

# *Strategic Plan*

## *2012 – 2014*

A New Era of Professionalism  
Fás, Forbairt agus Foghlaim



**The Teaching Council**  
*An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta*

*Fás*  
*Growth*  
*Forbairt*  
*Development*  
*Foghlaim*  
*Learning*

# Contents

Message from the Chairperson and CEO/Director ..... 2

**Chapter 1** Context for the Strategic Plan ..... 6

1.1 Background..... 6

1.2 Environmental Context..... 7

**Chapter 2** Strategic Direction ..... 12

**Chapter 3** Action Plan ..... 16

**Appendices** ..... 24

Strategy Development Process..... 24

Consultation..... 26

# Message from the Chairperson and CEO/Director

A Chairde,

This Strategic Plan, entitled A New Era of Professionalism: Fás, Forbairt agus Foghlaim 2012-2014, sets out the Teaching Council's strategic priorities and direction with the aim of realising in full its significant role in enhancing the quality of teaching in Ireland. The title is indicative of the continuum of learning with which the Council is engaged and reflects its drive towards greater achievement in the professionalisation of teaching, across the spectrum of its work.

This plan builds on the Teaching Council's first plan, Fás agus Forbairt 2008–2011, whose goals and objectives were achieved, to the extent that they were within the gift of the Council. Some objectives were partially realised and continue to form part of the Council's agenda of work. Others are ongoing and are dependent on factors outside of the Council's control. The Council remains focussed on the achievement of these outstanding objectives as part of its updated Strategic Plan.

The public sector staffing moratorium has placed significant pressure on the current staff complement of the Teaching Council. Despite this, the Council is supported by a strong and cohesive management team and high calibre personnel who are deeply committed to delivering the functions of the Council. As these functions expand over the coming years with the implementation of outstanding sections of the Teaching Council Act, the capacity and resources of the organisation will need to grow accordingly to ensure the organisation remains fit for purpose.

The process of developing the strategy is documented in an appendix to the plan which outlines the extensive consultation undertaken. This included: online questionnaires completed by registered teachers; consultation with Council members; focus group meetings with representatives of teacher unions, school management bodies, agencies in education, Higher Education Institutions; one-to-one interviews with stakeholders; focus group meetings with staff; meetings with the senior management team. The consultation process resulted in a rich yield of thinking and information which is embodied in the plan and which, we hope, gives ownership of it to a wide audience.

The term of office of the current Council will end in March 2012 and it is timely that this document, Fás, Forbairt agus Foghlaim 2012-2014, is being published prior to that. The third Council will commence its term of office in March 2012 and will build on the progress which the first two Councils have made. It will be guided in its work by the strategic objectives set out in this plan. That work will have greatest impact with the continued active engagement of teachers and the support and collaboration of all the partners in education over the lifetime of this plan.

Guímid gach rath ar an obair.



---

Lily Cronin, Chairperson



---

Áine Lawlor, CEO/Director



*Chapter 1*  
*Context*  
*for the*  
*Strategic*  
*Plan*

## 1.1 Background

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in March 2006 as the professional standards body for teaching. The purpose of the Teaching Council is to:

- Regulate the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers.
- Establish standards and promote the maintenance and improvement of those standards.
- Promote the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers.

The Teaching Council's statutory responsibilities are aligned with the teaching career, beginning with initial teacher education, followed by induction, probation and continuing professional development. The Council seeks to ensure that standards are upheld at each stage of the teaching career in the interests of students and society as well as for the purpose of maintaining the reputation of the profession.

The Teaching Council comprises 37 non-executive members acting in a voluntary capacity. Under the provisions of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, 22 places on the Council are reserved for registered teachers, of which 16 are elected and six are nominated by the teacher unions.

The Teaching Council's work is supported by a team of staff under the leadership of a Chief Executive known as the Director.

The Teaching Council is funded exclusively by the annual fees of registered teachers. No funds are received from Government or other sources.

As of November 2011 there were more than 73,000 teachers registered with the Teaching Council.

The Teaching Council's Strategic Plan, Fás agus Forbairt 2008-2011 has helped guide the organisation in progressing the implementation of the Teaching Council Act, 2001. To support the organisation in building on achievements under that plan and implementing outstanding sections of



the 2001 Act, the Teaching Council developed this new strategic plan to set out a clear direction for the organisation over the period 2012–2014. An overview of the strategy development process is set out in the Appendix.

