



# **Policy for Accreditation at Proficient Teacher**

**September 2016**

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# 1 Background

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers provide the framework for accreditation. They describe what teachers need to know, understand and practise to be able to ensure quality learning opportunities for children/ students. The Standards form a foundation for career planning and assist teachers to map and determine their professional learning and development needs. Accreditation processes provide a tool for professional engagement amongst teachers on issues of quality teaching.

The *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* provides the foundation for accreditation at Proficient Teacher. In 2014, amendments were made to the Act to enable teachers working in NSW early childhood education and care services to be accredited alongside NSW primary and secondary teachers.

Accreditation is required of teachers following a period of practice through a service<sup>1</sup>/school-based accreditation process of demonstrating achievement of the teaching Standards at Proficient Teacher.

Teachers are first accredited provisionally or conditionally based on an assessment of their qualifications. The *Provisional and Conditional Accreditation Policy* is available on the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) website.

# 2 Purpose

This policy describes the process of gaining accreditation at Proficient Teacher for provisionally and conditionally accredited teachers in NSW, as required under the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004*.

It incorporates advice previously given in the NESA *Policy for the Accreditation of Returning Teachers* and *Policy for the Accreditation of Casual, Temporary and Part-time Teachers*.

Accreditation at Proficient Teacher enables provisionally and conditionally accredited teachers to build on their initial teacher education and integrate it into their teaching practice. It is designed to assist services/schools in supporting teachers in the transition between university or tertiary institution and entry into the profession.

The policy sets out the requirements of accreditation and describes the roles and responsibilities of the teacher, teacher accreditation authorities, NESA and external assessors.

It is designed to support teachers and teacher accreditation authorities with the mandatory requirements of accreditation at Proficient Teacher which is a process of consistently demonstrating the Standard Descriptors in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The requirements will help to establish fair, consistent and valid processes for mandatory accreditation at Proficient Teacher. Underpinning the policy is a process of nurturing and

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<sup>1</sup> 'service' in this Policy means an approved centre based education and care service within the meaning of the *Children (Education and Care Services) National Law NSW* or the *Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Act 2011* and includes a service or facility of a class declared by the regulations to be an early childhood education centre for the purposes of this Act

supporting the teacher's entry or re-entry into the teaching profession.

### **3 The Teacher Accreditation Act 2004**

The Policy for Accreditation at Proficient Teacher gives effect to the relevant provisions in the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 (in particular Part 4, Sections 19 to 33) governing the accreditation of teachers at Proficient Teacher.

In 2014, amendments were made to the Act to enable teachers working in NSW early childhood education and care services to be accredited alongside NSW primary and secondary teachers.

NESA has legislated responsibility to advise the Minister on matters of accreditation.

### **4 Policy Objectives**

The Policy for Accreditation at Proficient Teacher seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To maintain a high quality of teaching in New South Wales.
- To assist beginning and returning teachers to develop their practice consistent with expected practice represented by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
- To assist schools in supporting teachers to integrate the Standard Descriptors into their teaching practice.
- To support the knowledge, skills and capabilities of teachers by providing appropriate recognition of teaching practice.

### **5 Accreditation at Proficient Teacher**

The process for accreditation is to be developmental, transparent and consultative. It should at all times be focused on supporting and assisting the teacher to achieve accreditation. The framework of Standards should provide direction and structure to support the development of teachers who are at the beginning of their career and also those returning to teach after an absence of five years or more.

Time, support and confidence are required to enable teachers to meet the Standard Descriptors. Constructive feedback is to be provided to the teacher throughout the accreditation process. Where appropriate, strategies to improve teaching practice and suggested areas for professional learning are to be recommended.

Accreditation requires teachers to meet all the Standard Descriptors at Proficient Teacher in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. That is, achievement of all the Standard Descriptors is considered essential to be an accredited teacher.

The Standard Descriptors constitute the agreed descriptive statements of the intricate and complex process of teaching.

#### **5.1 Developing consistent practice against the Standard Descriptors**

All teachers should reflect on, analyse and document their own progress against the Standard

Descriptors. Self-assessment comprises a significant component of an effective accreditation process. Provisionally and conditionally accredited teachers should be given the opportunity to lead discussion about their progress with their supervisor as well as with other colleagues. A genuine spirit of collaboration and open discussion between teachers, their colleagues and supervisor will foster the confidence and ability of the teacher to undertake this professional responsibility.

