



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## **Professional standards for teaching and leadership and the draft professional standards for assisting teaching (for consultation)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Why do we need new standards?**

New standards are critical to achieving the Welsh Government's vision for education in Wales and they have been developed to reflect the reforms in initial teacher education (ITE), a new curriculum, an evolving qualifications framework and the launch of the National Academy for Educational Leadership.

The new model of professional standards has been designed with the profession, for the profession. It is the culmination of extensive involvement of schools, ITE institutions, regional consortia and other key stakeholders. Teachers, teaching assistants, Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and leaders have been actively involved in developing, refining and testing the standards.

The new standards put the emphasis for professional learning and growth in the hands of the individual as a continuous and continuing process. Instead of the individual amassing 'evidence' against numerous standards over the duration of a career, we want each individual to be seen as responsible for their own growth, and work to high professional standards which are directly related to their daily work.

We want each person to feel professionally accountable and proud of their efforts to contribute to their school, the profession and education in Wales. By working with the profession we now have only five standards which are directly related to the routine work of every teacher, and similarly, there are five for leaders and five standards for those assisting teaching.

#### **When do the new professional standards take effect?**

The **professional standards for teaching and leadership** are available now and, individuals across Wales have been moving to them. The teacher who is transferring to a new school might sensibly wait until that point or someone moving to a promoted post would naturally start

on their new standards then. The new standards become mandatory for all teachers and leaders in September 2018.

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are already undertaking their induction working to the new standards and all students embarking on ITE will use them from September 2019.

**Draft professional standards for assisting teaching** will be available for use in schools from September 2018. A consultation will take place in the autumn term and the final standards will be available for use by all teaching assistants from September 2019.

### **What are the values and dispositions?**

There are six overarching values and dispositions that apply to every person working in schools: professional entitlement; Welsh language and culture; rights of learners; literacy, numeracy and digital competence; the professional learner and the system role. The values and dispositions do not replace the Education Workforce Council's (EWC) Code of Conduct. They are principles that every individual upholds by working within schools in Wales and they should underpin the work of all professionals.

To fall short in these values and dispositions means that, whatever else is achieved, the standards are not met and the only option is capability procedures which would often include improvement on a managed plan.

### **Does each person need to collect evidence to show they have complied with the professional standards?**

ITE students and NQTs undertaking their induction period will need to show that their professional experiences meet **all five standards and all of their relevant descriptors**. This evidence is shared with the individual's induction mentor and with the external verifier as necessary. It is most effective if this evidence is collected throughout the school year as a natural part of professional work rather than as a task to satisfy an accreditation process. The recording of thinking, practice and development should be the start of a process that builds and becomes natural throughout the career.

The expectation is that those undertaking formal assessment will collect evidence using the EWC's Professional Learning Passport (PLP) which will develop the habit of professional reflection that will be sustained throughout their career.

No practising teacher or leader is expected to engage with every descriptor. The five standards are clear, and the descriptors provide helpful exemplification and a focus for professional learning and dialogue.

**Is the point of using the professional standards to ‘provide evidence of effectiveness’?**

No. The point of the five professional standards is to provide a vehicle for professional behaviours and career-long growth for each individual. It is assumed that the ITE experience and the induction period have enabled the teacher to become an effective practitioner. If the right habits have been developed by that stage, then the standards serve as a guide to enable professionalism to flourish and each individual to exercise that professionalism so that they strive to be the best they can be in all dimensions of their work.

**So individuals don’t have to prove themselves on an annual basis?**

The new standards support performance management as a continuous process rather than a single conversation once a year. Schools have performance management cycles for which the standards should provide a useful backdrop for all practitioners to discuss performance in relation to their job description and their aspirations for development.

The performance management cycle offers the opportunity to reflect on the previous period and look for strengths and development, using the five standards as the overarching framework. With pedagogy as the paramount focus, the conversation can explore whether the five standards are in balance or whether a particular aspect might need to develop further. Each individual should explore and determine where they can focus attention in the coming year to try to develop and grow, in conjunction with school policies and with the job description.

Schools should also have appropriate performance management arrangements in place for support staff using the new standards, and these should be applied in the same developmental spirit.

**What are the descriptors for?**

They describe aspects of professional work that help to shape growth and further development. The entry-level descriptors set the bar for those coming into the profession and the sustained highly-effective practice descriptors are ambitious and aspirational. Many of the descriptors connect and interlock between dimensions and they are intended to help exploration of the complexity of teaching. It might be

that four or five descriptors become the focus for the next phase of growth and, again, the PLP becomes a means of planning, recording and reflecting on practice.

### **How do I access the PLP?**

The PLP is accessed via the EWC website and is available to all education practitioners registered with EWC.

### **How do I use the PLP?**

The point of the PLP is to reflect on practice effectively, in a way that doesn't create undue work. The point of the professional standards is that they help to improve the quality and enjoyment of teaching. The PLP should be a natural and economic tool to help teachers plan and record the vital work they do to develop themselves, their profession and ultimately learners.

The PLP belongs to the individual. The individual can choose to share it with others, whether that be colleagues working on a joint project or with the person reviewing their work with them.

### **If I have successfully completed induction, am I expected to meet each of the 'sustained highly-effective practice' descriptors the following year?**

No. Each individual is expected to make progress in each dimension each year and be supported in doing so. The 'sustained highly-effective practice' descriptors are a guide and are deliberately worded to be less definitive and more aspirational. They are not seen as an end point but as a way forward in the sense that the true professional is never the finished article; the sense of always striving to be yet better underlies all of the professional standards.

### **Do I have to show I can meet the five standards before I apply for promotion?**

Every teacher is expected to meet the five professional standards. If they do not, in the context of their job description and school policies, they are falling short of professional expectations and should be receiving additional support or subject to capability procedures and should not be considering or be supported for promotion.

For the vast majority of practitioners who meet the standards, creating a record of development using the PLP would be a good basis for building an application for promotion

### **Why is there only one set of standards for formal leadership?**

It is the formal leadership roles that are being supported by the professional standards rather than the post. The professional standards for leadership need to be set alongside the job description and the school policies for them to be most useful.

A person who is head of phase or head of department needs to perform effectively and grow and develop professionally, in the same way as the head teacher in the same set of standards. The difference in levels of formal responsibility comes when the professional standards and descriptors are matched with job descriptions.

The thinking is that the role in formal leadership grows from 'new-in-post' to sustained highly-effective practice. With further promotion, the individual finds themselves in new circumstances dealing with higher degrees of challenge. This means applying the same professional standards in a new and different context. The professional standards stay the same but the job role (and job description) changes.

### **How will the new standards help the small percentage of people who are not up to the job?**

The descriptors can provide a helpful basis for improvement. The descriptors provide detail that can support each of the five standards, and can be referred to in order to help the professional to develop in that standard e.g. in Pedagogy, the descriptors provide a very helpful insight into those dimensions that make up effective pedagogy. By exploring those dimensions, it can become clearer why a professional might be falling short in a particular standard. The base-line for performance beneath the five standards are the induction descriptors, and it is reasonable to expect that all practising teachers never fall below what is expected of a teacher completing induction. In the case of the vast majority of teachers, they will continuously be between the induction descriptors and those for sustained highly-effective practice.

Also, it's essential that leaders at every level take responsibility seriously as described in the professional standards. The small percentage who are falling short of the professional standards and their job descriptions can and should be the focus of effective leadership using the job description along with school policies and professional standards to address issues of poor performance. Trust in our practitioners as professionals is integral to the new standards.

Where an individual is not fulfilling the job described, they will be falling short in relation to particular school policies. All the standards have a descriptor which expects teachers to be able to show that they are following agreed corporate policies, whether they be school, local or national policies. Other descriptors highlight aspects of practice which might shed light on shortcomings but an individual whose performance is poor will be plainly inadequate on one of the five standards. The overarching values and dispositions might also be unfulfilled.

Where the individual is falling short consistently, then support should be put in place, and in the rare cases where necessary formal capability procedures should be implemented and followed assiduously.

The key element in dealing with poor performance is the match between school policies, the job description and the relevant professional standards.

### **How do we help the teacher or leader or teaching assistant to make the best use of the professional standards to develop?**

Essentially this is about taking responsibility for self and others. Some elements of the descriptors can enable the improvement of practice by creating circumstances in school where there are opportunities to meet or work with others who demonstrate sustained highly-effective practice. It may be that time spent on formal professional learning or wider reading would be beneficial and chances to see other classrooms or connect with other schools locally or beyond would build understandings. The provision of good mentoring is vital and often the informal and regular is as valuable as the formal but infrequent professional conversation.

Formal leadership standards are designed to work for teachers in that they make clear that a key function of leadership is to enable and facilitate teachers to be able to thrive in the five standards.

### **What about HLTAs? Do they have separate professional standards?**

The professional standards for assisting teaching contain standards for HLTAs and for teaching assistants. TAs seeking HLTA status should be demonstrating sustained highly-effective practice in the relevant descriptors. They may then undertake the HLTA scheme and if successful are awarded HLTA status. This involves providing written evidence against a series of indicators that match the standards for

teaching assistants working at the sustained highly-effective practice level which is assessed by an external assessor.

### **Why are the draft professional standards for assisting teaching not at four levels to match the grades at which they work?**

In the same way that we only have one set of standards for teachers, and one set for those in formal leadership positions, we propose only one set of standards for those assisting teaching. Standards should not be seen in isolation and should be matched with the job description and school policies. The qualities required to do the job well are often the same across the range of jobs in the profession. It is the job description that matches the functions of the post to its level, including salary level. The higher level functions and attributes that can be expected of HLTAs are made clear in the descriptors for HLTAs.

Just as with teaching and leadership, the professional standards for assisting teaching are concerned with helping people to grow and develop within their job. The job description will show status and level rather than the professional standards; the professional standards are used to help the job to be done well.

### **Why are the standards for assisting teaching in draft form?**

Many of those assisting teaching have not, up until now, had a set of professional standards. A set of standards for assisting teaching will be introduced by September 2019 and we want to give schools the chance to use the draft standards and provide us with feedback via a consultation in the autumn. The feedback will be taken into consideration before the standards are finalised for use in September 2019.

### **How will the new teaching and leadership standards support leadership development?**

The importance of effective leadership at all levels is key to Wales' vision for teaching and leadership which places the learner at the centre of everything we do. The expectation of continuing professional learning and the growing of leadership capacity in all teachers, from the point of entry to the profession, and supporting career-long development, forms a critical part of the vision. The new model reflects that by identifying leadership as one of the five standards for all practitioners, not just those in a formal leadership role.

We have developed leadership standards for those teachers who choose to move to formal leadership roles up to and including headship. The leadership standards support development by exemplifying early

practice in a formal leadership role and sustained highly-effective leadership practice.

**What will be the role of new standards in relation to pay?**

The role of standards in relation to pay and in relation to capability procedures remains unchanged.