

**Customer
Service
Action Plan
2024-2027**

October 2024

Table of Contents

Content	Page
Introduction	2
Strategic Goals 2022 to 2027	3
Customers of the Teaching Council	4
12 Principles of Quality Customer Service	5
Measuring and Evaluating Performance	13
Customer Complaints Procedure	13

Introduction

Customer Action Plan

The Customer Service Action Plan 2024-2027 outlines how the standards and commitments provided in the Customer Charter will be delivered and further evaluated by the Teaching Council.

The Customer Service Charter is available on our [website](#) at and on page 15 of this document.

In accordance with the 12 Guiding Principles of Quality Customer Service, the Customer Service Action Plan sets out the service standards that customers can expect from us as well as key performance indicators.

About the Teaching Council

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in March 2006.

The Teaching Council is the regulator of the teaching profession in Ireland. Our role is to protect the public by promoting and regulating professional standards in teaching.

We do this through the statutory registration of teachers, ensuring a highly qualified teaching profession, whose members meet and uphold high standards of professional competence and conduct.

The Council consists of 37 members.

The Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Council. The Director works closely with Council members and has overall responsibility for the implementation of the strategic goals of the Council. The Director is supported by a Senior Management Team and Council staff.

The Council's statutory functions are set out in the Teaching Council Acts 2001, as amended and include the following:

- promote and regulate the teaching profession,
- maintain and improve standards of teaching, knowledge, skill, and competence,
- establish and maintain the register of teachers,
- conduct inquiries into and, where appropriate, impose sanctions in relation to, the fitness to teach of any registered teacher,
- establish, publish, review and maintain a code of professional conduct for teachers, which will include standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence, and,
- promote teachers' ongoing learning.

Strategic Goals 2022 to 2027

This 2022-2027 strategic plan is the first 5-year plan in the Council's history. It sets forward the Council's ambitions for its remit years ahead, in the context of the wider education system, and the culmination of a comprehensive consultation process with stakeholders, Council staff and the Department of Education.

The Teaching Council promotes and supports the highest standards in teachers' professionalism and teacher education through effective policies, regulation and research. We seek to foster a conducive landscape for sustainable and responsive teaching and learning in our communities. We do this collaborating with the Department of Education and all stakeholders in an increasing diversity of innovative ways. This work will ensure quality teaching and learning for all, through enhanced creativity, inclusion, diversity, leadership, and wellbeing. This in turn will further develop public confidence and trust in the teaching profession in Ireland, and in education more broadly.

The strategic goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan 2022-2027 are outlined below:

1. Teacher Registration & Supply

- Ensure a sufficient supply of registered and vetted teachers to meet the identified needs of the school system, including diversity, in collaboration with the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and all stakeholders.

2. Collaborative Professional Communities for Sustainability

- Provide practical frameworks and supports for collaborative professional communities with a particular focus on inclusion, joy and creativity in quality teaching and learning.

3. Fitness to Teach

- Continue to ensure that fitness to teach processes are fair, appropriate and effective in the interests of the public and the profession.

4. Corporate & Resourcing Sustainable Ways of Working

- Maintain and enhance the Teaching Council's flexible, collaborative and innovative organisational culture that supports shared learning and responsiveness to regulatory requirements and national priorities.

Customers of the Teaching Council

External Customers

The Teaching Council has a wide range of external customers and is committed to providing a quality service to meet their individual needs. The Teaching Council's customers include, but are not limited to:

- Registered Teachers
- Applicants for Registration
- Students
- Parents
- Department of Education
- School Leaders
- National Bodies
- Employer Bodies
- A wide range of stakeholders from outside the public service including trade unions and other representative bodies.

Internal Customers

The Teaching Council recognises employees and Council Members as internal customers and is committed to supporting employees and Council Members.

