

Revised professional standards for education practitioners in Wales

Consultation response form

Your name: Dr Philip Dixon

Organisation (if applicable): ATL Cymru- The Association of Teachers and Lecturers

e-mail/telephone number: cymru@atl.org.uk , Tel: 02920 465 000

Your address: 1st Floor, 64 B Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 4LT

Responses should be returned by **Thursday 16 June 2011** to:

Learning Improvement and Professional Development Division
Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: practicereviewanddevelopment@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Question 1: Do the standards capture the required knowledge, skills and behaviours required of educational practitioners?

ATL Cymru believes that the proposed standards are an unhappy and unhelpful combination of standards, job description, and disciplinary code. Staff duties belong properly in contracts of employment and job descriptions rather than in professional standards. The latter should detail standards of knowledge, skills and attributes to the role of teacher.

School leaders and staff do require clarity about the appropriate expectations with regards to staff role performance. There are two elements to the role:

- Duties, as set out in contracts of employment and job descriptions (the 'quantity' of work)
- The standards of knowledge, skills and attributes appropriate to the role (the 'quality' of work or 'competence')

Members believe that there is too little differentiation between the standards, and suggested that there is a gap between the aspirations of the standards and the day-to-day reality of practitioners. There was also concern that the document is too lengthy, that there are too many standards, and it is hard to

discern which standards are essential for practitioners. There is a fundamental question unanswered in all this as to the purpose of the standards – are they aspirational or are they meant to be used rigorously in any future performance management regime. The Welsh Government needs to clarify how these standards will be used or run the danger that they will just be used as a ‘tick box’ exercise.

Members were particularly concerned about proposed standard 33 for HLTA’s: “**Advanced learning when working with whole classes without the presence of the assigned teacher**”. It was feared that this could be interpreted as HLTA’s taking classes in the absence of teachers. Members were concerned about the possibility of HLTA’s being used as a cheap replacement for teachers. Many commented that this is already the case and would not want the standards to exacerbate this.

Question 2: What practical steps could we take to raise awareness of the standards and ensure that all educational practitioners use the standards to improve their practice?

Given the major reservations expressed above, we believe this question is somewhat premature. However, and future standards would need to be brief, focussed and admit of articulation in day to day working for them to fulfil this purpose.

Question 3: Do the standards provide a sound basis to be used as the basis for performance management arrangements for practitioners and identify appropriate development needs?

Please refer to our response above about confusion over the role of the standards. The standards could link closely with performance management and professional development. However, the latter two form the key levers for optimising staff performance and morale (if undertaken properly), while the standards form a backdrop to them if properly worded and this purpose indicated. Again, the plethora of standards could run the risk of turning performance management into a tick box exercise. It is also difficult to see how some of the more aspirational standards could be used fairly and effectively in performance management – how exactly would a teacher demonstrate some of the behaviours indicated? Performance Management needs criteria which are SMART.

Question 4: Do the Practising Teacher Standards provide a sufficiently rigorous basis for assessing teachers at the end of their induction?

No. As stated earlier, members felt that the standards may result in a ‘tick box’ exercise. We would also suggest that at the end of induction there need to be certain standards which are met but that some of the other standards included in the proposals would only come after some extended practical experience.

Question 5: Do the proposed leadership standards work well as an effective tool to support the leadership development of other practitioners?

Please see our responses above. We would also like to note that we think this section needs far more work. Headship standards cannot simply be amended to provide leadership standards.

Question 6: We have asked for your views on the draft guidance document. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

ATL Cymru would like clarification about the appropriate training proposed for HLTAs to carry out the new requirements contained in paragraphs 17, 18 and 36. We also believe that there are fundamental communication questions raised but not answered in the document. How are teachers expected to know about such matters as Welsh Government and UN policies for instance?

Members wanted to stress that there needs to be a joined up approach between the Assembly Government and the GTCW. It needs to be ensured that there is no duplication of policies. Members were also concerned that the three documents were not linked to core standards or key skills.

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here: