Accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher

Information for Referees

Contents

The Highly Accomplished Teacher

Highly Accomplished teachers are recognised as highly effective, skilled classroom practitioners who routinely work independently and collaboratively to improve their own practice and the practice of colleagues. They are knowledgeable and active members of the school.

Highly Accomplished teachers contribute to their colleagues' learning. They may also take on roles that support, guide or advise others. They regularly initiate and engage in discussions about effective teaching to improve the educational outcomes for their students.

They maximise learning opportunities for their students by understanding their backgrounds and individual characteristics and the impact of those factors on their learning. They provide colleagues, including teacher education students (pre-service teachers), with support and strategies to create positive and productive learning environments. Highly Accomplished teachers have in-depth knowledge of subjects and curriculum content within their sphere of responsibility. They model sound teaching practices in their teaching areas. They work with colleagues to plan, evaluate and modify teaching programs to improve student learning. They keep abreast of the latest developments in their specialist content area or across a range of content areas for generalist teachers.

Highly Accomplished teachers are skilled in analysing student assessment data and use it to improve learning and teaching. They are active in establishing an environment which maximises professional learning and professional practice opportunities for colleagues. They monitor their own professional learning needs and align them to the learning needs of students and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. They behave ethically at all times. Their interpersonal and presentation skills are highly developed. They communicate effectively and respectfully with students, colleagues, parents/carers and community members.

The Lead Teacher

Lead teachers are recognised and respected by colleagues, parents/carers and the community as exemplary teachers. They have demonstrated consistent and innovative teaching practice over time. Inside and outside the school they initiate and lead activities that focus on improving educational opportunities for all students.

They establish inclusive learning environments that meet the needs of students from different linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. They seek to improve their own practice and to share their experience with colleagues.

They are skilled in mentoring teachers and teacher education students (pre-service teachers), using activities that develop knowledge, practice and professional engagement in others. They promote creative, innovative thinking among colleagues.

Lead teachers apply skills and in-depth knowledge and understanding to deliver effective lessons and learning opportunities and share this information with colleagues and teacher education students. They describe the relationship between highly effective learning and teaching in ways that inspire and enable colleagues to improve their own professional practice.

They lead processes to improve student performance by evaluating and revising programs, analysing student assessment data and taking account of feedback from parents/carers. This is combined with a synthesis of current research on effective learning and teaching.

Lead teachers represent the school and the teaching profession in the community with distinction. They are professional, ethical and respected individuals inside and outside the school.

Introduction

The accreditation process for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher must identify teachers who are recognised as meeting the Standards by the teaching profession and the wider community. Voluntary accreditation therefore identifies highly effective and exemplary teaching that is independent of a specific school context.

Accreditation decisions are made by a Teacher Accreditation Authority (TAA A/L) external to the candidate's school, following advice from a cross-sectoral Moderating and Consistency Committee.

The accreditation model for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher is based on the use of externally moderated professional judgements and a variety of evidence from three sources. Teachers have the capacity in this model to demonstrate the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers over time.

Candidates for accreditation can apply for either Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher. There is no requirement for a candidate to meet the requirements for Highly Accomplished Teacher before proceeding to Lead Teacher. The requirements are explained in the Policy for Accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher which can be downloaded from the 'Publications, policies and resources' page of the website.

Candidate's evidence for accreditation

The sources of evidence are documentary evidence, referee reports and the external observer report.

Evidence Guides for Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher are available to support candidates both in their collection of evidence and in understanding the basis of the accreditation decision. These evidence guides provide clear examples of the types of documentary, referee and observer evidence that typically demonstrate the achievement of each of the Standard Descriptors. They may therefore be useful to potential referees and assist them in understanding how Standard Descriptors might be observed and described.

Click here to download the *Highly Accomplished Teacher Evidence Guide* from the 'Develop your application' page of the website.

Click here to download the *Lead Teacher Evidence Guide* from the 'Develop your application' page of the website.

Importance of referee statements

Referees should be aware of the significance that their statements carry in the evaluation of a candidate's accreditation submission. Referee statements provide important balance in the submission, alongside documentary evidence and external observer statements. They help in the assessment of the candidate's overall submission by providing the voice of colleagues and others who work closely with the candidate.

Both the TAA A/L and the Moderating and Consistency Committee read referee statements thoroughly and consider their content. The evidence you provide in your referee statement assists the TAA A/L in making their judgement about the candidate's overall submission.

Candidate's selection of referees

Appropriate selection of referees by the candidate will help ensure that accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher is an authentic process and an experience with professional credibility.

Candidates will be aware that they require a minimum of three and a maximum of eight referees. Your relationship with the candidate will demonstrate how they either:

- report to someone (such as someone in a supervisory or line manager role), including the principal or head of school,
- work in a collegial way, such as with a teacher colleague, or
- assist another's professional progress, such as a colleague who has received professional assistance or guidance from the teacher

Referees may include but are not limited to people such as classroom teachers, executive staff, principals, education consultants or advisors, teacher educators, specialist or itinerant staff, members of the community and representatives of external organisations.

School students cannot be referees.

For Lead Teacher applicants, at least one referee's comment will substantiate the Lead Teacher Initiative. Referees can read more about the Lead Initiative on pages 11–12 of the Policy.

Your role as a referee

As a referee your role is to provide evidence for the candidate's application by making statements in relation to one or more Standard Descriptor/s. You are a witness to the candidate's work and someone who can attest to their achievement of the Standard Descriptors rather than being their advocate.

You would have been selected as a referee based on your capacity to provide credible judgement about the candidate's achievement of the Standard Descriptors over time. You will only need to comment on Standards and Standard Descriptors that reflect your expertise and level of involvement with the candidate's work. For all potential referees, considering the practice of the candidate in relation to the Standards at their selected career stage is an important first step.

In your role as a referee you will not be asked to write a general exposition as to a candidate's abilities; write an impressionistic or character reference; or to make assumptions as to the candidate's capacity to meet the Standard Descriptors.

When uploading your statements, you will need to agree:

- that your statements are accurate and valid
- to maintaining confidentiality
- to being contacted if necessary by Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) staff to provide further clarification of your statements.

You will also be asked to describe your professional relationship with the candidate. This information is for background and context to assist with contextualising your first-hand knowledge of the candidate's practice. It assists in ensuring that the candidate meets the referee requirements, so you will need to specify if you are the principal/head of school, a teacher colleague, or a teacher who has received professional assistance or guidance from the candidate. You may be a parent or member of the community. It is important to make your relationship with the candidate clear. However, this is not part of the candidate's evidence against the Standard Descriptors. You should not include any judgements about the candidate's practice or general comments about the candidate, their character or their abilities.

You will then be asked to check the boxes to say that you have read this information booklet, accurately described your relationship with the candidate, seen the Descriptors in practice and written the comments yourself.

It is recommended that referees read the [Policy for Accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher](#) before agreeing to act as a referee for a candidate.

Professional discussions with referees, including the principal

As the candidate plans and proceeds through their accreditation process, ongoing professional discussions will take place between the candidate and their principal and other identified referees. These discussions should be led by the candidate. A well-prepared candidate will plan which of the Standard Descriptors each of their referees will attest to. Possible focus areas for discussion include, but are not limited to:

- the Standard Descriptors attributed to the referee
- examples of the candidate's practice that demonstrate each Standard Descriptor
- achievements of the candidate over time that the referee has first-hand knowledge of and can therefore attest to, such as events, activities, impacts, outcomes.

The discussions will be most helpful to the referee and the candidate if they remain focused on the identified Standard Descriptors and examples of the candidate's practice. However, referee statements must not be written by the candidate, and referees should not feel under pressure to make any specific comments in their statement.

All referees, including the principal, should only include statements about a candidate's practice when their knowledge is first-hand.

If a Lead candidate wants a referee to address their Lead Initiative in their referee statements, this should be made clear during the discussions.

Writing an effective referee statement

Clear and concise statements that address the Standard Descriptors directly and provide appropriate examples of the candidate's practice will be most effective. Statements need not be lengthy (the maximum word length per comment is measured in characters, at the equivalent of approximately 300 words), but must directly focus on practice, and impact of practice, that addresses the Standard Descriptor to be useful to the candidate when their submission is assessed.

Although you will submit your statements in an online process, referees are advised to draft their comments in MS Word® in the first instance so that they can be checked for word count and spelling/typing errors before uploading. Statements that exceed the character limit cannot be saved into the candidate's submission.

Referees are strongly advised to retain a copy of their written statements as a backup.

