

# Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher Guidelines

September 2026

## Introduction

The Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) is the certifying authority for Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in Queensland who are employed by state and non-state schools, including those represented by Catholic Education Queensland Limited.

Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers is a voluntary process in which fully registered teachers demonstrate their abilities, experience, knowledge and skills at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stages of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The QCT certification process meets the requirements of the national Framework for the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers and is nationally portable.

Certification recognises and promotes quality teaching, provides opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice, and offers a reliable indication of quality teaching.

## Purpose

These guidelines provide information to help applicants and school leaders understand the requirements of the QCT certification process. They should be read in conjunction with:

- the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
- the Framework for the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers
- the QCT Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher Certification Policy.

## Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards)

The Standards are a public statement of what constitutes quality teaching. They provide a framework which makes explicit the knowledge, practice, and professional engagement required across a teacher's career. They provide a common understanding and language for discourse among teachers, teacher educators, teacher organisations, professional associations and the public.

The Standards are organised into 4 career stages and guide the preparation, support and development of teachers. The Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages of the Standards inform certification. An application for certification is assessed against the 7 Standards at the chosen career stage.

The career stage summaries for Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers are described on the following page.

## Career Stage Summary Statements

### Highly Accomplished teachers

Highly Accomplished teachers are recognised as highly effective, skilled classroom practitioners who routinely work both independently and collaboratively to improve their own practice and that of their colleagues. They are knowledgeable and active members of the school or setting.

Highly Accomplished teachers contribute to colleagues' learning. They may also take on roles that guide, advise, or lead others. They regularly initiate and participate in discussions about effective teaching to improve students' educational outcomes.

They maximise learning opportunities for their students by understanding their backgrounds and individual characteristics and how these factors affect their learning. They provide colleagues, including preservice teachers, with support and strategies for creating positive and productive learning environments.

Highly Accomplished teachers have in-depth knowledge of subjects and curriculum content within their sphere of responsibility. They model sound teaching practices in their teaching areas. They collaborate with colleagues to plan, evaluate, and modify teaching programs to improve student learning. They keep abreast of the latest developments in their specialist content area, or, for generalist teachers, in a range of content areas.

Highly Accomplished teachers are skilled in analysing student assessment data and use it to improve teaching and learning. They actively foster an environment that maximises opportunities for colleagues' professional learning and practice. They monitor their professional learning needs and align them with students' learning needs.

They always act ethically. Their interpersonal and presentation skills are highly developed. They communicate effectively and respectfully with students, colleagues, parents, carers, and community members.

### Lead teachers

Lead teachers are recognised and respected by colleagues, parents, carers, and the community as exemplary teachers. They demonstrate consistent, innovative teaching practice over time. They initiate and lead activities to improve educational opportunities for all students, both within and beyond the school or setting.

They establish inclusive learning environments that meet the needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. They continually seek to improve their practice and share their experiences with colleagues.

They are skilled at mentoring teachers and preservice teachers, using activities that develop knowledge, practice, and professional engagement in others. They promote creative, innovative thinking among colleagues.

Lead teachers apply their skills and in-depth knowledge and understanding to deliver effective lessons and learning opportunities, and to share this knowledge with colleagues and preservice teachers. They describe the relationship between highly effective teaching and learning in ways that inspire colleagues to improve their professional practice.

They lead processes to improve student performance by evaluating and revising programs, analysing student assessment data, and taking feedback from parents or carers into account. This is combined with a synthesis of current research on effective teaching and learning.

Lead teachers represent the school or setting and the teaching profession in the community. They are professional, ethical, and respected individuals inside and outside the school or setting.

## Certification process

To achieve certification, eligible teachers demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and practice against the Standards and participate in 2 stages of an assessment process, including an assessment of their classroom teaching practice.

### Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for certification at either career stage, an applicant must:

- be an Australian citizen or hold a permanent residency visa
- have full teacher registration in Queensland
- be employed by an employing authority for a prescribed school.

