



## The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning

An aspirational professional standard  
for Scotland's teachers

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# Introduction

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## Professional Standards for Teachers in Scotland

The Professional Standards, with professional values at the heart, support and promote partnership, leadership, enquiry and professional learning. They describe teacher professionalism in Scotland, our 'way of being'. Professional Standards for teachers in Scotland have multiple purposes:

- to create a shared language for teaching professionals
- as a benchmark for professional competency
- to develop and enhance professionalism
- to support career-long professional growth
- to provide a framework for Initial Teacher Education, probation and leadership pathways and programmes
- to ensure and enhance public trust and confidence in the teaching profession

Professional Standards for teachers were first established in Scotland in 2000. They were reformed in 2012 and enacted in 2013 as a reconceptualised model of teacher professionalism supported by the introduction of **Professional Update**. The discussion to review the 2012 Professional Standards began in 2017 and concluded in a set of refreshed and restructured Professional Standards with an enactment date of 2 August 2021.

The **Standard for Provisional Registration** is the **benchmark** of competence required of all student teachers at the end of Initial Teacher Education who are seeking provisional registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland). **This Professional Standard outlines what is required to become a teacher in Scotland.**

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 standards in which learners, parents, the profession itself and the wider community can have confidence. **This Professional Standard encompasses what it is to be a teacher in Scotland.**

The **Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning** provides an **aspirational and developmental** framework for teachers. It describes the advanced professional knowledge and pedagogical expertise that registered teachers could develop and maintain as they continue to progress in teaching and the education profession. **This Professional Standard supports the professional growth of teachers in Scotland.**

The **Standard for Middle Leadership** and **The Standard for Headship** provide **aspirational and developmental** frameworks for teachers in/or considering leadership roles. They outline the strategic vision, professional knowledge and understanding, interpersonal skills and abilities and professional illustrations that support teachers in leadership roles. **These Professional Standards provide a framework for professional growth for teachers in leadership roles.** Consequently, they have some additional purposes:

- support for self-evaluation and reflection for teachers in, and aspiring to, formal leadership roles in our schools
- informing the process of recruitment and selection
- contributing to dialogue about leadership and management

The **Standard for Headship** has the additional purpose of being a requirement for teachers permanently employed in local authority Headteacher roles from August 2020.

The suite of Professional Standards is underpinned by the interdependent themes of professional values, Learning for Sustainability and leadership. The Professional Standards provide the framework for all teachers in Scotland to enhance their professionalism and ensure rigour and challenge that supports a resilient and enabled profession confident in the skills, knowledge and values needed to enable Scotland's young people to develop skills for learning, life and work.

Scotland's Professional Standards actively support, embrace and promote the principles and practices of sustainability across all aspects. This means understanding and valuing environment, culture and heritage, developing a sense of place and belonging to the local, national and global community. It also means having a deep connection to the natural world and understanding the significance of the choices we make – now and in the future.

The Professional Standards are organised into interrelated categories with **Professional Values** and **Professional Commitment** at the heart. These elements are inherently linked to each other and one aspect does not exist independently of the others. It is this inter-relationship among all the categories which enables the professionalism of the teacher and leads to appropriate professional action and growth.

# 1 Being a Teacher in Scotland

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Our increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world faces many social, environmental and economic challenges, and an effective, responsive and inclusive education system is vital if we are to address these. Engaged, reflective, empowered and skilled teachers and learners acknowledge Scotland's place in the world, our history, our differences and diversity, our unique natural environment, and our culture based on social justice. Scotland's teachers help to embed sustainable and socially just practices in order to flourish as a nation.

The **Professional Standards** outline what it means to become, to be and to grow as a teacher in Scotland. A commitment to the **professional values of social justice, trust and respect and integrity** is at the heart of the Professional Standards and underpins our relationships, thinking and professional practice in Scotland.

The educational experiences of all our children and young people are shaped by the professional values and dispositions of all those who work to educate them. Values are complex: they are the ideals by which teachers shape their practice as professionals. Starting with teachers as individuals, values extend to our learners, our colleagues and community and to the world in which we live.

Professional values help to develop our professional identity and underpin a deep commitment to all learners' cognitive, social and emotional growth and wellbeing. They provide the foundation to support and encourage teachers to see the whole child or young person and their needs. They are integral to, and demonstrated through, all our professional relationships, thinking and actions and all that we do to meet our **professional commitment** as teachers registered with GTC Scotland.

