



CLD Standards Council Scotland

Response
to

Accreditation Process and Requirements Review
Consultation

By
The General Teaching Council Scotland

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About Us

The CLD Standards Council Scotland is the professional body for people who work or volunteer in community learning and development (CLD) across Scotland. CLD is a field of professional practice which has three integral domains of educative practice across; adult learning, community development, and youth work. As a member-led organisation we have a growing membership of over 3440 members, with an executive committee and three functional committees which are made up of members from across the CLD sector in Scotland. Our approach and our work plans to deliver our core responsibilities are defined by our member committees and based on feedback from the wider membership.

Our ministerially set core responsibilities are:

- Deliver a professional approvals structure for qualifications, courses, and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD
- Maintain a registration system available to practitioners delivering and active in CLD practice
- Develop and establish a model of supported induction, professional learning, and training opportunities
- Improve and develop our organisational capability; and
- Collaborate and contribute to relevant CLD policy and workforce development information.

Vision

“Our vision is that the communities and people of Scotland are served by CLD practitioners that are recognised as competent, confident and committed to equality, empowerment and life-wide learning for all.”

Mission

“Our mission is to drive high standards of professional practice in the CLD sector by the approval of professional learning, the registration of practitioners and the enabling of professional development, working with our members to be a voice for the profession.”

The CLD Standards Council works with a wide range of organisations across CLD and education sectors, nationally and internationally. We are members of a number of organisations, some we have specific partnership or framework agreements with, and we engage and work with many others.

Organisations we have formal agreements with:

- AIEB (All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training)
- COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
- Education Scotland
- GTCS (General Teaching Council Scotland)
- JETS (Joint Education and Training Standards – UK & Republic of Ireland)
- SCURL (Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries)
- Volunteer Scotland

Organisations we have membership of:

- BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland)
- CDAS (Community Development Alliance)
- Human Rights Consortium Scotland
- IACD (International Association for Community Development)
- Inclusion Scotland
- PARN (Professional Association of Research Networks)
- SCDI (Scottish Council for Development & Industry)
- SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)
- TAG:PALYCW (The Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work)

Key Stakeholders and Partner Organisations:

- Alliance of Commonwealth Youth Work Associations (ACWYA)
- CLD Managers Scotland
- CLD Professional Learning Networks
- College Development Network
- CWA (Community Work Australia)
- LEAD Scotland (Linking Education and Disability Scotland)
- Learning Link Scotland
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Open University
- SCDC (Scottish Community Development Centre)
- SCDN (Scottish Community Development Network)
- Scotland's Learning Partnership
- The Young Women's Movement
- WEA (Workers' Educational Association)
- YMCA Scotland
- Youth Scotland
- YouthLink Scotland
- Youth 1st (Fife)
- Youth Highland
- Young Scot

For further information on the CLD Standards Council please visit our [website](#) and view our social media [cldstandards](#) | [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) | [Linktree](#). If you would like to discuss this response further, please email us on contact@cldstandardscouncil.org.uk

About Community Learning and Development in Scotland

The CLD sector, which is a unification of the 3 professional practice disciplines of Adult Learning (Including ESOL), Community Development and Youth Work, is an integral and essential part of Scottish education, as recently reported in [Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development \(CLD\)](#), which was undertaken by Ms Kate Still, as part of Education Reform, and commissioned by Mr Graeme Dey MSP, the Minister for Higher and Further Education, and Veterans.

The CLD sector across Scotland is receiving considerable amount of attention at present, with the aforementioned recent Independent Review of CLD publishing the Still report [Learning: For All. For Life](#), (June 2024) and the HMIE producing the [Evaluation of Community Learning and Development in Scotland](#), alongside the wider piece around [Education Reform](#) in Scotland.

