

# PERFORMANCE THRESHOLD STANDARDS ASSESSMENT

## Guidance for Schools

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#### Attachments:

Quick Guide 2026/27

Application Form

Sample Evidence Request Form

Sample Feedback Form

Multiple Entry TR268 (UPS1)

Handbook for Threshold Assessment (for teachers)

# Threshold Assessment Northern Ireland

## 1. General Information

1.1 This guidance is intended for Principals / Line Managers conducting threshold assessments and teachers who decide to apply for threshold assessment. For teachers not working in schools (non-standard settings) substitute 'Line Manager' wherever 'principal' appears in this guidance. Likewise where it states 'school,' substitute 'non-standard setting.'

## 2. Summary of the key points for those teachers to apply for threshold assessment in 2026/27.

2.1 There is no external assessment of threshold applications. Applications will be assessed by the principal. In making decisions the principal will take account of the teacher's performance in the four threshold standards, the two recent Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) review statements for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

2.2 Teachers who wish to apply for threshold assessment must do so, to the Principal, **no later than Friday 2 October 2026. Applications submitted after this date will not be accepted.**

2.3 Applications must be made on the attached application form.

2.4 The four threshold standards remain unchanged.

2.5 Teachers can only apply for threshold assessment once in any school year.

2.6 Appeals against not being recommended for movement to the Upper Pay Scale will be dealt with through the school's salary appeals procedures which all schools are required to have, or through an organisation's internal processes if the teacher is employed in a non-standard setting e.g. within the Education Authority.

2.7 Successful teachers will move to point 1 of the Upper Pay Scale from 1 September 2026.

2.8 Teachers who were eligible to apply in previous years but who chose not to do so may apply. If successful they will be placed on point 1 of the Upper Pay Scale from 1 September 2026.

2.9 Teachers who were unsuccessful in previous years (and teachers who have not yet been notified of the outcome of their appeal) may also re-apply. If successful they will be placed on point 1 of the Upper Pay Scale from 1 September 2026.

## 3. Background to Threshold

3.1 Threshold assessment is part of a framework of pay and standards that provides a focus for a teacher's career and professional development. The threshold assessment process for eligible teachers who have completed periods of employment amounting to at least 26 weeks in aggregate of satisfactory service in the past 12 months; placed on point M6 of the teacher's Main Pay Scale on or before 1 September 2025 may commence immediately.

- 3.2** The threshold assessment process is operable when an eligible teacher has completed one year on point 6 of the Main Pay Scale and wishes to be considered for movement to point 1 of the Upper Pay Scale.

**Movement to point 1 of the Upper Pay Scale is not automatic**

- 3.3** Threshold assessment normally works alongside performance review and staff development arrangements and information from PRSD review(s) including information from classroom observation – provides an important part of the evidence to support threshold applications (PRSD Scheme 5.10).

**4. Threshold standards**

- 4.1** The threshold standards (and advice on appropriate evidence sources to support them) and supplementary information is provided in the Threshold Assessment Northern Ireland handbook, a copy of which is attached.

- 4.2** To 'cross the threshold' teachers must also demonstrate that they have met all four standards of effective teaching. The standards relate directly or indirectly to teaching and learning:

- core values, understanding of the curriculum and professional knowledge;
- teaching and assessment of learning;
- contribution to raising standards through pupil achievement;
- effective professional development.

- 4.3** The threshold standards embody the high professional expectations appropriate for experienced teachers. A teacher who is able to demonstrate effectiveness in each of these standards will be effective overall.

- 4.4** In order to achieve this, teachers need to have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and a clear understanding of the educational initiatives and developments that impact on them and their pupils.

- 4.5** Teachers applying to 'cross the threshold' will be assessed against the four standards on evidence of performance.

**5. Duty on Governing Bodies and Principals/Line Managers**

- 5.1** The Governing Body has no direct involvement in the assessment of applications for threshold. However, the principal must report the outcome of the process to the Governing Body. The Governing Body will have responsibility for any appeals against the principal's decision by unsuccessful applicants.

- 5.2** Principals have a duty to assess threshold applications (including those from teachers currently absent from school for any reason and those who have left the school after submitting their application) in line with their professional responsibility for evaluating the standards of teaching and learning in the school. Where a teacher has cited evidence from more than one school, principals should consult the previous principal(s).

