

General Teaching Council for Scotland Professional Standards and Professional Code Consultation

November 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on a refreshed set of Professional Standards for Teachers and the new Professional Code.

1. Background

We respond on behalf of Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Scotland, Scotland's United Nations-recognised Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). LfS Scotland is a membership network of organisations and individuals working to harness the full potential of learning to create a flourishing, sustainable world.

<http://learningforsustainabilityscotland.org>.

Our response is informed by:

- Participation in GTCS Review of Professional Standards Learning for Sustainability Working Group meetings 26.01.18 and 22.03.18
- Consultation with LfS Scotland members from schools, local authorities, government, colleges, universities and voluntary organisations at an event held on 06.11.19 at Moray House, University of Edinburgh.

Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is an approach to life and learning which enables learners, educators, schools and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. An effective whole school and community approach to LfS weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development education and outdoor learning to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences.

(National Improvement Hub 2019)

2. The place of Values and Learning for Sustainability (Lfs) in the Professional Standards and Code

2.1 The re-invigoration of the framework of GTCS Professional Standards in 2012, in recognition of changing contexts in education and society, set out challenging and aspirational Standards aiming to enhance professionalism for teachers in Scotland. The central place given to Values, Sustainability and Leadership and the clear embedding of Learning for Sustainability across all of the Standards was recognised as ‘world-leading’ by UNESCO in the [concluding report for the UN Decade of ESD 2004-14](#). Embedding Learning for Sustainability in the Professional Standards aligned with strategic recommendations in [the One Planet Schools report](#), accepted by Ministers in 2013, which stated that:

1. All learners should have an entitlement to Learning for Sustainability.
2. **In line with the new GTCS Professional Standards, every practitioner, school and education leader should demonstrate learning for sustainability in their practice.**
3. Every school should have a whole-school approach to Learning for Sustainability that is robust, demonstrable, evaluated and supported by leadership at all levels.
4. All school buildings, grounds and policies should support Learning for Sustainability.
5. A strategic national approach to supporting Learning for Sustainability should be established.

2.2 The Scottish Government’s [Vision 2030+ report \(2017\)](#) sets out Scotland’s continuing vision for Learning for Sustainability in educational settings through to 2030. These commitments align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030: central to Scotland’s national vision and at the heart of the Scottish Government’s revised National Performance Framework.

2.3. The Scottish Government’s new [Learning for Sustainability Vision 2030+ Action Plan](#), launched in June 2019 by the Deputy First Minister, set out specific actions for stakeholders and delivery partners. The following content from this new Action Plan relates directly to the current GTCS Professional Standards refresh:

In line with the new GTCS Professional Standards, every practitioner, school and education leader should demonstrate Learning for Sustainability in their practice.

3.1 Work to ensure that all 3-18 education practitioners engage with Learning for Sustainability through their professional standards and, through professional learning, are supported in embedding it within their practice.

*The Scottish Government will work with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) to ensure that **strengthened references** to Learning for Sustainability are included in their refreshed standards for: • registration; • career-long professional learning; and • leadership and management.*

Learning for Sustainability Action Plan Scottish Government 2019

In this context, we offer the following suggestions to support the strengthening of Learning for Sustainability throughout the refreshed Professional Standards and Professional Code and look forward to continued working with you on this.

3. Feedback relating to the Introduction to the Professional Standards and the Professional Code

3.1 LfS Scotland welcomes the inclusion of Learning for Sustainability in the diagram on page 2, and the statement that Professional Values and the themes of Personal Commitment, Learning for Sustainability and Leadership are at the centre of all of the Professional Standards and Code. The representation of Professional Values in a table is easier to engage with than previous versions.

3.2 We offer the following suggestions to strengthen Values and Learning for Sustainability in the new Introduction.

3.2.1 Feedback relating to Paragraph 1 Introduction

- We suggest an update to the context of the refreshed Standards; including an encouraging and motivational overall introductory vision statement to enable and inspire practitioners. This should set out the changing local and global context for educators and society in Scotland, highlighting the 21st Century challenges and opportunities whilst referencing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and current education priorities in Scotland as set out in the National Improvement Framework.

