

TRUSTED TEACHING



Policy

Professional Update

September 2025

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1 Background

In March 2011, the Scottish Parliament approved the Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland) Order 2011. Part of this legislation (Article 31), 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, we adopted the title “Professional Update” for this process. Professional Update (PU) is a continuous process for registered teachers to maintain their registration and demonstrate their ongoing professional development. Effective PU requires supportive and rigorous professional review and development (PRD) processes.

PU is central to our work to uphold and promote teaching standards, it promotes professional growth, supporting a culture of reflection and learning and ultimately improves outcomes for learners.

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 teaching as outlined in the Professional Standards and to enhance the impact this has on learners;
- ❖ 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 to develop and enhance professional practice as well as supporting next steps in professional learning identified through self-evaluation;
 - help manage change; and
 - offer a focus on career enhancement.
- ❖ confirmation that they have maintained the high standards required of a teacher or college lecturer in Scotland’s educational establishments.

3 Features of Professional Update

Scottish local authorities, colleges, independent schools, higher education institutes and national education organisations have developed local systems to support employees with Full (General) registration through the Professional Update process. The vast majority of these local systems have been subject to validation and revalidation by GTC Scotland. 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 and includes the following features:

- ❖ **An annual update of contact information by registered teachers**, involving the update to GTC Scotland of address and personal details, as appropriate. This must be done through our MyGTCS platform. It is a condition of registration with GTC Scotland that all registered teachers ensure that their personal 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, enhancing their expertise and ensuring 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 learners and provide high-quality teaching and learning experiences, enabling learners to achieve their best.
- ❖ **Opportunities for all teachers and college lecturers to engage in ongoing self-evaluation against 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 GTC Scotland's Professional Standards 2021. The Standard for Full Registration is the foundation of the Professional Standards and is the benchmark of competence required of all registered teachers in Scotland. This Professional Standard is the gateway to the profession and constitutes the teaching standard in which learners, parents, the profession itself and the wider community can have confidence.
 - **Professional Standards for Lecturers**
Professional Standard for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges which are a benchmark for learning and teaching, and to enhance and promote professional learning.
- ❖ **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 their MyGTCS account, to do this unless their employer requires an alternative way of doing this.

GTC Scotland requires the most significant professional development to be recorded; where an impact on thinking, practice and/or leadership is evident. Entries 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.

4 Who is Required to Engage in Professional Update?

4.1 Fully registered registrants

Engagement in the Professional Update process is a requirement of all fully registered registrants – teachers and lecturers.

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 matters of pedagogy, curriculum and professional practice.

The designated year of completion of the Professional Update sign-off is determined by a registrant's year of registration with GTC Scotland and follows on every five years from that point, the year that PU is due is clearly shown in MyGTCS.

4.2 Provisionally registered registrants

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 registrants

Where a teacher or lecturer 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.

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 PU sign-off process in their 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 PU 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 PU sign-off process, for example during a period of extended absence through ill-health, their 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. Employers' appeals and grievance procedures should be implemented if an individual teacher or lecturer disagrees with a decision regarding a deferral of the PU sign-off process.

Registrants not currently in employment and seeking deferral of the PU 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.

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 registrant at the beginning of the academic session in which they are required to complete their PU sign-off process. The planned date for this communication is **1 September** each year.

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, registrants who have not yet completed the PU 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 can access the details of teachers of school education and/or further education in their employment who have still to complete the PU sign-off process.

7 Partnership with Employers

Employers have a responsibility to support individuals in the PU process. In developing an effective PU process in collaboration with their employees they will ensure that there is a system in place to support registrants to record their professional learning, supportive PRD arrangements, information to support the deferral and appeals processes and a quality assurance mechanism.

In local authorities, local plans should be discussed and endorsed by Council LNCTs. Agreed system requirements 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 GTC Scotland System Validation

The vast majority of employers' teacher learning systems have been validated and revalidated by GTC Scotland. This means that teachers in those organisations do not need to complete their PU confirmation through a direct submissions approach. As we know that the majority of teachers are working in systems that have the components in place to support effective professional development and review, a streamlined PU confirmation is now in place. All 32 local authorities, several national organisations, 13 colleges, 12 Higher Education Institutes and the majority (83) of independent schools operate validated teacher learning systems.

We ask these validated systems to confirm with us, in line with their review timeline, through a self-evaluation process that they are continuing to provide the arrangements required to provide effective PRD and PU for teachers. We review all self-evaluation submissions and work with partners where we identify a need.

Where employers do not have or no longer wish to operate a validated system, their teachers use our PU Direct Submissions process. Our validation process is closed to new applications.

8 The use of Professional Standards and the PU Process

The PU process requires all registrants to reflect against 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 2021 GTC Scotland Professional Standards consist of:

- The Standard for Provisional Registration
- The Standard for Full Registration
- The Standard for Career Long Professional Learning
- The Standard for Middle Leadership
- The Standard for Headship

Professional Standards for College Lecturers are designed as a benchmark for learning and teaching, and to enhance and promote professional learning.

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

9 PU and Fitness to Teach

PU 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 GTC Scotland Framework on Teacher Competence (FTC), competence issues are managed by local authorities and employers in the first instance, with cases of alleged professional incompetence referred at the appropriate stage to GTC Scotland for resolution.

9.1 Failure to complete PU

The failure to complete PU is a relatively rare occurrence. However, if a registrant were to make a deliberate and conscious decision not to meet the requirements of PU 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 PU sign-off on a monthly basis. Every April, registrants who have not yet completed the sign-off process in their year of PU will receive a reminder e-mail, setting out the requirements and timescales for completion of the sign-off process. PU completion data is accessible to employers of teachers and lecturers working in Scottish educational establishments.

Within our 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 applies to any registrant failing to notify the GTC Scotland that PU has been completed by the required date.

Any teacher removed from the Register in this way can use our existing process to apply for re-admission to the Register.

9.2 PU and competency issues

As PU is an ongoing process which includes reflection against GTC Scotland's 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 PU sign-off process is due to be completed whilst the teacher is engaged in competence procedures from stage 2 onwards, it is not in the teacher or lecturer's best interests to complete the sign-off process. Therefore, the employer should notify GTC Scotland 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

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

Registrants subject to a Temporary Restriction Order (TRO) and still in employment should continue to engage in PU. If the registrant feels that there are specific circumstances which would make completion of the sign-off process difficult, they can 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 PU sign-off process is suspended. This information will 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 PU sign-off process is suspended. This deferral will be added to the individual teacher or lecturer's entry on the GTC Scotland register.

Trusted Teaching

GTC Scotland

We are the independent regulator for teachers in Scotland. We work to maintain and enhance trust in teaching.

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