

RESPONSE FORM

Submission on the draft *National Professional Standards for Teachers*

NSW SECONDARY PRINCIPALS COUNCIL

1. Are you making this submission on behalf of an organisation?

Yes

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NSW Secondary Principals Council

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5. Submissions will normally be published.

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In the development of this response, the NSW Secondary Principals Council has consulted with its members and their staff throughout NSW. NSWSPC would like to acknowledge the work that has been undertaken thus far and values the opportunity to contribute to the further development of the draft National Professional Teaching Standards.

1) Does the preamble to the Standards give a clear picture of the context for the reason, use and purpose of the Standards?

- i) The preamble does define a purpose for national professional teaching standards and gives scope for recognition of teachers at higher levels of expertise.
- ii) The close alignment of this document with the NSW Institute of Teachers Professional Teaching Standards framework is a positive for NSW teachers in terms of a future implementation and transition.

The NSWSPC puts forward the following suggestions for consideration:

b) Introduction

- i) The National Teaching Standards are being developed within a context of education reforms that includes the *Australian Curriculum* and the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*. The preamble and the Standards then should acknowledge any national initiatives that impact on the role of the teacher.

c) Purpose

- i) We recommend that there is a clarification of what will constitute a professional association and what will be the role of the employer to strengthen the status and enable alignment of the National Standards with the various state practices and legislations.

d) Organisation

We suggest that:

- i) Figure 1 *The National Professional Standards Framework* is inserted under the **Organisation** heading and then followed with the more detailed explanation.
- ii) an explicit statement is included that all teachers need to be able to demonstrate achievement of all of the descriptors at the relevant level of professional capability e.g. Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead, for accreditation.
- iii) the word "teacher" is attached to the standards table for consistency with the preamble i.e. Graduate Teacher, Proficient Teacher.

e) Domains of Teaching

- i) Principals support the three domains
- ii) It is a matter of concern that although the three domains should be embedded in each standard, at times the articulation of this was inconsistent e.g. *Professional Knowledge* seems to be heavily emphasised in *Standards 1 and 2* but is lacking in *Professional Practice*.

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f) Levels of professional capability

- i) Within the document there needs to be a stronger alignment between the definitions of the *Levels of Professional Capability* and the *Standards and Descriptors*. The level of teacher capability in the descriptions is higher generally than that expressed within the *Standard Descriptors*.
- ii) The description of the *Graduate* level is appropriate. However, the *Proficient* level has lower expectations than that of the *Graduate* level. The expectations at the *Proficient* level should be strengthened and raised by the incorporation of stronger language e.g delete “*fundamental*” *professional standards* to *professional standards*, since *fundamental* seems to imply “basic” or a low expectation for what all teachers should be able to know, understand and do. Principals also felt that at *Proficient level* teachers should have evidence of consistent development.
- iii) Suggest that the following “guide” (that could also be used as the stem for each descriptor) would provide a helpful differentiation between the levels and assist in identifying practice that would align to each level when the *Standards* are used to assess a teacher’s practice:
 - Graduate teachers *know and understand*
 - Proficient teachers *apply*
 - Highly Accomplished Teachers *demonstrate and model* to students, colleagues and others
 - Lead Teachers *evaluate, design and lead* in and beyond their school

2) Do the draft *Standards* describe a realistic and developmental teacher professional standards continuum?

- a) Overall principals felt that the standards represented a continuum; however there was agreement over a lack of differentiation between each level and many inconsistencies both within each *Standard* and across the levels.
- b) It was felt that the *Preamble* descriptions of *Levels of Capability* should strongly align with the *Standards* and their *Descriptors* and be used as a reference to ensure that each descriptor is pitched at the appropriate level.
- c) Principals felt strongly that the difference between the *Level of Capability* and performance of a teacher involved more than the simplistic addition of a different word but involved a growth in theoretical and practical knowledge and experience at high levels of sophistication, depth and breadth, especially at *Highly Accomplished* and *Lead* levels. This higher level of capability is lacking in the descriptors. They are currently a longer version of the *Graduate* level rather than a true description of the complex activity of a teacher at *Highly Accomplished* and *Lead* levels. Teachers at higher levels do not merely do more of the same thing, but actually operate differently and this should be articulated in the *Standards* if they are to be seriously used to accredit and recognise the work of teachers. At the *Highly Accomplished* level, but especially the Lead level, it should be acknowledged that a teacher not only has a positive impact on student achievement and improvement in their own classroom but also impacts on the classrooms of colleague teachers in their school and the wider education community

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3) Do the draft Standards reflect what you would expect teachers to know and be able to do for each of the four levels (graduate/proficient/highly accomplished and lead teachers)?

- a) Overall principals felt that the standards did not align with the expectations expressed in the *Levels of Capability* in that they were inconsistent and often lower than what would be expected by the profession.
- b) The language of the descriptors is passive and lacks action verbs needed to provide a demonstration of the *Standards*.
- c) Descriptors would be strengthened and contextualised by the inclusion of a concept or focus column. This organisational structure would assist teachers working towards accreditation to use the Standards to reflect on their practice while assisting them to identify actions and evidence, as well as providing supervisors with a clearly articulated framework for identifying and differentiating the work of teachers, e.g.

CONCEPT/FOCUS	Graduate	Proficient	Highly Accomplished	Lead
6.1 REFLECT ON and EVALUATE PRACTICE	Use professional teaching standards to evaluate regularly their professional knowledge, practice and engagement to guide their professional learning.	Use professional teaching standards and key educational documents to evaluate regularly their professional knowledge, practice and engagement to determine their professional learning goals.	Use professional teaching standards and key educational documents to evaluate regularly their professional knowledge, practice and engagement to determine their short and long term professional learning goals. Use standards as a framework to support colleagues.	Use professional teaching standards and key educational documents to evaluate regularly their professional knowledge, practice and engagement to determine their short and long term professional learning goals. Use standards to evaluate and support colleagues.
6.2 PROFESSIONAL GROWTH	Seek advice and accept constructive feedback on their professional knowledge and practice to improve teaching and learning.	Seek and accept constructive feedback from colleagues and students to improve their professional knowledge and practice, student outcomes and identify areas for continuing professional learning.	Seek and critically assess feedback from a range of sources, including colleagues and students, to improve their professional knowledge and practice, student outcomes and identify areas for continuing professional learning.	Seek and critically assess feedback from a range of sources, including colleagues and students, to improve their professional knowledge and practice, student outcomes and identify areas for continuing professional learning. They initiate strategies for developing a climate for accepting and providing constructive feedback and professional recognition.
6.3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Participate in ongoing professional learning, including using relevant evidence-based educational research and key educational documents, working with colleagues to explore contemporary educational issues and research and undertaking personal and group study.	Identify and participate in research-based professional learning to update their knowledge and practice, targeted to their personal professional learning needs and school and system priorities.	Identify and participate in research-based professional learning to review their knowledge and practice, targeted to their personal professional learning needs and school and system priorities. They apply new knowledge and skills to their practice to improve their students' learning.	Identify and participate in research-based professional learning to expand their knowledge and practice, targeted to their personal professional learning needs and school and system priorities. They apply new knowledge and skills to improve student learning within and beyond their classroom.

- d) Descriptors need to be strengthened to indicate a deeper and more sophisticated level of professional growth (across all descriptors in all standards). Current wording is indicative of low expectations, particularly across the transition from *Highly Accomplished* to *Lead*.

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- e) The Standards would lend themselves better to practical application in schools and universities if there was a reduction in the number of descriptors. This could be achieved easily through the elimination of repetition. An example, using Standard 4 *Create and maintain safe, and supportive learning environments* is developed below to illustrate this point.

Concept/Focus Area	Draft National Standard Standard 4	Proposed Change Standard 4			
		Graduate <i>(know & understand)</i>	Proficient <i>(apply)</i>	Highly Accomplished <i>(demonstrate and model to students, colleagues and others)</i>	Lead <i>(design and lead in and beyond their classroom/school)</i>
4.1 Values and interactions	Use strategies to support an environment where students are treated with courtesy, respect, integrity, justice, empathy and dignity.	Use strategies to support a learning environment where students are treated in line with the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools	Maintain and develop learning environments in which students have the opportunities to build their capacities in line with the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools.	Demonstrate and model the capacity to develop and maintain a range of sophisticated learning environments to reflect the values education framework.	Initiate, design and lead programs which promote high quality learning environments where all interactions are respectful and considered.
4.2 Student engagement and meeting their needs	Use knowledge of students to develop engaging, virtual and/or physical and authentic learning environments.	Use knowledge of how students learn to establish and maintain engaging, authentic, virtual and /or physical learning environments.	Maintain and develop a differentiated learning environment, managing resources, working with parents / care-providers and other support personnel to engage all students and meet their individual needs.	Demonstrate and model knowledge of all students to maximise student engagement. Constantly looks for new resources and new ways to use known resources to improve student engagement and learning.	Initiate, design and lead exemplary strategies for student engagement. Critically reflect and articulate to colleagues best practice in maximising learning outcomes for students.
4.3 Classroom management and student self-regulation	Communicate clear directions and expectations and provide feedback to students about behaviour to support learning.	Establish and communicate clear routines and structures to promote on task learning and student self-regulation.	Apply sound understanding of classroom management in practice to develop and maintain effective learning routines and student self-regulation.	Demonstrate and model a sophisticated understanding of student behaviour and classroom management practices that create a culture of student self-regulation and high quality learning.	Initiate, design and lead professional learning and strategies to promote exemplary classroom management practices within and beyond the school.
4.4 Covered in 4.2 and 4.3	4.4 delete the whole of 4.4				
4.5 Student well-being	Contribute to students' well-being and safety, working within school, system and legislative requirements.	Contribute to students' well-being and safety, working within school, system and legislative requirements.	Provide for students' well-being and safety, working within school, system and legislative requirements.	Provide for students' well-being and safety, working within school, system and legislative requirements and collaborate with others to develop safe practices.	Provide for students' well-being and safety, working within school, system and legislative requirements .They contribute to the development and implementation of policies and practices and promote these to their colleagues.

