

Registration Rules review consultation

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Introduction

Over the last decade there have been many changes to education and teaching in Scotland, and to GTC Scotland's own policy context, including the introduction of mandatory registration for teachers in the independent school sector and college lecturers, as well as the introduction of a mandatory framework for the Standard for Headship. Brexit has also meant that the legal framework in relation to the recognition of professional qualifications between European member states is no longer in place.

Our Registration Rules have not kept pace with these changes, and a review is now overdue.

Background

GTC Scotland must, by law, make and publish rules to govern registration and the Register.

Proposed revisions to the Registration and Standards Rules 2015 went out for public consultation at the end of 2021 into early 2022 and we received 256 responses to that exercise. Whilst there was overall support for the proposed amendments to the rules, the exercise identified higher levels of disagreement about some specific areas, which we believe resulted in part from a lack of awareness about our statutory role.

As a result, Council decided not to proceed with the changes until further engagement with stakeholders took place to ensure clarity on our role and functions. That engagement work took place from late 2022 through 2023 with a focus on GTC Scotland's role and remit, particularly in relation to the current registration rules and criteria.

It was a valuable exercise that had a positive impact on understanding of our statutory purpose, and we are now in a much stronger position to move forward with a revision of the Rules. This work is reflected in our 2023-28 Strategic Plan, "Trusted Teaching".

What do the rules do and how do we make them?

Maintaining a register of teachers and determining who is eligible to join and remain on it based on set criteria is a core part of our role as a professional regulator. It is set out in our governing legislation, the Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland) Order 2011 (the Order).

The Registration and Standards Rules as they are currently named (referred to in this document for ease as 'the Rules'), set out GTC Scotland's registration criteria, ongoing registration requirements and how the Register operates. They cover initial registration as well as enhancements to registration (for example, the Standard for Headship) and ongoing requirements to maintain registration (for example, professional update).

The Order sets out at article 15 that GTC Scotland must make and publish rules:

- setting out the procedure for inclusion in the register
- setting out registration criteria; and
- otherwise governing the operation of the register.

Article 14 of the Order also states that before making or varying the rules, GTC Scotland must consult:

- teachers or their representatives
- employers of teachers or their representatives; and
- such other persons appearing to it to have an interest.

The purpose and extent of this review

Taking account of learning from our previous consultation exercise and subsequent engagement, as well as our awareness of national discussions that could impact teacher registration in the future, our view is that now is not the time to introduce any larger scale change. However, it is essential that we now make changes to ensure the effective operation of the Rules and the Register. The changes we are proposing are predominantly administrative and are intended to modernise the Rules, given they are now over 10 years old. These will bring the Rules into line with contemporary requirements and practices, as well as our refreshed policy brand and messaging.

A summary of the proposed main changes are:

- to modernise and tidy language and the labels we use to ensure they are contemporary and contextually appropriate. We propose changing the name of the Rules from the "Registration and Standards Rules" to the "Registration Rules" as a better, simpler label for them. We also propose renaming "Professional Registration" to "Additional Registration" to better reflect the purpose and outcome. Similarly, changing "probationary service" to "induction" reflects updated language we have been using
- to introduce Accredited Specialism to our Registration framework in place of Professional Recognition. Feedback on this proposal was very positive in our previous consultation exercise. We believe it could address a system need and would link well with the ongoing national work on a revised model of teacher education. Implementation of it could be timed sensibly with the teacher education work
- to reflect changes to practice and better align with what the registration function is. The Professional Standards and Awards sections of the Rules, including Standard for Headship, have been updated as a result
- to add a new 'maintaining registration' section of the Rules, the aim of which is to highlight to registrants the proactive obligations placed upon them to ensure they maintain their registration. This proposal was included in the 2021/22 consultation and overall feedback was very positive
- to introduce a new requirement that registrants would have to provide us with current and previous employment information as part of maintaining registration. We consider this to be an important part of registration and ensuring GTC Scotland knows where a teacher is currently teaching. This is necessary to enable the effective performance of GTC Scotland's fitness to teach function as well as to better support GTC Scotland Council election processes
- to reflect recent changes to the PVG Scheme, including the move to time limited scheme membership and therefore a need to ensure that maintaining PVG Scheme membership is an absolute requirement of registration
- to refine the requirements we set for those who do not hold a recognised teaching qualification (a qualification gained via a teacher education programme we have accredited) to make these clearer. The requirements have also been reframed to ensure that they can be applied to college lecturers applying for registration as teachers of further education who have historic qualifications that may be equivalent to the TQFE (the recognised teaching qualification for the FE (college lecturer) context).

