

An Chomhairle
Mhúinteoireachta 
The Teaching Council

FÁS AGUS FORBAIRT
STRATEGIC PLAN

2008 – 2011

An Chomhairle
Mhúinteoireachta



The Teaching Council

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Foreword



A Chairde,

It gives me great pleasure to present to you *Fás agus Forbairt 2008–2011*. The title chosen is an appropriate one as this document will guide the Council during the next three years as it moves from an establishment phase to one of growth (*fás*) and development (*forbairt*). It is the roadmap which will assist us to steer the best course in the interest of the teaching profession and, ultimately, for the benefit of our young people.

The drafting of *Fás agus Forbairt 2008–2011* afforded the members of Council an opportunity to reflect on the responsibility placed upon them to regulate teaching, to promote it as a profession and to promote the professional development of teachers. The process has inspired a renewed energy as we continue to develop a goal-oriented and cohesive team of Council members and staff. This plan is the guiding force for our work and, as the Council's current term of office approaches its final year, it will provide continuity for the handover to a new Council in March 2009.

Fás agus Forbairt encapsulates the goals, objectives and strategies which the Council aims to bring to fruition during the lifetime of the plan. In agreeing these, the Council was conscious that they should be achievable and have a realistic timeframe. The Council was also aware that flexibility had to be built into *Fás agus Forbairt 2008–2011* since changing needs in the teaching profession and in the education system may require a change of direction during its lifetime.

On behalf of the Council, I invite you to read *Fás agus Forbairt* and take note of particular areas of interest to you about which you would like to offer comment or suggestions. Together, let us make this plan our roadmap to success.

Joan Ward

Joan Ward, Chairperson

Introduction



A Chairde,

The Teaching Council first met in February 2005 and was established on a statutory basis in March 2006. In the three years since February 2005, the Council's work has been planned and undertaken in line with the imperatives of the Teaching Council Act, 2001. *Fás agus Forbairt* will guide the Council as it continues to progress the implementation of the Act over the coming three years. It is an important and significant document which will allow the Council to realise its strategic goals by building on its work to date.

Fás agus Forbairt has been produced in compliance with the requirement for strategic and corporate planning in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. It will determine, to a large extent, the allocation and application of resources over the next three years. More importantly, it will inform teachers, the education community and the public in general, of the Council's goals, objectives and strategies for carrying out its functions.

The process of drafting *Fás agus Forbairt* began with an analysis of the internal and external environment in which the Teaching Council exists. This analysis involved the identification of key opportunities and challenges and it highlighted, among other things, the legislative, regulatory and educational context within which the Council operates. The process also involved a consultation phase and valuable feedback received at Council and Committee meetings and at meetings with the partners in education in February 2008 has been incorporated into the document.

In line with best practice, this document begins with the Council's vision and mission statements. These are followed by the goals which set out, in broad terms, what the Council wants to achieve. The objectives flow from the goals and set out, in more specific terms, what the Council needs to do to achieve its goals. The strategies set out the plans, policies and approaches to be used by the Council in order to meet its objectives. These strategies will be implemented through annual work plans which will include key actions and tasks.

In order to monitor its progress, the Council will produce an annual report outlining progress made in each of the three years of the plan beginning on 28 March 2008. Each report will map progress against the targets set out in the annual work plans.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have been involved in the development of the plan. In particular, our thanks are due to the bodies represented on the Council and all those who made a valuable input at consultation stage. I look forward to working in partnership with the teaching profession and the wider education community in progressing the achievement of the Council's goals over the lifetime of this plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aine Lawlor". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Áine Lawlor, Director

Vision

The Teaching Council will be at the heart of teaching and learning, promoting, supporting and regulating the teaching profession.

It will serve the best interests of education, in partnership with other interested parties, by being an authoritative, respected voice for the profession and a guardian of teaching standards, establishing best practice at all stages on the continuum of teacher education.

Mission

The Teaching Council aims to promote and maintain the highest standards of teaching, learning and professional conduct in our schools.

Environmental Analysis

The process of drafting this document began with an analysis of the internal and external environment in which the Teaching Council exists. This section summarises the key issues identified as part of that process.

Internal Environment

Structure of Council

The 37 members of the Council represent the partners in education at national level and bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their role as non-executive directors of the Council. This enriches and informs the deliberative and policy formulation processes.

Much of the work of the Council is conducted through a committee structure. As the Council develops as an organisation, the committee structure will be reviewed and altered as required, to ensure it continues to provide the most appropriate structure for the effective and efficient running of the Council.

The term of office of the current members of the Council ends in March 2009 at which point a new Council will be appointed. A key challenge for the Council will be to ensure a seamless transition between the first Council and the second Council. This strategic plan will assist the Council to meet that challenge.