12 Principles of Quality Customer Service

The Teaching Council is committed to providing the best possible service to all who engage with us. We will ensure this is the case by undertaking key actions, in-line with the Twelve quality customer service principles, which are outlined below:

1. Quality service standards

Publish a statement (Customer Charter) that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect and display it prominently at the point of service delivery on our website.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
1.1	Publish the Customer Service Charter and Customer Action Plan 2024 – 2027 on our website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan available on our website in both Irish and English.
1.2	Report on Customer Service progress each year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer service information will be included in our Annual Reports going forward.
1.3	All staff will be made aware of the commitments made and adhere to these commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback received from staff on the Customer Service Working Group in preparing the plan. Customer service training for staff as required. Update the onboarding process to incorporate this information

2. Equality and diversity

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community).

We will comply with all equality legislation including the Employment Equality Act, 1998, the Equal Status Act, 2000 and the Equality Act, 2004 and ensure that all customers are treated equally and in accordance with relevant legislation.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
2.1	Raise awareness of diversity and equality through an appropriate forum (e.g. Equality training for all staff and attending conferences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing training on equality and diversity policies including inductions for new staff and ongoing awareness for all staff.
2.2	Provide information in formats accessible to people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number information videos with subtitles produced. Ensure website remains accessible and monitor for ongoing changes. Provide appropriate interpretation and translation services, including sign language, to meet internal and external customer needs, when required.
2.3	Encourage participation of people with disadvantages/disabilities to enter the Teaching Profession and also to work with the Teaching Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance of Teaching Council member(s) at career advice days. Provide application forms in alternative formats such as Braille, audio or other languages (as far as practicable), on request.

3. Physical Access

Provide clean, accessible offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
3.1	Ensure Teaching Council office complies with health and safety legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain compliance through ongoing measures within the Corporate Affairs team, and also across a variety of other teams Regularly review Safety Statements for the Teaching Council building. Establishment of Health & Safety Committee with regular meetings to address issues raised efficiently. Maintain an appropriate number of trained safety staff. All staff participate in quarterly emergency evacuation drills.
3.2	Ensure that there are suitable facilities in place for customers,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide meeting room facilities

<p>including those with special needs, when dealing with Teaching Council staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where assistance is required by persons with disabilities in accessing our services, the Teaching Council's Access Officer will provide assistance and guidance. ○ Train appropriate staff in the use of evacuation chairs in case of emergency evacuation.
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Our Access Officer is Stephen Conneally who can be contacted at facilities@teachingcouncil.ie please write in the subject line "FAO – Access Officer".

4. Information

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
4.1	Expand and improve the use of social media platforms and video content to engage with our customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expand social media content creation and use typical social media KPIs (unique views, monitor duration of video watched, etc.)
4.2	Ensure staff are equipped with the technical knowledge, skills, and attributes to deliver a quality service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide Microsoft Office and other relevant training to all staff
4.3	Use Plain English written communications, keeping the use of technical or official terms and jargon to a minimum and where necessary explaining these terms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continued engagement with NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency) and other relevant agencies to ensure plain english is used throughout our website and on all correspondence.
4.4	Make staff information and updates on matters of interest available via the Intranet and internal newsletter where practicable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff feedback regarding availability and ease of access to information.

5. Timeliness and courtesy

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity, and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
5.1	Ensure that when staff are out of the office, appropriate voicemail and out of office email messages are active.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that Out of Office guides are widely circulated on our intranet to our staff.
5.2	Adhere to the timeliness and courtesy protocols detailed in the Customer Charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain adherence with these timelines, particularly those related to acknowledging receipt of correspondence and the issuing of replies. Keep customers informed of progress if undue delays occur in dealing with their correspondence.

6. Complaints

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent, and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided. This is also outlined in our Customer Service Charter, which can be accessed [here](#) and on page 15 of this document.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
6.1	Publicise our customer complaints procedure widely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the customer charter is kept up to date with information regarding the complaints procedure on our website.
6.2	Monitor customer complaints and feedback to identify opportunities for improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer complaints are dealt with and monitored by the Customer Relations Officer.

7. Appeals

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well publicised, accessible, transparent, and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
7.1	Ensure customers are aware of their options if they are unhappy with how a complaint has been dealt with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appeals process will be outlined in the Customer Charter, which will be available on our website.

