

A standard for teachers' professional development

Evidence from the Wellcome Trust

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Key points

- We fully support the ambition to develop a standard for teachers' continuing professional development (CPD), and also recognise the difficulty in doing so.
- The new standard will need to be flexible enough to be useful for different models of CPD, including courses run by professional and commercial organisations as well as CPD developed within schools.
- The standard could draw together existing evidence to produce principles for best practice that providers and schools can use when developing and evaluating CPD and enable accreditation of professional and commercial courses.
- A standard will not remove all barriers that make it hard for teachers to access effective CPD, but it should help alleviate issues relating to variable quality and value for money, and promote the importance of impact on pupils.

Introduction

1. The Wellcome Trust is a global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. Our breadth of support includes public engagement, education and the application of research to improve health. We have a long standing commitment to making inspirational, high-quality science education available to all young people, spending around £12 million each year towards this aspiration.
2. Supporting teachers and creating a strong evidence base for education is at the heart of our work. Since 2003, we have committed £45 million of funding to the National Science Learning Centre (NSLC) and Project ENTHUSE, enabling science teachers and technicians to access high-quality CPD with strong evidence of impact.

General points

We found it helpful to first consider different models of CPD and how the standard could work across them.

What the standard can do

When developing the professional development standard its purpose must be clear. We see this in broadly two categories:

- accrediting professional and commercial organisations to help improve their offer and to enable schools to judge the quality of that offer and ensure value for money
- giving guidance on the characteristics of good professional development to help schools and individuals design their own professional development.

We think the standard could and indeed should fulfil both of these functions and therefore must be flexible and clear in how it can be applied. The standard should allow schools to

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choose and design courses based on what is likely to be most effective in meeting their needs. But other activities that would not necessarily be included in a standard can also feed into professional development, such as reading the relevant literature or participating in Teachmeets. We have illustrated how the standard could be developed and its relevance to different forms of CPD in Table 1.

Table 1: How the standard could be used for different models of CPD		
Model of CPD	Could the standard apply to this?	How the standard could benefit this model
External offer of CPD for schools (e.g. through the National Science Learning Network)	Yes – accreditation could apply at organisational level	Schools can be confident that this organisation will deliver high-quality CPD that is good value for money. Organisations that offer the CPD can use it to identify best practice.
Individual courses that schools can buy in for CPD	Yes – on a course by course basis	Schools can be confident that courses are good value for money and if delivered properly will be high-quality
Within-school CPD sessions designed and run by schools (e.g. an IN-Service Training day on the new curriculum led by the head of science)	Yes – as guidance rather than accreditation	The standard acts as guidance for what high-quality CPD involves that schools can use to design their own CPD
Individual teachers' CPD (e.g., reading a journal on effective practice)	No	This is valuable to contribute to a teacher's professional development but cannot be accredited by a standard. The standard may list ideas of things that could contribute to personal professional development and guidance of how it can be impactful.
Result		
Individual teachers' development is high-quality, driven by impacts in their teaching practice and, above all, benefits pupils.		

We agree with the consultation document that the defining factor of teacher professional development is that it impacts upon pupils. We would not include activities that do not develop teaching practice or improve pupil experiences (e.g., learning about changes to a database system within the school or the introduction of Progress 8). We are aware that teachers need time to understand new systems and changes to qualifications but these should not take up time that is otherwise used for professional development activities.

Consultation questions

3. **Can you give an example of great professional development practice with which you were involved, which had significant impact on pupil outcomes? If you can, describe what the participants did, what the school did, and what the external expertise was.**

The examples given below are from our perspective as a funder of CPD. The Wellcome Trust funds the NSLC and Project ENTHUSE, which offers bursaries for teachers, technicians and teaching assistants to attend courses offered by the NSLC. We understand that the NSLC will be responding to this call for evidence. We highly recommend their recent report, "Lessons in Excellent Science Education", which characterises effective CPD and summarises much of the evidence of the impact of their CPD on teachers, pupils and schools accumulated over 10 years. The rest of this submission will be focused on other evidence that we have gathered which is not included in the report from the NSLC.

As well as funding the NSLC, the Wellcome Trust [supports teachers' CPD](#) through funding individual projects and promoting the use of evidence in policy and practice. We have also funded projects where the primary aim is not to deliver CPD, but it is an incidental and important consequence of the project. For example, Authentic Biology and Lab_13 are both projects in which teachers work with students on authentic scientific research, partnering with researchers. These give teachers access to external expertise which improve research skills and subject-specific knowledge.

From the work we have supported and the evidence gathered we have identified some key factors of effective and impactful CPD:

- It develops subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogical skills (e.g., [Hands-on DNA](#), [Authentic Biology](#))
- draws upon external expertise¹ (e.g., [Primary Science Specialist Programme](#))
- encourages participants to share practice with colleagues in school and across other schools² (e.g., [Primary Science Quality Mark](#))
- is structured to require participants to implement their learning³ (e.g., [Primary Science Specialist Programme](#), [Camden cross-curricular project](#))
- empowers leaders and teachers to be effectors of change⁴ (e.g., [Primary Science Specialist Programme](#)).

4. **How could the standard help to promote effective professional development practice which has a positive impact on pupils' education?**

¹ Morris, Meg; Chrispeels, Janet; Burke, Peggy. *Phi Delta Kappan* 84.10 (Jun 2003): 764-767.

