

**National professional standards for advanced
teaching and for principals**

**Second consultation
May 2008**

REPORT ON RESPONSES

Consultation on national professional standards for advanced teaching and for principals (May 2008)

REPORT ON RESPONSES

I. OVERVIEW

In May 2008, Teaching Australia commenced a consultation process on proposals for the development of national professional standards for advanced teaching and for principals. The particular **purpose of this consultation** was to seek responses to the draft capabilities for advanced teaching and for principals set out in the paper *National professional standards for advanced teaching and for leadership – Second consultation paper*.

Feedback was also sought on the functions and composition of a national standards body and the development of a national code of ethics for teaching.

National professional associations, government and non-government school authorities, education faculties at universities and individuals responded.

The responses, particularly those from professional associations, expressed a strong commitment to the role and responsibility of the profession to set standards, strong interest in continuing to be involved in shaping the standards, and support for Teaching Australia's work with associations to develop standards. There is recognition that standards developed and defined by the profession will:

1. provide inspiration to aspiring teachers and principals and clarify expectations about accomplished practice
2. offer guidance to members of the profession seeking to improve their professional practice
3. increase public recognition of the quality of the profession and understanding of the complexity and rigour of the work of teachers and principals.

There is also widespread awareness of the potential for standards to be used as a way of recognising and rewarding accomplished teaching and school leadership. Some responses expressed concern about this development while others felt that the profession needed to have a clear voice in the current debate about recognition, leading to rigorous assessment against profession-owned standards.

2. CAPABILITIES

Through previous consultations, the teaching profession has accepted a model for national profession standards which comprises three related components:

- The **Charter for the Australian teaching profession**, a statement of the core values and commitments of teachers and principals.
- Advanced teaching and principal **capabilities**, generic statements of the discrete elements of the knowledge and skills expected of teachers and principals operating appropriately and effectively at a high level of expertise in the different settings in which they work.
- **Descriptors of accomplishment**, elaborations of observable professional practice.

The main focus of the May 2008 consultation was on the content, language and organisation of the **capabilities** component of the model, in particular seeking comment on whether the draft capabilities prepared by teachers and principals from around Australia capture the essential features of advanced teaching and the work of principals.

Many responses drew attention to a need to **link the Charter** and capabilities more closely. To some, the capabilities as drafted presented a mechanistic view of the role of teachers and a management perspective of the role of principals, failing to capture the importance of the 'joy of learning' which was well reflected in the Charter. Some sought a more inspirational description of teaching and school leadership, picking up important ideas highlighted in the Charter.

While most responses generally found the **language** used both clear and articulate, there were reactions to particular words and phrases, and a number of suggestions for amending and improving the language, avoiding ambiguity and overstatement.

As a result of the feedback, amendments have been made to the draft capabilities (attached), to explicitly link the capabilities to the Charter, to simplify language, remove jargon and clarify meanings.

Many responses sought **greater elaboration** in the capabilities. The intention however is that in most cases, this will be addressed in writing the descriptors of accomplishment, leaving the capabilities as generic statements leading in to more specific descriptors. The process of developing descriptors is expected to illuminate the capabilities and may modify them. The teachers and principals involved in this process will have the opportunity to consider feedback to the consultation and assess whether particular issues should be accommodated in descriptors of accomplishment for their area of specialisation, or if they would seek further changes to the capabilities.

3. ADVANCED TEACHING CAPABILITIES

Generally the responses indicated support for the draft advanced teaching capabilities. A theme of many responses was that the capabilities are not strong enough, in either content or language, to describe the qualities expected of advanced teachers. Comment suggested that some of the capability statements reflect good solid teaching rather than **advanced teaching** and sought a *clear distinction between capabilities for competent teachers and those for advanced teachers*.

While the preamble and stem for each category of capability (“**contemporary and authoritative professional knowledge**”, “**exemplary professional practice**”, “**active and influential professional leadership**”) addresses this concern in part, some amendments have been made to the language of the capabilities in the attached draft. Over and above these changes, it will be important in the writing of descriptors to check that the indicators proposed would demonstrate advanced rather than simply competent teaching.

Many responses expressed concern that there was no mention of advanced teachers having a detailed knowledge of **subject content and curriculum**. They emphasised that having a deep and extensive knowledge of the subject taught and the curriculum is paramount in improving student outcomes.

As a result, amendments have been made to the capability statements to capture this requirement, while maintaining their generic nature, and the intention that they cover not only subject specialisation but also specialisation in a stage of schooling (early childhood or primary) or a cross curricula teaching discipline. Descriptors will need to refer to the nature of the knowledge required for the particular teaching specialisation.

A number of responses pointed out that advanced teachers should have extensive knowledge about the factors that influence the learning of students from **diverse social and cultural groups**, in particular the critical role that language plays in the construction of knowledge. Having a detailed knowledge and understanding of contemporary education trends as well as understandings of current social, political and environmental issues that affect education were also seen as important.

It was noted that advanced teachers must be able to select from a **range of pedagogical skills** according to the learning task and student needs. A number of responses indicated this requirement should be articulated more clearly. Innovation and creativity were highlighted in a number of responses as essential features of advanced teaching practice and therefore elements that should be included in the capabilities. One response suggested that advanced teachers should work as action researchers, actively interrogating current practices and trialling and evaluating new pedagogies.

Others proposed that the **learning environment** should be *safe and stimulating* as well being *intellectually challenging* and that assessment should be *relevant and purposeful*. It was suggested that reporting should be included in the statement about assessment and feedback and others noted the absence of a capability involving

planning. The need for advanced teachers to have the capability to integrate a wide range of appropriate resources, including information and communication technologies, in teaching and learning to suit individual student needs was highlighted. While this is explicitly included in professional knowledge, there were queries about whether it is adequately reflected in professional practice.

There was a view expressed in some responses that the importance of supporting or leading the **professional development** of colleagues should be articulated more strongly in the capabilities. There was also support for greater emphasis in the capabilities on teachers' commitment to their own professional development. It was mentioned that advanced teachers should assume an advocacy role in their subject/learning areas and make significant contributions to the wider school community.

Some feedback suggested the capabilities have not adequately captured the requirement for teachers to be agents of change in a rapidly changing global world, with a particular focus on *“the present and future realities of our existing socio-ecological crises (which) need very specific attention and skills by the educators who will guide learning for the future.”*

The **organising categories** used for the capabilities were largely accepted. For the advanced teaching capabilities, responses welcomed the category of “professional leadership”, important in acknowledging *“the full scope and value of the work of experienced classroom teachers.”*

4. PRINCIPAL CAPABILITIES

In endorsing the role of national professional standards for principals, responses drew attention to the risk that providing for the diversity of Australian schooling might lead to loss of depth and aspiration in the standards. This will be an important guideline in drafting descriptors, if the standards are to achieve their purpose and be relevant to all principals.

On this basis, responses pointed out that it was more appropriate to use the term *leadership* than *management* in capability statements for principals.

There was little detailed comment in the responses about the **level** of the principal capabilities. The question of whether the principal capabilities are advanced or competent remains open, for resolution in the drafting of descriptors of accomplishment but there is some inclination towards the advanced level.

Responses observed that the **centrality of students** to the work of principals was not well reflected in the capabilities. There was a strong view in the responses that the draft capabilities for principals should clearly recognise the professional teaching capability of principals, evidenced by comments such as *“it is problematic that principals do not necessarily have to demonstrate excellence in the classroom”*, and *“it would still be widely recognised that capable leaders ought to be credible educators”*.

Leading and influencing the learning of students were seen as the most important capability of a principal, calling for strong expression in the standards. There was also need for recognition in the capabilities, as in the Charter, that schools are concerned with supporting and encouraging the full development of students, encompassing welfare, social development and creativity as well as academic achievement. Some respondents proposed a capability requiring extensive knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy, in order to provide leadership of learning.

A perceived omission in the capabilities was reference to change management, given the crucial role the principal has in initiating, leading and **managing change**. It was suggested that futures thinking, including innovation and risk taking, needs to be evident in the capabilities.

A number of responses pointed to the importance of the principals having self-knowledge if they are to lead and influence others although there was also questioning of whether self-knowledge and other **personal qualities** such as emotional intelligence, ethical behaviour and having a moral purpose are appropriate as professional capabilities.

Equally important is the pivotal role of the principal as a **community builder** and unifier of purpose within the school, leading the school community based on its unique and/or particular values and identity. Fostering the school community is seen as central to the principal's role. Responses recognised the need for principals to demonstrate high level skills in governance and in developing and maintaining relationships with the wider school community.

The **organisation** of the principal capabilities was generally considered appropriate. Some responses expressed concern that the advanced teaching and principal standards were organised differently, while others found that the way the principal capabilities were organised supported and complemented the advanced teaching capabilities.

5. GOVERNING A NATIONAL STANDARDS SYSTEM

The Consultation Paper also sought feedback on the functions, size and composition of a Standards Council.

There was general agreement with the **functions** proposed for a Standards Council as the body responsible for the acceptance, endorsement and review of standards. One response pointed out:

“In terms of functions, the main role would be to monitor and update the system of professional standards. There does not seem a role, or capacity, to accredit teachers or principals – this is a difficult area – or one decidedly left to professional associations or local authorities.”