If the matter remains unresolved after all review procedures have been fully exhausted under the Teaching Council's Complaint Procedures, customers will be advised of their right to appeal to the Office of the Ombudsman.

8. Consultation and evaluation

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

The Teaching Council is committed to customer consultation and is always looking for ways to improve our services. If customers wish to contact the Teaching Council in relation to the area of customer service, they can email customerrelations@teachingcouncil.ie.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
8.1	Facilitate customers to share their views on our service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commit to developing a system to capture customers' views and feedback.
8.2	Consult staff in the preparation of the Customer Action Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engage with the Customer Service Working Group in preparing the Customer Service Action Plan & Charter.

9. Choice

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
9.1	Communicate information to customers using a range of appropriate channels including telephone numbers, email and through our website: www.teachingcouncil.ie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure website remains accessible. ○ Increase provision of Irish language services on the online portal Novus.
9.2	Continue to incorporate advances in technology to improve the quality of customer service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide updated services e.g. NOVUS portal.

10. Official languages equality

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

The Teaching Council makes specific provision for delivery of its services in the Irish language. In doing so, it is guided by the provisions of the Official Languages Act, 2003.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
10.1	Provide Teaching Council services through Irish on request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online registration portal available bilingually. ○ Dedicated Irish Language phone line. ○ Reply in Irish to all correspondence received in Irish. ○ Provide signage in public offices in both Irish and English
10.2	Produce all publications and press releases in both English and Irish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All press releases issued bilingually. ○ Teaching Council's Annual Report and Statement of Strategy published in Irish and English.

11. Better co-ordination

Foster a more coordinated and integrated approach to the delivery of public services.

We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
11.1	Collaborate with other public services such as third level institutions in the registration of Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agreements / alliances with higher education institutions ○ Further opportunities to collaborate at stakeholder events organised by the Teaching Council
11.2	Collaborate with the National Vetting Bureau to improve vetting processing times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vetting team members work in close partnership with the National Vetting Bureau.
11.3	Engage with Teaching Councils in other jurisdictions to learn from their experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4 Nations CEO meetings (Councils of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland) meet bi-annually to provide general updates on operations.

12. Internal customers

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted regarding service delivery issues.

- We will address this principle by implementing the following service standards:

No.	Action	Performance Indicator
12.1	Keep staff informed of developments in the Teaching Council, where appropriate, through use of relevant channels of communication including the Teaching Council intranet and staff monthly updates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff updated at monthly online SCRUMs, quarterly in-person SCRUMs and via the Intranet. ○ Provide staff with Microsoft Outlook and other relevant training

12.2	Encourage further learning and education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Offer training in customer service and other related training to staff who are in regular contact with members of the public.○ Increase awareness of study leave and funding opportunities
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Measuring and Evaluating Performance

The Teaching Council employs a range of mechanisms to measure and evaluate our performance against the standards set out in this document to ensure that we continue to deliver the highest levels of service to our customers. In monitoring our performance, we will:

- Benchmark our performance against previous results by monitoring and tracking the customer complaints received.
- Gather and analyse data related to the volume of calls/emails received and the overall service level of phone and email queries.
- Seek feedback and suggestions from our customers on ways in which we can enhance our service provision and delivery.
- Use internal management information systems to inform our customer service policies.
- Ensure full compliance with all applicable Health and Safety standards and regulations.

Customer Complaints Procedure

In order for us to learn from your experience of the service we provide and improve our systems as appropriate, we would be happy to receive your feedback or complaint in writing.

How to make a complaint

In writing	Customer Relations Officer The Teaching Council Block A, Maynooth Business Campus Maynooth Co. Kildare W23 Y7X0
Email	customerrelations@teachingcouncil.ie
Phone	+353 (0)1 651 7900 Between: 12.00pm to 5.00pm

Once a complaint is received, a member of our Customer Service Team will send you an acknowledgement.

A member of the Customer Service Team may contact you to seek additional, relevant information.

Having investigated the complaint, we will send you a detailed response.

We will:

- Deal with all complaints in an effective, fair, and confidential manner.
- Acknowledge your complaint within three working days and respond to complaints within twenty working days.
- Keep you updated as to the progress of your enquiry if the issue has not been resolved within agreed times.

Appeals Procedure

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation of your complaint, you may appeal the decision to:

In writing	Head of Corporate Services The Teaching Council Block A, Maynooth Business Campus Maynooth Co. Kildare W23 Y7X0
Email	info@teachingcouncil.ie FAO Head of Corporate Services Please include 'FAO Head of Corporate Services in the subject line
Phone	+353 (0)1 651 7900 Between: 10am-12pm & 3pm - 5pm

Further Appeals Procedure

If you feel that you have been unfairly treated or are not satisfied with our decision on your complaint, you may also contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Office of the Ombudsman examines complaints about the administrative actions of Government Departments and Offices.

The best way to contact the Ombudsman is:

In writing	Office of the Ombudsman 6 Earlsfort Terrace Dublin 2 D02 W773
Online	Clicking on the 'Make A Complaint' link at www.ombudsman.ie
Phone	Calling the Ombudsman on 01 639 5600 if you have any queries or if you need help making your complaint.

Customer Charter

The Teaching Council is the professional standards body for teaching in Ireland. Under the Teaching Council Acts 2001–2015, it promotes and regulates the profession of teaching. Our work is focused on setting standards to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning for our children, young people and adult learners.

In broad terms, its functions are as follows:

- 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 the delivery of its functions, the Council is committed to providing customer service of the highest standards to the public and stakeholders, with a focus on remaining professional, open and transparent. This Charter sets out the service experience that the Teaching Council aims to provide to the public and stakeholders through the provision of information on:

- Our standards of service
- How to provide feedback on the service provided by the Council
- How to make a complaint relating to the service provided by the Council
- How to make a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman relating to the service provided by the Council

The Customer Service Commitment has been developed to reflect the Council's commitment to providing high standards of service in accordance with Quality Customer Service initiatives approved by Government.

Mutual Respect Statement

Council staff are committed to engaging professionally and respectfully with all stakeholders. Whether you write, telephone, email us or call to the Council Offices in person, we will deal with your enquiry efficiently and promptly and treat you with courtesy and respect. In return it is expected that Council staff will be treated in a respectful and courteous manner. Abusive or offensive language and or behaviour is not acceptable, and contact will be terminated if a staff member is subject to such behaviour.

Contacting the Teaching Council

You can contact the Teaching Council using the following methods:

- **Email**
You may wish to email your query to info@teachingcouncil.ie. If applicable, please provide your registration number and sector —Primary, Post Primary or Further Education.
- **Telephone**
Our phone number is +353 (1) 651 7900.
The current hours for incoming telephone calls are:
Monday – Friday, excluding holidays: 12.00pm – 5.00pm

The phone lines close at 4pm on the last working day before a public holiday.

Please note that we can only discuss registration information with the applicant or registered teacher.

- **Appointments**

We facilitate appointments. Prior to an appointment being arranged by the Teaching Council, we will take all necessary steps and explore all avenues to try and resolve your issue, in the interests of saving your time.

To request an appointment:

Tel: +353 (1) 6517900

Email: info@teachingcouncil.ie

Written Communication including Emails

If you contact us by letter or e-mail, we will endeavour to:

- Send you a written response acknowledging receipt of your query within three working days.
- Provide you with a response in writing and/or by telephone within twenty working days (In some cases, this will be an interim response, but we will advise you when a final response will issue).
- Ensure that all written communications contain a staff contact name, telephone number and email address.

Telephone Communication

If you contact us by telephone, we will endeavour to:

- Answer your call promptly during office hours listed, 12.00pm - 5.00pm.
- The staff member will identify themselves and their area of work when answering the call.
- Respond to voice messages as soon as possible.
- Provide you with the information you require (please note that for data protection reasons, we are required to confirm the identity of registered teachers and applicants for registration (including vetting) by seeking three pieces of personal information before discussing registration /application details)
- Telephone you back if we are unable to deal with your query immediately.

