

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2170](#): Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to abolish the General Teaching Council for Scotland and replace it with a government agency, lodged by Paul Blaker on behalf of Accountability Scotland.

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

General Teaching Council for Scotland

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) is the independent regulator for teachers in Scotland. It was initially set up in 1965 and was established to support standards for the teaching profession in Scotland. Its role is to register and regulate teachers and college lecturers. GTCS' statutory functions are set out in the [Public Services Reform \(General Teaching Council for Scotland\) Order 2011](#). The 2011 Order sets out the aims of GTCS, which are:

- to contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning; and
- to maintain and improve teachers' professional standards.

The GTCS' general functions are also set out in the 2011 Order. These are that the GTCS:

- keeps a public register;
- sets the standards for entering and remaining in the teaching profession;
- investigates the fitness to teach for individuals;
- considers the education and training of teachers and prospective teachers; and
- provides advice to the Scottish Government.

The 2011 Order also provides that the "GTCS must have regard to the interests of the public when performing its functions."

Fitness to Teach review

GTCS is currently undertaking a review of its Fitness to Teach process. It undertook a public call for views in 2024 and asked the Professional

Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) to undertake an independent review of the performance and efficiency of the Fitness to Teach process. [The PSA's report](#) was published in May 2025. [The PSA said](#)—

“Our findings highlight several areas for improvement such as reducing the time it takes to resolve cases, supporting vulnerable participants, simplifying public-facing guidance and documentation, and enhancing case management.”

In [response to the findings of the report, GTCS said](#)—

“We will consider the PSA’s recommendations in full and we will be presenting an action plan to our Professional Regulatory Assurance Committee. In the meantime, we ask all our partners and stakeholders to read the report in full and consider it in the context of the wider regulatory system in which we all operate.”

Reform of GTCS

The [intention of the 2011 Order was to make](#) the GTCS “an independent, self-regulating, professional body for teachers working in Scotland.”

The Scottish Government considered reform of the GTCS in the previous session of the Scottish Parliament. In [November 2017, the Government consulted on a potential education reform bill](#). This included a proposal to establish an ‘Education Workforce Council’ to take on the responsibilities of the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the Community Learning and Development Standards Council and to register other education professionals.

On 26 June 2018, the then Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney MSP, announced that the Government would not take forward legislation and some of the aims of the reform would be taken forward in partnership with local government. In relation to the GTCS specifically, [John Swinney MSP said](#), “I accept that those proposals should not go forward because there is not sufficient agreement for that move to be undertaken.”

This parliamentary session, the Government has pursued reform of national education agencies. Reform of GTCS has not featured prominently as part this work.

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Senior Researcher

24 June 2025

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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