



Advice for Casual and part-time Teachers

SUPPORTING CASUAL AND PART-TIME TEACHERS TO ACHIEVE ACCREDITATION
AT PROFICIENT TEACHER

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Preamble

The Institute of Teachers was established by legislation in 2004. *The Institute of Teachers Act 2004* outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Institute and teacher accreditation authorities in the accreditation of teachers. This accreditation applies to teachers progressing to Proficient Teacher (permanent, casual and part-time) in all schools in New South Wales and is based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Teachers who commenced teaching on or after 1 October 2004, or who return to teaching in NSW after an absence of more than five years are required to be accredited against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The NSW Institute of Teachers is aware that the majority of teachers progressing to Proficient Teacher commence their teaching career in either a casual or part-time capacity and that the employment patterns of these teachers can make their accreditation process more complex.

This brochure aims to help you better understand the accreditation process and achieve accreditation at Proficient Teacher. It should be read in conjunction with the Institute's *Information for Teachers Progressing to Proficient Teacher* booklet and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Electronic copies of these documents can be found on the Institute's website at www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au.

Teachers should also seek out information from their schools regarding the application of the Institute of Teachers' policies for accreditation.

Casual and part-time teaching in NSW schools

The Institute recognises the important role of casual and part-time teachers in enabling NSW schools to provide continuity of quality learning opportunities. In many instances, you are replacing a full-time or permanent teacher who is on leave or undertaking professional development, and therefore face particular expectations and challenges.

You may also be working in a casual or part-time capacity or a mix of these in one school or across a number of schools, sometimes at the same time.

Whilst some teachers may be offered a long term temporary teaching engagement of twelve months or more, what is common to the majority is that they do not have the security of ongoing permanent employment in a particular school and are most likely gaining teaching experience across more than one school.

The Institute acknowledges that many casual and part-time teachers balance their current teaching employment with family, other employment or additional tertiary study commitments.

Nevertheless, as a casual or part-time teacher you are responsible for demonstrating the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and gaining accreditation at the Proficient Teacher career stage.

What are the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?

The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* comprise seven Standards which outline what teachers should know and be able to do. The Standards are interconnected, interdependent and overlapping.

The Standards are grouped into three domains of teaching: Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement. In practice, teaching draws on aspects of all three domains.

Within each Standard, focus areas provide further illustration of teaching knowledge, practice and professional engagement. These are then separated into standard descriptors at four professional career stages: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead.

The seven Standards are organised under three domains:

Professional Knowledge

1. Know students and how they learn
2. Know the content and how to teach it

Professional Practice

3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning
4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments
5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning

Professional Engagement

6. Engage in professional learning
7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community

The Standards provide a framework of knowledge, practice and engagement that needs to be demonstrated for the purpose of accreditation.

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is the process of recognising a teacher's achievement of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.

You have a major role in understanding the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and considering and evaluating your practice in terms of the Standards. You need to take responsibility for managing your progress towards mandatory accreditation at the Proficient Teacher career stage.

Over time, as you work in a casual or part-time capacity across schools, you should be continuing to develop your teaching skills in terms of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.

You will need to seek advice from the principal or other executive staff in the school or schools in which you work as to who is able to supervise and support you during your employment. Nominated staff members in the school or schools in which you work have a role in supporting you and giving you feedback and guidance. Both you and the school share the professional relationships that are necessary for the accreditation process to occur.

Where you are employed more frequently, your employer should ensure you have access to support and the formal accreditation process. In addition, your employer can liaise with another school or teacher accreditation authority that has agreed to finalise your accreditation. You should approach the principal in the school where you are employed regularly and make arrangements for your accreditation to proceed.

Whilst staff in these schools may observe your teaching and provide you with support and feedback, the responsibility for making a final judgement on your teaching practice in terms of the Proficient Teacher Standards rests with a person or body called a teacher accreditation authority.

Who is my teacher accreditation authority?

A teacher accreditation authority (TAA) is a person or body authorised to determine if a teacher meets the requirements for accreditation at any level of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Each school in NSW has a TAA.

In government schools the TAA at Proficient Teacher career stage is the local school education director. In Catholic systemic schools, the TAA is usually the Director of Schools in the Diocese.

The TAA in independent schools is usually the principal or head of school.

Whilst a TAA is responsible for determining accreditation decisions, a number of other staff have delegated roles and responsibilities in the process, including other teachers, supervising teachers and principals (where the principal is not the TAA).

For permanent teachers who are working in one particular school their TAA is clearly identified. But many casual or part-time teachers will be working across schools in different regions, dioceses or sectors, where these schools have different TAAs, and therefore their TAA is not so clearly identified.

How can I be accredited?

The process for accreditation is more fully described in the *Information for Teachers Progressing to Proficient Teacher* booklet.

The essential aspects of accreditation involve you collecting evidence that you are demonstrating all of the Proficient Teacher Standards and at the appropriate point in time, having an Accreditation Report completed about your practice by a supervising teacher or principal and authorised by a TAA for accreditation at Proficient Teacher. This report needs to be supported by annotated samples of evidence.

How long will it take to demonstrate the Standards?

