

23 February 2011

Dear member

I hope you will take the time to read this letter. I am writing about IfL's belief in your professionalism; about progress with Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status being recognised for teaching in schools; and to address some comments being made about IfL which we think are inaccurate. I am also writing in response to comments and concerns that some of you have raised recently.

IfL has to start charging for membership for 2011–12 because the government is withdrawing its subsidy for paying membership fees. In this tough economic environment, it is a hard time for IfL to have to make this change. Like most of you, and your organisations, we at IfL have reduced our spending to make sure we are as lean and cost-effective as we can be. We were determined to do this to keep membership fees as low as possible; for example, we have reduced our staffing to 36, and lost 16 posts through redundancy or voluntary severance.

The concessionary fee of £45 for those on low incomes, many who are part-time or sessional teachers, equates to 58 pence a week, and the standard £68 fee, with tax relief at 20 per cent, equates to 70 pence a week over the 18 month membership period for 2011–12. IfL's elected board of directors has committed to not raising the fee over the next three years. Although this is not a lot and we think IfL can offer you very good value for money in future, we do recognise that IfL membership fees are a new cost to you, and that it is not easy to pay for something new.

We believe that teachers and trainers are professionals, rather than a 'workforce'. Membership of a professional body is the norm for those who see ourselves collectively as professionals.

I believe that teachers and trainers in our further education and skills sector deserve more recognition for your professional expertise. IfL has fought hard and persistently for QTLS to be recognised for teaching young people in school settings, as fully qualified teachers, not as instructors or assistants. IfL has led extensive campaigning for members, because QTLS being equal to QTS is important to you, your sense of status and your wish for flexible career opportunities. It is also in the interests of young people having the best teachers, whatever the setting. I am hopeful that IfL's meetings with senior politicians and further education and schools ministers will result in schools policy changing so that QTLS is recognised at least for teaching vocational subjects, for example, to those above the age of 14 in schools. IfL can influence and does so. It is for schools policymakers to decide on this issue.

By offering robust evidence to the Wolf Review, based on 5,000 members' views, and to the select committee and the Skills Commission, and by consistently raising the issue of QTLS with senior parliamentarians, ministers and the all-parliamentary skills group, IfL has created a climate of readiness and impetus for possible change to the policy for teaching in school settings. IfL can have this influence only because of full membership of teachers across further education, as a powerful voice for the profession.

You may have seen some of the criticism that IfL has received for charging a membership fee from April 2011. If you too have felt reservations, I hope you will consider these four key points:

1. Running a national, professional body with influence and good services for members does have a cost attached. In objective terms, £68 is a low fee for professional body membership. The Royal College of Nursing, for example, charges £194.93 and the Royal College of Midwifery charges £230.16, in addition to which there is the requirement to be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council at £76. Some have said that IfL's fee has doubled, but for 2011/12, this would have meant a fee of £90 for 18 months.

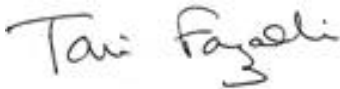
2. IfL cannot be used as a lightning rod for all the financial pressures in the public sector, in the country and in further education. While there is no doubt that the timing is bad for all of us, IfL cannot take responsibility for increases in VAT, for reductions in funding in further education, for changes to pension contributions, or for the government withdrawing its subsidy of your professional body membership fees. What we can do is keep the fee as low as possible, which we are doing.
3. Having IfL membership fees paid by you as an individual, or by your employer, does give more independence from the government and a stronger future for the profession. Some employers are considering paying or part-paying fees. Each employer will have their own policy.
4. IfL has listened to members and responded to what you want from your professional body, including:
 - a. QTLS being recognised for teaching in schools
 - b. More communications support for your CPD and teaching and learning (e.g. *On the Agenda* monthly e-newsletter, and *Intuition* magazine four times a year)
 - c. Communications about policy for further education and skills (*Informed* monthly e-newsletter)
 - d. A voice to influence policy, including the following areas where IfL's work is already evident:
 - Ofsted and the stronger focus on teaching and learning as the heart of any college or provider's activities
 - The Wolf Review of vocational education (based on responses from 5,000 members)
 - QTLS being given high status
 - Initial teacher training (ITT) – IfL negotiated for funds from the government for this, and disburses a £400 grant to help with the cost of ITT, to ensure there is support for entry to the profession; and conducted a survey on the effectiveness of ITT (based on 5,300 responses from members)
 - A route to QTLS for those with overseas teaching qualifications
 - EMAs and the impact of its withdrawal, and how the new smaller funding pot might be used to support students' attendance, as teachers are very concerned about this impact (1,700 responses)
 - A higher profile for teachers and trainers from further education and skills; your expertise and professionalism being recognised at top policy tables; evidence from teachers and trainers being drawn on in parliamentary debates and events
 - e. More professional development and support for teachers, including REfLECT, IfL's e-portfolio chosen by 108,000 members to plan, record and review your own CPD; and research and surveys into what makes for brilliant teaching and training and CPD ([A guide to effective CPD for teachers, trainers and leaders, more than 5,000 members' voices](#))
 - f. IfL to speak out for the profession and promote your valuable work for the nation, whether this is adult education and learners pursuing an interest, or vocational education or training for apprentices or specialist subject teaching. The 180,000 teachers and trainers, members of IfL, make a positive difference to the economy and local communities. As your professional body, IfL must and does champion the value of your work and your expertise. IfL is a strong single voice for you because we have full membership, and are not seen as partisan or a partial voice.

IfL tries to carefully listen to members and then respond, and there is always much more to do for the profession, guided by your priorities. Compared with other professional bodies, IfL is relatively new. Most other professional bodies, such as those for nurses and midwives, have been supporting their members for decades or centuries, and are well known and well respected by the public. This is where we want IfL to be. But our professional body is early on the journey, with most teachers and trainers having membership for less than three years so far.

IfL members are at the heart of IfL's governance, which is led by members, elected by you and working on your behalf. IfL is a not-for-profit company, and in the process of becoming a charity and working to gain chartered status. We need time and members' support. With your engagement, your continued membership and your voice to influence and speak out for the profession, together we can achieve widespread recognition and respect for your professional work. Our governance and our staff are absolutely determined and dedicated to you and the profession.

I will write to you again shortly, asking for your views in a survey. This is so that as IfL becomes self-financing and charges fees, every member has the chance to say what more or different you want from IfL as your professional body, as you renew your membership for 1 April 2011 to 30 September 2012. I look forward to hearing your views and responding.

Yours sincerely



Toni Fazaeli
Chief Executive