



**AEU Response to a  
National Framework for Standards  
for Teaching**

**A Consultation Paper**

**February 2003**

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The Australian Education Union (AEU) has been involved with the debate around Professional Standards for a number of years, as part of its core concern with teachers and teaching. At the national level, it has been involved in the organisation of, and has attended, all the various forums and conferences auspiced by the Australian College of Educators (ACE) and others since the forum held in Melbourne in February 2000.

Each of the Branches and Associated Bodies in their respective states and territories have been engaged with their employers and other professional organisations in developing programs and frameworks to enhance teacher professionalism.

The AEU federally operates through its Branches and Associated Bodies, its Federal Executive, and Federal Conference. Through this process it has developed the document entitled “Professional Teaching Standards – AEU Position” (Attachment 1), which was amended and endorsed at the Federal Conference January 2003. This has been used as the basis for answering the questions below, but should also be considered as a whole in its own right.

This submission has also been developed in consultation with Branches and Associated Bodies, particularly through the Curriculum and Professional Issues Committee of Federal Executive, on which all states and territories are represented.

The Federal Conference 2003 has also given in principle endorsement to a “National Statement from the Teaching Profession on Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism: A Working Document”, produced by the National Reference Group coordinated by ACE, on which the AEU was represented (Attachment 2) , and this has been drawn on in some responses, and should also be considered part of the overall response.

Each of the questions in the consultation paper is dealt with in turn below.

**1. What underlying principles and values might form the basis of a national framework and, by extension, standards of professional practice for teachers?**

The AEU supports the development of nationally consistent professional standards, and also supports MCEETYA, in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, coordinating the development of a National Framework for Professional Standards. The National Framework should, as suggested in the paper, provide a common language and agreed levels to which standards are pertinent. It may also provide a set of principles which determine the application of standards.

Throughout the consultation paper and the questions there appears to be a lack of clarity between a national framework for standards and standards themselves. This confuses the discussion, and there needs to be a clearer recognition of the difference.

A National Framework differs from the standards themselves. The framework provides guidance and some consistency in the process and in the dimensions that are addressed. So the Framework can only be used to guide state or territory developed standards. This is discussed further below.

The AEU notes that to date a range of standards have been developed at both state and territory level and nationally by some teaching professions. However, it should be emphasised that the appropriate location for the application, use and management of the actual standards, including any associated rewards, is in the various state/territory AEU/Department Certified Agreements, (EBAs); and the most fruitful path to national consistency and coordination would also appear to be through these various state/territory AEU/Department Certified Agreements, (EBAs).

It is presumed that similar arrangements would apply between the IEU and private school employers.

- 2. What purposes might a national framework for the teaching profession serve for:**
  - a. **teachers and the teaching profession;**
  - b. **principals and educational leaders ;**
  - c. **students and parents;**
  - d. **schools and school systems ;**
  - e. **Australian education generally?**

Consistent with the answer in 1 above, the AEU sees a National Framework as being primarily one which will guide negotiations between employers and unions as part of relevant Certified Agreements, (EBAs). Therefore the direct application of the framework, as opposed to the standards developed under it, to the particular categories identified would be fairly limited.

One specific purpose of a National Framework should be to provide consistency of application ensuring greater portability and mobility of reward and recognition for teachers.

A National Framework would begin the process, raise national awareness, and thus serve to enhance the status of the profession, serving the interests of all groups. The potential values of having professional standards themselves, rather than a Framework, are outlined in the accompanying attachments, and in the Consultation Paper itself.

- 3. The Consultation Paper presents two ways in which to think about the architecture for a national framework for standards, these are examples only to broach the issues of how to present key elements of a teacher's work and how to represent their professional growth.**

a. **What is an appropriate structure for a national framework?**

The examples given in the discussion paper are very limited. The National Framework should contain principles, process and substance that underpin the development of standards.

An example of a principle would be “That advanced standards reflect the complex nature of teaching and the highly skilled nature of the profession”. The process should specify, for example, that standards be developed in genuine consultation with teachers.