Where possible, referees should provide specific examples of the candidate's practice to demonstrate how the Standard Descriptor is met. It is not sufficient to say 'Can confirm' that the candidate meets the Standard Descriptor. Your written statement provides authenticity and validity to the candidate's evidence, and to your statements.
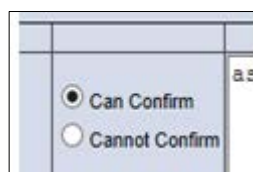
Questions to consider when drafting your statements

In drafting your statements for each of the specified Standard Descriptors, you might consider questions such as:
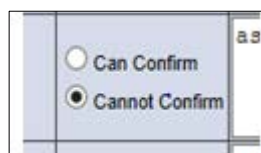
- What have you seen the candidate do in relation to the Standard Descriptor?
    - How did they do it?
    - Why did they do it?
    - What examples can you provide?
- How did the candidate demonstrate the key action/s in the Standard Descriptor?
    - Examples at Highly Accomplished Teacher include: model, share, support, work with colleagues, assist, initiate, organise, plan, engage
    - Examples at Lead Teacher include: initiate, lead, mentor, evaluate, monitor, lead by example, implement, review, coordinate, advocate, model
- How effective was it?
    - What evidence do you have?
    - What was the impact of their actions? On whom?
- How is it being / will it be sustained?

Potential issues for referees and possible solutions

When you are writing referee statements, it is possible that you can confidently confirm some or most, but not all, of the Standard Descriptors attributed to you. However, if you have not observed the candidate's practice against one or more of the Standard Descriptors, or you believe that the candidate's practice does not meet them, it is your professional responsibility to say so. Your statement will then be very important in qualifying the reason/s for your inability to confirm the candidate's practice against the Standard Descriptor.

If you have first-hand knowledge that the candidate's practice addresses a Standard Descriptor, you select 'Can Confirm'.

If you cannot confirm the candidate's practice against most or all of an identified Standard Descriptor you need to select 'Cannot Confirm'.

Some issues that referees may face are summarised below, with some suggested solutions. In all cases, **a discussion with the candidate is strongly advised** before completing and submitting your referee report.

Up until the time you have submitted your referee report, it is possible for the candidate to change the Standard Descriptors they have asked you to attest to.

Issue	Why this might happen	What can you do?
You support the candidate's application, but you are unable to write a referee statement for one, or part of one, Standard Descriptor that you have been asked to attest to	You have been asked to provide referee statements for a number of Standard Descriptors and there is just one, or a part of one Standard Descriptor, to which you cannot attest. For example, the candidate is using evidence from another school, or a non-school context, and you do not have first-hand knowledge of it.	Have a discussion with the candidate and suggest that a different referee attest to that Standard Descriptor, explaining why. You can then write your referee statements for the other Standard Descriptor/s. If the candidate insists that you write the statement, follow the advice provided below.
You have first-hand knowledge that the candidate meets part, but not all of, the Standard Descriptor	Some Standard Descriptors require more than one action, such as 'monitor and evaluate', or 'model and share'. You may feel that you cannot attest to both parts of the Standard Descriptor. Sometimes, a range of evidence is required for the one Standard Descriptor, and you only have first-hand knowledge of one example in the teacher's practice.	If the candidate demonstrates most of the Standard Descriptor but not all of it, you may still select 'Can Confirm' and use your written statement to identify those parts of the Standard Descriptor which you can and cannot confirm. If you cannot confirm the candidate's practice against most of the identified Standard Descriptor you need to select 'Cannot Confirm'. The statement you make will then be very important in qualifying the reason/s for your inability to confirm. You may also include a comment to support any part of the Standard Descriptor that you can confirm, even though you have selected 'Cannot Confirm'.
You do not have first-hand knowledge of the candidate's practice against any of one, or more, Standard Descriptors	The candidate has asked you to provide referee statements, but you have not worked directly with the candidate when they undertook the practice that demonstrated the Standard Descriptor.	If you do not have first-hand knowledge of the candidate's practice against the Standard Descriptors, you need to clearly say that this is the case. It will then be up to the candidate to identify a referee who can write a statement, or to provide documentary or External Observer evidence in its place. If the candidate insists that you write the statement/s, you will need to select 'Cannot Confirm' and explain why this is so.
The candidate's practice does not meet a specified Standard Descriptor	This may occur if you believe the candidate's practice for the particular Standard Descriptor is at a different career stage, such as a Lead candidate whose practice is at Highly Accomplished Teacher, or a Highly Accomplished candidate who is an excellent teacher but does not consistently model, share and assist colleagues.	If the candidate does not meet the Standard Descriptor, you need to select 'Cannot Confirm'. Your written statement needs to explain why you believe that the candidate does not meet the Standard Descriptor.
You are unable to write a referee statement for the candidate in relation to any Standard Descriptors	You do not support the candidate as an applicant at the key stage for which they have applied.	It is your professional responsibility to tell the candidate that you are unable to be a referee for them. If you are the candidate's principal, you are still required to provide a referee statement. You will need to select 'Cannot Confirm' and make a written statement to explain why you believe that the candidate does not meet the Standard Descriptor/s.
	You believe there is a conflict of interest and your concerns are of an ethical nature, such as where the candidate is a close friend or relative.	In this case, you need to tell the candidate that you feel unable to provide a referee statement at all. If the candidate insists, you are advised to have a discussion with the candidate's principal.

