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FE lecturers to be given professional recognition

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI), the professional and regulatory body for teachers here, has welcomed the publication of a consultation report on proposals to give FE lecturers the same professional recognition opportunities as teachers.

Welcoming the publication of the joint consultation report by the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning, the Registrar of GTCNI Dr Carmel Gallagher said:

“The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland was established more than 10 years ago to enhance the professional status of the teaching profession by ensuring that everyone who wishes to teach in Northern Ireland is registered with GTCNI and has attained approved qualifications.

“We are delighted with these proposals that will give lecturers in FE colleges the same opportunities as school teachers to become professionally registered. We look forward to working closely with stakeholders in the FE sector to enable the registration of FE lecturers over the coming years.”

The Consultation responses revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed that teaching staff in schools and the FE Sector should be subject to independent regulation. Ministers propose to carry forward the current functions of the Council into the new legislation with extended powers relating to fitness to teach. This will contribute to the Ministers’ aims of increasing the professionalism of the teaching workforce and driving up standards in our schools and colleges.

Dr Carmel Gallagher went on to explain:

“New legislation is expected to be introduced into the Assembly in the autumn session which will also extend the functions of GTCNI so that teaching is regulated in similar ways to other professions. GTCNI will also retain its role as an important advisory body, reflecting the views of the profession and disseminating the best in educational research and practice to the profession.

“This is a further positive step in enhancing the status of, and public trust in, teaching as a quality driven profession which is vital to the future success of young people, society and the economy.”

A summary of the DE & DEL consultation report is available to download at <http://www.delni.gov.uk/gtcni-consultation-joint-departmental-response-for-publication-june-2014.pdf>

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GTCNI is the statutory independent and regulatory professional body for teachers in NI. The Council was established under the auspices of the Education (NI) Order 1998 and has a membership of 33, the majority of whom are teachers. GTCNI is committed to developing a research and evidence based approach to discharging its statutory duties and informing key education policies in NI.

The main features of GTCNI are as follows:

1. Professional Registration

GTCNI, on behalf of the profession, ensures that only appropriately qualified teachers are registered to teach in Northern Ireland.

- Professional Registration: We check that all who wish to teach here have completed a suitable course of initial teacher education before being listed on the professional teachers' register.
- Accreditation of ITE Programmes: We accredit all Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Northern Ireland to ensure that all providers meet agreed criteria.
- Providing up-to-date Statistics: We maintain up-to-date statistics about the profession, (*for example, how many teachers are employed in each phase of education and their gender, age and subject profile*) so that there is an appropriate supply of qualified teachers for each phase.

2. Professional Regulation

GTCNI, on behalf of the profession promotes the highest standards of Professional conduct, competence and practice.

- **Professional Code and Competences:** These are set out in Teaching: the Reflective Profession' (*GTCNI 2007*) and can be accessed on the website at www.gtcni.org.uk
- **Extension to GTCNI's Regulatory Powers:** Proposals have been consulted upon and new legislation is expected to come into effect in 2014-15.

3. Professional Research

GTCNI on behalf of the profession undertakes, and provides access to, up-to-date educational research on practice.

- **Best Practice Research:** We support and disseminate best practice research to ensure that any proposed changes are informed by local, as well as global, experience and reflection.

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- **On-line Surveys:** We conduct on-line research on key issues (*for example, we surveyed your views on statutory assessment in June 2013*) in order to develop advice on matters that affect teaching and learning.

4. Professional Development

GTCNI, on behalf of the profession, advises government, employers and other stakeholders on all matters relating to teacher education, planning, performance review and professional development.

- **Policy Advice:** We have proposed that all teachers are given access to a progressive range of professional development opportunities throughout their careers, aligned to revised competence standards.
- **Policy Alignment:** We have proposed that revised competence standards are aligned to school development planning, school self-evaluation, PRSD and a 'professional update' e-portfolio.

5. Professional Voice

GTCNI is your professional voice on all matters relating to teaching. Our position is that the educational voice of the profession should lead educational policy thinking and development.

- **Policy Advocacy:** We promote informed educational policymaking and best practice at all levels and speak up for the good of young people and the profession with integrity and conviction, based on research and consultation.
- **Professional Engagement:** We consult you on matters of major concern / policy debate so that we can represent your views with authority (*for example during 2012-13 we engaged face-to-face with many Primary Principals' Associations and Area Learning Communities and undertook a major survey on statutory assessment*).
- **Consultation Responses:** We respond to all relevant educational consultations on your behalf, drawing on research and consultation evidence

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