

# Recognising exemplary teachers



## How to use this workbook

This workbook is part of a series designed to encourage teachers to continually reflect on their practice by developing a deliberate inquiry mindset. The focus is on improvement of practice and student outcomes through both informal and formal situations. For example, it may guide self-reflection, self-inquiry and discussion with colleagues, as well as support local performance and development processes and external processes such as certification.

Workbooks in this series are:

- ◆ Working with the Standards
- ◆ Developing a professional mindset
- ◆ Demonstrating impact
- ◆ Recognising exemplary teachers

This workbook, 'Recognising exemplary teachers', provides information about Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia, a process recognising achievement against these two levels of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards).

Working in conjunction with the Guide to Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia (Guide to Certification), the workbook explains how undertaking certification can benefit you and provides information about what the process involves. Guiding questions are included to assist you in formulating an application for certification.

This series of workbooks can be used individually, or as stimulus for discussion with colleagues. Each PDF is editable and responses can be typed directly into the document when prompted. To use this feature you must save the document to your computer and have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed. A free download is available from: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat.html>. Please note, direct editing may be unavailable on some mobile devices.



### Acknowledgment

This workbook series stems from the development of the national Certification Assessor Training Program. The content for this Program was developed in partnership with the National Research Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR) based at the University of New England and Certifying Authorities in Australian States and Territories. The content selected for this workbook series has been modified and elaborated in order to provide a set of comprehensive resources that are tailored to the needs of all teachers and school leaders.

**Do you consider yourself a highly effective teacher?**

**Do you really want to grow and develop as a professional?**

**Do you want to be recognised across the country for your high level of performance?**

**Do you want to be the best teacher that you can be?**

**If** you answered yes to the above questions, you should consider applying for certification. Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia is a nationally recognised achievement against the two voluntary levels of the Standards.

Recognition through certification is not new to many systems and sectors across Australia, but what is new is that there are now Standards and a process for certification that is consistent for all teachers in participating jurisdictions across Australia. Now you can be confident that if you achieve certification at either the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stage of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, you will be recognised as a highly effective teacher across the nation, not just within your school or system. A list of participating jurisdictions and the associated certifying authorities can be found on the [AITSL website](#).



**The benefits of certification for my own teaching have been incredibly important. The focus on the Standards has helped me to be quite intentional about what I'm doing in the classroom, to be incredibly reflective about my own practice, to look at where there might be gaps and to fill those gaps. As a Deputy Principal, I have found the Standards useful in supporting teachers, not just to achieve a particular kind of certification but to actually become better teachers to improve the teacher quality and the learning in our school.**

Melanie, Deputy Principal  
Brindabella Christian College, Australian Capital Territory

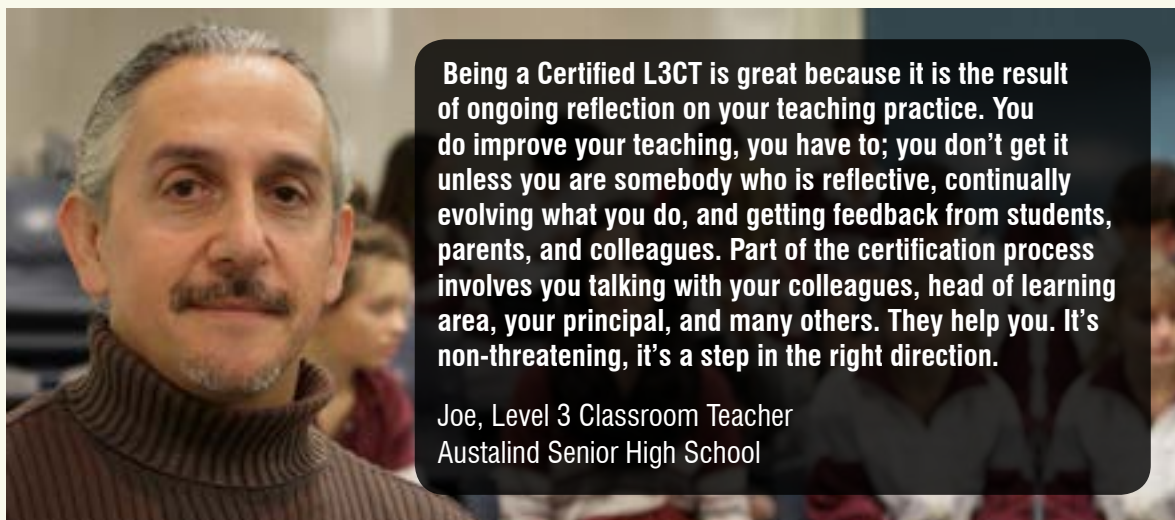
## What's in it for me?

Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia is a rigorous and transparent process enabling you to receive feedback on your practice and have your practice evaluated by nationally trained assessors who are external to your school. It will expose you to networks across the country and communities of practice enabling you to further develop and grow as a professional whilst improving outcomes for your students.

Certification of exemplary teachers in Australia recognises and promotes the development of collaborative learning professionals who strive to continually reflect upon and improve their practice. Reflection is the central focus of certification as it is a vehicle to improve your practice and make an impact. Reflection on practice assists in identifying learning opportunities with which you could engage, and supports and enhances your ability to:

- ◆ choose more effective professional development experiences
- ◆ develop better curriculum and learning experiences for your students
- ◆ improve your ability to evaluate student learning
- ◆ enhance your relationships and interactions with key stakeholders  
(Ingvarson & Rowe 2007, p. 16).

Use the [Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see where you would locate your practice within the Standards.



**Self-Assessment Tool**

[www.selfassessment.aitsl.edu.au](http://www.selfassessment.aitsl.edu.au)



## Benefits of Certification

Given that national certification of exemplary teachers is in its infancy in Australia, it is necessary to look at the international research to gain insights into the reported benefits of certification. This section draws on the certification process of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). This process operates in the USA and determines whether aspiring teachers meet the requirements specified for National Board-Certified Teacher (NBCT) status. The NBPTS has been chosen for inclusion here because it:

- ◆ has been in operation since 1987 and has, consequently, produced a large research base
- ◆ “has made a major contribution to international understanding about...reliable methods for assessing and esteeming teacher performance” (Ingvarson & Hattie 2008, p. 2)
- ◆ has approximately 106,000 National Board-Certified Teachers by 2013 (NBPTS, 2013)
- ◆ is a standards-based certification process similar to the Australian process.

In 2001 the NBPTS commissioned a large study that sampled the perceptions of 10,000 National Board-Certified Teachers. According to the findings, teachers reported that the certification process:

- ◆ made them better teachers (92 per cent)
- ◆ was an effective professional development experience (96 per cent)
- ◆ enabled them to create better curricula (89 per cent)
- ◆ improved their ability to evaluate student learning (89 per cent)
- ◆ enhanced their interaction with students (82 per cent), parents (82 per cent) and colleagues (80 per cent) (Ingvarson & Rowe 2007, p. 16).



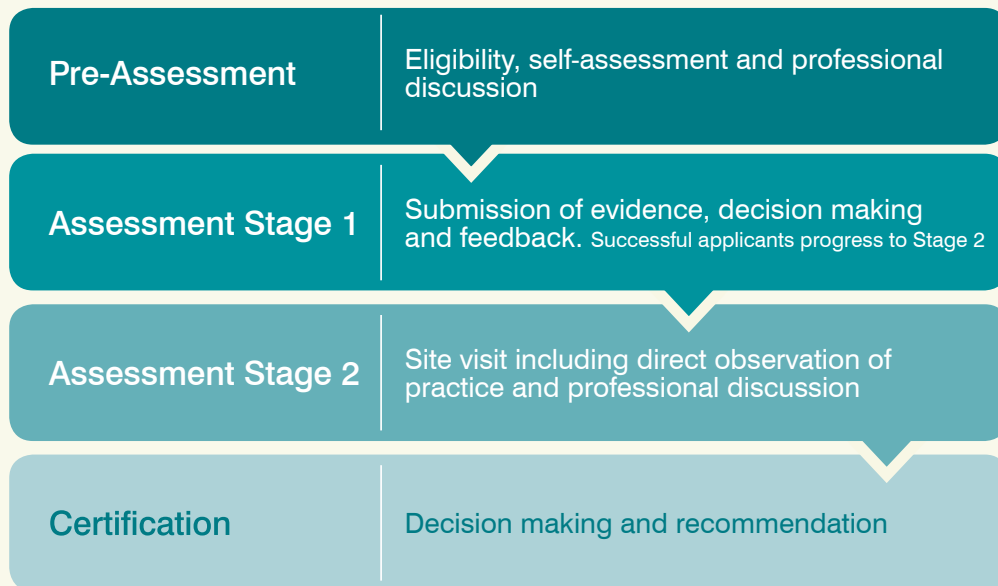
If you're interested in reading more about standards and other processes of certification you might like to look at the following research pieces:

- ◆ The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (<http://www.nbpts.org/>)
- ◆ [Ingvarson, L & Rowe, K 2007, Conceptualising and evaluating teacher quality: Substantive and methodological issues, ACER.](#)
- ◆ [Kleinhenz E & Ingvarson, L 2007, Standards for teaching: Theoretical underpinnings and applications, New Zealand Teachers Council, Wellington pp. 67-75.](#)

## What does the process involve?

The national certification process in Australia has three main elements – a pre-assessment phase and two stages of assessment. There are some differences in the process for the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages. It is your decision, as the applicant, to apply for certification at the Highly Accomplished or the Lead career stage of the Standards.

The following diagram provides an overview of all stages of the certification process.



To find out what is involved at each stage, and to work your way through the pre-assessment stage, read the [Guide to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia](#) (AITSL 2013b).

Certifying authorities are responsible for implementing the certification process and will have specific information for you. A list of these are available on the AITSL website at <http://www.certification.aitsl.edu.au/certifying-authorities>.



## What do I need to include in my submission for assessment Stage 1?

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Assessment Stage 1 involves submitting a collection of evidence which will be assessed by two independent assessors who are external to your school. Their assessment is based on the Standards.

There are a number of elements which you must include in your collection of evidence. These are listed below, along with page references directing you to relevant sections in the Guide to Certification where you will find detailed information about these aspects of your collection.

- ◆ Direct evidence (pp. 11-14)
  - » annotated evidence of your practice
  - » observation reports
- ◆ Teacher reflection on the direct evidence (pp. 14-15)
  - » written statement addressing the Standards
  - » written description of a Lead initiative (at the Lead career stage only)
- ◆ Referee statements (p. 15).

## How do I select and collate evidence of practice?

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Working your way through the 'Demonstrating impact' workbook may help you decide on the types of evidence you might use to demonstrate your practice and draw your attention to key checks you must consider to ensure it is authentic, reliable and valid.

Your decision to apply for certification means you are ready to engage in this formal reflective process by putting forward evidence that demonstrates a *holistic* picture of your teaching practice. Certification provides you with the opportunity to have your evidence of practice assessed by trained assessors.

To help you decide on the types of evidence you might choose to submit for your certification application and how you might structure your evidence (e.g. in evidence sets and stand-alone artefacts), have a look at the following resources:

- ◆ Certification documentary evidence supplements for the [Highly Accomplished](#) and [Lead](#) career stages. These provide examples of evidence for each Descriptor at these career stages and mapping templates which may assist in mapping your evidence against the Standards.
- ◆ The [visual representation of a collection of evidence](#). This provides you with an example of how you might group individual artefacts together to form evidence sets.
- ◆ [Examples of annotated evidence](#). These provide you with examples of evidence and annotation to provide context and draw links with the Standards.

# Over to you

Consider your own evidence and how you may group artefacts together to form evidence sets or whether you have artefacts that could effectively stand alone. Remember that for evidence to be able to tell the story it must include:


- ◆ what you want your students to learn
- ◆ how you will facilitate this learning
- ◆ how you will know they have achieved this learning (NBPTS 2005).

To assist you with organising your evidence you may download the mapping document for the relevant career stage ([Highly Accomplished](#) or [Lead](#)) and align your evidence sets/artefacts to the Descriptors. Ensure that you provide at least two pieces of evidence for each of the seven Standards and account for every Descriptor at least once.

Have a discussion with a colleague/critical friend about your evidence mapping and the evidence you are considering putting forward.

You might discuss:

- ◆ the alignment of your evidence to the Descriptors
- ◆ the clarity of your evidence in terms of the way you have grouped artefacts together
- ◆ any additional evidence which may strengthen your whole collection, or evidence which may not be necessary to include.