The AEU commends the “Principles for Guiding Standards” in Attachment 2 that Professional standards for teaching should:

- be the responsibility of, and be owned by, the teaching profession in collaboration with key stakeholders;
- be applied in the interests of learners and the public good;
- be firmly grounded in an accurate and comprehensive understanding of teachers’ work;
- provide a framework for teacher qualifications and registration;
- recognise the value of both generic and subject specific standards;
- be clear to the profession and the wider community;
- enhance the public perception of and regard for teachers and their work;
- promote teaching as a desirable career, thus contributing to recruitment;
- focus on high-level capabilities and be described in terms of professional knowledge, understanding, skills and values;
- promote engagement in professional learning throughout a teacher’s career, allowing for different points of entry and re-entry to the profession;
- acknowledge that context and resourcing will have an impact on implementation and sustainability;
- acknowledge the responsibility of employers to establish conditions conducive to developing and maintaining profession-defined standards.

There would also be a set of principles about standards themselves; specifying that it would look at the essential dimensions or core elements that standards must contain.

One of the principles that should be expressed in the National Framework is that standards as developed at the state or territory level should be for reflective purposes only, except in particular instances where the teachers' representative bodies, the relevant union, agrees they should be applied and that those instances be protected by agreement through EBA or Certified Agreement in which parameters and Question 2 processes are defined.

This then includes specifically acknowledging the vital importance of the role of the unions in national and state consideration of standards, rather than carefully avoiding any mention of the unions' role as the Consultation Paper does.

In regard to standards themselves, the two attachments give an extensive indication of the expectations the AEU would have regarding the principles for standards of practice for teachers, and the development and use of standards at the state or territory level, and the Task Force is referred to them.

One of the major parameters that should be specified in the Framework is the stages at which standards are to be applied and developed.

The AEU supports the development of:

- Standards for initial teacher education. Such standards would encompass the requirements on pre-service institutions for accreditation.
- Beginning teacher standards. These would be the standards which those entering the profession at the end of pre-service training would be expected to demonstrate as part of the qualification and registration process. Such standards have been previously developed (National Competency Standards for Beginning Teachers) under the auspices of the Australian Teaching Council and the AEU recommends they be reviewed and become part of the framework.
- Advanced standards. These would be voluntary, and the timing and use is part of the discussion below.

The AEU does not support the introduction of compulsory standards above beginning standards or more than one layer of voluntary advanced standards.

The Consultation paper says that “it is important to conceive of a national framework for standards as recognising multiple pathways to teaching excellence”, and this forms a suitable basis from which to begin their design.

The relationship between experience and attainment of particular standards is complex, and it is not simply a matter of choosing between the two ways presented in the paper.

It is probably necessary to first decide the nature of any advanced standards, assuming that such are to exist. To what extent would they be intended to be achievable by the vast majority of teachers, given reasonable capability and dedication, as opposed to being achievable only by “exceptional” competence? The AEU believes that they should be “accessible to all teachers”, though this does not elaborate the criteria on which they should be accessed (which should be the subject of negotiation). To be meaningful, they must involve some degree of difficulty and accomplishment, but unless they are achievable by the vast majority then they will not serve the purposes intended. If they are intended as a “road map for professional development” as some have suggested, then it must be a map all can follow. Standards should reflect current good practice, not seek to create a new breed of “super teacher”, as this will simply lead to their rejection by the majority of teachers who have developed advanced standards in practice.

Within this context, experience is an important element in the development of a skilled teacher. Whilst it is obvious that length of service of itself does not automatically lead to the achievement of advanced standards, it is also counter-intuitive to suggest that a teacher can achieve them without experience. To do so is to suggest that “good teachers are born”, and that professional development and experience are of minor importance.

Therefore it seems reasonable to assume that any advanced standards are such as might be achieved by most teachers in time given reasonable professional commitment, whilst acknowledging that the actual length of time will vary. This is assuming that there is adequate professional support as outlined in our answer at Question 10.

Those entering the profession “mid-career” would bring some prior learning to their new profession which may facilitate them achieving standards. Nevertheless, it would be expected that they demonstrate this prior learning against the beginning teacher standards, and advanced standards when appropriate.

**b. What might be the characteristics of a quality teacher?**

The characteristics of a quality teacher are clearly something that will be a fundamental consideration in the development of the standards, and it is not appropriate to consider them in detail here.

Standards which have been developed to date by a range of bodies, both here and overseas, show considerable overlap and suggest that reaching a common

understanding is possible. Considering these may inductively produce a set of core dimensions, which is what the framework should be concerned with.

