



Department of  
**Education**  
[www.education-ni.gov.uk](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk)

**ASPIRATIONS FOR EXCELLENCE: A  
PROFESSIONAL BODY FOR TEACHING IN  
NORTHERN IRELAND**

**ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES**

May 2023

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the independent Board Effectiveness Review of General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI), the Minister announced in December 2021 that DE would bring forward legislation to dissolve and replace the organisation, that in the interim GTCNI's Council/Board would be immediately stood down until the underpinning legislation could be changed, and that the organisation and its employees would continue to operate under direct DE oversight, ensuring its statutory functions would continue to be delivered as fully as possible.
- 1.2 The Minister also confirmed at that time that DE would bring forward a public consultation on the functions delivered by GTCNI to determine which were regarded as essential or helpful in supporting the teaching profession and to consider how these could be protected and most effectively delivered in future.
- 1.3 This consultation took place between 13 June and 30 September 2022. Many of the Department's delivery partners provided responses to the consultation and the Department is grateful for the insight and careful thought these responses contained. Nonetheless, the overall level of responses was disappointing with only very limited input being received from the teaching profession itself. However, it highlighted that the majority of respondents felt that all four functions currently with GTCNI's remit were still needed.
- 1.4 However, as any options for replacing GTCNI will impact directly on the circa 27,000 teachers registered to work in our schools, we consider that starting to draft legislation without some greater insight into the views of our teachers was likely to prove counterproductive. Prior to standing down on 28 October 2022, Minister McIlveen agreed with this assessment and asked us to explore alternative mechanisms to engage with teachers, to enable us to make more informed decisions on an optimal replacement for GTCNI.
- 1.5 Following consideration of the public consultation and the legal issues surrounding regulation and employers of teachers, it was established that a new professional body with the amended legislation to support it, is the most appropriate way forward. Whether that will be an Arm's Length Body or a completely independent body is yet to be explored. However, in considering a new body, DE felt it prudent to identify what the profession would want from a new body.
- 1.6 We appreciated the difficulties in engaging with the profession during a time of ongoing industrial action and were sensitive to the fact that many teachers would understandably wish to follow their Union's guidance during this period of 'Action Short of Strike', however, we firmly believed it is in best interests of the profession that we continued to pursue progress in this matter rather than maintaining the current interim position for what might be a protracted period.

- 1.7 We therefore ran a further targeted survey of those teachers currently working as Associates or Secondees; teachers serving on existing advisory or policy development working groups and across a number of our key educational stakeholders. These individuals are mostly experienced teachers and school leaders, well aware of the challenges of working in the modern classroom but also possessing, by virtue of their additional service or secondment, a broader understanding of the needs of the wider education system. We also surveyed final year student teachers so that they could consider what a new professional body could deliver for them in their future careers.
- 1.8 The survey exercise ran from 24 February until 28 April 2023.
- 1.9 The survey sought to identify what additional functions or services a new professional body may provide for the teaching profession. It explored a range of topics from how a new body may allow conditional registration, supporting newly qualified teachers (NQTs), types of sanctions to support regulation, commissioning research and many more. Some of the topics addressed are currently delivered by other bodies, however further decisions on what a new body may deliver will be discussed and agreed with all relevant stakeholders before moving forward with the development of legislation.
- 1.10 This report provides a summary of responses received by DE to the survey; Aspirations For Excellence: A Professional Body for Teaching in Northern Ireland.
- 1.11 **185** responses were received, **58** respondents listed themselves as having more than one role, with **208** roles listed. The following figures are the total roles listed: **17** (8%) Associate Assessors, **5** (2%) Lecturer / Tutors, **54** (26%) school leaders, **86** (41%) teachers, **21** (10%) student teachers and lastly **20** (10%) 'other roles'. **119** (64%) responses were submitted confidentially. A list of stakeholders who disseminated our survey can be found in **Appendix A**, and we thank them for their continued support.
- 1.12 The Department is grateful to all respondents for their interest and for taking the time to complete the survey.
- 1.13 The responses were collected and carefully considered. This analysis summarises the responses.

## 2. Survey Summary

2.1 Over two thirds of respondents are in favour of a new body:

- providing conditional registration, whereby applicants to a new body could have conditions imposed upon them for a period of time to enable them to start working as soon as possible, whilst they work to meet the conditional registration requirements;
- being the point of contact and support for NQTs whilst they work through their induction and early professional development requirements;
- providing a range of teacher learning opportunities both online and in person;
- providing a single webpage that displays links to all of the Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) available from all bodies that deliver it;
- providing multiple channels to promote effective practice in teaching such as in person workshops; a conference similar to FEILTE in Ireland and online pre-recorded learning;
- commissioning and disseminating research to its members in relation to workforce planning, pedagogy and other classroom based practice;
- is best placed to set professional teaching standards;
- should be offering training and support to Boards of Governors and school leaders in relation to understanding and upholding professional standards;
- being able to impose a range of sanctions on teachers found guilty of misconduct including; reprimands on their record, conditional registration orders such as mandatory training and suspension and prohibition orders for more serious offences;
- providing a recognition scheme, awards or ceremony to benefit the profession;
- providing incentives for students and serving teachers to specialise in low intake subjects; and
- continuing to be involved in validating individual courses / qualifications in Northern Ireland.

2.2 The majority (86%) of respondents were in favour of a portal for teachers to record their TPL and development records (this could be a role for a new body or a current body).

2.3 Areas that still had a majority, but less so (between 57-59%) included respondents being in favour a new body:

- potentially introducing periodic reaccreditation for teachers through evidencing their improved practice and continuing participation in TPL would be a positive step for the profession;
- developing more flexible qualifications requirements which would minimise barriers for entry to the profession; and
- potentially extending its scope and membership to include other practitioners such as classroom/teaching assistants or FE lecturers/tutors.

2.4 Although there were some negative responses, overall, there was a majority in favour of each of the functions / services suggested in this survey.

2.5 **Table 1 – Highlights the key statistics:**

	Yes %	No %
<b>Conditional Registration</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Central Contact for Newly Qualified Teachers</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) Provision</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>One TPL Page</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Provide Portal for TPL Records</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Periodic Reaccreditation</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Provide multiple channels to promote effective practice</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Commission and Disseminate Research</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Profession Standards set and held by body</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Support for Boards of Governors / School Leaders</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Range of Sanctions</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Recognition Scheme</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Incentives for Low Intake Subjects</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Professional Body to validate NI courses</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Provide flexible qualification requirements to minimise barriers</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Include additional Registers</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>

### Next Steps

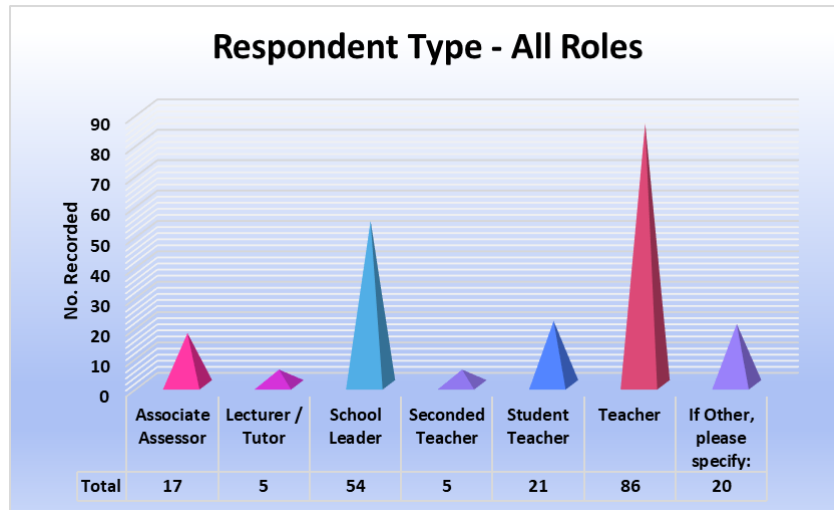
2.6 DE will use the findings from this survey combined with findings from the public 'Consultation on the Functions delivered by GTCNI' and the recommendations from the Baker Tilly Mooney Moore (BTMM) Review to inform policy and changes to the legislation. This process will be subject to further engagement with other jurisdictions and stakeholders before it is finalised for inclusion in a new Bill. The draft Bill will also require a public consultation on its content, which will provide a final opportunity for any changes to be addressed.

### 3. Analysis of Survey Responses

#### 3.1 Respondent Type

Please select the box/es that describe/s you as a respondent?

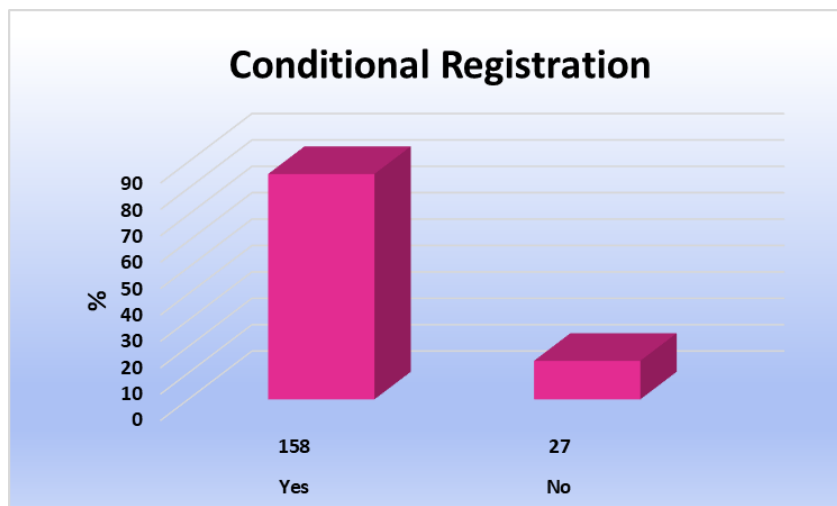
The Department received 185 responses however, respondents were able to select more than one role. There were 208 roles selected. Diagram 1 shows the number of all roles selected.



Within the 'Other' category the following roles were noted: Education Advisor x 2, Education Officer, Teacher Tutor x 4, School Improvement Profession, Principal x 2, EA Employee, Curriculum Manager FE, Autism Trainer/Advisor.

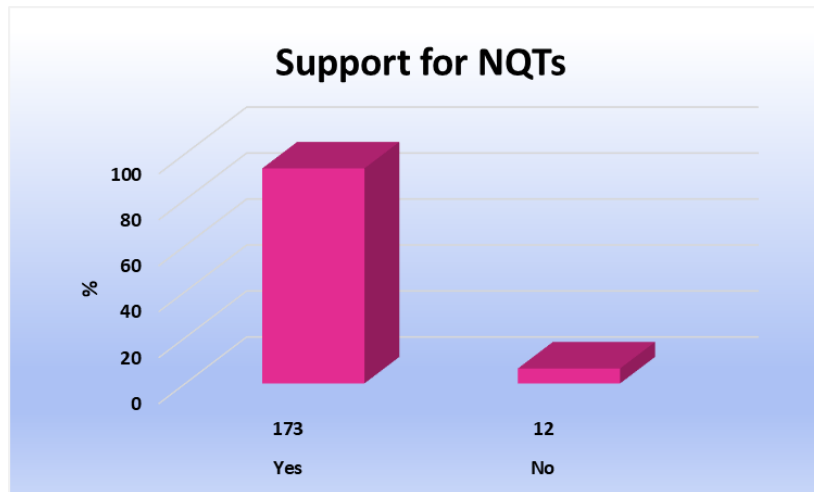
#### 3.2 Survey Question 1:

Do you believe conditional / provisional registration is something a new professional body should consider?



### 3.3 Survey Question 2: Newly Qualified Teacher Support

Do you feel it would be beneficial for a new professional body to offer itself as a point of contact and/or provide support for NQTs working through their Induction and Early Professional Development (EPD) requirements?



