

Policy for Accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher

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1 Background

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (The Standards) describe what teachers need to know, understand and do to teach effectively. The Standards reflect the commitment, values and attitudes that teachers bring to their work. The four career stages of the Standards are described along a continuum of increasing expertise, skill and quality – Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher.

Voluntary accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher provides a structured process for recognising the quality of teachers in NSW schools. Accreditation identifies teachers who are recognised by the teaching profession.

2 Purpose

The policy is designed to explain the process for gaining accreditation against the Standards at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher for the key participants – teachers, the teacher’s professional colleagues and teacher accreditation authorities.

The policy elaborates on provisions in the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* and provides the basis for accreditation processes.

Procedures and guidelines described are designed to provide assurance in relation to the consistency and comparability of accreditation decisions.

The Standards for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers describe benchmarks of highly effective and exemplary teaching. They do not describe the attributes of specific job descriptions. Accreditation at these career stages is applicable to classroom teachers as well as promoted teachers. It identifies teachers’ practice independent of a specific school context.

3 Scope

The voluntary accreditation process for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher is available to all teachers accredited at Proficient Teacher (new scheme and transition) under the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* and teachers not required to have mandatory accreditation.

Accreditation decisions for voluntary higher level accreditation are made by a teacher accreditation authority accomplished / lead (TAA A/L).

A TAA (A/L) may, on application by a person to whom this applies:

- a) accredit the person...
- b) refuse to accredit the person (Sections 39 and 40)

4 Principles

Teaching standards are the basis of accreditation processes.

Teacher quality is fundamental to developing student learning.

The teaching profession can identify and recognise teacher quality at highly accomplished and lead levels.

Applying for accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher is voluntary.

Accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher is strengthened by the use of externally moderated professional judgements and multiple sources of evidence to make accreditation decisions. Inherent within the process is the capacity for teachers to demonstrate the Standards over time.

5 Teacher Accreditation Authorities

5.1 Appointing Teacher Accreditation Authorities

Under the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004*, a teacher accreditation authority (TAA) means

- *in relation to a government school, the Director-General of Education and Training or such other person or body as may be approved... by the Director-General.*
- *The approval... by the Director-General authorises the person or body to accredit... at such levels of accreditation as determined by the Director-General; and*
- *in relation to a non-government school, the Minister or such person or body as may be approved... by the Minister.*
- *The approval... by the Minister authorises the person or body to accredit... at such levels of accreditation as determined by the Minister.*

In all NSW schools, approval to be a TAA is subject to the person or body complying with:

- (i) the accreditation procedures and guidelines set out in the Teaching Standards;*
- (ii) the conditions imposed by or under the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004; and*
- (iii) such other conditions as the Minister (or Director-General as in government schools) thinks fit to impose.*

[Section 4]

5.2 Guidelines for the identification of TAAs (A/L)

The *Teacher Accreditation Act* [Section 19] provides that the Minister “may approve professional teaching standards in relation to...

- d) accreditation at Highly Accomplished level*
- e) accreditation at Lead Teacher level*

The Act [Section 20] also provides that the Standards may deal with...

- c) the procedures and guidelines to be followed by TAA (A/L)s in relation to the accreditation of teachers.*

Procedures and guidelines described for the identification of TAAs for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher accreditation are designed to contribute to the assurance of consistency and comparability of accreditation decisions.

As the number of teachers seeking Highly Accomplished and Lead in any one year in one school may be relatively small, the following guidelines for the identification of TAAs for Highly Accomplished and Lead have been developed:

- A TAA (A/L) is responsible for determining accreditation decisions across at least 20 schools
- Ten or more of the 20 schools would have more than 200 students
- The schools would reflect diversity of school types and settings and therefore would include at least one primary (K-6) and at least one secondary school (Years 7-10 or 7-12)¹. The different settings would comprise a number of schools that include students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

An entity may be established specifically for the purpose of being a TAA (A/L).

5.3 The role of the Teacher Accreditation Authority (A/L)

5.3.1 Making an accreditation decision

The TAA (A/L) has responsibility for:

- considering and making recommendations with regard to a teacher's accreditation submission
- ensuring that quality processes for making accreditation decisions have been put in place
- forwarding the candidate's final submission, with a recommendation, to the Moderating and Consistency Committee for advice against state-wide benchmarks
- considering the advice from the MCC. The TAA (A/L) has the authority to make the accreditation decision.

5.3.2 Feedback for the candidate

In addition, a TAA may provide an applicant with some feedback with regard to the quality of his or her submission, at a mutually convenient time prior to the completion of the submission. The feedback process can be specific to a TAA (A/L) and be negotiated by the candidate with the TAA (A/L) or their delegate.

¹A K-12 school could be categorised as either a primary or a secondary school for this purpose. A school that includes a preparatory year within a secondary school environment (i.e. 5-12) is regarded as a secondary school.

5.4 TAA (A/L) Internal Policy and Processes

In order to ensure the validity and transparency of the accreditation process, it is necessary for TAAs (A/L), or an employment authority for a TAA (A/L), to develop an internal accreditation policy. This policy should assist the candidate to understand the quality assurance processes which the TAA (A/L) will use in assessing the submissions.

The policy will include information about any process specific to the employing authority to be followed by the candidate for completion of his or her accreditation submission.

In addition, a candidate must be provided with details about their right to a review when a TAA (A/L) makes a decision not to accredit. This internal review mechanism should be designed to address issues of procedural fairness between the teacher applicant and his or her TAA (A/L) in relation to the final accreditation decision.

The internal policy and processes developed by the TAA (A/L) will include:

- a process of internal quality assurance for submissions for accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher. All candidates should be aware of these quality assurance requirements.
- an explanation of the process whereby candidates can request a review of the final accreditation decision by the TAA (A/L). This includes the role of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT).

5.5 Training for TAAs (A/L)

Advice and training will be provided to support consistent and comparable accreditation decisions.

6 Key Aspects of Accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher

6.1 A phased model

The accreditation model comprises two distinct phases:

- A preliminary application phase

In this phase, teachers have their achievements assessed through an online application as an indicator of their likely success in demonstrating the Standards.

- An accreditation phase

In this phase, teacher applicants collect evidence from a range of sources leading to the submission of their final application against the Standards.

6.2 Preliminary Application Phase

The preliminary application process makes a realistic and valid assessment to:

- provide teachers with a clear indication of likely success in gaining accreditation should they proceed with their application, thereby giving them some confidence in proceeding;
- stop teachers from commencing the accreditation phase needlessly when there is little likelihood of success, and provides feedback to them as to what areas require additional experience, achievements or professional development in order to increase their likely success in gaining accreditation;
- use in the form of an online assessment instrument based on applicants providing information about their practice as teachers in terms of the evidence requirements for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher
- enable all teachers to undertake a self-assessment against the criteria and gain a clear understanding of the kinds of practice required for accreditation.

6.2.1 Undertaking a Preliminary Application

The preliminary application is designed to be an indicator of likely success rather than a guarantee of success. Teachers undertaking the preliminary application will be encouraged to provide accurate information about their past and current practice.

A teacher's decision to apply for accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead may be initiated by professional discussions with their principal or appropriate manager or supervisor. A preliminary application may assist a teacher make this decision. Teachers individual responses about practice are the basis for the feedback received. The statements about practice are based on criteria determined through surveying practising teachers. Details and access are on the teacher accreditation website.

The advice provided is in the form of whether the teacher is either *likely to succeed* or *not likely to succeed* at the accreditation phase, based on the results of their application. BOSTES also provides feedback to the teacher and information on how to proceed to the accreditation phase. This feedback will relate to what additional experience, achievements or professional development is recommended to increase their likely success in gaining accreditation against the Standards. Teachers can subsequently re-apply when they have addressed the feedback from the preliminary application and are ready to try again.

It is recommended that a teacher undertakes a preliminary application and is assessed as *likely to succeed* before proceeding with accreditation.

6.3 Accreditation Phase

6.3.1 Eligibility requirements for accreditation

To be eligible to apply for accreditation at the Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher career stages the applicant must:

- be an Australian citizen or have a permanent residency visa²
- have full accreditation at Proficient Teacher if required by the *Teacher Accreditation Act*
- have been assessed as satisfactory in their two most recent annual performance assessments for those applying for Highly Accomplished career stage, or have been assessed as satisfactory in their three most recent annual performance assessments for those applying for Lead career stage.³

6.3.2 Professional discussions with the principal and other colleagues

When a teacher decides to proceed to the Accreditation Submission Phase, the applicant should discuss his or her intention with colleagues who can contribute advice regarding the decision and the level at which accreditation will be sought. These discussions may include consideration of the breadth and depth of the applicant's experience that would contribute to demonstrating the standards required for accreditation.

If the teacher chooses to proceed, it would be prudent at this stage to seek out and canvass the opinions of referees identified to support his or her submission. The advice from referees could contribute to a decision to proceed.

At the time of applying to begin a submission, the teacher must inform the principal, or line manager (in the case of a school principal application), of their intention to seek accreditation. The principal will acknowledge, through their log-in access to the teacher accreditation website, that the teacher and the principal have discussed the intention to apply. The process involves a site visit by an external observer and formal acknowledgment recognises the potential impact on the school organisation of the teacher progressing through an accreditation process.

The principal will also verify the teacher's eligibility to apply for accreditation, on the basis of the school's performance development process and certified citizenship documents from the teacher.

² This also includes New Zealand citizens teaching in Australian schools or early childhood settings.

³ Annual performance assessments may be those conducted using the current school/system processes where these exist and are not required in a specific format. It is recognised that currently some schools may not have these processes, or the circumstances of teachers mean they have not received an assessment. In these cases, the referees will provide evidence of past performance. Following the implementation of the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework the specific requirements of an annual performance assessment outlined will need to be met.

6.3.3 Payment of application fee

An application fee is to be paid when an applicant proceeds with a submission for accreditation. The fee is paid through the applicant's log-in to the teacher accreditation website. Details regarding the fee and the payment are provided on the website. The fee is determined by Regulation to the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004*.

7 The Submission

7.1 An overview of the electronic submission

Payment of the fee provides access to the online submission process.

The teacher making an application provides essential details, or updates existing details, through their account on the teacher accreditation website. The online submission provides a structure for collating information on:

- schools where the teacher has developed evidence of meeting the relevant standards
- the teacher's overview statement on teaching context relevant to the evidence; key features of the documentary evidence and a summary of major strengths in relation to the domains of the teaching standards, Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement
- sources of evidence of meeting the Standard Descriptors, including the Lead initiative required by Lead Teacher applicants.

The teacher can log on to change or add to their submission over time. All submission information included is stored electronically for the teacher.

Teachers are responsible for deciding when to submit their evidence. There is a recommended maximum 3-year timeframe for the completion of a teacher's submission.

An extension of time can be requested to accommodate periods of leave from school (e.g. maternity leave, illness or other personal circumstances).

When the teacher submits the evidence, the application is then accessible to the TAA (A/L) for assessment.

A notification that the teacher is commencing or has completed a submission is emailed to the TAA (A/L) for the teacher's current school.

7.2 Sources of evidence required for meeting the Teaching Standard Descriptors

The accreditation decision is based on the teacher consistently meeting all of the Standard Descriptors at the relevant key stage.

It is important that the applicant has an authentic teaching role. For the purpose of accreditation, an authentic teaching role will include responsibility for students' curriculum program and their assessment. This is essential for being able to demonstrate the complete

range of teaching standard descriptors. It is accepted that teachers may have other significant functions in their role.

All applicants will demonstrate meeting the Standard Descriptors using three sources of evidence:

- documentation regarding the teacher's practice
- evidence from referees and
- evidence provided by an External Observer of the teacher's practice.

The teacher should make a careful selection of quality evidence, using the most appropriate source/s for particular standard descriptors. Overall, the contribution from these sources should be balanced and significant.

In addition, Lead Teacher applicants are required to undertake a Lead Initiative over a period of 6 months or more and include a statement about the initiative. At least one referee will need to refer to the project and its impact in their referee statements against standard descriptors.⁴

Evidence Guides for Highly Accomplished Teacher standards and for Lead Teacher standards provide clear examples of the types of evidence that typically demonstrate the achievement of each of the standards.

7.2.1 Documentary evidence

Documentation that represents aspects of the teacher's own practice can provide direct evidence of meeting specific Standard Descriptors.

To achieve a balanced set of evidence, documentary evidence should contribute to the seven groups of Standard Descriptors. Documentation from the teacher's practice will generally demonstrate evidence of more than one Standard Descriptor. Some documentary evidence collected may demonstrate most or all descriptors for a Standard or demonstrate descriptors across more than one Standard.

Documents may be presented as individual items or as sets of evidence that are connected.

The teacher nominates which Standard Descriptors are demonstrated by each piece or set of evidence. An annotation is also provided to explain how or why the evidence shows that the Standard/s are demonstrated.

The documentation is to include two reports of observations of teaching conducted at the school. One observation is to be conducted by the principal or head of school or by their delegate. The observation reports are to show what aspects of practice and which standard descriptors were the focus of the observation, a description of the teacher's behaviour or actions and comments that evaluate the classroom practice.

⁴ Activities may be drawn from a range of contexts but must demonstrate the impact on the candidate's school setting.

For Lead Teacher applicants, the documentation is also to include a statement describing their Lead Teacher Initiative. The applicant will lead an initiative that is linked to school or system goals or plans, for a minimum of six months. It should enable the applicant to demonstrate a leading role in design and/or implementation and evaluation or review. It should also be able to demonstrate an impact on the knowledge, practice or engagement of their colleagues.

The documentary component of a submission should focus on quality rather than the quantity of documentary evidence. A piece of documentary evidence or sets of evidence may demonstrate achievement of one or a number of standard descriptors. The amount of documentary evidence submitted will vary from candidate to candidate but should convey the complexity and depth of the candidate's practice across the seven standards.⁵

Teachers may include evidence that is from their immediate practice and evidence that precedes the date of their submission, using three years as a guide. All evidence will be considered on the basis of its continuing relevance to the teacher's current practice.

Each piece of evidence or set of connected evidence is submitted by uploading to the teacher's online application.

7.2.2 Referee evidence

Referees provide direct knowledge and experience of the applicant's practice. This can be over a period of time and a number of contexts.

The teacher nominates in their online submission referees who may substantiate aspects of the teacher's practice. The teacher also nominates which Standard Descriptors each referee is asked to respond to.

The teacher's application requires a minimum of three referees. The maximum number of referees is eight. The referees must include:

- the principal or head of school,
- a teacher colleague
- a teacher who has received professional assistance or guidance from the teacher.

Referees can verify the applicant's practice by attesting to observed or experienced examples of a teacher's capacity to meet specific standard descriptors that have been nominated. For Lead Teacher applicants, at least one referee's comment will include the Lead Teacher Initiative.

Teachers are responsible for undertaking professional discussions about the Standards and their practice with potential referees. They are also responsible for collecting necessary

⁵ As a guide, candidates should consider that 35 or fewer individual pieces of documentary evidence or sets of evidence will be sufficient for effective demonstration of the standard descriptors.

contact information to enable each referee to access the referee's portal to record their referee statements into the online application.

Referees may include but are not limited to classroom teachers, executive teaching staff, principals, education consultants, teacher educators, specialist teaching staff, members of the community and professional associations and representatives of external organisations.

Referees complete an online report for the teacher's application. This report relates directly to particular Standard Descriptors nominated by the teacher.

7.2.3 External observation evidence

External observations provide an opportunity for independent review of a teacher's practice. They are a crucial aspect of the accreditation model.

The teacher identifies which Standard Descriptors are to be observed during the observation. The selection will be appropriate for the observed sessions. The observation will occur on one day and it is expected that three sessions of practice will be observed. Observation of the candidate teaching students is essential for two periods or equivalent.

BOSTES appoints an External Observer when the teacher nominates in their online submission that they are ready for the external observation. BOSTES will take into account an External Observer's specific knowledge of subjects/teaching area when appointing an External Observer.

The timing of the observations is negotiated by BOSTES with the TAA (A/L) /principal and teacher. The External Observer will consider the teacher's practice with reference to the indicators described in the Evidence Guide as well as the teacher's submission.

7.3 Selection of External Observers

External observations are undertaken by External Observers who are skilled classroom practitioners. External Observers include teachers who are accredited at Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher. BOSTES provides training for External Observers.

External Observers who are not accredited with BOSTES are selected through an application process in response to selection criteria determined by the Quality Teaching Council. These are:

- Recent, successful experience in supporting and mentoring teachers
- In-depth understanding and knowledge of own subject/KLA content
- Excellent communication skills with experience in giving constructive and honest feedback
- Excellent analytical skills
- Proven record of excellent pedagogy and classroom practice
- Sound knowledge of the Professional Teaching Standards and the role they play in the accreditation process
- Current or very recent teaching experience

8 The Accreditation Decision

The accreditation decision will be made on the strength of evidence submitted from the teacher's practice. Three forms of evidence will be included in submissions – documentary evidence, referees' evidence and the external observer's evidence.

The TAA (A/L) first considers the teacher's submission and then makes a recommendation to the Moderating and Consistency Committee.

The Moderating and Consistency Committee considers the submission and recommendation and gives accreditation advice to TAAs (A/L) based on the appropriateness and adequacy of the evidence in the submission in relation to the Standards and a comparative analysis of a range of accreditation submissions from authorities across NSW. The Evidence Guides assist the MCC with examples of practice that demonstrate meeting the relevant standards at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher.

While the Moderating and Consistency Committee provides advice as to the success of a candidate, the TAA (A/L) is the final authority for the accreditation decision.

8.1 TAA (A/L) decision not to accredit

8.1.1 Advising the candidate to amend the submission before forwarding to the MCC

There may be cases where the TAA (A/L) considers that minor revisions of the submission are appropriate. The TAA (A/L) may advise the candidate with regards to the adequacy of the submission and of any areas that require amendment, enabling the candidate to revise their submission. The revision of the accreditation submission would occur before it is forwarded to the Moderating and Consistency Committee. It is not expected that such revisions would be substantial in nature and a timeframe should be set for candidates in these circumstances to resubmit to the TAA (A/L). This timeframe should not normally exceed three months.

The candidate should not assume that such advice will guarantee a successful accreditation submission following revision.

The TAA (A/L) advises BOSTES when the candidate has received advice to amend their submission.

8.1.2 Making a decision not to accredit without consideration by the Moderating and Consistency Committee

The TAA (A/L) may make a decision not to accredit and advise the candidate, without sending the submission on to the Moderating and Consistency Committee. In this case, a candidate may request a review of the decision.

The TAA (A/L) will need to advise BOSTES of the decision not to accredit without consideration by the Moderating and Consistency Committee.

8.1.3 Making a decision not to accredit after consideration by the Moderating and Consistency Committee

The TAA (A/L) may make a decision not to accredit following receipt of advice from the Moderating and Consistency Committee.

When the decision of TAA (A/L) not to accredit is final, the candidate may request a review of the decision.

The TAA (A/L) will need to advise BOSTES of the decision not to accredit after receiving advice from the Moderating and Consistency Committee.

8.2 Processes for Review of the Accreditation Decision

A candidate may request that the TAA (A/L) review the accreditation decision. The ultimate avenue of appeal under the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* is the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT)). All candidates for accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher must be aware of their right to request a review by this tribunal of the decision. This advice should be provided to the candidate through the internal policy of the TAA (A/L).