What to do if you need to say 'no' to a referee request

All referees, other than the candidate's current principal, have the option to say no to a candidate's referee request. However, all referee requests should be considered on their merit. Being a referee is an important professional responsibility for teachers and school leaders. Candidates carefully consider the selection of their evidence and will have invited you to be one of their referees because they believe that you have first-hand knowledge of their practice in relation to the identified Standard Descriptor/s.

Before you say no to a request, it may be useful to ask the candidate to clarify why they have asked you to be a referee and what practice they think you could consider in your statements. If you still feel unable to confirm that the candidate meets one or all of the Standard Descriptors attributed to you, you should say so. Agreeing to provide a referee statement for a Standard Descriptor when you are unable to provide evidence that the candidate's practice demonstrates it may weaken their overall submission. In these circumstances, it would be better for the candidate to ask a different referee.

If you are concerned about providing a referee statement and need support in saying no, you should discuss your concerns with the candidate's principal, especially if the candidate is your line manager.

Further advice to non-teacher referees

It is not a requirement that candidates include non-teacher referees. However, some candidates work closely with parents, community members, non-school based teacher professionals or professionals from other disciplines. In such circumstances these people may be best placed to attest to a candidate's practice for a particular Standard Descriptor.

If you are not a teacher, the candidate will need to request that you complete the attached form so you have a login to upload referee statements.

In addition to a login, you will require an email address (so that the BOSTES can communicate with you) and access to a computer to complete your referee report.

If you have any concerns about being a referee that cannot be resolved by the candidate, you should discuss the request with the candidate's principal.

Some important final comments regarding your report

Once you submit your referee report, your statements remain part of the candidate's submission and cannot be removed by you or by the candidate. You will no longer be able to edit or change them.

Referees should be aware that candidates can view their report once it has been submitted. This is to provide an open and transparent process for the candidate. Importantly, it provides the candidate with an opportunity to strengthen their other evidence against a Standard Descriptor if their referee has been unable to strongly attest to it or unable to confirm it at all. This is the candidate's responsibility as part of their accreditation process.

Need more advice?

Contact the Teaching Standards Directorate at the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards

Call: 9367 8409 or 1300 739 338

Email: contactus@bostes.nsw.edu.au

Street address: Level 4, 117 Clarence Street, Sydney, NSW 2000

Postal address: GPO Box 5300 Sydney 2001

How to upload your completed referee report

Referee reports are submitted online. Your statements will attest to the fact that you have seen the candidate demonstrate the Standard Descriptors over a period of time.

Accessing the BOSTES website

All referees need a BOSTES teacher number (formerly known as your Institute number) and a login. If you do not know your teacher number and your login, you need to complete a form and provide it to the candidate. The candidate may provide you with the form and request you to complete it. The form is included at the end of this document for your reference.

The candidate will send your form to the BOSTES so that you can be provided with a teacher number and a login. You will then also be identified as a referee in the candidate's submission area.

You will receive an email informing you that you have been identified by the candidate as a referee.

Until this has occurred, you will not be able to upload your referee statements.

The process for submitting the referee report online

Once you have received the email confirming that you have been identified as a referee for the candidate, you can upload your referee statements.

