

# Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA): **Draft Revised Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistant Status**

## Response from the General Teaching Council for England

### Introduction

- 1 The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) is the independent professional body for the teaching profession. Its main duties are to register and regulate the teaching profession and to advise the Secretary of State on a range of issues that concern teachers and teaching and learning. The Council acts in the public interest to contribute to raising the standards of teaching and learning.
- 2 The GTC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this review of Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) standards. The brevity of the response reflects the fact that the proposed changes are minimal.
- 3 When the original HLTA standards were consulted on, the GTC noted that they were in effect a subset of the QTS standards. There was at the time a need to persuade stakeholders that there was sufficient overlap between the skills sets of teachers and HLTAs to allow the latter to assume greater responsibility for teaching and learning, in the context of the Workload Agreement commitment to planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.
- 4 The GTC would have preferred the HLTA to have been positioned as, as it were, an 'advanced skills teaching assistant (TA)' with a respected contribution to make in their own right, rather than something short of a teacher. This would have provided the opportunity for the extension from TA to HLTA to be expressed in terms of the quality and extent of the contribution to teaching and learning, *and*, potentially, in a series of specialisms which may capture expertise beyond qualified teacher status (QTS) level in areas such as special education needs (SEN) or behaviour management. This remains the GTC view.
- 5 The GTC has recently been involved in the review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for teaching assistants, and whatever its shortcomings, there is within the NOS framework the opportunity to develop an area of expertise, which is not captured by HLTA status. The lack of a stronger recognition of specialism is likely to be unsatisfactory for HLTAs, as is the absence of any infrastructure for further development and recognition beyond HLTA status.

- 6 The forthcoming NFER research on HLTA in practice will provide useful further insights into the deployment of HLTA status holders and schools' capacity to identify appropriate higher level roles for teaching assistants. The guidance that accompanies the standards should also support this end.

### **Specific comments on the standards**

The standard relating explicitly to equal opportunities appears to have been removed (3.3.7). The GTC has no objection to mainstreaming the equalities aspects of practice in other standards, but the HLTA's responsibility actively to challenge discrimination has been lost, and this is at variance with the expectations of schools and their staff in the context of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (RR(A)A).

#### ***Professional attributes***

*Standard 1:* Remove or supplement 'educational' reflecting the context of ECM – teachers and others are committed to the fulfilment of potential in other ways.

#### ***Professional knowledge and understanding***

*Standard 9:* In common with the standard it replaces (2.1) this standard is unclear as to whether what is implied by 'area(s) of expertise' is *context* – e.g. KS3 – or *specialism* – e.g. behaviour.

#### ***Professional skills – teaching and learning activities***

*Standard 27:* This standard might more usefully begin 'Whether or not the teacher is present...'

'In the absence of a teacher' seems incongruous set against the footnote stating that the HLTA operates 'under the direction *and supervision* of a teacher' – clarification is needed.

*Standard 29:* Insert 'effectively'.

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