Expertise and confidence for beginning provisionally and conditionally accredited teachers may not be as evident as for an experienced teacher. The process of meeting the Standard Descriptors should be used as a basis for developing and building confidence and expertise in areas where these are lacking or require support.

## **5.2 Collecting evidence for accreditation**

It is the responsibility of the teacher to collect evidence of their practice as they teach at a service/school or services/schools, and to request that a supervising teacher signs documentary evidence to verify that it represents the teacher's work.

Advice and support documents are provided by NESAs, including Evidence Guides, which detail the kinds of evidence that teachers will be collecting through their teaching practice to demonstrate the Teaching Standards.

## **5.3 The teacher's context**

The specific teaching context of the teacher should be acknowledged in the process of accreditation. Each teaching context will have a set of unique challenges. In some cases, the challenges will be more demanding than in others. The teacher accreditation authority (TAA) should ensure that the accreditation process takes account of the demands of each specific teaching context and that it provides support for teachers to meet the Standard Descriptors regardless of the teaching context.

## **5.4 Making the judgement at Proficient Teacher**

The imperative to improve child/student learning underpins the Teaching Standards. Proficient Teacher will be identified when a teacher is able to create, on a consistent basis, an environment where child/student learning can occur.

The creation of such an environment will be evidence of the teacher's ability to effectively integrate and apply the knowledge and skills that comprise each Descriptor. Approved Learning Framework/syllabus requirements must be met and children/students are to be supported and have their learning needs addressed.

When teachers achieve the level of Proficient Teacher, they can be regarded then as a full member of the profession.

Making an holistic judgement involves observing and analysing the integration of a teacher's skills, knowledge and practices during teaching. The decision to accredit a teacher requires a judgement that the teacher's practice is integrated across varied circumstances.

Recognising a teacher at the level of Proficient Teacher requires an understanding that combinations of Australian Standard Descriptors are applied and demonstrated in a range of

circumstances. Such recognition requires the collection of a range of evidence and the use of strategies that include observation, as well as a review of documentation.

The Standards should not be used as an individual checklist or as any reductionist summary of the complexity of teaching. Any process that seeks to judge teachers against an aggregate of individually observed behaviours is not adequate for making a reliable accreditation decision.

When the service/school is confident that the teacher meets all Standard Descriptors at Proficient Teacher and has collected annotated examples<sup>2</sup> of their practice as evidence, the teacher's accreditation report is written.

## **5.5 Length of employment before making accreditation decisions**

Provisionally and conditionally accredited teachers should undertake teaching for a period of time that enables them to develop and demonstrate their teaching. It is essential that the period of employment is long enough for a TAA to be confident that a valid and reliable decision can be made about a teacher's practice.

As a guide, 160 – 180 days of teaching would typically enable the teacher to meet accreditation requirements at Proficient Teacher.

## **5.6 The maximum relevant timeframe for gaining Proficient Teacher**

The *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004*, sets a maximum period of time for a full-time teacher to achieve accreditation at Proficient Teacher.

The period for full-time teachers who are provisionally accredited is three years. The period for conditionally accredited full-time teachers is four years.

The Act provides additional time through Regulation for casual and part-time employees in relation to the maximum period of time to achieve accreditation.

The Regulation sets a maximum period of five years for casual and part-time teachers. Conditionally accredited teachers employed casually or part-time have six years.

## **5.7 Completing the accreditation report**

When the service/school is confident that the teacher meets the Standard Descriptors, a representative of the TAA is to complete the accreditation report for Proficient Teacher, describing the teacher's practice, which accompanies the evidence of the teacher's demonstration of the Standard Descriptors.

If the TAA is satisfied that the teacher meets all Standard Descriptors and should be accredited at Proficient Teacher, this is documented by the TAA signing the completed report. If the teacher has not met the Standard Descriptors, with guidance and support after an appropriate period, the report should also document this decision.

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<sup>2</sup> The examples required should be sufficient to reflect Standard Descriptors in all Standards and comply with a maximum limit of 35 pages. The evidence is a sample of the teacher's practice.

The teacher may discuss the contents of the report with the TAA or their representative. The teacher may not necessarily agree with the content of the report.

A proforma for the report is provided on the NESA website.

## **6 Accreditation at Proficient Teacher for Returning Teachers**

Teachers who return to teaching in a NSW school on or after 1 October 2004, following an absence of five years or more must be provisionally or conditionally accredited.

Teachers who return to teaching in a NSW early childhood education and care service on or after 1 October 2016, following an absence of five years or more, must be provisionally or conditionally accredited.