Step 1: Log in to the website by going to www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/ and clicking on the login tab at the top right of the screen.
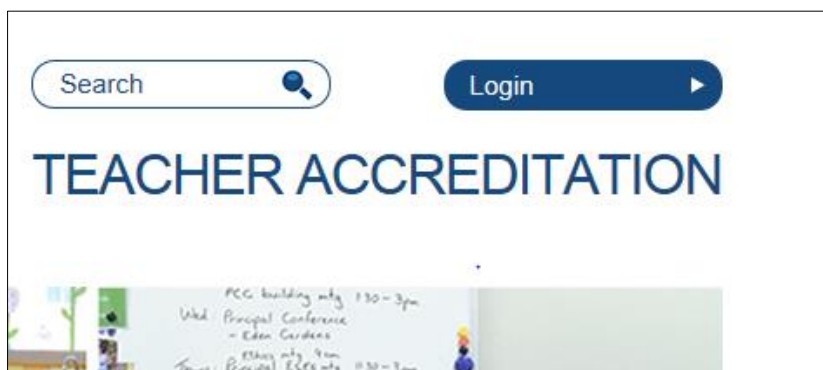
Step 2: Click on login for teachers, TAAs, supervisors, principals, PD delegates, referees and External Observers
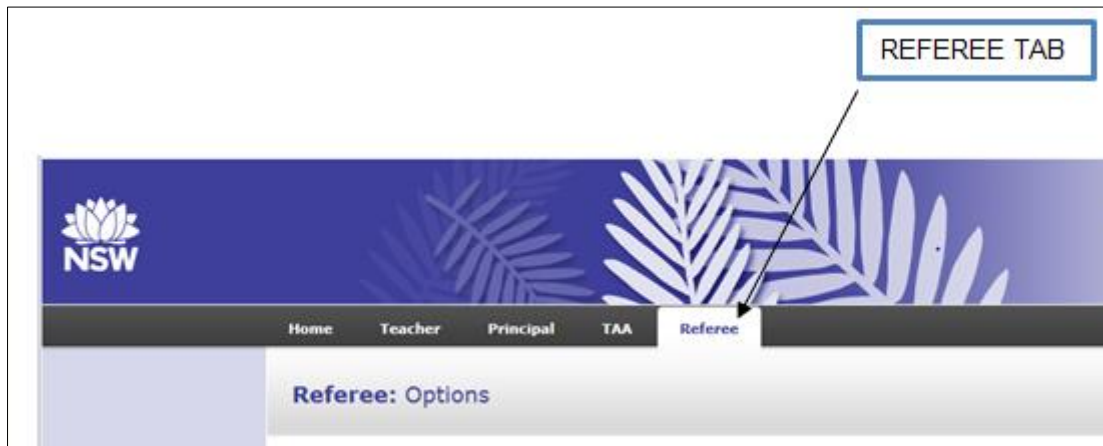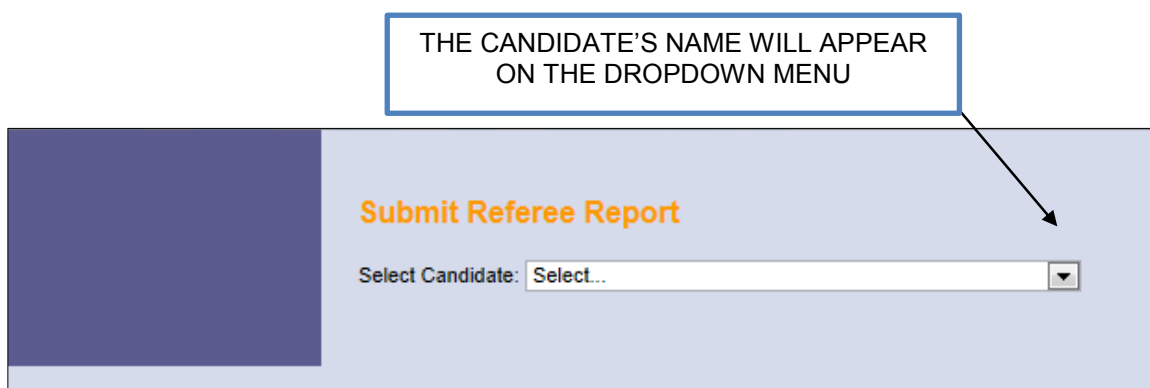

Step 3: Log in using your username and password

Step 4: Select and click on the Referee tab

REFEREE TAB

Step 5: Follow the onscreen prompt to Click HERE for referee reporting.

Step 6: Click on the arrow button and the candidate's name appears for you to select

THE CANDIDATE'S NAME WILL APPEAR
ON THE DROPDOWN MENU

Submit Referee Report

Select Candidate: Select...

Step 7: You will be asked to describe your professional relationship with the candidate. Use these sentence starters as a guide:

- My role is …
- My relationship with the candidate is …

You could also add the following, where appropriate:

- Together, we have worked on …
- The candidate has advised and/or assisted me with …
- I have worked in 'x' school where the candidate …

Then, check the boxes to say that you have read this information booklet, accurately described your relationship with the candidate, seen the evidence and written the comments yourself.