Format of consultation

This consultation is a section-by-section examination of the draft rules along with an explanation of the rationale behind the new or reworded content and comparison, where appropriate, with current provisions. Questions are integrated throughout.

Where changes to the language are stylistic and have been made in accordance with our updated brand guidelines and style guide, but nothing substantive has been added or changed, this is either not commented on, or specific views are not being asked for. However, we would welcome your views on any of the content and proposals in response to the final question.

Proposed changes and consultation questions

Section 1 – general provisions

The changes to this section primarily reflect the need to bring the rules into line with contemporary requirements as well as our refreshed policy brand and messaging. As such they are largely contextual.

1.1 Introduction

A sub-section has been added (1.1.3) to clarify the purpose of the Rules and of the Register.

1.2 Interpretation

The changes to this section are largely administrative. Where changes have been caused by a more material amendment later in the rules, this will be picked up in the appropriate section.

Section 2 – application for registration

The changes to this section primarily reflect the need to bring the rules into line with contemporary requirements as well as our refreshed policy brand and messaging. There is no material change to the purpose or effect. This includes removing the reference to the potential that an applicant may be required to attend a professional interview, as this does not take place in practice.

2.2 Provisional registration

We have removed reference to an applicant being granted provisional registration if they have previously been granted provisional registration with GTC Scotland in a part of a register. This is due to the scope for ambiguity if they were previously granted provisional registration in a different category. Instead, the introduction of Additional Registration is the route through which an individual may add registration categories to their registration, where they are already registered with GTC Scotland.

2.4 Additional Support Needs

In respect of Additional Support Needs (ASN) registration, we have added a sentence to clarify that the credits needed for provisional registration may be acquired cumulatively, providing a level of flexibility. This reflects the way in which ASN-specific content is often provided and accessed.

Q1: do you think that this proposed change accurately reflects how ASN-specific content is provided and accessed?

Section 3 – induction

The changes to this section are to reflect updated language use. As mentioned above, changing “probationary service” to “induction” reflects updated language we have been using. There is no material change to the purpose or effect.

Section 4 – repeat registration applications

There are no changes to this section.

Section 5 (of the current Registration Rules)

The section entitled the European Communities (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations has been removed, as it has been inoperable since the UK’s formal departure from the EU.

Section 5 – additional registration

We have added a new section to formalise the process for teachers registered in one category to register in another on the basis that they are at least part qualified to do

so. This has always been possible but was previously referred to as professional registration, which we no longer think accurately reflects the purpose and outcome of the process.

We consulted on this proposal previously and it received wide support. The process has gained greater prominence recently due to national discussions about teacher supply where it has been considered as one potential approach to addressing shortages in certain teaching categories, while also potentially enhancing career prospects for individual teachers.

Amendments have therefore also been made to Rules 2.2 and 2.3 to reflect the inclusion of Additional Registration in the Rules.

This process is set out in our Framework for Additional Registration.

Q2: Do you agree that the updated language more accurately reflects the purpose and outcome of registration in an additional teaching category?

NEW SECTION 6 – maintaining registration

The purpose of this section is to highlight that it is the responsibility of registrants to take action to maintain their registration and support the integrity of the Register by ensuring the accuracy of the information we hold.