CLD has its origins in the period of change that swept through society in the 18th and 19th centuries. New industries, and changes in science, technology, land use and education dislocated or smashed traditional forms of family and community life, with the history of youth work starting with voluntary action through faith organisations. Over time, we saw the further development of adult and young people's education with development of the [Workers Educational Association](#) and the National Council of Labour Colleges, and then the growth of community development as a response to the "rediscovery of poverty" in the 1960's. The Alexander Report – [Adult Education: the challenge of change](#) (HMSO 1975) was a response to the persistent issues of disadvantage and advocated that "Adult education should be regarded as an aspect of community education and should with the youth and community service, be incorporated into a community education service". In 1998, Mr Brian Wilson MP established a working group to "consider a national strategy for community based adult education, youth work and educational support for community development in the light of Government priorities in relation to social inclusion and lifelong learning" ([Communities: Change Through Learning. P14](#)). In 2004, the Scottish Executive published [Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities](#), stating "Community learning and development should incorporate the best of practice undertaken in the fields of 'community education' and 'community development'. It should enable individuals and communities to make real changes to their lives through community action and community-based learning. CLD is an approach which enables agencies to work with communities and provide access to their involvement in learning, action, and decision-making." These advancements were fundamental in bringing about the birth of CLD in the form it has grown into in the 21st century.

CLD – A Strategic Professional Practice within Education

CLD is a field of professional practice that is critical in the achievement of any policy and legislation that requires education, community engagement, development and learning as it supports the learning, growth, empowerment of individuals and communities, as well as supports the delivery of other services.

CLD plays a vital role in meeting the diverse educational needs of both adults and young people across Scotland, particularly those who face barriers to participation, learning and opportunity. It provides accessible, inclusive, and community-based learning opportunities that respond directly to individual and local needs, lived experienced and inequality

For young people, CLD supports personal and social development, confidence building, resilience, and wellbeing. It creates safe spaces where learners can develop skills for life, learning and work, strengthen their voice and influence and actively participate in their communities. CLD Youth Work supports engagement in citizenship, climate action, sustainability, and community decision making whilst also contributing to improved educational outcomes, employability, and positive transitions into adulthood.

For adults, CLD addresses educational needs relating to core skills such as literacy, numeracy, digital inclusion, employability and health and wellbeing. CLD adult learning opportunities enable individuals to gain confidence, improve skills, re-engage with learning and access further education, training, or volunteering. These opportunities are especially vital for adults who have faced disadvantage, poverty, or exclusion, or who have had challenging negative experiences within our formal education systems.

Across both age groups and communities, CLD adopts a flexible, learner centered approach that combines informal and non-formal learning with community development practice, learning opportunities are co-designed with participants, ensuring learning is relevant, empowering, and responsive. By supporting individuals to identify personal and collective goals, CLD strengthens community capacity, enhances democratic participation, and contributes to wider social, economic, and environmental outcomes including improved health, wellbeing, and sustainability.

The three domains of CLD (Adult Learning, Community Development, and Youth Work) work in unison to deliver [Scotland's National Outcomes](#). As a single, unified professional discipline, CLD is a vital educative force, and its impact should be strengthened through focused legislation. Guided by the [National Performance Framework](#), these domains are deeply interconnected — each reinforcing the other to create lasting change for our communities across Scotland. For example, CLD youth work on employability or equalities has far greater and more sustainable impact when complemented by community-based adult education and community development initiatives that engage families and whole communities to lead change. We offer a downloadable "[Guide to CLD in Scotland](#)" for further information.

Fundamental to the practice of CLD across all settings are these values which have been identified by the CLD Standards Council:

- **Self-determination** – respecting the individual and valuing the right of people to make their own choices.
- **Inclusion** – valuing equality of both opportunity and outcome and challenging discriminatory practice.
- **Empowerment** – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities through individual and/ or collective action.
- **Working collaboratively** – maximising collaborative working relationships in partnerships between the many agencies which contribute to CLD, including collaborative work with participants, learners and communities.
- **Promotion of learning as a lifelong activity** – ensuring that individuals are aware of a range of learning opportunities and are able to access relevant options at any stage of their life.

In Scotland, CLD has a legislative underpinning through the implementation of the [Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#), which are located as

part of Section 2 of the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#). These Regulations require each local authority to [publish a 3-year plan](#) that details the delivery of CLD activity in the local authority area, as stipulated in the [community-learning-development-plans-guidance-2024-2027.pdf](#).

