

Draft professional standards for assisting teaching

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by **14 March 2019** to:

Pedagogy, Professional Standards and A Level Branch
Pedagogy, Leadership and Professional Learning Division
The Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Crown Buildings
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: professionalstandardsreview@gov.wales.

About the National Education Union Cymru:

- The National Education Union Cymru stands up for the future of education. It brings together the voices of teachers, lecturers, support staff and leaders working in maintained and independent schools and colleges to form the largest education union in Wales.
- The National Education Union is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). It is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.
- Together, we'll shape the future of education.

NEU Cymru response

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation. TA and HLTAs form a vital part of our education workforce, and therefore we are supportive of

them having professional standards. However, we are concerned that these standards should be appropriate in terms of their role.

We therefore think the term 'as appropriate' should be used far more throughout these standards. Those assisting teaching do not have the same level of autonomy as teaching staff, do not have PPA time and are often on fixed-hour, lower wage contracts. We would not want to see these standards used inappropriately to suggest HLTAs should be working as TAs – or that TAs are expected to work beyond their contracted hours, or otherwise they are not showing commitment to their roles.

We would also note that these standards seem to have been written about education professionals working in schools and would highlight the need for parity with the FE sector.

Workload

We also question how much work it will be for TAs to 'evidence' their roles – when they rightly should be focused on assisting teaching. These needs to be workload impact assessed for TAs.

Funding

Wales is at crisis point in term of funding. We often see support staff vulnerable to redundancies, as a 'cheaper option' for schools. Without sufficient funding, those assisting teaching will be expected to fulfil roles, which should be filled by qualified teachers. Whilst we welcome the mirroring of these standards with the teaching ones, we are particularly concerned about this. This includes the ambiguity about maintenance of resources and community organising – again, this should not be compulsory for TAs.

Welsh Language

In particular, we note that HLTAs will be expected to seek their own opportunities to learn Welsh. This costs money, and should not be something anyone in the education profession is expected to undertake in their own time or at their own cost. We are concerned this could be prohibitive to those who cannot evidence they are on a course. Like so many aspects of the role, it doesn't fully acknowledge that TAs often work as directed, and may not be supported by release time, especially if it is not fully funded.

Education Reform

The fast pace of education reform means that those assisting teaching will already have a lot of learning and development to undertake, particularly in relation to the curriculum and the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunals (Wales) Act.

We are concerned that TAs will lose out in terms of funding and training, and not necessarily be fully supported to undertake the range of activities in these standards. Thus it is essential that WG considers them alongside the rest of the workforce when planning implementation of changes – which are already highly significant without greater expectations placed in the workforce.

Leadership

The leadership standards particularly cause concern in terms of expectations placed on TAs. Whilst TAs may be enabled to take on some leadership, it is worth noting that teachers should receive additional pay (teaching and learning responsibility payments (TLRs)) for leadership roles. It would therefore seem appropriate that TAs receive pay in conjunction with leadership roles.

Monitoring

We would also note the need for monitoring of the standards for support staff needs to be considered as a workload issue for teachers. We would welcome a workload assessment which takes into account the amount of monitoring of these standards which is expected. We would also be concerned should the standards be used to introduce performance related pay.

Question 1 – Do you agree that the values and dispositions, the five standards and their elements offer an appropriate shared purpose for those assisting teaching?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

We have made comments about some specific standards which need adjusting.

Pedagogy

Planning, delivery and assessment – this is rather open-ended for HLTAs – the words “where appropriate” should be included.

Leadership

The TA “takes responsibility for supporting the accountability of teachers”:
What does that mean in practice?

Question 2 – Do you agree that the descriptors of effective practice (as well as the sustained highly-effective practice attached to each element) capture teaching assistants’ (TAs) and higher-level teaching assistants’ (HLTAs) roles?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

Some standards need refining and to be less open-ended in terms of language. For example, ‘organising events to promote the school”, could raise issues for job descriptions and adversely affect those with caring responsibilities.

Question 3 – Do you agree that the descriptors attached to each element will support TAs and HLTAs to reflect on their practice and provide a focus for professional development?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

Whilst we agree that in principle these standards do offer an opportunity for reflection they need to be reviewed in light of the expectations placed on people to ensure they are within both their control and their job descriptions. How the school will help them is not set out in the document.

Question 4 – Do you think that it is appropriate for HLTA status to be dependant on the provision of evidence of having met the standards and relevant descriptors?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

Whilst this is fine in principle it does not set out what time will be given to TAs to undertake this work

Question 5 – Do you think that using the standards for assisting teaching will promote the importance of the role and help TAs and HLTAs to feel valued?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

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Question 6 – Do you agree that performance reviews, together with access to professional learning opportunities, are key to ensuring that the standards have the greatest impact on practice?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

Without professional learning opportunities the standards will not work.
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Question 7 – Do you think that, as a matter of principle, the performance reviews of those assisting teaching should be made a statutory requirement as part of schools' performance review policy (i.e. a compulsory appraisal process set out in legislation)?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

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Question 8 – Do you consider the proposed timescale and the arrangements for introducing the new standards to be realistic?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

We believe given the timing of the ALN Code and the new Curriculum, the timeframe is too quick.

Question 9 – We would like to know your views on the effects that introducing professional standards for assisting teaching would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

We support the principle of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

As we have already stated, however, it should not be for TAs to support their own opportunities to learn Welsh, and this should not prevent them from becoming an HLTA. Without the full amount of training and funding for the education workforce as a whole, the Welsh language targets will not be met.

Question 10 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed standards could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

See comments above.

Question 11 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: