

# Framework for the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers



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# Preamble

Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers at the higher career stages enhances the professionalism of teachers by recognising the quality of their teaching and supporting career progression. The Framework for the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (the Framework) will ensure certification of teachers is rigorous and based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Teacher Standards), noting the way in which certified teachers may be recognised or financially rewarded is an employment matter.



# Purposes

Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers has three primary purposes:

- to recognise and promote quality teaching;
- to provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practice;
- to provide a reliable indication of quality teaching that can be used to identify, recognise, deploy and reward Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers.

By contributing to teacher quality, the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers will help to achieve the national goals for schooling expressed in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Australian Governments Education Council 2019, Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, viewed 17 March 2023

# Principles

The proposed approach to the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers is informed by the following principles:

## Standards-based

Certification is awarded against the Teacher Standards. It represents an assessment against the Teacher Standards, independent of any use it might then be put to by teachers, their employers, or others.

## Student-improvement focused

Certification recognises those teachers who are highly effective in improving student outcomes. Evidence of student outcomes is central to certification processes. Student outcomes are broadly defined and include student learning, engagement in learning and wellbeing.

## Development driven

Certification is part of a wider career development approach that includes professional learning, performance assessment and development. Participation in certification processes should be a positive experience for applicants and provide useful feedback that further enhances development and learning, including for those teachers who do not achieve certification.

## Credible

Certification is credible when assessments of teacher performance are based on rigorous, valid, reliable, fair and transparent measures and processes. The evaluation of teacher practice will be based on consistent application and moderation of these processes, and multiple methods and sources of evidence. Consistency of judgements will be maintained across the diverse contexts where teachers work, so that context does not disadvantage any applicant.

## Evidence-based

Certification processes must be built on nationally and internationally recognised best practice and contribute to the development of evidence about what works in promoting and recognising teacher quality.

## Fit for purpose

Certification processes will incorporate the context and perspectives of stakeholders such as employers, certifying authorities/bodies, professional teacher bodies, unions, teachers and relevant educational researchers.

## Streamlined

Certification processes will be as streamlined as possible, minimising the administrative burden on applicants while ensuring rigour of assessment against the Teacher Standards. Certification processes should be integrated into teachers' daily practice to help prevent duplication or unnecessary additional work in the application process.

# Elements of national certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers

The Framework provides a nationally consistent approach to certification of teachers across Australia at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages.

Certifying authorities<sup>2</sup> can develop their own certification processes provided they incorporate all elements of the Framework.

The Framework consists of 8 elements:

1. Eligibility
2. Portability
3. Assessment of Highly Accomplished or Lead practice
4. Appeals process
5. Applicant support
6. Maintenance
7. Pathways
8. Quality assurance

## 1. Eligibility

Applicants require current and full teacher registration with an Australian state or territory teacher regulatory authority. Applicants do not have to be certified as a Highly Accomplished teacher before applying for Lead teacher status.

Applicants can apply for certification at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages if they are employed in a school or early childhood setting with a certifying authority across Australia.

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<sup>2</sup> Teacher employers recognise an authority or organisation with responsibility for managing the certification of their teachers at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages known as a certifying authority. Certifying authorities can be teacher regulatory authorities, employers/systems, peak bodies, member-based associations or other appropriate organisations.

## 2. Portability

Certification at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages is recognised across Australia\*.

Certified teachers do not need to reapply upon changing employment to another sector or jurisdiction but will need to provide evidence of current certification and eligibility to the incoming certifying authority.

\*Any industrial implications of certification are at the discretion of the incoming employer.

## 3. Assessment of Highly Accomplished or Lead practice

Assessment will be against the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stages of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and is based on an 'on-balance' judgement of demonstrated achievement of each of the 7 Teacher Standards.

The achievement of certification should be based on multiple sources of evidence against the Teacher Standards. Certification processes should accommodate different contexts and experiences.

An 'on-balance' judgement by the certifying authority will be made as to whether each Teacher Standard has been demonstrated, based on the evidence provided. Any or all parts of the assessment and certification recommendation can be delegated to a person trained by the certifying authority either internal or external to the applicants setting (e.g. principal or external assessor) but must include verification of the assessment by the certifying authority.

Evidence will:

- be drawn directly from the teacher's work;
- show that the applicant meets the Teacher Standards in a clear, concise and convincing way;
- be derived from a range of sources and must:
  - include evidence of impact on student learning;
  - show reflection on practice and provide evidence of impact;
- contain direct observation (either video or in-person) of, or an observation report on, the applicant's practice that demonstrates the Teacher Standards.





## Notes

- The Standard Descriptors may be used as a way for applicants to demonstrate that they meet the Teacher Standards. They can be used to inform evidence curation and 'on-balance' judgements but are not mandatory or prescriptive;
- Templates, scaffolds and/or work associated with formally credentialled courses may be used as part of certification processes to capture evidence from teachers;
- A single piece of evidence can address multiple Teacher Standards;
- Evidence can be submitted as a collective of applicants, provided the certifying authority can discern the individual applicant's unique contribution and impact;
- Referee statements or interviews can be used as evidence or to further strengthen assessor judgement, if required;
- Certifying authorities may choose to have a process by which Highly Accomplished or Lead teachers can be certified as specialising in a particular area or subject, identifying that specialisation on the teacher's certification records. Specialisation processes could include the provision of tailored scaffolds, templated approaches and/or supports.

