



Teaching Council Strategic Plan 2015–2017



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The Teaching Council is the professional standards body for teaching in Ireland. Under the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2012, it promotes and regulates the profession of teaching. Its work is focused on setting standards to support the quality of teaching and learning for our children, young people and adult learners.

The Council's mandate to both promote and regulate the profession of teaching is grounded in the concept of standards. The Council has a responsibility to set the standards for the profession of teaching, and to verify to both the profession and the public that they are being upheld. It also seeks to empower others in contributing to the maintenance and enhancement of those standards, including the profession. All aspects of the Council's work, in both promotion and regulation, are designed to ensure the highest of standards in all phases of teaching and learning for all learners.

Background

As the Council approaches its 10th anniversary in 2016, we reflect on what has been achieved over the past three years and the values and concepts that should guide our work during this Strategic Plan.

Since January 2014, with the commencement of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, all teachers must be registered in order to be paid from public funds. This was a very significant milestone for the Council, and paved the way for the commencement of the outstanding sections of the Teaching Council Act. Significant progress has been made in establishing standards for all stages of teachers' careers, including the commencement of *Droichead*, a new pilot model of induction and probation, the drafting of new registration regulations, the review and accreditation of all programmes of initial teacher education, preparation for Fitness to Teach and the commencement of consultation on a National Framework for continuing professional development (CPD). In terms of promoting teacher professionalism, the Council is working with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and Centre for Effective Services (CES) on the *Research Alive!* initiative, as we seek to nurture the further development of a culture of research that will support and encourage teachers in all that they do.

While we have made significant progress, the ongoing challenges in the current climate must be acknowledged. Perhaps the most significant are the heightened expectations that people have of teaching and learning. People are coming to understand more about the complexity of teaching, and what this means for the education and support that teachers require throughout their careers.

Development of plan

The Council's strategic planning is conducted within the framework of the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2012. In particular, the planning must provide strategic guidance for the areas of registration, teaching, learning and research, and fitness to teach. The Council also takes account of the national policy framework as set out by the Department of Education and Skills.

In preparing the plan for the three year period January 2015-December 2017, the Council has engaged in the following consultations:

- **National stakeholders, including the Department of Education and Skills**
- **Public consultation, including the teaching profession during October 2014**
- **Council staff.**

As in all its work, the Council will have due regard to resourcing implications in implementing this plan.

The Council must also ensure that its own organisational and infrastructural development is supported and enhanced on an ongoing basis in order to address priorities and respond to emerging needs over time in a dynamic way.

Rationale and underpinning values

Values and guiding concepts

Council's work revolves around the concepts of learning, teaching, standards, trust, quality, voice, support, challenge, consistency and flexibility, and ongoing improvement. Its work is underpinned by the values of shared professional responsibility, collective professional confidence and professionally-led regulation.

Voice

The process of education revolves around talking about teaching and learning. The voices of all those who care about teaching and learning are therefore of critical importance to the Council in fulfilling its mandate. The voices of learners (including children, young people and adult learners), parents and teachers are especially important, as they are the ones most directly involved in teaching and learning every day in our schools.

The work of Council is also informed by the voices of stakeholders who nominate or elect members to it – teachers, teacher unions, parents, school management, HEIs, the Department of Education and Skills, IBEC and ICTU.

Council engagement with stakeholders

The Council is here to reassure and to challenge. It seeks to reassure parents and pupils as to the quality of teaching and learning that they can expect in schools. It seeks to support and reassure the profession so as to enable teachers to embrace the opportunities that our work offers them.

The Council also endeavours to challenge teachers, parents, pupils and all stakeholders to enhance their ways of working together to further enhance that quality over time. The Council acknowledges that it has a role to play in facilitating the professional conversations that will be required between the various stakeholders in order to bring this vision to fruition. Crucial to this is the support and development of a new language that accurately reflects our more developed understanding of this complex profession.

The Council aspires to ongoing improvement in all that we do.

Supporting teachers' professionalism in the public interest

The Teaching Council seeks to maintain and enhance trust – the trust of the public in the profession, as well as the trust that teachers have in themselves and each other.

