

## Accreditation

# Classroom ready: Demonstrating the impact on student learning of initial teacher education programs

Position paper

August 2015

**Citation**

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2015, *Classroom ready: Demonstrating the impact on student learning from initial teacher education programs*, AITSL, Melbourne.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was formed to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership with funding provided by the Australian Government.

ISBN 978-1-925192-29-2

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This project was funded by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited (AITSL) with funding provided by the Australian Government.

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# Purpose

This paper is intended to stimulate discussion on how teacher education programs in Australia can demonstrate their impact on school student learning. Evidence of impact is central to the approach to accreditation outlined in the *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* (Action Now) report, and the Australian Government's response to it. The response highlights that better quality assurance of teacher education programs is essential to ensure every program is preparing classroom ready teachers with the skills they need to make a positive impact on school student learning.

This paper builds on the strengths of the current national approach to accreditation of initial teacher education, and the work of states and territories in an effort to help Australia's teachers be their best. It proposes three questions for consideration:

1. Which of the proposed components of evidence of impact would convince you about the quality of initial teacher education programs?
2. What components of evidence of impact should be mandatory, and which should be optional?
3. What evidence of impact could initial teacher education providers feasibly collect?

The paper is intended to promote discussion of these important questions as a basis for developing an approach to accrediting initial teacher education programs that is based on an assessment of their impact.

Have your say. You can submit your answers to the questions here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DRRQYQZ>

# The place of evidence of impact in the accreditation process

The capacity to demonstrate impact on school student learning is central to the proposed accreditation process, and is a major new element of the process.

The Action Now report proposes that the accreditation process have two distinct stages. This paper uses the terms 'National accreditation stage one' and 'National accreditation stage two' to refer to these stages.

**National accreditation stage one** (Accreditation stage one) is for programs that have not previously been nationally accredited. This includes new programs and, for a transitional period, programs that have been accredited under state and territory standards rather than national standards or procedures. Providers submitting programs for National accreditation stage one would provide:

- **A rationale for program design.** A clear statement of the overall philosophy, understandings and evidence that underpins the design and delivery of the program, including how the program design will develop effective teachers.
- **Evidence against the program standards.** Evidence that the program meets each of the program standards. It is anticipated that the program standards will resemble the current standards, but with some amendments to reflect the new requirements identified in the Action Now report, including requirements around professional experience, selection, primary teacher subject specialisation and graduate literacy and numeracy levels.
- **Mapping against the graduate standards.** Mapping that demonstrates where in the program each descriptor of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage is taught, practised and assessed. Providers will demonstrate that this assessment will ensure only those graduates who meet the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage and have a positive impact on school student learning will graduate.
- **Plan for demonstrating impact.** Providers will develop a plan that clearly describes what evidence is to be collected, why it constitutes valid evidence of impact, the level of performance the provider aims to achieve on the chosen measures and a rationale for these targets, and how this evidence will be used to continuously improve the program. This plan would inform evaluation of particular aspects of a program such as selection procedures, structure of professional experience and effectiveness of literacy and numeracy support.

To achieve National accreditation stage two, providers will need to demonstrate that the program has had an impact on its graduates as described in their plan for demonstrating impact, and that these graduates can have a positive impact on school student learning. To achieve this, the collecting of evidence needs to be built into a program from the beginning. The plan for demonstrating impact, developed by providers, will need to be approved by the regulatory authority, and will guide a provider's collection of evidence and avoid future disputes about what constitutes acceptable evidence.

**National accreditation stage two** (Accreditation stage two) will be based substantially on the provider's interpretation of the evidence they have collected on the impact of a program on graduate performance and outcomes. Programs will be required to achieve Accreditation stage two following a period determined at the time of Accreditation stage one which should not exceed 3 years for post graduate programs and 5 years for undergraduate programs.

Providers submitting programs for Accreditation stage two would provide:

- **An analysis of their evidence of impact.** An interpretation, supported by data, of the evidence they have collected against their agreed plan for demonstrating impact. This falls into two broad categories:
  - **Evidence of graduate performance.** Evidence that graduates meet the full range of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage, and have a positive impact on school student learning.
  - **Evidence of graduate outcomes.** Evidence of the outcomes achieved by graduates following graduation supported by data, as outlined in the plan agreed at Accreditation stage one.

