



Press Release

GTCNI DISMISSES “A LEVEL” CRITICISM

18th August 2005

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland, today responded to criticism that “A levels” are getting easier. The Chairman of the professional body for teachers, Eddie Ferguson, stated that the criticism is unjustified and demeaning in respect of the efforts made by teachers and students alike.

He said: “Today’s results are proof that pupils and their teachers are working harder and more effectively to achieve the results that society now demands. To suggest that exams are getting easier undermines the efforts of the teaching profession and overshadows the real achievements of the young people of Northern Ireland.”

He continued: “Examination success depends on many factors, not least of which is the quality of teaching that students receive. It is appropriate therefore, at this time, to recognise and celebrate the work of Northern Ireland’s teachers. I would like to thank them for their dedication in helping to develop our young people. It is the high calibre of teaching that makes continuous improvement possible.”

“I would like to warmly congratulate the students of Northern Ireland on the excellent examination results that they have achieved at A-level. This is testament to the hard work and perseverance of the students themselves. It is important that they receive public recognition for the many years of dedicated study that they have undertaken.”

Ends

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Notes to the Editor

ABOUT THE GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland is the statutory, independent body for the teaching profession and is dedicated to enhancing the status of teaching and promoting the highest standards of professional conduct and practice.

It works in partnership to develop and sustain a broad "professional community" characterised by a culture of respect, integrity, cooperation and dialogue.

Council's Profile and Core Activities

Established under the auspices of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, the Council has a membership of 33, the majority of whom are teachers. The Council is constituted as follows: 14 members are elected directly by the profession with a further 5 members nominated by the Northern Ireland Teaching Council. In addition, 10 members are nominated by broader interests within education including the Higher Education Institutions, Employing Authorities and other agencies. There are also 4 members appointed by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

The Council's responsibilities as set out in the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, Articles 34-41, are as follows:

- The registration of teachers.
- The development of a Code of Professional Values and Practice for the profession.
- Disciplinary functions relating to professional misconduct.
- The provision of advice to the Department of Education and Employing Authorities on:
 - The training, career development and performance management of teachers.

- Standards of teaching.
- Registration issues.
- Standards of conduct for teachers.
- Other issues such as may be determined by the Department of Education

EDDIE FERGUSON – CHAIR OF THE GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR NORTHRN IRELAND (GTCNI)

Eddie Ferguson started his teaching career in St Patrick's College, Antrim Road, Belfast in 1970 where he taught Religious Studies, Mathematics and English. He was appointed Head of Religious Studies in 1973.

He moved to Cross and Passion College, Ballycastle in 1976 to take up the post of Head of Religious Studies. He was subsequently appointed Senior Teacher with responsibility for: the college's LMS budget and the induction of Newly Qualified Teachers. During this time he also lectured (part time) on the University of Ulster's PGCE and M.Ed programmes.

He was seconded to the North Eastern Education and Library Board in 1996 where he had overall responsibility for the induction of primary and secondary NQTs and the development of the Board's Early Professional Development programme.

In 1998, he was elected National President of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers. He led the campaign for ATL's entry into the TUC and ICTU and was a strong advocate of closer links between the teaching unions.

He joined the newly established GTCNI in 2002 and was elected Chairman of the Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee before being elected Chairman of the Council in December 2004. Eddie has a long standing interest in initial teacher training and the professional development of teachers.