CLICK ON EDIT TEXT & A POP UP WILL APPEAR

When you have completed this information you can click on 'Proceed to report'.

Step 8: You are now ready to copy and paste your referee statements out of MS Word® and into the Referee Report template. It is important to remember these things:

- Each statement should be a maximum of around 275 words (calculated in characters). If you exceed the character count your statements will not save.
- There is no warning to tell you that the statements have not saved. Again, you are strongly encouraged to retain a copy of your statements to avoid having to re-draft them.
- In order to paste each comment, first click on 'Edit Text' and a pop up will appear. Paste your comment in and 'Save'.
- IMPORTANT: Save each comment before proceeding to the next one to ensure that you haven't exceeded the word count. If one of the comments exceeds the word count, none of the comments will be saved.
-

AGAIN, CLICK ON EDIT TEXT & A POP UP WILL APPEAR
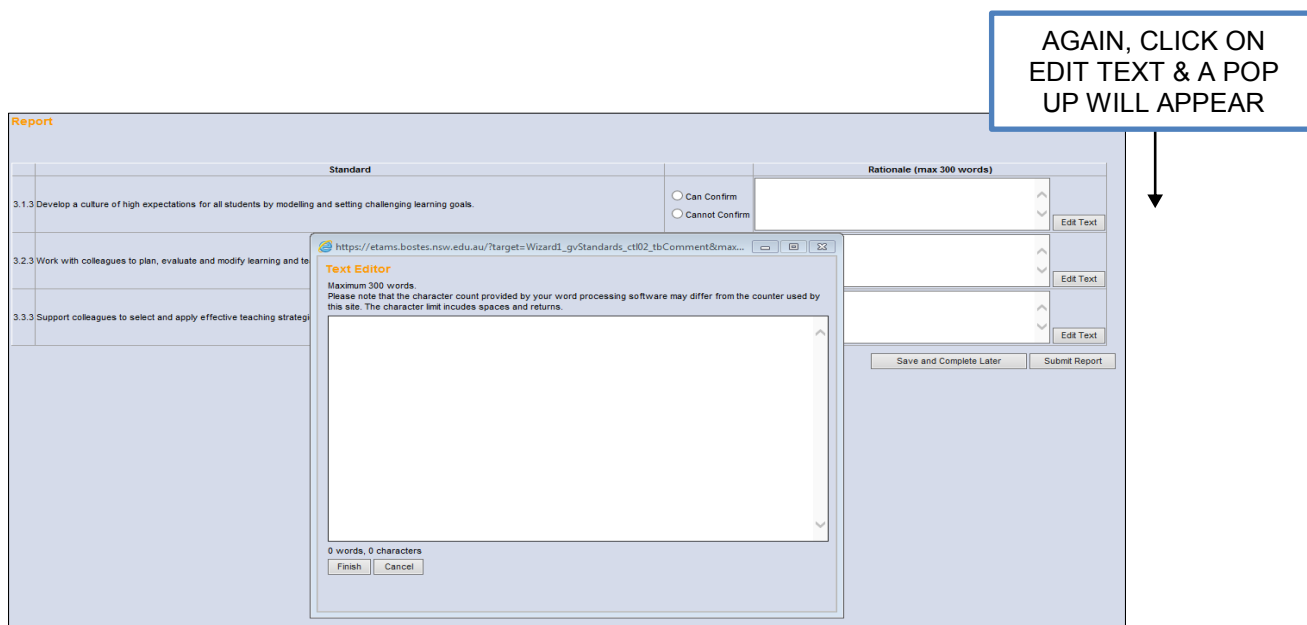
Step 9: Tell the candidate that you have completed the Referee Report. They will be able to log in and read your comments. You will no longer be able to change them.

Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher Request for Information from Referees

The following information is required to give you online access to complete your referee's report. Please email the completed file to BOSTES Data Processing Officer. You will be notified by email of your username, password and Institute number. You will need to give your Institute number and email address to applicants for whom you are refereeing.

If you have completed this form previously there is no need for you to complete it again. If you are already on our system and you know your Institute number and login, there is no need to complete this form – simply provide your Institute number and email address to the candidate. When they have advised you that you are now a referee for their application, you log in to the BOSTES website to complete your report.

*Name (first, last)	
*Title	
*Date of birth	
Current school	
Workplace (if not a school)	
Position	
Employment type (permanent, temporary)	
Employment status (F/T, P/T, C)	
*At least one phone contact:	
Work phone	
Home phone	
Mobile phone	
*Email address	
*Referee for?	*Applicant's name:*

*required