The interpretation of evidence submitted should also outline what is revealed about the strengths and areas for improvement of a program, action already taken on the basis of this evidence, and planned actions to strengthen the program.

- **Plan for evidence collection.** Providers will also submit an updated plan for collecting evidence over the next accreditation period, which should be based on the usefulness of the evidence already collected, and any gaps or areas for further inquiry.
- **Evidence of ongoing compliance with the program standards.** Applications will indicate how a program continues to comply with the program standards.

Programs that have reached National accreditation stage two will be required to update their Accreditation stage two status within a time determined by their regulatory authority at the time of National Accreditation stage two.

All accredited programs will be expected to provide an **annual report** to their regulatory authority. This report will detail:

- Data collected as agreed in the provider's plan for demonstrating impact
- Data and other information required to be provided in a standard format for jurisdictional and/or national reporting
- Any significant changes to the program, with a rationale for why they have occurred.

Through the annual reporting requirement, the process of collecting evidence is ongoing. It allows any issues to be identified, investigated and addressed early by the regulatory authority and/or provider before the point of applying for Accreditation stage two.

## The accreditation process

Applications for accreditation will be assessed by expert panels. As recommended in the Action Now report, this process will be supported by clearer guidance on what constitutes acceptable performance, and effective training of accreditation panel members (including cross-jurisdiction members to ensure comparability).

# The standards are the backbone of accreditation

The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage are an agreed national statement of what graduate teachers should know and be able to do. As such, they form the basis for accreditation, with the fundamental principle being that programs are accredited on the basis that they produce graduates who meet the Graduate Standards, and can have a positive impact on school student learning. The Graduate Standards cover seven important areas of teachers' work:

1. Know students and how they learn
2. Know the content and how to teach it.
3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning.
4. Create and maintain supportive and safe environments.
5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning.
6. Engage in professional learning.
7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community.

# The nature and use of evidence in accreditation

A fundamental principle of this approach to accreditation is that providers are responsible for selecting, interpreting, and acting on evidence against both the program and graduate standards.

This document describes types of evidence that could be used to demonstrate impact. Providers will not be limited to these examples, and are encouraged to provide quality evidence that is relevant to their program and meaningful to them.

As important as the evidence is the provider's interpretation of it. Evidence should be carefully chosen to illustrate important aspects of a provider's application. Applications should be very clear on the implications of the evidence collected and the way it has been, or will be, used to improve a program.

Evidence should also be transparent. Program, provider and aggregate data will be made public and used to build a national evidence base on initial teacher education (minus student names and other individually identifying information). It is expected that initial teacher education providers, as researchers of their own practice, should actively contribute to building the evidence base. There is great potential for collaboration on larger scale studies to investigate what works best in initial teacher education.

## Principles of evidence

Initial teacher education programs are diverse and there are multiple ways to prepare pre-service teachers and demonstrate impact. While there is no one right way, providers are encouraged to work together to share methods of showing impact, to moderate with other providers, and to use common measures, where appropriate.

Evidence of impact supplied in an application for accreditation should reflect the following principles:

- **Relevant.** Evidence sheds light on the development of the professional knowledge, practice and engagement described in the graduate standards.
- **Fair.** The impact information is dependable and appropriately interpreted. Evidence should be reliable, valid, representative and moderated.
- **Authentic.** Evidence draws on actual teaching performance, or factors shown to be closely related to performance.
- **Formative.** Evidence should form part of the provider's continuous improvement of its program.

## Proposed requirements for evidence of impact for discussion

This section of the paper proposes the following potential components of evidence of impact and the characteristics of quality approaches to each component (a summary of the potential evidence requirements is at Box B). Once the components are agreed, more detailed rubrics will be developed to assist providers and accreditation panels in evaluating how these are being addressed.

Evidence of impact is of two distinct but related types:

- **Evidence of graduate performance** is evidence that the program has produced graduates who meet the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage, and who can have a positive impact on school student learning.
- **Evidence of graduate outcomes** is evidence of what is achieved following a program, including the employment of graduates as teachers, and of their effectiveness as teachers.

# 1. Evidence of graduate performance

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) proposes that providers should produce analysis and supporting data that demonstrate graduates meet the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage and have a positive impact on school student learning, in all three of the following categories.

## 1.1 Assessment of graduate standards

Programs provide a coherent strategy justifying the assessment framework used to judge whether pre-service teachers met the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage. The assessment should include a content analysis, identifying where in the program pre-service teachers are assessed on each aspect of the seven graduate standards and whether the assessment is an academic essay, examination, case study, classroom observation, performance assessment or other form of assessment. Examples of evidence for the graduate standards are at Attachment 1.

In addition, programs provide evidence that the approaches to teaching with which graduates are equipped are consistent with research evidence on teaching effectiveness in each subject area which graduates are prepared to teach.

## 1.2 Assessment of classroom performance

In addition to 1.1, each program contains assessments of classroom performance. Although assessment and feedback to pre-service teachers should be ongoing, it is the final assessment of classroom performance at or near the end of the program that is important for the purposes of accrediting initial teacher education programs. This final assessment assesses the authentic practices of teaching including planning, classroom teaching, reflection and assessment of school student learning. This assessment may take the form of a teaching performance assessment or some other reliable, valid and moderated performance assessment procedure.

It is important to note that whether assessments are made through program-based or externally developed instruments, authentic teaching performance assessments or some other procedure, providers will be required to provide evidence of the quality of the assessments. That is, providers will be expected to provide evidence of the **validity** and **reliability** of their comprehensive assessment of teaching performance including moderation (refer to Box A). These assessments can be included in but will not replace professional experience requirements.

One example of a final assessment of classroom performance is a **teaching performance assessment**. Authentic teaching performance assessments typically include pre-service teachers' planning, teaching and assessment artefacts, school students' work samples, examples of feedback to school students, and commentaries on unedited videos of classroom teaching. They are assessed against standards-based scoring rubrics. Local examples of this approach include Deakin's *Authentic Teacher Assessment* (Dixon, Mayer, Gallant & Collard, 2011). Similar approaches developed in international contexts include the *Performance Assessment for California Teachers*, the *edTPA* and the *Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers*. Programs may choose to develop their own teaching performance assessment or work with other providers to develop a common assessment.

## Box A: Reliability, validity, moderation and standard setting of assessments

Considering the validity of assessments, programs should provide a justification of the content validity of assessments compared with the content of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage. This may include a description of procedures followed in developing the assessment, establishing face validity, or conducting formal quantitative validity studies.

Programs should also provide evidence of the procedures they use to establish the reliability of the rating scales or rubrics used in their performance assessments. This may include descriptions of procedures to train and assess raters as well as local and refereed research analysis of inter-rater or inter-observer reliability. Reliability is likely to be increased if multiple raters are used, and multiple observations are made.

Programs should provide evidence of procedures they use to establish standards on the scales or rubrics used in the comprehensive assessment of teaching performance, especially at the pass-fail point.

Programs should also provide evidence of moderation at the pass-fail point and other grades. This evidence may include descriptions of procedures followed, benchmarking with other programs, or cross-marking within or between institutions.

In addition, programs should provide time series data of achievement on their comprehensive assessment of teaching performance, comparative data where it is available, and evidence of procedures undertaken in their cyclical reviews of assessment procedures and scoring strategies.

### 1.3 Evidence of impact on school student learning

Programs are required to provide evidence of the impact their pre-service teachers have on school student learning. This evidence will typically take the form of case studies, student surveys or value-added studies.

Case study evidence of impact on school student learning may be drawn from clinical observation studies conducted by initial teacher education students, or as part of a formal teaching performance assessment, or other similar student investigations undertaken as part of the initial teacher education program.

Surveys of school students may also be a useful source of evidence of impact on school student learning, especially on attributes such as a teacher's classroom management and their capacity to provide intellectually challenging work.

Value-added studies rely on estimates of achievement at the beginning and end of a teaching program. The relatively short time that pre-service teachers work with any particular group of school students is not normally sufficient to provide direct evidence of impact on school student achievement during professional experience.

Programs may, however, find it useful to draw on published value-added studies demonstrating the predictive validity of standardised assessments such as classroom observation scales or teaching performance assessments.

In addition to the evidence of content validity for assessment for classroom performance, programs should provide evidence of the predictive validity of their assessments.