## How do I annotate my evidence?

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Annotations should set the context of and tell the story about your evidence. This is information which cannot be gleaned from simply looking at artefacts alone. They draw connections between your evidence and the Descriptors and it is your responsibility to make these connections explicit for the assessor (Figure 1).

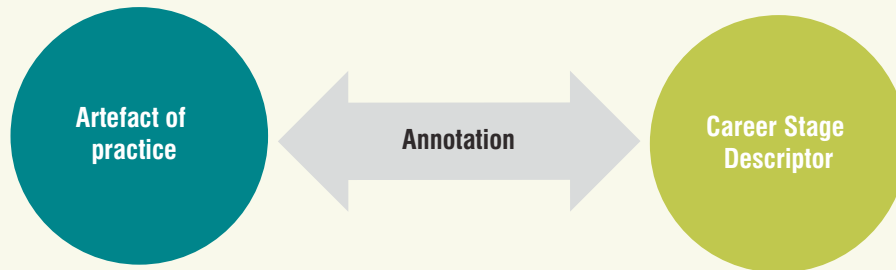


Figure 1: The annotation is essential in order to link the artefact of practice and career stage Descriptors

When an assessor looks at your evidence and annotations they will be making judgements about whether the evidence you submit demonstrates your achievement of the Standards at the relevant career stage. This is why it is important to present your evidence and annotations in a user friendly format and annotate effectively to ensure the assessor will be able to easily follow and understand the various components of your collection and all of the connections that you have drawn.

Read the annotations that accompany the [examples of evidence](#) and note the different styles of annotations demonstrated. For instance, both the [Cooperative Reading Program](#) and [Jump Start New Student Induction Program](#) are evidence sets containing four artefacts. However, each of the annotations accompanying the Cooperative Reading Program relate to one Descriptor, whilst the annotation accompanying the Jump Start Program relates to the whole evidence set and therefore covers multiple Descriptors.

### Over to you

Choose one of the evidence sets/stand-alone artefacts that you identified in the mapping document for the previous activity. Consider what form of annotations might be appropriate for this evidence and have a go at writing an annotation. Refer to the following checklist to ensure you include all of the necessary information in your annotation:

- ◆ Have you identified the relevant Standard(s)/Descriptor(s) and used language that demonstrates your understanding of these?
- ◆ Have you described and made explicit links to explain how your evidence demonstrates achievement of the Standards/Descriptors?
- ◆ Have you included analysis and reflection on the practice demonstrated?

- ◆ Have you identified your impact on student outcomes?
- ◆ Have you identified your impact on the practice of your colleagues, if applicable?
- ◆ Have you identified your individual contribution?
- ◆ Have you identified the leading/supporting/sharing/modelling role you undertook, if applicable?

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## Observation reports

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The evidence you submit must include at least two observation reports, at least one of which must be from your principal/supervisor or their delegate.

Remember that the observation reports form part of your direct evidence so think about how they may add value to your annotated artefacts and/or evidence sets within your collection. How can they add to the picture you are creating about your teaching practice and help to demonstrate the Standards?

An important element to consider prior to a colleague observing your practice, is the discussion before and after the observation. For further information about how you might ask a colleague to undertake an observation of your practice and what you might discuss with them, see the 'Demonstrating impact' workbook.

### Over to you

- ◆ Is an observation framework, tool or template being used in your school/system? If so, which one?
- ◆ Which of your colleagues might you consider asking to observe your practice? Why?
- ◆ How will the classroom observations link with your evidence?



## Teacher reflection on the direct evidence – written statement addressing the Standards

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You will need to submit a written statement with your collection of evidence. Just as the annotations provide the context and tell the story behind your evidence, your written statement provides an overall picture of your context, your achievement of the Standards and the evidence you are putting forward for assessment.

### Over to you

1. What does the assessor need to know about your specific context?
2. What additional information does the assessor require to make sense of your whole collection of evidence?
  - ◆ How will you avoid simply repeating what is already contained within your annotated evidence?
  - ◆ Plan your written statement based on the requirements outlined on page 14 of the *Guide to Certification*.

