

Virtual site visit: Guide for taking quality videos of teaching practice

Companion document to the Guide to Certification of
Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia

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Introduction

This Guide provides information to assist applicants, certifying authorities and other personnel in understanding how to capture high quality video for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher certification applications, when the applicant is required to submit recordings of teaching practice to be reviewed by an external assessor. It should be used in conjunction with the [*Guide to Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia*](#)¹ (Guide to Certification), specific state/territory requirements, as well as other relevant support material.

This document includes information about:

- consent requirements
- equipment
- video and audio recording tips
- how to reduce the size of video files.

This guide does not include detailed information about the national certification process. This can be found in the Guide to Certification. Information specific to states/territories may also be available, so state/territory certifying authorities should be contacted for further information.

AITSL would like to thank and acknowledge the Queensland Department of Education and Queensland College of Teachers for their help in developing this guide.

¹ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) 2017, *Guide to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia*, Education Services Australia, Carlton South.

Before getting started

Before commencing any video recordings:

- video parameters should be agreed upon with the state/territory certifying authority
- consent must be obtained from the school and the individuals who will be recorded
- equipment and device storage should be checked to ensure they are adequate for the task
- the space should be checked to ensure it is ready for filming.

Obtaining consent

Consent must be obtained from all individuals, including volunteers, colleagues, and the parents or legal guardians of all students who will appear or be heard in the video or audio recordings. The school's consent policy and procedures should be checked for relevant information.

Consent forms are important for parents / carers to inform them that video recording may be taking place in order to compile the certification application and as part of ongoing reflection on professional practice. If a student's parents / carers do not provide consent, videos should not be edited or blurred to deidentify students. Instead, it is recommended those student(s) are seated out of the camera's range and cannot be identified.

- **Important Tip for Stage 2 Applications**

If consent is unable to be obtained from the majority of individuals and parents/carers and therefore cannot capture an authentic demonstration of practice, the teacher should contact their certifying authority.

Equipment

Can personal devices be used?

Most jurisdictions do not allow employees to use personal cameras or mobile phones to photograph or record students. The state/territory code of conduct provides more information regarding the use of personal devices.

What equipment is recommended?

AITSL does not recommend or endorse the use of any particular product or supplier. It is recommended that teachers investigate what equipment is already available in the school, nearby schools in the region or certifying authority. The following list suggests useful equipment or resources for video recordings that may be available.

- Video camera, smart phone, tablet, auto-track and capture video camera, or other recording device.
- Memory card for device (if required).
- Auto-tracking camera mount.
- Tripod, stand or colleague to hold the video camera.
- Microphone or other voice projection device.

- Extension cords, charging cables, docks and / or batteries.
- User guides for chosen devices (an internet search will easily locate them if they are not with the equipment).

Video Devices

It is recommended that the best video recording equipment that is available in the school is used when making lesson observation recordings. The school may have good equipment that can be used to create higher-quality recordings, or alternatively nearby schools, regional offices or the certifying authority may have suitable equipment that can be borrowed.

Microphones

It is important that all participants in the recording can be heard clearly. This means ensuring the equipment that is being used has a sensitive microphone. Some handheld cameras have audio reception that is sensitive while others require a separate microphone. If filming small student groups, and the teacher is circulating among the groups, a handheld microphone or recording device can be carried to record all voices, rather than using a tripod for the whole lesson.

Device storage

Before recording commences, the amount of storage available on the device should be checked to ensure it is appropriate for the number and length of videos that are required. As a guide, for a video with 720p resolution, around 2GB is required for a 30 to 35 minute recording.

Can videos be stored in the cloud from individual devices?

Some devices offer free unlimited cloud storage for recordings. These services are not recommended as videos are stored on overseas servers and the security of recordings are at risk. Instead, videos should be stored on the device or school network or downloaded directly to the school computer or laptop.

Camera settings

It is also important to know the resolution settings of each device (e.g. camera, smart phone, tablet) before filming begins. Resolution is the number of pixels presented in video. Generally, a smaller resolution size will result in a smaller sized video file. 720p is recommended.