The AEU agrees that improving student learning should be integral to the base from which standards are derived. However, the inclusion of the word “outcomes” after learning is inappropriate and may lead to a misperception that professional standards can be measured on the basis of some external standardised testing. This would be highly undesirable, and any teaching standards and measurement of standards must recognise the importance of teacher professional judgement in the specific context of the school and students involved.

Advanced standards should also include the concept of an expanding role within the school and education community, such as mentoring of other teachers, leadership, and advocacy of the ideals, values and ethics of the profession and public education.

The five dimensions or objectives of teaching listed under the heading ‘Standards in the Context of Quality and Professionalism’ in Attachment 2 are also pertinent here. They are:

- to act as a public advocate for the profession and the social good;
- to contribute to the development of the knowledge base of the profession;
- to adhere to professional and ethical standards set by and for the profession;
- to be competent and knowledgeable about subject matter and pedagogy;
- to reflect a strong values orientation across all areas of learning and teaching.

**c. How can a teacher’s growing expertise best be described?**

The answers to a. and b. above are also relevant here.

The teachers growing expertise is not a linear progression. In many ways it may be context specific, and the breadth of experience and the opportunity for growth may be as significant as the length. The standards must be applied in context to ensure that they are not easier to achieve in some types of schools than in others.

**4. Should a national framework be able to encompass generic standards, specialist standards (for example, in literacy teaching), subject specific standards or all three?**

The AEU position states:

- The core of advanced standards should be generic, acknowledging the common skill and practices that teachers require regardless of subject or age taught.

- This core could be supplemented by subject and/or age related standards where these are explicit to that subject or age.

Many people have commented that the subject specific standards that have been developed to date are easily transferable and adaptable across subjects and specialisms. This is not to suggest that they should not exist as subject specific standards but that it will be relatively easy to develop a core set of generic standards within which subject and or specialist standards are embedded. It seems most likely that the subject or specialist standard might become a way of demonstrating a generic standard. As it is phrased in Attachment 2:

Standards contain both generic and specific elements. Generic standards identify broad capabilities and teacher attributes that apply across a range of subject areas. Specific standards identify the knowledge, skills and values required to teach in particular curriculum areas, levels of schooling and/or other areas of specialisation.

## **5. How might a national standards framework assist in informing ...?**

Again this question fails to adequately distinguish between the Framework itself and the specific applications of the framework at state or territory level. In reality the latter are likely to have the more direct influence on all aspects of application. The Framework should, as its name implies, provide a framework for these. Its principal role is to assist in national consistency and provide a common base from which each jurisdiction (or employer) operates in agreement with the relevant union.

### **a. course development for pre-service trainers**

The framework should contain a set of core dimensions on course development, which will be developed in individual sets of standards.

### **b. teachers' self reflection**

Teacher's self-reflection should not be part of the Framework.

### **c. professional learning**

The framework should contain a set of core dimensions on professional learning, which will be developed in individual sets of standards.

### **d. establishing registration standards**

This is also not relevant to the Framework but part of the individual sets of standards themselves.

### **e. performance assessment?**

The issue of performance assessment and management is dealt with at 10 below.

## **6. How might a national framework be linked with teachers' professional development?**

The Framework may inform a national program of professional development. For instance, if the Framework had an agreed core of professional development in, for instance, subject knowledge and pedagogy, then a national program of professional development may be developed around the dimensions of that. Similarly, the dimensions identified in the Framework could be used for a program of national professional development.

Otherwise, the direct relationship between professional development and standards will be in the standards themselves.

As noted in Attachment 1, standards must be linked to employment arrangements which encourage, resource, and facilitate employer funded professional development in areas identified as important or desirable by teachers.

And in Attachment 2:

- improving the effectiveness of professional development, by clarifying the areas in which the profession expects its members to improve with experience and establishing a standards-guided system for continuing professional learning across the profession;
- providing a basis for improving career path opportunities and pay systems for classroom teachers who attain those standards;
- providing, thereby, stronger incentives for all teachers to engage in long term professional development focused on student learning and guided by challenging profession-defined teaching standards.

