

NSW INSTITUTE OF TEACHERS



**POLICY FOR VOLUNTARY ACCREDITATION AT PROFESSIONAL
COMPETENCE**

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POLICY FOR VOLUNTARY ACCREDITATION AT PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

1. Summary of the Accreditation Process

Voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence is rigorous in its own right and differs from mandatory accreditation in several ways. The most notable difference is that the process is autonomous and based on the presumption that the teacher will be responsible for managing their own progress towards accreditation at Professional Competence.

This process requires the teacher to provide documentary evidence of achievement of all the Standards at Professional Competence. He or she will be responsible both for collecting samples of his or her work as evidence for accreditation and for the completion and submission of the Accreditation Report.

Another key difference is that the process itself does not form part of an induction or introduction to the teaching profession.

The accreditation process for voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence can be summarised as follows:

- The teacher undertakes the on line application found on the NSW Institute of Teachers' website. This application will assist him/her in determining their level of practice against the Standards at Professional Competence. The teacher will also be in a position to determine the types and amount of evidence that is already available.
- The teacher discusses his or her intention to proceed with voluntary accreditation with his or her principal¹.
- The teacher collects and annotates evidence against the Standards, bearing in mind that he or she must demonstrate achievement of all the Standards.
- Once sufficient evidence has been compiled the teacher completes the Accreditation Report. The authenticity of the teacher's evidence and the Report are verified by the teacher's principal².
- The Accreditation Report and the evidence are submitted to the Institute by the teacher.
- The Institute checks the evidence against the Standards and forwards the report, evidence and a recommendation to the teacher accreditation authority (TAA) or their delegate for endorsement of the decision.
- Once the decision is endorsed, the teacher is accredited at Professional Competence and membership of the Institute commences.
- The teacher will be required to maintain their accreditation under the *Maintenance of Accreditation at Professional Competence Policy*.

¹ or manager if a Principal is applying for voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence

² or manager if a Principal is applying for voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence

2. Rationale

The *Institute of Teachers Act 2004* allows for the voluntary accreditation of teachers at Professional Competence.

This policy is based on the premise that teachers who commenced employment before 1 October 2004 may wish to have their skills, practice and expertise recognised, confirmed and acknowledged by the teaching profession by seeking accreditation at Professional Competence on a voluntary basis.

3. Purpose

The policy supports teachers in taking responsibility for gaining accreditation at Professional Competence on a voluntary basis within the context of school and school system processes.

The policy provides a framework that schools and school systems can apply according to the context of the teacher and the school. It describes the professional responsibilities and the processes associated with voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence.

It is important to note that seeking accreditation at Professional Competence will always be voluntary for teachers who began teaching in NSW before 1 October 2004 and that gaining accreditation at Professional Competence is neither a prerequisite for, nor guarantee of, gaining accreditation at Professional Accomplishment or Professional Leadership.

4. Background

This policy has its foundation in the *Institute of Teachers Act 2004* and the *Policy for Accreditation at Professional Competence*. The relevant points from these documents are set out below.

4.1 Institute of Teachers Act 2004

The *Institute of Teachers Act 2004* allows for the voluntary accreditation of teachers at Professional Competence:

Division 5 / Voluntary accreditation

Voluntary accreditation of teachers at various levels (Section 39)

- (1) This section applies to any person who is a teacher (other than a new scheme teacher within the meaning of Division 3 or a transition scheme teacher within the meaning of Division 4).
- (2) A teacher accreditation authority may, on application by a person to whom this section applies:
 - (a) Accredit the person at any one or more of the following levels:
 - (i) professional competence level,
 - (ii) professional accomplishment level,
 - (iii) professional leadership level

4.2 Policy for Accreditation at Professional Competence

The *Policy for Accreditation at Professional Competence* gives effect to the relevant provisions in the *Institute of Teachers Act 2004*. The policy forms part of the Professional Teaching Standards as approved by the Minister. It is designed to support teacher accreditation authorities and teachers gaining accreditation at Professional Competence.

The policy describes the requirements, roles and responsibilities of the various parties in the accreditation process.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Any teacher who is not classified as a new scheme teacher³ or transition scheme teacher⁴ may seek accreditation at Professional Competence on a voluntary basis.

5.1 Role of the Teacher Accreditation Authority

The teacher accreditation authority (TAA) is a person or body authorised to determine if a teacher meets the requirements for accreditation at any level within the Professional Teaching Standards. The final decision with regard to a teacher's accreditation rests with the TAA.

The role of the TAA is to make the accreditation decision. They make this decision based on the evidence and the Institute's recommendation.

The TAA notifies the teacher of the accreditation decision.

While this role differs from mandatory accreditation at Professional Competence in some ways, the decision to accredit a teacher must be informed by the same quality of evidence as for mandatory accreditation. Teacher accreditation authorities are not obliged to accredit a teacher if the evidence does not support such a decision.

Each TAA is to have a documented internal review process. A teacher can use this process to request a review on the basis of procedural fairness.

5.2 Role of the Teacher

Voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence is fully self-managed by the individual teacher.

The teacher is responsible for collecting samples of their work as evidence for accreditation and for the completion and submission of their Accreditation Report to the Institute.

When the teacher decides to proceed with accreditation, he or she should discuss this with his or her manager or principal. This will give the school an opportunity to support the teacher.

5.3 Role of the Principal

The process of voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence does not form part of an induction or introduction to the teaching profession.

The role of the principal is to discuss with the teacher their intention to proceed with voluntary accreditation and to verify the teacher's evidence and Accreditation Report.

³ A new scheme teacher is any teacher who first started teaching after 1 October 2004 or who has returned to teaching following an absence of five or more years away from teaching.

⁴ A transition scheme teacher is a teacher who, before 1 October 2004, was employed to teach and was not the holder of a teaching qualification or a degree relevant to the area in which they were employed to teach.

5.4 Role of the NSW Institute of Teachers

The NSW Institute of Teachers (the Institute) oversees the system of accreditation and recognition of teachers' professional capacity against the Professional Teaching Standards.

The Institute advises and assists TAAs in accrediting teachers and monitors the consistent application of the accreditation process across all schools in the state. The Institute supports the fair application of the Professional Teaching Standards for each teacher.

In the case of voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence, the Institute is responsible for checking the evidence against the Standards, organising the review by the external assessor and forwarding the report, evidence and recommendation to the TAA or their delegate for endorsement of the decision.

The Institute is also responsible for collecting and storing the teacher's Accreditation Report and evidence and for the development and maintenance of the online application form.

The Institute manages the use of external assessors in the accreditation process.

5.5 Role of the External Assessor

External assessors will review and comment on the evidence contained within the Accreditation Report. The external assessor will not observe the applicant's teaching directly. The external assessor will submit a review of the Accreditation Report and evidence to the Institute of Teachers. The TAA will be sent a copy of the external assessor's conclusions as part of the Institute's recommendation.

The TAA should consider the advice of the external assessor contained in their review of the Accreditation Report. This advice should be used to inform accreditation processes and judgements within the teacher accreditation authority.

Where the recommendation of the external assessor varies from the TAA, the decision of the TAA is final.

The external assessor is selected by the Institute from the same school sector as the teacher.

6 Key Aspects of Voluntary Accreditation at Professional Competence

6.1 The Accreditation Process

Teachers who seek voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence will take responsibility for demonstrating achievement of all the Standards with less direct involvement from a supervisor at the school level. Support for the teacher can come from a range of colleagues.

The accreditation process itself should be determined according to the needs, skills and experience of the individual teacher. Prior to seeking voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence, the teacher should engage with the Standards and reflect on their knowledge, skills and practice as they relate to the Standards at Professional Competence. The online application form on the Institute's website will assist teachers in mapping their experience to the Standards at Professional Competence. They will then be in a position to determine the amount and types of evidence they already have and identify areas needing new and/or additional evidence to fulfil all requirements for accreditation.

The process of accreditation will probably be compacted in terms of the time required for the teacher to demonstrate achievement of the Standards, without assumptions

being made about a teacher's level of practice. The maximum amount of time to be taken is two years for a full-time teacher⁵. There is no minimum time-frame.

Once the teacher has gathered the evidence that demonstrates achievement of all the Standards at Professional Competence, he/she is responsible for writing his/her Accreditation Report. The Report and evidence are verified by the teacher's Principal or manager.

The Accreditation Report is then submitted to the Institute by the teacher. The Institute checks the evidence against the Standards and forwards the report, evidence and a recommendation to the TAA or their delegate for endorsement of the decision.

Following this endorsement, the teacher's status with the Institute is that of Professional Competence.

6.2 Collection of Evidence

The evidence used for voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence should be of the same type and quality as for mandatory accreditation. That is, teachers must demonstrate achievement of all the Standards at Professional Competence.

Teachers may use documentation from previous years' teaching in their evidence. The evidence must be relevant to the Standards, based on current syllabus and policies and developed no longer than three years prior to the teacher presenting for accreditation.

A brief annotation should be included to describe the relationship between the evidence and the Standards.

A teacher's participation in further study and/or related activities that can be directly associated with education and the school setting (for example, active involvement in teaching associations or any other relevant organisations) may contribute to their demonstration of achievement of the Standards at Professional Competence.

6.3 The Accreditation Decision

The development and submission of the Accreditation Report is the responsibility of the individual teacher. The report is written by the teacher, substantiated by evidence that is verified by the Principal and submitted to the Institute. The Institute will check the report to ensure that it has been correctly completed and an external assessor will review the report and the evidence. The report and a recommendation will be sent to the teacher's TAA or delegate who will make the accreditation decision.

6.4 Recognition of Accreditation

All teachers who meet the Standards at Professional Competence will receive a *Certificate of Accreditation*.

6.5 External Validation

External assessors who are trained by the Institute will review Accreditation Reports and evidence.

⁵ Separate advice is provided in relation to the voluntary accreditation of casual, part time or temporary teachers.

6.6 Casual and Part-Time Teachers

Casual and part-time teachers may undertake voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence. These teachers may collect and use evidence from the different schools in which they teach. They will be required to nominate a TAA who will endorse their report. Separate, more detailed advice is provided in relation to casual, temporary or part time teachers.

6.7 Maintenance of Accreditation

Teachers who are accredited at Professional Competence on a voluntary basis will be required to maintain their accreditation.

Accredited teachers will be required to:

- undertake mandatory professional development to maintain their accreditation
- pay the annual accreditation fee.

A separate policy describes in detail the requirements for maintaining accreditation.

6.8 Failure to Meet the Standards at Professional Competence

A teacher who elects to undertake voluntary accreditation at Professional Competence cannot be subject to the same consequences as a new scheme teacher if they should fail to meet the Standards at Professional Competence. Only new scheme teachers can have their right to teach removed under the *Institute of Teachers Act 2004*.

Any material submitted to the Institute that does not meet the requirements for accreditation will be returned to the applicant. It will not be forwarded to the TAA or their delegate.

Voluntary Accreditation at Professional Competence

