

Professional Formation

The Institute for Learning's policy statement on professional formation; 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. Professional formation leads to the conferral of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) or Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) status.

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 and skills 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. 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 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. The professional formation account

- 3.1. Applicants for QTLS or ATLS status will be expected to submit their professional formation account through the Institute's online personal learning space, REfLECTⁱⁱⁱ. A template will enable the applicant 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 applicants.
- 3.2. The account comprises two forms of evidence:
- a) mandatory elements are drawn from typical sources and are common for all applicants 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 applicant.
- 3.3. Mandatory elements:
- 3.3.1. 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.*
 - 3.3.2. Numeracy and literacy skills at or above level 2^{iv}: *scanned certificates or direct notification from the awarding body or other evidence such as numeracy or literacy skills within the teacher's subject area.*
 - 3.3.3. Supporting testimony, the endorsement of the completed application by a person deemed to satisfy the Institute's criteria for supporting claims for professional formation^v: *a peer review of the complete application following the Institute's template for supporting testimonies.*
 - 3.3.4. Declaration of suitability^{vi}, 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.*
- 3.4. Personalised elements:
- 3.4.1. Subject currency – an account of the applicant'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^{vii}, scanned copies of qualifications in the subject area, etc.*
 - 3.4.2. Teaching and learning – an account of the applicant'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.*

- 3.4.3. Self evaluation – an individual analysis of the applicant’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.*
- 3.4.4. Professional development planning – an individualised learning plan detailing the actions the applicant 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 applicant’s reflective journal or professional development log, etc.*
- 3.4.5. Reflective practice – reflection on the impact of professional development on the applicant’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.*

4. Quality assurance

- 4.1. 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' (this can be found on www.lluk.org) The professional formation evidence requirements are mapped to the standards in Annexe A.

ⁱⁱⁱ 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.

^{iv} 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.

^v 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 applicant. The supporter must be an appropriately qualified teacher or associate teacher, meeting the requirements of the 2007 regulations.

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

^{vii} An expert witness (the "witness") is any person able, through qualification or experience of the applicant'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.