## 1.2 Environmental Context

The external environment in which the Teaching Council operates is undergoing a period of significant change. The Council needs to respond to these developments, influence the future and secure its position through implementation of outstanding sections of the Teaching Council Act 2001

### **The Teaching Council is a relatively new organisation and its powers have not yet been fully implemented**

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in 2006. Its establishment brought greater coherence to the profession and brought teaching into line with other regulated professions. The Teaching Council Act, 2001 sets out the specific role and functions of the Teaching Council. The Council must implement its functions within that framework.

The Council welcomes the recent confirmation by the Minister for Education and Skills that the commencement of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001 is imminent. That Section confirms that only registered teachers will be eligible for payment as teachers in recognised schools.

A number of the Council's additional statutory functions have yet to be commenced by way of Ministerial Order, including those related to the Induction and Probation of new teachers (which are planned for commencement on 1 September 2012), Continuing Professional Development, and Fitness to Teach. As such, the role and responsibility of the Teaching Council is set to expand and develop significantly over the coming years as the relevant sections of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, come into effect. This will place increased pressure on the capacity of the organisation to support these new roles.

### **The current economic environment presents challenges across the public sector**

Public finances are under severe strain and this will be the case for the foreseeable future. As a statutory organisation, the Teaching Council is subject to public sector staffing restrictions despite its independent sources of funding. On a broader level the restrictions in public sector funding are also impacting on the provision of education. This brings with it increased pressures across the system, impacting in a potentially negative way on teacher employment, workload and training.

### **Ireland's demographics are changing, impacting on teachers and the Council**

Ireland's population has diversified significantly over the past decade, and teachers have found themselves facing a range of new challenges and opportunities in the classroom. The integration of children with disabilities and/or special educational needs into mainstream schools, the increase in the numbers of students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the changes in an increasingly diverse society, changing family structures and the emergence of new societal problems are contributing to the complexity of teaching in 21<sup>st</sup> century Ireland. This complexity is intensified by the fact that teaching in the primary, post-primary and further education sectors takes place in a multiplicity of contexts, thereby resulting in a diverse range of needs within and across the different sectors. These developments are leading to a heightened expectation in relation to the role of teachers and a major cultural shift whereby teaching now requires a much greater degree of interaction with students, colleagues, parents and co-professionals.

### **The teaching context has evolved considerably, altering skill requirements and driving expectations**

The pace of change in the education system since the 1990s, including reform of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment at both primary and post-primary levels, together with the pace of legislative change in the education sector, is having a significant impact on teaching. These changes include:

- The introduction of *Aistear*<sup>1</sup>, a new framework for early childhood education, brings into focus the work of teachers in the junior classes in primary schools.
- The Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language (*Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010–2030*) highlights the challenges and requirements that arise at all stages of the teacher education continuum in preparing teachers to teach Irish.
- The *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People 2011–2020* highlights the challenges which arise in relation to literacy and numeracy, and the developments that are needed to enhance the skills of teachers in teaching literacy and numeracy.
- New technologies and social media play a central role in the way young people communicate and learn and this is having an impact across all education provision.
- Regard for social inclusion, the early identification of children with learning difficulties, multiculturalism, partnership with parents and ICT are increasingly significant issues.

The Teaching Council is cognisant of this evolving and dynamic context for teaching, whereby new understandings and insights have emerged in a range of areas including pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, human learning, early childhood education and teacher education.

In summary therefore, the emergence of new knowledge, understandings and insights into curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and teacher learning, together with the accelerating pace of societal, legislative, regulatory and educational reform, and the increasingly complex role of teachers now require teaching to move into a new era of professionalism. These issues also provide an important context for the strategic direction of the Teaching Council.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* was developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in partnership with the early childhood sector. It was published in October 2009.



# *Chapter 2*

## *Strategic Direction*

# Strategic Direction

This section outlines the future strategic direction of the Teaching Council within the context of the challenges and opportunities presented by its environment.

Our vision statement reflects the overall ambition of the Teaching Council. It serves as the baseline from which our Strategy is developed.

## VISION

Leading teaching into a new era of professionalism

Our mission statement communicates our purpose and indicates who we are, what we do and who we serve.

## MISSION

The Teaching Council regulates teaching and promotes professionalism in the interests of the public good.

- We admit teachers to the profession through registration.
- We set standards for teacher education at all stages of the teaching career.
- We establish standards of professional competence and conduct.
- We investigate complaints made against registered teachers.

