

Information Note

What is involved in being a member of the Teaching Council – March 2016

Some practical information is set out below, which may be of assistance to candidates for elected teacher positions on the Council, and for nominating bodies when considering the nomination of persons to be appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills to the Teaching Council. Reference is made to a number of documents available on the Teaching Council website (www.teachingcouncil.ie), which should be considered by election candidates and potential nominees.

- 1. The Teaching Council** is established and governed under the Teaching Council Acts, 2001-2012. The Council is the professional standards body for teaching in Ireland and its remit covers primary, post-primary and some areas of the further education sector. The Council has 37 members representing the major stakeholders in teaching, including elected teachers, nominees from the teacher unions, school management bodies, national parents' bodies, higher education institutions, and five members nominated by the Minister (including a nomination each from IBEC and the ICTU). Nominating bodies are listed in Section 8 of the Teaching Council Acts. The Acts may be viewed in the 'About Us' section of the Council's website, located at the base of the opening page or at this [link](#).
- 2. The Council is responsible for promoting and regulating the teaching profession. In this context, its principal functions are:**
 - a. promoting the role of teaching standards and quality;
 - b. advising the Minister on the requirements for entry to teacher education programmes;
 - c. establishing and monitoring standards for all phases of teacher education;
 - d. maintaining a Register of Teachers (currently in excess of 91,000 teachers);
 - e. developing and updating a Code of Professional Conduct; and
 - f. investigating complaints regarding the fitness to teach of a teacher.
- 3. How the Council functions** – The 37-member Council has overall responsibility for governance and policy-making, with Council normally convening six to seven times a year. Extra meetings may be called from time to time as necessary. From a practical perspective, much of the Council's work is done through committees and sub-committees of the Council, which meet on a regular basis (see table below). The Council, committees and panels are supported by the Director and staff of the Council. Three of the Committees – Executive, Investigating and Disciplinary – are established on a statutory basis.

In general terms, the committees develop policy for consideration by the full Council while non-standard teacher registration application matters are adjudicated on by the three panels at i, j, and k below. The Investigating and Disciplinary committees deal with matters relating to complaints concerning a teacher's fitness to teach.

The following are the main committees and panels of the Council:

- a. Executive Committee (11 members)
- b. Registration Committee (13 members)
- c. Education Committee (13 members)
- d. Finance Committee (seven members)
- e. Audit Committee (five members)
- f. Investigating Committee (11 members)
- g. Disciplinary Committee (13 members)
- h. Primary Registration Applications Panel (seven members)
- i. Post-Primary Registration Applications Panel (seven members)
- j. Evidence of Character Panel (seven members)

Under the Teaching Council Acts, the Council may establish further committees from time to time. To date, all members of the committees and panels listed above have been members of the Council. Further information on the roles and membership of the committees and panels can be found in Appendix 3 of the Council's most recently published Annual Report (2013/2014), which is available in the 'Publications' section of the Council website at this [link](#).

The schedule of Council and Committee meetings during the year ended 27 March 2014 is set out below:

Council	7
Executive Committee*	6
Registration Committee/Registration Review Group	10
Education Committee	6
Finance Committee	7
Investigating Committee*	5
Disciplinary Committee*	5
Audit Committee	3
Evidence of Character Panel	10
Applications Panel (Primary)	9
Applications Panel (Post-Primary)	12
Procedures Sub-committee (ad-hoc)	6

* *Statutory Committees*

4. Council members –

- a. All 37 members are appointed for a term of up to four years by the Minister. Elected teachers and the five Ministerial nominees (including the ICTU and IBEC nominees) will be appointed for a term of four years (2016-2020). The remaining nominees will be appointed for a term of two years (2016-2018), and thereafter nominee appointments will be for a term of four years (2018-2022, etc.). The initial shorter term for certain nominees is a once-off measure to allow for a more orderly turnover of Council membership into the future.
- b. Council members are subject to disclosure of interests requirements under section 57 of the Act and disclosure of information requirements under Section 58 of the Act. In addition, Council members are required to comply with the requirements of the Ethics in Public Office Acts, which apply to public bodies.
- c. The Council comes within the remit of the Corporate Governance Guidelines for State Bodies (as published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform). The Council, committees and Director work within the terms of *The Code of Practice for Council Members, Chairperson, Director and Secretary*, which is available on the 'About Us' page of the Council website and at this [link](#). This is the Council's key corporate governance document.
- d. Council members and staff must also comply with the Council-approved Code of Conduct, available on the 'About Us' page of the Council website and at this [link](#).
- e. Meetings of the Council and committees may be scheduled for the first half of the week (Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday). The calendar of meetings is approved in advance by Council. **There are quite substantial demands made on members' time** by virtue of the number of committees and panels and the level of activity at each of those fora. It should also be borne in mind that the Council's 'Fitness to Teach' functions will be commenced by the Minister in the near future and the two committees involved in this area – Investigating and Disciplinary – will continue to have a significant workload.
- f. There are no fees or allowances payable for serving as a member of the Council. Substitution arrangements are in place for members who are serving teachers. Travel and subsistence expenses are paid for travel costs necessarily incurred by members in the course of their Teaching Council duties. These are paid in line with Department of Finance circulars.