

# Education Scotland core strategies

## Strategic objective 2:

Promoting high-quality professional learning and leadership amongst education practitioners



## Contents

<b>1: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2: What do we believe about promoting high-quality professional learning and leadership amongst education practitioners?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3: What are the key features of implementation?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4: How will we evaluate the impact of this strategy?</b>	<b>11</b>

## 1: Introduction

This strategy is designed to support the implementation of Education Scotland's second strategic objective, which aims to 'promote high-quality professional learning and leadership amongst education practitioners'. The strategy addresses the ways in which we will lead specialist learning opportunities for all practitioners who support learners of all ages across all sectors and in all settings. It should be viewed within the overall context of the corporate plan and is one of a suite of strategies – one for each strategic objective.

Each strategy exists to help all Education Scotland staff and our key stakeholders align their work to make the biggest possible impact. When planning and delivering our work, we should use these strategies to ask ourselves whether what we are doing or the way we are doing it can be further improved to have even more impact.

### What do we say in the corporate plan about strategic objective 2?

The corporate plan contains clear commitments and measures for each of Education Scotland's strategic objectives. In talking about this objective, it says:

#### We will:

- lead developments in collaboration with our partners to seek and embed a strong culture of professional learning and enquiry amongst practitioners in every sector of education;
- play a key role as members of the National Implementation Board for Teaching Scotland's Future in driving forward the agreed implementation programme, including supporting workstreams on initial teacher education, career-long professional learning and educational leadership;
- work with our partners to ensure nationwide access to high-quality learning, coaching and mentoring models that promote and support collegiate networks, and enhance professional learning, addressing local and national priorities;
- work with colleges, ROMs and the College Development Network to promote professional learning and build the capacity of senior college managers and staff in the context of college regionalisation;
- collect and promote the use of knowledge and research to provide clear, succinct advice for practitioners and professional learning communities;
- rationalise and develop our online systems to provide a coherent national portal to support professional learning and promote the use of Glow to encourage the best and most innovative practice for professional learning;

- ensure that the Scottish Learning Festival (SLF) and the Scottish Education Awards programmes are thought-provoking, inclusive and innovative, a celebration of both national and international excellence in learning and leadership;
- implement effective approaches to career-long professional learning and leadership. For example, we will focus on Masters-level learning in all our engagement activities and concentrate on new professional standards and competencies;
- lead the development of new national guidance on professional review and development, and support the implementation of the 'professional update' for teachers and the new standards for the community learning and development (CLD) workforce;
- support the development of The Scottish College for Educational Leadership and leadership development across the public sector; and
- support the embedding of learning for sustainability (including global citizenship sustainable development education an outdoor learning) and the modern labour market (including career management skills and enterprise in education) in the practice of practitioners and school leaders in line with the new professional standards.

### How will we know if we are succeeding?

Some of the key activities which will provide evidence of success include:

- Network activity and rich reflective dialogue across professional learning communities will significantly increase as evidenced by the uptake and the quality of the dialogue on Glow (and other online technologies), supporting professional learning communities and networks as well as direct feedback from practitioners.
- Teachers and other professional groups will report that they are increasingly experiencing Masters-level learning in national, local and school-based conferences, workshops and collegiate networks.
- Stakeholders will report higher levels of competition for key leadership and practitioner posts.
- Inspection and engagement visits will report that pedagogical and leadership reforms are embedding further and that partnerships are strengthening across practitioners involved in all phases of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Involvement and engagement with SLF and the Scottish Education Awards programmes will continue to increase, becoming more representative of practitioners across Scotland and integrated with planning for professional learning at local authority level.
- Stakeholders will confirm that our ability to identify, celebrate and promote effective innovation is improving and valued, leading to improvement in learning and teaching.