Videos need to be able to be clearly seen and heard by the viewer. A high definition video recording is not needed to achieve a quality recording of teacher practice. Camera and microphone placement and other important tips are detailed below.

User guides will provide information about how to check and change the resolution size of the videos captured by the device. User guides should be able to be located online if they are not provided with the device.

• Important Tip for Stage 2 Applications

It is important to check the file size requirements with the certifying authority as some may have size restrictions. The video may need to be downloaded onto the school's laptop or computer to check its size. If the size is larger than what the certifying authority will accept or larger than what will fit on a storage device the video file may need compressing.

How to record video of teaching practice

Familiarisation and practise for the teacher and students

Until the teacher and students get used to the experience, recording teaching practice may not present an authentic or realistic view of teacher practice. The first time recording equipment is present in a lesson many students may not behave as usual. The teacher may also find they act differently in front of a camera the first few times.

Here are some tips to help with getting used to video recordings.

- Practise filming to become familiar with taking videos. It will also help the teacher and students to be more relaxed and assist with presenting an authentic video of teacher practice and students' experiences during the lesson.
- When practising, close attention should be paid to the time and the video and audio quality.
- When viewing videos, it is important to reflect on teaching and use tools such as AITSL's [Classroom Practice Continuum](#) and [Looking at Classroom Practice guide](#) to explore areas for improvement. Noticing what the teacher said, made, done and written and what students said, made, did and wrote as the lesson unfolded is important when reflecting on practice.
- It is useful to record different lessons and varied teaching formats, including whole lessons, and students undertaking group work (including large and small groups). In order to show the usual teaching context, these practice recordings should be made during the usual learning times and not created during non-contact time.

- **Important Tip for Stage 2 Applications**

If during the practising phase of capturing videos the students are unable to relax or they continue to be distracted by the video, and an authentic demonstration of practice cannot be captured, the certifying authority should be contacted.

Equipment placement

The video device should be placed either on a tripod or stand, in an auto-tracking camera mount or in a vantage point (for example, on top of a file cabinet) where the camera view takes in all of the students participating. Some equipment user guides may include placement recommendations. Alternatively, a colleague could operate the video recorder. The recording equipment should be set up so that a good coverage of the room can be seen and it is away from noisy items like air conditioners.

Several sessions may need to be recorded and watched to become accustomed to how the video recording looks and sounds. The teacher should pay attention to what students are saying, making, doing and writing, and reflect on students' learning, to determine how best to capture this. Once an ideal placement of equipment has been established, the placement should be noted for future reference.

Video and audio recording tips

Once the teacher and students are more familiar with video equipment in lessons, good quality videos that best capture teaching practice can be recorded. The videos do not need to be of professional quality but it is important the viewer can see and hear everything that is happening in the video.

Audio quality is important and can be challenging in learning settings and particularly outdoor settings. If the teacher or students cannot be heard, it will be difficult for others to watch the recording and understand what is happening. There are environmental and technical challenges when trying to get the best audio quality, including being outdoors, or in areas with flat, echoing walls.

When more than one person is speaking it is also difficult to hear everything that is being said. For these reasons, it is important that the cables, video and the microphone are checked to ensure they are working before starting. The following video and audio recording tips may be helpful.

Video tips

- Where possible, a tripod, stand or auto-tracking camera mount should be used so that the video is steady and smooth.
- In general, the camera should be focused on people when they are speaking. When students are speaking, the camera should capture them. Placement of the recording device should be considered carefully to ensure everything is captured.
- If a person is assisting with recording the video, they may need to follow the teacher, moving from group to group to capture what is happening. However, it may be distracting to have the camera follow a conversation back and forth between different people. Instead, it may be better to capture both people at once.
- If using a tripod or stand, looking through the viewfinder before starting to record is important to make sure that everyone who is sitting or standing is in full view.
- If writing on a whiteboard/smartboard is an important part of the lesson, what is written must be captured on the video recording and must be legible. This may require:
 - refocusing the camera on the board and checking on the camera that the writing can be seen
 - moving the camera to reduce the amount of glare on the board
 - using dark markers on the board.
- The amount of light in the room generally improves the quality of video recording, however, aiming the camera towards bright light should be avoided. The combination of lights, open curtains or blinds which provide the best recording should be noted. If there are windows on one side of the room, the device could record with the lens facing away from the window, otherwise the video may be over-exposed.