8.2.1 TAA (A/L) Internal Processes

Before the request for review goes to the NCAT, the TAA (A/L) must first review the decision. This is called an internal review. Requests for an internal review must be made in writing and supported by documentary evidence to the TAA (A/L) within 28 days of the candidate being informed of the TAA (A/L)'s decision not to accredit.

The request for review should contain the following information:

- the name of the candidate
- the name of the TAA (A/L)
- the grounds for review

The TAA (A/L) must respond, within 28 days from receipt of the request for review, to advise the candidate of a date for a meeting, and to advise BOSTES that the review is occurring.

It is expected that the candidate and the TAA (A/L) will bring to the meeting, for discussion, any relevant documentation relating to the grounds for review. Relevant documentation may include evidence from the submission, the Moderating and Consistency Committee's advice and the TAA (A/L)'s recommendation.

A record of the meeting must be signed by all parties present with a copy made available to them.

8.2.2 Review by NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT)

The candidate's ultimate avenue of appeal under the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* is the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT). Decisions subject to review must first be considered through an internal review by the TAA (A/L).

8.2.3 Advising BOSTES of an Accreditation Decision

The TAA (A/L) has the authority to accredit. All accreditation decisions must be provided to BOSTES within 28 days from the date of the decision.

If the TAA (A/L) chooses not to take the advice of the Moderating and Consistency Committee, the TAA (A/L) is required to respond in writing describing the reasons for the decision. This response should include an explanation justifying the reason or reasons for the final decision of the TAA (A/L).

The TAA (A/L) must also advise BOSTES in cases where the decision not to accredit is changed following a review.

8.2.4 Notifying the Candidate of the Accreditation Decision

BOSTES will acknowledge a decision to accredit by sending a letter to the candidate and forwarding a certificate to the TAA (A/L) for their signature. This will occur within 28 days.

9 Moderating and Consistency Committee for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher accreditation

9.1 Role of the Committee

All submissions are considered by a cross-sectoral committee comprising representatives of key stakeholders of the accreditation process. The role of this committee is to support consistent accreditation decisions by considering accreditation submissions and recommendations from TAA (A/L)'s in a state-wide context.

The Committee provides accreditation advice to the TAA (A/L) with regard to each submission. This advice is based on the appropriateness and adequacy of the evidence in the submission in relation to the Standards and the Evidence Guides, and a comparative analysis of a range of reports.

All submissions are accompanied by a detailed description of the teacher's current and past school contexts. While achievement of all the Standards is required, the Committee may take the teaching context into account in their deliberations.

Where the Committee's advice is not to accredit a teacher, feedback and constructive advice is provided to the relevant TAA (A/L).

Briefing sessions and guidelines are provided to all Committee members. The guidelines are designed to support an understanding of the Standards and Evidence Guide as the common objective criteria applied with regards to accreditation submissions.

9.2 Resolving disputes between the Committee and the TAA (A/L)

As the TAA (A/L) has the authority to accredit, the TAA (A/L) can choose not to take the advice of the Committee. In these cases, the TAA (A/L) would be required to respond to the Committee in writing describing the reasons for their decision.

9.3 The BOSTES' role in assuring the quality of accreditation decisions

A key accreditation function of the Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) is to monitor the accreditation process across all schools and to ensure that the professional teaching standards are applied fairly and consistently.

BOSTES will use the advice of the Moderating and Consistency Committee to monitor the accreditation decisions of specific TAA (A/L)s at the higher levels. Should the BOSTES identify inconsistencies in the decision, there are a range of penalties under the Act that can be applied to the TAA (A/L).

9.3.1 Expert advice

The Committee may at times also need to draw on specific subject/stage expertise. It is appropriate to have a number of KLA and stage panels. Each panel would be to provide expert advice relating to each application. The membership of these panels may comprise subject and stage specialists drawn from professional associations and other relevant organisations.