

**Consultation on
Functions Delivered
by the
General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland**

June 2022



Department of
Education

www.education-ni.gov.uk

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS BOOKLET

INTRODUCTION

The Minister of Education announced, to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 13 December 2021, her decision to seek the dissolution of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI), the organisation currently established by statute to be the professional body for teachers. In her announcement, the Minister also stated that the Department would consult on the functions currently assigned to the GTCNI and how these can be delivered efficiently and effectively.

The Department would like to hear your views and feedback to inform, shape and improve final policy proposals and changes to legislation. This consultation process will provide you with the opportunity to consider the structures used in other jurisdictions and the differing functions these bodies provide. Your views will inform the development of a robust future model for Northern Ireland which reflects the unique needs of our education system while providing effective support to the teaching profession.

It is very important that you read the accompanying Consultation Support Document prior to completing this questionnaire.

Timescales and Submission of Responses

This questionnaire can also be completed online. The consultation will be open from **13th June 2022** until **midnight** on **30th September 2022**.

If you prefer, you can e-mail or post your response to:

GTCNIconsultation@education-ni.gov.uk

or

Teacher Education Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill BANGOR BT19 7PR

Responses received after the deadline will not be considered.

Completing this Questionnaire

This consultation questionnaire contains a number of statements and questions. In most cases you are asked to indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the statements. There are a series of comment boxes available to provide additional information. The Consultation Support Document has further information to assist with answering the additional comments sections. It will be helpful to refer to this as you work through the questionnaire.

This Consultation could take you up to one hour to complete depending on the level of detail you wish to provide in the additional comments sections.

Please note that translations of this questionnaire, along with its supporting documentation, can be provided on request by emailing GTCNIconsultation@education-ni.gov.uk.

Respondent's Details

If you are responding as an individual, please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trade Union Representative | <input type="checkbox"/> Education Sector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Pupil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Guardian | <input type="checkbox"/> Member of the public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

If Other, please specify: _____

Name of Respondent: _____

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation then please state organisation name:

Organisation Name: _____

The Department may make responses available on its website (www.education-ni.gov.uk), although contact names and addresses would be removed.

Please note that under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) (Annex A), responses may be made available to the public.

If you would prefer your response to remain confidential, please tick this box

1. Functions

The functions of the GTCNI, as established under The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, are listed in the table below.

Please refer to page 3, paragraph 1.2 and page 27, paragraph 6.3 of the Consultation Support Document for further information.

- a. Which of the below functions do you consider to be ‘Essential’, ‘Helpful’ or ‘Non-Essential’ to the teaching profession?

	Essential	Helpful	Non-Essential
i. Establish and maintain a register of teachers			
ii. Approve qualifications for the purposes of registration			
iii. Regulate the teaching profession			
iv. Provide advice on developing and enhancing the teaching profession			

- b. Which of the below functions do you consider to be ‘Essential’, ‘Helpful’ or ‘Non-Essential’ for schools or the wider education system?

	Essential	Helpful	Non-Essential
i. Establish and maintain a register of teachers			
ii. Approve qualifications for the purposes of registration			
iii. Regulate the teaching profession			
iv. Provide advice on developing and enhancing the teaching profession			

Additional comments: Please consider any additional functions not currently provided which you feel could positively support individual teachers, schools or the wider education system.

2. Delivery of Functions

GTCNI in its current form is primarily responsible for the four functions listed in the table below. These functions, however, could be delivered through other mechanisms.

Please refer to page 27, paragraph 6.4 of the Consultation Support Document for further information

Which of the following mechanisms do you feel would be best suited to delivering each of the four functions?

	Government	Existing Employing Authorities	New Professional Body	Other	Not needed
a. Establish and maintain a register of teachers					
b. Approve qualifications for the purposes of registration					
c. Regulate the teaching profession					
d. Provide advice on developing and enhancing the teaching profession					

If you responded 'Other' to any of the functions above, please outline what mechanism you believe would be best suited to deliver the function and why.

Additional comments: If you have identified any additional functions in Question 1, please outline which of the above (or 'Other') mechanisms could deliver these most effectively.

3. Professional Bodies / Models

In considering the possible establishment of a new professional body, similar models already exist across the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Please refer to page 10, paragraphs 5.4 to 5.11 and page 28, paragraph 6.5 of the Consultation Support Document for further information.

