

Advice on Professional Update

*This bulletin was prepared by the
SSTA Senior Managers' Advisory Panel*

1. General Principles

This advice document has been prepared by the SSTA Senior Managers' Advisory Panel to assist our Senior Manager members in addressing both their own Professional Update and the Professional Update of their school colleagues, many of whom will also be fellow SSTA members. Bearing this in mind, an empathetic and sensitive manager can ensure that the 'Duty of Care' towards staff is properly implemented and existing or potential problems are mitigated or avoided altogether.

Professional Update has been welcomed in principle throughout Scottish Education. The view of the SSTA is that participation by our members in Professional Update should lead to increased levels of professional satisfaction as teachers gain new skills and further develop existing skills in a supportive, encouraging and enabling professional learning environment. It is the creative potential generated by this positive ethos and increased satisfaction that will bring lasting benefits in the consistent, high quality teaching and learning that our pupils deserve.

At all times the focus should be on improving learning and teaching in the school through the on-going Professional Development & Review process and the satisfaction of teaching staff at all levels with their professional and career development. The objective is to avoid anxiety and additional work as the 5-year Professional Update sign-off approaches, making it a step along the way rather than a hurdle to be overcome.

These outcomes for teachers can only be achieved by consistent and sensitive application of high quality policies and procedures at National, Council and School levels. The SSTA strongly encourages its Senior Manager members to take every opportunity to become fully involved in the development and review of policy and practice for Professional Update and to enable staff at all levels to make their own contribution to this review process.

2. Corporate and Personal Responsibilities

It is essential that all Senior Managers are fully aware of their employer's policy and act according to their employer's guidelines.

Senior Managers should make clear to their employer that they require ongoing, high quality training in order to carry out these policies. SSTA Senior Managers should also be quick to seek advice, including advice from the SSTA.

It is important for you as a Senior Manager to derive the same benefit as other staff from the on-going Professional Review & Development process within the Professional Update process. In maintaining regular contact with your own Reviewer and updating your own Professional Learning Record you will be setting the tone for the colleagues for whom you in turn are the Reviewer.

3. Record Keeping – Confidentiality and Transparency

Records must be properly kept and monitored, whether your employer requires you to use the framework in MyGTCS or a different system. It is a requirement of GTCS membership to keep your own personal details up to date electronically through MyGTCS.

Strict confidentiality according to Authority guidelines must be observed. Details of verbal, written and electronic records and communications should only be revealed to other staff with good reason and with the employee's consent. In particular Senior Managers must make clear to clerical staff that confidentiality is paramount.

All information relating to the PRD process should be stored in accordance with Council Policy. Employees have right of access to all information recorded in personal files. Employees also have the right to be informed that such files exist. No comments, other than verifiable facts, should be recorded.

4. Range and Availability of Development Opportunities

It is important to ensure that a full range of development opportunities is available to teaching staff and that those activities taken up are closely matched to the identified needs and career aspirations of each individual reviewee. These activities should include formal courses (both online and extraction from school), membership/leadership of committees and working groups and opportunities to develop new skills in leadership and management.

While Senior Managers clearly have a responsibility to build professional relationships that facilitate the availability of opportunities and the development of relevant skills for their colleagues, it is equally important to ensure that Senior Managers receive the same service from their own reviewers.

5. Personal Support and Motivation

Good leadership by school senior managers and a collegiate approach to implementing Professional Update will ensure the best possible outcomes for all teaching staff and hence for the school. Managers must be allowed to manage and teachers require clear procedures, timelines and lines of communication.

Workload issues are best dealt with by planning in advance through the school's Working Time Agreement (WTA). SSTA senior managers are advised to ensure that formal dates and meetings are built in to the WTA and are adhered to (both as reviewer and as reviewee) so that any difficulty or concern experienced by a colleague can be resolved quickly before it becomes perceived as an obstacle.

The development needs of reviewees are best identified through a process of self-reflection and planned observation, particularly classroom observation. The Working Time Agreement and Classroom Observation have been described as a litmus test for collegiality in a school.

Developing a continuous professional relationship with each reviewee should ensure that issues such as failure to maintain a Professional Learning Record or requesting a delay or deferral in the 5-year Professional Update sign-off process will not come as a surprise but will have been resolved informally before it is necessary to consider formal procedures.

6. Temporary and Supply Staff

Senior Managers should ensure that temporary and supply staff are aware of their obligations regarding CPD and Professional Update. Where appropriate these groups should be included in school and authority based CPD opportunities.

7. Conclusion

We hope that you find this leaflet helpful in building a collegiate approach to the Professional Update process and that the focus on improving learning & teaching, on-going professional review & development and building professional relationships is helpful in in your own school and your own practice.

SSTA officials are always available to provide confidential advice, particularly if you are required to implement a scheme that does not follow the standards set out in this leaflet

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