



ACT
Government



National Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers Policy

Purpose

This policy sets out the framework for national certification of teachers in the ACT.

Certification as a Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher in the ACT is part of a nationally recognised quality assurance framework that uses the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (the Standards) as criteria for assessment. In accordance with the *ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act 2010* (the Act) the ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) is to determine standards, including assessment and certification Standards, for the teaching profession in the ACT. As the certifying authority in the ACT, the Institute certifies teachers against the Standards within the nationally consistent framework for certification.

Application

This policy applies to any teacher holding full registration in the ACT who is seeking certification as a Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher.

It elaborates on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) documents, *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers* (2012) and *Guide to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (2017) for the ACT context.

The policy is supported by the:

- *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*
- *Guide to Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia – ACT Edition*
- *ACT Certification – the TQI Supplement for the ACT Edition of the AITSL Guide to Certification*
- *ACT Certification Overview*
- *Guide to the Renewal of Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia – ACT Edition*
- *ACT Renewal of Certification - the TQI Supplement for the ACT Edition of the AITSL Guide to the Renewal of Certification.*

Legislative reference

The *ACT Teacher Quality Institute Regulation (2010)* sets out the legal authority and requirements for certification of teachers as Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in the ACT.

Policy statements

An eligible teacher may seek certification through the Institute.

The certification process is conducted in Terms 2, 3 and 4 of each calendar year in the ACT.

TQI grants or refuses the application for certification based on the assessment of the teacher's demonstrated abilities, knowledge and skills against the relevant requirements of the Standards for the career level applied for.

Certification achieved by a teacher is added to the teacher's details on the Register of Teachers and remains valid for a period of five years from the date of certification and can be renewed.

National recognition

The national certification issued by TQI is recognised in those other Australian States and Territories which apply the national framework for standards certification. Teachers with certification as a Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher from any other Australian jurisdiction will have their certification status recognised by TQI after confirmation by the issuing jurisdiction that the certification remains current.

Definition of certification

Certification is awarded by TQI to teachers who provide evidence from multiple sources that is assessed as satisfying professional practice criteria at either of the two higher-level career stages described in the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for certification at the Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher career stages the applicant must hold Full registration with TQI.

Applicants who seek certification at the Highly Accomplished career stage must have been assessed by their employer as satisfactory in their two most recent annual performance assessments.

Applicants who seek certification at the Lead career stage must have been assessed by their employer as satisfactory in their three most recent annual performance assessments.

Teachers do not have to be certified as a Highly Accomplished teacher before applying for Lead teacher status.

Certification requirements

Pre-assessment

Before submitting the preliminary application, teachers are expected to:

- complete the AITSL self-assessment tool to gauge their readiness for certification, and
- have had a professional discussion with their principal or education and care service director/nominated supervisor (or their delegate) regarding their readiness to apply for certification at the level applied for.

Applicants are also expected to:

- attend/view a *Certification Information Session* (with their referees where possible), and to
- attend TQI *Evidence and Annotation* and *Module 1 Workshops* prior to submitting Module 1 evidence; a *Module 2* and a *Module 3 Workshop* prior to submitting Module 2 and Module 3 evidence.

Preliminary Application requires the completion of an online application form via the TQI Teacher Portal, to enter the certification process.

Certification is granted once applicants have been assessed as having demonstrated achievement of three Certification Modules, including verification of evidence by referees: Module 1, Standards 1 and 2 of the Professional Knowledge Domain, based on portfolio evidence; Module 2 Standards 6 and 7 of the Professional Engagement Domain, based on portfolio evidence; and Module 3 Standards 3, 4 and 5 of the Professional Practice Domain based on portfolio evidence and direct evidence of practice on a site visit. In order to progress to the next module, applicants must have been assessed as having achieved the previous module.

In recognition of the learning that occurs for teachers when evidencing their practice against the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, five hours of teacher identified professional learning is automatically allocated to a teacher's profile each time they submit a Certification module for assessment or an application for renewal of certification.

Module 1 of Certification requires applicants to submit the following evidence for assessment in digital, hard copy or hybrid form:

- a written statement addressing all seven of *the Standards*
- a completed TQI evidence map for Standards 1 and 2, the Professional Knowledge Domain
- up to 10 pieces of annotated evidence addressing each of Standards 1 and 2 twice and each of the Descriptors at the relevant level evidenced at least once
- an index of labelled artefacts
- reflection on the direct evidence via annotations
- at least two observation reports on teacher practice, including one from the principal
- the names of up to five referees, including their current principal or delegate (as nominated by the principal) who have direct knowledge of the applicant's professional practice in the Professional Knowledge Domain
- a written description of the Plan for a Lead Initiative for Lead applications.