Based on the information provided in the Consultation Support Document and/or any direct personal experience you may have, do you feel any of these models provide a helpful starting point for the structuring of a new professional body, if that is deemed the best approach?

	Yes	No	Don't know
a. The Teaching Council (Republic of Ireland)			
b. General Teaching Council for Scotland			
c. Education Workforce Council (Wales)			
d. Teacher Regulation Agency (England)			

If you consider a hybrid model (drawing on elements from more than one of these models and/or our current GTCNI model), would be more beneficial, please elaborate:

Additional comments: If you are aware of another organisation that delivers effective support for its profession (teaching or non-teaching), please provide details below.

4. Registration / Membership

Many professions (i.e. Solicitors, GP's, Health Care providers, Architects etc) have a body which requires individuals practicing in that field to be a member. Through their membership, each individual demonstrates that they hold the required qualifications and specialist knowledge for their work, they have accepted certain standards of conduct and professional competence and that they will be regulated (and may lose their membership) if their behaviour or competence falls below expected levels.

Please refer to page 28, paragraph 6.6 of the Consultation Support Document for further information.

- a. **To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is important that teachers in Northern Ireland should be a member of a professional body?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Most professional bodies charge registration and membership fees to deliver their functions.

- b. **To what extent do you agree or disagree that it would be reasonable to require teachers to pay a fee to be a member of an effective professional body?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Additional comments: While any membership fee would need to reflect the costs incurred in delivering an agreed set of functions, we would welcome your views on the general value of a professional body for the Northern Ireland teaching profession and your thoughts on how such a body might be financed.

5. Board Composition

A new professional body, if established, will need to address those weaknesses identified in the leadership of GTCNI and the delivery of each of its functions. A recent Review undertaken by BTMM on behalf of the Department identified particular weakness in the skills and experience of GTCNI's Council members as a significant factor in its overall ineffectiveness. Council members' own self assessments, as part of the Review, also recognised that this was a significant issue.

Please refer to page 17, paragraphs 5.12 to 5.15 and page 29, paragraph 6.7 of the Consultation Support Document for further information

- a. Do you agree or disagree that the membership of the Board of any new professional body should be based on individuals being able to demonstrate relevant experience, skills and competences?**

Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree

BTMM's Report also identified that the size of GTCNI's Board (33 members) was too large and was not conducive to productive debate. The report suggested that a future Board should be limited to 10 – 12 members and that members should be appointed under a public appointments competition.

- b. Do you agree or disagree with BTMM's recommendation regarding the size of a new Board for a new professional body.**

Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree

More information on the public appointments process is provided in the Consultation Support Document, page 29, paragraph 6.7 or can be found at <https://www.publicappointmentsni.org/>.

- c. **Do you agree or disagree with the BTMM's recommendation that future appointments to the Board of a new professional body should follow the public appointments process?**

Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree

Additional comments: What do you consider to be an optimal size of Board? How could the membership of any future Board be kept representative of both the profession and the wider education system? How might we construct a future Board to balance its need to be representative against the need for its members to have the skills to contribute effectively to timely decision making and the strategic leadership of the body?

6. Regulation

The legislative basis for regulation by the GTCNI currently only permits it to invoke one sanction for a teacher found guilty of misconduct, the permanent removal of the teacher from the teaching register.

Please refer to page 22, paragraphs 5.16 to 5.19 and page 30, paragraph 6.8 of the Consultation Support Document for further information.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a new professional body, or other regulatory mechanism, should be able to apply a range of sanctions to a teacher found guilty of misconduct?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Additional comments: In other jurisdictions, graduated sanctions are considered to support a more proportionate response to all cases of misconduct. In providing any general comments on this question we would also invite you to consider any advantages you see in the processes and sanctions used elsewhere in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

7. Additional Comments

The Department would like stakeholders to highlight any other issues which they consider pertinent to the development of a fit for purpose registration and regulatory body (if needed). If, for example, you consider there are additional functions or processes which should be put in place to support and enhance the teaching profession, please provide details of these below.

Annex A

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – CONFIDENTIALITY OF CONSULTATIONS

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or be treated as confidential.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see website at: <https://ico.org.uk/>).

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