Staff

With regard to staffing, the sanctioning of posts is subject to the approval of the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Finance. To date, there have been three major recruitment drives, in 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively. At each stage, the Council has received approval for the number and grade of posts sought and has recruited high calibre personnel with relevant qualifications and experience.

At the time of print, there is a sanctioned staffing level of 28.5 staff members who support the work of the Council under the leadership of its Director. This plan will assist staff to organise resources effectively to meet the challenges ahead. As the work of the Council expands, the staffing will be reviewed and further posts will be created as required. It is likely that more specialist posts may be created as the Council's role in key areas such as Fitness to Teach, research and Garda Vetting continues to develop.

Funding

During its early years, the Council was funded by the Department of Education and Science, as provided for in the Teaching Council Act, 2001. From March 2008, the Council became self-funding through the payment of teachers' annual registration renewal fees. The introduction of the fee effected the transition from being a government-funded body to a self-financing body.

Key Achievements to Date

A major focus of the Council's work to date has been the establishment of a Register of Teachers and the Council has brought this work to its final stage of completion. From 2008 onwards, the focus will move from establishment to ongoing maintenance of the Register and to developing it as a valuable repository of information.

The Council has drafted Registration Regulations to govern the registration process. These regulations have been submitted for Ministerial consent.

As part of the process of registering teachers for the first time, the Teaching Council agreed to be the

authorised body to seek the vetting of newly qualified teachers. The issue of Garda Vetting is a subject which has gained considerable national attention in recent months.

A significant milestone has been the development of Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers following a process of consultation with teachers and all the partners in education. These have now been circulated widely and the process of promoting ownership of the Codes is underway. During the lifetime of this plan, the Council will engage in a national review of the Codes.

Operational Systems and Processes

The Council's focus on its core functions as prescribed by the Act is constant and it is also mindful of the need to run an effective and cost-efficient organisation and make optimum use of its resources. To this end, an effective financial management system is in place and tailored ICT and communications strategies have been developed. The Council will continue to review its processes and systems as it evolves, to ensure they remain effective.

Conclusion

The range and volume of work being undertaken by the Council has proved to be challenging and time-consuming and has made enormous demands on the individual members of Council who are acting in a voluntary capacity. The demands on staff are equally onerous.

However, the internal analysis highlights a favourable and positive environment within which the work of the Council is flourishing.

External Environment

Partnership with External Agencies

The Teaching Council has established effective working relationships with a range of bodies and individuals in order to further its work. The Council works closely with all the parties represented on the Council, with the General Teaching Councils in Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales and also with other professional bodies in Ireland such as the Medical Council, An Bord Altranais and Engineers Ireland, all of whom supported the Council in the start-up phase.

Public Perception of the Council

Among the partners in education, the influence of the Council in teaching matters is acknowledged. Indeed, it is referenced at almost all education conferences where it is recognised that its role extends into all areas of teaching as a profession. However, the Council still has much work to do in clearly establishing its identity in the minds of key audiences and this issue will have to be addressed vigorously over the lifetime of this plan. Significantly, there is a need to foster a sense of ownership of the Council among the profession and encourage teachers to engage with the Council.

Role of Regulatory Bodies

The role and composition of regulatory bodies has been an area of development and change in recent years. Working within this environment, a key challenge for the Teaching Council will be to earn goodwill and prove it is capable of handling self-regulation with integrity.

The Legislative Context

As a statutory agency, the Council is subject to legislation in a wide range of areas and will ensure it complies with all relevant legislation.

The Teaching Council Act, 2001 is the Council's founding legislation and that which guides its work. The Act is a complex instrument, the implementation of which has proved to be demanding and resource intensive. The functions of the Act which have not yet been commenced relate to the continuum of teacher education, Fitness to Teach and registration as a pre-requisite to paid employment as a teacher.

With regard to the continuum of teacher education, the Act confers on the Council significant functions. In order to guide its work, it has begun a process of developing a policy paper on the continuum of teacher education and a strategy for the review of programmes of initial teacher education. Over the lifetime of this plan, it is expected that the policy paper will be agreed and that implementation of the review strategy will commence in colleges and universities.

With regard to Fitness to Teach, while the relevant sections of the Act have not been commenced, the Council has been busy preparing for its role in this area by researching best practice in other jurisdictions and in other professional bodies.

Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001 provides that only registered teachers may be paid from State monies, in respect of their employment as teachers in recognised schools. It is understood that this section of the Act will be commenced later this year and a key priority for the Council, at this point, is to make teachers aware of this provision so that if they wish to register, they may do so in advance of the commencement of this section.