There are additional eligibility requirements specific to employers. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure these requirements are met.

Highly Accomplished teacher certification is not required before applying for Lead teacher certification.

### Roles and responsibilities

The certification process involves several participants, each with distinct roles and responsibilities.

| Role                              | Key Responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Applicant</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarise themselves with the eligibility requirements and guidelines</li> <li>• Engage in professional discussions with their principal</li> <li>• Engage with QCT resources and workshops</li> <li>• Maintain full responsibility for their certification application</li> </ul> |
| <b>Principal</b><br>(or Delegate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain knowledge of the certification process and the Standards</li> <li>• Facilitate effective professional dialogue with applicants</li> <li>• Implement effective support processes</li> <li>• Maintain firsthand knowledge of the applicant's practice</li> </ul>              |
| <b>Employers</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate and confirm applicants' eligibility to the QCT prior to commencing the certification application process</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>The QCT</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement and manage certification and renewal processes</li> <li>• Grant or refuse applications after assessing them against the Standards</li> <li>• Record certification status and advise on renewal requirements</li> <li>• Provide applicant support resources</li> </ul>      |
| <b>Assessors</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the national Assessor Training Program</li> <li>• Conduct rigorous and transparent assessments</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                   |

## Certification assessment

Certification is based on the Standards at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stage.

To achieve certification, all 7 Standards must be met on balance. A Standard is met on balance when 50% or more of its descriptors are fully evidenced. Consequently, a successful application at the Highly Accomplished or Lead level requires a minimum of 20 evidenced descriptors across the 7 Standards.

### On balance requirement for each of the 7 Standards

| STANDARD 1                                                                                              | STANDARD 2 | STANDARD 3 | STANDARD 4 | STANDARD 5 | STANDARD 6 | STANDARD 7 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1.1                                                                                                     | 2.1        | 3.1        | 4.1        | 5.1        | 6.1        | 7.1        |
| 1.2                                                                                                     | 2.2        | 3.2        | 4.2        | 5.2        | 6.2        | 7.2        |
| 1.3                                                                                                     | 2.3        | 3.3        | 4.3        | 5.3        | 6.3        | 7.3        |
| 1.4                                                                                                     | 2.4        | 3.4        | 4.4        | 5.4        | 6.4        | 7.4        |
| 1.5                                                                                                     | 2.5        | 3.5        | 4.5        | 5.5        |            |            |
| 1.6                                                                                                     | 2.6        | 3.6        |            |            |            |            |
|                                                                                                         |            | 3.7        |            |            |            |            |
| Minimum number of descriptors to be evidenced to meet on balance requirement of each of the 7 Standards |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| 3                                                                                                       | 3          | 4          | 3          | 3          | 2          | 2          |

## Certification Application Stages

Certification has 2 stages, and both stages must be assessed as successful to meet certification requirements. A fee is payable on submission of each stage. Please refer to the QCT website for current fees.

Before submission, applicants must advise their intention to apply via the myQCT portal, which provides access to applicant certification resources and information.

### Stage 1

Stage 1 includes the following mandatory components:

- endorsement of up to 10 Standard descriptors signed by the applicant's principal
- video of practice: a lesson (or no more than two lesson segments) up to 35 minutes and less than 2GB
- lesson plan to supplement the video of practice (include learning goals and teaching and behaviour management strategies)
- context statement (include class demographics: number of students and students with additional needs)
- Classroom Practice Continuum (CPC) with highlighted self-assessment of the video of practice
- 2 classroom observations (signed and dated) from within the 12 months before submission.

#### Stage 1 Endorsement form (maximum of 10 Standard descriptors)

Applicants collaborate with their principal (or delegate) in a conversation that reflects on their professional practice against the AITSL Career Stage Summary (Highly Accomplished or Lead).