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## Teacher reflection on the direct evidence – Lead initiative (for Lead applicants only)

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If you are applying for certification as a Lead teacher you will also need to include a description of an initiative you have led within your school or across schools. There are a number of mandatory requirements for the Lead initiative (outlined on page 15 of the *Guide to Certification*). It is important to remember that your Lead initiative must be grounded in the Standards and it is your responsibility to provide valid and explicit links between your initiative and the Descriptors. Therefore when considering what Lead initiative you could describe it may be useful to investigate the Descriptors which link specifically to elements within the mandatory requirements.

### Over to you

Read Lead Descriptors 2.1, 2.2, 2.4 and 4.3 of the Standards which all relate to the teacher leading an initiative.

- ◆ For each one, identify what an initiative related to this Descriptor might look like in practice.
- ◆ Which other Lead Descriptors could refer to the teacher leading an initiative? (e.g. you might look for Descriptors where the term 'leading colleagues' is used.)
- ◆ To find descriptors that relate to the remaining mandatory requirements of the Lead initiative you might like to explore the Lead Descriptors and find those that mention the following words:
  - » Design/develop      » Implementation      » Evaluation
  - » Review                » Knowledge            » Practice
  - » Engagement
- ◆ Identify initiatives you have led which satisfy the mandatory requirements and which were designed to build the capacity of your colleagues.

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## Referee statements

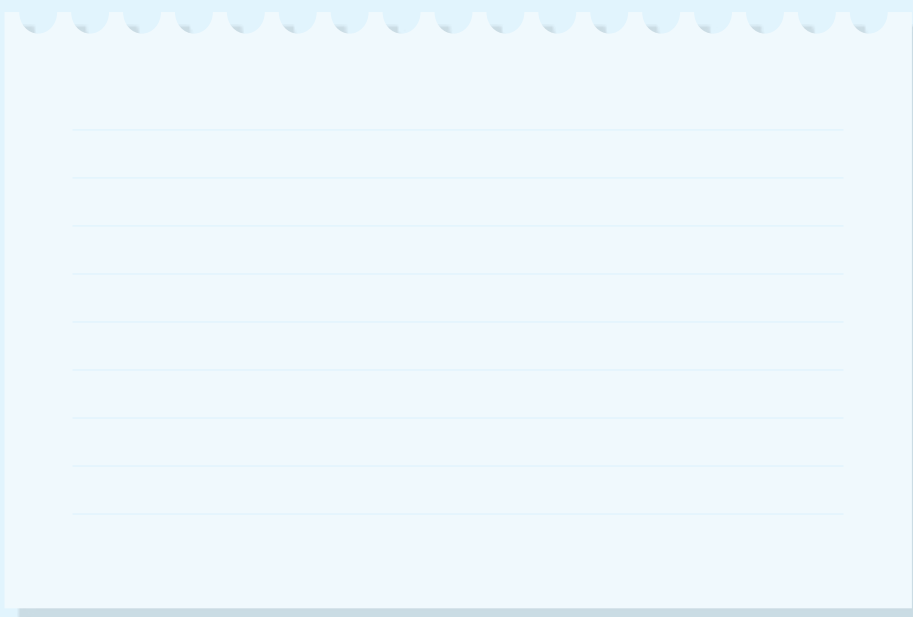
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Your annotated evidence and written reflection must be supported by referees' written and/or verbal evaluative statements. You will need to nominate three to five referees, one of which must be your current principal/supervisor or delegate (AITSL 2013a, p. 15).

It is your responsibility to ensure that referees are aware of which annotated evidence within your collection and which Standards/Descriptors they will be asked to comment on so completing the following activity may assist you.

### Over to you

- ◆ To ensure you select appropriate referees think about the following:
  - » Which of your colleagues (e.g. teachers, school leaders, teacher educators, specialist staff) have knowledge of the Standards?
  - » Which of your colleagues have a direct knowledge of your practice?
  - » Which of your colleagues may be best placed to comment on your practice, considering the annotated evidence and Lead initiative (if applicable) you have included in your collection?
- ◆ This may be a good time to have a discussion with the colleagues you have identified and share your annotated evidence with them.



## How do I prepare for the site visit for assessment Stage 2?

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If you are successful at Stage 1 one of the independent assessors who appraised your application will contact you to arrange a site visit, the purpose of which is to provide additional evidence against a number of the Standards (for further detail on the site visit please refer to pages 17-19 of the *Guide to Certification*).

