

## What is the Chartered College of Teaching?

Date 10 May 2017

Author Tom Simon  
LGiU/CSN Associate

### Summary

The [Chartered College](#) is a new, independent organisation set up with the purpose of enhancing the professional status and improving the professional framework for teaching in England. It was created in 2016 following work done by the Prince's Teaching Institute and the Claim Your College campaign and opened its doors to members in January 2017.

This briefing will provide a short overview of the background to the founding of the Chartered College, look at what it is, what it does and where it has got to so far. It also considers how the Chartered College is and could be relevant to local government.

This briefing will be of interest to members and officers with responsibility for education and children's social care as well as teachers, school leaders and school governors.

### Overview

The Chartered College is the successor to the [College of Teachers](#), which was founded in 1846 by teachers concerned about standards within their profession. It was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1849 and offered a range of training and qualifications to teachers in the UK and overseas. It also published the quarterly academic journal *Education Today*.

In 2012, the idea of a new college of teaching was put forward at a headteacher residential held by the [Prince's Teaching Institute](#). With the support of the House of Commons Education Select Committee in its report [Great Teachers: attracting, training and retaining the best](#), and from the government, the idea began to take shape. The *Claim Your College* coalition was launched in 2014 to promote and develop the concept further and by the end of 2015 the new organisation was starting to emerge, with founding trustees and an interim staff team being appointed.

Over the course of 2016 the new college went through its 'start up' phase, transforming itself from a handful of interim staff working under a governing council that was still in development, and alongside the then still-extant College of Teachers, to a properly formed, stand-alone organisation with permanent employees. [Dame Alison Peacock](#) was appointed as the college's first CEO and took on the role full time at the start of 2017. June of 2016 saw the approval by the Privy Council of a supplemental charter to the Royal Charter held by the College of Teachers, enabling the new college to take over the Royal Charter. Representation of teachers on the governing council was enhanced in November by the addition of seven new members who are current classroom teachers. Crucially, the government confirmed it would support the set-up of the new college with up to £5 million of seed funding over four years.

# CSN POLICY BRIEFING

For a more detailed account of the early development of the Chartered College see [this page](#) from the now-defunct *Claim your College* campaign. It covers developments from 2012 up to early 2016.

## Briefing in full

### What is the Chartered College?

The Chartered College describes itself as follows:

The Chartered College is 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. We work in partnership with associations, unions and learned societies to build on the best of teaching and emerging research evidence. Covering all phases of education and subject specialisms, the Chartered College connects a diverse community of teachers to share ideas and knowledge and provide an independent, authoritative voice for the teaching profession.

A driving idea behind the new college was that, unlike many other fields, the teaching profession lacked a coherent professional structure and a unifying professional body. The college aims to match the best that exists in medicine, law, engineering, accountancy and other fields. If the field of surgery has the Royal College of Surgeons, accountancy has the Institute of Chartered Accountants and surveying has the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, then teaching should have a commensurate body.

### Ethos – independent, teacher-led and not London-centric

Three key ideas underpin the college and are essential to its credibility:

- 1) It must be an independent organisation, free from political control or bias;
- 2) It must be for teaching, led by teachers, i.e. not something 'done' to or for the profession by politicians, civil servants or others not directly involved in teaching. The ill-fated [General Teaching Council](#) has been referred to as what [the college should definitely not seek to emulate](#); and
- 3) The college must serve teaching across England and avoid the trap of being London-centric.

This ethos emerged during the early development stage of the college and was recognised as being essential for the credibility and success of the project. There was a clear consensus it would not work if it was a top-down organisation, imposed on teachers by Government. To achieve this end, the college has sought to work with teachers from across the country at every stage of its development. There have been multiple rounds of engagement and user-led research, taking the form of surveys, ['Big Staff Meetings'](#) carried out by the *Claim Your College* campaign, workshops, [focus groups](#) and conferences. Thousands of teachers have taken part in this process. It has also been important for the college to ensure that the voice of teachers is well represented on its governing council. At present, over half of its 19 members, including the chair, are current classroom practitioners and only five have never been a teacher.

# CSN POLICY BRIEFING

## Organisational structure

The Chartered College's governing body is its [Council](#), which is made up of volunteers from across the educational community and business. Most its members are current or former teachers, supplemented by professionals from other key areas, such as finance and law. There is also a larger advisory group whose members assist the college on an ad hoc basis.

The college has a small staff team based near Euston, London. A network of volunteer 'regional advocates' help promote the college across England.

## Funding

The organisation is currently funded primarily by the £5 million seed money provided by the government, but with the launch of its membership has started moving towards being funded by subscriptions. The college also plans to raise funds from other charitable activities related to its work. It is important to remember that the seed money comes from the government on a 'no-strings-attached' basis. While the Department for Education does monitor the spending, this is for the usual purpose of ensuring the public money is used for its designated purpose; it is not for trying to exercise control of the organisation.

