



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Bill Paper

Paper 10/26

28 January 2026

NIAR 257-25

General Teaching Council Bill Paper

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This Bill Paper provides an overview of the General Teaching Council Bill as introduced to the Assembly on 24 November 2025. The paper outlines the background to the Bill and also identifies those areas within the Bill which may merit further consideration. Where relevant, it compares similar areas of responsibility held by regulatory bodies in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

This information is provided to Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in support of their duties, and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as professional legal advice, or as a substitute for it.

Key Points

- The Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 24th November 2025 and the second reading was held on 2nd December 2025. This paper is based on the Bill as introduced.
- The GTCNI Bill seeks to reinstate the Board of the General Teaching Council (GTC) for Northern Ireland, following the decision to dissolve the GTC in December 2021 by the then Minister of Education, Michelle McIlveen, following a series of controversies and allegations relating to the Council Board, which were extensively reported in the media at the time.
- It was established under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 as the professional body for teachers, with responsibility for: maintaining a register of teachers; approving teaching qualifications; regulating the profession; and providing advice to the Department of Education.
- The Explanatory and Financial Memorandum (EFM) accompanying the 2025 Bill notes that the Council has been in special measures in seven of the past nine years (i.e. to December 2024)¹ and quotes the Baker Tilly Mooney Moore (BTMM) Review commissioned by the Department in 2021 as finding that the then leadership Council was “dysfunctional, deeply flawed and irredeemably divided”.
- The BTMM Review also recommended that the Board of any future replacement body should comprise 10-12 members (GTCNI’s Council in the current legislation comprises 33 members²) and that future Board

¹ [General Teaching Council Bill - Explanatory and Financial Memorandum \(as introduced 24.11.25\)](#)

² As constituted in 2021, the Council should have had a membership of 33, the majority of whom are teachers. Fourteen of its members were teachers elected directly by the profession. A further five members were nominated by the Northern Ireland Teachers’ Council (NITC). Ten members were nominated by other educational stakeholders (including Higher Education Institutions, Employing Authorities and other agencies) and four members are appointed by DE under a public appointments process. [Statement of the Minister for Education to the Assembly on the publication of the Independent Review on 13.12.21](#)

members should be “exclusively appointed through a skills and experience-based public appointments process.”³

- Other jurisdictions in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland have similar regulatory bodies with whom individuals must register if they wish to teach in a grant-aided school. These are: the Teacher Regulatory Agency (England); the Education Workforce Council (Wales); the General Teaching Council of Scotland; and the Teaching Council (Ireland).
- A DE survey of teachers in 2023 (with 185 responses) found support for (amongst other functions): the provisional or conditional registration of teachers (85%); a point of contact or support for Newly Qualified Teachers (94%); professional standards set and held by body (83%); and a range of sanctions for misconduct (66%).
- In evidence to the Committee on 8th October 2025, DE officials stated that “although a wide range of options was considered, the business case analysis concluded that reforming the existing body was the best way in which to deliver the desired functions at the lowest cost and with the lowest risk to the ongoing smooth delivery of those functions”.
- The General Teaching Council Bill (as introduced) has 16 clauses and is in four Parts:
 - The Council’s constitution and general functions
 - Matters relating to the registration of teachers
 - Miscellaneous
 - General
- Part 1 amends the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 which gives the Department the power to constitute the GTCNI. It removes the list of

³ See footnote 1

stakeholder representatives to be included in the Council membership listed in the 1998 Order and removes reference to elections. It allows DE to make regulations to delegate further powers to the Council, including the creation of sub-committees. It also allows the Council to include non-members on its committees and states that disciplinary committees should consist solely of non-members.

- Clause 5 allows for the delegation of functions to Council staff and Clause 6 allows for the remuneration of members and non-members of the Council. This section also covers the provisional registration of teachers and the revalidation of registration through the demonstration of continuous professional development.
- Clause 9 allows DE to make regulations about any aspect of the registration of powers and Clause 10 makes it an offence to pretend to be a registered teacher. Clause 11 introduces a new schedule of disciplinary powers. Clause 12 makes the Council responsible for setting fees for its services and for ensuring it is financially sustainable.
- The Department of Education's Business Case presents a reformed GTCNI as the most cost-effective option it considered. DE recognised however, that this option would not be acceptable to the teaching profession.
- In its [evidence](#) to the Committee for Education on 14th January 2026, the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC), representing the main unions and professional bodies, confirmed their opposition to the Bill as stands and noted that teachers should not be required to pay fees to a reformed Council if it is not independent: "The Bill is unambiguous: the new GTCNI will simply carry out the Minister's wishes. If the Committee believes that that is the way to go, it should at least remove the requirement for teachers to pay for it." The NITC also oppose the removal of elections to the Council.

- NITC also raised concerns about the fees and whether, with its new powers, the Council could truly be self-funding without placing an undue burden on teachers. DE officials responded to these concerns in an evidence session to the Committee on 28th January 2026. This evidence has not been included in this Paper due to publication dates but should be considered in more detail as part of the scrutiny process.
- This Bill Paper concludes with a consideration of the potential financial implications of the Bill as published.

Introduction

The GTCNI Bill seeks to reinstate the Board of the General Teaching Council (GTC) for Northern Ireland, following the decision to dissolve the GTC in December 2021 by the then Minister of Education, Michelle McIlveen. Since that time, as outlined in greater detail below, GTCNI staff have continued to deliver the functions of the GTCNI under the oversight of the Department of Education. The Bill also introduces two new offences and expands the sanctions available to the Council. It contains 16 clauses.

The Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 24th November 2025 and the second reading was held on 2nd December 2025.

This paper is based on the Bill as introduced. It provides background information on the GTCNI, the review and consultation processes that have been conducted over the last five years, considers the Bill clause-by-clause, and concludes with a discussion of the potential financial implications of the legislation as introduced.

1 The General Teaching Council

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) is the professional body for teachers in Northern Ireland. It is an Arm's Length Body (ALB) of the Department of Education and is accountable to the Education Minister and the

Northern Ireland Assembly.⁴ It was established under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. According to the GTCNI website:⁵

“As the professional body for teachers in Northern Ireland we are dedicated to enhancing the status of teaching and promoting the highest standards of professional conduct and practice.”

Its statutory responsibilities are to:

- Establish and maintain a register of teachers
- Approve qualifications for the purposes of registration
- Regulate the teaching profession
- Provide advice to the Department of Education and employing authorities on:
 - Registration
 - Training, career development and performance management of teachers
 - Standard of conduct for teachers.

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (Constitution) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001 sets out the membership of the Council. The Explanatory Note to these Regulations states that:

“The Council will consist of 14 elected teacher members, 5 teachers appointed by the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council, 10 members appointed by other bodies representing different interests in the education field, and 4 members appointed by the Department of Education of whom one member will be representative of industry and commerce.”⁶

⁴ [General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland | Department of Education](#) accessed 21 November 2025

⁵ [Overview | The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland](#) accessed 21 November 2025

⁶ [The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland \(Constitution\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2001](#)

The Council is funded by teacher registration fees, currently £44 per year (please see section 2.3 for further discussion).⁷ The GTCNI states that all teachers in grant-aided schools must be registered as a condition of employment:

“The Education (NI) Order 1998 (amended) NI Order 2003, section 35 (3) states that; “An employing authority shall not employ a person as a teacher unless he is registered under this Article”. ”⁸

The GTCNI website also provides professional development resources and blogs for teachers.

According to evidence from GTCNI to the Committee for Education, there are currently 28,500 teachers active on the GTCNI Register of Teachers.⁹

1.1 Current disciplinary processes

The Department of Education amended the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (Registration of Teachers) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 in 2015 to give GTCNI the power to consider cases and remove a teacher from the register on the grounds of misconduct.¹⁰ The GTCNI states that it will consider a complaint if:

- The allegation of misconduct is of a serious nature, falling significantly short of the standard of behaviour expected of a teacher
- The allegation of misconduct is such that it may bring the profession into disrepute
- The conviction of an offence relevant to being a registered teacher.¹¹

⁷ [Registration Fees | The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland](#) accessed 21 November 2025

⁸ [Registration FAQs | The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland](#) accessed 28 November 2025

⁹ Committee for Education, [General Teaching Council Bill: the General Teaching Council Northern Ireland](#) 19th January 2026

¹⁰ [Rules & policies | The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland](#) accessed 22 December 2025

¹¹ [Investigation process | The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland](#) accessed 22 December 2025

The only sanction currently available to GTCNI if it upholds a complaint is to remove that individual from the register. i.e. to effectively prevent the individual from teaching in grant-aided schools. The 2022 consultation document and DE's business case for the GTCNI recognises the existing problems with the Council's regulatory powers:

“Since 2005, GTCNI has maintained a register of teachers and, following the transfer of the function from the Department to GTCNI in 2007, it has been responsible for approving qualifications for the purposes of registration. In 2015, GTCNI became responsible for regulating the teaching profession. Legal advice and emerging case law subsequently identified that the legislative basis for regulation is not robust and has left GTCNI unable to exercise these powers as originally intended”¹²

Additional and less severe sanctions than prohibition are proposed in this Bill. This paper also outlines the sanctions that are available to similar regulatory bodies in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

1.2 Background to the dissolution of the Council's Board in 2021



In 2021, Baker Tilly Mooney Moore (BTMM) was commissioned to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Council following concerns around its

¹² Department of Education (2022) [Consultation on Functions Delivered by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland](#)

operations, news coverage of bullying in the organisation and governance issues dating back to 2015, including 13 resignations from the Board between 2019 and 2021.^{13,14} BTMM found that:

- The legislative basis of the GTCNI was weak and did not allow GTCNI to adequately carry out its regulatory functions
- The governance model was “highly ineffective”
- The Council had done little to promote or support teacher professional development
- There were issues around the delivery model for registration¹⁵

The main findings, however, related to the ineffectiveness of the Council itself. In its conclusions, BTMM stated that:

“It is our view that GTCNI as the current delivery mechanism for achieving its statutory responsibilities/Government objectives is incapable of rectification in its current format and requires fundamental change. This will require dissolution of the organisation as it is currently structured. To progress to dissolution will require winding up legislation, consideration of an alternative delivery mechanism to accommodate the statutory functions in another format i.e. transfer of function back to DE or other bodies and putting in place transitional arrangements to manage the change in delivery mechanism.”¹⁶

On receipt of this report, the then Minister of Education, Michelle McIlveen, made a statement to the Assembly to say that she was standing down the Council with immediate effect.¹⁷ The Minister also stated that there would be a consultation to ascertain which GTCNI functions should be retained and that,

¹³ [‘Special measures’ set for NI’s professional teaching body](#) BBC News 12 January 2016

¹⁴ [Minister suspends ‘toxic’ teaching body](#) BBC News 13 December 2021

¹⁵ Department of Education (2021) [General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland – Board Effectiveness Review](#)

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ See footnote 2

pending its replacement, GTCNI would continue to deliver core functions such as teacher registration under the direction of the Department of Education.^{18,19}

The General Teaching Council (Directions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 added the General Teaching Council to Article 101 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which lists the organisations to which DE can give directions.

The Explanatory and Financial Memorandum accompanying the 2025 Bill notes that the Council has been in special measures in seven of the past nine years (i.e. to December 2024)²⁰ and quotes the Review as finding that the then leadership Council was “dysfunctional, deeply flawed and irredeemably divided”.

The Review also recommended that the Board of any future replacement body should comprise 10-12 members (GTCNI’s Council as defined in the current legislation comprises 33 members²¹) and that future Board members should be “exclusively appointed through a skills and experience-based public appointments process.”²²

The BTMM Review also recommended that:

“[This] Public appointment process for all Council members [should have] a focus on creating a Council composed of a blend of skills and experience to generate high levels of effective governance and oversight. Whilst teaching

¹⁸ See footnote 12

¹⁹ With the introduction of the General Teaching Council (Directions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

²⁰ See footnote 1

²¹ As constituted in 2021, the Council should have had a membership of 33, the majority of whom are teachers. Fourteen of its members were teachers elected directly by the profession. A further five members were nominated by the Northern Ireland Teachers’ Council (NITC). Ten members were nominated by other educational stakeholders (including Higher Education Institutions, Employing Authorities and other agencies) and four members are appointed by DE under a public appointments process. [Statement of the Minister for Education to the Assembly on the publication of the Independent Review on 13.12.21](#)

²² See footnote 1

professionals should be on a new Councils, they should not form a majority nor dominate the composition.”²³

1.3 The Independent Review of Education

The Independent Review of Education, published in 2023, emphasised that:

“Establishing an effective professional body for teachers is of fundamental importance. It should not simply be concerned with the administrative function of maintaining a register but should play a key role in setting, maintaining and improving standards of teaching and learning. It must perform in a manner which commands public confidence.”²⁴

One of the recommendations of the Review is that the remit of the Council is extended to include all those working in education (other than in higher education):

“As soon as practicable, this requirement should be extended to cover all professionals and para-professionals employed within the publicly funded education service, other than in universities – with the GTCNI becoming an Education Workforce Council.”²⁵

1.4 Consultation on the Council functions

In 2022, DE undertook the first of two consultations on the functions delivered by the General Teaching Council. In the consultation document, DE stated that there was a negative view of GTCNI amongst the teaching profession in Northern Ireland:

“The Department fully recognises that there is a widespread view among the teaching profession in Northern Ireland that GTCNI has, for some time,

²³ See footnote 15

²⁴ [Investing in a Better Future: the Independent Review of Education](#) (2023)

²⁵ Ibid.

failed to deliver tangible benefits for teachers despite being directly funded by them.”²⁶

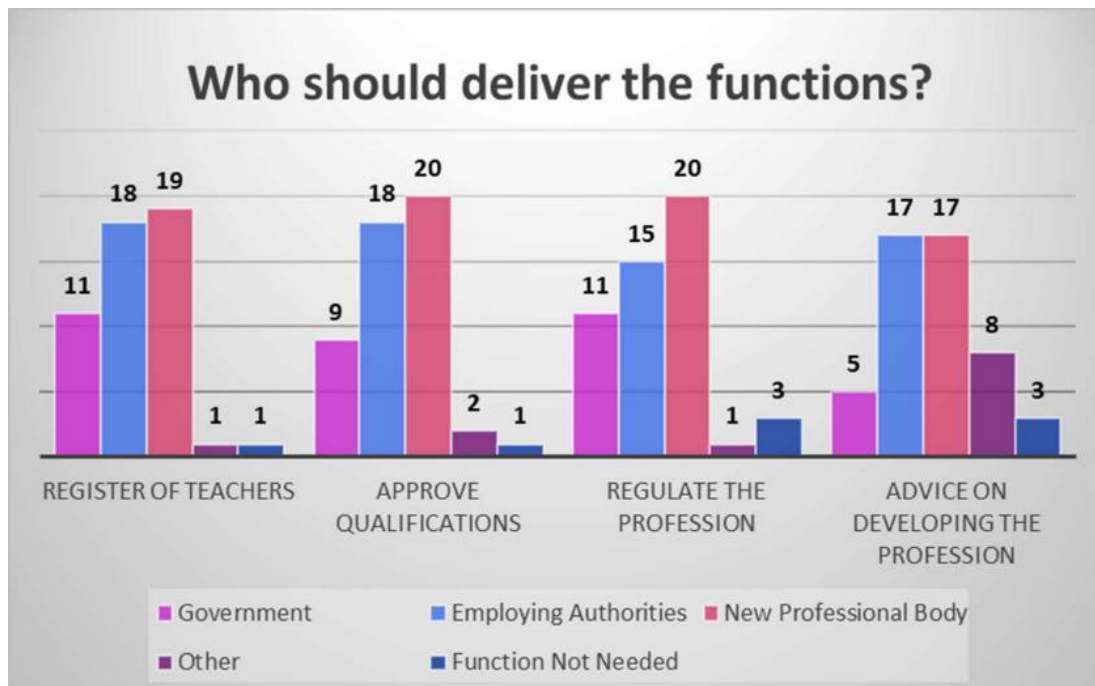
The first exercise received 50 responses, 16 of which were from individual teachers and 11 were from individual school leaders. This consultation found that a majority of respondents found that the following functions were all “essential” to the teaching profession: establishing and maintaining a register of teachers (74%); approving qualifications for the purposes of registration (66%); and regulating the profession (64%). Three in 10 (30%) thought that providing advice on developing and enhancing the teaching profession was “essential” with a further 34% believing this function is “helpful”.

There was a broadly equal split between “a new professional body” and “an employing authority” in terms of preferences for delivering these functions.²⁷ There does not appear to be a specific question on retaining the existing GTCNI organisation in the consultation response document.²⁸ Instead, the Consultation document asked respondents a question on which bodies should be responsible for four functions currently sitting with the GTCNI, as illustrated in the diagram below which has been excerpted from the consultation analysis report.

²⁶ See footnote 12

²⁷ Department of Education (2022) [Consultation on Functions Delivered by GTCNI Summary Paper: analysis of consultation responses](#)

²⁸ Department of Education (2022) [Functions Delivered by GTCNI - Consultation Questions Booklet](#)



Given the relatively low response rate to this first consultation, DE decided to undertake a more targeted exercise specifically with teachers in 2023. There were 185 responses to this consultation. This survey found support for (amongst other functions):

- The provisional or conditional registration of teachers (85%)
- A point of contact or support for Newly Qualified Teachers (94%)
- Professional standards set and held by body (83%)
- A range of sanctions for misconduct (66%)
- Periodic reaccreditation (57%)²⁹

1.5 Options Paper and Business Case

The EFM accompanying the Bill outlines the options paper and costed business case that were produced following this engagement exercise. The options considered included:

- Retain GTCNI as it is and continue to operate with Department oversight

²⁹ Department of Education (2023) [Aspirations for Excellence: A Professional Body for Teaching in Northern Ireland - Analysis of Survey Responses](#)

- Retain GTCNI with a reinstated Board restoring normal Non-departmental Public Body (NDPB) governance and accountability processes
- Retain and reform GTCNI, legislate to amend Board structure and enable its regulation function to be fully implemented
- Transfer all functions into the Department
- Establish a new NDPB as an Arms' Length Body of the Department
- Establish an Agency as an Arms' Length Body of the Department

The Business Case produced by the Department outlines 10 options and states that its preferred option is to “retain GCNI, legislate to amend Board structure and enable regulation function to be fully implemented”.³⁰ According to DE, this option has the following advantages:

“This option meets all CSFs [Critical Success Factors] permitting the delivery of the core functions of GTCNI which consultation and engagements have identified as essential or helpful to the teaching profession, schools or the wider education sector. It would also meet most of the outworkings of the BTMM Report and would provide for restored representation from the profession itself. Although this option would still require a significant amount of complex legislative work to develop a Bill to address teacher regulation and fix the leadership structures, it would eliminate a large amount of incidental work for DE officials in planning for and managing the orderly closure of one NDPB (staffing, assets, pension liabilities, etc) while establishing a functionally identical replacement NDPB. This option would acknowledge the recent improvement in GTCNI's performance and governance. It will also address the suggestion in the BTMM report to amend current board size and structure as well as using a public appointment process to ensure board has the necessary skill and competence to support effective decision making.”

In terms of disadvantages, DE recognises that:

³⁰ Replacement options in the Business Case for GTCNI (DE, 2005) provided by DE to RalSe in January 2026.

“This option does not meet the previous Minister’s decision to dissolve and replace GTCNI and so would be dependent on securing a superseding Ministerial decision. With GTCNI able to conduct investigations and panel hearing, there will be a need to increase staffing capacity and skills to cover regulation. This may require a review of the annual fee to ensure that any additional cost in conducting regulation is covered by the profession itself although the fee is likely to be reviewed for any option going forward.

This option is also not likely to be accepted by the profession as the Northern Ireland teaching unions have already indicated their opposition to the establishment of a body which is subject to DE control and in which elected teachers do not hold majority control within its Board.”

The EFM explains that “retaining and reforming GTCNI was the lowest cost option which delivered all of the desired functional outcomes. It was also the option with the lowest levels of associated risk and provided significant resource and timing advantages in the speed with which it could be implemented.”

1.5.1 Evidence to the Committee for Education

This section of the paper refers to initial evidence heard by the Committee for Education prior to the Committee Stage (commencing 3rd February 2026), which has been recorded and published as Minutes of Evidence on the Committee webpages.

In evidence to the Committee for Education on 8th October 2025 in relation to the forthcoming introduction of the Bill, Departmental officials outlined that:³¹

“Since 2021, under interim leadership arrangements and with departmental oversight, the GTCNI has made dramatic operational improvements, particularly on teacher registration and governance”.

They also noted that:

³¹ Committee for Education [General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland Legislation: Department of Education](#) 8th October 2025

“Engagement with the profession has also confirmed broad support for the retention of all the GTCNI's core functions. That suggests that closing the GTCNI would cause the Department to have to establish unnecessarily a new, functionally identical body. Although a wide range of options was considered, the business case analysis concluded that reforming the existing body was the best way in which to deliver the desired functions at the lowest cost and with the lowest risk to the ongoing smooth delivery of those functions”.

During this evidence session, the officials stated that the Bill would encompass:

- The constitution of Council
- New investigatory and fitness to practice panels
- Disciplinary sanctions
- The creation of two criminal offences
- Provisional registration (subject to consultation)
- Revalidation of registration (subject to consultation)
- The ability to share information with other regulators
- The ability to act on referrals from the public

The final two functions (i.e. sharing information from other regulators and acting on referrals from the public) do not appear to have been included explicitly in the Bill as published.

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) gave evidence to the Committee on 14th January 2026.³² It stated that:

“The NITC believes that the General Teaching Council Bill will still leave the GTC operating under the direction of a Minister, which means that it will not be independent or representative of the profession. Teachers already ask why they have to pay for a body that is not fully functional. They will find it hard to stomach paying for a non-departmental public body in future. Calling it a council gives the impression that it will have some

³² The umbrella body for the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, NASUWT, the National Association of Head Teachers, the National Education Union, and the Ulster Teachers' Union.

decision-making powers, whereas it will have nothing of the sort. The Bill is unambiguous: the new GTCNI will simply carry out the Minister's wishes. If the Committee believes that that is the way to go, it should at least remove the requirement for teachers to pay for it".³³

In this evidence session, the NITC made clear its opposition to the Bill as currently stands, as indeed was anticipated by DE in its selection of Option 4 in its Business Case. The NITC response to individual clauses in the Bill is provided in Section 2 below, but its main objections relate to the fact that the reformed GTCNI is not envisaged to be independent but will still collect fees from members and that there will no longer be elections to the Council.

DE officials responded to these concerns in an evidence session to the Committee on 28th January 2026. This evidence has not been included in this Paper due to publication time constraints.

Potential scrutiny points

- Members may wish to satisfy themselves that the option proposed in the legislation is the best option for a reconstituted GTCNI or whether there are there other models which might be more appropriate.
- Members may also wish to request clarification on the potential risks assessed by the Department in its development of the options outlined in its Business Case.
- Linked to the above, and given feedback from the teaching unions, is there a need for greater independence from DE for the GTCNI?

³³ Committee for Education [General Teaching Council Bill: Northern Ireland Teachers' Council](#) 14th January 2026

- Consideration could be given to whether there has been sufficient consultation on retaining the existing organisation as an option.
- Members may also wish to consider whether the proposed Bill is a sufficient response to the criticisms of the previous Council outlined in the BTMM report.
- Members may also wish to consider whether the Bill adequately addresses the legislative deficiencies identified in the 2022 consultation document, particularly in regard to the Council's regulatory functions.
- Members may want to clarify with the Minister the reasons for the potential omissions in the legislation identified above; whether there are any plans to introduce these functions under regulations; and if so, under which timeframe.
- In their evidence to the Committee (and in the EFM accompanying the Bill), officials noted that "[they] are trying to pick up on the best elements of the models that are followed by the other UK teaching regulators", and in particular, from GTC Scotland and the Education Workforce Council in Wales. Members may wish to clarify with DE the specific elements of these models that they are trying to adopt in Northern Ireland. This could include the extent to which GTCNI is or should be a representative body.
- Linked to the above and to the recommendations of the *Independent Review of Education* outlined previously, consideration could perhaps be given to the scope of the workforce to be covered by GTCNI.
- How will DE continue to monitor the performance of GTCNI? What will be the monitoring arrangements? What will be the

triggers for GTCNI returning to special measures if needs be?

- Given the current staffing levels of the GTCNI (15 staff), what will the impact of this legislation (and associated increased powers) on GTCNI resourcing and budget?

1.6 Teaching regulatory bodies in Great Britain and Ireland

The paragraphs below provide an initial overview of the remit and functions of similar regulatory bodies in the rest of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Further information on specific aspects of these functions, for example, in relation to available sanctions, are (where available) provided in the relevant sections in the pages which follow.

1.6.1 England: Teacher Regulatory Agency (TRA)

The TRA is an executive agency of the Department for Education (DfE). Its purpose is to support employers, schools and headteachers with their safeguarding responsibilities.³⁴ It investigates allegations of serious misconduct by teachers and prohibits teachers when necessary. The TRA maintains a record of qualified teachers to enable employers to conduct pre-employment checks. The TRA is a regulatory body rather than a teaching representative body and does not maintain a register of teachers.³⁵ According to correspondence with the TRA:

“Unlike Scotland and Wales, the regulatory model in England does not require teachers to be actively registered with the regulator. There is no

³⁴ Teaching Regulation Agency (2025) [Teaching Regulation Agency Strategy 2024-2027 and Business Plan 2024-2025](#)

³⁵ The National College for School Leadership merged with the Teaching Agency to form the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). The Teaching Agency had covered teacher regulation, supply, retention and teacher quality. The new merged body had responsibility for school leader development, as well as teacher regulation and supply. In 2018, the NCTL was dissolved and some functions transferred to the DfE, with the teaching regulation elements transferred to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA). In more recent times, the TRA has been criticised for the length of time taken to process misconduct cases. Source: correspondence from the House of Commons Library (7.01.26) and [Teachers' regulator in England investigated after claims it has left teachers in distress](#) Guardian, 3rd August 2024

public register of teachers in England and therefore teachers do not hold registration statuses (for example full registration, provisional registration etc). In order to be employed as a qualified teacher in maintained schools in England, teachers must hold qualified teacher status (QTS) and subsequently complete a statutory induction period. The Department for Education (DfE) maintains the central record of teachers in England. This central record is checked by Employers via a DfE digital service to confirm whether a teacher holds QTS and has passed induction. Disciplinary action taken by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) can result in a prohibition order being imposed on a teacher which prevents them from teaching in schools. TRA maintains the list of prohibited teachers and employers can also check if a teacher is prohibited using the same digital service they use to confirm QTS.”³⁶

1.6.2 Wales: the Education Workforce Council (EWC)

EWC is the independent, professional regulator for the education workforce in Wales. It establishes and maintains a Register of Education Practitioners.³⁷ It regulates education practitioners across schools, further education, youth work, and work-based learning.³⁸ It publishes a Code of Professional Conduct and Practice which sets out the standards expected of registrants. It also investigates and hears allegations of unacceptable professional conduct, serious professional incompetence, or relevant criminal offences.³⁹ The EWC also works to promote the sector and influence education policy decision-making.⁴⁰

³⁶ Correspondence between RalSe and the Teaching Regulation Agency, 21st January 2026

³⁷ See footnote 12

³⁸ [Introduction to the EWC](#) accessed 23rd December 2025

³⁹ [Introduction to the EWC](#) accessed 23rd December 2025

⁴⁰ The EWC was established by the [Education \(Wales\) Act 2014](#). The Act renamed the General Teaching Council Wales to the Education Workforce Council and “expands its remit to include the registration and regulation of more of the people who are involved in teaching and learning in Wales”

1.6.3 Scotland: General Teaching Council for Scotland

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland) is the independent regulator for teachers and college lecturers in Scotland. It was the first independent, self-regulating body for teaching in the world.⁴¹ It maintains the register of teaching professionals (registration, as elsewhere in the UK and Ireland, is a legal requirement to teach in Scottish schools).⁴² It sets the qualifications and criteria for registration; sets and upholds the standards for the profession, including expectations of conduct; and investigates concerns around competence and conduct under its fitness to teach process. It also accredits Initial Teacher Training and works with the Scottish Government and others nationally and internationally to inform policy development around regulation.

1.6.4 Republic of Ireland: The Teaching Council

The Teaching Council is the regulator of the teaching profession in Ireland. Its role is “to protect the public by promoting and regulating professional standards in teaching”.⁴³ It maintains the register of 126,000 registered teachers in Ireland, vets applicants to the register, ensures that Newly Qualified Teachers coming into the profession receive the necessary support, investigates complaints against registered teachers and apply sanctions if necessary, reviews and accredits 52 ITE programmes, and provide free access to an online library of journals and ebooks. The Council awards bursaries to teachers. It also conducts and commissions research “to support evidence informed decision making.”⁴⁴

2 The General Teaching Council Bill

The General Teaching Council Bill (as introduced) has 16 clauses and is in four Parts:

⁴¹ See footnote 12

⁴² [About GTC Scotland](#) accessed 23rd December 2025

⁴³ [The Teaching Council](#) accessed 19th December 2025

⁴⁴ The Teaching Council (n.d.) [What does the Teaching Council do?](#)

1. The Council's constitution and general functions
2. Matters relating to the registration of teachers
3. Miscellaneous
4. General

2.1 The Council's constitution and general functions

2.1.1 Clause 1: membership

Clause 1 amends the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 which gives the Department the power to constitute the GTCNI. It **removes** the list of stakeholder representatives to be included in the Council membership listed in the 1998 Order, i.e.:

- Teachers
- Employing authorities
- Transferors and trustees of grant-aided schools
- Institutions providing for the initial and further training of teachers
- Industry and commerce
- Such other interests as in the opinion of the Department will enable the Council to carry out its functions more effectively

This is in line with the BTMM Independent Review that recommended that the membership of the Council should be reduced by approximately two thirds. Please see Appendix 1 for a table displaying the previous membership of the Council. It also removes references to the "election" of members. This is in line with DE's intention that:

"[The] current 33-member council will be replaced by a streamlined 12-member board, and every member of that board will in future be appointed through a public appointments process that will shortlist applicants based on the skills and experience that they can bring to the role and on their ability to contribute to the provision of strategic direction, strong governance and oversight of the GTCNI... half the positions on the new

board will be filled by currently registered teachers. That will ensure that the profession is still strongly represented within the body”.⁴⁵

In its evidence session, the NITC stated its strong opposition to appointment-only membership of the Council:

“We profoundly disagree with the removal of elections. In most other professional bodies, half the members are appointed and half are elected. The Bill removes that entirely. The argument that is used is that teachers elected the wrong people, but, to be honest, that is not a good argument.”⁴⁶

The NITC also stated that it had an issue with employer representatives on the Council but had mixed views on whether the membership should be representative of all school sectors.⁴⁷

It is worth noting in this context the conclusion of the Independent Review of Education, in relation to the composition of the Council, that:

“A chief concern, given the history of the GTCNI, is the composition and structure of the Council itself. The primary purpose of the Council is to act in the public interest. Its composition must reflect that purpose. It should have a majority of lay members who are selected using skills-based criteria and a public appointments process. They should include members drawn from business and industry, academia and persons able to represent the views of parents and young people. At the same time, a strong teacher voice is absolutely essential. Teacher members should be elected using a small number of separate constituencies to ensure a balance of sectors and between classroom teachers and senior staff. The overall size of the Council should be manageable. Total membership should be around twelve”.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ See footnote 31

⁴⁶ See footnote 33

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ See footnote 24

The composition of the relevant Councils in the rest of Great Britain and Ireland is set out in the table below.

Table 1: Council membership in regulatory bodies elsewhere

Jurisdiction	No. of members	Composition
England: TRA	N/A – Executive agency of the Department	N/A
Wales: EWC	14 Council members	7 public appointments 7 teaching union nominations (from 13 organisations) ⁴⁹
Scotland: GTC Scotland	37 Council members	19 elected registered teachers 11 educational stakeholder nominees 7 lay members appointed by an independent Appointments Committee ⁵⁰
Ireland: Teaching Council	37 Council members	11 primary teachers: nine elected and two teacher union nominees 11 post-primary teachers: seven elected and four teacher union nominees 2 nominated by colleges of education 2 nominated by specified third-level bodies 4 nominated by school management (two primary and two post-primary) 2 nominated by parents' associations (one primary and one post-primary)

⁴⁹ [The Education Workforce Council \(Membership and Appointment\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2014](#)

⁵⁰ [Governance](#) accessed 22.12.25

		5 nominated by the Minister for Education, including one representing each of IBEC and ICTU.
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Potential scrutiny points

- Do members have a view on whether it is appropriate that all Council members are appointed and not elected if the GTCNI is to be the representative body for the teaching profession in Northern Ireland?
- How will the composition of the Board be decided if not specified in the legislation? How will the Department determine the appropriate composition?
- Is the proposed size of the Council proportionate to the size of Northern Ireland and its population of teachers? There are currently approximately 28,500 teachers registered with GTCNI.⁵¹
- Has the Department any further views on the appointment process for Council members? What skills will be specified? Is it important that the teacher members are reflective of the schools sector in NI? If so, how does this work in practice with the public appointment process?
- What does the Department envisage as the key risks if the NITC does not support the legislation as it stands?

⁵¹ See footnote 9

2.1.2 Clause 2: rules relating to the Council's constitution

This clause amends paragraph 1(3) Schedule 1 of the 1998 Order which currently reads “(3) Regulations under sub-paragraph (1) may authorise the Council to make provision with respect to any matter.” This clause allows DE to delegate matters relating to the constitution of the Council to the Council through regulations. The EFM suggests that this could include decisions around the tenure of members and the creation of committees and sub-committees.

England: not applicable

Wales: According to the Education (Wales) Act 2014, “Welsh Ministers may by order confer or impose on the Council such additional functions as they consider appropriate.”⁵² The EWC does not appear to have specific powers in this regard.

Scotland: GTC Scotland can determine its committee and panel structure under the Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland) Order 2011.⁵³

Ireland: Under the Teaching Council Act 2001-15, the Council “may establish committees consisting in whole or in part of persons who are members of the Council— (a) to assist and advise the Council on matters relating to any of its functions or on such matters as the Council may from time to time determine, or (b) to perform such functions of the Council as may be delegated to the committee from time to time.”⁵⁴

⁵² [Education \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)

⁵³ [Governance](#) accessed 23rd December 2025

⁵⁴ [TEACHING COUNCIL ACT 2001](#)

Potential scrutiny points

- Does the Department intend to introduce regulations under this clause? If so, what is the likely timeline for these regulations?
- Is it appropriate for GTCNI to decide the tenure of members? The BTMM report, for example, stated that tenure should be restricted to four years and a maximum of two terms.
- What other powers does DE anticipate delegating to GTCNI?

2.1.3 Clause 3: sub-committees

This Clause amends paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 of the 1998 Order to give the Department the power to “authorise or require” the Council to create sub-committees. It also amends other parts of Schedule 1 to include references to sub-committees as well as committees. The 2022 Consultation Document lists the committees in operation under the previous Council as:

- Policy, Registration and Regulation Committee (PRRC)
- Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GPC)
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)
- Human Resource Committee (HRC)⁵⁵

The consultation document notes that in each Council mandate, Council members were appointed to serve on these Committees, based, where possible, on their interests, skills and experience; and each Committee in turn elects a Chair and Vice Chair to direct its work.

⁵⁵ See footnote 12

2.1.4 Clause 4: membership of committees and sub-committees

Clause 4 inserts two paragraphs into Schedule 1 of the 1998 Order to make it clear that regulations may allow Council committees and sub-committees to consist of, or include, people who are not members of the Council. According to the EFM, this will allow the Council to draw on specialist, external expertise.

The second paragraph states that committees or sub-committees established to exercise the functions under Schedule 1a (Disciplinary Powers of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland – newly introduced here under Clause 11) should solely consist of people who are not members of the Council. According to the EFM, this is to ensure that decisions around teachers' fitness to practice are not in conflict with recent case law about the involvement of members of regulatory bodies in decisions about professionals' fitness to practice.

Membership of disciplinary panels in the rest of Great Britain and Ireland

TRA (England): Professional Conduct Panels. Panel members are recruited through a public appointments process. A panel has three members, and will include: a teacher, or someone who has been a teacher in the previous five years; and a layperson, specifically not from the teaching profession. The third panel member may be a person who has taught previously, but does not currently meet the 'teacher panellist' criteria and will be referred to as a 'former teacher panellist'. One panellist is asked to act as chair. A legal adviser is present to advise the panel on the legal process. The adviser is not a member of the Department for Education and takes no part in the decision-making process.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ [Teacher misconduct: regulating the teaching profession](#) accessed 22nd December 2025

Wales: The initial complaint is considered in private by the Investigating Committee which must include a minimum of three panel members, including at least one member registered with the EWC, and one lay person. If the complaint progresses to a public hearing, it is heard by a fitness to practise committee includes at least three panel members, including at least one member registered with the EWC. The Committee is supported by an independent legal adviser. The Committee which sits at a hearing will not have had any previous knowledge of the case.⁵⁷

Scotland: GTC Scotland panels. These panels include at least three people. The majority will be registered teachers and college lecturers and there will be at least one non-teacher. Panel members are not GTC Scotland employees.⁵⁸

Ireland: Panels of the Disciplinary Committee. A Panel consists of not less than three and not more than five members of the Disciplinary Committee.⁵⁹

Potential scrutiny points

- In what circumstances does DE anticipate that the Council will appoint specialist non-members to non-disciplinary committees?
- How will the disciplinary panels work in practice? How will non-members be recruited by the Council?

⁵⁷ [Fitness to Practise hearings](#) accessed 22nd December 2025

⁵⁸ [Fitness to Teach > Panel consideration meetings](#) accessed 22nd December 2025

⁵⁹ [Fitness to Teach Inquiries](#) accessed 22nd December 2025

- Are the previous issues relating to GTCNI's regulatory and disciplinary powers adequately addressed and resolved in this legislation? (See also Schedule 1a below)

2.1.5 Clause 5: delegation of functions

This clause widens the scope for the delegation of functions. It replaces the existing paragraph 7 of the 1998 Order which **currently** reads:

“7.—(1) The Council may authorise the chairman, the registrar or any committee of the Council to exercise such of its functions as it may determine.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) is without prejudice to any power to authorise an officer of the Council to carry out any of the Council's functions on behalf of the Council.”

The new list in this Bill includes: committees, sub-committees, the chairman or other members, the registrar (chief executive) or other officers. According to the EFM, the purpose of this clause is to speed up decision-making. The amended text does state however that “ [this] does not affect the Council's responsibility for the exercise of the function”. In its evidence to the Committee for Education, NITC highlighted a concern about the degree of delegation and the need for Board oversight.

Potential scrutiny points

- Will there be any restrictions in practice on the level to which functions may be delegated in the organisation.
- What will be the accountability arrangements for increased delegation?
- Will this be monitored (if at all) by DE or GTCNI?

2.1.6 Clause 6: remuneration and allowances

Paragraph 8 of the 1998 Order currently allows the Council to pay Council or Committee members expenses and subsistence. Clause 6 replaces this

paragraph to allow the Council to remunerate members of the Council and non-members on its committees or sub-committees if they are not already a paid member of staff or member.

Potential scrutiny points

- What will be the policy for remuneration? Will this policy be in line with other public sector bodies?
- Will this policy be published?
- What are the likely daily rates for specialist non-members of the Council? Have these been included in the additional anticipated running costs of the Council?

2.2 Matters relating to the registration of teachers

2.2.1 Clause 7: provisional registration

This clause amends Article 36 of the 1998 Order to enable the Department to authorise the Council to allow provisional registration of teachers who do not quite meet the qualification requirements for registration. This is to allow these individuals to work as teachers for a defined period of time while they can fill any gaps in their professional qualifications.

In evidence to the Committee for Education on 8th October 2025, DE stated:

“We intend to allow for a new category of provisional registration for teachers whose qualifications are judged to have minor deficits against the GTCNI's qualification rules. That could help prevent overly rigid application of those rules from becoming a barrier to entry into the profession. It may even, in providing greater flexibility, contribute in some small way to addressing some subject-specific teacher shortages, of which we are aware. Although that additional flexibility would need to be implemented carefully, we believe that it could be done without compromising the high standards that we expect from all teachers.”

The Department also stated that this change would be subject to further consultation with teachers and other relevant stakeholders.

Provisional registration of teachers

England: Not applicable – the TRA does not hold a register as such.

Wales: the Education (Wales) Act 2014 gives the EWC the power to register individuals on a provisional basis. According to the EFM accompanying the Act, “there are a variety of circumstances where it may be appropriate for a person to be provisionally registered including while the person:

- Undertakes a period of induction
- Starts teacher training
- Works towards obtaining a required qualification”⁶⁰

Scotland: in Scotland, provisionally registered teachers have successfully achieved a teaching qualification but have not yet completed an induction period of assessed teaching practice.

[GTC Scotland's Provisional Registration and Probationary Policy 2023](#) sets out the requirements for individual teachers to progress from provisional to full registration. There are three groups of provisionally registered teachers in Scotland: those that have qualified in Scotland; those with an equivalent qualification gained outside of Scotland; and fully registered teachers seeking registration in an additional registration category.⁶¹

⁶⁰ [Education \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)

⁶¹ [What is Provisional Registration](#) accessed 9th January 2026

Republic of Ireland: in Ireland, the Teaching Council offers registration with conditions if the application has not fulfilled all registration requirements. The condition(s) are recorded on the Register and on the Conditional Registration letter. If all the conditions are not within the timeframe and an extension is not granted an extension, the registration will lapse.⁶²

Potential scrutiny points

- When does the Department envisage undertaking the consultation on the introduction of provisional registration?
- Does the Council have capacity to manage a potential increase in applications for provisional registration?
- How will provisional registrants be monitored in relation to their progress towards full registration?
- What does DE intend by a “defined period of time”?
- What does DE consider to be a “minor deficit”?

2.2.2 Clause 8: further training

Clause 8 amends Article 36 to make it clear that DE can require GTCNI to periodically make registered teachers revalidate their registration by showing evidence of their continuing professional development. In the evidence session to the Committee for Education on 8th October 2025, DE stated that:

“The Bill will provide a power allowing for the periodic revalidation of every teacher's registration with the GTCNI. That will require all teachers to

⁶² [Registration with Condition\(s\) | The Teaching Council](#) accessed 9th January 2026

demonstrate periodically their continuing participation in teacher professional learning. If that power is brought into effect, it will ensure that the skills of every teacher remain up to date and informed by developments in good practice and research throughout their careers, which, again, will enhance the quality of our teaching workforce.”

Again, DE officials committed to consulting on this change both in their oral evidence and in the EFM:

“The Department has already committed that regulations and commencement orders for Clauses 7 and 8 will only be brought forward following appropriate consultation with the teaching profession and key stakeholders”.⁶³

The EFM accompanying the Bill states that this is a mechanism already used by teaching regulators in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. In its evidence to the Committee, NITC raised the following concerns in relation to this Clause:

“Clause 8 is more problematic, as we do not know what mechanism GTCNI would use for the re-registration of teachers. Other professional bodies have systems whereby members of the body provide a sample of professional learning or work. We want clarity that that would be distinct from the employment relationship. There is a fear, which may be unfounded, that a person's employer could make that decision, whereas it should be the person's professional body. The Bill is a bit open-ended about what might happen, so we would prefer to have clarity.”⁶⁴

Professional development

England: N/A. According to correspondence with the TRA “we do not have a register of teachers, so teachers are not required to revalidate their registration status. QTS is a permanent

⁶³ See footnote 1

⁶⁴ See footnote 33

status. There is also no statutory CPD requirement in England, although our Teacher Standards expect teachers to take responsibility for improving their practice ([Teachers' standards - GOV.UK](#)). The Department for Education does sponsor and fund the National Professional Qualifications for teachers and schools leaders: [National professional qualification \(NPQ\) courses - GOV.UK](#)".⁶⁵

Wales: information does not appear to be publicly available at present.

Scotland: GTC Scotland has a reaccreditation scheme called [Professional Update \(PU\)](#) to record the standards of education and training of teachers on its Register. PU is an ongoing process that includes:

- Engaging in relevant [professional learning](#)
- Self-evaluating against the [Professional Standards](#)
- Maintaining a reflective professional learning record
- Dialogue with a line manager acting as reviewer

To maintain Full (General) registration status with GTC Scotland, teachers and college lecturers must provide evidence of their engagement with the PU process every five years.⁶⁶

Ireland: information does not appear to be publicly available at present.

⁶⁵ Correspondence between the Teaching Regulation Agency and RaISe, 21st January 2026

⁶⁶ [Policies for teachers and lecturers - Education Scotland](#) accessed 23 January 2026

Potential scrutiny points

- When does the Department envisage undertaking the consultation on the introduction of revalidation?
- Does the Council have capacity to manage the administrative processes for revalidation?
- How will professional learning be monitored?
- Will revalidation create an additional burden on teachers?
- How will appropriate professional learning be determined?
- How will the process fit with existing systems of recording professional learning?

2.2.3 Clause 9: rules relating to registration

This clause replaces the existing paragraph 5 in Article 36 of the 1998 Order which **currently** states “(5) Regulations under this Article may authorise the Council to make provision in relation to any matter.” The new paragraph is intended to clarify that the Department has the power to make regulations about any aspect of the registration of teachers. This clause is open-ended and prompted the NITC to comment in their evidence session on 14th January 2026:

“Clause 9 is interesting, because it gives the Department the power to set out in regulations "any matter" relating to the registration of teachers that will be required or authorised to include in its rules. I say that that is interesting because it makes clear that GTCNI is entirely subservient to the Department. If that is the case, it is not morally justifiable to ask teachers to pay for it.”⁶⁷

⁶⁷ See footnote 33

Potential scrutiny points

- Members may wish to explore what regulations DE may envisage introducing here.
- Members may also wish to explore whether DE still retains the power to direct the Council under The General Teaching Council (Directions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 noted above.

2.2.4 Clause 10: offences

Clause 10 adds a paragraph to Article 35 of the 1998 Order to make it an offence to pretend to be a registered teacher. It also creates an offence of providing false or misleading information to the Council. According to the EFM, “Both these offences will be triable summarily only and punishable by a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale (£2,500)”.^{68,69}

Potential scrutiny points

- Do Members agree that this level of fine is sufficient for the offence?

2.2.5 Clause 11: disciplinary powers

The GTCNI currently has disciplinary powers under the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (Registration of Teachers) (Amendment)

⁶⁸ See footnote 1

⁶⁹ According to the EFM, Regulations under Article 36 which contain provision for the offence can only be made if a draft of the regulations is laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly; and if combined with regulations under Chapter 1 of Part 6 of the 1998 Order on other matters subject only to negative resolution, then all can be taken forward in regulations which are subject to the draft affirmative procedure (see subsection (3)(c) of this clause, which allows any regulations under Chapter 1 of Part 6 of the 1998 Order to be subject to this procedure instead of being subject to negative resolution)

Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (SR 2015/151).⁷⁰ According to the GTCNI website, the Regulations allow:

- GTCNI to remove a teacher from the register if found guilty of misconduct
- Individuals to make representations to GTCNI
- GTCNI to issue a notice of its decisions
- The right of appeal to the High Court if a teacher is removed from the register.⁷¹

GTCNI can only investigate if the employing authority or employer has already dealt with allegations of misconduct through an agreed disciplinary process.

Clause 11 introduces a new schedule to the 1998 Order to clarify and extend the disciplinary powers held by the Council. With the introduction of Schedule 1A, GTCNI will acquire powers, through regulations made by the Department, to regulate the teaching profession and impose a range of sanctions. As previously noted in this paper, the Council currently only has the power to remove an individual from the register.

Schedule 1 has eight sections:

1. Investigation, hearing and determination of disciplinary cases
2. Disciplinary orders: general
3. Conditional Registration Orders
4. Suspension Orders
5. Prohibition Orders
6. Interim Suspension Orders
7. Appeals against interim suspension orders and disciplinary orders
8. Supplementary provision about regulations under this Schedule

⁷⁰ [Rules & policies | The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland](#) accessed 22nd December 2025

⁷¹ *ibid*

Investigation, hearing and determination of disciplinary cases

This section states that regulations may set out the processes that the GTCNI will follow where:

“Regulations may make provision for and in connection with –

(a) the investigation by the Council of cases where, in respect of a registered teacher

(i) it is alleged that the teacher is guilty of unacceptable professional conduct or serious professional incompetence, or has been convicted at any time of a relevant offence;

or (ii) it appears to the Council that the teacher is guilty of such conduct or incompetence, or has been convicted of such an offence;

and (b) the hearing and determination by the Council of such cases where it is found on investigation that a registered teacher has a case to answer.”