The process involves:

- **Selecting descriptors:** The applicant selects up to 10 Standard descriptors from the template to be endorsed.
- **Principal endorsement:** The principal initials each career stage overview statement and signs the form to confirm the applicant is working at the nominated career stage and demonstrates the 10 selected Standard descriptors.
- **Finalisation:** Once signed, these 10 descriptors are considered met without further assessment and contribute towards the on balance evidence for all 7 Standards.

### **Video of Practice\***

Applicants must submit a video recording of a lesson (or no more than two lesson segments) of up to 35 minutes and less than 2GB in size. Before submission, applicants must ensure the video plays back accurately, has clear sound, and displays the evidence selected in the CPC self-reflection document (see below).

The video of practice must be accompanied by a lesson plan and a context statement that includes background information about the participating students.

### **Classroom Practice Continuum (CPC)\***

After recording a video of practice, applicants review their practice using the CPC to highlight the elements of the CPC illustrated in the video. Highly Accomplished practice aligns with CPC levels 4 and 5; Lead practice aligns with levels 5 and 6.

### **Classroom Observations\***

Stage 1 applications require 2 classroom observations completed within 12 months before the submission date.

\*The Video of Practice, Classroom Practice Continuum and Classroom Observations are required as multiple sources of evidence to demonstrate holistic achievement of the relevant career stage collectively; they are not aligned to individual Standard descriptors.

Applications will be returned if they are incomplete, missing signatures, contain illegible images or documents, include corrupted files, contain files that cannot be opened or viewed by an assessor, or exceed the 2GB upload limit.

A nationally trained assessor assesses a Stage 1 application. If an application does not meet the career stage applied for, the applicant may be invited to submit supplementary evidence consisting of an additional video of practice and an accompanying lesson plan or context statement.

A Stage 1 application must be successful before an applicant can proceed to Stage 2.

The Stage 2 application must be submitted within 10 weeks of receiving the successful Stage 1 report.

## Stage 2

Stage 2 provides documented evidence demonstrating achievement on balance for each of the 7 Standards.

The Stage 2 application should prioritise quality of evidence. Applications should be streamlined and succinct, reflecting professional responsibility and integrity. It is important to select your strongest example of evidence to demonstrate each selected Standard descriptor.

Stage 2 comprises the following components and must include evidence against 20 Standard descriptors:

- Documented Evidence submission of up to 5 evidence sets
- Evidence Tracker indicating which descriptors have been evidenced, and they meet the on balance requirements for each Standard.

### Documented Evidence

The documented evidence submission includes up to 5 evidence sets totalling no more than 3,000 words and evidence images to address 20 Standard descriptors.

Applicants may submit between 1 and 5 evidence sets.

Each evidence set includes 2 statements:

1. **A context statement** describing the setting, what was done, and why it was done.
2. **An impact statement** describing how the applicant's actions impacted students and colleagues.

Each part of the evidence set allows for 3 images supporting the claims in the statement. Additional evidence of a further 3 images may be used per evidence set; that is, a total of 9 images may be provided per evidence set.

Evidence images are provided to support and verify the evidence statements; they are assessed alongside the statements of context and impact. All images must be titled, clear and readable, and not count toward the word limit.

The following principles of effective evidence apply:

- evidence is drawn directly from the applicant's work
- evidence demonstrates the impact on student outcomes, such as learning, engagement and wellbeing
- evidence demonstrates the impact of practice on teaching colleagues
- evidence clearly reflects the applicant's individual contribution.

The applicant's professional judgement will be used in allocating the word count. If fewer than 5 evidence sets are used, the word limit remains at 3,000 words in total. Evidence must be authentic, verifiable, and a true representation of the applicant's practice and impact over time. To ensure alignment with current practice, evidence should be from the 5 years preceding the date of a Stage 1 application.

Applications will be returned if they are incomplete, lack signatures, contain illegible images, include corrupted files, or contain files that an assessor cannot open or view.