Repetition occurs throughout the *Standards Descriptors* especially in the areas of communication, professional learning and development and assessment which seem to appear across all of the *Standards* in various forms.

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- f) Many of the Descriptors contain a number of concepts creating confusion about what is actually expected of the teacher, for example

CONCEPT/FOCUS	Graduate	Proficient	Highly Accomplished	Lead
2.3	Know and understand current research on effective teaching for specific content. They know the typical difficulties students may encounter in learning this content.	Know and understand current research on effective pedagogical content knowledge to identify and address difficulties their students may encounter in learning the content.	Know and utilise current research on effective pedagogical content knowledge to identify and address difficulties their students may encounter and know how to share this with colleagues.	Know current research on effective pedagogical content knowledge and evidence from practice and use it to identify difficulties students may encounter. They know how to lead initiatives to address difficulties encountered by other teachers within and beyond the school.

This descriptor seems to be addressing *pedagogical content knowledge* (which the graduate teacher doesn't seem to need) as well as student learning and perhaps even learning difficulties. It is very confused in concept and language. It also seems to change in purpose and action across the levels.

What exactly does “*effective pedagogical content knowledge*” actually mean and what might it look like in the classroom?

Comments related to specific Standard Descriptors

a) Standard 1: Know their students and how they learn

- i) The emphasis on “know and understand” without any action to demonstrate that knowledge or understanding does not lend itself to evidence based assessment. The language is extremely passive.
- ii) The statement "including Indigenous students" is inappropriate. A separate descriptor should be included to acknowledge the importance of Aboriginal Education and Aboriginal students rather than appearing as an add-on to the current descriptor.
- iii) 1.2 refers to knowing and understanding current research and applying it to teaching. This would be more appropriately placed in Standard 6.
- i) 1.4 relates to assessment and should be in Standard 5
- ii) The descriptors could then be reduced to five based on the concept/focus areas of:
 - 1.1 Student background (which could include Standard 2.9 encompassing recognition of Australian and Indigenous cultures and history)
 - 1.2 Development Characteristics
 - 1.3 Approaches to learning
 - 1.4 Prior achievement affecting learning
 - 1.5 Individual and special needs (encompassing literacy, numeracy, Aboriginal, gifted and talented, special needs students, etc)

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- iii) There needs to be a clear definition of the meaning of “disadvantage” in the context of the *Standards* where it should be preceded by the word “educational” to read educational disadvantage. There is evidence that supports the concept that there is a difference between disadvantage and educational disadvantage, although the two often go together.

b) Standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it

- i) See comment for Standard 1i).
- ii) 2.1 It would be useful to add numeracy to the subject specific areas, especially for teachers teaching subjects underpinned by numeracy (science, maths, technology). It would also be better to replace the word “issues” with key “concepts, content and skills”. “Issues” are policy matters – teachers need to come to grips with the metalanguage of curriculum.
- iii) 2.2 Some principals would like to see “technology” added to the key platforms of literacy and numeracy as underpinning platforms for learning in the 21st century. This could replace 2.7 or could flow to it because 2.7 is about the application of ICT in the classroom.
- iv) 2.4 can be deleted as it is covered in Standard 3
- v) 2.6 can be deleted as it is covered in Standard 5
- vi) The language of 2.9 would be improved with the final sentences containing words like: “plan & teach in response to current and changing cultural contexts” and/or “teach specific aspects of Australian culture relevant to different school contexts”
- vii) Principals would like to see the use of ICT within the classroom as an effective teaching and learning tool expressed more explicitly than it currently is within the *Standards*. ICT application is expressed more as a tool to expand knowledge (internet searching) or as an administrative tool for recording student progress (Standard 5).

c) Standard 3: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

- i) There is a lack of recognition that collegial work occurs at all levels of teaching from *Graduate* to *Lead* but in different configurations. A graduate would have demonstrated their capacity to work collegially and build on their teaching practice and knowledge through their practicum. *Standard 3.1* implies that this collegiality does not occur until the *Lead* level.
- ii) The *Graduate* and *Lead* levels are particularly low in expectation.
- iii) 3.1 Teachers at proficient level should be planning and implementing quality teaching programs designed to meet the needs of their students. Developing learning goals is not the only component of high quality planning. It also involves the teaching skills explored below in point v).
- iv) 3.2 There is too much emphasis on content without the related “concepts and skills” that are required in any learning. The three should be noted in all four levels. At present content and skills are mentioned at graduate level, with only content mentioned at the other three levels.
- v) 3.4 does not articulate either strongly or explicitly the application of ICT or contemporary teaching strategies.

