Evidence from around the world suggests that the most important factor in helping young people to achieve their potential and to improve their life chances is the quality of teachers and teaching. The most highly regarded education systems in the world: sustain a very high respect for teaching as a profession; provide quality initial teacher education focusing on sound research informed theory linked to up to date classroom practice; and support all professionals throughout their careers with effective career-long professional development and provide effective and appropriate training for leadership positions.

Building capacity through continuous professional development and keeping up-to-date with relevant research and new insights and approaches to teaching and learning is core to the meaning of what it is to be a professional teacher. A range of research has highlighted the key elements and characteristics of effective professional development to enhance student learning.

A panel representing the Teaching Councils across the UK and Ireland, chaired by Professor Graham Donaldson will explore:

- The key messages arising from the research into the career-long professional development of teachers
- The regional challenges of framing sustained provision for career-long professional development and leadership
- The key role of Teaching Councils as professional and advisory bodies: in disseminating and supporting educational research; developing professional competence standards and keeping these under review; promoting and supporting the use of competence standards as tools to inform teacher and school development planning, teacher and leadership appraisal, school self-evaluation, external quality assurance and in CPD; and
- promoting, framing and evaluating career-long professional development.

The panel will be chaired by Prof. Graham Donaldson.

Short inputs from each Teaching Council will highlight current research and development in each country to help explore the unique remit and contribution that Teaching Councils make in advising on competence and professional development frameworks and promoting career-long professional development.

Short presentations will be followed by structured group consideration and feedback on the key themes

This is not a symposium as academic papers will not be presented but the ideas advanced will draw on relevant research and may provide the basis for comparative research