## What is this strategy trying to achieve?

This strategy builds on educational research and is designed to provide a coherent framework that will guide the work of all staff across Education Scotland in promoting high-quality professional learning and leadership amongst all practitioners. It relates to the reforms being taken forward in response to the Teaching Scotland's Future report, but it also applies to our work in education sectors beyond schools, such as early years settings and adult services and for professionals beyond teachers, such as educational psychologists and those with the Childhood Practice Degree. As such, it also relates to the provision of specialist learning opportunities, which are a requirement of continued registration with professional bodies, such as for General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) registered teachers and college lecturers, educational psychologists, and practitioners across the CLD sectors

## What does this strategy commit our staff to?

### Our staff will:

- use the approaches set out within this strategy to work closely with providers and partners to promote high quality professional learning and leadership;
- ensure, working individually and collectively in teams, that they have a clear understanding of the approaches set out in this strategy and that they use the approaches consistently to underpin their work;
- develop our resources and methodology for professional learning and leadership using the approaches outlined within the strategy;
- continue to work alongside the National Implementation Board for Teaching Scotland's Future, The Scottish College for Educational Leadership, the College Development Network, CLD networks and others to lead and support the promotion of professional learning and leadership across all education sectors; and
- evaluate the impact of this strategy across all aspects of our work to ensure that we are promoting high-quality professional learning and leadership at all levels.

## 2: What do we believe about promoting high-quality professional learning and leadership amongst education practitioners?

To ensure that “learners progress in one of the most effective education systems in the world”, we believe that professional learning and leadership:

1. must be a central and pervading element of our drive to improve the quality and consistency of learners’ experiences and outcomes;
2. engages practitioners in critical enquiry, evidence-based ongoing self-evaluation with a focus on improving outcomes for learners and services;
3. involves reflection on/in practice, experiential learning, cognitive development and collaborative learning;
4. develops a wide range of leadership skills and attributes including leading learning, management and leadership of change and improvement; and
5. links individual, local and system level priorities for improvement.

Our emphasis on the key dimensions of high-quality and equitable outcomes for all, together with strong and productive partnerships, provide the framework for shaping the context and delivery of professional learning and leadership for education practitioners.

Professional learning and leadership supports the delivery of all four elements of the Scottish virtuous cycle of improvement. The emphasis of individual, local and system level professional learning activities can focus, as appropriate, on:

- contributing to nationally-shared aims and goals, with clear expected outcomes;
- encouraging local interpretation and application of learning and leadership activities;
- ensuring impact is evaluated at appropriate levels;
- drawing in external research and intelligence; and
- identifying and spreading evidence to practitioners about what works.

### Career-long professional learning

Career-long professional learning is a continuous process from the early phase of education professionals’ learning, to the end of their career. It includes leadership development in different forms, from leadership of learning through to leadership at systems level.

The model of career-long professional learning<sup>1</sup> has been generated from research studies exploring the relationship between professional learning and the enhancement of practice. It aims to further develop and sustain a highly competent, committed workforce of enquiring professionals who focus on the best possible outcomes for learners - developing all staff as leaders of learning and enquiring professionals who are able to critically evaluate and improve their work is a core component.

## Key elements of effective professional learning

There are four interrelated processes that support professional growth of practitioners and transformation of practice.

- **Reflection on/in practice:** where, through professional learning, practitioners are curious about and critically explore practice.
- **Experiential learning:** learning through structured activities to question, try out and enhance practice.
- **Cognitive development:** developing ideas to challenge assumptions and deepen understanding of practice.
- **Collaborative learning:** learning with and through others to enhance practice.



Enquiring practitioners are at the centre of effective career-long professional learning.

They are committed to ongoing self-evaluation to improve the learning outcomes of the children, young people and adult learners they work with, and also to overall service improvement. Enquiring practitioners engage in deep, rigorous, high-impact professional learning and understand the inter-connectedness between enquiry and rigorous evidence-based self-evaluation. Enquiring practitioners recognise the need for professional learning to impact on professional practice, the quality of learning and teaching and school improvement. Career-long professional learning links professional review and professional update with an important focus on discussing and agreeing the right blend for each practitioner (individual, school, local authority and system level priorities).

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<sup>1</sup> More detailed guidance and advice: [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/clpl](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/clpl).

## Leadership

Effective career-long professional learning is an integral component of the [Framework for Educational Leadership](#). The framework is intended to support improvements in Scottish education by developing high-performing leaders equipped to take on the significant task of leading and managing in challenging and changing times. Whilst the framework was developed through the work of Teaching Scotland's Future National Partnership Groups, it is applicable to a wide range of leadership roles through common skills and attributes. In particular, the framework highlights working with and influencing others to improve the learning experiences for all learners.

Leaders should participate in a range of professional learning activities, including individual, group, establishment, local authority, university and national opportunities. We expect all practitioners to be leaders in a number of important ways.

- Leading learning for, and with, all the learners with whom they engage, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for all.
- Developing capacity to lead colleagues and other partners to achieve change through specific projects or development work.
- Encouraging collaborative partnerships, in order to achieve positive outcomes for all children and young people with a focus on improving attainment and achievement of all.

We expect those in, or aspiring to, promoted roles within education, to lead teams to initiate and manage change effectively and to develop leadership capacity in others.

Leadership is central to educational quality. Education leaders demonstrate the ability to:

- develop a vision for change, which leads to improvements in outcomes for learners and is based on shared values and robust evaluation of evidence of current practice and outcomes;
- mobilise, enable and support others to develop and follow through on strategies for achieving that change;
- promote public sector collaborative leadership with wider services, such as health, police and social work; and
- contribute to leadership for improvement at individual, establishment, local and system level.



## What does this approach to professional learning and leadership mean in practice?

Education Scotland staff will use the model for professional learning to support them in designing or leading professional learning. We will ensure these four elements of learning come together in meaningful professional learning activities.

**Reflection on/in practice:** we will promote the use of the [GTCS Standards for Career-Long Professional Learning and the Standards for Leadership and Management](#) and accompanying guidance, including the Framework for Educational Leadership, as the basis for GTCS registered teachers' self-evaluation and the identification of their personal learning goals. To complement this work, Education Scotland will lead the development of new national guidance on professional review and development, and support the implementation of the professional update for teachers and the new standards for the CLD workforce.

We have an important role in ensuring all practitioners continuously analyse children's, young people's and adults' learning needs to identify their professional learning needs. We will support practitioners in accessing and developing their skills in using a range of evidence, including research, national and international statistics and information on approaches to learning and teaching that are likely to improve outcomes.

In planning professional learning, we will ensure that it is directly relevant and meaningful to the individual practitioner, group and/or school and takes account of current knowledge and expertise. We will ensure reflection on practice focuses on evaluating success based on change in professional practice and, ultimately, impact on learners, not solely evaluation of the activity itself.

**Experiential learning:** we will promote a range of experiential, action and enquiry-based activities which address the needs of specific groups of educators. We will promote and support collegiate networks in which practitioners can explore and challenge their educational beliefs and consider how they impact on their practice. We will provide opportunities for practitioners to engage critically with new and emerging ideas about education, including through sharing of thought-provoking, inclusive and innovative practices in learning and leadership through the SLF.

**Collaborative learning:** effective professional learning relies on partnerships in learning and teaching to ensure that enquiring practitioners take responsibility for their own learning in a stimulating and collaborative learning environment.

Through discussion and reflection with peers, mentors and leadership teams, enquiring practitioners are able to establish clear objectives and personal action plans and identify the right blend of professional learning opportunities.

We will support and facilitate a range of collaborative learning opportunities, including learning from, and with, peers through coaching and mentoring approaches, with high-quality and relevant input from external experts/specialists (where appropriate). We will provide a range of means, including through Glow and our online services, which practitioners can use to enhance their knowledge, understanding and skills, in relation to individual, local and national priorities.

**Cognitive development:** we will support practitioners in achieving the right balance of professional learning activities, to ensure they develop their knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly in relation to generic/pedagogy, subject content/curriculum areas, the use of technology to support learning and teaching. In particular, we will support the embedding of learning for sustainability and modern labour markets, where appropriate, in line with professional standards.

We will ensure that professional learning activities are facilitated by those with the necessary expertise and, where appropriate, are planned around relevant masters-level characteristics and/or benchmarked against masters-level. These characteristics are described in the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#).

By promoting planning and reviewing professional learning using the characteristics of SCQF level 11, the GTCS Standards, and other developing professional standards, we will help to 'raise the bar' of professional learning for all practitioners.

## **Leadership**

Education Scotland will support the development of The Scottish College for Educational Leadership and leadership development across the public sector.