These individuals may be referred to as returning teachers. They may bring additional skills and diverse experiences to teaching that enrich their understanding of curriculum, the children/students they are teaching and how they learn.

### **6.1 Requirements for accreditation at Proficient Teacher for returning teachers**

Returning teachers are expected to meet the same requirements as beginning provisionally and conditionally accredited teachers. For a complete description, please refer to Section 5.

In most cases, returning teachers should not be regarded as inexperienced teachers.

The accreditation support processes for returning teachers should:

- recognise existing knowledge and skills, as well as previous teaching experiences, qualifications and accreditations;
- acknowledge that some returning teachers may require on-going support only in specific Standards or particular Standard Descriptors;
- allow for flexibility and tailoring to individual circumstances.

### **6.2 Returning teachers' length of service for completion of mandatory accreditation**

The returning teacher's knowledge skills and experience should be taken into account in the process of accreditation at Proficient Teacher. The length of employment required to demonstrate the Standard Descriptors at Proficient Teacher may be shortened as a result.

This applies to individuals employed to teach across the full range of positions: full-time, part-time and casual.

TAA's may also enable teachers with significant overseas teaching experience to undertake accreditation in a shorter time, if it is clear that they meet all the Standards.

In all employment scenarios, it is the responsibility of the TAA in consultation with the returning teacher, to judge when an accreditation decision can be validly and reliably made about the

teacher.

## **7 Accreditation at Proficient Teacher for Casual and Part-time Teachers**

Accreditation under the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* applies to all teachers, including casual and part-time teachers.

The criteria and processes for assessing casual and part-time teachers' achievement of the Standard Descriptors at Proficient Teacher are the same as those for full-time teachers. For a complete description, refer to Section 5.

### **7.1 Collecting evidence for finalising mandatory accreditation**

Casual and part-time teachers may collect evidence at a number of services/schools and use that evidence to finalise accreditation at one service/school. During this period it is the responsibility of services/schools to assist casuals by verifying evidence of their work.

In all employment scenarios, it is the responsibility of the TAA in consultation with the casual or part-time teacher and an experienced, supervising teacher, to judge when an accreditation decision can be validly and reliably made about the teacher. The service/school where the finalisation of accreditation occurs may need to consult with other services/schools where the teacher collected evidence of their practice.

### **7.2 Casual and part-time teachers' length of service for completion of mandatory accreditation**

Alongside the guideline of 160-180 days, a component of teaching for casual and part-time teachers should include a continuous period within a single service/school to assist the TAA make the accreditation decision. As a guide, a continuous period of six to ten weeks should be sufficient for observing that the teacher meets the Standard Descriptors. If the continuous teaching is part-time, a longer continuous period may be necessary.

### **7.3 Casual and part-time teachers' maximum period for achieving accreditation at Proficient Teacher**

The Act provides additional time through regulations for casual and part-time teachers in relation to the maximum period of time to achieve accreditation.

The regulations set a maximum period for the accreditation of casual and part-time teachers. This maximum period is:

- Five years for provisionally accredited teachers<sup>3</sup>
- Six years for conditionally accredited teachers<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This is three years for a full-time teacher.

<sup>4</sup> This is four years for a full-time teacher.



## 7.4 Extending the maximum period

Casual and part time teachers who have been limited in their opportunity to be accredited during the maximum period may apply to NESAs for an extension of this time in some circumstances. The criteria for an extension describe circumstances that limit opportunity to present for accreditation such as:

- child rearing responsibilities
- home carer responsibilities
- sickness or misadventure
- undertaking further teaching-related education courses
- other appropriate professional circumstances (for example, employment which does not include teaching an Approved Learning Framework/ NESAs syllabuses or curriculum)

Teachers who wish to extend the maximum period should write to NESAs to request an extension, describing their specific circumstances, using the form provided on the NESAs website. Teachers may be required to provide evidence for their claim, related to the circumstances described above.

# 8 Description of Role for the Accreditation of Teachers at Proficient Teacher

## 8.1 Role of the teacher presenting for accreditation at Proficient Teacher

Provisionally and conditionally accredited teachers are required to collect and present documentation as evidence of their meeting the Standard Descriptors in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

This includes written documentation or quality examples drawn directly from their practice as a teacher as required by NESAs and authorised by supervisors as contributing to their successful attainment of accreditation at Proficient Teacher.

The teacher must collate the examples of their practice and annotate them to show how or why the evidence addresses the Standard Descriptors. The evidence will encompass the full range of professional experiences.

