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Consultation Document

Draft professional standards for assisting teaching

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Action required: Responses by 14 March 2019

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Draft professional standards for assisting teaching

Overview

This consultation seeks views on proposals to introduce professional standards for those assisting teaching (teaching assistants (TAs) and higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs))

How to respond

Responses to this consultation should be e-mailed/posted to the address below to arrive by 14 March 2019 at the latest.

Please insert 'STANDARDS CONSULTATION' in the email subject box.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

The consultation documents can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at:

[Consultations](#)

Information on the professional standards for teaching and leadership can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at:

[Professional standards for teaching and leadership](#)

Contact details

For further information:

Pedagogy, Professional Standards and A Level Branch
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General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation. Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation.

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

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Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data held about you and how to access it
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
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- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

e-mail: Data.ProtectionOfficer@gov.wales

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745 or
0303 123 1113

Website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

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Introduction

Education in Wales – our national mission is the Welsh Government’s revised action plan for education reform in Wales and builds on the previous government’s education improvement plan. *Our national mission* is aligned to supporting the realisation of the ‘ambitious and learning’ theme in *Prosperity for all: the national strategy*¹.

Our national mission sets out how the school system will develop and realise the new curriculum and identifies four enabling objectives which are interdependent to its delivery:

- developing a high-quality education profession
- inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards
- strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and wellbeing
- robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system.

Professional standards for the school workforce have an important role to play in achieving these objectives, especially developing a high quality education profession. Professional standards describe the skills, knowledge and behaviours that characterise excellent practice and help underpin the development of all school practitioners as they lead the transformation of our education system in Wales.

The roll-out of new professional standards across the workforce began in September 2017 with newly qualified teachers (NQTs) using the new professional standards for teaching and leadership during their statutory induction period. From September 2018, all serving teachers and leaders are expected to use the new standards. The third phase is to introduce professional standards for all those who work in classrooms to assist teaching and learning. A school learning support worker means a person who is required to register with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) in that category of registered persons². School learning support workers are commonly referred to as teaching assistants (TA) and higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) and as those terms are more familiar to the education workforce, they are used in the remainder of this document.

The development of professional standards for assisting teaching will support the professional growth of a significant part of the school workforce, and help to maximise the effectiveness and value of their role.

What is this consultation about?

This consultation is about proposals to introduce a set of standards for all TAs and HLTAs working with learners in the classroom.

The consultation seeks views on how professional standards could be used with the school’s performance review cycle and professional learning opportunities to enable those assisting teaching to reflect on and develop their practice, identify areas for development and support their professional progression.

¹ Welsh Government

² See the Table of registered persons set out in Schedule 2 to Education (Wales) Act 2014. The category of school learning support worker is further defined in regulation 18A of the Education Workforce Council (Main Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2015 (S.I. 2015/140).

Your views are sought on the impact (positive or negative) that introducing the new standards may have on the use of the Welsh language.

Finally, we are seeking views on the proposed timetable for introducing the standards.

Where are we now?

There are currently no professional standards for TAs. The standards for HLTAs were introduced under the previous government in 2011 and are no longer in step with the priorities and aspirations of the education system today.

Over the years there has been a significant increase in the number of TAs/HLTAs employed in schools across Wales. We recognise that they play an important role in the drive to achieving education reform and in the provision of inspirational teaching and learning for all our young people.

Since 2003, the role of TAs and HLTAs in Wales has evolved, largely due to the provisions adopted by the previous government from *Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement*³ and as a result of initiatives to improve provision for early years education and pupils with additional learning needs. The development of TAs/HLTAs in this way has been instrumental in securing significant cultural change in the deployment of the school workforce.

The previous Welsh Government published the *Action plan to promote the role and development of support staff in schools in Wales*⁴ in 2013. The actions include the development of professional standards, performance review and professional development for TAs and HLTAs.

Following the action plan, the government at the time, in partnership with regional consortia, developed an HLTA programme to provide a route for TAs seeking to gain HLTA status. They do so by producing a portfolio of evidence from their practice which is reviewed by an independent assessor using the current HLTA standards. Gaining HLTA status does not in itself impact on an individual's remuneration or role. HLTA status does allow an individual to apply for an HLTA post, if that is something they wish to pursue.

The HLTA programme has been instrumental in identifying those teaching assistants who are highly skilled and experienced and have the capacity and desire to take on roles with increased responsibility for supporting learning and for line managing other TAs. This, in turn, frees up teachers so that they can focus on their core role of leading teaching and learning.

Appraisal of TAs and HLTAs (i.e. school learning support workers) and the use of existing professional standards as part of their performance review is encouraged but currently not statutory. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this process is undertaken by some, but not all, schools. The wider performance review arrangements in schools and specifically in relation to TAs and HLTAs, will be the subject of a review in due course. Consideration will also be given to Professor Mick Waters' review of teachers' pay and conditions, *Teaching: A valued profession*⁵, which was published in September 2018.