According to the EFM, it envisages regulations:

- Making provision about serving notices on a person who is subject to fitness to practise proceedings
- Allowing a person the opportunity of making oral representations in hearings
- Allowing the person to be represented by any other person at hearings (a barrister, for example)
- Publishing statements where a case against a person is not proved
- The production and admissibility of evidence
- Administering oaths or affirmations

It also allows for regulations to allow the Department to restrict the Council's power to investigate a case, for example, where it has already been referred to the UK Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Disciplinary orders: general

Paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 1A provides the Department with the power to make regulations authorising GTCNI to make disciplinary orders in relation to registered teachers who have been found guilty of unacceptable professional conduct or serious professional incompetence or who have been convicted of a relevant offence. This includes notifying them of their right to appeal, publishing relevant information, notifying the employing authority and requiring the authority to take appropriate steps which may include dismissal. This section also defines “disciplinary orders” as potential sanctions, including:

- A reprimand
- A conditional registration order
- A suspension order
- A prohibition order

It therefore expands the range of sanctions available to the Council.

Conditional Registration Orders

A conditional registration order allows the Council to specify the steps that a person must take to become competent, which can be at their own cost (i.e. the cost of training). The teacher can request that the Council reviews the order. If the teacher does not comply with the Order, the Council can move to a suspension order or a prohibition order.

Suspension Orders

Paragraph 4(1) of Schedule 1A states that “where a suspension order is made in relation to a person, the person ceases to be eligible for registration under Article 35.” If the teacher is currently on the register, they must be removed. The suspension can last up to two years and the teacher will not be able to work in a grant-aided school in Northern Ireland. The order may contain conditions for re-entry onto the register.

Prohibition Orders

Under a prohibition order, a teacher ceases to be eligible for registration under Article 35 and if they are already on the register they will be removed from it for a minimum of two years. Following the two year period (or longer, if specified in the order), a teacher can apply to have their registration restored.

Interim Suspension Orders

Paragraph 6 of the Schedule states that GTCNI will be provided with the power, through regulations made by the Department, to make an interim suspension order in respect of a teacher who, on the face value of evidence presented to it, seems likely to be found guilty of unacceptable professional conduct or serious professional incompetence or likely to be found to have been convicted of a relevant offence. Each order will be for a maximum of 18 months and will be reviewed every six months. Interim orders will only be made if the Council is satisfied that it:

- Is necessary for the protection of children
- Is otherwise in the public interest
- Is in the interests of the person

Appeals against interim suspension orders and disciplinary orders

Paragraph 7 of this Schedule, states that regulations must give the right to appeal an interim suspension order or any disciplinary order to the High Court. The High Court judgement will be final.

Supplementary provision about regulations under this Schedule

According to the EFM, Paragraph 8 of the Schedule 1A affects the way in which powers in Schedule 1A to make regulations may be exercised. The paragraph allows, for example, those regulations to authorise the delegation of functions beyond the types of delegation permitted by paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 to the 1998 Order (as amended by clause 5 of the Bill). Paragraph 8 of Schedule 1A also ensures that powers to make regulations under Schedule 1A include power to require or authorise GTCNI to deal in its rules with any matter that the disciplinary regulations can provide for.

The Bill also provides clarity that a registered teacher is a teacher who is on the register or who has applied to be on it and that a relevant offence is:

(a) in the case of a conviction in the United Kingdom, a criminal offence other than one having no material relevance to the person's fitness to be a registered teacher; (b) in the case of a conviction elsewhere, an offence which, if committed in Northern Ireland, would constitute such an offence as is mentioned in paragraph (a).

Disciplinary powers

England: the TRA can issue an Interim Prohibition Order if the alleged offence is deemed to be sufficiently serious.⁷² It also can issue a Prohibition Order which has a lifetime duration but can be reviewed.⁷³

Wales: EWC investigates all referrals received where it is alleged that a registered person is guilty of unacceptable professional conduct or serious professional incompetence, and/or has been convicted (at any time) of a relevant offence.⁷⁴ Prior to the disciplinary committee hearing, an individual can agree to a voluntary reprimand or voluntary prohibition which can then be ratified by the committee. If the individual does not admit the specified conduct, the sanctions available to the panel are:

- A reprimand
- A Conditional Registration Order⁷⁵

⁷²Teaching Regulation Agency (2020) [Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession](#)

⁷³ Teaching Regulation Agency (2022) [Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers](#)

⁷⁴ Education Workforce Council (2024) [Disciplinary Procedures and Rules 2024](#)

⁷⁵ This shall specify all the conditions relevant to the registered person's employment as a practitioner with which the individual must comply, and in relation to each condition, whether it is time bound or not

- A Suspension Order⁷⁶

- A Prohibition Order⁷⁷

Scotland: potential sanctions from GTC Scotland from a panel consideration meeting or a full hearing include (if warranted):

- Reprimand
- Conditional Registration Order
- Reprimand and Conditional Registration Order
- Removal⁷⁸

Republic of Ireland: potential sanctions from the Teaching Council in Ireland are similar i.e. they include:

- Advise, admonish or censure the person
- Place conditions on their registration
- Suspend [the person] from the register for a set time (up to two years). This would mean that [they] would not be able to teach in a position funded by the Department of Education for the time that [they] are suspended from the register.
- Removal from the register and prohibition to apply to be restored to the register for a set time.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ This shall specify the period (not exceeding two years) at the end of which the person again becomes eligible to re-apply for registration. A Suspension Order may specify conditions to be complied with by the individual which must be complied with before they can become eligible again to apply for registration. A condition specified in a Suspension Order can be time bound or not

⁷⁷ This shall specify the period (which shall not be less than two years, beginning with the date on which the order takes effect) before the end of which no application may be made by the person for a determination that he or she is eligible to re-apply for registration. A person wishing to be readmitted to the Register following a Prohibition Order must apply to the EWC for a determination in compliance with the rules

⁷⁸ [Panel consideration meetings](#) accessed 23rd December 2025. GTC Scotland is currently reviewing its Fitness to Teach process: [GTC Scotland publishes Fitness to Teach action plan](#)

⁷⁹ [Information for registered teachers](#) accessed 23rd December 2025

Potential scrutiny points

- When are these regulations likely to be made? Will there be further consultation on the proposed regulations?
- Are there any other sanctions that should be considered?
- Are the timelines associated with the proposed sanctions sufficient?
- Will the proposed regulations differentiate between misconduct and incompetence?
- Will DE and/or the Council provide sufficient protections against malicious allegations?

2.3 Miscellaneous

2.3.1 Clause 12: fees and charges to cover Council's expenditure

This clause allows the Council to set fees for its services and seeks to make it financially sustainable by making the Council responsible for “ensur[ing] that the income from such fees and charges, taking one year with another, is equal to the expenditure it incurs in exercising all of the functions conferred on it under this Part or any other statutory provision”.

According to the EFM:

“This will ensure that fees can be set at levels which provide sufficient income to fund the totality of GTCNI’s operations; while also protecting the long-term sustainability of the body. It also removes the Department’s approval role in the setting of fees.”⁸⁰

⁸⁰ See footnote 1

In DE's evidence to the Committee on 8 October 2025, officials stated that:

"There is a £44 fee. It is tax-deductible, so it does not actually cost you £44. That is the good thing about membership fees. It has been the same fee for 20 years. That was introduced in 2005. Once the new body is established and there is a board, it will be up to the board and the new body to determine its fee structure. That is included in the draft Bill. Depending on what services they provide and how they can justify those, they will review the fee... [and] it will probably go up. I am pretty sure about that, particularly because it has not been looked at for 20 years. The fee of £44 is less than the fee in all the other jurisdictions in the local area that charge a fee."⁸¹

In the initial DE consultation, there were mixed views on the payment of fees with 42% agreeing that a requirement for teachers to pay fees was reasonable and 44% disagreeing. The small base size (n=50) for this consultation should however be considered when drawing any conclusions from this finding.

In its evidence to the Committee, the NITC also raised concerns about the fees and whether, with its new powers, the Council could truly be self-funding without placing an undue burden on teachers:

"We believe that those charges should be removed, because we think that the fact that clause 11 widens the scope, in conjunction with the fact that it will be directed by the Department, means that we could end up with a situation in which fees escalate out of control for a body that is carrying out functions for the Department."⁸²

Fees and charges

England: The TRA is funded centrally by the Department for Education. It does not charge a fee as it does not maintain a register as such.

⁸¹ See footnote 31

⁸² See footnote 33

Wales: The EWC in Wales has a two-tier fee system. The first group (school teachers, further education teachers, youth workers) pay £45 while those in the second group (school, further education or youth support workers) pay £15. It also receives grant funding for other activities from the Welsh Government.⁸³

Scotland: GTC Scotland is self-financing. According to its fees policy, fees are set with the objectives of:

- Being transparent
- Reflects the costs incurred by GTC Scotland
- Ensures the long term financial sustainability of the organisation
- Provides predictability for registrants

In December 2024, GTC Scotland stated that it will increase its annual registration fee from £65 to £75 from April 2025 followed by planned increases to £83 in 2026 and £88 in 2027.⁸⁴

Ireland: The Teaching Council's initial registration fee is €90 (approximately £79) followed by an annual renewal fee of €65 (approximately £57).

While the potential financial implications of the Bill are considered in more detail in Section 3 below, a number of potential areas for consideration are presented in the box below.

⁸³ See footnote 12

⁸⁴ [GTC Scotland to increase registration fees from April 2025](#) accessed 23rd December 2025

Potential scrutiny points

- Given that the fee has not increased since 2006, what does DE anticipate as the likely value of fee to be set by the Council, particularly given the increased scope and functions?
- How feasible is it that the Council will be self-funding, given the increase in powers and functions under this Bill?
- What has the Department calculated as the likely cost of disciplinary panels under these new powers? How many does it anticipate occurring per year under the new regime?
- Will teachers be liable (via increased fees) for any shortfall in the Council budget? Are there any mechanisms anticipated to mitigate against budget overruns?
- How does this provision compare to the fee structures set by professional bodies in other sectors?

2.3.2 Clause 13: rules previously made by the Council

Clause 13 states that the validity of any rules previously made by GTCNI is not affected by Clauses 2 and 9 and treats those rules as having been validly made under the 1998 Order for all purposes.

2.4 General

2.4.1 Clauses 14-16: definition, commencement and short title

- **Clause 14 - The 1998 Order**
 - This defines “the 1998 Order” for the purposes of the Bill as the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.
- **Clause 15 - Commencement**

- This sets out that all clauses of the Bill will come into operation by Commencement Order, except Clauses 14, 15 and 16 which will come into effect the day after Royal Assent.
- **Clause 16 - Short title**
 - Once this Bill comes into operation it will be referred to as the General Teaching Council Act (Northern Ireland) 2025.

3 Review of Bill Costs

This section addresses key potential financial implications for the “public purse,” which could directly arise from the Bill, if enacted as introduced. To do so, it first provides context-setting information. Thereafter, such public purse implications are considered in distinct areas, namely: additional regulatory services and related sanctions; anticipated staffing needs; new investigation and appeal powers; and general DE budget considerations. It does so by drawing on the following sources: key individual Bill provisions; the Bill’s accompanying EFM; and, as appropriate, the Business Case⁸⁵ for GTCNI replacement options dated February 2025, which was compiled by the DE GTCNI Interim Sponsorship Team (GIST) – hereinafter referred to as “Business Case”.

When relying on this section, please note:

- Identified potential public purse implications are not intended to provide an exhaustive list
- Discussions around potential costs are informed by available information at the time of writing
- Any discussion regarding the prevailing law, including existing legislation, is not intended to provide legal advice or opinion.

3.1 Context-setting

3.1.1 Public purse

⁸⁵ On 16 January 2026, RalSe received the Business Case from the DE, following prior request for same and related correspondence with DE officials.

The “public purse” refers to taxpayers’ money raised through taxation and other sources of government revenues.⁸⁶ Government departments are custodians of the public purse and must use funds “efficiently, effectively and economically”, with Accounting Officers personally responsible for ensuring value for money.⁸⁷

In Northern Ireland, that encompasses the Northern Ireland Block Grant from His Majesty’s (HM) Treasury, revenues raised regionally, and other funding sources. As such, in the case of this Bill, departmental spending is allocated through the Northern Ireland Executive Budget process, and any costs arising from the Bill, if enacted as introduced, would need to be met within the DE’s existing budget or through reallocation within the Northern Ireland Executive’s overall spending envelope.

3.1.2 Public finance requirements for the Executive since 2024

Since the return of fully functioning devolution at the start of 2024, additional requirements arose for the Northern Ireland Executive as a result of the December 2023 political agreement and related February 2024 funding package, namely those relating to the [Interim Fiscal Framework](#), the [Budget Sustainability Plan](#) and the accompanying [Budget Improvement Plan Roadmap](#), as well as the establishment of [Interim Transformation Board](#). The Executive and its individual departments are required to comply with the requirements specified in each, which ultimately aim both to improve Northern Ireland public finances and increase accountability.

3.1.3 DE budgetary context

It is widely acknowledged that all Northern Ireland Executive departments, including DE, have been operating in a restricted budgetary context for some time now, and apparently will continue to do so for the near future. For example,

⁸⁶ Details on how Government Departments must handle taxpayers’ money are set out in *Managing Public Money*, published by HM Treasury, available [here](#).

⁸⁷ The standards expected of the Accounting Officer’s organisation are outlined in Box 3.1 (page 25) of *Managing Public Money*, published by HM Treasury, available [here](#). The Accounting Officer, acting within the authority of the Minister(s) to whom they are responsible, must ensure the organisation meets the standards set out in the Managing Public Money policy.

on 6 January 2026, the Education Minister [responded](#) to the [Draft Executive Budget 2026-2029/30](#) as follows:⁸⁸

“Under the proposed allocations, my Department would be required to make savings of approximately £826 million in 2026-27, £1.01 billion in 2027-28, and £1.15 billion in 2028-29. These levels of reduction are simply not achievable”.

3.2 Key potential public purse implications of the introduced Bill

3.2.1 Additional regulatory services and related sanctions

As highlighted earlier in this Paper, under Schedule 1A of the Bill, if enacted as introduced, the GTCNI would acquire powers, through regulations that would be made by the DE, that would both regulate the teaching profession and impose a range of sanctions, including disciplinary and suspension proceedings. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that following enactment of such new regulatory powers, the cost of delivering existing GTCNI services could increase.

Current GTCNI service delivery costs are estimated at approximately £1.3 million (m) per year, as noted in the Business Case.⁸⁹ At present, there are approximately 28,500 teachers registered in Northern Ireland; and GTCNI service delivery costs are largely met by teacher registration fees which are currently set at £44 per year.⁹⁰ It is important to note evidence provided to the Committee for Education on 21st January 2026 when a GTCNI official stated that the registration fee has remained unchanged for the past 20 years.⁹¹

As mentioned previously in this Paper, the introduced Bill, if enacted, would establish additional functions to be carried out by GTCNI, including those

⁸⁸ DE (2026) Written Statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

⁸⁹ Business Case (2025) received by RalSe on the 16 January 2026, following correspondence with DE officials

⁹⁰ [General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland | Department of Education](#) accessed 21 November 2025

⁹¹ Education Committee Meeting 21/01/26

relating to the regulation of the teaching profession. In relation to those additional functions, the DE has stated:⁹²

“Once regulation of the profession commences, these costs will increase and it seems likely that these will need to be met through an increase in the teacher’s fee(s).”

Of further relevance here is evidence to the Committee for Education provided by representatives from the main teaching trade unions in Northern Ireland. They voiced concerns over the approach in the introduced Bill, suggesting registration fees for teachers should be removed, stating:⁹³

“We believe that those charges should be removed, [...], in conjunction with the fact that it will be directed by the Department, means that we could end up with a situation in which fees escalate out of control for a body that is carrying out functions for the Department”.

However, the EFM for the Bill states:⁹⁴

“Implementation of the provisions in this Bill will incur no costs”.

Given the above, a number of scrutiny points arise about costs in relation to additional regulatory services that would be established under the Bill, if enacted as introduced.

Potential scrutiny points

- What, if any, contingency plans has the DE put in place, or would it put in place, to fund the additional services provided by the new GTCNI body, if this Bill is enacted as introduced and if the teaching profession refuses any increase in registration fees?

⁹² Business Case correspondence from DE received by RalSe on 16 January 2026.

⁹³ Education Committee Meeting 14/01/26

⁹⁴ [General Teaching Council Bill](#)

- What, if any, contingency plans has the DE put in place, or would it put in place, to fund these additional services, if this Bill is enacted as introduced and if registered teacher membership would fall from the current 28,500?
- Would the DE intend to cut funding in other areas to support any shortfalls that would arise in this regard?
- Does the DE intend to seek extra funding in this regard from the Executive? To date, has the DE investigated alternative sources of funding? If so, please provide details. If not, please detail why.
- If this Bill is enacted as introduced, and the scope of the specified regulatory functions would be widened in the future, what additional costs would be anticipated to arise from such legislative amendment? And if any such additional costs arise, how would those be funded?

3.2.2 Anticipated staffing needs

The Business Case states that the GTCNI staff complement in 2024/25 was 16 full time equivalents (FTE)⁹⁵ and that the 2024/25 salary and wages budget for those GTCNI staff was £937,000.⁹⁶ The Business Case also states that whilst that staffing level met requirements to ensure the delivery of current GTCNI functions, the anticipated increase in workload, following the introduction of additional regulatory functions, will necessitate recruiting new GTCNI staff. The Business Case states:

“...based on the experience of other regulators and the comparative sizes of their teaching workforces, it can be expected that a future

⁹⁵ Please note that subsequent evidence to the Committee has suggested the Council has 15 members of staff

⁹⁶ Business Case correspondence from DE received by RalSe on 16 January 2026.

regulation mechanism will be required to deal with 5-10 regulation cases per year (more, if the scope of regulation is subsequently expanded to include professional competence / fitness-to-teach considerations)."

And:

"...It is envisaged that three members of staff would be required to take forward regulation, namely a Head of Professional Standards (part of the Senior Management Team) and two Regulatory and Investigatory Affairs Officers."

Furthermore, the Business Case states:

"...GTCNI has estimated that it will require a specialist workforce of two to manage regulation referrals, comprising an experienced Regulatory Solicitor and Regulatory Executive Officer."

Potential public purse implications therefore could result from any increased volume of regulation cases, including those resulting from the proposed expanded scope of such cases, if the Bill would be enacted as proposed. Given the introduced Bill's EFM states that Implementation of the provisions in this Bill will incur no costs, the following scrutiny points arise.

Potential scrutiny points

- Please share the methodology that DE relied on when estimating the suggested 5-10 regulation cases per year, including detail of all underlying assumptions, calculations and other for those figures and related data.
- What plans, if any, has the DE in place to deal with any potential workload increase that could arise following the regulations that would be subsequently made under the Bill, if the Bill would be enacted as introduced?
- If the Bill is enacted as introduced, what, if any, contingency plans has the DE put in place, or would put in place, to deal with any increased workload that could arise from any

subsequent legislative amendment that would include professional competence / fitness-to-teach considerations?

- Has the DE accounted for any workload increase due to complex or challenging cases to date? If so, please fully detail any additional staffing costs that the DE identified as a result. If not, please explain why no such costs were identified?

Further to the above, the Business Case includes a new staffing structure for additional regulatory functions, based on salaries in 2024/25, along with the total salary costs for new regulation roles in the amount of £559,200, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 2: Baseline costs for new regulation roles (Payroll costs)⁹⁷

Department	Role	NICS Scale equivalency	Basic salary	Full salary cost ⁹⁸
Corporate Services	Communications Officer	SO	£34,834	£46,897
Regulation	Regulation Manager	DP	£44,711	£60,064
Regulation	Regulation officer	SO	£34,834	£46,897
CEO Office	CEO	G5	£80,000	£132,342
Corporate Services	Secretariat	EOI	£30,559	£41,199
Corporate Services	Secretariat	EOII	£28,624	£38,620

⁹⁷ Table by RalSe, relying on data contained in the Business Case.

⁹⁸ Includes pension and national insurance contributions.

Corporate Services	Head	G6	£65,409	£105,209
Corporate Services	Head	PO11 / G6	£63,750	£87,972
Total				£559,200

The noted Business Case also states that said roles have been evaluated using JELPIS⁹⁹ criteria and have been benchmarked against NICS/NICVA frameworks. Given the additional regulatory functions prescribed in the introduced Bill, the following potential scrutiny points arise in relation to potential staffing costs that could arise for the replacement GTCNI body.

Potential scrutiny points

- Please detail the methodology that DE relied on to evaluate each post in Table 1 above, including the underlying rationale, such as any evaluation criteria, assumptions, calculations and data used for the JELPIS job evaluation, to fully explain how it benchmarked each role against NICS/NICVA frameworks.
- Please detail the DE rationale that explains why and how the proposed roles would be essential to supporting the operation and delivery of the new regulatory functions of the new GTCNI body, if the Bill would be enacted as introduced?
- Please detail what, if any consideration, the DE has given to identify alternative delivery models, such as outsourced

⁹⁹ JELPIS is a Local Government Services Job Evaluation Scheme.

secretariat support, or digital/AI solutions, which could lower staff costs.

- How would the proposed staffing complement, which would be required under the Bill if enacted as introduced, compare with existing equivalent regulatory bodies in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, particularly those of similar size and statutory scope?
- To what extent are the proposed roles designed to be flexible, given existing and future GTCNI Board uncertainties relating to structures and volumes of meetings?
- Has a detailed estimate been prepared by DE or other regarding the training of new staff who would work in the proposed roles? If so, please fully detail.
- Please detail any DE provision for additional staff costs that could arise from any increased training and professional development for regulatory staff, if the Bill is enacted as introduced.

3.2.3 Investigations and Appeals Costs

As mentioned above, if the introduced Bill is enacted, its specified regulatory powers would empower the GTCNI both to investigate allegations of unacceptable professional conduct or serious professional incompetence and to impose a range of sanctions, including disciplinary and suspension proceedings. Consequently, the new GTCNI body would need to recruit staff to act on its behalf as panel members for any subsequent investigations, appeals and tribunals. However, the introduced Bill's EFM states:

“Implementation of the provisions in this Bill will incur no costs”

Nonetheless, the Business Case provides the following estimation of such panel costs, using Department for Finance guidance for fees, at 2023 rates, summarised as follows:¹⁰⁰

3.2.4 Investigation Panel Costs

The Business Case estimates the cost of fees for an investigation panel per year to be £20,790. This estimation is based on the following assumptions:

- The average daily cost of investigatory panel member is £231
- A panel size of six members
- 15 investigation cases per year
- The duration of panel meeting for each case will be one day

3.2.5 Appeal Panel Costs

The cost of fees for an appeals panel per year is estimated at £14,543. This estimation is based on the following assumptions:

- Average daily cost of an appeals panel member is £346
- A panel of six members
- Half of the 15 cases will go to internal appeal
- Duration of appeal panel meetings for each case will be one day

3.2.6 High Court Appeal Panel Costs

The cost of fees for a High Court appeals panel is estimated to be £19,992 per year. Additionally, £11,080 per year for legal advisor fees on High Court appeal cases. This estimation is based on the following assumptions:

- Average daily cost of a high court appeals panel member is £417
- A panel of six members
- Four of the internally appealed cases will go to the High Court
- Duration of appeal panel meetings for each case will be two days

¹⁰⁰ Business Case correspondence from DE received by RalSe on 16 January 2026

The Business Case also provides estimates of annual training costs (£7,500) and annual IT costs (£9,450) for panel members.

In light of the above, the following potential scrutiny points arise in relation to investigations and appeal panel costs that could arise from the implementation of the additional regulatory functions, if the Bill is enacted as introduced.

Potential scrutiny points

- What, if any, work has the DE done to assess more up to date figures for daily fees? This is particularly relevant given the listed fees are based on rates for 2023. Please detail in full.
- What evidence, if any, did the DE rely on to determine a membership of six members per panel? Please detail in full.
- Has the DE undertaken any modelling to assess whether smaller panel sizes could reduce overall cost without compromising impartiality? Please detail in full.
- What evidence, if any, did the DE rely on to determine the duration of hearings across all panel types? Please detail in full.
- What evidence, if any, did the DE rely on in projecting 15 investigation cases per year? Please detail in full.
- Is the DE monitoring the volume of investigation cases per year? If not, why not?
- What is DE's underlying rationale for assuming half of all investigation cases progress to appeal? Are there data to support that premise? If so, please detail in full.
- What, if any, evidence or data underpin the DE assumption that four internally appealed cases would escalate to the

High Court, if the Bill is enacted as introduced? Please fully detail.

- Has the DE conducted any benchmarking exercises to ensure the combined annual costs (£20,790 + £14,543 + £19,992 + legal fees of £11,080) represent value for money? Please detail in full.
- Has the DE any reporting mechanisms in place to ensure value for money with regard to total annual panel costs? If yes, please detail in full.
- Has the DE any reporting mechanisms in place to ensure value for money with regard to total annual panel costs? If yes, please fully detail.

3.3 DE Budget considerations

In light of the above sub-sections and the apparent DE budgetary constraints, the following scrutiny points arise in relation to DE's budget if the Bill is enacted as introduced.

Potential scrutiny points

- How would the DE ensure the provisions contained in the Bill would be affordable in light of on-going pressures faced within the Department and across the Executive?
- How has the DE factored potential costs arising from the introduced Bill into the Departmental spending plans going forward, given DE's constrained budget allocation for 2025/26 and reasonably foreseeable future constrained budget position?

- How would the DE ensure that the Bill's provisions, if enacted as introduced, would be implemented in a sustainable way that would comply with the Executive's agreed [Budget Sustainability Plan](#) and other related public expenditure requirements for the Executive?

4 Summary and conclusions

The GTCNI Bill seeks to reinstate the Board of the General Teaching Council (GTC) for Northern Ireland, following the decision to dissolve the GTC in December 2021 by the then Minister of Education, Michelle McIlveen. Since that time, GTCNI staff have continued to deliver the functions of the GTCNI under the oversight of the Department of Education. The Bill also introduces two new offences and expands the sanctions available to the Council. It contains 16 clauses.

The Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 24th November 2025 and the second reading was held on 2nd December 2025. This paper is based on the Bill as introduced.

The Bill introduces new membership structures, powers and functions for the GTCNI. It removes the list of education stakeholders and representative bodies that were previously on the Council and removes the reference to elections. The Bill also enables the Department to introduce regulations to require the Council to establish committees and sub-committees and to include non-Council members on those committees and sub-committees. It also allows for the delegation of functions through the Council structure and for the remuneration of members and non-members of the Council if they are not already paid by the Council.

In relation to the registration of teachers, the Bill allows the Department to authorise the Council to allow the provisional registration of teachers and to make the Council revalidate registration through evidence of professional learning. Both the relevant Clauses (7 and 8) are subject to further consultation with teachers and other educational stakeholders. Clause 9 allows the

Department to make regulations about any aspect of the registration of teachers, which has resulted in the NITC querying the independence of the Council as a representative professional body.

The Bill also introduces two new offences of pretending to be a teacher and/or providing false or misleading information to the Council. It also introduces a range of disciplinary powers under Schedule 1a, to mitigate some of the existing deficiencies in the Council's regulatory powers and to introduce new sanctions, short of prohibition. Finally, it allows the Council to set its own fees and sets out the expectation that the Council will be self-funding.

Where relevant and available, this paper has set out practice in England (the Teacher Regulatory Agency); Wales (the Education Workforce Council); Scotland (the General Teaching Council for Scotland) and Ireland (the Teaching Council).

The paper has also included some of the evidence already provided to the Committee for Education for ease of reference. This evidence includes testimony from the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council, who have expressed some opposition to the Bill as it stands given the power that is retained by the Department and the fees that will be paid by teachers to a body which they describe as an arm's length body of the Department. NITC is also concerned about the presumption that the newly constituted GTNI will be self-funding and the potential liabilities that will subsequently fall on teachers. DE has subsequently provided additional evidence in response which has not, given publication timings, been included in this paper, but should be considered as part of the Bill scrutiny process.

This paper has also highlighted a number of issues in general and in relation to individual clauses that Members may wish to explore further in their consideration of this Bill. It has also considered the potential financial implications of the Bill as introduced.

Appendix 1: Current composition of the Council¹⁰¹

The table below illustrates the composition of the Council as it stood under the legislation prior to dissolution. Both elected and appointed members served on the Council for four years.

Background/sector	Elected/appointed	Number of members
Nursery	Elected	1
Special	Elected	1
Primary (not principals)	Elected	5
Post-primary (not principals)	Elected	5
Primary principal	Elected	1
Post-primary principal	Elected	1
Total elected		14
Education Authority	Appointed	2
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Appointed	2
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	Appointed	1
Governing Bodies Association	Appointed	1

¹⁰¹ [Functions Delivered by GTCNI - CONSULTATION SUPPORT DOCUMENT.PDF](#)

NI Council for Integrated Education	Appointed	1
Transferors' Representative Council	Appointed	1
Archbishop of Armagh and Bishops of Clogher, Derry, Down and Connor, Dromore and Kilmore ¹⁰²	Appointed	1
Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (Northern Ireland)	Appointed	1
Department of Education	Appointed	4

¹⁰² One member acting jointly as representatives of the trustees of Catholic maintained schools