As part of **teacher professionalism**, professional values are required to be enacted in everyday practice both within and outwith the educational establishment. They support us to ask critical questions of educational theories, policies and practices and to examine our own attitudes and beliefs. Values, and the connections between values and actions, require regular reflection over the course of teachers' careers as society and the needs of learners change and as understanding develops. Our commitment to career-long professional learning is a critical part of developing our professionalism. Enquiring and collaborative professionalism is a powerful force in developing teachers' agency and delivering our commitment to engaging children, young people, their families and communities in the education process.

## 1.1 Professional Values

### Social Justice

Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities now and in the future.

- Promoting health and wellbeing of self, colleagues and the children and young people in my care.
- Building and fostering positive relationships in the learning community which are respectful of individuals.
- Embracing global educational and social values of sustainability, equality, equity, and justice and recognising children's rights.
- Respecting the rights of all learners as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and their entitlement to be included in decisions regarding their learning experiences and have all aspects of their wellbeing developed and supported.
- Demonstrating a commitment to engaging learners in real world issues to enhance learning experiences and outcomes, and to encourage learning our way to a better future.
- Committing to social justice through fair, transparent, inclusive, and sustainable policies and practices in relation to protected characteristics, (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation) and intersectionality.
- Valuing, as well as respecting, social, ecological, cultural, religious, and racial diversity and promoting the principles and practices of sustainable development and local and global citizenship for all learners.
- Demonstrating a commitment to motivating, and including all learners, understanding the influence of gender, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds on experiences of learning, taking account of specific learning needs and seeking to reduce barriers to learning.
- Demonstrating a commitment to supporting learners who are experiencing or who have experienced trauma and children and young people from a care experienced background, and understanding responsibilities as a corporate parent.
- Understanding and challenging discrimination in all its forms, particularly that which is defined by the Equality Act 2010.

## Trust and Respect

Trust and respect are expectations of positive actions that support authentic relationship building and show care for the needs and feelings of the people involved and respect for our natural world and its limited resources.

- Promoting and engendering a rights respecting culture and the ethical use of authority associated with one's professional roles.
- Acting and behaving in ways that develop a culture of trust and respect for self, others and the natural world.
- Understanding, acknowledging, and respecting the contribution of others in positively influencing the lives of learners.
- Understanding health and wellbeing and the importance of positive and purposeful relationships to provide and ensure a safe and secure environment for all learners and colleagues within a caring and compassionate ethos.
- Respecting individual difference and supporting learners' understanding of themselves, others and their contribution to the development and sustainability of a diverse and inclusive society.

## Integrity

Integrity is the practice of being honest and showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values.

- Demonstrating kindness, honesty, courage, and wisdom.
- Being truthful and trustworthy.
- Critically examining professional beliefs, values and attitudes of self and others in the context of collegiate working.
- Challenging assumptions, biases and professional practice, where appropriate.

## 1.2 Professional Commitment

Making a **professional commitment** to learning and learners that is compatible with the aspiration of achieving a sustainable and equitable world embodies what it is to be a teacher in Scotland. This means teachers commit to living the professional values and engage in lifelong learning, reflection, enquiry, leadership of learning and collaborative practice as key aspects of their professionalism. This commitment to professional learning and growth, to the growth of learners, and to helping support that of colleagues, is demonstrated through engagement with all aspects of professional practice. It is demonstrated by working collegially, in English or Gaelic medium with all members of our learning communities with enthusiasm, adaptability, critical thinking and associated constructive, professional dialogue.

A core component of teachers' professional commitment is understanding the needs of all learners. Some children and young people may have a barrier to wellbeing and learning associated with a range of circumstances such as the learning environment, family circumstances, disability or health need, and social and emotional factors. This includes learners with additional support needs such as: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Autism, Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia) (DCD), Dyslexia and Tourette syndrome. Teachers recognise, see and acknowledge the value in everyone and have a deep awareness of the need for culturally responsive pedagogies. They promote equality and diversity, paying careful attention to the needs of learners from diverse groups and in upholding children's rights.