We consulted on this proposal in 2021 and it received positive feedback, except in relation to the inclusion of an obligation to notify us if a registrant is charged with or found guilty of a criminal offence, on the basis that there are already formal procedures in place for this. We agreed with that observation and have removed that provision from the draft.

The information that registrants must provide is:

- That they are and remain a PVG scheme member
- That they have met Professional Update requirements
- That their registration with another professional or regulatory body has been affected as a result of a disciplinary or fitness to practice process
- That they have changed employer, name and/or address

We have also included the requirement that registrants provide us with an email address (if they have one).

Q3: Do you agree that the inclusion of this section will help highlight to registrants the importance of maintaining up to date information with GTC Scotland?

Section 7 – Professional standards and awards

This section proposes to introduce a new recognition of accredited specialism for fully registered teachers. The Accredited Specialism Framework would offer recognition to registered teachers with Full Registration who achieve additional qualifications and develop specialist knowledge during their careers. This recognition would be offered to teachers based on evidence of their commitment to enhancing their knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities through the successful completion of a formal qualification. It could also help employers to identify teachers with the necessary expertise and experience that they might be looking for in particular specialist contexts.

Through the Accredited Specialism Framework, it is proposed that registered teachers would be able to apply for the recognition of an Accredited Specialism which would then appear against their entry on the Register. The Accredited Specialism Framework will set out the application process for registered teachers to complete and be considered by GTC Scotland.

We are proposing that Accredited Specialism is a qualification-based route to enhancement of individual registration. Some examples of how this framework could be applied are:

- a fully registered teacher of primary education with a Postgraduate Diploma in Inclusive Education (Deaf Learners) would be searchable on the Register of Teachers as: Fully Registered Primary Education, Accredited Specialism: Inclusive education (Deaf Learners)
- a fully registered teacher of secondary biology education with a Masters in coaching would be searchable on the Register of Teachers as: Fully Registered Secondary Biology Education, Accredited Specialism: Coaching
- a fully registered teacher of further education with a postgraduate certificate in Inclusive Education would be searchable on the Register of Teachers as: Fully Registered Further Education, Accredited Specialism: Inclusive Education.

We consulted on this proposal in 2021 and it received a high level of support. As well as being broadly comparable to what other professional regulators offer, we believe it will lead to an objectively evidenced, desirable enhancement to registration for both registrants and employers.

Q4: do you agree with our proposal to introduce an Accredited Specialism framework?

Section 8 – notice of decisions

Minor changes have been made to clarify how we communicate decisions made under these rules and what the review and appeal provisions are. There is no material change to the purpose or effect.

Section 9 – right of review

The changes to this section are necessary because of the changes made to section 7 regarding professional recognition and accredited specialism. There is no material change to the purpose or effect.

Section 10 – right of appeal

There are no changes to this section.

Section 11 – certificates

We have updated this section to reflect that we no longer issue hard copy certificates. Otherwise, there are no material changes.

Section 12 – The Register

12.3 Security and Integrity of the Register

We have added a new sub-section that incorporates the detail of the previous sub-section titled Access to the Register, which we're proposing to delete, as well as the subsequent sub-section titled "the Keeping of the Register", which we are also proposing to delete.

This new provision has much the same effect but is intended to further strengthen the importance of ensuring the security and integrity of the register. It operates in tandem with proposed new section 6 which sets out the obligations of registrants in this regard, by setting out the relative obligations that GTC Scotland has. The reference to the Data Protection Act explicitly acknowledges our responsibility to protect the personal data of registrants and treat it respectfully, and the remainder of the section ensures that we act on relevant information given to us in an efficient and effective manner, keeping individuals informed where necessary.

[Q5: do you agree with the inclusion of this new provision to make explicit the actions GTC Scotland will take to maintain the security and integrity of the register?](#)

Q6: does it capture all the necessary detail?