Call recording

Please note that a call recording system is in place and all calls may be recorded for training and verification purposes.

Visiting the Teaching Council Office (Appointment Service)

In most cases, the general public, teachers, applicants, etc. will be able to conduct their business with us via NOVUS Online Portal, email, telephone, letter or via our [website](#).

If, however, you wish to visit our office, please note that an appointment service is in place.

Prior to an appointment being arranged by the Teaching Council, we will explore all necessary steps and explore all avenues to try and resolve your issue, in the interests of saving your time.

The appointment service will ensure that:

- A member of staff from the relevant section will be available to meet with you.

- Suitable facilities for meetings will be provided.
- The staff member concerned will have an understanding of your query and be in a position to deal with it promptly.
- You will be met punctually and avoid long waiting periods.
- The Teaching Council will ensure that our offices are accessible for people with disabilities.

To request an appointment:

- +353 (1) 6517900
- Email: info@teachingcouncil.ie

Communication with Suppliers

We will operate clear, impartial and transparent tendering and purchasing procedures in accordance with Public Procurement Guidelines. We will ensure that payments to suppliers are made in accordance with Prompt Payment legislation and regulations.

Access to Records

When you avail of the statutory mechanisms supplied by the Freedom of Information Act 2014, the Access to Information on the Environment Regulations and the Data Protection legislation to seek access to records held by the Council, every effort will be made to make these available to you in the shortest possible timeframe.

Service through Irish

The Council makes specific provision for delivery of its services in the Irish language. In doing so, it is guided by the provisions of the Official Languages Act, 2003. The Council will endeavour to ensure that communication received in the Irish language (written and verbal), is responded to in the Irish language. A number of Council staff are proficient in Irish language and will, where possible, address queries in Irish.

Social Media Communication

The Teaching Council uses social media platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, to update stakeholders on Council activities. Please note that these media platforms are a broadcast only service.

Equality/Diversity

We are committed to providing an inclusive and accessible service for all individuals. We make every effort to ensure that our building is welcoming, functional and accommodating to people of all abilities.

If you are visiting our building and have a specific accessibility requirement that you would like to bring to our attention, please contact our Access Officer Stephen Conneally at facilities@teachingcouncil.ie

We value your feedback and are committed to making continuous improvements. If you encounter any accessibility barriers within our building or have suggestions for enhancements, please contact our Access Officer.

Feedback and Complaints

In order that we may learn from your experience of the service we provide and improve our systems as appropriate, we would be happy to receive your feedback or complaint in writing to:

Customer Relations Officer
The Teaching Council
Block A, Maynooth Business Campus,
Maynooth,
Co. Kildare,
W23 Y7X0.
Email: customerrelations@teachingcouncil.ie
Phone: +353 (0)1 651 7900

- Once a complaint is received, a member of our Customer Service Team will send you an acknowledgement within three working days. A member of the Customer Service Team may contact you to seek additional, relevant information.
- Having investigated the complaint, we will send you a detailed response within twenty working days.

We will:

- Deal with all complaints in an effective, fair and confidential manner.
- Keep you updated as to the progress of your enquiry if the issue has not been resolved within the timelines set out above.

Appeals Procedure

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation of your complaint, you may appeal the decision to:

Deputy Director
The Teaching Council
Block A, Maynooth Business Campus
Maynooth
Co. Kildare
W23 Y7X0
Email: info@teachingcouncil.ie (FAO Deputy Director)
Phone: +353 (0)1 651 7900

Further Appeals Procedure

If you believe that you have been unfairly treated or are not satisfied with our decision on your complaint, it is open to you to contact the Office of the Ombudsman. The Office of the Ombudsman's staff examine complaints about the administrative actions of Government Departments and Offices.

The best way to contact the Ombudsman is by:

- Clicking on the 'Make A Complaint' link at www.ombudsman.ie or
- Writing to: Office of the Ombudsman, 6 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 W773 or
- Calling the Ombudsman on 01 639 5600 if you have any queries or if you need help making your complaint.

