of existing Chartered Teachers' and those who were working towards the should be actively used to help to raise the quality of professional learning for colleagues within their own communities and professional networks.

6.2 The depth, rigour and relevance of professional learning for all teachers in Scotland should be raised significantly, taking account of the successful features of the chartered teacher programme identified in paragraph 3.9 of this report. The new GTCS standard for career-long learning and SCQF level 11 should be used as reference points when planning and evaluating teacher professional learning.

6.3 Support should be provided to enable the extension of promising collaborative models (hub schools and other partnerships) to provide masters-level learning and accreditation for teachers beyond the early phase of their careers.

6.4 Scotland's universities should develop a variety of forms of masters provision to meet a range of priorities and interests, but all with the aim of improving experiences and outcomes for pupils. The provision should be accessible and flexible, and feature strong practice-based elements and close working between academic staff, teachers and schools. Universities should co-operate to offer mutual recognition of credits.

6.5 The new GTCS standard for career-long learning, masters-level learning (SCQF level 11), the professional review and development process and Professional Update should be fully aligned and the links between them should be clear.

6.6 *The impact of masters-level learning and qualifications on teaching, learning and attainment in Scotland's schools should be monitored and evaluated.*

To succeed, the policy will require strong, collegiate leadership across all partners and within schools, and also significant investment.

Appendix A

The task members liaised with representatives of the following groups and organisations and would like to thank them for their contributions.

- Association of Chartered Teachers Scotland (ACTS)
- General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS)
- Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC) and staff in individual universities
- National Partnership Group sub-group two representatives
- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
- Teacher Professional Associations, including the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), School Leaders Scotland (SLS) and the Association of Headteachers and Deputes Scotland (AHDS)

Appendix B: SCQF Level 11 ⁹

(PG Cert, PG Dip, Ma, MSc, SVQ5 are examples of qualifications at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge that covers and integrates most, if not all, of the main areas of a subject discipline – including their features, boundaries, terminology and conventions. • A critical understanding of the principal theories, principles and concepts. • A critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, principles and concepts. • Extensive, detailed and critical knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms, much of which is at, or informed by, developments at the forefront. • A critical awareness of current issues in a subject/discipline and one or more specialisms.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	<p>Use a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, practices and/or materials which are associated with a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use a range of specialised skills, techniques, practices and/or materials which are at the forefront of, or informed by, forefront developments.</p> <p>Apply a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent instruments and techniques of enquiry.</p> <p>Plan and execute a significant project of research, investigation or development.</p> <p>Demonstrate originality or creativity in the application of knowledge, understanding and/ or practices.</p> <p>Practise in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional level contexts.</p>
Generic cognitive skills	<p>Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to issues which are at the forefront of, or informed by, developments at the forefront of a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Identify, conceptualise and define new and abstract problems and issues.</p> <p>Develop original and creative responses to problems and issues.</p> <p>Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills practices and thinking in a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in situations in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.</p>
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	<p>Use a range of advanced and specialised skills as appropriate to a subject/discipline, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate, using appropriate methods, to a range of audiences with different levels of knowledge/expertise. • Communicate with peers, more senior colleagues and specialists. • Use a wide range of software to support and enhance work at this level and specify new software or refinements/improvements to existing software to increase effectiveness. <p>Undertake critical evaluations of a wide range of numerical and graphical data.</p>
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	<p>Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities. Take responsibility for own work and/or significant responsibility for the work of others. Take responsibility for a significant range of resources.</p> <p>Demonstrate leadership and/or initiative and make an identifiable contribution to change and development.</p> <p>Practise in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and others' roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Deal with complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements on issues not addressed by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.</p>

⁹ Scotland's Lifelong Learning Framework, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, 2001.