The following diagram was used in the 2012 Strategic Guidance on CLD for Community Planning Partnerships to illustrate the policy context for CLD in Scotland and continues to provide a useful picture of the pivotal role of CLD.



This response was compiled on behalf of the members of the CLD Standards Council.

Assumptions:

It is important to note that this CLD Standards Council response reflects insights gathered from previous engagement with members through consultation review activities and online professional learning opportunities, from engagement with partners and stakeholders, and from with our staff team. As such, it provides an indication of member views and experiences but should not be considered fully representative of the entire CLD sector in Scotland or the full CLD Standards Council membership.

Response from the CLD Standards Council to GTCS Accreditation Process and Requirements Review

The CLD Standards Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the General Teaching Council for Scotland's Accreditation Process and Requirements Review Consultation, which aims to update and streamline the framework governing accreditation of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) programmes. The consultation recognises the significant evolution of Scotland's educational landscape since GTCS assumed formal accreditation responsibility in 2012, including expansion of provider types and the legal requirement for college lecturers to register with GTCS.

The CLD Standards Council strongly supports efforts to modernise accreditation processes. We also believe this review presents a crucial opportunity to ensure Scotland's professional standards, accreditation systems, and workforce development arrangements fully reflect the breadth of the education workforce—including the CLD sector.

This response highlights key themes and addresses the consultation question areas most relevant to CLD. It draws on previous extensive engagement with our members and with partner organisations and reflects both the operational realities and lived experiences of CLD practitioners and the communities they support. The purpose of this consultation response submission is to articulate views on the proposed changes to the GTCS Accreditation Process and Requirements. It aims to highlight the essential role of CLD within Scotland's wider education system, advocate for recognition and alignment of professional standards across all educators, and ensure that future accreditation arrangements reflect the skills, expertise and workforce needs of CLD practitioners. It also identifies opportunities to strengthen policy and practice to maximise the impact of CLD within a reformed education landscape.

Section 3 – General Principles

Yes. We agree with the inclusion of an upfront statement of general principles. We welcome the intention to make these principles explicit, as this helps ensure that accreditation is understood as a meaningful quality process rather than an administrative exercise, consistent with the aims outlined in the consultation.

However, we request that these principles be further strengthened through explicit alignment with the values, ethics, and competencies embedded within the CLD Competent Practitioner Framework. This alignment is essential to ensure coherence across Scotland's broader education workforce and to recognise the importance of professional standards that go beyond classroom-based teaching. Embedding these shared principles across sectors would support:

- A consistent ethical foundation for all educators, including those working in schools, colleges and community settings.
- A common values-based approach that promotes trust, partnership, transparency and learner-centred practice.
- Recognition that professional practice in Scotland spans multiple educational environments, and that accreditation principles should reflect this diversity.

We note that other education partners, including Learning for Sustainability Scotland, have also called for key sector principles to be made explicit in the accreditation document. We therefore

encourage GTCS to consider cross-referencing or formally aligning these general principles with the CLD values, ethics and competencies that guide the practice of thousands of educators working in community settings across Scotland.

Section 6: content, nature and duration of programmes

Practice Placements

High quality supervised practice placements are an essential component of any professional preparation programme. As highlighted in Section 6.7 of the GTCS review, professional placement is a critical part of teacher education, providing the real-world context in which academic learning, professional conduct, and pedagogical skills are integrated and applied. This aligns strongly with the established expectations within CLD, where supervised, values driven practice placements are central to demonstrating competency, ethical behaviour, and the ability to work effectively with learners and communities. This also aligns with wider stakeholder emphasis on ensuring professional preparation reflects values-driven, real-world practice.

In both teaching and CLD, supervised practice placements allow students to:

- Apply academic study in authentic settings, confirming the principle that professional practice must be rooted in both theory and evidence
- Develop and demonstrate conduct consistent with professional codes, such as COPAC in teaching and the CLD values and ethics that guide practitioner behaviour
- Build confidence, capability and reflective practice through meaningful engagement with experienced practitioners, communities and learners.