12.4 Removal, Reinstatement and Restoration

Amendments to this section include changing the title to clarify the difference between reinstatement and restoration to the Register (the former being an action that we will take where an individual is reinstated for the purpose of processing a fitness to teach referral). We also expand the list of reasons in which we may remove a registrant's name from the Register to include that:

- the individual has failed to notify GTC Scotland, without delay, that another professional and / or regulatory body has made a finding in respect of their registration as a result of fitness to practice procedures (or an equivalent)
- the individual has failed to notify GTC Scotland of a change of employer (as per proposed new section 6, maintaining registration)
- the individual has failed to notify GTC Scotland as soon as reasonably possible on identifying any other changes to, or errors in, the registration information set out in Schedule 1 that is held in the Register in relation to them.

These reasons align with the new section 6: maintaining registration in emphasising the importance of the obligation placed on registrants to maintain their registration.

We have also added a new sub-section to provide that where a registrant is removed from the Register and we are aware that they are employed in an educational establishment, we will notify the relevant employer of the removal. These are changes that we have identified over time in the exercise of our regulatory work as necessary.

Q7: do you agree that these reasons would (in the absence of explanation or further action on the part of the individual) give us cause to remove someone from the Register?

We are proposing to expand the provisions relating to the circumstances in which a registrant may be restored to the Register to clarify that the process for restoration will vary depending on the reason why the registrant has been removed. Broadly speaking, it will be as a result of one of four reasons:

1. an administrative oversight (failure to pay registration fee, or notify of a material change to personal or employment details)
2. failure to engage with or complete the Professional Update process within the relevant timeframe

3. where a provisionally registered teacher has not gained full registration and/or met any condition(s) imposed on their registration within the specified timeframe
4. a fitness to teach (or equivalent) panel decision.

In respect of 1) and 2) we will produce a policy statement to confirm what the process is and engage on the material content prior to the introduction of these revised rules. In relation to 3) and 4) the relevant information will be contained within a refreshed Provisional Registration and Induction Policy and our Fitness to Teach Rules respectively.

Q8: Where an individual has been removed from the register and seeks to return after a significant period of time, are there any requirements you would expect to be placed on the individual in order to evidence that they are eligible to return to the register?

Q9: Where a provisionally registered teacher has been removed by reason of not gaining full registration within the specified timeframe (currently 3 years), how long do you consider is a reasonable period of time to restore them to the register to work towards full registration?

Q10: Where a provisionally registered teacher with a condition or conditions attached to their registration has been removed by reason of not having met the condition(s) of registration within a specified timeframe, should they be permitted to be restored to the register under Provisional (Conditional) Registration a second time, or instead be required to meet the requirements of Provisional Registration before seeking restoration?

Q11: Where an individual has been removed from the register by reason of not completing their Professional Update requirements, do you consider it to be reasonable to restore that individual to the register while imposing a further period for completion of Professional Update?

Section 13 – Fees

There are no material changes to this section.

Schedule 1 - Registration Information

The changes to this schedule are updates that bring it in line with current practice. There is no material change to the purpose, although it will have the effect of making registration numbers public-facing information, along with registrant names. This is

standard practice with professional registers and reduces scope for error, for example where two (or more) registrants have the same name.

Schedule 2 – Other registration criteria

The main changes to this schedule are to ensure that the requirements we set for those who do not hold a recognised teaching qualification (a qualification gained via a teacher education programme we have accredited) are clearer, and can be applied to a wider range of qualifications. This includes changing the name of the schedule to clarify that it is not only applicable to applicants who have qualified outside of Scotland and to include provisions relevant to the Further Education sector.

Our assessment of candidates with a wide range of qualifications and experience over many years has given us a clearer idea of the many routes to gaining the academic and teaching requirements necessary to meet the Professional Standards. This has enabled us to tailor our processes accordingly. As a result, we are proposing to replace references to the attainment of 'broadly comparable' in relation to qualifications, standards and experience (which we consider to be too vague and subjective a term) with 'substantially the same', recognising the rigorousness of our assessment process and the importance of meeting the Professional Standards as a safeguard for the integrity of the Register.