Module 1 applications will initially be evaluated for compliance. TQI will advise applicants about missing or incomplete parts of the application. Applicants will then have seven days to ensure their application is complete. Applications that remain non-compliant will not be assessed and the Module 1 assessment fee will be refunded.

Following the verification of practice with referees and an assessment that Module 1 evidence demonstrates achievement of Standards 1 and 2 at the appropriate career stage, assessors make a recommendation to TQI for progression to Module 2. Module 2 of Certification requires applicants to submit the following evidence for assessment in digital, hard copy or hybrid form:

- a written statement addressing all seven of *the Standards*
- a completed TQI evidence map for Standards 6 and 7, the Professional Engagement Domain
- up to 10 pieces of annotated evidence addressing each of Standards 6 and 7 twice and each of the Descriptors at the relevant level evidenced at least once
- an index of labelled artefacts
- reflection on the direct evidence
- at least two observation reports on teacher practice, including one from the principal
- the names of up to five referees, including their current principal or delegate (as nominated by the principal) who have direct knowledge of the applicant's professional practice in the Professional Engagement Domain
- a written description of the Progress of a Lead Initiative for Lead applications.

Module 2 applications will initially be evaluated for compliance. TQI will advise applicants about missing or incomplete parts of the application. Applicants will then have seven days to ensure their application is complete. Applications that remain non-compliant will not be assessed and the Module 2 assessment fee will be refunded.

Following the verification of practice with referees and an assessment that Module 2 evidence demonstrates achievement of Standards 6 and 7 at the appropriate career stage, assessors make a recommendation to TQI for progression to Module 3.

Module 3 of Certification requires applicants to submit the following evidence for assessment in digital, hard copy or hybrid form:

- a written statement addressing the Standards
- a completed TQI evidence map for Standards 3, 4 and 5, the Professional Practice Domain

- up to 15 pieces of annotated evidence addressing each of Standards 3, 4 and 5 twice, and each of the Descriptors at the relevant level evidenced at least once
- an index of labelled artefacts
- reflection on the direct evidence
- at least two observation reports on teacher practice, including one from the principal
- the names of up to five referees, including their current principal or delegate (as nominated by the principal) who have direct knowledge of the applicant's professional practice in the Professional Practice Domain
- a written description of a Lead Initiative Summary and Impact for Lead applications.

Module 3 applications will initially be evaluated for compliance. TQI will advise applicants about missing or incomplete parts of the application. Applicants will then have seven days to ensure their application is complete. Applications that remain non-compliant will not be assessed and the Module 3 assessment fee will be refunded.

In Module 3 Part A, portfolio evidence is assessed by assessors, practice verified with referees and a Module 3 Part A report is provided. If Module 3 Part A has been achieved, the applicant progresses to Module 3 Part B, the site visit. The onsite assessment of teacher practice includes the assessment of direct evidence against the Areas of Focus cited in Module 3 Part A report, classroom observation, discussion with the principal, discussion with other colleagues as required and professional discussion with the applicant.

TQI requires applicants to consult with their assessors and school staff in order to design the site visit.

Following Module 3 assessment, assessors make a recommendation to TQI. Applicants who have successfully achieved Modules 1, 2 and 3 of certification will receive a Certificate of National Certification and their certification status (Highly Accomplished or Lead) will be recorded on their TQI records and on the register of teachers maintained by the Institute.

Assessors

TQI allocates two trained external assessors to each applicant. They cannot be from the same school as the applicant nor have significant prior knowledge of the applicant's practice. A conflict-of-interest check is conducted, and where such a conflict is determined, the application will be allocated to a new assessor.

Internal moderation activities will be used by TQI to gauge the rigour, validity and consistency of judgements, the fidelity of the process and inter-rater reliability.

Potential assessors must have Full registration with TQI and be in a formal educational leadership role and/or hold certification as a Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher. Those seeking selection as a certification assessor submit an application. TQI will consider the applications and assessors will be selected for training. Following the completion of training assessors are members of the TQI certification assessor pool and are required to maintain currency through refresher training and assessment.

The role of the principal

As leader of the professional learning community, the principal has a significant role in highlighting exemplary practice. The certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers is practice-based and TQI seeks the active engagement of principals in the certification process.

The principal is responsible for being involved in a professional discussion with the applicant based on the Standards with regard to the applicant's readiness to apply for certification at the relevant level. The principal must provide an observation report of the applicant's practice, a referee statement and be involved in a professional discussion during the site visit. The principal may delegate their responsibilities to a deputy/assistant principal or equivalent school leader who has significant knowledge of the applicant's practice.

Referees

Applicants are required to provide the names and contact details of three to five referees. The assessors will contact at least two, including the principal of the applicant's school. At the Lead career stage, at least one referee must have knowledge of a school-wide initiative led by the applicant and submitted as part of their application for certification. Referees' oral comments from a phone/online conversation will be documented by the assessor and signed by the referee. Referees' comments will be provided by TQI to the applicant on request.