## What it is not

It is important to note the distinction between the Chartered College and the trade unions which recruit teachers. The Chartered College of Teaching is ultimately about improving the quality of teaching in the UK and therefore the outcomes for learners. Unions have the very important additional focus of protecting the employment rights of teachers which may mean the College and the unions approach some issues differently.

## What does it do?

### Membership

The foundation of the Chartered College [is its membership](#). In January 2017, it launched its founding membership and over 3000 teachers have joined so far. The college is aiming to attract large numbers of teachers to join. It is worth noting that there are over 400,000 serving teachers in England. There are currently two categories of membership available:

- Full membership – for those currently employed as teachers in a school.
- Professional Affiliate membership – for those working with teachers but not directly involved in teaching, as well as those involved in training teachers and others working in the wider education community.

In return for an annual subscription, members will "have an opportunity to not only help build the Chartered College, but also to join us in shaping the future of the teaching profession". Specific benefits also include access to a substantial knowledge base, subscription to a peer-reviewed journal, the chance to get involved in online and face-to-face communities across the country, invitations to key events and access to a career-long professional development 'pathway'. Providing these benefits will be the major part of the college's work, particularly as they are still under development.

# CSN POLICY BRIEFING

There have been suggestions of providing institutional membership as well, i.e. for schools and possibly other relevant organisations, but as yet there is no clear indication whether or when this would happen.

## Knowledge base and access to research in a usable form

One of the concepts behind the college is to find a way to better-connect practitioners with academic research and examples of good practice from which their work could benefit. There is an awareness that there is a great deal of research in to good teaching practice, a lot of knowledge that if shared could benefit teaching up and down the country, but that the mechanisms for sharing the knowledge are patchy. Many teachers find their heavy workloads make it difficult to find useful information, or find that research is presented in a way that is readily accessible.

Developing the knowledge base will be an ongoing job and the base will improve with time. The college is already able to point to providing members with access to over 2,000 pieces of research. The latest development on this front is that the college is 'taking up the baton' of the work done by the Cambridge Primary Review Trust (CPRT), which is closing. The college will provide online access to the CPRT's highly respected collection of over 100 publications. You can [read more about this development here](#).

An important element of this area of work will be the Chartered College's peer-reviewed journal. In 2016, the college continued with the College of Teachers' *Education Today*, which had its final edition in December. The college has announced that the first edition of its new journal will be available to members "during the Summer term". It will have the theme 'Perspectives on evidence-informed practice' and include Dr Chris Brown, Sir Kevan Collins and Stuart Kime as contributors, as well as a range of teachers.

## Communities

The college's website refers to creating "opportunities to share in **online and face-to-face communities** seeking to build the profession's capacity for research and innovation via national and regional events, activities and a directory for members wanting to collaborate in exploring specific aspects of practice".

During 2016 the [college was referring to the creation of regional hubs](#) or networks to facilitate the sharing of good practice, research and ideas. The concept being that at present, while there is some good work of this type already being done, it is very patchy and inconsistent. Ultimately teachers in all areas of the country should have access. The current statement is a broader, but still seems to encapsulate the same idea, even if the mention of 'hubs' has been dropped.

The communities idea remains under development and no further information is available, but some regional events have already taken place (see below).

## Events

The college ran two inaugural conferences in February for the first wave of members, one in London and the other in Sheffield. A [series of regional events](#) to hear the views and priorities of teachers across the country were held between January and March 2017 in London, Bristol, Portsmouth, Nottingham, Cambridge, Birmingham, York, Manchester and Newcastle.

# CSN POLICY BRIEFING

There are currently two events for members [organised for May](#) and plans for further events later in the year.

## The Professional Pathway and Chartered Teacher status

The Chartered College is developing what will be a central piece of its offer – the [Professional Pathway and Chartered Teacher status](#) (CTeach). The aim of the college is “to raise the status of the profession and support teachers in acquiring the expertise necessary for maintaining excellence in teaching”. The professional pathway will ultimately lead to the Charter Teacher status. The college’s intention is that the qualification will establish:

- A set of teacher-developed professional principles that are highly regarded and which clearly articulate what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do
- A rigorous, valid assessment process that recognises and accredits teachers who meet these professional principles
- A collegiate body of Chartered Teachers whose expertise will influence and advance educational practice, research and policy.

Further, the aim is to make CTeach “the most rigorous, relevant and developmental qualification for teachers in the world”. The programme aims to open initially to an ‘Accreditation by Prior Experiential Learning’ route in Autumn 2017, and the full programme in Autumn 2018.

The college is welcoming teachers who have joined to participate in the development of CTeach.