### Evidence Tracker

The Evidence Tracker is used both as an organisational tool and as confirmation that each of the 7 Standards has been addressed on balance. Applicants complete the Evidence Tracker by selecting the Standard descriptors they have evidenced in their Stage 1 (Endorsement) and Stage 2 (Documented Evidence) applications. The tool is automated and records when each of the 7 Standards is addressed on balance.

The Evidence Tracker is a quality assurance tool and is not aligned with individual Standard descriptors.

Supplementary evidence may be invited by the QCT where an assessment of the evidence indicates that an application has not yet met each of the 7 Standards on balance.

Once a Stage 2 application has met each of the 7 Standards on balance, an assessor will make a recommendation to the QCT to finalise the decision to certify.

## Pathway Programs

The QCT supports certification applicants who use a pathway program at Stage 2 and recognise completion of a pathway program demonstrates the identified Standard descriptors. Programs must be endorsed by the QCT to be accepted as evidence for certification.

## Decision making and outcomes

Assessors will make a final recommendation to the QCT based on:

- the assessment of evidence on balance against the Standards
- observations of practice against the Classroom Practice Continuum
- the provision of multiple sources of evidence to holistically demonstrate the relevant career stage.
- the endorsement of career stage from a principal (or delegate).

If the QCT is satisfied that an applicant has demonstrated the abilities, experience, knowledge, and skills appropriate to the relevant career stage, it will issue a Stage 2 report, an outcome notice, and an award of national certification.

Unsuccessful applications for certification as a Lead teacher are not automatically considered for Highly Accomplished status.

If an applicant is unsuccessful at either career stage, they may submit a new application in a subsequent certification round.

## Quality Assurance

Quality assurance mechanisms are essential to achieving and maintaining rigorous, valid, and credible assessments of teacher practice for certification.

Quality assurance mechanisms include but are not limited to:

- the Framework for certification
- use of the APST as the basis for assessment
- assessor training
- use of experienced assessors
- assessment moderation
- assessment of classroom practice using the Classroom Practice Continuum

## Review process

If an application at either Stage 1 or Stage 2 is unsuccessful, an applicant may, under Section 209 of the *Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005*, apply for a review of the decision. Applicants must complete a request for internal review of the decision, using the template available on the QCT website.

Applications for internal review must be sent to the QCT within 28 days of receiving the information notice. Further information about the internal and external review processes is available on the QCT website.

## **Record keeping and privacy**

The QCT is required under the Public Records Act 2002 to maintain records. The QCT regulatory compliance model and its implementation are grounded in values and behaviours critical to achieving optimal regulatory compliance. The QCT regulatory compliance framework requires good record-keeping and reporting arrangements with stakeholders.

The QCT collects personal information in accordance with the Information Privacy Act 2009. The [QCT's privacy policy](#) is available on the website.

## Applicant checklist

### Pre-submission readiness check

- ☐ Confirmed eligibility against QCT requirements
- ☐ Confirmed eligibility against employer requirements
- ☐ Engaged in a discussion with principal/supervisor
- ☐ Submitted an Intent to Submit form via myQCT
- ☐ Engaged in QCT applicant support

### Stage 1 Application

- ☐ Completed discussions with principal
- ☐ Selected 10 endorsed Standard descriptors in collaboration with principal
- ☐ Completed endorsement form, ensuring all statements are signed
- ☐ Completed 2 signed and dated lesson observations
- ☐ Completed a 35-minute video recording
- ☐ Completed a context statement
- ☐ Submitted a lesson plan
- ☐ Completed a Classroom Practice Continuum self-reflection
- ☐ Paid the Stage 1 fee
- ☐ Uploaded application to the QCT portal

### Stage 2 Application

- ☐ Completed context statement and impact statement per evidence set (no more than 5 evidence sets)
- ☐ Inserted no more than 3 images per statement – maximum 9 images per evidence set
- ☐ Evidenced 20 Standard descriptors that meet the on balance requirement across 7 Standards
- ☐ Completed Evidence tracker
- ☐ Paid the Stage 2 fee
- ☐ Uploaded application to the QCT portal