

## The John Muir Award and Professional Development for Teachers in Scotland



The John Muir Award, a UK-wide environmental award scheme run by the John Muir Trust, can provide a context for teachers' professional learning and development. It can be a tool to help promote and meet Professional Standards and a pathway for gaining Professional Recognition through the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS).

Central to this is the impact that Award participation can have on pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors (as well as teachers, parents and families who can get involved).

### Revised Professional Standards

Professional Standards for Teachers define what is expected of student teachers, qualified teachers and school leaders. Anyone wishing to teach in, or lead, a Scottish school must demonstrate that they meet these Standards.

The GTCS revised [Professional Standards](#) aim to shape the continuing Professional Development of Scotland's teachers. They describe the advanced professional knowledge and pedagogical expertise that registered teachers should develop and maintain as they continue to progress in their profession. Registered teachers need to provide evidence of meeting the revised Standards at Professional Review and Development and Professional Update.

Guidelines on the Revised Professional Standards are available at the General Teaching Council Scotland [website](#).

The Standards are underpinned by the key themes of values, sustainability and leadership: 'Learning for Sustainability is a whole-school commitment that helps the school and its wider community develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and practices needed to take decisions which are compatible with a sustainable future in a just and equitable world. Learning for Sustainability has been embedded within the Standards for Registration to support teachers in actively embracing and promoting principles and practices of sustainability in all aspects of their work.' (p2, [The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning, December 2012](#)).

This is expanded upon in the Education Scotland publication [Opening up Great Learning - Learning for Sustainability](#).

### **The John Muir Award and Learning for Sustainability**

The Scottish Government defines a whole school approach to Learning for Sustainability as featuring sustainable development education, global citizenship and outdoor learning. The John Muir Award encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places. As such it is a tool to help embed outdoor learning in teaching practice, and explore what sustainability means in ways that are experiential, relevant and engaging.

It can focus on how people are more likely to care for our planet if they are connected with it, and encourage thinking about motivations and values.

The [John Muir Award Sustainability Resource Guide](#) offers practical ideas, links and online resources.

Direct curriculum links are explained in [Curriculum for Excellence and the John Muir Award](#).

### How can the John Muir Award help meet Professional Standards?

The revised Professional Standards directly reference areas that John Muir Award participation (and its delivery by teachers) can relate to, including:

- **Learning for Sustainability** 'Embracing locally and globally the educational and social values of sustainability'; 'learning our way to a better future'; 'respecting social, cultural and ecological diversity'.
- **Outdoor Learning** 'Appropriate contexts and environments for learning including outdoor learning'; 'direct experience of nature'; 'level of care ...for the natural world'; 'dependence on the natural world'.
- **Social Inclusion** 'Meeting the needs of all learners'; 'motivating and inspiring learning, acknowledging social and economic context'.
- **Wider Achievement** 'Promote positive behaviour and celebrate success'.
- **Interdisciplinary Learning** 'Promoting learning beyond subject boundaries'.
- **Professional Development** 'Analysis of impact on learners and professional practice'.

### What is Professional Recognition?

[Professional Recognition](#) provides the opportunity for Scottish teachers who have completed one year of professional practice (after gaining full registration with GTCS) to focus on and develop their professional learning. This will be in particular areas of interest and/or expertise and enable recognition for enhanced knowledge, understanding and practice.

There are many areas in which this can apply. Teachers interested in Professional Recognition in Outdoor Learning and in Learning for Sustainability may find it relevant to understand and deliver the John Muir Award as part of this.

### How can the John Muir Award help gain Professional Recognition?

Running the John Muir Award with staff and pupils, and reflecting on this experience as a learning journey, can be an effective way to gain Professional Recognition. You can use the process of planning, delivering and wrapping up an Award to help gain evidence of professional action for a submission to the GTCS. For example:

- The John Muir Award Proposal Form can be used to demonstrate planning an outdoor learning experience within a holistic framework.
- As part of the 'Share' aspect (one of 4 Challenges) of the John Muir Award, pupils will be reflecting and recording their activities and experience (e.g. through Record Books, portfolios of work, peer reviews).
- Ongoing observations and reflections as part of this outdoor learning journey can be captured, particularly in relation to the impact on pupils' learning.

Some further steps are required to help meet GTCS Professional Recognition Criteria including: research and reading in the area of expertise; professional discussion with a manager; and evidence of critical reflection.

To apply for Professional Recognition in Outdoor Learning or in Learning for Sustainability, download and complete the [GTCS application form](#). The John Muir Award can also be integrated into GTCS-accredited programmes such as Scottish Natural Heritage and Grounds for Learning's 'Teaching in Nature' courses.

### Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL)

There is no need to participate in CLPL to deliver the John Muir Award, however many teachers and educational establishments find this useful. Training aims to convey its underlying philosophy, and give a thorough introduction to the relevant skills, knowledge and approaches needed for delivering the John Muir Award. For more information on training see [here](#).

For more **information on the John Muir Award**, visit the [website](#) where you can watch an [introductory film](#), download an [Information Handbook](#) and review [case studies](#).