In order to work towards the achievement of the vision and fulfilling our mission, the Teaching Council identified six strategic objectives which together define the focus of the organisation for the next three years. Each objective is explained in further detail in the next section.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 1 Secure the immediate implementation of outstanding sections of the Teaching Council Act 2001.
- 2 Establish and promote high professional standards for all stages of a teacher's career.
- 3 Promote the role and identity of the Teaching Council as the regulatory and professional standards body for teaching.
- 4 Lead the development of the profession of teaching.
- 5 Initiate a national debate on the potential for reconceptualisation of the education system towards an improved teaching and learning experience in our schools appropriate to the 21st Century.
- 6 Build the organisational capacity to deliver on strategic objectives.





# *Chapter 3*

## *Action*

## *Plan*

## Action Plan

For each strategic objective, specific actions and tasks have been outlined which will contribute to their achievement. These actions are presented at a high level, demonstrating the overall areas of work under each objective. All actions will be reflected in the more detailed Annual Business Plan and ongoing implementation process.

The following strategic actions articulate the high level activities that should be implemented within each area of work.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Secure the immediate implementation of outstanding sections of the Teaching Council Act 2001

#### Strategic Objective 1 explained:

The Teaching Council Act, 2001 underpins the role and functions of the Teaching Council. Ensuring that outstanding sections of the Act (Sections 30, 37, 39 and Part 5) are implemented is critical to the ongoing effective operation of the Teaching Council. Therefore, an important objective for the Teaching Council is to assist and support its timely implementation.

#### Strategic Actions:

- 1.1 Continue to engage with the Minister and Departmental officials to secure the immediate implementation of the outstanding sections of the Act.
- 1.2 Highlight the benefits of the implementation of the outstanding sections of the Act in any planned communications.

**STRATEGIC  
OBJECTIVE 2****Establish and promote high professional  
standards for all stages of a teacher's career****Strategic Objective 2 explained:**

The Teaching Council's main focus to date has been on establishing the Register of Teachers, publishing registration regulations and codes of professional conduct for teachers, and formulating policy on the continuum of teacher education. In line with its policy on the continuum of teacher education, the Council has commenced the review and accreditation of programmes of initial teacher education and has established criteria and guidelines for providers in reconceptualising their programmes. Over the coming years, its role in teacher education will expand into induction and CPD for teachers. With the introduction of Part 5 (Fitness to Teach) the role of the Council will also expand into the area of fitness to teach.

**Strategic Actions:**

- 2.1 Publish revised registration regulations.
- 2.2 Review criteria for entry to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes.
- 2.3 Establish a competence framework for all stages of the teaching career.
- 2.4 Establish a framework for induction and probation (including procedures and criteria).
- 2.5 Review programmes of ITE and accredit as appropriate.
- 2.6 Establish a framework for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (including procedures and criteria).
- 2.7 Publish and promote a revised Code of Professional Conduct.
- 2.8 Facilitate Garda vetting of registered teachers not previously vetted.
- 2.9 Conduct inquiries into the Fitness to Teach of registered teachers where appropriate.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Promote the role and identity of the Teaching Council as the regulatory and professional standards body for teaching

#### Strategic Objective 3 explained:

Significant efforts have been made to promote the role and identity of the Teaching Council. The feedback from stakeholder consultation indicates that much greater effort will have to be made to ensure that the Teaching Council gets its message across to teachers and other stakeholder groups. Part of this challenge will be to develop a communications strategy which is tailored to the unique requirements of each audience.

#### Strategic Actions:

- 3.1 Develop a schedule for engagement with stakeholders to encourage proactive communication on relevant issues.
- 3.2 Develop a communications strategy to promote the role and identity of the Teaching Council as the professional standards body for teaching. This could include:
  - Building on the success of Contact Persons Scheme
  - Using the Council's website as a central platform
  - Use of podcasting / video clips
  - Making more use of electronic communications such as E-newsletter / text messaging
  - Providing annual update to teachers
  - Promoting the Annual Report and Statistics Digest
  - Building on existing student awareness promotion campaigns.

- 3.3 Engage additional PR expertise to support the Director and staff in implementing the communication strategy.
- 3.4 Undertake regular surveys to assess teachers' understanding of the role of the Council.
- 3.5 Develop a programme of conferences, seminars and information sessions to raise the profile of the Teaching Council and to build on the value of face to face contact.

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

#### Lead the development of the profession of teaching

##### Strategic Objective 4 explained:

The Teaching Council is in a fortunate position of being able to engage with its many stakeholder groups on a day to day basis. This helps the Teaching Council to identify opportunities and develop strategies that will help to promote teaching as a profession.

##### Strategic Actions:

- 4.1 Commission and publish research on national and international trends on the development of the profession (including comparative research with other professional and regulatory bodies).
- 4.2 Disseminate research to interested parties:
  - Hold conferences / seminars / information sessions to:
    - Present research
    - Promote debate
    - Identify key issues to be addressed
  - Develop a repository for research on the teaching profession.
- 4.3 Actively engage with other bodies nationally and internationally to inform the development of the teaching profession, including the design of stages of progression and areas of specialisation within the profession.

- 4.4 Engage with Higher Education Institutions and others to plan for the accreditation of CPD programmes.
- 4.5 Develop appropriate policy and advisory documents that will act as an input to the development of the teaching profession.
- 4.6 Make well-informed public statements about teaching as a profession.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Initiate a national debate on the potential for reconceptualisation of the education system towards an improved teaching and learning experience in our schools appropriate to the 21st Century

### Strategic Objective 5 explained:

This objective has a longer term horizon than the period of the strategy which is 2012–2014. Given its role at the centre of the teaching profession, and its engagement with similar organisations in other countries, the Teaching Council is in a strong position to contribute to the future direction and development of the education system in Ireland.

### Strategic Actions:

- 5.1 Gather and analyse research focussed on:
  - The current Irish educational system
  - High performing international systems
  - Identifying potential implications for Ireland
- 5.2 Disseminate research outcomes and engage with the Department of Education and Skills and key stakeholder bodies, with a view to:
  - Examining implications for teaching
  - Identifying potential for change
  - Advising the Minister as appropriate
  - Acting as an advocate for change.

**STRATEGIC  
OBJECTIVE 6****Build the organisational capacity to deliver on its  
strategic objectives****Strategic Objective 6 explained:**

It is critical that the Council should have the necessary resources and structures to deliver on the objectives set out in this Strategic Plan. At the time of publication, the Teaching Council is significantly understaffed. Objective 6 and its supporting actions set out the organisation's plans for ensuring that the necessary resources and structures are identified and put in place. Given its importance in supporting the overall implementation of the Strategic Plan, this objective will be a key priority.

**Strategic Actions:**

- 6.1 Review the organisation's staffing, structures, processes and procedures to support implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- 6.2 Secure the staffing required to support the current and future functions of the Council.
- 6.3 Conduct a review of the governance of the Teaching Council to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency.
- 6.4 Ensure that the Teaching Council has the appropriate financial resources to carry out its functions in an efficient and effective manner, and review these resource requirements on an ongoing basis.