## **6. Eligibility to apply for threshold assessment and progression to point 1 on the Upper Pay Scale from 1 September 2026.**

**6.1** Threshold assessment is open to all qualified teachers who:

- are statutorily covered by the agreements reached on pay and conditions of service within the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC);
- have completed periods of employment amounting to at least 26 weeks in aggregate of satisfactory service within the past twelve months;
- on or before 1 September 2025 were paid on point M6 of the Main Pay Scale for qualified classroom teachers; relevant points are those for qualifications and experience, including experience points awarded on a discretionary basis by Governing Bodies;
- meet all the above conditions on the date when they apply; and
- apply to the Principal **no later than Friday 2 October 2026.**

**6.2** Threshold assessment is also open to qualified teachers who:

- would have met the above criteria had they not been temporarily paid on the leadership pay scale at the time their application is due;
- have stepped down/will be stepping down to the classroom teachers' pay scale.

**6.3** Where eligibility is not clear principals should refer to the appropriate employing authority for advice.

## **7. Applications**

**7.1** Threshold assessment is a voluntary process and entirely a matter of choice for individuals who are eligible to apply. Teachers are responsible for applying for threshold. Teachers who choose not to apply should inform the principal of their decision in writing.

**7.2** Eligible teachers must submit their written application to their current principal **no later than Friday 2 October 2026. Applications submitted after this date will not be accepted.** All successful applicants will move to point 1 of the Upper Pay Scale effective from 1 September 2026.

## **8. Notifying Teachers' Pay & Pensions Team (TPPT)**

It is the responsibility of the principal to complete and return the multiple-entry TR268 (UPS1) form **no later than Friday 23 October 2026** notifying TPPT of which teachers should be progressed to UPS1 effective from 1 September 2026. Email addresses for TPPT are included on the forms, if you prefer to scan and send electronically.

**TR268 (UPS1) forms received after this date will not be processed.**

## **9. Evidence Period**

- 9.1** It is the teacher's responsibility to provide summarised evidence – in the form of concrete examples from their day-to-day work – to demonstrate that he/she has worked at the level indicated by the threshold standards for a sustained period immediately before the application is submitted. Normally, the evidence should cover at least two years and not more than three years leading up to and ending at the date of their application. In certain exceptional circumstances evidence collated over a period of up to five years can be taken into account (e.g. for teachers on secondment or on career break).
- 9.2** For the purpose of the evidence period, a year is defined as when a teacher has completed periods of employment amounting to at least 26 weeks in aggregate within the twelve-month period, with the total 2–3 year relevant evidence period ending at the date of the application. Queries regarding eligibility in this area should be directed to the appropriate employing authority.

## **10. The mandatory evidence requirement**

- 10.1** In assessing evidence provided by teachers some fluctuations in performance are only to be expected, but principals will be seeking to determine whether the evidence is accurate and is indicative of the teacher's overall performance against the threshold standards. Principals must also take account of the teacher's two most recent PRSD review statements as appropriate as part of their decision-making.
- 10.2** There is no requirement to prepare portfolios of supporting evidence. However, teachers must have access to all evidence cited and any key supporting material such as feedback from classroom observation, pupils' work, their own records or schemes of work. They should also take account of information in their two most recent PRSD review statements.

## **11. Absence**

- 11.1** Teachers who have not been teaching children in grant-aided schools in the two years immediately preceding applying and who are not covered by the specific absences (see 10.2 for examples), but who have worked for an aggregate period of at least two years in the five years preceding their application, should cite evidence from the most recent 2–3 year period ending at the point when they last taught children in grant-aided schools. Teachers should not cite evidence more than five years old.
- 11.2** The type of absence where the need to look back over a five-year period might arise could be as a result of the teacher being absent on a secondment; study leave or because they took a career break.
- 11.3.** All teachers must be in-service on the date of their application to be eligible to apply. Teachers can be absent from work on the date of application but in-service, such as on maternity or similar leave; study leave; sickness absence; career break or secondment etc.

## **12. Teachers who work in two or more schools simultaneously**

- 12.1** Where a threshold applicant is simultaneously employed to teach at two or more schools (e.g. part-time teachers simultaneously employed in two or more schools) the teacher should submit their application to the principal of the school at which the applicant spends most time and the principal of that school should normally assess the application, with appropriate input from the principal(s) of the other school(s). Where the applicant spends equal time in every school, the teacher should submit their application to the principal of the school at which the teacher has been employed the longest and the principal of that school should normally be responsible for making the assessment. The assessing principal should consult with the other principal(s) in assessing the application and they should participate in the assessment. Where all the relevant principals agree, it is also possible for any one of them to assess the application. The assessing principal must have access to all evidence required to make his/her decision.
- 12.2** Teachers can only make one application, regardless of the number of schools they work in. Regardless of the number of principals who contribute to the assessment, only one should decide whether each of the standards has been met.

