



QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF TEACHERS RESPONSE

TO THE DRAFT NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS

May 2010

Introduction

The Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) is a statutory body established by the Queensland Government on 1 January 2006 under the *Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005* (the Act), building on the work of previous authorities, namely the Board of Teacher Education (1971–1989) and the Board of Teacher Registration (1989 – 2005).

The QCT is responsible for developing and implementing professional standards for entry to and ongoing membership of the teaching profession in Queensland.

The QCT's predecessor, the Board of Teacher Registration, first developed professional standards for teachers in 2002 and these were the basis for decisions about approval of preservice teacher education programs, granting provisional registration and the progression from provisional to full registration. The QCT developed its *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* during 2006 and they underpin a range of policies and practices including:

- The approval of preservice teacher education programs
- The progression from provisional to full registration
- Renewal of registration and the Continuing Professional Development Framework

Given the long history of teacher registration in Queensland and significant experience with the development and implementation of professional standards for teachers, the QCT is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the draft National Standards.

The QCT considers the draft National Standards to be a positive initiative, which will provide an opportunity to clarify the education community's expectations of teachers throughout their careers. The QCT supports national consistency in requirements and expectations for the teaching profession.

The following comments are presented as constructive feedback to inform the further development of National Standards.

General Comments

Many of the claims made in the preamble to the draft National Standards ('the standards') are equally applicable to the current situation and to processes and professional standards already in place. However, overall, the standards would be enhanced if they were more detailed and reflected a higher level of expectations of teachers. In their current form, the draft National Standards do not reflect or support well the Queensland government's quality reform agenda as outlined in documents such as the *A Flying Start for Queensland Children* green paper, which notes that the Masters review of Queensland education found that high performing education systems set high expectations for all students and schools (2010, 19).

According to the Australian government inquiry into teacher education, *Top of the Class*, 'Ensuring high quality teacher education is a first and critical step in delivering high quality teaching in schools, particularly at a time when the role of teachers is becoming increasingly

complex and demanding' and 'teacher education does not finish at graduation from an initial teacher education course, but continues through induction into the profession as a beginning teacher through to established, advanced and leadership stages' (2007,xxi).

A detailed and robust set of standards is essential to support the achievement of quality outcomes in areas such as approval of teacher education programs, gaining provisional and full registration, and through all stages of teachers' careers. Therefore, QCT puts forward the following suggestions to assist in achieving this goal.

1 & 2. Comments about the 'Introduction' and 'Purpose'

The preliminary sections of the standards provide some useful background about the context, use and purpose of the standards. However, it is not clear that 'the standards make explicit ... the knowledge, skills and dispositions...' in all areas of teaching or for teachers in all contexts. The relevance to different phases of learning is not always apparent.

There could be greater information about the intended use and processes for implementation of the standards. If they are intended for classroom teachers (rather than teachers in positions of additional responsibility), that should be stated.

The values dimension appears to only be reflected in the Charter, which is an attachment.

3. Do the draft Standards describe a realistic and developmental teacher professional standards continuum?

A nationally consistent developmental continuum of professional standards for teachers across their careers is supported. The following suggestions are provided:

- There needs to be clearer differentiation of levels – often the levels seem to be distinguished only by the addition or change of a verb or adjective rather than by an indication of increased complexity; this is particularly the case with the Highly Accomplished and Lead levels.
- It is not clear whether higher levels are intended to include the previous levels as in many cases wording is repeated across the levels.
- There is an unevenness of descriptions across levels – e.g. in some cases, the description of Graduate sounds more difficult than the higher levels, some Highly Accomplished descriptors sound more like Proficient level.
- The Standards are based on a simplistic assumption that the levels are discrete and hierarchical and that teachers will move fully formed from one level to the next, whereas in reality a teacher could be simultaneously at several different levels on different aspects of teaching. A profiling approach, which represents development on a continuum for different standards, could be preferable.
- Use of term 'graduate' is problematic as it does not identify well a teacher who, in Queensland, may be teaching for up to four years (as a provisionally registered teacher) before progressing to 'Proficient'.
- There is an artificial distinction between levels – e.g. only Highly Accomplished teachers analyse, address issues of diversity; only Lead teachers take on mentoring roles.
- The differences between Graduate and Proficient should better reflect the differences that sustained practice makes.