## 4. Appeals process

Certifying authorities must provide applicants with a provision for appeal of certification decisions, in line with legislation and existing processes in the relevant jurisdiction.

## 5. Applicant support

Certifying authorities must provide applicants with constructive, formative feedback at least once throughout the certification process and support those who are not yet meeting the Teacher Standards at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stage to understand what they need to do to achieve certification.

Certifying authorities must provide applicants with sufficient support to meet the assessment requirements by providing templates, exemplars, information sessions and/or evidence samples.

## 6. Maintenance

Certification will be granted for a fixed period of five years. To maintain certification status, teachers must maintain their full registration as a teacher.

To renew status for a further five years, a teacher's employer or their delegate must verify that the teacher's practice remains at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stage.

Teachers can have their certification revoked during the five-year fixed period if their registration as a teacher is no longer current and/or their employer alerts the certifying authority that the teacher's practice is no longer at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stage.

## 7. Pathways

Certifying authorities must have a pathways process to recognise prior assessment from credible programs where teachers have demonstrated they already meet part or all of the Teacher Standards at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stages. This process will require certifying authorities to map the Teacher Standards achieved previously and only require evidence from applicants against the Teacher Standards not yet demonstrated through the prior assessment.

Any certification via a pathways approach will be subject to national quality assurance processes as per element 8 of the Framework.

Any industrial implications of certification through a pathways process are at the discretion of the employer.

## 8. Quality assurance

Quality assurance mechanisms are essential to achieve and maintain rigorous, valid and credible assessments of teachers' practice for the purposes of certification.

Certifying authorities must:

- conduct moderation of assessments within their jurisdictions to ensure consistency and reliability;
- participate in national moderation and are required to submit a number (determined by AITSL) of de-identified applicant samples annually to AITSL; and
- provide samples of evidence submitted by teachers who are certified through a pathways process (element 7) to AITSL on request for quality assurance and moderation.

Reports detailing the outcomes of AITSL's moderation processes will be made available to Education Ministers (or delegates) as needed.

Certifying authorities will collect and provide summary data on certification decisions and provide this to AITSL annually. Summary data will include (at a minimum) the following fields:

- Number of certified teachers at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stage;
- Number of applications for certification received;
- Number of applications for certification withdrawn;
- Number of unsuccessful applications;
- Applicant gender;
- Applicant employment setting type (early childhood, primary, secondary, combined);
- Applicant sector;
- Applicant employment setting geographic classification;
- Applicant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

# Roles and responsibilities

Item	AITSL	Certifying authority	Employers
<b>Certification of teachers at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stage</b>	Establish, review and maintain the Teacher Standards and the Framework.	Advise, review and maintain the certification process within their setting.	Consider creation or maintenance of roles (and industrial implications) that effectively utilise the expertise of certified teachers.
<b>Training for individuals assessing evidence against the Teacher Standards</b>	Provide accessible professional learning on Standards-based teaching assessment and bias for use by certifying authorities.	Conduct training for individuals assessing evidence against the Teacher Standards.	Promote the opportunity for teachers to become assessors of certification.
<b>Support for implementation</b>	Convene certifying authorities and provide reports to employers on implementation and moderation outcomes as required. Provide online materials such as videos of practice.	Provide materials to support implementation for applicants such as guides, templates, scaffolds and information sessions for applicants and school leaders.	Consider time allocation and other supports for applicants, school leaders and assessors (if applicable).
<b>Promotion of certification</b>	Conduct Promotional activities such as networking for Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers and communications.	Develop materials for applicants and school leaders to promote certification and its value in their settings.	Promote the benefits and value of certification to teachers and school leaders.
<b>Appeals</b>	No role.	Run or participate in appeals processes, depending on jurisdictional requirements.  Where an appeal is upheld, convene a new assessment process.	No role.

Item	AITSL	Certifying authority	Employers
<b>National data and reporting</b>	<p>Maintain summary data on the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers and report to employers and Education Ministers on request.</p> <p>Establish and maintain links with relevant bodies for provision of data and information relating to the implementation of the Framework.</p>	<p>Maintain a database of the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers.</p> <p>Provide AITSL with annual summary data.</p>	No role.
<b>Quality assurance</b>	<p>Convene national moderation using de-identified samples from certifying authorities</p>	<p>Conduct moderation of assessments within their jurisdiction to ensure consistency and reliability.</p> <p>Participate in and act on the results of national moderation and submit de-identified applicant samples annually to AITSL.</p>	No role.

# Connect with us

Requests for information and queries about this document can be sent to [info@aitsl.edu.au](mailto:info@aitsl.edu.au)

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The logo for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) features the lowercase letters 'aitsl' in a sans-serif font. The letters are filled with a vertical gradient that transitions from a light yellow-green at the top to a darker teal at the bottom.

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A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consists of two overlapping triangles. The left triangle is a solid teal color, and the right triangle is a solid yellow-green color. They meet at a diagonal line that slopes upwards from left to right.

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