³ [Institute of Education](#)

⁴ [Welsh Government](#)

⁵ [Welsh Government](#)

Opportunities for those assisting teaching to undertake professional learning are provided in some schools but this is by no means routine. There is a variety of professional development opportunities available for those assisting teaching but the quality is variable. As part of the education reforms, the Welsh Government is working in partnership with regional consortia to develop a comprehensive professional learning offer for all school teachers, leaders and those assisting teaching. Alongside this initiative, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is working with the Welsh Government on the Schools as Learning Organisations (SLO) programme. All schools are being supported in this process which will enable them to develop their workforce in line with the professional standards and the new curriculum.

Vision for the education profession

Education can have a positive effect on the life chances of children and young people. HLTAs and TAs play an important part in this and in turn, supporting the development of a healthier community, a stronger society and a better world. In Wales, education also has a key role to play in the Welsh Government's aspiration to increase the number of confident Welsh speakers and the appreciation of Welsh culture.

Wales' vision for teaching and leadership places the learner at the centre of everything we do, ensuring that all learners benefit from excellent teaching and learning. The vision sees children and young people being inspired to have a desire to learn and to take increasing control of their own learning. It builds on the powerful evidence of the central importance of good teaching to support effective learning, which requires the considered selection of teaching methods in relation to the purposes of the curriculum, and the needs and developmental stages of all learners.

Effective leadership at all levels, including those assisting teaching, is seen as key to this vision. Leadership practices shape the school's processes, establish effective pedagogy and drive wider collaboration, with necessary innovation, all of which result in improved learner outcomes. TAs and HLTAs have a vital role to play in this vision and professional standards are required to define it.

The changes necessary to achieving the vision are well underway. Initial Teacher Education is undergoing extensive reform and a new curriculum is being developed through an unprecedented collaboration with teachers, supported by expertise from Wales and beyond. Professional standards that embody the principles of the vision have been rolled out to all teachers and leaders. The qualifications framework is undergoing a rolling programme of change to align it to the best models, fit for the age in which we live. The National Academy for Educational Leadership has been established and the SLO model is being implemented in all schools across Wales. Together with the development of a national professional learning offer for all practitioners including TAs and HLTAs, this represents a far-reaching programme that will support an able and confident, highly trained and respected, collaborative teaching community delivering the best for all our learners.

Why are we proposing change?

Professional standards for the whole teaching profession are key to the education improvements we are seeking. HLTA standards were introduced by the previous

government in 2011 as a stand-alone set of standards and are no longer fit for purpose. TAs currently do not have any professional standards.

Independent reviews commissioned by the previous government and undertaken by the OECD⁶, Professors Tabberer⁷, Furlong⁸ and Donaldson⁹, respectively, have signalled the need for a coherent suite of standards that reflect the vision for education in Wales and provide all classroom practitioners with a framework for professional growth.

A set of standards for assisting teaching is required to set minimum expectations and provide a reference for the performance review cycle. The standards, together with focused professional learning and performance review, will support a continuum of professional growth and facilitate a clearer pathway for TAs seeking HLTA status.

The draft professional standards for assisting teaching have been developed using the same five standards model as the standards for teaching and leadership, which were published in 2017. The model is based on the essential elements for everybody who works in the classroom with learners:

- pedagogy
- collaboration
- leadership
- innovation
- professional learning.

Like the professional standards for teaching and leadership, the professional standards for assisting teaching are accompanied by the overarching set of values and dispositions which should drive everyone who works with learners:

- Welsh language and culture
- The rights of learners
- Literacy, numeracy and digital competence
- The professional learner
- The system role
- Professional entitlement

The draft standards have been designed with the profession for the profession and are the culmination of sustained involvement of those assisting teaching, head teachers, regional consortia and other key stakeholders. The draft standards have been regularly shared and refined as part of this process. Since January 2017 this engagement has been facilitated by Professor Mick Waters and builds on the professional standards for teaching and leadership.

The draft standards have also been trialled by the profession. A small group of schools worked with the draft standards to explore how they may best be used with TAs and HLTAs in a variety of settings and contexts. The feedback from trialling informed further development resulting in the version that is now the subject of this consultation.

⁶ [Improving schools in Wales](#)

⁷ [Review of initial teacher training](#)

⁸ [Teaching tomorrow's teachers](#)

⁹ [Successful futures](#)

The draft standards were published in June 2018 and all schools were invited to explore and use them on a voluntary basis from September 2018, in order to have practical experience of them prior to this consultation.

What specific changes are we proposing?

We are proposing to establish one set of professional standards for TAs and HLTAs that are aligned to the professional standards for teaching and leadership and the national professional learning model. Initially, the use of the standards would be encouraged but would not be compulsory. Our consultation includes a question on whether these standards should become statutory in future, as part of schools' statutory performance review policy. This would mean regular appraisals for TAs and HLTAs using the relevant standards.

TAs and HLTAs, together with the line manager or mentor, will use the professional learning passport (PLP) to engage with the complete range of assisting teaching standards. Using their online PLP (located on the EWC website) they can use the standards to reflect on their professional experiences and see how they link together to provide a coherent framework to support professional progression.

For those seeking HLTA status, the standards and relevant descriptors will be the basis upon which they will be required to provide evidence.