4. Do the draft National Standards reflect what you would expect of the teachers at Graduate /Proficient/ Accomplished/ Lead Levels?

It is critical that the agreed National Standards are realistic for teachers at each level and also reflect the expectations of major education stakeholders and support the implementation of policies and processes for entry to and ongoing membership of the profession. The following suggestions are provided:

- The National Standards should represent higher expectations, particularly for Graduate teachers and Proficient teachers. Graduate level descriptors currently focus in many cases on knowing, with no requirement to apply the knowledge. This is well below the expectation of teacher employers for beginning teachers who have to be able to take on the full role and responsibilities of a teacher. The QCT position is that graduates must have opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and abilities through practice before being allowed to teach; therefore, the Graduate level should include much of what is in the Proficient level. Examples follow:
 - Standard 1.2 states that Proficient teachers 'know and understand research on how students learn, actively update their knowledge and how to apply this to their teaching' whereas Highly Accomplished teachers 'know how to analyse current research about how students learn and apply relevant aspects to their teaching'. Graduate and Proficient teachers also need to analyse and differentiate what is valuable or relevant to their teaching and for their students.
 - Standard 1.1 states that Graduate teachers 'know the effect diversity in social and cultural background has on student learning' - they should also have to know how to apply this knowledge. Similarly, standard 4.2 appears to indicate that only Lead teachers need to use knowledge about students to create differentiated learning environments. In fact, all teachers must use knowledge of individual students to plan and implement learning experiences.
 - Standard 2.7 states that Graduate teachers 'know and understand what resources and strategies are available to support teaching and learning' whereas Proficient teachers 'know and understand how to select and use quality resources and strategies to support teaching and learning'. The QCT position is that graduates also must be able to select and use appropriate resources and strategies to be able to provide quality learning experiences.
 - In standard 4.5, Graduate teachers should be able to 'provide for' not merely 'contribute to'.
 - In standard 7.3, Graduates should more than 'understand how to' work collaboratively to enhance students' well-being in order to reflect expectations of Graduate teachers working in schools.
 - Standard 7.5 implies that Graduates only have to 'understand' the importance of involving parents/caregivers – the descriptor for the Proficient level should apply – i.e. 'establish and maintain respectful and collaborative relationships with parents/caregivers'....
- The National Standards use words such as 'aware of', 'knowledge and understanding of', 'know how to' in all four levels; there could be more use of active statements – such as those in the QCT Standards, e.g. 'create learning environments...', 'apply ICT to empower students...' or 'work and communicate regularly with parents'.
- Standard 4.3 for the Proficient teacher – 'They develop rapport with their students through listening and responding positively' seems too prescriptive and does not match the language of the other standards - there are other ways to build rapport with students. The notion of building rapport should be included also for Graduate, Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers.

5. Are there other descriptors that the draft National Standards should include?

The following are put forward as suggestions to strengthen the standards descriptors.

Literacy and Numeracy

- The addition of a separate standard focused on these important areas, or at least a greater focus on literacy and numeracy throughout, would greatly strengthen the standards.

- Additional descriptors are required along lines of:
 - explicitly teach language, literacy and numeracy skills for students to achieve learning goals and perform effectively across the oral, written and visual aspects of language and numeracy
 - monitor and evaluate students' language, literacy and numeracy development
 - review and improve personal literacy and numeracy competence
 - use authentic assessment to gather information, make judgements on students' language, literacy and numeracy and inform the design of learning experiences

Intellectually challenging learning experiences

- Additional descriptors could be considered along the lines of:
 - apply scaffolding techniques to assist students achieve learning goals and take responsibility for learning
 - use inquiry methods for students to investigate problems, test ideas and opinions, interpret data etc
 - establish learning environments in which diverse ideas and opinions are valued

Effective teaching and assessment

- In standard 3.6, Graduates 'evaluate and revise learning activities' – this should also extend to evaluation of learning programs/units of work.
- The descriptor in standard 5.3 could be modified to include use of assessment data and information about students in planning and reviewing programs.