We therefore strongly support GTCS making the importance of supervised professional placement explicit in its requirements for professional qualifications. Robust, well supported, supervised placements are vital for ensuring that all educators, whether working in schools, colleges or community settings, are competent, ethical and fully prepared to meet the diverse needs of Scotland's lifelong learners.

Section 7 - Teacher Educators and Programme Staffing

CLD as a Core Part of Scotland's Education System

CLD is central to improving outcomes for children, young people and families by strengthening relationships between schools and communities, playing a vital role to improve outcomes for children and young people, and the communities they live and grow in. As the professional body for CLD in Scotland, the CLD Standards Council works closely in partnership with Education Scotland, supporting this work by offering professional learning opportunities, advice and guidance. Across the two organisations, we facilitate national practice networks such as Professional Learning consortiums, CLD Leads, ESOL, Adult Learning and Youth Work. These networks provide targeted improvement support and Education Scotland have dedicated CLD education officers working across all of the thirty two local authorities. Together, our support enhances the impact of CLD and youth work within effective school and community partnerships.

This review underscores that the range of programmes and providers engaged in education has broadened substantially, requiring updated expectations and processes. CLD practitioners are

central contributors within this expanded workforce as CLD practitioners deliver outcomes that directly support Scotland's key education objectives, including improving attainment, supporting wellbeing, strengthening family learning, and enabling lifelong learning. As such, CLD must be considered an integral part of the wider education system when setting expectations for professional standards and oversight. We therefore recommend that:

- Any national framework for accreditation, standards, or educator expectations explicitly acknowledges CLD practitioners as educators.
- The revised policy highlights the full diversity of Scotland's education workforce, beyond teachers and FE lecturers, to include those who work in youth work, adult learning, community development, family learning and wider community-based pedagogies.

Alignment of Professional Standards Across Educators

This review proposes to bring together accreditation expectations for ITE and TQFE into a single coherent document and introduces a consolidated set of "general principles" to guide accreditation processes. Whilst we support this streamlined approach towards clear and consistent standards across your approved teaching qualifications, we would like this opportunity to note that:

- Scotland's education system relies on multi-disciplinary professional collaboration.
- Coherence across professional standards is essential to supporting learners whose experiences span schools, colleges, communities, workplaces, and families.

CLD already operates within nationally recognised Professional Standards and the CLD Competent Practitioner Framework, and we recommend that GTCS engages further with the CLD Standards Council to support greater cross-sector coherence. There is strong alignment across sector responses emphasising the need for accreditation requirements to connect more clearly with existing national frameworks. Strengthening the general principles within the accreditation policy through an explicit commitment to collaboration across all parts of the education system would help establish shared language, shared expectations, and a stronger sense of collective professionalism

A Unique Opportunity to Advocate for Workforce Parity & Recognition

GTCS states that accreditation is being updated because of shifts in the teaching landscape, including new legal requirements for FE lecturer registration and expanded programme provision. CLD practitioners face similar professional responsibilities to teachers and lecturers, and therefore we ask that GTCS supports us in asking for recognition and parity of esteem for the CLD workforce across Education. This is consistent with partner views that programme staffing expectations should reflect the full breadth of Scotland's education system, reflects a wider sector call for stronger coherence across the whole education workforce and for accreditation arrangements to recognise the full range of educators contributing to national outcomes, as well as supports our call for a stronger statutory requirement for a CLD workforce that also sits within a coherent national framework, akin to teaching and social work professions.

Workforce parity strengthens quality, safeguards learners, and supports cross-sector collaboration, especially as education increasingly spans schools, colleges, communities, and multi-agency settings. National policies on education reform, wellbeing, prevention, equalities, and place-based working depend on a whole education workforce approach, not one defined narrowly around formal teaching. This review presents an opportunity to consider the whole education workforce, where CLD faces significant sustainability challenges due to reductions in

funding, workforce shrinkage, and increasing demand. A fragmented professional system risks deepening inequalities in provision. We therefore recommend:

- Stronger commitment to cross-sector workforce planning, recognising the interdependence of teaching, college lecturing, and CLD roles.
- Enhances and committed engagement between GTCS, CLD Standards Council, Colleges, Universities and COSLA to explore future alignment or shared principles for professional learning, workforce development and quality assurance.

