

School Teachers' Review Body (STRB): Submission of evidence

Response of the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE)

Executive summary

1. In response to the recommendation that a review of teachers' roles and responsibilities, the Council remains of the view that a further overlay of specification of roles and responsibilities is unlikely to be helpful in clarifying the nature of teachers' work and professionalism.
2. Given the reality of the current context, a refresh of the description of duties is likely to be helpful and its value will lie in it being a light touch, minimum and high level specification. This together with the revised Professional Standards Framework and the GTCE's *Statement of Professional Values and Practice* and the *Code of Conduct* appears to us, in combination, to be the limit of what is needed to encode the shared professionalism at a cross-profession and national level.
3. The Council provides its understanding of terms such as duties, role, responsibilities and professional standards used to describe teachers' work and professionalism to clarify and share understanding with others.
4. Demonstration that standards are achieved and maintained is often via a process of active maintenance of registration with the regulatory body which is charged with safeguarding and raising standards of practice in the public interest.
5. The Council considers that the most appropriate use of professional standards is in capturing what is expected of the profession in terms of maintaining and developing expertise and advancing specialisation of professional expertise not emphasising the stages of remunerated career progression and 'roles' and 'responsibilities'.
6. Given that this would require as substantial review of the existing documentation the GTCE considers that this is deployed to best effect, as follows:
 - 6.1. the GTCE's Statement and Code and the professional attributes section of the Professional Standards Framework be acknowledged by all parties as the high level encapsulation of shared professional role
 - 6.2. a light touch refresh of the STPCD duties be the basis for national conditions
 - 6.3. the Professional Standards Framework be the basis for performance management

and that no further national specification of role and responsibility is produced.

7. The GTCE sees the principle of local latitude, where schools are able to determine specific teaching duties and to further specify the parameters of professional role and responsibility as critical to supporting teachers' work in the interest of the public they serve.

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Introduction

8. The General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) was established in 2000 as the independent professional regulatory body for teaching. Its role is to uphold standards of teaching in the public interest. Its statutory duties are to register and regulate the teaching profession and to advise the Secretary of State on a range of matters relating to teaching.
9. This submission relates to matter (i) of the Invitation to Submit Evidence accompanying the Secretary of State's letter to the STRB of 29 March 2007:

(i) What should constitute new statements for teachers' professional roles and responsibilities, following recommendations in the 16th Report on this matter; and a corresponding set of roles and responsibilities for the leadership group; with the aim of producing a coherent set of roles and responsibilities that apply across the profession?

10. The response follows and is in two parts; the Executive Summary followed by supporting evidence that sets out the Council's views on teacher roles and responsibilities.
11. The GTCE's stake in the area of professional roles and responsibilities derives from the *Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998* that legislated for the establishment of the GTCE. Among the areas in which the GTCE has a statutory duty to advise the Secretary of State, in the public interest, are:
 - standards of teaching
 - standards of conduct for teachers
 - the role of the teaching profession
 - the training, career development and performance management of teachers
 - recruitment to the teaching profession
 - medical fitness to teach.

Teacher professional roles and responsibilities

12. The GTCE has an interest and a stake in ensuring that, taken in the round, the parameters and descriptions of teachers' professionalism meet the range of legitimate interests in teaching quality, including the interests of the public. The GTCE is also concerned that such descriptions have credibility and resonance

with teachers themselves, to maximise the chance that they will be used to inform and advance effective practice, rather than constrain and impede it.

13. The STRB Sixteenth Report recommends that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), in consultation with interested parties, prepare new statements of teachers' professional roles and responsibilities, which are:
 - focussed on high standards and pupil outcomes;
 - clear and accessible;
 - credible and relevant to teachers;
 - concise, enabling and flexible;
 - in a dedicated section of the STPCD, separate from other conditions of employment; and
 - distinct from, but complementary to, GTCE publications and professional standards.
14. The STRB also recommended that these new statements be prepared after the review of the leadership group has been completed, and take account of developments in relation to TLR payments, SEN allowances and the ETS and AST schemes.
15. In response to this recommendation, the Council remains of the view that, whilst the current description of duties is overbearing and not sufficiently congruent with the more developed informed professionalism sought by all parties, including Government and its social partners, that a further overlay of specification of roles and responsibilities is unlikely to be helpful in clarifying the nature of teachers' work and professionalism.
16. Given the reality of the current context, a refresh of the description of duties is likely to be helpful and its value will lie in it being a light touch, minimum and high level specification. This together with the revised Professional Standards Framework and the GTCE Code and Statement appears to us, in combination, to be the limit of what is needed to encode the shared professionalism at a cross-profession and national level.
17. We are particularly mindful of recent research¹, commissioned by GTCE, the early findings of which illuminate the extent to which there is a need for, and an experience of local (organisational) level dialogue with the community of interests as to the nature of the professionalism required to understand and serve their goals and interests. It does not appear to us that further national specification of roles and responsibilities is going to contribute to the real need to build the capability within the profession to express and enact this school-level dimension of professionalism.
18. The Council also notes that there is a need to clarify and share an understanding of the terms such as duties, role, responsibilities and professional standards used to describe teachers' and leaders' professional practices. In responding we are using the following working definition of terms:

¹ Professionalism in the Public Interest, Office of Public Management Draft Report as yet unpublished

- 18.1. *Duties* support human resource management and deployment and are the means by which high level allocations of 'tasks' are made. They flow from negotiated national conditions (and pay) and inform job descriptions.
- 18.2. In our definition *role* demarcates the norms of behaviours, practices, expertise, ethics and intentions held in common and associated with being part of a particular profession or occupation. Thus the professional role in teaching is encapsulated within the GTCE Code of Conduct and the Statement of Professional Values and Practice. It is further elaborated in the Professional Attributes sections of the Professional Standards Framework. Currently there appears to be some confusion over terms which may inadvertently lead to a role being seen as more closely resembling a job description than would be helpful, either to assure shared national professional norms or to support the required local response.
- 18.3. *Responsibilities* are understood in terms of those matters of professional practice (including teaching and leading) for which the individual is **accountable**. At the present time such **responsibilities** are described in relation to teaching and learning, special educational needs coordination and for various leadership positions. For example, teaching and learning responsibilities are specified as follows:
- Before awarding a TLR the relevant body must be satisfied that **the teacher's duties** include a **significant responsibility** that is not required of all classroom teachers and that this*
- *is focused on teaching and learning;*
 - *requires the exercise of a teacher's professional skills and judgement;*
 - *requires the teacher to lead, manage and develop a subject or curriculum area; or to lead and manage pupil development across the curriculum;*
 - *has an impact on the educational progress of pupils other than the teacher's assigned classes or groups of pupils; and*
 - *involves leading, developing and enhancing the teaching practice of other staff*
- 18.4. In addition, there must be within the responsibility referred to above line management responsibility for a significant number of people.
- 18.5. *Professional standards* are descriptions of the levels of expertise and accomplishment and associated practices that are deemed to be required for the profession as a whole to fulfil its remit and responsibilities and to produce agreed benefits for those served. They, therefore, often describe specialisation of expertise and practice within a framework. They often also include descriptions of *role* as defined above i.e., the values, ethics, conduct, attitudes and attributes associated with the profession.

19. Demonstration that these standards are achieved and maintained is often via a process of active maintenance of registration with the regulatory body which is charged with safeguarding and raising standards of practice in the public interest.
20. It is not very common for professional standards to be so closely aligned to performance management or career phases attracting specified pay as has become the case in teaching. It is more often the case that duties and responsibilities are deployed for the purposes of rewarding and recognising performance.
21. The GTCE acknowledges that the new Professional Standards Framework has brought a measure of continuity and coherence to the standards for teaching that did not exist before. However, we do not believe it the most appropriate use of professional standards to emphasise the stages of remunerated career progression and 'roles' and 'responsibilities' rather than capturing what is expected of the profession in terms of maintaining and developing expertise and advancing specialisation of professional expertise.
22. Nevertheless, the GTCE is clear that it is not, in the short term, timely to review and revise the Professional Standards Framework or its provenance and purpose. In lieu of such a radical review, and given the current configuration of descriptions of duties, role, standards, and responsibilities, we suggest that the existing documentation is deployed to best effect, through that is:
 - 22.1. the GTCE's Code and Statement and the Professional Attributes section of the Professional Standards Framework being acknowledged by all parties as the high level encapsulation of shared professional role
 - 22.2. a light touch refresh of the STPCD duties being the basis for national conditions
 - 22.3. the Professional Standards Framework being the basis for performance management and
 - 22.4. no further national specification of role and responsibility is produced.
23. The GTC sees the principle of local latitude, where schools are able to determine specific teaching duties and to further specify the parameters of professional role and responsibility as critical to supporting teachers' work in the interest of the public they serve.

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