## **7. How might professional development and tertiary courses be recognised?**

- The advanced standards may be linked to post-graduate study and qualifications. Where this is the case the involvement of Teacher Education faculties and practising teachers in the development and awarding of standards should ensure the development of relevant partnerships combining theory and practice. (Attachment 1)

## **8. Can a national framework represent the role of the principal and others in school leadership positions and if so how?**

Separate standards for leaders could be developed within the generic framework as for other specialisms. However, it is emphasized that they must be firmly based in the same dimensions and principles as the other standards and should be based on educational leadership rather than positional status.

However, the Framework itself will not include these standards, though it could include a principle such as that in the paragraph above.

As noted at 3b. above, all the standards should include the concept of an expanding role within the school and education community, such as mentoring of other teachers and leadership. However, this does not equate with leadership positions per se and achievement of these standards should not be limited to those in formal leadership positions.

**9. Should and if so how can teacher quality be described by reference to the learning outcomes of students?**

As noted at 3b above, the AEU agrees that improving student learning should be integral to the base from which standards are derived. However, the inclusion of the word “outcomes” after learning is inappropriate and may lead to a misperception that professional standards can be measured on the basis of testing student performance.

There are many factors which influence the learning outcomes of students, such as socioeconomic status, health, class size and other resourcing issues. Student performance on a standardised test is a limited demonstration of student outcomes and not an appropriate measure with which to judge teacher quality. This would ignore the complexity of the tasks involved.

Any teaching standards and measurement of standards must recognise the importance of teacher professional judgement in the specific context of the school and students involved.

As noted in Attachment 2, standards should be firmly grounded in an accurate and comprehensive understanding of teachers’ work, and their assessment be based on peer and self assessment.

The standards should also be about teachers’ learning and development.

**10. Which elements of the Consultation Paper present issues for your organisation and how might these be resolved?**

On the whole the AEU agrees with the main thrusts of the Consultation paper. It does, however, have some major concerns.

First, it is most regrettable that very early in the paper, there is paragraph citing selective research. Some of the authors of this work are well known as advocates of the “resources do not matter” line which has been destructive within education debates. It suggests that the paper is seeking to leave the impression that teaching standards are an alternative to proper resourcing, and that putting an emphasis on standards will relieve governments of a responsibility to provide more resources.

The AEU welcomes research which underlines and emphasises the importance of teachers work. However, it strongly rejects any association between the quality of this work and a rationale for reducing pressure for quality resourcing. It is important to note that in endorsing Attachment 2 in principle, the Federal Conference also supported the addition of the following:

The quality of teachers' work is also affected by the conditions of student learning. Conditions such as reasonable class sizes, time release, administrative support, well resourced education settings, access to high quality ongoing professional development, encourage a culture that promotes creativity and innovation. Supportive partnerships with parents and university-school collaboration are recognised as being most conducive to quality teaching. Any consideration of what constitutes quality teaching needs to take into account the diversity of context and conditions in which teachers work."

Quality of teaching and quality of resourcing must be viewed as complementary, not alternatives.

Similarly, the quote, which is in fact nothing more than an assertion, from Boston (1999) is inappropriate in the context it is used. There is other research such as that around the STAR project which could be seen as contradicting this, especially as it controlled for teacher quality. The Productive Pedagogies research in Queensland has more accurately set teacher quality and resource levels as concentric circles around student performance.

The use of these quotes in these ways seriously undermined the credibility of the paper, and raises questions about MCEETYA's motivations in pursuing standards.

Second, the issue of performance management (or review, or assessment) requires some discussion. It is notable how many times this appears in the Consultation paper, whilst reference to it is largely missing in the two attachments. The same instruments cannot be used for self reflection and improvement, reward and recognition and at the same time be used for punitive work performance measures. Any suggestion that the development of standards will enable more performance management will lead to the rejection of the standards movement by teachers. The AEU position states quite clearly that seeking certification of advanced standards should be made voluntary. Advanced standards, at least, are seen as a formative tool for teacher learning, not a judgemental tool for management use.

The role of standards in promotion may be another matter and should be the subject of negotiation between unions and employers.

The AEU also expresses its disappointment at the attempt to ignore or exclude education unions, as the major teacher representative bodies, from the debate and to marginalise their role and involvement in the discussion and development of standards. There is little recognition in the paper of their considerable involvement in the developments to date, at both national and state or territory level. For example, in Appendix 1 the paper religiously avoids the fact that the WA competency framework was the product of a joint Union/Department development and implementation process arising out of a Certified Agreement and continues to be a joint venture. It also avoids recognising the role played by the Union in the Leadership Framework development. Similar things could be said in relation to other states and territories.