The Council endeavours to develop a new understanding of professionalism in a way that is rooted in teachers' own experience and expertise, but that also reflects the fact that today's society has new expectations of professionals. Such understanding must be informed by research.

The Council is responsible for ensuring that robust standards of quality are clearly evident in each stage of teachers' practice. The register is the official statutory record that teachers have achieved the high standards set by the Council for each stage of their career. These standards of practice will be maintained and nurtured in classrooms through teachers' learning. The *Code of Professional Conduct* describes how teachers should apply what they have learned, and continue to learn, in their professional practice.

Some of the hallmarks of teachers' learning include quality, relevance for practice and students' learning, consistency of standard and variety of approach. All of us have a responsibility to value, acknowledge and support teachers' learning. Professional learning is a central element to the standards framework of all professions. Teachers' learning requires space and time, and should be supported and informed by research. Teacher educators have a key role to play in supporting and guiding teachers' learning.

Research, Reflective Practice, Relationships

Everything the Council does is ultimately focused on teaching and learning. This is with the aim of ensuring that the educational experience of pupils in schools is the best it can be. This is the same for the teaching profession.

Three pillars that support the Council and the profession in this work are Research, Reflective Practice and Relationships. They support the strategic goals of Council in a number of ways, including:

- They are essential for supporting teachers' learning and sustainable policy development.
- They facilitate a rigorous focus on high standards and ongoing improvement in those standards. They also support the profession in realising those standards in their daily practice at each phase of the continuum of teacher education.

Research



Research by and for teachers is essential to support their learning and practice as professionals. The Council's work also depends on research in order to make the best decisions possible in the interests of teaching and learning.



Reflective practice

Reflective practice is essential for each teacher, and for teachers as a professional learning community, in enabling professionals to make the best decisions in the interests of their students. It is the key to sustaining teachers as people as well as professionals. As a learning organisation, the Council also engages in reflective practice, in order to help us make the best decisions in the interests of the profession, parents, pupils and the wider community.



Relationships

"All learning is understanding relationships."

(George Washington Carver)

Teaching and learning come alive through positive, constructive relationships. The quality of the Council's work rests on the quality of its relationships with others.

Strategic goals

While the Council's action plans over the next three years will be grounded in the following strategic goals, each of the goals have been chosen for their potential to guide the Council's thinking and policy development during the period after 2017.

The Council acknowledges the ongoing needs of the Irish-medium sector, including the teaching of Irish, in the identification of actions to give effect to the strategic goals during the lifetime of the plan.

1

Work with the profession, public and all stakeholders to promote a culture of shared learning in which research and leading practice is encouraged and applied within the classroom setting.

This will mean:

- a) Facilitating communications, collaboration and engagement with and between teachers and the public.
- b) The identification of innovative channels for communication and engagement.
- c) Engaging with the profession to support the identification of research priorities, and supporting it in reflective engagement with that research.

2

Develop and promote leading standards for teacher education and practice and ensure the achievement of those standards through effective registration processes.

This will mean:

- a) The ongoing review, and accreditation as appropriate, of programmes of initial teacher education.
- b) The implementation of a revised model of induction and probation, informed by the *Droichead* pilot.
- c) The development of a national framework for continuing professional development.
- d) The confirmation of standards at each stage of teachers' careers through the ongoing maintenance of a secure, reliable register of teachers.

RESEARCH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE RELATIONSHIPS

3

Lead the enhancement of a culture of professional learning, including a national framework for continuing professional development (CPD) for teaching.

This will mean:

- a) Consulting with the profession and all stakeholders to inform the development of a national framework for CPD.
- b) Working proactively with the profession and all stakeholders to enhance the impact of CPD on the quality of teaching and learning.

4

Ensure that the development of Fitness to Teach processes further enhances public confidence in the profession.

This will mean:

- a) That Fitness to Teach inquiries and findings are impartial, objective and proportionate.
- b) The development of Fitness to Teach procedures that clearly acknowledge, where appropriate, the importance of the resolution of issues at the school level.
- c) The development and ongoing communication of clear guidelines to teachers, school leadership and the public that explain the complaints and inquiry processes and that summarise the rights and responsibilities of all participants at each stage of the process.