Audio tips

- Noises that may interfere with the recording should be eliminated, such as fans or air conditioners, or outside noises, such as a lawn mower.
- The recording device's microphone should be kept close to the action or an external microphone used that is compatible with the video camera which can be moved closer to the action. The location of the microphone is key to capturing quality audio because the closer the microphone is to the action, the better the sound recording.

Editing videos

The most important quality of the video is that the viewer can see and hear everything that is happening in the video. The video must be continuous with no breaks, music, dubbing, subtitles or any other editing.

- **Important Tip for Stage 2 Applications**

Editing of video recordings is not permitted for this process and may bring into question the integrity of the recording. Videos must not be split, spliced, or edited in any way such as adding music or visual effects, blurring faces or fading in and out. The certifying authority can provide information about the length requirements of each video.

Conclusion

As outlined in this guide, it is important to be prepared for filming of teaching practice.

First it is necessary to obtain consent, identify how best to utilise the available technology and equipment and consider device storage and settings. Second, it is useful to practise filming so that people feel comfortable in front of the camera and the best placement for cameras and microphones can be determined.

This guide may be updated over time, in line with advancements in technology and as research in this area continues to develop.

Checklist for taking quality videos of teaching practice

AITSL acknowledges the Queensland Department of Education and Queensland College of Teachers for their help in developing this checklist

Before starting

- ☐ Read the Guide to [Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia, 2017](#) (p21-24)
- ☐ Contact or refer to the [certifying authority](#) guidelines for further information
- ☐ Obtain consent from the school, individuals and parents/carers of students who will be recorded
- ☐ If consent is not provided, ensure these students are seated out of the camera's range and cannot be identified. If these students are inadvertently filmed, ensure that footage is not included in published videos (i.e. edit and remove)
- ☐ Dress in a 'camera friendly' way. Try to avoid patterns or stripes and heavy jewellery that may interfere with video audio
- ☐ Ask a colleague to help with the recordings
- ☐ Ensure the space meets intellectual property laws and cover any items that include overt branding

Equipment check

- ☐ Use school equipment, not personal equipment. Contact the state/territory certifying authority if support is needed to source equipment
- ☐ Select an appropriate device for recording. This is not specified and can be a video camera, tablet, smart phone, an auto-track and capture video or another recording device
- ☐ Select an appropriate tripod, stand or camera auto-tracking mount
- ☐ Check there is appropriate storage available on the device or memory card
- ☐ Check there is extension cords, charging cables, docks and/or spare batteries if needed
- ☐ Locate the user guide for the equipment
- ☐ Check the cables, video and microphone are working

Video recordings

- ☐ Check the resolution settings of the device and ensure it is set to record at 720p, high resolution videos are not required
- ☐ Practise video recording in the learning setting so that everyone can become familiar with the process
- ☐ Set up the recording equipment so that everyone is in full view and can be heard
- ☐ Check and note lighting and noisy items like air conditioners
- ☐ Practise by recording different lessons and varied teaching formats (whole lessons/groups work)
- ☐ If writing on a whiteboard/smartboard is an important part of the lesson, be sure what is written is captured on the video recording and is legible
- ☐ Make sure videos are saved to the school device and not on cloud storage

Finalising the video

- ☐ Check the videos to ensure that teaching practice has been clearly captured and is clearly audible
- ☐ Either re-read guidelines or re-contact the certifying authority to ensure the videos comply with possible size and length requirements
- ☐ Follow the instructions provided by the assessor or certifying authority for sharing the video