Upholding the professional values of social justice, trust and respect and integrity requires a commitment to leadership that inspires confidence and encourages aspiration. This commitment underpins leadership of learning in all contexts and change for improvement. It values the contribution of others, challenges biases and assumptions and applies critical thinking to make effective decisions, in the interests of maintaining and improving the quality of education and leading to improved outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland.

The professional commitment of teachers in Scotland is to lead learning through:

- developing deep knowledge of learning and teaching
- critically examining how our teaching impacts on learners
- using evidence collaboratively to inform teacher judgement and next steps for learners and professional practice, where appropriate

## 1.3 Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning

The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning builds on the Standards for Registration to provide an aspirational and development framework for teachers to progress and enrich their professional knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities. It supports teachers to continue to develop as accomplished, reflective and enquiring professionals who are able to engage with the complexities of teaching and learning, the changing contemporary world of their learners, and the world beyond the profession and its institutions, in order to enhance the learning experiences for all learners. This Professional Standard is designed to help teachers identify, plan and develop their own professional learning needs and ensure continuing development of professional practice as they progress through their careers.

Professional values and professional commitment are at the core of the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning. They are integral to, and demonstrated through, all our professional relationships and practices. They are central to the delivery of high-quality learning and teaching, aimed at improving outcomes for all learners and contributing to efforts to achieve a sustainable and equitable world. The personal and professional qualities

of sustainability and social justice, integrity, trust and respect and professional commitment are crucial if we are to inspire and prepare learners for success in our increasingly complex, interdependent and rapidly-changing world.

Learning for Sustainability has been embedded within the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning to support teachers in actively embracing and promoting principles and practices of sustainability in all aspects of their work. In Scotland, Learning for Sustainability is an entitlement for learners. As such, all teachers demonstrate in their practice the professional values, skills, knowledge and understanding and actions that are compatible with a sustainable and equitable world; as part of an effective whole-school and community commitment.

The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning includes a focus on teacher leadership and leadership of and for learning. All teachers are leaders of learning, who lead learning for, and with, all learners. They also work with and support the development of colleagues and other partners. Leaders at all levels should actively embrace a robust, demonstrable approach to Learning for Sustainability. This is enabled by teachers planning for Learning for Sustainability across the curriculum, their professional learning both individually and collaboratively.

Central to the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning is the core principle of practitioner enquiry. This involves teachers having an enquiring disposition by thinking critically and questioning their own educational beliefs, assumptions, values and practices. Teachers will continue to develop knowledge to enhance, progress and lead the learning experiences of all their learners and work collaboratively with colleagues. The teacher as a strong and engaging expert is open to change and engages with new and emerging ideas and approaches for learning and teaching within the ever-evolving curricular and pedagogical contexts in which learning and teaching take place in both the English and Gaelic medium.

It is vital that career-long professional learning is supported by effective and systematic **Professional Review and Development (PRD)** and **Professional Update** processes.

# 2 Professional Knowledge and Understanding

## 2.1 Curriculum and Pedagogy

### 2.1.1 Have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of Pedagogical and Learning Theories and Professional Practice

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of:

- the stages of learners' cognitive, social, emotional, physical and psychological development and know how to use this information to support every learner's wellbeing
- approaches to pedagogy and practice: assessment, learning and teaching and curriculum where appropriate taking account of Gaelic medium, and Learning for Sustainability
- the most appropriate contexts and environments for learning, including outdoor learning, and how to apply appropriate pedagogies for these environments
- innovative and partnership approaches for learners with additional support needs
- digital technologies to support learning
- the significance of and practices in leadership of curriculum development and pedagogical practices
- how to take critical account of the gender, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and economic context of learners and how to adapt practices accordingly

## **2.1.2 Have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of Research and Engagement in Practitioner Enquiry**

### **Professional Illustrations**

As an accomplished teacher you have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of:

- how to access and apply relevant findings from educational research and contribute to research knowledge in areas of interest
- practitioner enquiry as stance in relation to your own professional learning, individually and/or collaboratively, to challenge and inform professional practice (pedagogy, learning and subject knowledge)
- a range of enquiry approaches, different data collection methods/tools, appropriate to the enquiry question/context

## **2.1.3 Have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of Curriculum Design**

### **Professional Illustrations**

As an accomplished teacher you have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of:

- current principles (local and national) of curriculum and assessment design
- how to interpret and analyse current policy about curriculum design and assessment to ensure learners experience a curriculum that meets their needs
- the value of learning beyond curricular areas/ subject boundaries and of cross curricular subjects, e.g. literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, Learning for Sustainability and digital literacy
- the skills and competencies that comprise teacher digital literacy and know how to embed digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning
- the need to adapt and enhance learning experiences for learners with additional support needs
- the need to explore and adopt a wide variety of technologies and learning spaces within and beyond the classroom, including the use of outdoor learning

## 2.1.4 Have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of Planning for Assessment, Teaching and Learning

### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of:

- approaches to pedagogy and practice: assessment, learning and teaching and curriculum
- the gender, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and economic context of every learner and how to adapt practices accordingly
- the features of inclusive learning contexts which motivate and value every learner
- how to engage with a range of literature, research and policy and how to use this individually and collaboratively to inform, evaluate and analyse practice
- individual and collaborative leadership approaches to curriculum development and pedagogical practices
- approaches and practices employed to enable positive and purposeful relationships with every learner to discuss and support their progress through meaningful feedback and agreed next steps
- the most appropriate contexts and environments for learning and how to apply appropriate pedagogies for these environments

## 2.2 Professional Responsibilities

### 2.2.1 Have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of Education Systems

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of:

- how to actively consider and critically question national and international influences on educational policy, practices and systems development
- frameworks, systems and processes to support and enhance teacher professionalism
- current policy context and how that impacts on educational change and teaching and learning and meaningfully links to inform and change practice
- how to ensure a culture which recognises and realises the rights of all children and young people and in which every learner meaningfully participates in decisions related to their learning and wellbeing
- biases and their impact on people and practices and how to identify and challenge these

### 2.2.2 Have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of Learning Communities

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you have an enhanced and critically informed understanding of:

- the roles and responsibilities of teachers in establishing positive relationships across the learning community and how to individually and collaboratively support, develop and sustain these relationships
- local and wider learning communities and how to draw on these to enrich learning experiences for every learner
- the contexts and complexity in which teachers operate and the dynamic and complex role(s) of professionals within the educational community including Gaelic medium ethos where appropriate

# 3 Professional Skills and Abilities

## 3.1 Curriculum and Pedagogy

### 3.1.1 Plan effectively to meet learners' needs

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you consistently demonstrate the enhanced skills and abilities working both individually and collaboratively to:

- use a range of assessment approaches to plan and adapt teaching and/or further assessment
- plan and adapt learning, teaching and assessment, to meet the needs of every learner:
  - with a critically informed rationale for actions taken
  - taking account of the gender, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and economic context
  - using appropriate resources, environments and technologies
- lead pedagogical practice with a deep, informed understanding of purposes and processes of learning
- plan learning that is creative, sustainable and takes full account of the impact on resources

### 3.1.2 Critically and effectively utilise pedagogical approaches and resources

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you consistently demonstrate the enhanced skills and abilities working both individually and collaboratively to:

- enact deep subject knowledge and pedagogical leadership
- use research informed pedagogies and critically evaluated resources to:
  - deliver high-quality learning experiences for every learner
  - support every learner to be curious and engaged with their learning using real world themes where appropriate
- employ rigorous and critical self-evaluation, reflection and enquiry including how to ethically investigate and evidence impact on every learner and on professional practice
- create opportunities for learning to be transformative in terms of challenging assumptions and expanding the world views of learners

### 3.1.3 Critically and effectively use partnerships for learning and wellbeing

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you consistently demonstrate the enhanced skills and abilities working both individually and collaboratively to:

- further develop and encourage a culture where learners meaningfully participate in decisions related to their learning, wellbeing and learning community
- work effectively with colleagues, parents/carers, wider school community and partner agencies to enrich learning and teaching and support the wellbeing of all, across the learning community
- create and develop and sustain partnerships which:
  - support decision making that is compatible with a sustainable future in a just and equitable world
  - connect learners to their dependence on the natural world and develop their sense of belonging to both the local and global community
  - connect relevance of learning to skills for life, learning and work

### 3.1.4 Critically and effectively employ assessment, evaluate progress, recording and reporting as an integral part of the teaching process to support and enhance learning

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you consistently demonstrate the enhanced skills and abilities working both individually and collaboratively to:

- ensure formative and summative assessment information is used effectively to inform learning and teaching and is proportionately and appropriately recorded
- critically evaluate and use a range of differentiated assessment strategies that ensures support and challenge for all learners
- apply the principles, policies and practices of assessment, including those required by awarding and accrediting bodies
- with a range of relevant partners, select/design, use and evaluate innovative, responsive assessment approaches and strategies
- engage with moderation and verification processes to effectively inform pedagogy, learner progress, whole school and system improvement
- contribute to/design effective recording strategies to capture and analyse appropriate and proportionate data that:
  - provides meaningful feedback/feedforward to learners
  - supports meaningful reporting of learners' progress to parents/carers, families and partners
- contribute to the evidence base used to inform learning and teaching, school and system level improvement
- apply professional judgement to evidence gathered to inform summative assessment

## 3.2 The Learning Context

### 3.2.1 Critically and effectively organise and manage learning

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you consistently demonstrate the enhanced skills and abilities working both individually and collaboratively to:

- create and maintain an inclusive, stimulating, purposeful and dynamic learning environment that offers appropriate support and challenge for all learners
- provide innovative and adaptive learning experiences for learners with additional support needs
- ensure that the learning environment takes full account of the diverse learning needs of learners
- ensure opportunities for active participation, individually and collaboratively, for all learners
- critically evaluate, select and design appropriate resources to ensure appropriately differentiated learning, teaching and assessment
- ensure that every learner has access to and are enabled to select from well-chosen/designed resources including digital technologies
- draw on a range of sources to critically evaluate the impact of the learning environment on every learner and learning and to challenge assumptions, bias and adapt provision, as appropriate

### 3.2.2 Critically and effectively engage learner participation

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you consistently demonstrate the enhanced skills and abilities working both individually and collaboratively to:

- ensure meaningful opportunities are provided for learners' active participation in decision-making about their education and in which learners recognise that their contributions are genuinely recognised and valued
- develop alternative mechanisms for ensuring participation that take full account of the additional support needs of learners
- use a range of approaches to promote active participation that:
  - embrace diversity
  - ensure learners feel welcomed, included, respected, valued, safe and nurtured
  - take account of wellbeing indicators, childhood development and the impact of childhood experiences

### 3.2.3 Build positive, rights respecting relationships for learning

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you consistently demonstrate the enhanced skills and abilities working both individually and collaboratively to:

- promote, develop and sustain positive relationships that support learners' curiosity, motivation and engagement with their learning
- create a learning environment where every learner feels safe, valued and included and is respectful of themselves, each other, their surroundings and the natural world
- promote and develop effective methods of communication that benefit learners with additional support needs
- use a wide variety of research-informed approaches to develop and sustain positive relationships across the learning community

## 3.3 Professional Learning

### 3.3.1 Engage critically with literature, research and policy

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you consistently demonstrate the enhanced skills and abilities working both individually and collaboratively to:

- critically review, examine and evaluate a range of educational literature, research and policy to:
  - critically question and challenge educational assumptions, beliefs and values of self and system
  - ensure practice is informed, justifiable and adapted accordingly
  - enact key learning from professional reading and adapt to suit local contexts to ensure that practice reflects current educational thinking to support the needs of learners
  - participate and/or lead robust professional dialogue through both face-to-face and online discussions

### 3.3.2 Engage in reflective practice to develop and advance career-long professional learning and expertise

#### Professional Illustrations

As an accomplished teacher you consistently demonstrate the enhanced skills and abilities working both individually and collaboratively to:

- engage in rigorous, evidence informed self-evaluation of practice
- investigate, analyse and evaluate the impact of practice and make changes accordingly
- engage in and/or lead practitioner/professional enquiry to inform and challenge practice
- identify and engage in meaningful career-long professional learning, including postgraduate study as appropriate, and maintain a reflective record of evidence of impact on self, colleagues and learners
- show professional courage and judgement to support and challenge system improvement through:
  - understanding and exploring local, national, and global contexts and the complexity in which teachers interact
  - contributing to a learning culture that supports and facilitates professional dialogue, debate and constructive feedback
- lead and contribute to the professional learning of colleagues, including student and probationer teachers
- engage with the Professional Update process



## **The General Teaching Council for Scotland**

We are the independent regulator for teachers in Scotland. We work in the public interest to enhance trust in teachers by setting, upholding and promoting high standards.

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