### 3.4 Survey Question 3a: Provision of Teacher Professional Learning

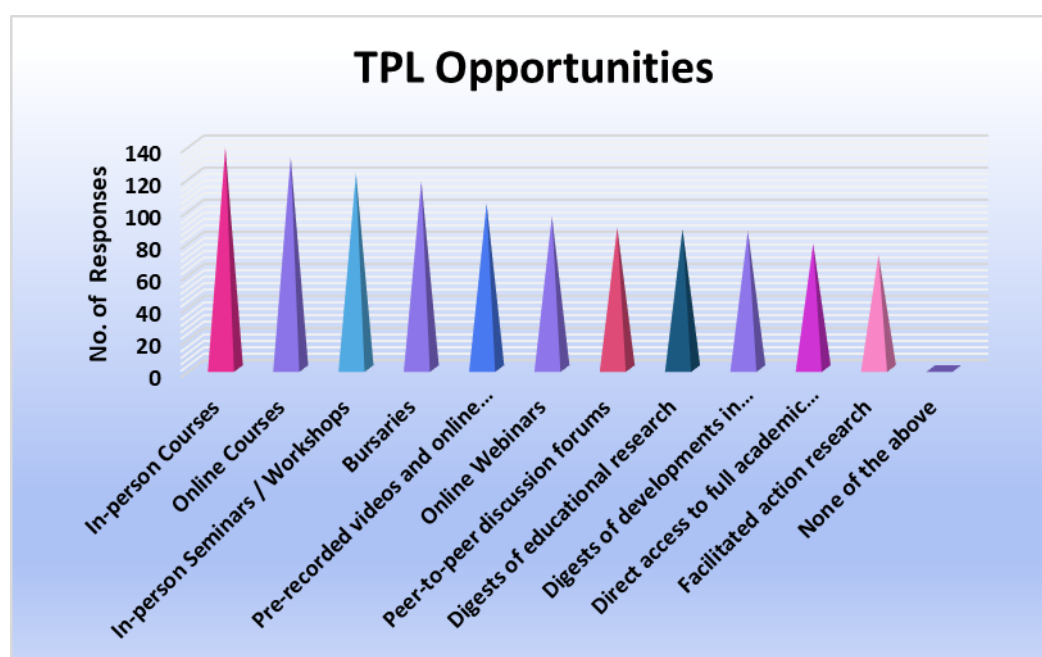
Do you feel that a new body should offer training and professional learning opportunities to the teaching profession?





### Survey Question 3b: Provision of Teacher Professional Learning

As you answered “Yes” to the last question, which of the following TPL opportunities would you consider helpful to you as an individual teacher?



### Survey Question 3c: Provision of Teacher Professional Learning

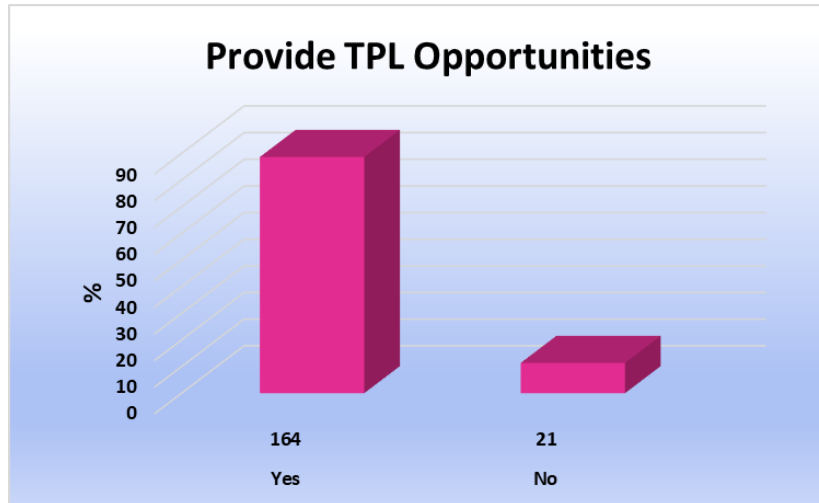
Are there any training and professional learning opportunities that you feel are not being currently provided that a new professional body could deliver (not specified in previous answer)?

**Table 2 - Other Areas that respondents felt could be considered:**

Middle Management / Career Development.	More TPL opportunities for Irish Medium Sector.
Subject specific TPL and core curriculum subjects – Maths, PE, Home Economics, use of ICT.	SEN / Autism support training for NQTs and current teachers.
Further support for NQTs such as coaching and observation of other teachers, student behaviours and teaching strategies.	Training in evidence based teaching techniques.
Funding and support for the profession and school leaders to do their PHD/Masters / Replace PQH programme. Access to Masters of Education Modules.	Peer to Peer Coaching / observation / good practice sharing sessions for NQTs and current teachers including SEN classes.
Wellbeing for Teachers and Leaders.	More TPL for SEN Teachers.
Training linked to school development planning.	Pastoral Training.

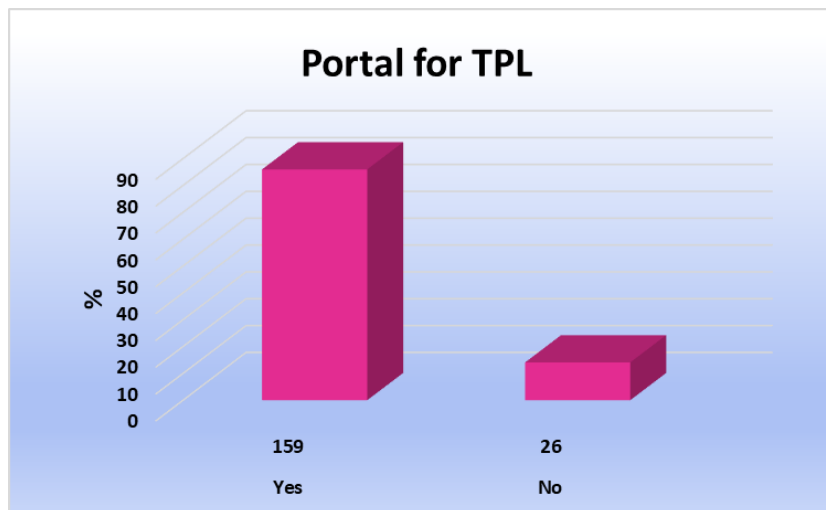
### Survey Question 3d: Provision of Teacher Professional Learning

Would you consider it worthwhile for a new professional body to provide a single TPL webpage with links to signpost teachers to all current TPL opportunities available in Northern Ireland?



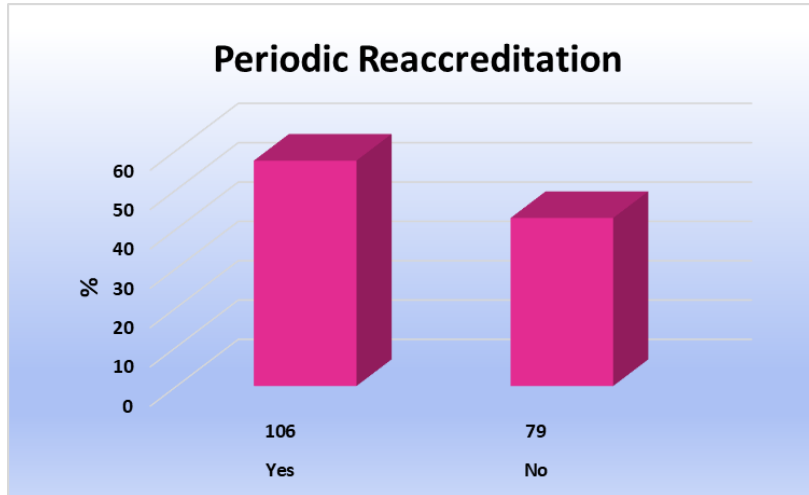
### 3.5 Survey Question 4a: TPL Portal and Reaccreditation

Do you feel that a portal for teachers with their professional learning and development records would be a benefit to the profession?



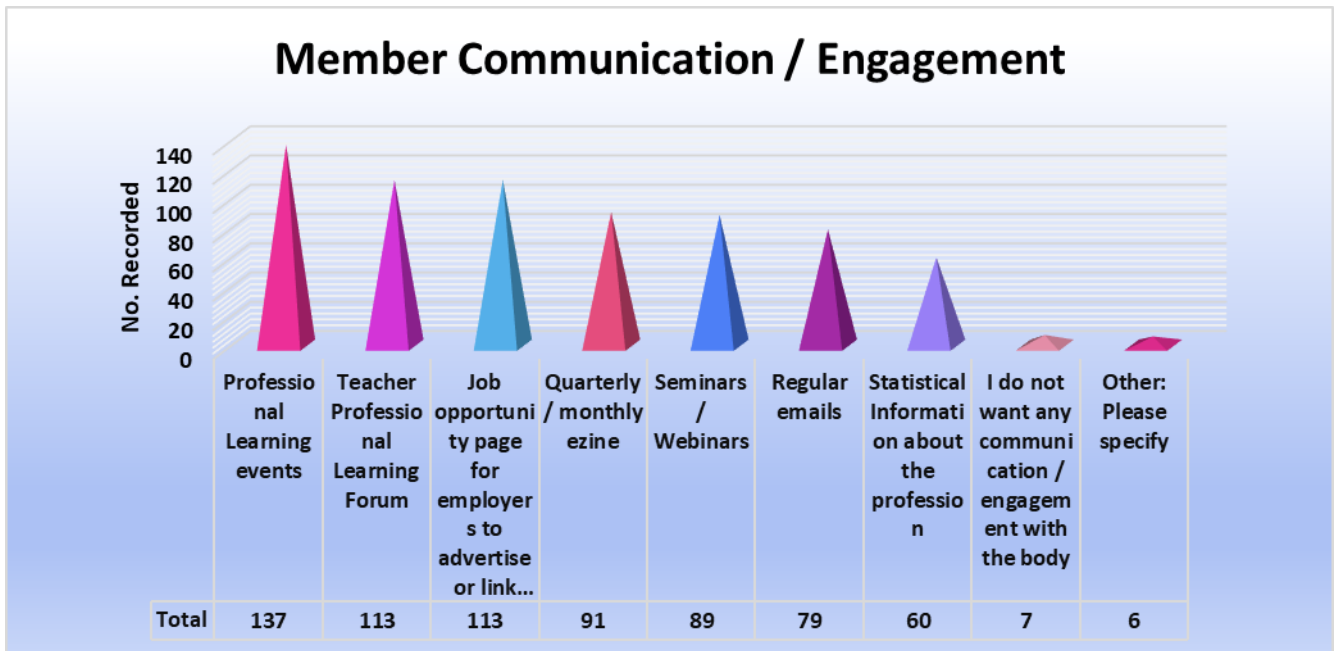
### Survey Question 4b: TPL Portal and Reaccreditation

Do you feel that periodic reaccreditation for teachers in Northern Ireland through evidencing their improved practice and continuing participation in TPL would be a positive step for the profession?



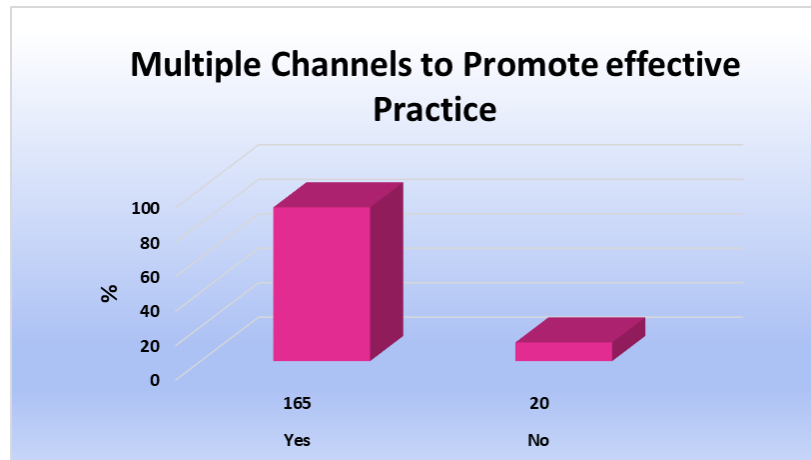
### 3.6 Survey Question 5: Communication and Engagement

What forms of communication and engagement would you like from a new professional body?



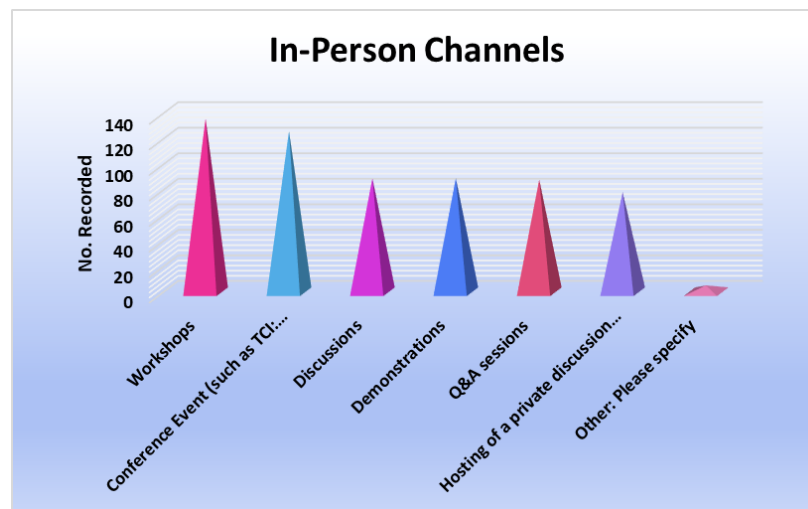
### 3.7 Survey Question 6a: Multiple Channels for Effective Practice

Do you feel that a new professional body should provide multiple channels to promote effective practice in teaching?



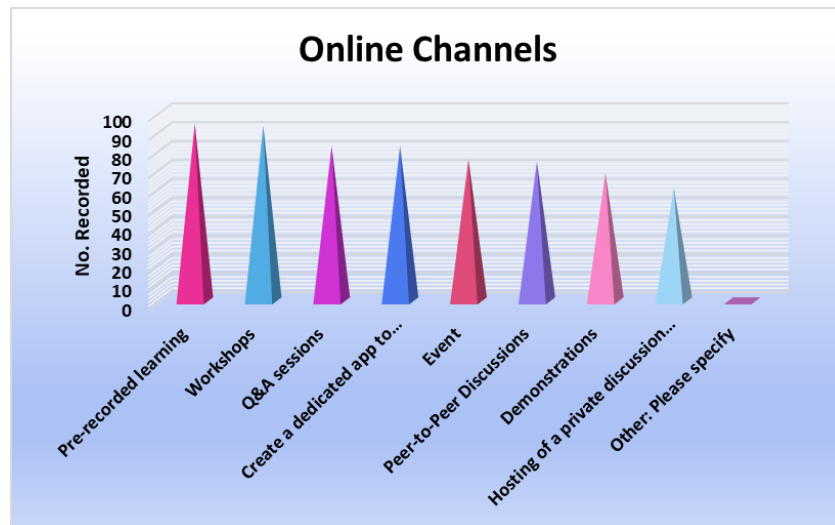
### Survey Question 6b: Multiple Channels for Effective Practice

As you answered "Yes", please tick all that you would find helpful:



**Table 3 - Other In-person channels provided:**

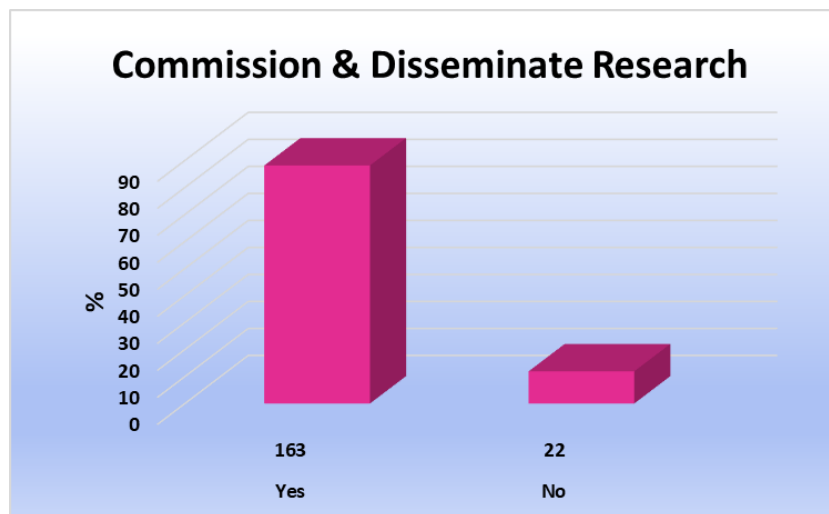
Cluster / networking groups across school areas – outside the normal ALCs – specific forum for middle leaders as well.	Impossible to get out of classroom or to get cover in my current school – I end up doing any extra learning in my own time.
Teacher led events, peer led events.	Peer to Peer observation.
Shared practice training which include real exemplar material (overview of area for improvement, action plan, reviews & learning). Real life exemplars delivered by those who delivered the improvement – authentic, less 'text book' speak but judged to have worked by ETI or school.	Conference events are good to stimulate discussion but do not always change practice in a classroom. Inquiry Informed practice model should be used to make the most impact.



No 'Other' on-line channels provided.

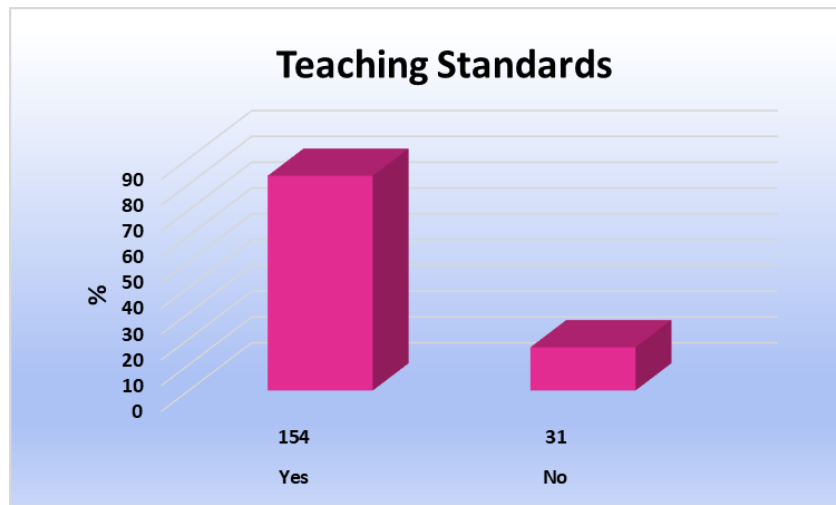
### 3.8 Survey Question 7: Commission and Disseminate Research

Do you feel that a new professional body should be actively involved in relevant research and research dissemination to its members?



### 3.9 Survey Question 8a: Teaching Standards

Do you think it is appropriate that professional teaching standards in Northern Ireland should be set by a new professional body?



### Survey Question 8b: Teaching Standards

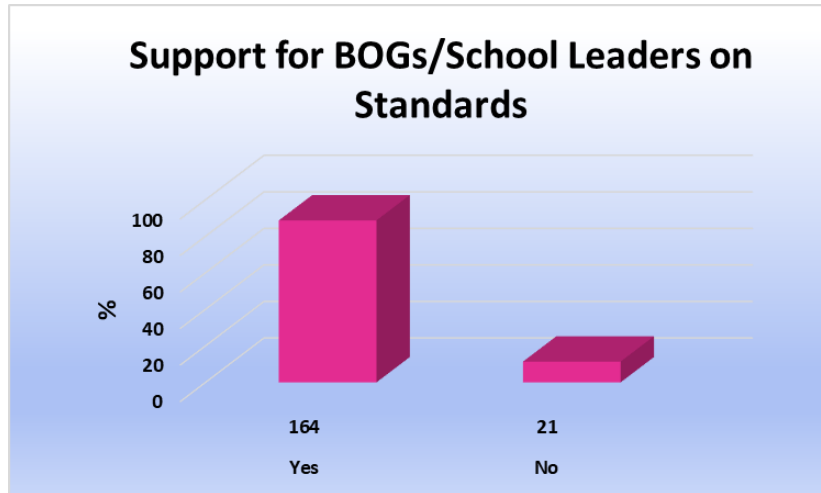
As you answered 'No' to the last question, where should they reside?

**Table 4 – Who respondents felt should set / hold the teaching standards**

Teachers.	Aligned with UK.
Teaching Unions.	Department of Education.
Forums / working party set up and represented by teachers/school leaders.	EA with Teachers in consultation.
Employing Authority.	Education Authority.
They are not needed.	Schools.
Unsure.	By all stakeholders.
GTCNI.	PGCE accrediting bodies.
Set by body in consultation with ETI and Teaching Trade Unions and relevant stakeholders.	Senior teachers/principals who are still teaching to input in the teaching competences.

### Survey Question 8c: Teaching Standards

Do you feel that a new professional body should offer guidance and / or training to school leaders and Boards of Governors on understanding and upholding professional standards?



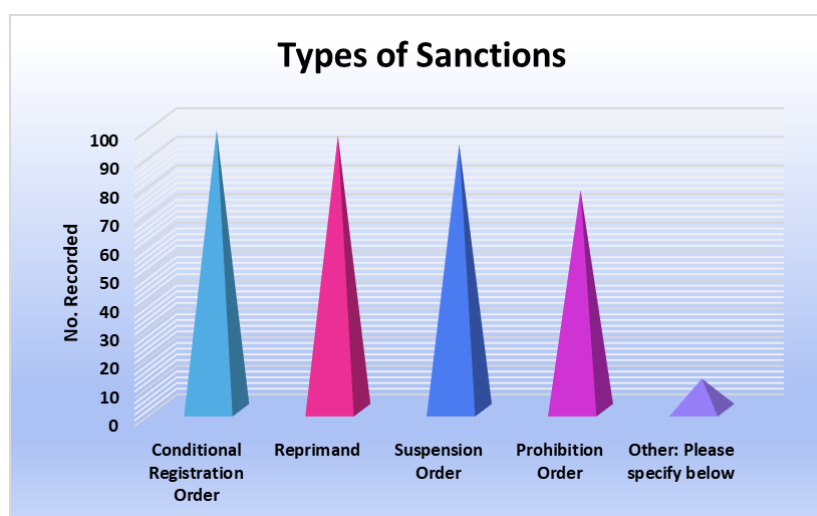
### 3.10 Survey Question 9a: Regulation – Sanctions

Do you feel that a new professional body should be able to impose a range of sanctions on teachers found guilty of misconduct including minor infringements?



## Survey Question 9b: Regulation – Sanctions

If you answered 'yes', please tick which potential sanctions you think should be included:



**Table 5 - Responses given under 'Other' types of sanctions:**

It would need to be something very serious to warrant a note against their registration.	Don't know – Need more reflection on this / further exploration and clarification on the sanctions.
Incompetence needs to be weeded out.	Mandatory training.
Dependent on the misconduct – range of options depending on severity or frequency of offences / infringement.	If a teacher is ineffective at induction or EPD level, this could also be noted, no automatic right to complete this if inadequate.
Able to sanction for major issues. Not sanctioning for minor issues as often Principal's and BOG do not deal well with internal complaints and may falsely forward information to the body without real concern for the wellbeing of the teacher. BOG training and sanctioning would be much more important.	As long as the teachers have appropriate time to access TPL to ensure their standards are maintained. Comparing to England etc is not helpful unless the same PPE conditions are provided here.
I think it is important to know if a teacher you could potentially be about to employ has acted inappropriately – but great consideration of what counts as minor is very important, this could not be an arena to make some teachers unemployable for making what some may regard as a small mistake due to inexperience, lack of clarity from an employer etc however it could help avoid employing someone unsuitable or who does not agree with your school's ethos or who you would have any	As a principal, poor behaviour and standards for teachers are not in line with other jobs. Some teachers are aware of the systems and how bureaucratic they are that they continue to misbehave within a reasonable time, abuse sick pay benefits citing stress and essentially 'work the system.' Removing a teacher is incredibly challenging to the

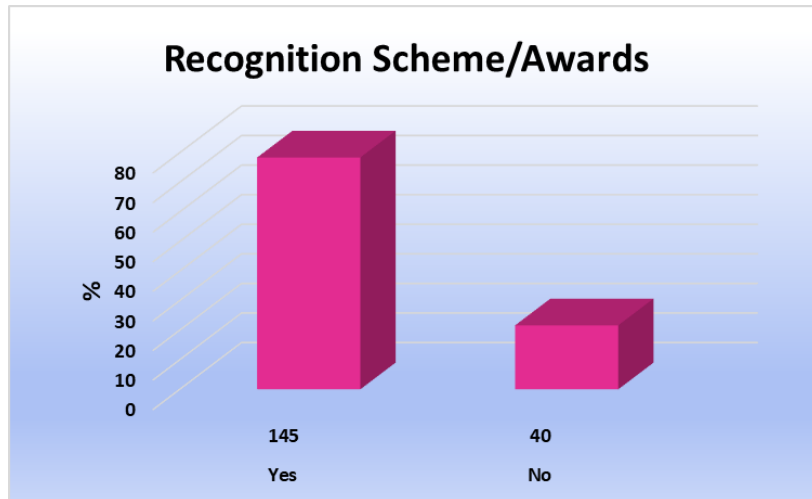


concerns about or who would need a period of re-education relating to an incident etc.

point where it is unfair. The process should reflect other jobs.

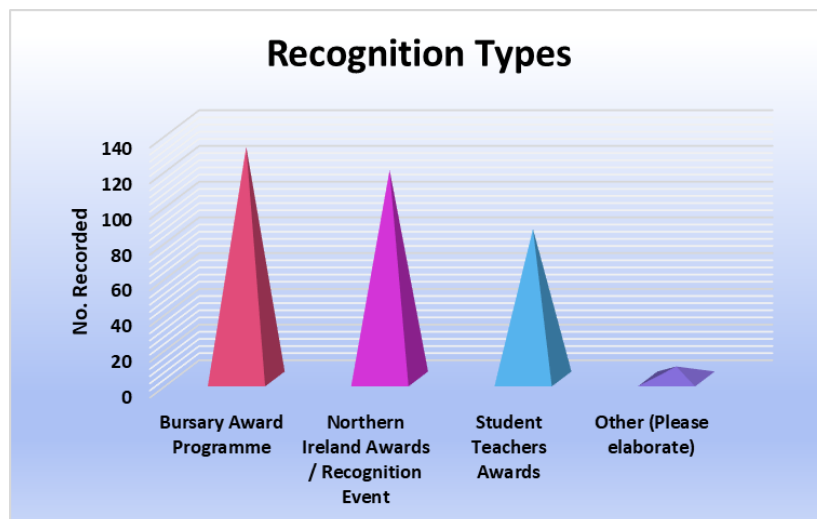
### 3.11 Survey Question 10a: Recognition and Incentives

Do you feel that a recognition scheme, award or ceremony would be beneficial for the profession in Northern Ireland?



### Survey Question 10b: Recognition and Incentives

If you consider this would be worthwhile, which of the following do you consider would be helpful?



'Other' recognition and incentive types suggested:

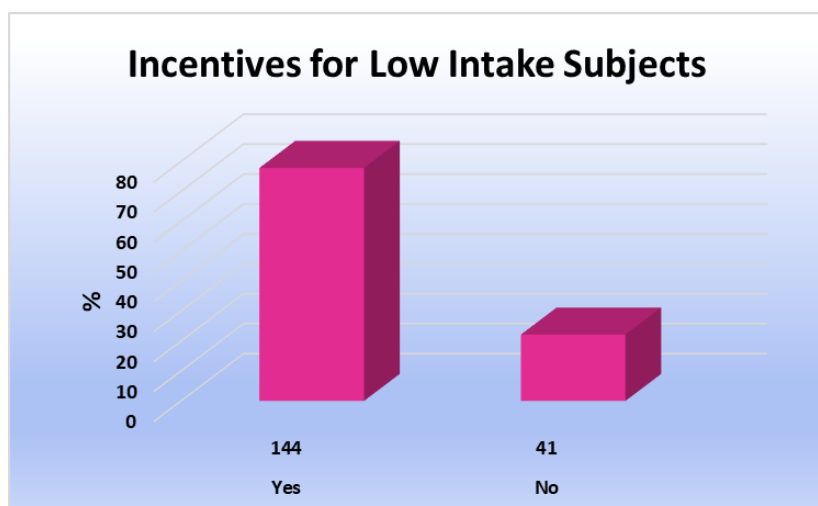
Fully funded Masters Degrees and Doctorates for all teachers who wish to avail.

Online certificates detailing competences acquired.

Awarding further education with a bonus pay, those in other regions have extra pay for masters degrees.	Awards for research or to raise standards would work well. Awards events do not help and are a poor use of money.
Specialist teaching areas specific awards – to recognise efforts of those staff coming in to teach in hard to recruit to areas.	Something also for Classroom Assistants. Also a separate one for Special Needs Teachers.
I don't agree with awards that depend on nominations of teachers as recognition is heavily dependent on the school's interest; some schools seek these awards for staff as part of a PR campaign but other schools ignore them – this doesn't give all teachers equality of opportunity.	

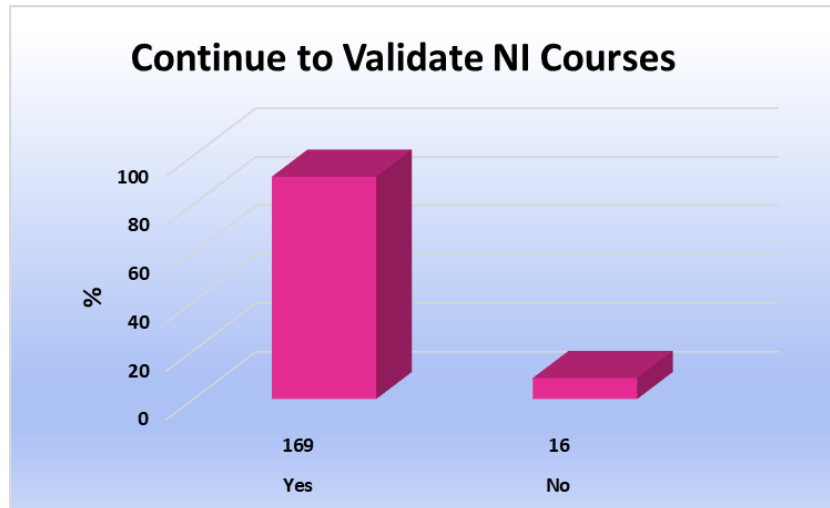
### Survey Question 10c: Incentives of Low Intake Subjects

Would you see this (subject shortage incentives for potential students or current teachers) as a worthwhile role for a new professional body to undertake?



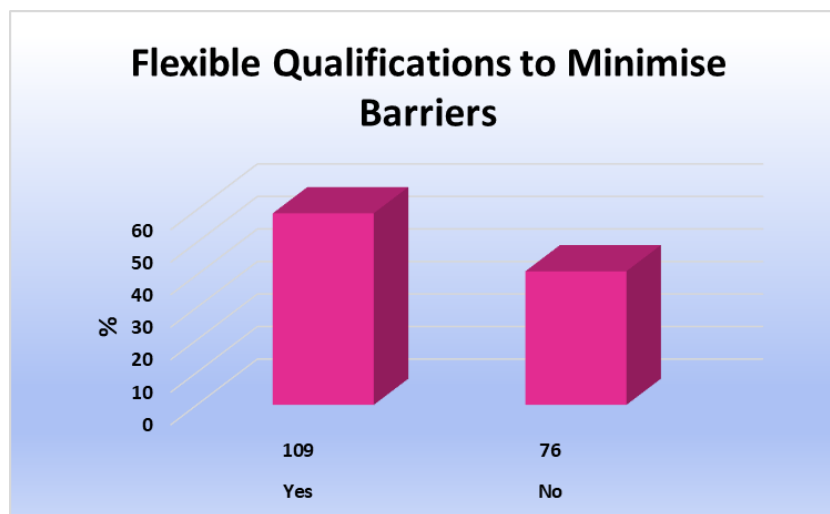
### 3.12 Survey Question 11a: Validating courses and qualifications

Do you feel that a new professional body should continue to be involved in validating individual courses/qualifications in Northern Ireland?



### Survey Question 11b: Validating courses and qualifications

Do you feel a new professional body should develop more flexible qualifications requirements which would minimise barriers for entry to the profession?



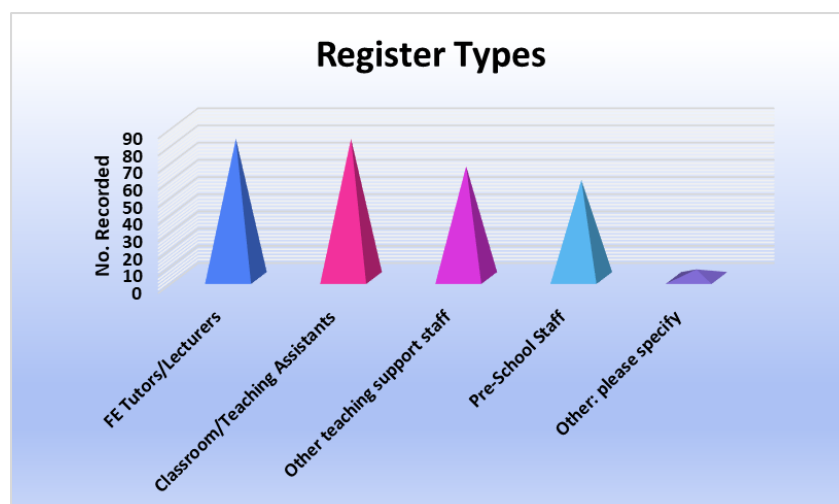
### 3.13 Survey Question 12a: Other Registers

Do you feel that there is the potential for a new professional body to extend its scope and membership to include other practitioners?



### Survey Question 12b: Other Registers

As you felt that a wider based professional body would be a positive development, which other categories of practitioners could be considered?



'Other' Roles suggested included; ETI & EA Personnel, Specialised practitioners to support aspects of the curriculum, Technicians- ICT, PE, etc and Social Workers.

### 3.14 Survey Question 13: Vision Statement

What would your 'vision statement' be for a new professional teaching body? (Please limit to one sentence and no more than 30 words)

**Table 6 - Some of the suggested visions statements:**

To support, develop and regulate the best teaching professionals in the world to ensure they can provide the highest quality education and learning environments for pupils in Northern Ireland.	Setting and upholding the highest standard in professional practice across the teaching profession for the delivery of world class standard of education.
A body that motivates, inspires and challenges teachers to uphold their professional status and continue to learn.	Ensuring high standards and excellence in education for the best outcomes for the children of Northern Ireland.
Developing and motivating educational professionals to progress and achieve in their own learning in order to best facilitate the learning of our young people.	A body to promote and support high standards in teaching and learning and to provide support and ensure that our pupils are in a safe, caring environment.
To enhance the status of the profession by promoting the highest standards of professional qualifications, conduct and practice.	A body for regulating the teaching profession, led by the profession to ensure that teachers uphold the quality standards and commit to TLP throughout their careers.
A robust regulator to uphold high standards in the profession and ensure the high quality of teachers entering the profession.	A body that is fit for purpose, supporting teachers to develop, continue learning and uphold the professional standards.

### 3.15 Survey Question 14: Additional Comments

If you have any additional comments that you would like to share with us in relation to any of the issues raised by this survey, please provide these in the box provided:

**Table 7 - Subject Areas Covered in the Additional Comments Question:**

New Body	Need for clear distinctions between roles or EA and new Body, what is role of SIPs in EA, no duplications, ensuring same mistakes don't happen again, more streamlined, distinct from Unions, teachers should have direct input, working groups of practicing classroom teachers, meeting the needs of Irish Medium Sector, beneficial for body to liaise with universities to provide info to student teachers
TPL	Investment, budgets, engaging teachers, opportunity to network and share practice, online portal to track induction and EPD, quality of CPD is variable, need for 1:1 prof learning for classroom assistants and teachers, lack of time to participate

Recruitment and retention of teachers	Lack of specialised teachers eg science, pay issues
Digitisation	App based instead of portal
GTCNI	No impact to teachers, poor length of time to complete reg process, no justification for new body, can DE not carry out functions
Awards	Mainstream teaching award where competencies have to be met
Survey	Useful to have a forum to tease out some issues raised in survey
Inspection	Use ETI to identify excellence in key areas instead of fear of inspection

## **Appendix 1**

### **List of organisations that supported the survey distribution:**

1. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
2. Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
3. Education Authority
4. Education and Training Inspectorate
5. Queen's University Belfast
6. Ulster University
7. Stranmillis University College
8. St Mary's University College