Our vision is of a flourishing Scotland where sustainable and socially just practices are the norm throughout society and our roles and responsibilities within a globally interdependent world are recognised.

This is a Scotland where learners are educated through their landscape and understand their environment, culture and heritage; where they develop a sense of place and belonging to their local, national and global community, and have a deep connection to the natural world. Here, learners will understand the significance of their choices, now and in the future.

Our expectation is that Scotland will provide leadership globally as one of the first sustainable, low carbon industrialised nations on Earth. By living within the limits of our planet's resources, and helping to ensure that these resources are shared fairly by all, our country, in transforming its own practices, will give others the inspiration and freedom to do likewise.

One Planet Schools Report 2012

3.2.2 Feedback relating to Paragraph 2 Purpose and Use

- In our view, the combination of the Professional Standards with the Professional Code has led to an overall tone of regulation and compliance rather than professionalism and development.

- A clear Introduction to diagram 2.1 is needed, explaining the Structure of the Standards is required, with the statement that Professional Values and the themes of Personal Commitment, Learning for Sustainability and Leadership are woven through all of the Professional Standards and Code.
- Together the Standards aim to provide a coherent Framework for teachers throughout their career, but they still appear to be separate. We suggest that the Framework is presented diagrammatically showing how all Standards relate to, and require continual reference to, the Standards for Registration. This should signal that Professional Values and the themes of Personal Commitment, Learning for Sustainability and Leadership are embedded throughout.
- We suggest adding Learning for Sustainability to the Professional Code diagram because, as stated on page 5 '... LfS ... is at the core of the Professional Standards and Code'

3.2.3 Feedback relating to Paragraph 3 Core Values and Themes

- We suggest placing the finalised text in Section 3 Core Values and Themes at the start of each Standard as well as in this Introduction to enhance its use for self-evaluation and professional learning. A link to the LfS summary pages on the National Improvement Hub should also be included.
- In 3.1 we suggest:
 - It is made explicit that the values of Learning for Sustainability are within Professional Values, by changing the heading 'social justice to 'sustainability and social justice'
 - It is made explicit that 'values are about doing well by ourselves, others and the world in which we live', to emphasise that values relate to all life and natural systems, not just people.
 - The text **reverts to the previous text** (2012) for statements of Professional Values where the meaning has been changed , e.g.
 - **'real world issues'** or local and global social, environmental and economic issues' rather than 'social and world issues' '
 - Valuing and **respecting social, cultural and ecological diversity...**'
 - The text is **reviewed and replaced with previous text** for the Values statements that are no longer included or implied in the current table, e.g.:
 - replace 'Embracing locally and globally...' with 'Has a sense of care, ethical regard and responsibility towards the natural environment, people, cultures and generations'
 - replace 'committing to the principles of democracy and social justice...' with 'valuing equity, justice, rights and responsibilities...'
- In 3.3, to avoid confusion, we suggest:
 - Using the shared definition of Learning for Sustainability, which is already on the National Improvement Hub and is used by all education stakeholders; making clear the extent and nature of LfS and that it is an entitlement of learners.

- Including the link to the Scottish Government’s policy on Learning for Sustainability outlined Vision 2030+ Report and the new Action Plan
- In 3.4, we suggest:
 - in line with the Vision 2030+ report and the Scottish Government’s new Learning for Sustainability Action Plan include LfS in the list of areas in which all teachers are required to be leaders.

4. Feedback relating to the Standards for Registration (SFR)

4.1 The Consultation Information provided (page 3) indicates that the sections on knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities and professional actions were largely unchanged apart from some restructuring.

We are dismayed to find that many important aspects of Learning for Sustainability, such as outdoor learning, have been removed. We strongly suggest these be replaced in line with research and Scottish Government policy, including work in development through the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

4.2 We offer the following outline suggestions for Values and Learning for Sustainability in the Standards for Registration. We would be pleased to support the additional detailed work that is required to strengthen Learning for Sustainability as a core embedded theme.