The verbal contortions that were performed in order to avoid using the word "union" are noticeable.

The Framework needs to acknowledge the fundamental importance of education unions to all aspects of the introduction of standards. Involving teachers through their

unions is one of the key ways to ensure genuine teacher consultation. Reaching agreement about their introduction through the EBA process is fundamental to their implementation. The union communications will be essential to a broad teacher understanding.

**11. What is the best way to achieve collaboration in the design and content of a national standards framework?**

Despite the above reservations, the AEU believes that it is appropriate for MCEETYA, through its task force, to play a lead role in the development of the Framework. However, in doing this, it places obligations on the task force to ensure that the consultation is full, open and guided by the views of the broad education community. As part of this it needs to ensure that the key role of the unions is given due emphasis.

It should also be noted that unions, and also other professional associations, have democratic process that require reasonable allocations of time for them to take place. Allocating short periods of time for consultations is not the best sign of good faith, especially when that short period of time includes the summer break.

There has in the past been a tendency for MCEETYA to rush to judgement and submit proposals to Ministers that have not gained ownership by the profession at large, and it is important that this not occur in this instance.

The AEU notes the undertaking by Stuart Hamilton at the Conference in November 2002 that a further discussion paper will be produced following these responses and that this will be the subject of further consultation. It is important that the Task Force hold to this despite Mr Hamilton's departure from the role he then held.

The AEU would urge the task force to accept a longer term view of the process and ensure that it is structured to allow adequate process and input by the whole education community. If this means that its presentation to a full MCEETYA meeting is delayed, so be it.

## **Attachment 1**

# Professional Teaching Standards

## Australian Education Union Position

- \$ The AEU strongly supports the development of appropriate professional standards for all involved in teaching in early childhood, school and TAFE. Their development provides an opportunity for professional recognition and public support and will enhance the status of the profession. It is also consistent with AEU support for teacher registration and the maintenance of high level qualifications.
- \$ The appropriate location for the development and management is in the various state/territory AEU/Department Certified Agreements, (EBAs).
- \$ The most fruitful path to national consistency and coordination would appear to be through the various state/territory AEU/Department Certified Agreements, (EBAs).
- \$ The introduction of standards must be accompanied by the time, space and tools for real engagement, reflection and discussion by learning communities of teachers.
- \$ Standards must be more than a check list of things that teachers do. They must be presented in a way that reflects the complex work that professionals undertake in educational settings.
- \$ The AEU will encourage teacher activists to participate in any jointly agreed development and implementation of standards in order to ensure that classroom teachers have the ability to shape and own the standards.

### Standards for Initial Teacher Education

- \$ Standards for Initial Teacher Education must include mandatory requirements for sufficient professional experience and training in Aboriginal studies and Torres Strait Islander studies
- \$ Standards should be developed in consultation with teachers to be used as the basis for assessment and accreditation of initial teacher education courses. Teaching standards must be underpinned by rigorous academic and teaching qualifications.

### Beginning Standards

- \$ As a matter of priority, the National Competency Standards for Beginning Teachers should be reviewed and used as a generic base to inform pre-service and induction programs.

### Advanced Standards

- \$ Standards should be developed by the teaching profession and embedded in industrial or formal agreements between employers and teacher unions.

- \$ The core of advanced standards should be generic, acknowledging the common skill and practices that teachers require regardless of subject or age taught.
- \$ This core could be supplemented by subject and/or age related standards where these are explicit to that subject or age.
- \$ In developing standards for TAFE and VET, due regard should be had to the relationship between teaching skills and other relevant professional and industry experience and expertise.
- \$ Seeking certification of advanced standards should be made voluntary, be accessed on the basis of peer assessment based on criteria, not quota.
- \$ They must be linked to employment arrangements which encourage, resource, and facilitate employer funded professional development in areas identified as important or desirable by teachers.
- \$ The advanced standards may be linked to post -graduate study and qualifications. Where this is the case the involvement of Teacher Education faculties and practising teachers in the development and awarding of standards should ensure the development of relevant partnerships combining theory and practice.
- \$ Given that a number of subject associations is already leading in the development of accomplished standards, the AEU should participate in their development, and encourage a diversity of similar projects based on both subjects and age levels (especially pre-secondary), with a view to encouraging the identification of a generic core.
- \$ The AEU reaffirms its position that teachers should be paid on a common scale. Any rewards arising from the acquisition of advanced teaching standards should be accessible to all teachers and be subject to agreement between Branches and Associated Bodies and the respective employers.

