

A Chartered College of Teaching – Ten Key Tests

Background and context

In January 2017, the Chartered College of Teaching opened its door to new members. The stated purpose of the College is to be 'an autonomous, member-driven organisation, established to promote the learning, improvement and recognition of the art, science and practice of teaching for the public benefit.'

Proposals to establish the College were first put forward in 2012 by the Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI) and later by the Claim Your College Coalition. The NASUWT has never objected in principle to the creation of a College, and the Union has continued to participate actively in the ongoing national debate on this issue. However, the NASUWT expressed profound concerns about the plans for the College developed by the PTI and the Claim Your College Coalition. These concerns were set out in detail in the NASUWT's submission to the Department for Education (DfE) consultation on creating a world-class teaching profession.¹

The NASUWT has engaged constructively with the Chartered College before and after its launch. Through this engagement, the Union has continued to examine the remit, role and organisation of the College. The NASUWT has identified ten key tests that the College must meet if it is to make a positive contribution to the progress and achievements of the education system.

1. The role and remit of the College must be clear

Although the College has sought to clarify its core purpose and mission, many of its prominent supporters continue to advocate a range of different, and often contradictory, aims and objectives. It is important that the College proceeds on the basis of a clear and settled consensus about the functions it should fulfil if it is to have the trust and confidence of the profession and to enhance the professional status of teaching.

2. It must be recognised that a Chartered College, of itself, will not enhance the professional status of teaching

Proponents of a College point to the medical colleges, such as the Royal College of Surgeons, as a model for an effective College of Teaching. The DfE has claimed that 'the new College of Teaching will be a professional body like those in other high-status professions such as law and medicine.'

This claim rests on the assumption that the existence of the medical colleges is responsible for, rather than a result of, the high status of these occupations and that the establishment of the Chartered College of Teaching will, in and of itself, raise the status of teaching.

The NASUWT is clear that this view takes insufficient account of the fact that doctors are also required to register with the General Medical Council, the statutory regulatory body for clinicians. Following the Government's decision in 2011 to deregulate teaching and to remove almost all requirements for teachers to possess Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), it is evident that the Chartered College cannot be the sole means by which the professional status of teaching will be raised further.

It is therefore important that the College progresses on the basis that other reforms to strengthen QTS are necessary if teacher professionalism is to be enhanced.

3. All members of the Chartered College should be qualified teachers

The NASUWT believes that there should be a clear standard of entry to the College and that possession of QTS should fulfil this purpose. While the current membership criteria for the College only admit individuals 'currently professionally engaged' in teaching, there is no requirement for members to hold, or be working towards, QTS.

¹ NASUWT (2015). NASUWT consultation response: *A world-class teaching profession*. Available at: (www.nasuwt.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/42cad025-d0b4-4319-afa23f4153281731.pdf), accessed on 04.07.17.

4. The Governance of the College must be member-led

A genuinely representative College of Teaching must be fully democratic, transparent and led by fully qualified, practising teachers. While the Chartered College now has a majority of serving teachers on its governing Council, it will need to set out in further detail how it will ensure that it will become a genuinely member-led organisation, not merely the 'member-driven' body described in its published aims.

5. The Chartered College must not establish inappropriate relationships with employers

The Chartered College of Teaching has been established as a fully voluntary body.

However, given the size of membership that would be required for the College to operate on a sustainable financial basis, the NASUWT is concerned that it may seek to increase its membership by establishing arrangements with employers that would make membership of the College a condition of employment.

The Chartered College must make clear that it has no intention to enter into arrangements with employers on this basis.

6. The Chartered College must make the case for teachers to have a statutory entitlement to professional development and training

Currently, teachers in England have an obligation to participate in continuing professional development (CPD) but have no corresponding entitlement. In the absence of a statutory entitlement to CPD, it is difficult to sustain claims that the Chartered College would secure improved access to professional development and training for teachers. The medical colleges are only able to play a significant role in the provision of CPD for doctors as a result of their members' contractual entitlement to professional development and training. The NASUWT continues to argue that teachers need a comparable contractual entitlement.

7. The cost of membership of the College must not be excessive or exclusive

Financial modelling undertaken on behalf of the Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI) indicated that without additional sources of external funding, annual membership fees for the College would fall within the range of £70 to £130, far in excess of those for the former General Teaching Council for England (GTCE). However, unlike the GTCE, there are no proposals for teachers' salaries to be supplemented by the Government to meet College fees.

The Chartered College of Teaching membership fee is currently £45 per year, with no concessions for part-time or supply teachers. However, it should be noted that the College is currently receiving financial support from the DfE. It is therefore not clear how the current fee level will be sustained if external financial support is no longer available.

8. The Chartered College must maintain political impartiality

The Chartered College is seeking to operate on the basis of unambiguous political neutrality and freedom from political interference. However, the provision of direct funding for the College by the DfE risks leaving the College open to undue control and influence by Ministers. It is important to note in this context that a commitment to establishing a College of Teachers was set out clearly in the manifesto of the current Government. In all its actions, the Chartered College must address the legitimate concerns of teachers that it will operate without political intervention or undue influence.

9. The Chartered College must operate free from influence by commercial organisations

The need for the College to secure significant start-up funding may also leave it open to inappropriate influence by those commercial organisations prepared to provide this funding. The interests of these organisations may conflict with those of College members. The DfE has raised the prospect of transferring key workforce-related functions undertaken currently by the Secretary of State, the DfE and the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) to the College. In circumstances where the College may be funded directly by commercial organisations, such a transfer of responsibilities could lead to an unacceptable degree of private sector influence over these core functions of the state. It will be important for the Chartered College to demonstrate its independence from commercial influence.

10. The Chartered College must not undermine the legitimate role of teacher trade unions as representative bodies of teachers

In a speech given in April 2013, the then Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, endorsed the model for a College proposed by the Claim Your College Coalition and set out his view that the College would represent a more positive form of representative organisation for teachers than trade unions. This statement has never been repudiated by any of his successors as Secretary of State.

It is important that the College operates on terms that recognise the distinctive role of trade unions in representing the employment and professional views and interests of teachers and school leaders and that are therefore focused on the professional practice of teaching.