This evidence should demonstrate that performance on the program's comprehensive assessment of teaching performance predicts future teaching performance, including impact of teachers on school student learning. This evidence may include direct studies of student learning in a sample of graduates' classrooms, or formal evidence of the predictive validity of the observation instrument, practicum assessment or teaching performance assessment.

## 2. Evidence of graduate outcomes

AITSL proposes that providers collect and interpret evidence and data showing what is achieved by graduates after completing a program. AITSL proposes that providers collect this information in two ways:

- By participating in any national or jurisdictional data collections that address these issues, such as the Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT) surveys.
- By conducting their own data collections and follow-up studies to address issues of particular interest to a program.

The intent of this data collection is to provide further evidence of graduate quality, and inform program improvement. Again, it is important that providers interpret this data and indicate how it will inform future directions for the program.

There are a number of potential types of data that can be used. Also where such data are available, providers can participate in available systemic (jurisdictional and/or national) data collection mechanisms and analyse and interpret this data to inform ongoing program improvement. Providers should supplement this with data from other sources.

The examples below outline the types of evidence that could contribute towards a provider demonstrating the achievement of their graduates after completing a program. It is noted that these examples are not complete measures of graduate outcomes, however in combination with other evidence, these measures can contribute to demonstrating the outcomes of graduates who have completed their programs.

### 2.1 Registration and employment

In jurisdictions where there is routine data exchange between initial teacher education providers and teacher registration authorities, providers should publish and analyse time series data on the number and proportion of graduates from each year who seek provisional registration and the number and proportion of graduates from each year who subsequently achieve full registration.

In jurisdictions where employment data are available from one or more major employers, time series data on initial employment by particular employers, and subsequent full registration while working with that employer may be substituted for registration data.

In all cases, time series data are preferred, because of the impact of attrition on the data. Two types of attrition are common, but not expected to be subject to sudden fluctuations: graduates who complete their initial teacher education in one jurisdiction and seek employment in another; and teachers who move from one employer to another after gaining provisional registration. Where initial teacher education providers have reason to believe that changes in time series registration and employment data are the result of external factors, such as changes in rates of attrition, they should provide an explanation of these changes.

## 2.2 Satisfaction of graduates and their employers

Programs should provide evidence of satisfaction of graduates and their employers (e.g. principals, mentors, students) with levels of preparedness and of the strengths and areas for improvement of the program.

Where surveys of graduates and their supervisors are used, time series data should be provided, the survey instrument should be consistent over time, and survey response rates should be provided. Surveys of students and employers should focus on particular aspects of preparation as well as overall satisfaction with the provider.

## 2.3 Priorities for program improvement

Programs should provide evidence that strengths and areas for improvement of the program have been identified, that targets for improvement have been established, and that follow up studies have investigated the impact of improvement plans.

A wide range of evidence may be considered, including case studies, surveys of students or employers, advisory committee feedback, external review panels or focus group or interview studies.

## 2.4 Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT) surveys

The Australian Government requires that higher education providers participate in the Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT) program of student, employer and graduate surveys. These include:

- student satisfaction with university experience, measured by the University Experience Survey (UES)
- employer satisfaction with the generic skills, technical skills and work readiness of graduates, measured by the Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS)
- labour market outcomes of graduates, measured by the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS).

Analysis of the QILT survey results includes analysis of the distribution of UES, ESS and GOS scores compared with benchmarked programs and national distributions of scores. As time series data become available from these surveys, changes in performance over time should also be analysed.

## **Box B: Summary of the proposed components of evidence of impact**

### **1 Comprehensive assessment of graduates against the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage**

All three of:

- 1.1 Assessment of graduate standards
- 1.2 Assessment of classroom performance
- 1.3 Evidence of impact on school student learning

### **2 A comprehensive assessment of graduate outcomes**

A combination of:

- 2.1 Registration and employment
- 2.2 Satisfaction of graduates and their employers
- 2.3 Priorities for program improvement
- 2.4 Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT) surveys

## Next steps and further work

Following discussion and agreement to the requirements for evidence of impact, there are some critical steps that need to be taken to ensure that the use of evidence of impact is effective. An immediate priority is to develop rubrics for assessing evidence, to ensure that providers have clear guidance on what to submit, and accreditation panels are able to consistently distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable approaches.

