

THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND

EIS Response to consultation on proposed changes to GTCS Council Election Scheme and Process.

Do you have any comments on how we could improve awareness and understanding of voting (as compared to registration) categories?

It may be helpful to include in all materials explaining the process, a table that indicates for each registration category, the appropriate voting category. Clarificatory information on the relationship between registration, employment and voting would also be helpful, for example, for teachers working in special education and within external services.

Do you think there is anything else we could do to attract more interest in our election process?

Many teachers are unclear about the role of the GTCS, how it functions or the part played by Committees of Council. Engagement and enhanced communication with registrants around this, in a variety of forms, would perhaps stimulate greater interest and willingness to participate in the organisation and therefore the Council election process.

GTCS does not currently operate rigorous equality monitoring processes. If it did gather equality-related data, including that relative to its election processes, then it would be better equipped to make intelligence-led adaptations or additions to communication and engagement practices that might be more inclusive of, or indeed targeted at, certain groups of registrants.

Do you agree that anyone currently registered, in any voting category should be permitted to propose or second a nomination as outlined under (i) in the consultation information document?

Yes, the EIS view is that anyone currently registered in any voting category should be permitted to propose or second nominations.

That said, a matter that may require clarification is the relationship between the employment status of nominees, proposers and seconders, and the nominations process. Not all who are registered are currently employed as teachers

In addition, we consider there to be potential advantage and disadvantage in the removal of the requirement for five supporters. While this change may make the nomination process less onerous for those seeking election, it may render the process less representative.

Do you agree that the nomination process be moved online?

Not entirely.

Do you have any comments regarding the proposed change to online nominations?

The EIS is not convinced that conducting the nomination process solely online, while being less expensive to deliver, will have the desired effect of increasing engagement in the process.

In practical terms, an online nominations process requires access to the necessary technology by all and reliability of the relevant IT systems. Potentially there are issues around equality of access to the process related to geography and reliability of internet access; the extent to which registrants are IT literate; and to the access that all registrants have to IT facilities and the internet both in the workplace and at home.

In light of this, a better approach might be to run both systems in parallel for a time and then evaluate.

Do you think that any of the changes we are proposing will have an impact on any group of people in terms of the protected characteristics (i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership)?

In response to the recent Fitness to Teach consultation, the EIS recommended the introduction of equality monitoring covering all protected groups. As previously stated, it would be good practice to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment on the impact of the proposed changes on those sharing the above protected characteristics.

Only by gathering and analysing robust equality data can an organisation genuinely evaluate the impact of its policy, practice and processes on those who share protected characteristics. Although not a public body and not required by law to do so, the GTCS is a body which acts in the public interest, whose membership is largely employed within the public sector, and which would therefore do well to adopt good practice in equality monitoring.

In particular, the EIS would be interested to view data relating to the levels of engagement with GTCS elections of registrants who are from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds, this being a group who are under-represented within the profession as a whole and significantly under-represented within leadership roles.

With regards to the move to solely online nominations and voting, GTCS should be aware of the implications of the digital divide as it relates to age.

In the interests of promoting genuine equality, justice and fairness within GTCS procedures, the EIS would urge robust equality data collection, monitoring and analysis, including that which relates to Council elections.