

NSW INSTITUTE OF TEACHERS

POLICY FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF RETURNING TEACHERS

1 BACKGROUND

The *Institute of Teachers Act 2004* requires accreditation at Professional Competence¹ for individuals who return to teaching after 1 October 2004, following an absence from teaching in NSW of five years or more.

These individuals are referred to as returning teachers.

This policy applies to individuals employed to teach across the full range of positions: full-time, part-time, temporary, and casual.

It is recognised that most returning teachers will possess a diverse range of knowledge, skills and prior experiences, and will demonstrate the capacity to meet the Standards for Professional Competence in varying degrees and within varying timeframes. They may bring additional skills and experiences to teaching that enrich their understanding of the curriculum, their students and how they learn.

The initial and subsequent accreditation of returning teachers is the responsibility of Teacher Accreditation Authorities (TAAs).

2 DEFINITION OF RETURNING TEACHERS

Individuals with K-12 teaching experience in NSW schools, who return to teaching following an absence of five years or more, are designated as returning teachers. This applies to teachers who are employed *after* 1 October 2004.

3 DEFINITION OF ABSENCE FROM EMPLOYMENT AS A TEACHER IN NSW

Absence from employment as a teacher means not undertaking duties that reflect the Professional Teaching Standards as defined under Section 20 of the Act.

4. EXISTING TEACHERS IN SCHOOL-BASED TEACHING SUPPORT POSITIONS

Teachers² who are employed in NSW school-based positions who do not require allocated classes (for example, careers adviser, counsellor, teacher librarian, head teacher curriculum, deputy principal, principal³) are existing teachers and therefore are not required to be accredited at Professional Competence. This is determined on the basis that their duties include responsibility for supporting the implementation of the NSW Board of Studies curriculum.

¹ These teachers should also be accredited at the point of employment.

² This applies to teachers who were employed prior to the 1 October 2004.

³ This excludes Chief Executives who do not hold teaching positions.

5. THE STATUS OF SCHOOL EDUCATION CONSULTANTS, TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE (TEI) TEACHERS AND TAFE TEACHERS

- 5.1 Individuals with K-12 teaching experience in NSW schools who have been seconded to work in non-school-based positions or who have taken continuous extended leave from their employer for the five or more years prior to returning to schools, are existing teachers.⁴
- 5.2 Individuals with K-12 teaching experience in NSW schools who are not covered by 5.1 above and who have been employed as school education consultants, TEI teaching staff or TAFE teachers for the five years prior to returning to schools can be classified by TAAs as existing teachers. These teachers are not required to be accredited at the Standards for Professional Competence.

In making the determination for these individuals, TAAs should use the following guidelines:

Individuals with prior K-12 teaching experience are to be considered as existing teachers if they have worked in a position with respect to one or more of the following:

- *Development and/or implementation of the NSW Board of Studies K-12 curriculum, including assessment and reporting*
- *Student learning and well-being*
- *Teaching and learning in schools*
- *Teacher professional learning and support;*

or, if they have worked in a position that the TAA deems, on the basis of evidence, as being the equivalent of the above.

- 5.3 Teachers who are accredited at Professional Competence or higher and subsequently employed as school education consultants or TEI teaching staff for five years or more *after* 1 January 2005, will be able to maintain their accreditation on meeting the requirements of the Institute's maintenance of accreditation policy⁵.

PROCESS FOR RETURNING TEACHERS TO MEET THE STANDARDS AT PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

6. Accreditation at the point of employment

Individuals with a degree and K-12 teaching experience in NSW schools but no teaching qualifications, who return to teaching *after* 1 October 2004 following an absence of five years or more, are regarded as conditionally accredited teachers.

Individuals holding approved qualifications, who return to teaching *after* 1 October 2004 following an absence of five years or more, are regarded as provisionally accredited teachers.

⁴ Existing teachers are persons employed to teach in NSW prior to 1 October 2004 and are currently teaching. These teachers are not affected by the *Institute of Teachers Act 2004*.

⁵ This policy is currently subject to consultation.