Once commenced, all of these sections of the Act will present significant challenges and opportunities. In implementing them, the Council will be guided by a commitment to high standards and a focus on its duty to the profession and to the public.

The Education Environment

The education environment within which teachers work is changing rapidly. Much change can be attributed to systemic factors in the field of education relating to legislation, school patronage, policies and curricula. Recent economic and socio-cultural trends have also altered the education environment and these will have consequences for the work of the Teaching Council, particularly in the area of teacher education. EU legislation and trends also have a significant impact with regard to the recognition of qualifications and the mobility of teachers.

Perceptions of Teaching

Traditionally, there has been a positive public perception of the teaching profession and various attitudinal surveys in recent years have indicated that teaching continues to be one of the professions most highly regarded by the public. The Council must build on this by promoting teaching as a profession and creating a culture where the role of teachers in preparing young people for life is valued and celebrated.

Teaching Supply

Teaching in Ireland continues to attract high-calibre entrants at undergraduate and post-graduate levels and the Council is committed to ensuring that this continues. A key challenge for the Council will be to ensure that the supply of new teachers will be more closely aligned with demand. This is a significant issue, particularly where certain subjects and geographic areas are concerned.

There are also many opportunities for the expansion of the profession. For example, the Council must consider how to attract people who are under-represented in the profession, e.g., men, people from areas designated as disadvantaged and members of the new Irish community.

Conclusion

The external analysis highlights a challenging external environment to which the role of the Teaching Council will make a significant contribution.

Goals

The following pages set out the goals, objectives and strategies for 2008-2011 and these will form the foundation for the annual work plans over that period.

Goal 1

To promote teaching as a profession.

Goal 2

To maintain and develop teaching standards and competences and the quality of teaching and learning in the State.

Goal 3

To regulate the teaching profession.

Goal 4

To develop and maintain an efficient and effective organisation to support the work of the Council.

Goal 1

To promote teaching as a profession.

	Objective	Strategy
1.1	Highlight the central role of the teacher in the holistic development of the student.	<p>Communicate the positive contribution of the teaching profession to Irish society.</p> <p>Disseminate relevant research findings and initiate public debate on issues related to teaching and learning.</p>
1.2	Confirm the integrity of the teaching profession and acknowledge its role in promoting democracy, social justice, equality and inclusion.	Promote the Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers which clarify the ethics and set out the core values underpinning teachers' practice and conduct.
1.3	<p>Enhance the status and inform the public perception of the teaching profession.</p> <p>Promote teaching as an attractive and fulfilling career option.</p>	<p>Highlight the work of teachers and, in particular, the complexity of teaching.</p> <p>Disseminate relevant research findings and initiate public debate on issues related to teaching and learning.</p> <p>Engage with relevant stakeholders in order to develop a fulfilling career path for teachers.</p> <p>Communicate with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential student teachers • Schools, colleges and universities • The media • The wider community.
1.4	Establish the Council as an authoritative advocate for the teaching profession and an autonomous, representative and influential voice on matters pertaining to teaching.	<p>Establish and maintain effective relationships with stakeholders through the implementation of a communications programme.</p> <p>Conduct consultations, undertake research and participate in debate on educational matters.</p>
1.5	Inform the Council's work in promoting teaching as a profession, through a focused programme of research.	<p>Develop and carry out a programme of research and disseminate relevant research findings.</p> <p>Review the Council's research policy on an ongoing basis and ensure that its policies and activities reflect the outcomes of research.</p>

Goal 2

To maintain and develop teaching standards and competences and the quality of teaching and learning in the State.

	Objective	Strategy
2.1	Establish standards, policies and procedures for the education of teachers at all stages on the continuum of teacher education.	Following research and consultation with the education partners, develop a policy paper setting out the Council's vision and framework for each stage on the continuum of teacher education.
2.2	<p>Review and accredit programmes of initial teacher education.</p> <p>Apply the subject criteria in determining the suitability of degree courses for entry to a programme of post-primary teacher education.</p> <p>Review qualifications for teaching in the further education sector.</p>	<p>Develop, in consultation with teachers, the Minister, the providers and the other education partners, criteria for the review and accreditation process, having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant research • The Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers • The standards of education required for entry to programmes of teacher education and • The standards of knowledge, skill and competence required for the practice of teaching.
2.3	Establish procedures in relation to the induction of teachers into the teaching profession following commencement of the relevant section of the Teaching Council Act, 2001.	Engage with the National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction (Primary & Post Primary), undertake appropriate research and consultation, formulate and put forward policy proposals to the Minister.
2.4	Develop a framework of continuing professional development for teachers following commencement of the relevant section of the Teaching Council Act, 2001.	<p>Conduct research and develop a comprehensive continuing professional development framework in consultation with the stakeholders.</p> <p>Review and accredit programmes relating to the continuing professional development of teachers.</p> <p>Make policy proposals to the Minister.</p>
2.5	Raise awareness among the teaching profession, student teachers, the education partners and the wider community of the benefits of continuing professional development for teaching and learning.	Communicate with teachers, student teachers, the education partners and the wider community at local, regional and national levels using a variety of communication strategies.