Teachers develop their skills and refine their practice over time, through their experience in the classroom and in a school context. As a guide, the Institute recommends a period of employment of at least 160 to 180 days for development of skills and practice that will meet the Proficient Teacher standard descriptors. The period for any individual teacher will depend on how quickly their practice has developed.

The period of time for developing skills and practice may not always occur through full time or continuous employment. Initially, it may be through very short employment at a number of schools. However, a continuous period of 6 – 8 weeks should become a component of your employment to provide the opportunity to demonstrate the full range of standard descriptors.

A longer period may be necessary if you are working part-time. Continuous employment may comprise working three days per week over, for example, two terms, or two days per week over three terms. The important point is that there can be some degree of flexibility that recognises the nature of casual and part-time forms of employment.

Continuous practice at one school provides teachers with opportunities to demonstrate standard descriptors that involve planning, programming and assessment, and communication with colleagues, parents and the community.

After you have completed a reasonable period of teaching, the school in which you are undertaking some continuous employment may then be confident that you are demonstrating all of the Proficient Teacher standard descriptors and that you have selected a range of available evidence to support that assessment. The combination of a period of employment with some continuous practice is viewed as the minimum timeframe within which a valid and reliable decision can be made by the Teacher Accreditation Authority about your teaching for accreditation purposes.

It is also important that you check with your current employer in regard to their specific requirements.

How will I collect evidence for accreditation?

Collecting evidence to support your accreditation is an ongoing process. As you work as a casual or part-time teacher in schools, you will need to collect evidence against the Proficient Teacher standard descriptors.

This evidence will assist in self-analysis and can be used as the basis for discussions with colleagues and supervising teachers.

The *Information for Teachers Progressing to Proficient Teacher* booklet describes a range of evidence that you could collect (see page 3). Evidence can be used to illustrate combinations of standard descriptors.

You should ensure that any evidence you collect in a school is signed and dated by your supervising teacher at that school. This includes any records of observations undertaken by your supervising teacher.

Can evidence I have collected across a range of schools be used by my teacher accreditation authority in making the decision about my accreditation?

Yes, if you have worked across a number of schools, evidence that you have collected at these schools can be considered by the school supporting the completion of your accreditation report.

As this school has full responsibility for confirming that you are demonstrating all of the Proficient Teacher standard descriptors it has the discretion to consider whatever evidence is available to support that decision. This may include some or all of the evidence you have collected at other schools as well as the evidence collected at that school.

The extent to which this school relies on the evidence that has been collected at other schools, in order to make its decision, may relate to the length of employment and the quality of evidence collected at that school and the length of employment and quality of evidence collected at other schools.

The school may also decide to consult with other schools in which you have taught, on some aspects of the evidence you have collected at those schools, or to verify that employment.

How is the accreditation report finalised?

When you are employed in a school that is supporting the completion of your Accreditation Report you will need to use your professional judgement as to what evidence will be included with the completed report. You should make these decisions in consultation with your supervising teacher. The evidence should be a representative sample of your work. You should refer to the *Information for Teachers Progressing to Proficient Teacher* booklet for advice on the amount of evidence to be included and on annotating that evidence.

The TAA for that school is responsible for considering the report and supporting evidence and making the final determination of your accreditation.

Once the TAA signs the Accreditation Report you are accredited and the TAA is then required to forward the completed Accreditation Report and supporting evidence to the Institute.

Soon after the receipt of your signed Accreditation Report, the Institute will forward accreditation advice to you as well as a signed Certificate of Accreditation to your TAA to confirm that you are accredited at Proficient Teacher.

You should keep the Institute informed of any change of address to ensure that you receive your accreditation certificate.

Maximum timeframe for completion of mandatory accreditation.

The amount of time that you have to achieve accreditation will depend on your accreditation status at the point of employment. If you are accredited as provisional you have a maximum of five years to complete your accreditation and if you are accredited as conditional you have a maximum of six years to complete your accreditation.

The time that it will take you to gain accreditation will depend on your capacity to demonstrate all of the Proficient Teacher standard descriptors and to collect evidence of this achievement.

Can I apply for an extension of time?

There are some circumstances under which you may apply for an extension of time to complete the accreditation process. These include a lack of reasonable opportunity to present for accreditation, some child rearing responsibilities, home care responsibilities, sickness or misadventure and other appropriate professional circumstances.

To apply for an extension of time you should complete the relevant form on the Institute's website and forward with accompanying evidence to the Manager, Standards and Accreditation at the NSW Institute of Teachers.

Can I apply for a Leave of Absence?

The Institute also has a Leave of Absence process to accommodate accredited teachers who have a period outside of teaching where they are, for example, not working as a teacher, undertaking child rearing responsibilities, travelling interstate or overseas or undertaking further study.

What resources should I refer to?

The following Institute documents are available to support you through your accreditation:

- *Accreditation at Proficient Teacher/Professional Competence Policy*
- *The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*
- *FAQs*
- *Information for Teachers Progressing to Proficient Teacher*
- *Summary - How do I Become Accredited at Proficient Teacher?*
- *Advice for Returning Teachers about Accreditation, if applicable*
- *The Evidence Guide*

Your school may be able to refer you to additional policies and resources that have been developed to implement the Institute's policies.

For further information

Please go to the Institute of Teachers' website: www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au or

Contact the NSW Institute of Teachers:

Phone: 1300 739 338

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