Adopted by Federal Conference January 2003



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## **Attachment 2**

*National Statement from the Teaching Profession on  
Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism*

*A Working Document*

*11 December 2002*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Why should teachers embrace professional standards? What purposes are they designed to serve? Who will benefit most from their introduction? Such questions are often in the minds of practising teachers, given that over time they have witnessed a plethora of initiatives designed to improve the quality of teaching, with many of these emphasising the importance of professional standards.

What teachers know, do and value has a significant influence on the nature, extent and rate of student learning. The powerful phrase – ‘teachers make the difference’ – captures the key role that professional educators play in shaping the lives and futures of their students. Recognition of the critical relationship between teacher and learner highlights the need to better define, communicate and build on what constitutes good teaching.

Professional teaching standards provide a powerful mechanism for achieving these objectives. While teaching is not a standards-free endeavour and most teachers have always understood the essential elements of high quality professional practice, much of this knowledge has remained at an intuitive level. Standards do help to make the knowledge and capabilities *explicit* – not only to professional colleagues, but also to students, parents and the wider community. They also provide a means through which good teaching can be identified, celebrated and rewarded. Provided the profession can maintain its role as the driver of the standards agenda, then there is considerable potential for these measures of teaching quality to be used in ways that will support teachers individually and collectively.

Several national professional associations have invested considerable time and resources in establishing a rationale for teaching standards, and in working with classroom practitioners to design and trial various models and approaches. At the state and territory level, statutory bodies for teachers and education systems have been active in advancing this agenda. There has also been recognition of advanced status in a number of industrial agreements (e.g. Level 3 Teachers in Western Australia). Underpinning all of this work is the teacher’s fundamental commitment to the effective learning, care and achievement of his or her students.

Another common theme spanning much of the published work of teacher organisations on standards is the strong connection with professional learning. Many envisage teaching standards being used as a framework for continuous professional learning and development which is teacher-directed and controlled. In other words, the process is done by and with teachers not *to* or *for* them. Building on this concept, many also see standards being used to support the development of career pathways, with teachers using standards as a means of determining their current position on a learning continuum and charting their own course for higher-order learning and professional recognition. Effective professional learning has been referred to by one author as a long-term personal quest to attain high professional standards, as distinct

from a series of discrete courses or workshops provided by school authorities, universities, professional associations and other agencies.

## **STANDARDS IN THE CONTEXT OF QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM**

The profession of teaching incorporates five dimensions or objectives:

- to act as a public advocate for the profession and the social good
- to contribute to the development of the knowledge base of the profession
- to adhere to professional and ethical standards set by and for the profession
- to be competent and knowledgeable about subject matter and pedagogy
- to reflect a strong values orientation across all areas of learning and teaching.

Teachers' professional learning involves both the opportunity to engage with research and knowledge, and the capacity to generate new knowledge and critique the knowledge claimed by others. All forms of professional learning should support teachers in achieving high professional teaching standards. Examples include pre-service training, professional development courses and reading, continuous inquiry embedded in the daily life of a school, learning networks, professional association activities and post-graduate study. These activities also provide teachers with opportunities to strengthen the profession by leading, facilitating and supporting others committed to improving the quality of teaching. Other factors influencing the quality of teaching and learning include high quality supportive leadership in schools and good collegial relations. The quality of teachers' work is also affected by the conditions of student learning.

While professional teaching standards are not the only means of achieving quality and teaching excellence and enhancing the status of teachers and the profession, they do provide an important strategy for:

- “improving the effectiveness of professional development, by clarifying the areas in which the profession expects its members to improve with experience and establishing a standards-guided system for continuing professional learning across the profession
- providing a basis for improving career path opportunities and pay systems for classroom teachers who attain those standards
- providing, thereby, stronger incentives for all teachers to engage in long term professional development focused on student learning and guided by challenging profession-defined teaching standards
- strengthening the contribution the profession makes to leadership in teaching, accountability and quality assurance.”