We will ensure a focus on leaders working with and influencing others to improve the learning experiences of all learners and give a high priority to improving attainment and achievement for all and reducing inequity in educational outcomes.

## **What are the building blocks needed to ensure that this approach makes the biggest difference?**

Embedding these approaches to career-long professional learning and leadership across all sectors of the education system requires the right conditions to ensure they make the biggest difference. Supporting practitioners and providers in how they establish and embed these will be a key focus for Education Scotland, both through this strategy and in other key areas of our work.

It will be essential that our staff have a depth of understanding about what these mean in the context of their own work and also for the education system as a whole.

- 1. Embedding a strong culture of collaborative professional learning and enquiry amongst education practitioners** with professionals learning from, and with their peers, with high-quality and relevant input from external experts/specialists (where appropriate).
- 2. Building on rigorous, evidence based self-evaluation** where practitioners use professional standards and the Framework for Educational Leadership, and take account of priority areas where learning and teaching need to improve at establishment, local and national levels. Effective use is made of evidence, including research, of approaches to learning and teaching that are likely to improve.
- 3. Ensuring professional learning has clear outcomes and intended impact** where professional learning is undertaken on an individual and collaborative basis with negotiated aims and focus on defined outcomes describing what impact the professional learning will have with a particular focus on intended outcomes for learners.
- 4. Enquiring practitioners take responsibility for their personal professional development** with intended improvements to knowledge, skills and behaviours planned carefully and evaluated systematically.
- 5. Supporting professionals to take calculated risks with innovative practice** with a focus on analysis of evidence of impact and improving outcomes for learners.
- 6. Developing leadership that supports the culture of learning, building and sustaining partnerships with a focus on improvement.**

### 3. What are the key features of Implementation?

This section provides an overview of the key aspects of implementing this strategy. The detailed actions are held within the associated action plan.

#### We will

- develop an action plan, which will drive the successful implementation of the strategy. This plan will provide detail of mandatory professional learning for all staff, how the key features of the strategy will be taken forward across all aspects of Education Scotland and how this will impact on our engagement with external providers and partners;
- set up a strategic objective steering group that will oversee how the strategy is being implemented and used across all aspects of Education Scotland's work. This group will consider key issues relating to professional learning and leadership and provide an appropriate stimulus and catalyst for new approaches as required;
- work closely with teams from across Education Scotland to ensure that their engagement with external providers and partners reflects the key elements of the strategy. Key groups include all staff who will be engaging directly with educators to lead and support professional learning and leadership development activities;
- use the strategy in our engagement with key stakeholder groups and seek ways to emphasise its key messages with stakeholders as appropriate; and
- ensure transparency and openness by placing the strategy on our website as part of our suite of approaches for improvement.

## 4. How will we evaluate the impact of this strategy?

We will work with teams across Education Scotland to evaluate the impact of the strategy. The Assistant Director will work with teams to determine the best approach to gathering evidence of impact and to provide appropriate support and challenge as required. We will introduce systems that allow us to evaluate the impact of this strategy, including gathering evidence from a variety of sources and activities.

- Data from Glow+ (and other online technologies) on network activity and quality of reflective dialogue across professional learning communities, and feedback from coaches/mentors and focus groups.
- Reports from teachers and other professional groups on the extent to which they are increasingly experiencing Masters-level learning, where appropriate, in national, local and school-based conferences, workshops and collegiate networks.
- Stakeholder reports on the levels of competition for key leadership and practitioner posts.
- Inspection, review and engagement visit evidence on the embedding of pedagogical and leadership reforms and the effectiveness of partnership working amongst practitioners across all phases of Curriculum for Excellence.
- The levels of involvement, representation and engagement with SLF and the Scottish Education Awards programme and the extent to which these are integrated with planning for professional learning at local authority and stakeholder levels.
- Stakeholders views on improvements in our ability to identify, celebrate and promote effective innovation, leading to improvement in learning and teaching.
- Feedback from our staff on how this strategy is impacting on their work.

Teams will be required to report regularly on the impact of the strategy to the strategic objective steering group and through this provide evidence to the Strategic Impact Board on an annual basis.

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