

# College of Teaching Consultation

**Royal  
Geographical  
Society**  
with IBG

Advancing geography  
and geographical learning

## ● Consultation response submitted by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is the Learned Society and Professional Body for geography and geographers and maintains a strong overview of the discipline, its position and its practice in schools, higher education and the workplace, including professional accreditation. We advise on and support its advancement, dissemination and practice in these realms and within wider public engagement and policy. We have 16,000 members and Fellows and our work currently reaches more than three million people per year. Each year the Society works with teachers and pupils from about 50% of English secondary schools and our online educational resources receive c. 1 million 'user sessions' annually. The Society received its Royal Charter in 1859.

The Society is pleased to respond to the consultation undertaken by The Prince's Teaching Institute into the proposed College of Teaching. The Society has no strong feelings either way on the proposal in general for a College of Teaching **however there are three key areas of detail in the proposals that raise significant concerns for the Society and which we oppose. These are:**

- **The scope and range of activities proposed for the college**

The Society believes that the College of Teaching scope is currently too broadly defined and does not take proper note of existing structures and established areas of subject specialist and professional accreditation support. We feel this is unacceptable.

The discussion about how the College of Teaching might relate to, support or replicate the established work of subject specialist bodies in education - including Learned Societies and Subject Associations - has not been explored in sufficient detail. Our concerns focus on the issue of subject specialism and the proposal that the College provide subject specialist support to teachers and advise policy makers on the curriculum.

The PTI is aware of the widespread support that is provided to teachers through the relevant Learned Societies and Subject Associations. This work connects teachers with up-to-date academic research and subject knowledge; supports the use of subject specialist pedagogy; and provides an ongoing subject community within which a teacher can enhance their professional knowledge and skills. There is nothing to be gained by a College of Teaching seeking to replicate this work, or indeed even attempting to take on this remit.

Further, the Society does not support the suggestion that the College of Teaching create (subject) specialist committees to feed into its proposed training programme; which had been proposed in relation to the concerns of some Subject Associations. (New College of Teaching Workshop Report September 2012). The Society's impression is also that elements of earlier discussions about the proposed college have been informed by the concerns of some (but not all) Subject Associations and the difficulties that they face in terms of their membership levels and support that they provide. The Society does not feel that this accurately reflects the entirety of how teachers engage with their subjects; the bodies that support them in that; and how a teacher's expertise in a subject area can be recognised and accredited. It is vitally important that any proposals relating to subject specialism embrace the breadth of the current Learned Societies and Subject Associations and recognise the well-established and leading work that many bodies do in this area in relation to their disciplines. During evidence

provided to the Education Select Committee (17.06.2013), it was suggested that Subject Associations (and perhaps by implication relevant Learned Societies?) might pay over a proportion of their membership fees, to support the establishment of the College, in return for the College providing subject specialist support to their members. The Society does not support this approach.

- **Subject Specialism: supporting and representing subject specialist teachers**

Within the Standards Setting section of the discussion paper the first priority for this work is identified as 'Subject Content Knowledge'; alongside pedagogical knowledge, professional skills, contributing to the profession and leadership. The Society is at a loss to understand how a general body of teachers can legitimately and effectively 'claim' the area of subject knowledge; when so much of this work is largely provided through the existing work of the respective subject specialist Learned Societies and Subject Associations, many of which have been doing this for decades if not centuries. As the PTI will be aware, Learned Societies and Subject Associations are actively engaged in a wide range of subject specialist support which includes:

- Disseminating new subject specialist academic research to the educational community to connect teachers with up-to-date subject knowledge and approaches.
- Running CPD programmes which support thousands of teachers every year.
- Publishing print and online resource materials for teachers, alongside journals and other publications.
- Providing a range of subject specialist professional accreditations that recognise a teacher's professional practice in relation to their discipline.
- Engaging teachers within and across their professional subject community, connecting teachers with other subject specialists within education, in HE and the wider professions.
- Supporting subject progression from schools to university and into the workplace.
- Providing expert subject specialist advocacy with Government and in the wider policy environment, highlighting the contribution a particular subject makes to young people, university students, in the field of research and the wider professions.
- Providing expert subject specialist advice to Government on curriculum content and assessment.

Indeed, it is unclear whether the proposed College would see a role in the representation of subject specialism to Government. If it does, we are strongly opposed to it, feeling that the role of the proposed College should concern generic matters relating to teaching, not subject specific ones. Many Learned Societies and Subject Associations, drawing on our ongoing relationships with schools, HE and employers, have provided very effective advice and input into DfE's current reviews. In relation to geography the Society would be unwilling to see such positive and effective policy engagement subsumed within, or overshadowed by, the general work of a College of Teaching.

- **Professional accreditation**

The Society is also concerned that the consultation materials have overlooked the existing work of Learned Societies and Subject Associations in relation to their provision of subject specific professional accreditation. The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) and Association for Science Education raised this issue with the PTI earlier in 2013 and highlighted the contribution of existing subject specialist Chartered accreditations that are suitable for teachers. These schemes provide robust and externally validated professional accreditations which include the following: Chartered English Teacher, Chartered Geography Teacher, Chartered Mathematics Teacher, and Chartered Science Teacher. These all have clear and complementary standards that have been approved by the Privy Council.

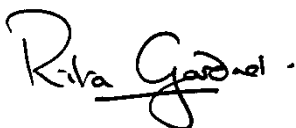
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The Society was pleased to hear these existing Chartered programmes positively referenced in evidence provided to the Education Select Committee's enquiry into the College of Teaching (17.06.2013) and the recognition that existing subject specialist Chartered Teacher accreditations are robust, have credibility (with teachers and the wider professions) and require an ongoing commitment to professional development. However, during the oral evidence provided to the Select Committee it was also suggested that the proposed College take on a role in the coordination/oversight of these accreditations. The Society does not see the necessity for this given that all the accreditations need to meet the professional standards required by the Privy Council. It is also disappointing that some of the discussion papers that accompany the consultation have significantly misunderstood the current context in relation to Chartered accreditations for teachers. To be candid, it is unhelpful to see Chartered Geographer Teacher and Chartered Science Teacher erroneously described as 'semi-official professional standards' which have 'no central coordination or oversight of these standards'. (Towards a Royal College of Teaching 2013 p29). This does not accurately reflect the current situation; the role of external assessment within these professional accreditations; how Chartered status builds on subject specialist Fellowship/memberships in terms of career progression; or their establishment and regulation by Royal Charter and the Privy Council.

**In conclusion, it is for teachers to decide whether they wish to see the creation of a general College of Teaching, and indeed whether they are prepared to support its work financially through their individual subscriptions. However, it is for the established Learned Societies and Subject Associations to lead on subject specialist support and CPD, advice to government, and accreditation in their own areas of subject expertise. For the College to seek to take on these roles would be unnecessary duplication and a waste of resources and would serve potentially to undermine both sets of organisations. We (the subject specialist bodies and the proposed College) should be working together, inclusively, to make the most of our potentially complementary strengths and long-standing reputations and expertise in the case of the Learned Societies.**

**We understand that our concerns are shared with a number of other leading Learned Societies and Subject Associations. We would like to suggest that a private meeting is convened between the Societies and those leading on the proposals for the College of Teaching. The Royal Geographical Society is willing to convene such a meeting.**

Yours sincerely



Dr Rita Gardner CBE  
Director  
Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

1 Kensington Gore  
London SW7 2AR  
T: (0)20 7591 3010  
E: [director@rgs.org.uk](mailto:director@rgs.org.uk)

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