

Growth-focused teaching evaluations

Growth-focused teaching evaluations support teachers to become better equipped to provide for their learners' needs. Evaluations should be focused on supporting teachers to determine opportunities for improvement, facilitated by a positive culture with the right conditions to support professional growth. Uptake of effective evaluation processes and practices achieves greater impact for students, while also allowing teachers to exercise agency in their careers and development.

Teaching evaluations are a valuable tool for assessing teaching effectiveness, when undertaken in-line with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Through both summative and formative methods, and using evidence such as indicators of learning, teachers can be provided with adequate feedback to inform and enhance their practice through targeted professional learning, leading to improved outcomes for learners.

Methods for evaluating teaching practice

Evaluations of teaching practice can include infrequent, formal, and high-stakes performance or promotion evaluations, such as annual appraisals or accreditation.

More valuable to continuous teacher growth are frequent, less formal and lower-stakes evaluations that help to inform teaching practice, such as classroom observations or coaching and reflection activities.

Using a range of teaching evaluation methods from various evidence sources allows teachers to receive in-depth and reliable feedback. Insights gained from evaluations can inform professional learning goals as indicated by areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

"An effective approach to improving practice will include a conscious effort to collect and reflect on evidence that provides insight into the effectiveness of teacher practice, and informs growth and access to high-quality professional learning. This should occur in a context of frequent formal and informal feedback." [AITSL 2012](#)

Teaching evaluation methods

Some common and frequently used evaluation methods, including the benefits and key considerations

METHOD	BENEFITS	KEY CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Classroom observations & feedback</p> <p>One or more observers join the teacher in the classroom (or watch a video recording of a class) to provide feedback on teaching practice. Usually done internally by peers and leaders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly accessible and can be conducted frequently. Can be used as a singular method of evaluation. Provides clear and meaningful feedback on improvement. When undertaken by peers, promotes professional conversations and collaboration in teaching practice. When used to inform practice, can have a substantial impact on students' learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observer bias can be reduced through training, employing a standardised assessment rubric, or involving multiple observers. Consider using tools such as AITSL's Classroom Practice Continuum tool.
<p>Interviews</p> <p>Typically led by school leaders, teachers discuss their practice; may also involve interviewing teachers, students or parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an opportunity for teachers to focus on strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement in their practice. When compared with responses from other parties, provides multiple perspectives on teaching practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bias from the relationships the teacher has with their leaders, colleagues, or students can affect reliability and validity. Consider using multiple interview sources (e.g. teacher self-appraisal, students and peer review). Interviews are usually very time consuming, so allow sufficient time to complete.
<p>Surveys</p> <p>May include self-appraisal by a teacher, or surveys of peers, students, or parents about a teacher's practice, to evaluate teacher effectiveness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an opportunity for teachers to focus on strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement in their practice. An efficient way to gather evaluation data. Regular surveys can be valuable for measuring improvements in practice over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bias can occur due to the teacher's relationship with respondents, which influences evaluation results. Reduce bias by anonymising responses, so respondents can openly share their views, and by designing explicit and unambiguous survey questions. Regular surveys are valuable for evaluating improvements over time and when used in conjunction with other evaluation methods.
<p>Classroom artefacts</p> <p>Documents created during teaching practice that can be collated as part of teacher evaluation. Can include teacher-designed assessments and instructional resources, and samples of student work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides first-hand evidence of what students can 'do, say, make or write' and is crucial to determining student learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom evidence is not usually standardised. Should be assessed with specified 'success criteria' of learning and understanding, in the form of a standard rubric.
<p>Coaching</p> <p>Involves an open, low-stakes conversation with a coach (usually a school leader or expert teacher) to discuss opportunities for growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching can be linked with vastly improved student outcomes. Coaches partner with teachers, identifying and closing gaps between current and desired practice, setting goals, and implementing strategies until goals are met. When paired with traditional professional development methods (such as workshops) and instructional materials, there is potential for considerable benefits to teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school/ learning environment should be supportive, growth-focused and regularly provide feedback to teachers. Coaching should be about development. If viewed as disciplinary, teachers will reject coaching efforts. Teachers who are open to critique and willing to recognise areas of weakness as a way of expanding their impact will benefit most. Effective coaching is a complex skill that requires expertise and training. Coaching conversations and promotional conversations should be conducted separately.

Evaluations can vary in their use and formality, and contribute in different ways to the career progression, continuous improvement and learning of all teachers.

Formative evaluations

prioritise frequent and timely feedback to inform teachers' learning and development for improvement in teaching practice informed by learning indicators or evidence of instructional practice.

An important goal of formative evaluations is the use of several indicators of learner impact to make quick decisions on where to direct resources to improve teaching and learning. In doing so, accuracy of teacher judgements and other indicators of impact should also be considered.

Summative evaluations

focus on performance outcomes and prioritise high validity and accuracy. They are used in instances of formal performance evaluation especially where there are prospects for accreditations, career promotions and progression. Summative evaluations of teaching practice should be kept minimal as teachers and their learners benefit far more from formative feedback and continuous learning.



Where can I find out more?

For related resources and links to relevant research visit www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/understand-your-impact/growth-focused-evaluations

Selecting appropriate evaluation methods

The Teaching Practice Evaluation Framework (Clinton, Aston, Qing, & Keamy 2019) details 12 principles schools can use to select appropriate evaluation resources. In selecting an evaluation method, teachers and leaders should consider the principles for the purpose of the evaluation noting evaluations do not need to embody all principles. To do so, they can reflect on the following:

- Is the evaluation going to take place in the professional practice setting (e.g. classroom), making it *authentic*?
- How might we ensure evaluations are carried out by those who have professional evaluation experience and understand the standards of practice, so it is *evidence-based*?
- How can we ensure a level of *collaboration*, through communication and opportunities for reflection?
- What might we do to make sure evaluations are *context-specific*, and tailored to practice settings?
- Are we making sure evaluations are *comprehensive*, using multiple sources of information and assessment?
- Are the purposes for evaluation and feedback clear and *understandable* to teachers?
- How can we make sure evaluation methods are linked to *relevant* standards and performance metrics?
- Do the evaluations focus on improvement and *professional growth* of teachers, by providing actionable feedback?
- Are evaluations currently, or going to be, consistent, ongoing and *regular*?
- How might we establish *student-based* feedback and observations in the evaluation process?
- How are we allowing *professional agency* and self-direction in evaluations and their outcomes?
- How can we make sure evaluations are tailored to areas of professional growth and learning, to assure *utility* in career development?

Using growth-focused evaluations to improve practice

Effectively planned and consistent evaluations - supported by a positive educational environment – provides teachers with the tools to enhance their practice, in-line with the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (the Framework); an ongoing cycle consisting of three stages:

Feedback and review:
Regular performance feedback should be provided on teaching practices, including annual formal reviews.



Reflection and goal setting:
Teachers regularly reflect on their impact on learning and establish development goals using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Professional practice and learning:
Teacher practice should be evaluated using evidence from a range of sources including learner data and peer observation.

“An important part of effective professional practice is collecting evidence that provides the basis for ongoing feedback, reflection and further development.”
AITSL 2012