



QTLS and ATLS conferral through Professional Formation

A briefing paper for key stakeholders, higher education institutions and awarding bodies

The Institute for Learning's policy statement on professional formation was published in July 2008; professional formation is the post-qualification process by which a teacher demonstrates through professional practice the ability to use effectively the skills and knowledge acquired whilst training to be a teacher and the capacity to meet the occupational standards required of a teacher.

This briefing paper outlines the broad concepts of professional formation, leading to the conferral of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) or Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) status.

Institute for Learning
First Floor, Bracton House
34-36 High Holborn
London WC1V 6AE
Tel: 0844 8153202
Email: enquiries@ifl.ac.uk
Website: www.ifl.ac.uk

1. Professional formation

- 1.1. The Institute for Learning (IfL, “the Institute”) is the professional body for teachers, tutors and trainers (hereafter referred to as “teachers”) in the further education sector, with responsibility for the registration and regulation of licensed practitioners through Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) status.
- 1.2. In keeping with other major professions, professional status in the form of QTLS or ATLS status is not bestowed upon individuals by awarding institutions at the point of qualification; it is a *licence to practise* conferred by the Institute subject to individual teachers satisfying the criteria adopted by its Council and incorporating the specific requirements of the Secretary of State for teaching in the regulated further education sector.
- 1.3. This licence will be conferred through a process of professional formation, defined in the 2007 Regulationsⁱ as:

“the post-qualification process by which a teacher demonstrates through professional practice:

- (a) the ability to use effectively the skills and knowledge acquired whilst training to be a teacher; and
- (b) the capacity to meet the occupational standards required of a teacher”

2. Background and context

- 2.1. Throughout initial teacher training (ITT) teachers are assessed against the occupational standardsⁱⁱ. Professional formation affords teachers the opportunity to describe how these standards are evidenced in their teaching practice, along with aspects of subject currency, teaching and learning, reflective practice and planning for continuing professional development (CPD). The professional formation evidence requirements are mapped against the occupational standards in Annexe A.
- 2.2. Professional formation is not limited to time, other than the regulatory requirement for new entrant teachers to achieve QTLS or ATLS status within five years of employment in the sector. It is based on the teacher’s ability to meet the standards expected of a licensed practitioner. Some teachers could complete the process very soon after taking their teaching qualification whilst others might take longer. This allows the process to take account of the diversity of employment within the sector and not disadvantage any teachers or employers.
- 2.3. The time taken to complete professional formation and achieve QTLS or ATLS status will be determined by the individual circumstances of the teacher, for example, length of experience, full-time, part-time, fractional or sessional role and in-service training. The Institute has therefore taken a flexible, pragmatic approach to professional formation.

- 2.4. Membership of the Institute for Learning, QTLS and ATLS status are protected titles, retained by the teacher through adherence to the Code of Professional Practice and the requirement to remain in good standing through CPD. With these safeguards in mind and the assurance they bring to the sector in terms of protecting the profession, the Institute has determined that a *light touch* self-assessment model is sufficient for evidencing professional formation; in essence the teacher tells their story through a professional formation account, drawing supporting evidence from a variety of sources.

3. Qualifications

- 3.1. The route to QTLS and ATLS status through professional formation, whilst modelled on the requirements for the regulated further education sector, can be followed by any teacher working in a learning and skills context; for example a college, sixth form college, Learning and Skills Council funded provider, other publicly funded adult learning provider or private/in-company learning and development.
- 3.2. Eligibility is determined at the point of professional formation according to the candidate's ability to demonstrate that they meet the qualification threshold. The threshold for the regulated sector is set by the Secretary for State, where qualifications are endorsed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK):
 - 3.2.1. The Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector ("the Diploma"; DTLLS) at Level 5 or above approved by the Secretary of State, or its equivalent; for those seeking QTLS.
 - 3.2.2. The Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector ("the Certificate"; CTLLS) at Level 3 or 4 approved by the Secretary of State, or its equivalent; for those seeking ATLS.
- 3.3. For those teachers qualifying after September 2007, where a significant amount of teaching practice is in the regulated further education sector or Learning and Skills Council funded provision, the qualification threshold is the Diploma for QTLS status and the Certificate for ATLS status, or their equivalents; awarded by higher education institutions (HEIs) or awarding bodies and endorsed by SVUK.
- 3.4. For those teachers qualifying after September 2007, where a significant amount of teaching practice is outside, but comparable to, the regulated further education sector or Learning and Skills Council funded provision, the qualification threshold is the Diploma for QTLS status and the Certificate for ATLS status, or their equivalentsⁱⁱⁱ; awarded by higher education institutions (HEIs) or awarding bodies.
- 3.5. For teachers who qualified between September 1996 and September 2007 the qualification threshold is the Tariff of Initial Teacher Training Qualifications ("the Tariff") maintained by SVUK. The Tariff equates post 16 initial teacher training qualifications available in England prior to September 2007 to the Diploma, the Certificate and the requirements of the overarching professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector in England, established by Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK).

- 3.6. For teachers who qualified prior to September 1996, where the absence of detailed specifications for the range of teaching qualifications awarded by higher education institutions and awarding bodies makes it difficult to map through the Tariff, the Institute will adopt a pragmatic approach informed by custom and practice. Where teachers are able to present evidence of a teaching qualification equivalent in level and characteristics to those included within the Tariff and clearly addressing teaching practice in post-compulsory education and training, the teacher will be deemed to satisfy the qualification threshold.
- 3.7. Teachers who are unable to meet the eligibility criteria in 3.3 – 3.6 have the opportunity to have their professional standing confirmed through the General Professional Recognition Learning and Skills (GPRLS) scheme operated by SVUK as an alternative to undertaking initial teacher training. GPRLS offers various routes to enable competent, experienced or differently qualified teachers, for whom undertaking an initial teacher training qualification would be inappropriate, to be recognised as qualified members of the workforce.

4. The professional formation account

- 4.1. Candidates for QTLS or ATLS status will be expected to submit their professional formation account through the Institute's online personal learning space, REfLECT^{iv}. A template will enable the candidate to add evidence from a variety of sources (scanned documents, video, peer reviews, audio, etc) to support the application. The Institute will provide exemplars of accounts and a dedicated support service to assist candidates.
- 4.2. The account comprises two forms of evidence:
- a) mandatory elements are drawn from typical sources and are common for all candidates and are determined through regulation or other requirements deemed by the sector to fit all teaching roles;
 - b) personalised elements are individual reflections on professional elements and are determined by the Institute, incorporating evidence from a variety of sources appropriate to the candidate.
- 4.3. Mandatory elements:
- 4.3.1. Completion of an approved qualification (or equivalent) at a level appropriate to QTLS (level 5) or ATLS (level 3 or 4) status: *scanned certificates or direct notification from the awarding body.*
 - 4.3.2. Numeracy and literacy skills at or above level 2^v: *scanned certificates or direct notification from the awarding body or other evidence such as numeracy or literacy skills within the teacher's subject area.*
 - 4.3.3. Supporting testimony, the endorsement of the completed application by a person deemed to satisfy the Institute's criteria for supporting claims for professional formation^{vi}: *a peer review of the complete application following the Institute's template for supporting testimonies.*

4.3.4. Declaration of suitability^{vii}, a self-declaration of fitness to practise made against the Institute's criteria set out in the Declaration of Suitability Statement: *a completed declaration of suitability statement.*

4.4. Personalised elements:

4.4.1. Subject currency – an account of the candidate's expertise in their subject area: *could include, or be a mix of, a personal reflection on subject related skills or expertise, peer observation from a suitable expert witness^{viii}, scanned copies of authenticated qualifications in the subject area, etc.*

4.4.2. Teaching and learning – an account of the candidate's ability to use effectively the skills and knowledge acquired through ITT to deliver their subject to a range of learners: *could include, or be a mix of, a personal reflection on teaching and learning, peer or learner observation from a suitable expert witness, observation of teaching and learning, micro teaching, etc.*

4.4.3. Self evaluation – an individual analysis of the candidate's learning needs and goals for the next 12 months: *could include, or be a mix of, a personal reflection on teaching practice using REfLECT (or other reflective method), evidence of needs analysis coming from appraisal or review, etc.*

4.4.4. Professional development planning – an individualised learning plan detailing the actions the candidate will take to address the needs and goals identified through self assessment: *could include, or be a mix of, a professional development plan within REfLECT (or other CPD planning and recording method), a scanned professional development plan, reference to the candidate's reflective journal or professional development log, etc.*

4.4.5. Reflective practice – reflection on the impact of professional development on the candidate's teaching practice, the benefit to learners and wider communities of practice: *could include, or be a mix of, a personal reflection on the impact of CPD, peer review, learner observations, observation of teaching and learning, collaborative working, etc.*

5. Quality assurance

5.1. The Code of Professional Practice and requirement to remain in good standing through CPD safeguards the future behaviour and practice of those awarded professional status. All new entrant teachers achieving QTLS or ATLS status are subject to their professional development being sampled within the first five years of their teaching careers. The Institute recommends that all new teachers should be subject to the observation of teaching and learning as a part of the employer's self-assessment cycle within 24 months of the award of QTLS or ATLS status.

Endnotes

ⁱ The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007:2264)

ⁱⁱ Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK): 'new overarching professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector' (<http://www.lluk.org>). The professional formation evidence requirements are mapped to the standards in Annexe A.

ⁱⁱⁱ Equivalent qualifications are those offered by higher education institutions and awarding bodies without the endorsement of SVUK because a significant amount of teaching practice falls outside of the regulated further education sector or Learning and Skills Council funded provision; bespoke or custom qualifications offered by higher education institutions and awarding bodies where the core requirements of the Diploma and the Certificate are met.

^{iv} REfLECT is the Institute's online personalised learning space provided to members as a benefit of membership and capable of supporting reflective practice and the planning, recording and evaluation of continuing professional development. REfLECT has been developed to facilitate the compilation and submission of evidence and, except where personal circumstances provide a barrier to the use of this technology, is the accepted means of submitting professional formation accounts.

^v The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007:2264) state: "[no person may be employed in a teaching role unless that person] has completed such a programme to the satisfaction of IfL, or has obtained such award as may be deemed approved by the Secretary of State, for the purposes of demonstrating that a person has the necessary literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology skills to teach". Agreement has been reached across the sector with respect to numeracy and literacy, this is reflected through the mandatory evidence requirements for professional formation. ICT is subject to ongoing debate and will be incorporated into the mandatory evidence requirements for professional formation when agreement has been reached. The use of REfLECT as the means for compiling and submitting the professional formation account demonstrates personal skills in the application of ICT to support learning.

^{vi} The completed application must be peer reviewed by a member of the Institute for Learning (the "supporter") in a category of membership equivalent to the candidate. The supporter must be an appropriately qualified teacher or associate teacher, meeting the requirements of the 2007 regulations.

^{vii} The Declaration of Suitability Statement is a template provided by the Institute for applicants to self-declare their fitness to practise as a teacher, incorporating any criminal convictions or disciplinary action by other professional bodies or associations.

^{viii} An expert witness (the "witness") is any person able, through qualification or experience of the candidate's work, to make an objective supporting statement. Where supporting a specific claim such as subject expertise, the witness must be suitably qualified in the subject area to make such a judgement.