

Moderating and Consistency Committee (MCC) Advice to Teachers

Context

The Moderating and Consistency Committee (MCC) of the Quality Teaching Council (QTC) has been assessing applications for teacher accreditation at the career stages of Professional Accomplishment and Professional Leadership since 2012. At the end of 2014, 39 teachers were accredited at Professional Accomplishment and 46 at Professional Leadership. A decision not to accredit was made by the TAA (A/L) for a further 31 submissions. 26 of these had been submitted to the MCC for review¹. The overall candidate success rate is currently around 75%.

The following advice to teachers is based on the analysis of submissions undertaken by the Committee prior to and during their deliberations. While the submissions were based on the NSW Professional Teaching Standards, the advice is of a general nature and applies equally to submissions made against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers².

NOTE: *This advice does not reference any of the additional requirements for submissions received from 3 April 2015. The Committee is yet to review any such submissions. Candidates are advised to refer to the Policy for Accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher and the Evidence Guides for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher for requirements.*

Getting it right at the start: choose the appropriate career stage for your application

Making the decision to apply for accreditation at Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher is a significant career decision. Selecting between Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher can be complex and is best made through a thorough examination of the teacher's practice against the Standard Descriptors. Even if the decision appears obvious, potential candidates are advised to examine how their practice addressed each of the Standard Descriptors with an open mind.

It is not uncommon for the MCC to review submissions that reflect good teaching practice but do not consistently meet the Standard Descriptors at the identified career stage. This occurs, for example, when a teacher applies for Highly Accomplished Teacher and significant aspects of their practice reflect the Standard Descriptors at Proficient Teacher, or a Lead candidate's practice is reflective of Standard Descriptors at Highly Accomplished Teacher. In these cases, the Committee has no choice but to recommend that the TAA (A/L) not accredit the teacher.

¹ In the other cases, the TAA (A/L) made the decision not to accredit without forwarding the submission to the MCC for advice.

² This Advice to teachers is designed for future candidates, so the language used is based on accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Candidates are also reminded that the Standards are teaching standards. Being in an Executive role in a school does not necessarily mean that your practice meets the Standards at Lead Teacher.

Tips for choosing the appropriate career stage for your accreditation:

- Read the descriptions of practice at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher carefully. You will find this information on page 7 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
- Review your practice against all of the Standard Descriptors across the key stages. It can be surprising to find that practice you assume is Lead meets the Standard Descriptors at Highly Accomplished, for example.
- Undertake the pre-application. The assessment is based on your answers to the questions, so you need to be honest about your practice to get accurate feedback.
- Have a discussion with your principal and other trusted colleagues.

General advice for developing your submission

The evidence a candidate collects and the way it is organised and presented should be thoughtfully planned. Candidates should be aware that the assessment process involves several readings of their submission by a number of individuals who do not know them or their context. The strongest submissions present documentary evidence that is well selected and combines effectively with the referee and Observer statements to very clearly demonstrate the Standards. Strong submissions provide an appropriate balance of the three sources of evidence- documentary evidence, referee evidence and External Observer evidence.

General tips for candidates:

Your overall submission needs to:

- show the effect you have on the professional practice of colleagues and the learning outcomes of students explicitly across your submission
- include your best evidence, not all of your evidence
- match the Standard Descriptor and the evidence that you have provided. Refer to the focus area for the Standard Descriptor and the examples in the Evidence Guide for assistance
- use all three sources of evidence. Consider providing at least two items of evidence for each Standard Descriptor, including those met during the External Observation. In many cases, an item of documentary evidence and a referee or Observer statement provides more complete demonstration of the Standard Descriptor
- Document your practice with colleagues across teaching contexts and/or curriculum areas. Make sure you do more than provide evidence of membership and/or attendance. Consider your direct contribution and your impact on others through your:
 - practice across stages/faculties, schools and/or educational organisations, such as universities
 - participation in professional teaching associations or informal professional networks
 - participation in state or national educational bodies, such as BOSTES, ACARA and AITSL, or employer organisations such as the DEC, CEO or AIS

All candidates are urged to read the Policy for Accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher and the Evidence Guide for their career stage before commencing their application.

Documentary Evidence

While the organisation of the documentary evidence does not directly affect the recommendation of the MCC, a poorly organised submission makes it more difficult for Committee members to understand your evidence in the context you intended.