Teachers are expected to take responsibility for seeking advice from colleagues and supervisors regarding their practice and achievement of the Standard Descriptors. The Standard Descriptors provide a framework for them to also evaluate their own practice.

Teachers must take responsibility to ensure they maximise their opportunity to develop and demonstrate their practice across the teaching and learning cycle. It is their professional responsibility to be fully aware of the mandatory requirements for accreditation.

Teachers are responsible for paying the annual accreditation fee within the period of the payment terms.

## 8.2 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 NESAs framework of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

TAAAs are appointed to make the accreditation decision at Proficient Teacher. In the government sector, TAAAs are appointed by the Director General. For the non-government sector, TAAAs are appointed by the Minister. For NSW early childhood education and care services, the TAA is NESAs or a body approved by NESAs.

TAAAs are also responsible for ensuring that teachers working towards accreditation are adequately supervised and mentored during the process of accreditation. Supervisors and mentors should be experienced teachers, capable of assisting and supporting teachers to meet the Standard Descriptors. It may be that this role is assigned to a teacher accredited at Proficient Teacher or a higher level who has experience and knowledge to contribute to the process.

The capacity for supervising teachers to provide advice leading to valid and reliable accreditation judgements acknowledges and supports the primacy of the professional judgements made by teachers in services/schools.

The TAA is responsible for developing the accreditation report about the teacher. All reports will be provided in a consistent format across all teacher accreditation authorities. A template for the report is available on the NESAs website.

TAAAs should have a policy determining that an appropriate supervisor has been assigned responsibility for teachers for accreditation and a documented internal appeals process.

TAAAs should organise an appropriate system to record accreditation decisions. This will include holding a copy of the report making the teacher accreditation decision.

### **8.3 Role of NESAs**

NESAs oversees the system of accreditation and recognition of teachers' professional capacity the Standard Descriptors in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

NESAs advises and assists TAAAs to accredit teachers as well as monitoring the accreditation process across all services/ schools. NESAs's processes support the consistent and fair application of the framework of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers for each teacher.

NESAs manages and supports the use of external assessors in the accreditation process. It provides briefing sessions for these assessors to support their capacity to make consistent judgements. NESAs also monitors the application of the external assessor judgements across the state by providing reports to TAAAs.

### **8.4 Role of the external assessor**

External assessors are teaching professionals who have been selected and trained by NESAs to review Proficient Teacher submissions.

Assessors are appointed to review teachers' evidence and the accreditation report against relevant criteria to ensure quality and consistent accreditation decisions across the state.

Information from the external assessor's reviews will be provided in reports to TAAs. The assessor's advice will not affect the TAA's accreditation decision.

## 9 Payment of Fees

The *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* requires that the annual fee is paid as a condition of a teacher's accreditation. Teachers who fail to pay their annual fee cannot continue to be employed while the amount remains outstanding.

## 10 Appeals

The teacher can request a review of a decision to refuse their accreditation.

The *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* specifies that a person may apply to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) for a review of decision to refuse accreditation.

If the teacher is refused accreditation, they must be informed of their right to request a review of the decision by the NCAT at the time they are informed of the decision.

Before applying for a review by the NCAT, the teacher must request that the TAA reviews the decision. This is called an internal review. Requests for an internal review must be made in writing and must be made within 28 days of the teacher being informed of the TAA's decision.

Each TAA is to have a documented internal appeals process. It is the responsibility of the TAA to provide provisionally and conditionally accredited teachers with a copy of the internal appeals process.

The TAA or representative must acknowledge the teacher's request for an internal review within 21 days from the receipt of request.

## 11 Recognition of Interstate Teachers

NESA has recognition arrangements with all state and territory registration authorities in Australia. Teachers coming to NSW from interstate will need to be accredited provisionally before they are eligible to apply to have their existing registration recognised in NSW.

Teachers who have full and current registration with another authority will be eligible for Proficient Teacher status in NSW. Evidence must be provided to NESA within 60 days of initial accreditation and ongoing maintenance of accreditation requirements will apply.

## 12 Leave of Absence from Accreditation

Teachers may apply in writing to NESA for leave of absence from their accreditation, suspending their timeframe for the period they are not teaching. Details are available in NESA's *Policy for Leave of Absence from Accreditation*.

# Notes

## Distribution history – internal use only

<b>Version</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Purpose/Change</b>
<b>0.1</b>	April 2014	Teaching Standards and Professional Learning	Transition to Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
<b>0.2</b>	September 2016	Teaching Standards	Minor changes to nomenclature to include teachers in early childhood and care services