You will receive a written report in which the assessors may identify suggested areas of focus during the Stage 2 site visit. You are responsible for planning the site visit so it is a good idea to keep these suggestions in mind and to structure the site visit to ensure they are evidenced.

### Over to you

- ◆ The classroom observation is a large component of the site visit. What type of lesson will demonstrate your range of teaching capabilities?
- ◆ Other than the classroom observation, what activities might you plan for the assessor to observe in your context? How will these demonstrate the alignment of your practice with the Standards?
- ◆ What other things do you need to consider when planning the site visit (e.g. schedule of the colleagues with whom the assessor will need to have a discussion)?

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## Professional discussions

The areas of focus for each of the professional discussions which take place during the site visit are outlined below. This table represents a summary of information in the *Guide to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL 2013b, pp 17-18).

Interviewee	Content
Applicant (pre-observation discussion)	Lesson context and focus Lesson objective(s) Planning documentation Resources Catering for students with additional learning needs Standards/Descriptors to be demonstrated
Principal discussion	Evaluative comments Demonstrated performance against specific Standards/Descriptors, including evidence
Colleague(s) discussion	Verification of evidence Evaluative comments
Applicant (post-observation discussion)	Observation reflection Reflection on evidence from Stage 1 Questions from assessor, e.g., aspects of professional practice, collaboration with others, specific Standards, impact.

### Over to you

Whilst you are responsible for structuring the site visit, the assessor may want to ask you, your principal and/or colleagues particular questions. These may include questions relating to specific Standards and/or Descriptors.

What questions do you think might be asked of you in the pre-observation and post-observation discussions with the assessor and what questions do you think the assessor might ask your principal/colleagues?



## Observation of practice

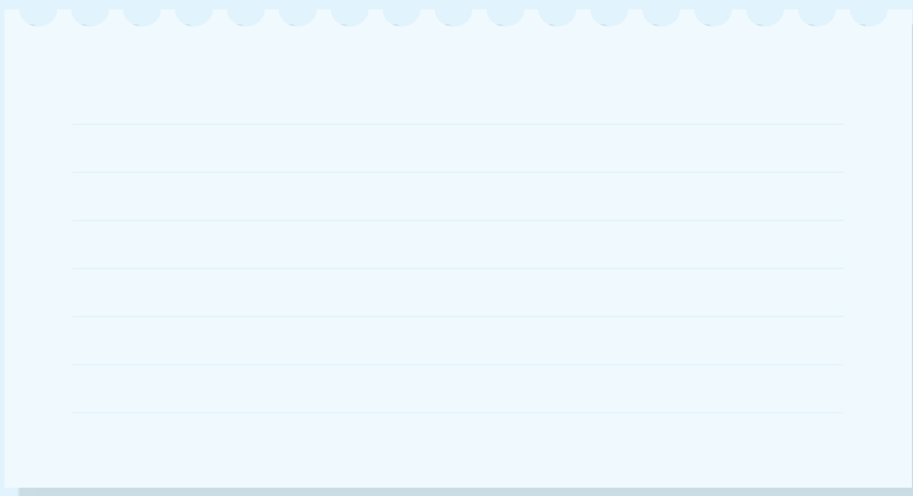
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During the site visit the assessor will observe your classroom practice. Classroom observation is a key component of quality teaching and a major source of evidence for studying how teachers teach, determining what highly effective teachers do in the classroom that distinguishes their practice from less effective teachers and identifying what instructional practices correlate most highly to achievement. As such it is integral to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia, Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education courses, the Australian Professional Learning Charter, the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework and the Australian Principal Standard.

The assessor will use the Classroom Practice Continuum based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to gather evidence to assist in determining whether your practice meets the relevant Standards.

### Over to you

- ◆ Read '[A Model of Teaching Expertise](#)' by David Berliner. How does this description of expertise resonate with your own understanding?



## Where to now?

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If you are interested in undertaking certification please contact your local [certifying authority](#).

As outlined here there are [numerous resources](#) that have been developed to provide you with more detail and guidance on the process, and many [certifying authorities](#) run information sessions for prospective applicants and their principals.

## References

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Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2013a, *Certification documentary evidence supplement: Highly Accomplished teachers*, Education Services Australia, Carlton South.

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