In addition the expansion of our register to include the independent school and further education sector has expanded the range of applicants we need to be to recognise and assess.

We are proposing to include a new sub-section (Academic or Vocational Qualification Requirements) to clarify the equivalent qualifications required for applicants seeking to register in the further education sector, and a new sub-section (Headteachers Qualified Outside Scotland - Equivalency Criteria) to clarify what is required to meet the Standard for Headship.

Otherwise, the changes to this Schedule reflect updates to the UK system of recognition and assessment of qualifications gained elsewhere, and corresponding SCQF requirements.

[Q12: do you agree that these changes adequately address the range of prospective applicants to the Register?](#)

Schedule 3 – Panel Procedures

There are no material changes to this section.

Q13: If you have any other comments or suggestions in relation to this consultation, please leave them here.

List of questions

Q1: do you think that this proposed change accurately reflects how ASN-specific content is provided and accessed?

Please give us your views.

Q2: Do you agree that the updated language more accurately reflects the purpose and outcome of registration in an additional teaching category?

Please give us your views.

Q3: Do you agree that the inclusion of this section will help highlight to registrants the importance of maintaining up to date information with GTC Scotland?

Please give us your views.

Q4: do you agree with our proposal to introduce an Accredited Specialism framework?

Please give us your views.

Q5: do you agree with the inclusion of this new provision to make explicit the actions GTC Scotland will take to maintain the security and integrity of the register?

Q6: does it capture all the necessary detail?

Please give us your views.

Q7: do you agree that these reasons would (in the absence of explanation or further action on the part of the individual) give us cause to remove someone from the Register?

Please give us your views.

Q8: Where an individual has been removed from the register and seeks to return after a [significant] period of time, are there any requirements you would expect to be placed on the individual in order to evidence that they are eligible to return to the register?

Q9: Where a provisionally registered teacher has been removed by reason of not gaining full registration within the specified timeframe (currently 3 years), how long do

you consider is a reasonable period of time to restore them to the register to work towards full registration?

Q10: Where a provisionally registered teacher with a condition or conditions attached to their registration has been removed by reason of not having met the condition(s) of registration within a specified timeframe, should they be permitted to be restored to the register under Provisional (Conditional) Registration a second time, or instead be required to meet the requirements of Provisional Registration before seeking restoration?

Q11: Where an individual has been removed from the register by reason of not completing their Professional Update requirements, do you consider it to be reasonable to restore that individual to the register while imposing a further period for completion of Professional Update?

Q12: do you agree that these changes adequately address the range of prospective applicants to the Register?

Please give us your views.

Q13: If you have any other comments or suggestions in relation to this consultation, please leave them here.

Responding to the consultation

You can respond to this consultation [using our online response form](#), or our Word document response form, which [you can access on our website](#). You can email the completed form to gtcs@gtcs.org.uk and put 'Accreditation Process and Requirements Review consultation' in the email subject line. You can also print off the document and post to:

General Teaching Council for Scotland
Clerwood House
96 Clermiston Road
Edinburgh
EH12 6UT

If you need us to provide the consultation documentation in an alternative format, please email us at gtcs@gtcs.org.uk.

Privacy statement

For this consultation we intend to publish a summary report of the responses that we receive. If we quote from individual responses in our summary report, these will be unattributed. Please be mindful not to share any personal information in your response.

Further information on how we process your personal data in relation to this consultation is set out in our privacy notice, [which can be found on our website](#).

Deadline for responses

All responses should be received no later than 5pm on Tuesday 15 December 2026. Responses received after this deadline may not be considered. Please let us know in advance of this deadline if you anticipate having difficulties meeting it.

Annexes

[Annex 1: draft revised Rules](#)

[Annex 2: current version of the Rules](#)

[Online questionnaire \(Microsoft Forms\)](#)

[Consultation questionnaire \(Word version\)](#)