Tips for selecting and organising documentary evidence:

- Documents must have consistent file names which reflect the content of the document.
- Make sure your documents are logically organised and well presented. Check that photocopies and scans are clear.
- Annotations should explain the link between your practice, the document and the Standard Descriptor/s to which it is ascribed. Make sure that your annotation refers to the evidence by its title to assist the Committee in locating evidence items as they read the submission. Annotations should clearly say what your role was in the origin and development of each item of documentary evidence.
- If a document needs verification, add a referee report.
- The way/s that the document has been used by students, colleagues, parents/carers, and/or community members should be evident.
- Use email evidence sparingly. Emails are generally not an effective substitute for a referee statement. They do not provide authentic evidence of the impact of your actions on others. Such communications are generally not heavily weighted by the Committee as they may have a tone of contrivance, undermining your genuine influence on colleagues.
- Check that all of your evidence has been de-identified to protect the identity of students. This check needs to be done after scanning the documents as sometimes you will think the names have been blocked out but they can be read.
- Upload each document only once.
- Avoid attributing a large number of Standard Descriptors to a single document. Applications are weakened when documents do not support the range of Standard Descriptors allocated to them. Consider using more than one document for significant examples of your practice. This might be achieved by breaking one large document into smaller more targeted pieces of evidence.

Referee Evidence

Referees Reports form an important part of the evidence. The Committee carefully considers

- the range of referees selected
- the ability of each referee to attest to the teacher's practice
- the extent to which the referee statements describe the candidate's practice in relation to the individual Standard Descriptors

Referees are checked to ensure that they include the candidate's principal³, a peer, and a colleague for whom they have provided mentoring, support or guidance.

Tips for presenting effective referee evidence:

- Your referees need to write clear and concise comments that directly address the Standard Descriptors and provide appropriate examples of your practice.
- Keep your principal informed of the progress of your application, including ensuring time is allocated to discuss your principal's Referee Report.
- Advise your referees to state their professional relationship with you without providing additional information of a general nature. The relationship should be a brief statement of fact, including the referee's role, the context for the referee's statement, (such as school, professional association, parent, teacher education student, or university colleague), whether the referee is your principal, peer or has been supported by you and for how long they have known you.
- Make sure that you have referee evidence that covers the scope of your work.
- When discussing your practice with each of your referees, explain that they need to do more than say 'yes' that you meet the Standard Descriptor. They need to explain how you meet the Standard Descriptor, using examples from your practice.
- Referees need to have first-hand knowledge of your practice.
- And some don'ts:
 - Over reliance on referee comments weakens your overall submission.
 - Don't overload your referees. Asking them to provide a large number of statements may mean that they are not able to adequately attest to your practice against each Standard Descriptor attributed to them.
 - Use of many referees, with more than one statement for a large number of Standard Descriptors, is not required and can detract from your submission.
 - Use of the same referee comment for more than one Standard Descriptor is generally ineffective evidence.
 - You must not write the comments for your referees.

³ All submissions received on or after 3 April 2015 must include the candidate's principal as a referee

External Observer Evidence

Candidates should not underestimate the value of the External Observer's report. It is viewed as an objective voice to validate the candidate's claims, and it is a very important source of evidence in the deliberations of the Committee.

Tips for making the most of your External Observation:

- Plan your External Observation carefully, with a range of around 6 to 10 carefully selected Standard Descriptors.
- Discuss the Observation with your allocated External Observer prior to the day. Remember that the External Observer may have done quite a number of Observations so it is wise to accept their advice.
- Consider both teaching and non-teaching activities for the Observation. While strong classroom practice is expected in all cases, the opportunity for the External Observer to see your practice with colleagues and/or parents is also viewed positively by the Committee.
- If the External Observer is not able to observe an identified Standard Descriptor, or can only partially observe it, make sure that you select further documentary or referee evidence to strongly and explicitly address the wholeness of the Standard Descriptor.
- And some don'ts:
 - An Observation Report that addresses a very small number of Standard Descriptors, or is based on a very narrow range of the candidate's activities, may diminish an application.
 - Expecting the External Observer to comment on too many Standard Descriptors may also diminish an application. If you select too many Standard Descriptors, the External Observer may not have an opportunity to observe them all during the day.
 - A poorly planned Observation day is a lost opportunity. Use the External Observation materials that are available to candidates through your online submission to make the most of the opportunity.

Some final considerations

The Committee generally describes weaker submissions as providing insufficient appropriate evidence to support the candidate. This may occur because:

- some Standard Descriptors have not been met by the candidate, even though other parts of the application may be quite strong
- a significant number of Standard Descriptors are supported by weak evidence
- there is a significant imbalance⁴ between the number of Standard Descriptors supported by documentary, referee and observer evidence
- there is inconsistency across the three sources of evidence, where referee and/or Observer statements do not adequately validate the documentary evidence

Candidates are advised to pay close attention to detail to be sure that they have developed a balanced submission with sufficient evidence across all Standard Descriptors.

⁴ Note that balance does not mean equal use of all three sources. Rather, it means that each of the three sources of evidence is used effectively across the submission.