Section 9: Accreditation Application, Assessment and Duration

We welcome the move by GTCS to adopt a defined, cyclical accreditation process, as outlined in Section 9.3., proposing to shift from year round accreditation to a structured cycle with clear stages, timings and predictable assessment windows, noting that this approach aligns with benchmarking against other regulators and improves efficiency and sustainability. We note that sector partners have also engaged with the review's process-related questions, emphasising clarity and consistency in accreditation cycles. The consultation also identifies May–June as a period that works well for higher education institution (HEI) accreditation assessments.

This approach aligns well with the CLD Standards Council's own processes in several important ways:

1. Predictability and planned quality assurance

CLD Standards Council already uses structured, cyclical processes for:

- Approval of CLD HE and FE Qualifications
- Re-approval cycles
- Ongoing quality monitoring

Having a defined cycle mirrors the CLD Standards Council practice of ensuring that programme providers work within known timeframes, allowing adequate preparation, planning, and resource management. This creates consistency and transparency for providers, values which are shared across our organisations quality assurance and standard setting systems.

2. Partnership and collaboration as shared principles

We both highlight collaboration and partnership as core quality principles. GTCS lists partnership and collaboration as a key general principle for accreditation whilst the CLD Competent Practitioner Framework places similar emphasis on shared practice, ethical collaboration, and sector-wide learning cultures.

A cyclical approach supports this by enabling:

- Better alignment of dialogue with providers
- Joint planning
- Opportunities for cross-sector engagement during fixed review periods

3. Opportunity for cross-regulator consistency

As we continue through the process of Education Reform in Scotland, it enables us to explore more coherent professional standards and regulatory alignment across all education sectors. Predictable cycles create opportunities for future coordination between bodies such as GTCS and CLD Standards Council. If both organisations operate structured and transparent cycles, this supports:

- Shared capacity planning for providers offering both CLD and teaching related programmes
- Clarity for HEIs involved in delivering qualifications that bridge sectors
- A more joined up coherent system of professional approval and accreditation

Areas for further consideration

Alignment of Values

While the alignment of accreditation cycles would be broadly positive, please offer consideration to the importance of aligning values, ethics and competencies. Any structural alignment must also uphold the values, ethics, and competencies within the CLD Competent Practitioner Framework. A cyclical model supports this by enabling deeper, values led reflection during scheduled review periods, rather than piecemeal or reactive processes.

Action in instances of non-compliance with the accreditation process

We believe it is appropriate for GTCS to take action in instances of non-compliance. This is important because:

- It protects the credibility of the accreditation system, ensuring it is seen as meaningful rather than a procedural formality, consistent with GTCS's stated general principles.
- It safeguards learner quality, safety and public confidence, particularly as the provision of ITE and TQFE has expanded and requires consistent oversight.
- It supports continuous improvement, aligning with the principle of being developmental and evidence-informed, and helps providers address issues constructively.
- It maintains fairness and consistency across institutions, ensuring that compliant providers are not disadvantaged and that accreditation expectations are applied uniformly.
- It aligns with CLD Standards Councils own regulatory expectations, where action on non-compliance is also necessary to uphold ethical practice, professional standards and trust in the wider education workforce.

In summary, proportionate action on non-compliance is essential for maintaining quality, fairness, improvement, and shared professionalism across Scotland's education system.

Conclusion

The CLD Standards Council welcomes this review as a vital opportunity to strengthen coherence, equity and professionalism across Scotland's wider education system. As Scotland advances through a period of significant educational reform, it is essential that accreditation arrangements fully recognise the breadth of the education workforce and the distinctive contribution of Community Learning and Development. We urge GTCS to embed principles, processes and expectations that reflect the diverse contexts in which learning takes place, and to align accreditation with national professional frameworks that already underpin high-quality practice across sectors. Through continued collaboration, shared values and a commitment to sector-wide coherence, Scotland can build an accreditation system, for an education workforce, that is fair, future-focused, and reflective of the collective professionalism that supports learners, families and communities.