

M1 Advice for teachers to be accredited as Proficient

M1.1 Introduction

On January 1, 2014 the functions of the NSW Institute of Teachers and the NSW Board of Studies merged to form the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES). BOSTES incorporates many areas of work in NSW schools, including curriculum, teaching, assessment, registration and policy.

The following advice arises from the BOSTES implementation of mandatory accreditation processes for teachers who are required to be accredited. The advice is designed to be used by:

- principals
- assistant principals, head teachers and deputy principals
- others who have responsibility for supporting teachers who are required to be accredited at Proficient Teacher.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers have been implemented progressively from 2012 in the accreditation of teachers in NSW schools.

All accredited teachers should now be using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. For information regarding the transition from NSW standards to Australian standards, please see BOSTES' *Accreditation Matters, 1, 2, and 3 (2012)*.

M1.2 Important advice on documentary evidence

Federation is concerned by continuing reports of unreasonable workloads being imposed upon some beginning teachers and school executive as part of the accreditation procedures set by BOSTES and Department of Education and Communities (DEC).

Many of these demands seem to be based on some misunderstanding of BOSTES and DEC's requirements. Some of this misconception seems to result from an overly supervisory, administrative approach rather than a collaborative and supportive approach based upon beginning teachers' real developmental needs.

Federation sought clear advice from BOSTES and the Department regarding the evidence required to be submitted for accreditation and was provided with the following:

- a teacher's documentary evidence is designed to support the accreditation report
- the documentation submitted must fit in an A4 plastic sleeve (see M1.3)
- evidence must have been developed in the course of your teaching practice — the BOSTES does not require special material
- only include evidence that has been developed substantially by the teacher
- include evidence that aligns to the seven standards, not individual standard descriptors. Evidence must align to each of the seven standards but not every standard descriptor
- one piece of evidence may be sufficient to meet a number of standards.

M1.3 How much documentary evidence must be submitted with the accreditation report?

The DEC's accreditation at Proficient Teacher Procedures (October 2014) states in part:

"The teacher, with the assistance of the supervisor, reviews the collected evidence over time and towards the end of the accreditation period selects the supporting evidence which best demonstrates their teaching at the level of Proficient Teacher.

The focus for submitted evidence is on quality not quantity – the submitted evidence could reasonably be expected to fit into an A4 plastic sleeve if printed.

For example, evidence may be made up of about 6 documents of approximately 3-4 pages each."

M1.4 A different language and context for support, development and assessment of beginning teachers

While Federation does not agree with all aspects of the Professional Teaching Standards or with all aspects of the Department's or the BOSTES's procedures, Federation seeks to ensure that they are implemented in positive ways that assist in the development and retention of new teachers in public schools.

BOSTES requirements and the Department's policy procedures should be implemented through school based processes which reflect established good practice in the support and development of new teachers. Any process should be cooperative, collegial and reasonable. It should not impose unreasonable expectations or workload implications for beginning teachers or those teachers assisting them.



M1.5 Know the policy and procedures which are applicable

All new scheme teachers and those who work with them must be given access to copies of appropriate policies and procedures which impact on their work. There are a number of documents which need to be referred to, some produced by the Department and others by BOSTES.

The Department's document *Accreditation at Proficient Teachers Procedures* (October 2014) and *Strong start, Great teachers* resource includes references to other relevant policies and procedures from both the Department and BOSTES.

It is important to be aware of the manner in which the Department has employed a teacher in order to know what policies and procedures are relevant. For example, while most probationary teachers are new scheme teachers, others are not. Some teachers who are required to be accredited (for example, casual teachers) are not probationary teachers. Additionally, all temporary teachers should be provided with a copy of their engagement notice.

The DEC's policy and procedures also dictate what processes must be followed if things go wrong. The Department's documents *Probationary Teacher Improvement Process* or *Managing temporary teacher engagements including circumstances of early cessation* may be applied if teachers are experiencing difficulties with their teaching. Members are encouraged to contact Federation for support.

BOSTES has support documents on its website. Many of these are currently being updated to reflect the transition to the Australian Standards.

M1.6 A collegial process aimed to achieve success

Teachers in promotions positions (including those referred to in Department or BOSTES documents as "Supervising Teachers") with responsibility for supporting teachers who are required to be accredited need to be cognisant of their responsibilities to support and develop beginning teachers to succeed.

Federation opposes overbearing and authoritarian approaches to the application of standards. Beginning teachers need to feel comfortable to ask for advice and assistance. It needs to be clear who the supervisor is.

There may be circumstances in which the same individual will be involved in both support and making judgements against the Standards at Proficient Teacher. It is vital that such distinctions be made clear for all participants when conversations, meetings or classroom observations take place.

M1.7 All beginning teachers to be involved in an induction program

Several Department documents, as well as BOSTES documents, refer to the need for all beginning teachers to be provided with an induction program. Federation fully supports this and has lobbied for additional resources for schools so that a meaningful induction program can be provided.

Department professional learning funds provided to schools can and should be used to provide induction programs and ongoing support.

DEC's *Strong start, Great teachers* resource emphasises the focus on quality teaching, teacher professionalism and strong professional relationships. It should be borne in mind by those implementing policies relating to beginning teachers that no member of staff is more vulnerable than beginning teachers trying to establish themselves in a school community. They are new to the profession, the staffroom and classroom. Many are new to the wider communities in which they teach.

In this context, beginning teachers often feel overwhelmed by the expectation of "getting on with teaching" while managing the often competing demands of:

- becoming more familiar with aspects of the curriculum, assessment and reporting practices
- identifying the individual needs of students
- locating and preparing resources
- adjusting to the system/school/college's culture, policies and procedures
- meeting faculty and whole-school/college responsibilities
- the BOSTES accreditation procedures
- establishing themselves in a new location/community.

M1.8 The standards at Proficient level

It is important that the Standards at Proficient are applied in a holistic way which acknowledges the varied and complex circumstances of teachers' professional work. The use of a simplistic "checklist" or a microscopic focus on a single aspect of a standard is inappropriate and unacceptable.

The focus should be on the seven standards across the three domains of the Australian Professional Teaching Standards. "Supervising Teachers" should make a holistic judgement in relation to what would reasonably be expected of a beginning teacher. This judgement must take into account the context of the school. The aspects and descriptions of the specific standards at Proficient are useful for professional conversations, particularly when a new teacher requires clarification of what is expected.



M1.9 Teachers in casual positions or temporary appointments

Most beginning teachers in a casual teaching position or temporary appointment will also be teachers who are required to be accredited and as such the accreditation requirements apply to them as well. They do, however, have a longer period of time to meet these requirements.

Federation is concerned by reports that principals and/or other “supervisors” are ignoring the professional induction and development needs of casual and temporary teachers by assuming it is someone else’s responsibility in the Department — it is not. Casual or temporary teachers must be informed of the process for induction and accreditation that will operate in their teaching engagement at the school.

Especially in long temporary appointments, temporary teachers must be treated in the same way as their permanent colleagues in relation to induction and accreditation.

Federation’s advice is that during each casual/temporary work engagement a teacher who is required to be accredited should collect and have annotated supporting evidence that will add to their final accreditation report. Casual/temporary teachers may therefore have documents signed by a number of different supervisors and principals.

It is sometimes reported by temporary/casual teachers that assistant principals or head teachers dismiss their attempts at collecting supporting evidence by saying “it’s not relevant” or “the engagement is not really long enough”. Federation’s advice in this situation is that the “supervisor” should be directed to the Department’s *Accreditation at Proficient Teacher Procedures* (October 2014) and referred to section 4.6.

M1.10 Lesson observation

Policy and support documents in relation to the annual performance and development cycle of all teachers, including teachers required to be accredited and probationary teachers, refer to the use of lesson observation. Such observations should include subsequent written feedback to new teachers and probationary teachers as well as opportunities for them to observe colleagues, including the supervising teacher. All lesson observations shall be the subject of negotiation between those involved before they occur.

There needs to be a clear understanding of the purpose of the observation and of the way in which feedback will be provided. Whilst lesson observations make up a useful component of induction and accreditation, they do not make up the entirety of such. Too many will be counter-productive. Excessive lesson observations will undermine collegiality and will hinder beginning teacher development.

M1.11 Workload

All members are advised to avoid the creation of complex and demanding school based processes which lead to excessive demands being placed on teachers. Implementing the procedures is about consistent standards, not “lifting the bar” for new teachers.

M1.12 Additional release time

Federation has been successful in obtaining additional release time for many beginning teachers. It provided for one hour of additional release time to support beginning teachers appointed permanent on probation in the six non-metropolitan regions in 2008. In 2009 it was extended to the metropolitan regions.

Recent improvements sought by Federation included an additional two hours of release time per week for all teachers in their first year, permanent and temporary and one hour per week in the second and third years.

While the Department’s *Beginning Teachers Support Policy* provided release for permanent beginning teachers in their first year, the policy did not adequately address the needs of either beginning teachers or their supervisors. It was, however, a significant first step.

As a result of years of campaigning, from 2014 there is an additional two hours of release time per week for permanent beginning teachers in their first year and one hour per week in their second year. There is also additional release time for experienced teachers or supervisors supporting beginning teachers.

It is important that the implementation of additional release time not be used to increase the existing workload of beginning teachers, nor should it be used to withdraw other support time currently available to beginning teachers. Particular care should also be taken wherever possible to provide proper support to the significant numbers of non-permanent beginning teachers not covered by the policy.

M1.13 If things go wrong

Federation is available to provide advice and assistance to financial Federation members who are involved in an accreditation process. If problems arise in the implementation of these processes members are advised to contact Federation sooner rather than later to seek resolution.



Frequently asked questions

What happens if I do not pay my accreditation fee?

The Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 requires all teachers required to be accredited to pay the annual fee. If you do not pay the fee, your accreditation to teach may be suspended and you will not be able to teach in any school in NSW; government or non-government.

Federation, however, opposes in principle the requirement for individual teachers to pay such a fee, maintaining that the Department, as the employer, should pay the mandatory fee. Federation will continue to pursue this policy.

Your accreditation fee is tax deductible.

When new teachers join Federation for the first time or upgrade their membership status from student member to a casual, temporary or permanent category, they can apply for Federation to pay their accreditation fee for the first year.

Do I get anything for my money?

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

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

Why does BOSTES require me to do so much work at school or home to meet their standards?

The BOSTES requirements themselves do not necessitate more work. The BOSTES 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 BOSTES adding to your workload but poor understanding or interpretation of DEC policies by someone in a supervisory position at the school level. If in doubt, contact Federation for advice.

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

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 'inspectorial' 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.

I have been teaching for more than two terms and no one has mentioned any of the BOSTES accreditation processes to me. Should I be concerned?

Yes, the alarm bells should be ringing. 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.

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?

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 DEC 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 being accredited at Proficient. BOSTES provisions apply to all teachers, casual, temporary or permanent.

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

Your first couple of years as a teacher can be a hectic and stressful time. Federation has negotiated extra support for beginning teachers for many years.

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 teacher required to be accredited did not seek additional support or assistance.

This leaflet sets out in summary, current service conditions, information and advice regarding relevant Department of Education and Communities (DEC) 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 DEC 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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