² Bell, M., Jopling, M., Cordingley, P., Firth, A., King, E. & Mitchell, H. (2006) Systematic research review: What is the impact on pupils of networks that include at least three schools? What additional benefits are there for practitioners, organisations and the communities they serve?, Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.

³ Hattie, John. "What is the nature of evidence that makes a difference to learning?." *2005-Using data to support learning* (2005): 7.

⁴ Price, Jeremy N., and Linda Valli. "Preservice Teachers Becoming Agents of Change Pedagogical Implications for Action Research." *Journal of teacher education* 56.1 (2005): 57-72.

As discussed in our general comments, we believe that CPD should have the overall outcome of benefiting pupils' education and are pleased to see this at the core of the development of the new standard. However, there must also be recognition that some forms of CPD will not have immediate impacts on pupils (e.g., leadership courses) and schools must be encouraged to take a long-term view of the benefits, including those that extend beyond educational qualifications (e.g., pupil wellbeing or developing careers advice).

There are certain things that should be included in all CPD, listed below, and therefore should be included in the standard. There are other aspects of CPD where there is good evidence that they can be impactful but need not necessarily be included in every course. How these aspects of CPD are reflected in the standard or further guidance must be carefully considered. Essential elements include:

- **Using evidence to inform CPD development and delivery.** Providers of CPD should use an evidence-informed approach to design courses, and schools should use evidence of effective practice when developing in-school CPD sessions. It is not possible to robustly evidence pupil impact for every CPD course, but CPD should be developed using evidence-based principles and participant evaluation of impact on teachers and their students should be gathered when possible. The standard could draw together existing evidence to produce principles for best practice so that providers that meet the standard are inherently evidence-informed. Ideally, providers should be able to show that they continually evaluate the impact of the course, using input from those who have taken part, and through independent evaluation, and using this information to improve their offer.
- **Implementing learning into teaching practice** is essential for any CPD. For the full impact of CPD to be realised, teachers should be encouraged to plan how it will be integrated into their practice before, during and after the course.
- **Evaluating the impact of CPD on pupils' experiences.** There should be an expectation that teachers will evaluate the impact of their CPD, including reflections on impacts on pupils as well as their own teaching practice. For example, the NSLC requires teachers to complete an impact report after attending a course before they receive the Project ENTHUSE bursary.
- The standard must reflect that professional development should be **sustained over teachers' careers** to have maximum impact, but also flexible enough to recognise the value of occasional one-off sessions.

There are then many other aspects that make up effective CPD but should not necessarily be required in every CPD course (see point 3 for evidence of these):

- drawing upon external expertise
- improving subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy
- sharing practice with colleagues in their school and other schools
- improving school or subject leadership.

5. **How could the standard help shape or improve the provision of professional development (including school-based professional development activities)?**

Professional development comes from a wide range of providers and it can be difficult for schools to ensure they are getting high-quality provision and the best value for money. Many schools also offer professional development internally, yet there is little evidence-based guidance on how to make this as effective as possible and to support schools in sharing best practice.

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A professional development standard that is flexible enough to work across different models of CPD delivery, via external organisations or within school, would ensure that schools can discriminate between professional development offers and feel confident that they will get something of high-quality. However, the standard would not be able to ensure that schools offer the right professional development for the needs of their teachers or school. The Teachers' Professional Development Expert Group should consider offering further guidance for schools on how to identify the professional needs of their school as a whole and of individual teachers.

6. What short-, medium- and long-term approaches might help to remove barriers to professional development and could be reflected in the standard?

Barriers to professional development include:

- time – INSET days are not always enough and are often used for non-CPD activities such as updating staff on changes to whole school processes
- reluctance to leave the classroom⁵ – teachers are reluctant to leave classes (e.g., due to links between performance and pay or because they do not wish to use cover teachers) and senior leaders are reluctant to release teachers (e.g., in anticipation of Ofsted visits)
- expense and poor value for money⁶ – some courses, for example, some offered by the NSLC, are supported through bursaries but many come at a significant cost for schools and the value for money is not always clear
- senior leadership buy-in – CPD is not always prioritised when competing with limited time and funding, particularly when it is difficult to show impacts on pupils especially in the short term
- teacher buy-in – teachers are not always motivated to improve their practice, particularly when this is not valued by senior leadership and impacts are not easily seen
- variable-quality offer – there are many fantastic CPD opportunities, but there are also less well-evidenced or effective courses that still attract participants and negative experiences can put schools and teachers off further participation.

The standard would not be able to overcome all of these barriers, but it should contribute towards overcoming issues around the quality of the offer, by giving schools guidance on what courses are high-quality and ensuring providers meet a certain standard. It could also help ensure schools get good value for money, and ensure senior leadership buy-in by promoting evidence-based provision that has implementation and evaluation built in.

In the long term we would like to see a CPD entitlement for all teachers that allows them to continually progress through a professional development pathway and work towards the next stage of their careers. The standard would ensure that CPD undertaken on this pathway was of high-quality and has a positive impact on pupils (although this does not mean that all professional development that contributes to a teacher's professional journey should be accredited by a standard).

⁵ Consultation led by NSLC

⁶ Teaching and Learning International Survey, 2013