(Source: National Professional Standards for Highly Accomplished Teachers of Science, Australian Science Teachers Association, 2002, p.4)

## **PRINCIPLES FOR GUIDING STANDARDS**

In discussions so far, national teacher organisations and stakeholders have reached consensus on a set of principles to guide the development and application of standards. Professional standards for teaching should:

- be the responsibility of, and be owned by, the teaching profession in collaboration with key stakeholders
- be applied in the interests of learners and the public good
- be firmly grounded in an accurate and comprehensive understanding of teachers' work
- provide a framework for teacher qualifications and registration
- recognise the value of both generic and subject specific standards
- be clear to the profession and the wider community
- enhance the public perception of and regard for teachers and their work
- promote teaching as a desirable career, thus contributing to recruitment
- focus on high-level capabilities and be described in terms of professional knowledge, understanding, skills and values
- promote engagement in professional learning throughout a teacher's career, allowing for different points of entry and re-entry to the profession
- acknowledge that context and resourcing will have an impact on implementation and sustainability
- acknowledge the responsibility of employers to establish conditions conducive to developing and maintaining profession-defined standards.

### **HOW WILL STANDARDS BE USED?**

Standards are derived from good practice and articulate what the profession believes teachers should know, do and value. Teachers have demonstrated that they can develop publicly credible and professionally challenging standards for professional practice. Standards should be used to provide a framework and guide for:

- teacher education and continuous professional learning
- reflecting on and assessing professional teaching practice
- recognition and certification of teachers who attain standards for highly accomplished professional practice.

In other words, standards are tools for action – tools with which the profession can exercise greater responsibility for the quality of learning in schools. Use of standards must be first and foremost about professional learning. Teachers should use them to create and monitor their own professional learning programs, either individually or as members of learning communities.

National collaboration and the involvement of professional organisations are essential to ensure maximum consistency in the use of both beginning and advanced teaching standards in all states and territories.

There should be flexibility in the use and forms of assessment of standards across different fields to recognise the complexity of teachers' work, the range of contexts in which they work and the different ways in which teachers can meet standards.

Standards contain both generic and specific elements. Generic standards identify broad capabilities and teacher attributes that apply across a range of subject areas. Specific standards identify the knowledge, skills and values required to teach in particular curriculum areas, levels of schooling and/or other areas of specialisation.

Evidence of ability to meet relevant profession-defined standards should be a requirement for entry to the profession and a basis for advancement within the profession. Peer and community recognition will result from engagement with and achievement of teaching standards.

### **ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION**

Professional certification is an endorsement by a professional body that a member of that profession has attained a specified level of professional practice. In education, certification might be implemented across a number of fields of teaching and learning. Given the work of national professional associations, state/territory statutory bodies for teachers and the inclusion in some industrial agreements of advanced status payments, a nationally coordinated and consistent approach to professional certification should be further developed. In the meantime, however, it is important to acknowledge an emerging consensus that the process for the formal assessment of performance for certification should:

- be authentic
- be based on professional teaching standards
- have peer involvement in its development and execution
- reflect the core business of teaching
- be positively oriented (i.e. with a focus on accomplishment rather than deficiencies)
- use a range of methods and evidence
- incorporate appeal processes.

The processes for assessing attainment of standards should be consistent across all fields of teaching and learning and be fair for all applicants. Peer and self-assessment through reflective practice and professional learning communities is in keeping with ownership by the profession.

In the case of advanced standards, participation by teachers in assessment processes should be conducted on a voluntary basis. Where assessor panels are established they should be composed predominantly of practising teachers who are adequately trained in the assessment processes. In these processes it is important that judgements are made against the standards themselves.

## **RECOGNITION AND REWARD**

A nationally coordinated and consistent system should be established to provide recognition to teachers who demonstrate advanced standards. There should be no quota on the number of teachers who are able to receive recognition for certification. Reward is an important part of the recognition process and reflects the desire of the profession and the community to acknowledge high-level accomplishment in tangible ways such as increased remuneration, professional leave or other incentives.

The enterprise bargaining process between employers and unions will be an important mechanism for providing substantive recognition for professional certification. All employing authorities should be encouraged to provide recognition and support for professional certification as the process comes to demonstrate its credibility and its effects on professional learning.