Goal 3

To regulate the teaching profession.

	Objective	Strategy
3.1	Establish the Council as the trusted regulator and statutory guardian of standards in the teaching profession.	<p>Engage with teachers, the education partners and the wider public in promoting the Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers.</p> <p>Implement a comprehensive information and consultation strategy in advance of the review of the Codes in 2009.</p> <p>Prepare for and implement <i>Part 5 Fitness to Teach</i> of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, following its commencement.</p>
3.2	Determine and publish the requirements for admission to the Register of Teachers.	Establish, publish, maintain and review the Registration Regulations.
3.3	Develop the Council's role as the designated authority for the recognition of teaching qualifications awarded within the EU and the competent authority for the recognition of teaching qualifications awarded outside the EU.	<p>Comply with relevant EU legislation.</p> <p>Liaise with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and authorities in other jurisdictions to develop best practice in relation to teaching qualifications and exchanges.</p>
3.4	Establish procedures and criteria for the probation of teachers, following commencement of the relevant section of the Teaching Council Act, 2001.	Undertake appropriate consultation, formulate and put forward policy proposals to the Minister.
3.5	Maintain and develop the Register of Teachers as the authoritative repository of information on those who are registered to teach at primary and post-primary (including further education) levels.	<p>Manage an efficient registration and renewal process.</p> <p>Establish systems to ensure that the information held in the Register is secure, accurate, up to date and accessible as appropriate.</p> <p>Initiate the process of seeking ISO 27001 accreditation for information security management systems.</p>
3.6	Advise the Minister on teaching-related matters.	Provide statistical information from the Register to advise the Minister on issues such as teacher supply and other matters as necessary.

Goal 4

To develop and maintain an efficient and effective organisation to support the work of the Council.

	Objective	Strategy
4.1	Maintain and further develop appropriate and effective structures and systems for the Council in line with best practice in corporate governance.	<p>Operate an efficient committee structure and review it on an ongoing basis to ensure its continued effectiveness in fulfilling Council functions.</p> <p>Develop and maintain excellent management and communications systems and review regularly to ensure optimum use of resources.</p> <p>Provide induction for new Council members, to include their role as non-Executive Directors outlining the roles and responsibilities of Council members and those of Council staff.</p> <p>Engage further with other Teaching Councils to learn from their experience.</p> <p>Promote greater use of technology in communicating with Council members.</p>
4.2	Manage the budget and adhere to the highest levels of probity in all matters of governance.	<p>Ensure compliance with financial controls and procedures.</p> <p>Review and implement codes of conduct for staff and Council members on an ongoing basis.</p>
4.3	Employ effective human resource management systems to support the work of the Council.	<p>Recruit high calibre staff with the necessary skills and expertise to enable them to carry out their work efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>Develop and implement a training and development policy.</p> <p>Be pro-active in assessing future staffing needs.</p>
4.4	Establish and maintain effective relationships with stakeholders.	<p>Develop and implement a planned and sustained communications programme.</p> <p>Hold regular meetings with stakeholders to facilitate shared understanding and promote the work of the Council.</p>
4.5	Manage elections and nominations to the Teaching Council.	<p>Devise structures for elections and nominations to the Teaching Council.</p>

Appendix

Committee Structure

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee is designed to facilitate the efficient and effective functioning of the Council by conducting the business of the Council between general meetings of the Council.

THE INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

When it is deemed appropriate to do so, this committee will investigate an application for an inquiry on the Fitness to Teach of a registered teacher.

THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

When it is deemed appropriate to do so, this committee will conduct a hearing on a referral made to it by the Investigating Committee.

THE REGISTRATION COMMITTEE

The Registration Committee is responsible for establishing and reviewing the qualification requirements for registration.

THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

This committee oversees the financial affairs of the Council, including the preparation of the annual accounts, the control of expenditure and the reviewing of registration and other fees.

THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

This Committee oversees the Council's communication, education and research functions and makes recommendations to the Council on these areas of its work.

THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Audit Committee monitors the systems, financial controls and procedures of the Council to ensure they operate in an orderly and efficient manner.