



Learning for Sustainability Scotland
Moray House School
of Education
University of Edinburgh
Charteris Land
Holyrood Road
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

0131 650 9731
lfsscotland.org

Learning for Sustainability Scotland's feedback on the final drafts of the Professional Standards 2021 for Scotland's teachers

October 2020

Thanks for the opportunity to respond to the final drafts of the Professional Standards 2021. We commend the strengthening of Learning for Sustainability in these final drafts. 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](#). In our view the changes that have been made in the 2021 final drafts are now *mostly* (though not fully) consistent with this status and they support the aspirations of the [Learning for Sustainability Vision 2030+ Action Plan](#).

Consequently, we suggest that some specific and important changes in the final text of the Standards are required to make clear for teachers the place of Learning for Sustainability that is well stated in the narratives of the 'Introduction' and 'Being a teacher in Scotland'.

The following comments refer to the full text of the Standards. We appreciate that the new website <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/Standards-2021.aspx> is a 'work in progress'. While we welcome the 'side-by-side' layout of the Standards and the facility to compare them, we consider that placing important material in the side bar (Being a Teacher in Scotland,

Professional Values etc) detracts from their value and makes it easy to avoid engagement. The website omits important text, for example the introductory text for each Standard where the place and definition of Learning for Sustainability is made clear.

1. Introduction

Reference to the UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#) 2015-2030 should be made in the Introduction. Scotland is committed to the SDGs, and the 17 goals are a blueprint for tackling local and global challenges: inequalities, hunger poverty, loss of biodiversity, climate change and more. They are localised through Scotland's National Performance Framework, addressing every aspect of life in Scotland including Education as outlined in the [Learning for Sustainability Vision 2030+ Action Plan](#). As such the SDGs should be acknowledged as providing the overall local and global context for the GTCS Standards.

2. Being a Teacher in Scotland

2.1 In the first paragraph the place of Scotland's unique natural environment should be acknowledged as follows (in bold):

... acknowledge Scotland's place in the world, our history, our differences and diversity, **our unique natural environment** and our culture based on social justice.

3. Professional Values and Learning for Sustainability

3.1 The stated definition of 'social justice' does not embrace the breadth of sustainability values set out in the list below it. To make clear that the values of Learning for Sustainability are within the Professional Values expected of a teacher we suggest either:

- changing the heading 'social justice' to '**social justice and sustainability**' or to '**social and environmental justice**'
- or at the very least (and far weaker) adding the word 'environmental' to the definition, i.e. 'Social Justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political, **environmental** and social rights and opportunities'.

3.2 Learning for Sustainability in Scotland includes commitment to time spent in the natural world as part of its pedagogical approach and value. This distinct feature is a Scottish Government policy commitment since 2012 (re-affirmed in 2016 and 2019) which has been praised

internationally. Christie and Higgins' recent [review for the Scottish Government](#), highlights the broader academic, developmental and educational benefits of time spent outdoors¹, and also re-confirms the evidence of its impact on developing positive attitudes to sustainability. The value of caring for the natural 'more than human' world as well as the human world should be made explicit in the Professional Values, reflecting the introductory statement that 'values extend to the world in which we live' and the need for a 'deep connection to the natural world'.

We suggest:

- *Re-insert* the word 'ecological' in 'valuing as well as respecting social, cultural, **ecological**, religious and racial diversity and promoting the principles and practices of **sustainable development and** local and global citizenship for all learners.
- Insert 'acting in ways that develop a culture of trust and respect **for self, others and the natural world**'.

4. Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning

We welcome the clear introductory statement that Learning for Sustainability 'has been embedded within this Standard to support teachers in actively embracing and promoting principles and practice of sustainability in all aspects of their work'. We suggest the following addition (in bold):

2.1.1 Approaches to pedagogy and practice: assessment, learning and teaching where appropriate taking account of the Gaelic medium **and Learning for Sustainability**

5. Standard for Middle Leadership

We welcome the clear introductory statement that this Professional Standard is underpinned by Learning for Sustainability. This needs to be made more explicit in the Standard's Professional illustrations to strengthen enactment. We suggest the following additions (in bold):

2.2.2 build and sustain professional and personal credibility by modelling your commitment to on-going professional learning, integrity and ethical practice **and Learning for Sustainability;**

3.2.1 help co-create, model and share the vision, values, ethos and aims of the learning community with all learners, colleagues, parents/carers and

families and wider community including Gaelic medium ethos where appropriate **and embracing Learning for Sustainability;**

3.2.4 Insert ‘**support the provision of regular access to and education in the natural world for all learners**’

3.5.1 ... identify with colleagues appropriate use of resources to sustain and enhance the **indoor and outdoor** learning environment to support the needs of every learner;

... develop understanding and promote collective responsibility for the sustainable **procurement and** use of resources.

6. Standard for Headship 2021

We welcome the clear introductory statement that Learning for Sustainability (LFS) is ‘embedded in the Standard to support Headteachers to develop a demonstrable ‘whole-school’ approach’, and the Professional Illustration in 2.1.1 - ‘embrace LFS within the shared vision for the learning community’.

To strengthen enactment in all aspects of effective leadership we suggest the following additions (in bold):

2.2.2 build and sustain professional and personal credibility by modelling your commitment to on-going professional learning, integrity and ethical practice **and Learning for Sustainability;**

3.2.1 co-create an aspirational vision, values, ethos and aims, agreed in partnership with all colleagues, learners, parents/carers and families and wider community **and embracing Learning for Sustainability;**

3.2.4 add: **provide learners with regular access to and education in the natural world**

3.5.1 foster collective responsibility across the school and wider learning community for the sustainable **procurement and** use of resources;

Learning for Sustainability Scotland October 2020

¹ The Health and Wellbeing benefits have long since been evident, and these are particularly significant given both the general trend for children and young people (and teachers!) to spend more time indoors and 'on-screens', the fact that this has been exacerbated during the Covid epidemic, and that their physical and mental health is suffering as a result.