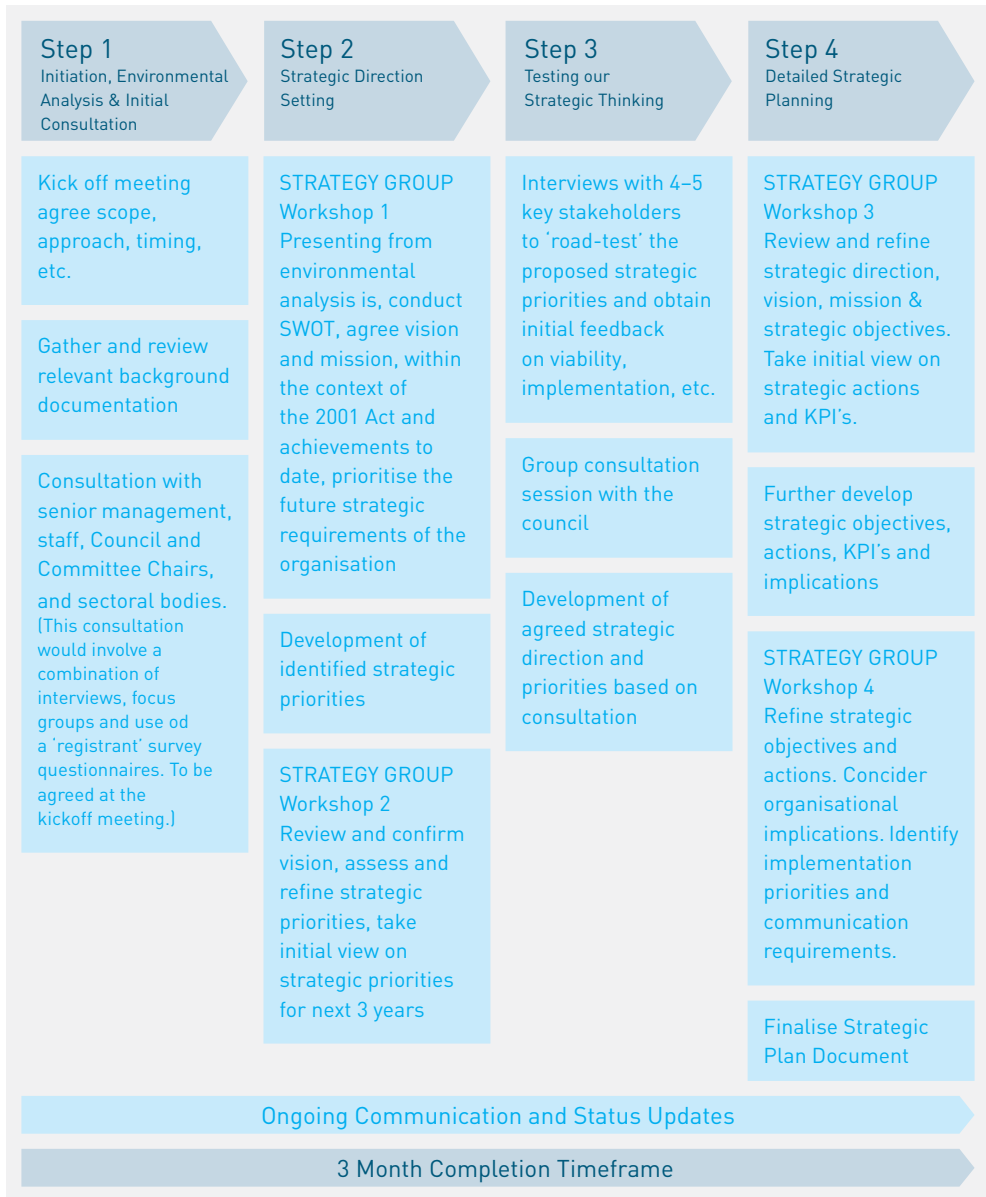
# *Appendices*

## Appendix 1 Strategy Development Process

The Strategy Planning Process was facilitated by Prospectus Strategy Consultants and driven by the senior management team of the Teaching Council. The Strategy Planning Process was completed in the period from March to July 2011 and was characterised by:

- Meetings with the senior management team, facilitated by Prospectus. These included:
  - Workshop 1: Kick Off
  - Workshop 2: Environmental Context, Vision and Mission
  - Workshop 3: Strategic Objectives
  - Workshop 4: Actions and Implementation Plan
- Two staff focus groups
- Two online questionnaires distributed to Contact Persons of the Teaching Council and Teaching Council Registrants, which obtained the input of 614 registered teachers
- One to one interviews with 14 stakeholders
- Four focus groups with unions, agencies in education, management bodies, and Higher Education Institutions which obtained the input of 36 individuals
- Consultation with the Council
- Approval by the Council.

An overview of the process is presented below:



## Appendix 2 Consultation

Extensive consultation was undertaken as part of the Strategic Planning process. The following stakeholders were interviewed to obtain their views on the Teaching Council and the opportunities and challenges facing the organisation over the coming three years.

All feedback from the consultation process was treated confidentially. Key messages were fed back to the Steering Committee under thematic headings.

**One to one interviews:**

A total of 16 individuals were invited to engage in one to one interviews. Interviews were subsequently conducted with representatives from the following organisations:

ORGANISATION
General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)
Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools
Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA)
Trinity College Dublin
University College Cork
Department of Education and Skills
National Parents Council (Primary)
Mary Immaculate College
Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
JP McDowell Solicitors

### Focus Groups:

Six focus group sessions were held, two with staff and four with external stakeholder organisations. A total of 63 external stakeholders were invited to attend focus groups sessions. Of these, 36 attended on the day. Those who attended represented the following organisations:

ORGANISATION
Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI)
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)
Mary Immaculate College
St Patrick's College, Thurles
National University of Ireland, Galway
National College of Art and Design
St. Nicholas Montessori College Ireland
Hibernia College
Church of Ireland College of Education
Mater Dei Institute
National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Dublin City University
CIT Crawford College of Art and Design
Muslim Primary Education Board (MPEB)
National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education
Church of Ireland Board of Education
Joint Managerial Body (JMB)
National Induction Programme for Teachers - Primary
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)

ORGANISATION
Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
UCD - National Induction Programme for Teachers - Post Primary
National Council for Curriculum & Assessment (NCCA)
National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)
National Qualification Authority of Ireland (NQAI)
Association of Teacher Education Centres Ireland (ATECI)
Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)
National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)
Association of Teacher Education Centres Ireland (ATECI)