Actions to be taken include the following:

- Development of an evidence guide, in the context of a guide to the entire accreditation process. This will include clear advice on the requirements for demonstrating evidence of impact, and rubrics to clearly define what constitutes an acceptable approach.
- Training of accreditation panel members and ongoing moderation to ensure consistent and transparent judgements nationally.
- Investigating whether there is a need to develop assessment approaches or tools that would not be mandatory, but would be available for providers to use in demonstrating evidence of impact. It is expected that providers will also develop their own tools, individually or in cooperation.
- Collecting and publishing information on approaches taken that have been deemed acceptable, and evidence on their effectiveness as it becomes available.
- Determining the form of data to be supplied and how it will be published.

## Have your say

This paper is intended to promote discussion, and the propositions it presents should be read in this spirit. Anyone with an interest in improving initial teacher education is encouraged to respond to these three critical questions:

1. Which of the proposed components of evidence of impact would convince you about the quality of initial teacher education programs?
2. What components of evidence of impact should be mandatory, and which should be optional?
3. What evidence of impact could initial teacher education providers feasibly collect?

You can submit your answers to the questions here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DRRQYQZ>

We look forward to hearing your views on these important issues.

# Attachment 1 - Evidence for graduate standards

Standard	Examples of evidence
<p><b>1. Know students and how they learn</b></p>	<p>Lesson plans and teaching strategies based on understanding of the needs and development of individual students and groups of students</p> <p>Student work samples annotated to show understanding of students' strengths, abilities and priorities for further learning</p> <p>Classroom observation that demonstrates that teaching strategies are appropriate to student needs</p> <p>Evidence of student growth as a result of teaching interventions, across a range of student backgrounds and ability levels</p> <p>Evidence of impact on students from studies of follow up of graduates when they enter employment</p>
<p><b>2. Know the content and how to teach it</b></p>	<p>Evidence of achievement in academic subjects relating to the content to be taught, benchmarked where relevant against the performance of students not undertaking initial teacher education</p> <p>Evidence of pre-service teachers' personal literacy and numeracy, including performance on the national literacy and numeracy test</p> <p>Lesson plans demonstrating deep understanding of the content and appropriate teaching strategies</p> <p>Resources developed or selected to match the content to be taught</p> <p>Annotations of student work demonstrating understanding of student misconceptions and how to address them</p> <p>Records of feedback provided to students that promotes learning</p> <p>Classroom observation demonstrating deep understanding and appropriate teaching of content, and provision of quality feedback</p> <p>Evidence of student performance that demonstrates increasing understanding of content</p> <p>Final Progress Testing of developing of pedagogical content knowledge</p>
<p><b>3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning</b></p>	<p>Classroom observation using validated instruments</p> <p>Teacher performance assessments that evaluate a sequence of lessons, including planning, classroom delivery and reflection on the effectiveness of teaching strategies</p> <p>Feedback from supervising teachers on the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies.</p> <p>Evidence of improved student learning, for example annotated work samples showing progress</p>
<p><b>4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments</b></p>	<p>Classroom observation that demonstrates effective classroom management</p> <p>Feedback from supervising teachers on effectiveness of classroom management</p> <p>Tests, essays or other assessments demonstrating understanding of relevant policies and legislation</p> <p>Student surveys or other feedback demonstrating positive perceptions of learning environments</p>

<p><b>5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning</b></p>	<p>Teacher performance assessments that include assessment of assessment strategies and feedback provided to students</p> <p>Observation or records of participation in moderation activities</p> <p>Examples of assessment tasks, strategies and rubrics selected or developed, with a rationale for their use</p> <p>Examples of analysis of student achievement data and its implications</p> <p>Examples of reports and other information provided to parents</p>
<p><b>6. Engage in professional learning</b></p>	<p>Self-reflection leading to analysis of priorities for further professional learning</p> <p>Evidence of improved teaching performance arising from addressing professional learning needs</p>
<p><b>7. Engage professionally with colleagues, carers and the community</b></p>	<p>Assessments such as essays that demonstrate understanding of ethical, legal and organisational requirements</p> <p>Records of interactions with parents/carers, colleagues and community groups</p> <p>Evidence of improved classroom performance and impact on student learning in areas targeted by these interactions</p> <p>Reports of principals and other colleagues relating to participation in and contribution to the school community</p>





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AITSL is funded by the Australian Government