## **13. Teachers who have worked in two or more schools during the evidence period**

- 13.1** Teachers who cite evidence from more than one school (e.g. teachers who have changed jobs) should submit their application to the principal of the school they are contracted to work in on the date of submission of their application. That principal should consult with the principal(s) of the other school(s) in assessing the application and all should participate in the assessment. The assessing principal must have access to all evidence required to make his/her decision, including PRSD review statements.

## **14. Teachers in non-standard settings**

- 14.1** Eligible teachers directly employed, for example, by the Education Authority and employed under teachers' terms and conditions of service should have their threshold assessment carried out by whoever the Education Authority designates as the person with management responsibility for the applicant.
- 14.2** Teachers working in a support or advisory capacity will draw on evidence that relates to their specific role. Where they do not have direct contact with pupils, they should demonstrate that they meet the standards through the advice and support that they provide.

## **15. Feedback**

- 15.1** Teachers should be promptly notified of the outcome of the assessment and, in all cases, within 20 working days of the date of their assessment. All teachers should receive oral feedback from their principal on each standard and the reasons for the outcome of their applications. They should receive advice on aspects of performance that would benefit from further development.

**15.2** Feedback should be sensitive, informative and developmental. Feedback should link effectively to the school's performance review and staff development arrangements and should enable the teacher to identify clear priorities for future professional development.

**16. Unsuccessful threshold applicants - written feedback**

**16.1** In the case of unsuccessful applicants, principals should give written feedback on the reasons for the outcome of the application, standard by standard, including those where the standards have been met, within 20 working days of their decision on the application. A sample feedback pro-forma is attached.

**16.2** Principals should record details of any additional evidence they use in determining that the standard(s) are not yet met. A sample pro-forma on which feedback may be based is attached at Annex A.

**16.3** In all cases the aim of feedback should be to give clear advice about how the teacher needs to develop in order to reach the standards. If, in discussion with the teacher, it has been necessary to amplify the comments then the key additional points made should be confirmed in writing.

**17. Confidentiality**

**17.1** Principals should keep the contents of threshold applications and all other documents associated with an application confidential and should not disclose details to anyone who is not involved in assessing or reviewing the application.

**18. Equal opportunities**

**18.1** All teachers must be treated in accordance with current equal opportunities policies and must not be discriminated against on the basis of age; disability; gender; nationality; race; religion; sexual orientation or whether they are full/part-time staff. The review process should be used to promote equality of opportunity by encouraging all participants to fulfil their professional potential. It is vitally important to be aware of the potential for unconscious discrimination and to avoid assumptions about individuals based on stereotypes.

**19. Individual teachers' right to appeal**

**19.1** Teachers who, after feedback from the principal, believe that they have been wrongly assessed have the right to appeal against this decision under the appeals mechanism within their school's salary policy. **Grievance procedures should not be used for appeals against pay decisions.**

- 19.2** If a teacher 'crosses the threshold' on appeal, movement to the first point of the Upper Pay Scale will be backdated as appropriate. If the appeal confirms the original assessment the teacher will be able to re-apply for assessment in the following year.
- 19.3** All relevant bodies – both Governing Bodies and other employing bodies where they are the relevant body – must have a salary policy. It should be reviewed annually and be kept up-to-date to take into account any legal changes.

### **Summary**

Eligible teachers, on point 6 of the Main Pay Scale, who wish to seek progression to the Upper Pay Scale, must apply for assessment against the Northern Ireland Threshold Standards, which remain unchanged. Decisions to move teachers to point 1 of the Upper Pay Scale from 1 September 2026 will continue to be based on the professional judgment of the principal. There will be no external assessment.

In making your assessment you will need to analyse the teacher's performance in the four threshold standards. Verification of evidence will continue to be required for all applicants, including use of the two most recent PRSD staff review statements.

**SAMPLE - THRESHOLD ASSESSMENT - FEEDBACK TO TEACHERS**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

TR No: \_\_\_\_\_

Following your recent application for threshold assessment, effective from 1 September 2026, please find below my comments relating to :

- (a) your performance in each of the four threshold standards, and
- (b) your most recent Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) review statement(s).

These comments have been provided in the interests of your further professional development.

(a) Threshold Standards:

1. Core values, understanding of the curriculum and professional knowledge
2. Teaching and assessment of learning
3. Contribution to raising standards through pupil achievement
4. Effective professional development

(b) PRSD Review Statement(s)

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: / /2026