

Frequently asked questions

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Q. Do I join the Institute?

A. No, it is not a teachers' union like the NSW Teachers Federation or a professional association such as the English Teachers Association, where you make a decision to join or not.

The NSW Institute of Teachers is the statutory body established under the NSW Institute of Teachers Act 2004. It is independent of the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and Federation. All teachers in NSW employed for the first time after October 1, 2004 are required by law to achieve accreditation at Professional Competence with the NSW Institute of Teachers.

Q. Am I a member of the Institute?

A. No, you don't belong to the Institute of Teachers in the same way you don't belong to the Roads Traffic Authority (RTA) if you are a driver or owner of a car in NSW. It is the body that accredits all teachers employed to teach in the state of NSW and sets the standards expected of teachers.

Q. Do I have to pay a fee annually?

A. Yes. The Institute, because it is a statutory authority, can and does impose an annual fee for you to remain an accredited teacher in NSW akin to a 'practicing licence' to teach in NSW.

Federation's policy is that this mandatory fee should be met by the employer. This is part of the current salaries claim on the Government.

Q. Do I get anything for my money?

A. While the Institute could be more supportive, it will never provide the level of professional support, the industrial organisation or legal protection of Federation.

What you get is a 'licence' to teach similar to other professions and trades (for example nurses, doctors, lawyers, plumbers). The Institute is not a service organisation but a regulatory authority.

Q. Are there Institutes of Teachers in other states?

A. Yes. They may not have the same name but in all Australian states and most OECD countries some type of teacher registration and/or standards body exists in one form or another (for example the Queensland College of Teachers has existed in one form or another since 1975).

Q. Why does the Institute require me to do so much work at school or home to meet their standards?

A. The Institute requirements themselves do not necessitate more work. The Institute's processes were designed to give a clearer focus to teacher induction and clearer guidelines for support. They were not intended to add to total workload of beginning teachers or those who support them.

It is not usually the Institute of Teachers adding to your workload but poor understanding or interpretation of DET policies by someone in a supervisory position at the school level. If in doubt, refer to Federation's *Advice to New Scheme Teachers* and contact your Federation Organiser.

Q. Does my school 'supervisor' have the right to come into my classroom unannounced to observe my lessons?

A. No. Any classroom observation has to be agreed and negotiated. The negotiations with you need to identify the focus of the observation and the schedule of such visits. Lesson observations should not be 'inspectoral' but need to be part of a supportive induction program and you should have the opportunity to observe other more experienced teachers' lessons, including the teacher supervising you.

Miscellaneous



Q. It is term 2 and no one has mentioned any of the Institute's Accreditation processes to me. Should I be concerned?

A. Yes, the danger bells should be ringing. The school may, for example, be assuming you are not a new scheme teacher. You should meet with your school principal immediately and discuss your induction and accreditation needs. If this does not progress the matter you should contact Federation for assistance.

Q. I am a temporary teacher in my first teaching position, a two-term teaching engagement three days per week, and my head teacher has told me the Accreditation process doesn't really apply until I get a full-time permanent appointment. Is this correct?

A. No. The school should be putting in place some professional induction programs for you and you should be collecting examples of your teaching work towards your Accreditation report. These will need to be annotated as per DET procedures.

You would not be on probation as you are not a permanent teacher, however, your service as a temporary teacher counts as part of the time frame for your Professional Competence. The Institute provisions apply to all teachers, casual, temporary or permanent.

Q. I feel overworked and not supported at my school level. What can I do?

A. Your first couple of years as a teacher can be a hectic and stressful time. Federation fought for a designated teacher mentor as a promotion position in each school. So far the union has been successful in getting 50 teacher mentors appointed.

Federation has also been successful in gaining an additional hour of release for permanent teachers on probation and seeks for this to be extended to temporary teachers.

You should talk to your immediate "supervisor" or principal to discuss your concerns. These people have responsibility for providing you with the necessary support and assistance to succeed. Often in cases Federation has dealt with, where there have been problems, principals and "supervisors" have claimed that the new scheme teacher did not seek additional support or assistance.

Q. My head teacher says he/she doesn't have time to complete the report this year as he/she is too busy so they will extend my probation and complete the report next year. Can he/she do this?

A. No. Your head teacher does not have the authority to extend your probation. It is a breach of DET procedures for them not to complete this report unless a formal extension has been sought by the principal and granted, in writing, by the Employee Performance and Conduct Director. This must occur prior to the end of the probationary year. This should occur only in rare circumstances.

It is also a failure in their responsibility to you as a beginning teacher. It also delays your accreditation and Teachers Certificate. You should contact your local Federation Organiser to assist in resolving any misunderstanding of the DET procedures.

This leaflet sets out in summary, current service conditions, information and advice regarding relevant Department of Education and Training (DET) policy documents and other legislative requirements. It is not intended to be exhaustive as changes occur from time to time.

Members should also refer to the relevant DET documents.

Members who are given conflicting advice or who are uncertain about their entitlements can contact Federation on (02) 9217 2100 or 1300 654 369 or the Federation website (www.nswtf.org.au).

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