Our suggestions are to:

- Place the finalised text in Section 3 Core Values and Themes at the start of each Standard as well as in the Introduction to enhance understanding and usability for self-evaluation and professional learning.
- Ensure consistency throughout the overall Introduction by providing an inspiring overall introductory vision statement for these Standards. This should set out the changing local and global context for educators and society in Scotland and 21st Century challenges and opportunities, referencing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Embedded in Scotland’s National Performance Framework.
- Keep the layout with SPR and SFR Standards in parallel as it continues to be helpful for cross-referencing and to indicate progression. In the refreshed Standards, however, this displays the lack of consistency and removal of language to indicate progression (such as develop ... and demonstrate ...) across and between the two Standards that was present in the 2012 version (for example in 3.2.2, Nurturing relationships and Developing Pupil Voice).
- Undertake a rigorous review to ensure that important aspects of the 2012 SFR that have been removed continue to be reflected in the Standards, for example
 - 3.1.4 reference to ‘the natural world’ removed
 - 3.1.3 reference to ‘transformative learning, challenging assumptions and expanding worldviews’ removed.
 - 3.1.3 reference to ‘outdoor learning’ removed
 - 3.2.1 reference to ‘direct experience of nature’ removed

- Remove the reference in 2.2.1 to ‘current educational priorities such as Learning for Sustainability. This would seem to suggest that LfS is a transitory priority - and one of many such priorities - rather than a long-term priority to 2030+.
- Review the list in 3.3.1 where effective planning for Learning for Sustainability is not required in SPR, while in SFR Learning for Sustainability and Global Citizenship are represented, in error, as separate ‘teaching programmes’.

5. Feedback relating to the Standard for Career Long Professional Learning

5.1 The Consultation Information provided (page 3) indicated that the sections on knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities and professional actions were largely unchanged apart from some restructuring. However, Learning for Sustainability has been entirely removed from the Standard for CLPL, aspects of the Standard are poorly written (e.g. 2.4 and 3.4) with errors, and the introduction is incomplete. We suggest LfS is re-instated, and that the full standard is thoroughly proofread.

5.2 We offer the following outline suggestions for Values and Learning for Sustainability in the Standard for CLPL and suggest that further work is required to strengthen Learning for Sustainability as a core embedded theme.

Our suggestions are to:

- Place the finalised text in Section 3 Core Values and Themes at the start of the CLPL Standard as well as in the Introduction to enhance understanding and usability for self-evaluation and professional learning.
- Review the layout and content of the CLPL Standard to ensure consistency with the other Standards including consistent use of ‘Professional knowledge and Understanding’, Professional Skills and Abilities and ‘Professional Actions’ (missing from this Standard).
- Review the content of the CLPL Standard to ensure that Learning for Sustainability, including an outward-looking curriculum that raises awareness of the wider world and the learner’s place in it, is made explicit throughout and is required as a ‘must-do’ for every practitioner in every 5-year Professional Update cycle as part of a whole setting ethos.

6. Feedback relating to the Standards for Leadership and Management

6.1 We suggest revision of the Standards for Leadership and Management to make explicit the vital relationship between leadership and management in developing a whole-setting approach to LfS.

6.2 During participation in the GTCS Review of Professional Standards Learning for Sustainability Working Group meetings held on 26.01.18 and 22.03.18 there was agreement that the Standards for Leadership and Management require considerable further examination,

This reflects the need for:

'every practitioner, school and education leader to demonstrate learning for sustainability in their practice'

Scottish Government Vision 2030+ Report and Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2019

Research has shown that the skills, dedication and vision of the Headteacher are pivotal in ensuring an effective whole-setting approach to Learning for Sustainability. The support of middle school leaders is essential in ensuring its inclusion in the Improvement Plan, access to appropriate professional learning; and that the whole school staff is involved in a coordinated way.

6.3 We urge that Learning for Sustainability is made explicit in the refreshed Standards for Leadership and Management.

We would be pleased to support further work that will strengthen Learning for Sustainability as a core embedded theme and make explicit the role of Head Teachers and Middle Leaders in ensuring a whole setting approach to Sustainability.

November 2019
Learning for Sustainability Scotland