Safe and supportive learning environments

- Explicit teaching of skills to assist students' own behaviour is only included for the 'Highly Accomplished' and 'Lead Teacher'. All teachers should do this, e.g.:
 - explicitly teach skills to assist students to assume responsibility for themselves and behave responsibly towards others (for all levels)
- Descriptors could be also included along lines of:
 - knowledge of principles and strategies of behaviour management
 - knowledge of learning styles and a range of techniques for ensuring full and varied participation of all students.

Digital Literacies

- As there appears to be limited reference to the embedded use of digital literacies in teaching practice or learning experiences, it is suggested that greater consideration be given to the need for teachers to possess technological pedagogical content knowledge.
- A descriptor could be included along the lines of:
 - implement learning experiences in which students actively use ICT to access, organise, research, interpret, analyse, create, communicate and represent knowledge

Learners with diverse needs

- The area of special needs should be expanded to include, for example, students with learning difficulties.
- The area of Indigenous learners would be better addressed through integration across standards rather than appearing in one descriptor in one standard.

Relationships

- Additional descriptors should be considered along the lines of:
 - knowledge of goal setting, team dynamics and the roles and responsibilities of school-based and other professional teams

- knowledge of communication, negotiation, time management, conflict resolution and problem solving techniques

Personal Development, Social Participation, Relationships with Parents and Community

- Student pastoral care and well-being is not highlighted for Lead teachers. These experienced teachers should be modelling respectful, collaborative relationships with students to encourage their participation in school activities as well as being proactive global citizens.
- Additional descriptors also could be considered along the lines of:
 - promote personal development and social participation
 - create opportunities for students to assess personal interests and competencies and set goals
 - understand how globalisation and the changing nature of work, education and leisure may impact on students
 - strategies for involving students in community-based learning and for developing partnerships with family and community.

6. Remembering that there will be substantial support materials; will it be possible for educators to use the standards to evaluate teacher practice?

It is difficult to answer this question without access to the support materials. Overall, the view of the QCT is that greater detail and a higher level of expectation at Graduate and Proficient levels would provide an enhanced framework for evaluation of teacher practice. The following suggestions are made:

- Use of more precise language and a reduction in duplication across levels could facilitate evaluation.
- Inclusion of information about models of evaluation, or about such areas as whether each descriptor has to be met in order to progress to a higher level, would assist.

7. Do you agree that the Proficient, Accomplished and Lead Teacher Level Standards will be a useful guide for planning continuing professional development?

The QCT supports professional standards as a positive guide for teachers in planning their professional development. A more detailed framework would be more useful for teachers to reflect on practice, identify learning goals and plan their continuing professional development.

8. Do you agree that it will be possible to determine suitability for full registration as a teacher using the Proficient level standards?

It would be possible; however, the draft standards provide lower expectations for full registration as a teacher as they are not as explicit or robust as the current QCT professional standards. Some inclusion of greater detail would enhance their use in this regard.

9. Do you agree that it will be possible to accredit/approve preservice teacher education programs using the Graduate level standards?

Good teacher education is essential to give teachers a 'flying start' for their teaching career. It is essential that the agreed National Standards support the implementation of policies and processes for entry to the profession. In their current form, the draft National Standards would not provide as high a level of quality assurance regarding outcomes and graduates' level of readiness for teaching as do the current QCT standards. To be useful for this purpose, the National Standards need to be much more explicit, detailed and robust. The standards need to reflect higher expectations for graduates in order to provide a more useful framework for the approval of preservice programs.

10. Do you agree that the National Standards reflect the integrated nature of teaching?

The QCT suggests the importance of knowledge underpinning practice could be foregrounded more in the draft standards. Having some standards focused on knowledge and some on practice creates an artificial separation of knowledge and practice, which is problematic. It also creates some repetition where wording is included to indicate the need to be able to apply knowledge to practice for effective teaching and learning. Teachers make decisions about learning experiences to benefit their students, based on their knowledge – a seamless and integrated process.