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vi) 3.5 if assessment is to be addressed in this *Standard* (since *Standard 5* addresses assessment) then it needs to make a more explicit link between learning goals/outcomes, teaching strategies, scope and sequence (planning) and assessment for learning not merely assessment of learning.

d) Standard 4: Create and maintain safe and supportive learning environments

- i) The descriptors need more explicit references to classroom management and student self-regulation (4.3). There should also be mention of managing students with challenging behaviours and/or mental health issues – especially at the proficient, accomplished and lead levels.
- ii) “*environment*” always should be called “learning environments”
- iii) See example provided in **response 3.e)** on page 4 of this submission for illustrative details.

e) Standard 5: Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning

- i) As stated earlier there are many areas of overlap within the *Standards* in the area of assessment. There seems to be a common approach within the *Standards* to differentiate between “knowing” and “doing” when in practice a teacher cannot effectively “do” without “knowing” and that knowledge and understanding cannot be evidenced without some action, therefore they must exist within the same descriptor. Principals see this approach to the articulation of all the *Standards* as a fundamental flaw that will inhibit effective implementation.
- ii) 5.3 This descriptor is about “assessment for learning” and that phrase should be used.
- iii) 5.4 The descriptor should be “tightened” to ensure that the feedback relates to the learning task rather than the learner (see Hattie research). All teachers need a deep understanding of types of feedback and which types will generate the most improvement in student learning outcomes. That is not included in this descriptor.

f) Standard 6: Engage in professional learning and reflection

- i) Fundamentally agree with the three concept areas identified in Standard 6.
- ii) These statements should show how teachers demonstrate change in classroom practice and improve student learning outcomes as a result of professional learning and reflection. At the *Lead* level teachers should share expertise with colleagues to guide teaching and learning practice.
- iii) Generally for all three descriptors, there is little to no differentiation between the levels.
- iv) At the *Lead* level there is little if any reference made to leading, initiating or being proactive in professional learning outside the classroom and/or school
- v) There is an implication that professional learning and reflection is solely related to the development of self, with only a cursory reference to using *Standards* for evaluation and support of colleagues, which is almost supervisory rather than collegial. Collegiality is an essential feature of a professional learning culture and of higher level professional practice so it should be included.

g) Standard 7: Contribute to the school and professional community

- i) 7.1 and 7.2 are both related to compliance and could easily be combined

4) Are there other descriptors the draft Standards should include?

- a) See above for *Standards 1* (Indigenous students) and *Standard 3* (ICT learning tools)

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- b) The stronger articulation and more explicit reference to the development, application and sharing of classroom and behaviour management skills and practices in *Standard 4* are needed.
- c) Teachers do not work in isolation so some recognition of home/school and community partnerships would strengthen the *Standards* and more realistically and authentically reflect the work of teachers. This could be included in *Standard 7*.

5) Remembering that there will be substantial support materials, will it be possible for educators to use the standards to evaluate teacher practice?

- a) In their present form the *Standards* could not be effectively used to assess the work of teachers. They lack any demonstrated capacity against which to assess and are consequently not as practical as they will be if they are edited to focus more on behavioural and action language.
- b) The language is convoluted and unclear as are the concepts within each *Standard Descriptor*. Good editing is needed, perhaps by drawing together a team experienced in using standards to do the task.
- c) Overall the benchmark for each *Level of Professional Capability* is very low and inconsistent within and across the levels which devalues the purpose of the *Standards* and the accreditation process.
- d) The essence of each *Standard* needs to be more explicitly and clearly articulated so that teachers can easily identify what level of practice they are either at or aiming to achieve as they select appropriate evidence.
- e) The inclusion of a concept or focus column would highlight the critical aspect of each standard being described.

6) Any additional comments?

In summary the NSWSPC supports the development and implementation of National Professional Teaching Standards provided that:

- i) the *Standards* include stronger, more explicit action language that reflects the work of teachers in the practical application of knowledge, skills and understanding of effective pedagogy to improve student learning within a learning community;
- ii) there is clearer differentiation between each *Level of Professional Capability* which reflects an authentic scaffold for career development and recognises the collegial nature and developing sophistication and complexity of the work of teachers as they progress to the *Lead* level of operation;
- iii) the *Standards* do not reflect the lowest level of expectation of a teacher in any system but is a true reflection of quality teaching in which every teacher must at least achieve a minimum accreditation at *Proficient*.