This sentiment was echoed in other responses where there was some unease about the Council's role if the standards were to be used for accreditation and remuneration. One response suggested that *“these functions need to be well advertised and discussed with stakeholders if they are to be used as a gauge for promotion/accreditation to the positions of advanced teacher and principal.”*

There was much questioning of the **relationship** of the proposed Standards Council to state regulatory and employment bodies. Respondents pointed to the confusion of having a number of sets of standards at the state and national level. What teachers want is a consistent career framework. There was concern about how accreditation against national standards would align with existing mandatory and voluntary accreditation processes in different states and territories. There was however support from the profession for a national system of standards, with one response posing the question: *“Would it be more cost efficient to have the national standards as the single set of standards used to accredit and validate beginning teachers, advanced teachers and principals across the nation?”*

The notion that standards should be managed by the profession and for the profession was strongly supported. It was agreed that practising teachers and principals need to develop, manage and monitor their own professional standards and this should be reflected in the **composition** of the Standards Council. Therefore current teachers and principals should be represented on the Council through their professional associations and employers, government, union and higher education bodies should have minimal representation. One response stated:

“The relationship with other ‘stakeholders’ is important and needs to be teased out. If the Council is the mechanism by which standards are managed ‘by the profession for the profession’, then that is not the place for unions, employers and regulatory bodies – any more than is the case in other professional bodies.”

The point was frequently made that those on the Council should have expertise in standards development and/or implementation. It was also mentioned that some representatives should have expertise in cross curriculum areas.

Responses generally agreed the Standards Council should not be large and unwieldy (12 – 15 members were suggested as a good number). One response suggested that some professional associations may have ongoing representation, while other smaller associations may rotate their representatives. Others suggested that members with specific expertise could be co opted by the Standards Council for particular tasks. It was recommended that *“the selection of members must be a very transparent process aligned to succinct guidelines.”*

Most agreed that there should be one Standards Council to oversee the standards although one response made the case for separate bodies to manage the advanced teaching and principal standards, perhaps under the one administrative umbrella.

6. DEVELOPING A NATIONAL CODE OF ETHICS

Views were also sought from stakeholders about the development of a national code of ethics for the profession. There was considerable support for this initiative with many responses citing the benefits that a code of ethics would have in lifting the profile of the profession. At the same time, the number of existing codes of ethics was highlighted and a few respondents were not convinced of the value of a national code. They pointed out that codes of ethics have been or are being developed by state education authorities and professional associations and duplication of these documents at the national level was not warranted. Some thought that the Charter for the Australian teaching profession would provide the ethical base for the standards.

Most responses agreed that the Charter and existing codes of ethics for the profession would be a useful starting point for development. There was positive support for the approach proposed in the consultation paper of establishing a working group to summarise existing codes before conducting widespread consultation. Other suggestions include using the processes involved in the Open Book Scenarios project or the development of the Charter as a model.

7. OTHER ISSUES

A number of responses raised questions about how national professional standards might be implemented and requested further clarification of the processes.

The Teaching Australia website will continue to provide information on progress with the development of standards to ensure that it is a transparent, inclusive process.

Teaching Australia
30 September 2008

ADVANCED TEACHING CAPABILITIES

The values and commitments in the Charter for the Australian teaching profession underpin the high levels of professional knowledge and expertise evident in advanced teaching. Advanced teaching is evident when teachers consistently demonstrate high level capability in the area of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional leadership.

Contemporary and authoritative **PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE** and understanding of:

- 1.1 students and the factors that influence learning and development
- 1.2 effective pedagogies, assessment and reporting
- 1.3 teaching specialisation, such as discipline or stage of schooling
- 1.4 a wide range of resources, including interactive technologies and their use in teaching and learning

Exemplary **PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE** which:

- 2.1 builds effective relationships and manages complex interactions
- 2.2 creates and maintains engaging and intellectually challenging learning environments
- 2.3 plans, implements and evaluates rigorous and inclusive learning programs
- 2.4 uses assessment and constructive feedback to inform teaching and learning
- 2.5 communicates effectively with different audiences using a range of strategies

Active and influential **PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP** to:

- 3.1 contribute to school planning, development and management
- 3.2 encourage professional learning, critical reflection and professional discussion, drawing on evidence to improve practice
- 3.3 build an environment of confidence, resilience and success
- 3.4 contribute to the development and renewal of the profession

PRINCIPAL CAPABILITIES

The values and commitments in the Charter for the Australian teaching profession underpin the professional practice of principals. High level capabilities in the areas of professional knowledge, leadership of learning and leadership of the organisation, grounded in accomplished teaching, are required to lead schools that give students the best education possible.

Contemporary and authoritative **PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE** and understanding of:

- 1.1 the principles and practice of teaching and learning
- 1.2 theories and approaches to developing and leading people
- 1.3 strategies for managing resources to achieve the full range of educational outcomes

Contemporary and authoritative **LEADERSHIP OF LEARNING** that:

- 2.1 promotes and models excellent teaching and learning
- 2.2 builds the capacity of teachers as effective and influential educators and leaders
- 2.3 fosters a culture of care, respect, high expectations and success
- 2.4 takes responsibility for managing personal professional growth
- 2.5 supports families as active partners in their children's schooling
- 2.6 actively contributes to the development and renewal of the profession

Effective **LEADERSHIP OF THE ORGANISATION** that:

- 3.1 plans and manages school structures, processes and resources to achieve the best education possible for all students
- 3.2 engages the school community in a shared vision and purpose for the school
- 3.3 uses evidence and judgement in responding to competing needs
- 3.4 sustains productive relationships and partnerships within and beyond the school
- 3.5 develops and manages fair and open school governance