## A powerful voice for the teaching profession

The Chartered College aims to build an authoritative, collective voice about teaching, informed by research, just as other professional bodies do for their fields. The British Medical Association provides well-respected, non-partisan, evidence-based comment on relevant policy ideas, the Chartered College aims to be able to do the same in relation to teaching.

This is one reason why the independence of the Chartered College is continually emphasised, along with the ‘no-strings-attached’ basis of the £5 million in funding from the government.

## Comment

### The Chartered College and local government

With the college still under development, the opportunities for local government to benefit from the work of the college, or to collaborate with it, remain somewhat unclear. However, that does not mean opportunities don’t exist. There is some potential across the work of the college.

### Teachers joining the Chartered College

If it becomes clear that being a member of the college tends to help teachers improve their practice, then this is something that schools, and by extension, LAs or Academy Trusts (ATs), should welcome and promote. In this scenario encouraging, incentivising or subsidising membership for teachers could be attractive.

# CSN POLICY BRIEFING

## The professional pathway and CTeach

The same point made above about membership applies to the professional pathway and to CTeach, with the recognition that these programmes have not yet been launched. It will take longer to get a sense of their effectiveness.

## Access to the knowledge base

As the knowledge base develops it could become an increasingly valuable resource not just for teachers to improve their practice, but for schools and LAs to develop their strategies for improving performance and for helping their teachers collectively. This is an area where some form of institutional membership could be valuable. LAs, ATs and schools may want to reach out to the Chartered College to inquire about institutional membership. It makes sense that the greater the demand, the more likely it will be implemented, particularly as it could provide the college with a welcome revenue stream.

## Communities

It is fair to say that it is beyond the capacity of the College at present to create face-to-face communities for teachers from scratch across the whole of England, at least in the short-medium term. Where existing networks already exist or where schools or LAs are interested in building or enhancing networks, there is probably fertile ground for working with the College. This is perhaps the most promising area for collaboration. The College, and its volunteer advocates, may well be looking for opportunities of this kind, but given the scale of the task the smart thing for interested LAs to do is to reach out to the college.

## Future challenges

The Chartered College has not been free from controversy and its development has at times been something of a bumpy ride. It is worth noting that early surveys asking teachers whether they supported the creation of the college reported [40% in favour, 40% undecided and 20% opposed](#). So, there was from the beginning a significant number of teachers who would need winning over. There was also a misjudged crowdfunding campaign in 2015 that failed to reach its target. That said, the college has made strident efforts to win over the teaching profession with a wide variety of approaches, to live up to its ethos of being a teacher-led organisation. It has put critical building blocks in place, developed its image and offer, and started recruiting members at a decent pace. It has also built links to a wide range of partner organisations, including [subject associations](#).

Many challenges lie ahead before the Chartered College can be called a truly successful project. Perhaps the most critical test will be on the organisation's ability to become self-funding. This will mean building its membership to a high enough level for the subscriptions to cover all or most of its costs, before the seed funding runs out. This is a significant challenge. The rate at which its membership grows will at the same time be a crucial test of the college's credibility.

Clearly the ability of the college to increase its membership beyond the initial intake, which to some extent will have been those teachers most keen on the project, will depend on its ability to develop the various aspects of the membership offer, as well as its success at promotion. The 3000 or so members recruited so far is a good start, but given there are over 400,000 teachers in England, there is clearly a long way to go on this front.

# CSN POLICY BRIEFING

A potential pitfall lies in the college's relationship with teachers' unions, due to the possible overlap between the work of the college and what unions do. For example, the college and unions may take different views on government policy with regards to education and to teachers. This is an area the leadership of the college will be watching carefully.

Overall, the Chartered College has come a long way since its inception in 2012 and overcome many significant challenges. At present, with its membership offer developing and the numbers on roll increasing, it is heading in the right direction, but the next 2 years are likely to prove critical to the college's viability and success.

## External Links

[Chartered College of Teaching website](#)

[Chartered College of Teaching events website](#)

The *Claim Your College* campaign's webpages for: the [College of Teaching's history](#) and the '[Big Staff Meetings](#)'

Wikipedia pages for: [College of Teachers](#), [Dame Alison Peacock](#) and the [General Teaching Council](#)

[The Prince's Teaching Institute webpage for the College of Teaching](#)

House of Commons Education Select Committee: [Great Teachers: attracting, training and retaining the best](#) (May 2012)

Schools Week: [Interview with Dame Alison Peacock as new CEO of the Chartered College](#)

[NAHT guest blog on Chartered College by Dame Alison Peacock](#)

## Related Briefings

[A world-class teaching profession: DfE consultation](#) (January 2015)

[Great teachers: attracting, training and retaining the best](#) (June 2012)

For further information, please visit [www.lgiu.org.uk](http://www.lgiu.org.uk) or email [john.fowler@lgiu.org.uk](mailto:john.fowler@lgiu.org.uk)