6.1. Accreditation requirements for returning teachers

Returning teachers are required to demonstrate achievement of all of the Professional Teaching Standards at Professional Competence. Some returning teachers will be able to more readily demonstrate the standards and may do so in a short timeframe.

6.1.1 Full-time returning teachers

The *Institute of Teachers Act 2004* sets a maximum period of time for achievement of mandatory accreditation for full-time returning teachers, as follows:

- 3 years for provisionally accredited
- 4 years for conditionally accredited.

6.1.2 Casual, temporary and part-time returning teachers

Returning teachers who are employed in a casual, temporary and part-time capacity must be accredited. Many of these teachers will have significant prior experience.

Returning teachers working in this capacity will need to gain employment for a period of time that is sufficient for a TAA to make an accreditation decision. The TAA must be confident about the returning teacher's capacity to meet the accreditation requirements.

Returning casual, temporary and part-time teachers should undertake a period of continuous teaching (either full-time or part-time) within a single school. This period, for example, could comprise one to four days over two terms to five terms. It is essential that the period of employment is long enough for a TAA to be confident that a valid and reliable decision can be made about a new scheme teacher's accreditation.

In all employment scenarios, it is the responsibility of the TAA in consultation with the returning teacher, to judge when an accreditation decision can be validly and reliably made about the teacher.

The Act provides additional time through regulations for achievement of mandatory accreditation for casual, temporary and part-time returning teachers.

The maximum periods described in the regulations are as follows:

- 5 years for provisionally accredited teachers
- 6 years for conditionally accredited teachers.

More information about the accreditation of casual, part time and temporary teachers is available in the *Policy for the Accreditation of Casual, Temporary and Part-Time Teachers*⁶.

⁶ Note that the guidelines in this policy suggesting 180 teaching practice do not apply to returning casual teachers.

6.1.3 Extending the maximum period for casual, part time or temporary teachers

Casual, temporary or part time returning teachers who do not have the opportunity to be accredited during the maximum period may apply to the Institute for an extension of time. The criteria for endorsement of an extension include a range of circumstances such as:

- lack of reasonable opportunity to present for accreditation
- child rearing responsibilities
- home care responsibilities
- sickness or misadventure
- other appropriate professional circumstances.

7. Documents to be used for the accreditation of Returning Teachers

The application of this policy should enable TAAs, schools, returning teachers and their colleagues to identify and recognise the full range of knowledge, skills and experiences of returning teachers. In most cases, returning teachers should not be regarded as inexperienced teachers.

The accreditation processes and support programs⁷ for returning teachers should:

- recognise existing knowledge and skills, as well as previous teaching experiences, qualifications and accreditations;
- establish shared responsibility of the TAA and returning teachers for determining an agreed professional learning focus that takes into account any experience that occurred during the non-teaching period, that can be referenced to the Professional Teaching Standards;
- acknowledge that some returning teachers may require on-going support only in specific elements or particular standards;
- allow for flexibility and tailoring to individual circumstances.

There are two documents to be used by TAAs for the accreditation of returning teachers:

- *Accreditation Advice at Professional Competence*
- *An Evidence Guide for Accreditation at Professional Competence.*

Both documents are available in the Teacher Accreditation Manual. TAAs, other teachers and returning teachers should refer to these documents in supporting re-orientation to teaching.

The criteria and processes for assessing casual, temporary and part-time returning teachers' achievements of the Standards at Professional Competence are the same as those for full-time returning teachers.

⁷ Refer to support materials: *Supporting re-orientation to teaching - suggested steps*

8. Accreditation decisions and fee

All accreditation decisions including a decision to refuse accreditation are to be provided to the Institute within 21 days of the decision.

Accreditation is dependent upon payment of an accreditation fee to the Institute of Teachers. The Institute of Teachers will invoice each teacher directly for payment of the fee on receipt of the advice of the accreditation decision.

Should the teacher not pay the prescribed fee in the set period the Institute will advise the TAA that the accreditation of the teacher has been cancelled and that the teacher may not continue to be employed as a teacher.