We are also considering introducing Regulations that would place a statutory responsibility upon schools to ensure that TAs and HLTAs (i.e. school learning support workers) benefit from regular performance reviews with a line manager or supervisor, in accordance with specified requirements set out in the Regulations. The effect of that would be that the appraisal process for TAs and HLTAs would be set out in legislation in a similar way as it is for school teachers¹⁰. Appraisal of this kind would provide the opportunity for TAs and HLTAs to reflect on their practice in relation to the relevant professional standards and descriptors, identify strengths and areas for professional development. The precise nature and content of the appraisal would be contained in Regulations and would form the subject of a separate consultation.

The professional standards model

There are five professional standards that concentrate on the essential constituents of assisting teaching: pedagogy, innovation, collaboration, leadership and professional learning (Figure 1). These five standards are common to all assisting teaching roles and the wider education profession.

¹⁰ See the School Teacher Appraisal (Wales) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/2940).



Figure 1

Each standard is divided into elements with descriptors that exemplify how the standards could apply to an individual’s work, depending on where they are in terms of their role and career. These elements have been selected to focus on the features of the education reforms and on the characteristics of professional practice that are evident in the work of all TAs/HLTAs. The professional learning standard for example, reflects the importance placed upon developing the Welsh language skills of the whole school workforce; and the leadership standard supports the notion that there is an element of leadership in the roles of all those who work in the classroom with learners.

Each element is expressed through two descriptors. The first describes the professional practice required by anyone assisting teaching, the second exemplifies sustained highly-effective practice. TAs seeking HLTA status will also be required to provide evidence that they meet the second level descriptor in the relevant areas.

The standards are presented in an interactive PDF that sets out the requirements for TAs and HLTAs, provides descriptors of sustained highly-effective practice and enables exploration of the relationship between the standards, elements and descriptors.

The PDF can be accessed from the Welsh Government’s website at <http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/180621-draft-professional-standards-for-assisting-teachers-interactive-en.pdf> (PC)

<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/170901-apple-professional-standards-for-teaching-and-leadership-en-v2.epub> (Apple devices (open through ibooks))

Working with the standards

Practitioners access the standards using the PLP as a tool to support personal reflection, identify strengths and provide insight into areas for developing practice.

The standards place the onus on the process rather than the product; the standards and their descriptors are intended to assist TAs and HLTAs to reflect on their practice, gain confidence from their achievements and identify areas for development. The standards can be used in a way that suits the individual, depending on career point, role or aspirations.

At times, and at least annually, a mentor or line manager should consider effectiveness of practice with the TA/HLTA, to help build a profile of development over time. As well as supporting the individual, it provides the opportunity to look at the strengths and needs of the team as a whole and consider how best to use complementary strengths or support from elsewhere.

We recommend the new standards be used as a backdrop to the performance review of TAs and HLTAs but they should not be the only stimulus for informed discussion. The descriptors can provide the focus for professional dialogue and be used to help establish an appropriate and manageable set of targets, together with an agreement about the support necessary to enable development. The standards and descriptors have not been designed to be used as an annual checklist of competence.

We recommend TAs seeking HLTA status use the standards to review their practice in relation to the sustained highly-effective practice level in the relevant descriptors. They may then undertake the HLTA scheme and provide written evidence to demonstrate how they meet the relevant descriptors. The evidence is assessed by an external assessor and if successful, the TA is awarded HLTA status. This does not, in itself, automatically impact on an individual's role or remuneration.

The descriptors are not designed to be used in a linear or incremental way. This is why the standards and their descriptors are not presented in a list or chart format. The standards are presented as positive and expansive professional aspirations rather than a simplistic summary of the role.

Just as with teaching and leadership, the professional standards for assisting teaching are concerned with helping people to grow and develop within their job. It is the job description rather than the professional standards that will indicate the status and level of a role. The professional standards are used to help the job to be done well. That is why we are not proposing a set of standards for each qualification level within the assisting teaching group. It is the job description that matches the functions of the post to its level, including salary level.

Similarly, the standards are not primarily designed to drive capability or competency procedures. For the very small proportion of TAs/HLTAs who fail to work effectively, action needs to be taken to uphold the rights of the learner and preserve professional integrity. However, while the TA or HLTA who is the subject of capability procedures may be required to have their performance and progress judged against the standards in specific circumstances, the standards themselves are not a series of competencies that those assisting teaching need to be routinely judged against.

Timescale for introduction of the new standards

Responses from the consultation will be considered in the spring term 2019 and the finalised professional standards for assisting teaching will be published in the summer term 2019, for use on a voluntary basis from September 2019.

Responses

Specific questions are listed in the separate response form and you are invited to provide answers to these questions, or to comment in more general terms. The form may be submitted electronically or in hard copy, using the contact details on page 2 of this document.

Draft professional standards for assisting teaching in schools

Consultation response form

Your name:

Organisation (if applicable):

e-mail/telephone number:

Your address:

Responses should be returned by 14 March 2019 to:

Pedagogy, Professional Standards & A Level Branch
Pedagogy, Leadership & Professional Learning Division
Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Crown Buildings
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e-mail: professionalstandardsreview@wales.gov