Decision making

Assessors determine whether the applicant meets the certification requirements and make a recommendation to TQI. Should assessors not be in agreement about the decision TQI will appoint a third assessor.

TQI makes decisions about certification on the basis of the evidence submitted and the assessors' reports and communicates the decisions to the applicant.

Feedback

TQI provides applicants with written reports at the end of Module 1, Module 2 and Module 3 Part A and Module 3 Part B.

The module report includes feedback about the assessment of the applicant's annotated evidence and their demonstration of achievement of the relevant Standards at the nominated career stage.

All applicants can request further feedback by contacting TQI to arrange a phone or face-to-face discussion with the assessors and TQI staff. Any request for further feedback must be arranged within 14 days of notification of the outcome of Module 1, Module 2 or Module 3.

Fees

The certification process attracts a tax-deductible fee payable in four parts:

- Payment 1 - submission of the preliminary online application.
- Payment 2 - submission of evidence for Module 1.
- Payment 3 - submission of evidence for Module 2.
- Payment 4 - submission of evidence for Module 3.

Assessment fees are non-refundable once the assessment has taken place.

Fees are determined by the ACT Minister for Education and are detailed in the ACT Certification Overview.

Renewal of Certification

Certification is granted for a fixed period of five years. The purpose of renewal of certification is a quality assurance mechanism to verify an applicant's ongoing performance at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stage. Renewal of certification requires a re-assessment against all seven of *the Standards* through a written statements and verification by referees who have direct knowledge of the applicant's teaching practice in the period since the original certification.

To be eligible for renewal of certification, teachers must have been nationally certified as a Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher for the previous five-year period. They must have met legislative requirements to be fully registered in the ACT, including the requirements for professional conduct, practice and professional learning. Teachers need to have received satisfactory annual performance assessments in the previous five years.

Exceptional circumstances may apply where teachers have taken leave or are in a new position in the previous five years. Provision is made whereby certified teachers may have their certification extended for one year beyond the previous five-year period. This would enable the applicant to receive annual performance assessments in five of the previous six years. In circumstances where teachers have not received an assessment, the principal/delegate nominated by the principal will, as a referee, provide verification of past satisfactory performance.

Re-applying for a certification module

An applicant for Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher certification who has not achieved the module applied for, may revise the application with the benefit of feedback provided in the assessment report and submit a new module application. Such a Highly Accomplished or Lead module application is treated as a new application and new fees apply.

Re-applying with change of certification career stage

An applicant for Lead Teacher who has not achieved Module 1, Module 2 and Module 3 of the certification process may submit substantially the same evidence in an application for the Highly Accomplished Teacher level subsequently, provided it is accompanied by a new written statement and new annotations that demonstrate achievement of the Standards at the Highly Accomplished career stage. Such a Highly Accomplished application is treated as a new application and new fees apply.

Right of Appeal

Applicants who receive an unfavourable decision about completion of Module 1, Module 2 or Module 3, or for renewal of Certification, may request an internal review of that decision within 14 days of being notified of the decision. The request for internal review should be in the form of a statement not exceeding 1000 words indicating the grounds on which the applicant considers that the decision should be reviewed, highlighting challenges to the Standards-based assessment.

On receipt of the request for internal review of a Certification module decision, or a renewal of Certification decision, TQI will appoint a review panel of assessors not previously involved in the module assessment, or renewal of Certification, that is being appealed. They will assess the evidence for Certification, or written statements for renewal of Certification, against the Standards and provide TQI with a recommendation to uphold or to alter the decision within 21 days. The outcome will be communicated to the appellant within seven days of receipt of the report from the review panel.

Certification is an appealable decision. An applicant who has been refused certification or renewal of Certification after the completion of an internal review may appeal to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for a review of the decision.

Record keeping

TQI record keeping is regulated by the *Territory Records Act 2002* and is managed in accordance with policies and guidelines issued by the ACT Territory Records Office.

TQI holds on file a copy of applications, reports, letters to applicants, letters to assessors and certificates.

Collections of evidence will be available to be collected by applicants one month after finalisation of the assessment process.

Privacy

TQI has issued a Territory Privacy Principle 5 (TPP 5) notice for the collection of personal information, in *accordance with the Information Privacy Act 2014*.

The notice is available online and outlines:

- when personal information is collected and how it is used
- when personal information may be disclosed and the legislative authority for that disclosure
- the impact if you do not consent to supplying TQI with the information requested
- what to do if you believe that TQI has not handled your personal information correctly.

To request a copy of the TPP 5 notice in another format, please contact TQI.

Policy information

Approved by

The ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board.

Approval date

Current policy as approved by the TQI Board on 2/12/2025.

Publication of policy

This policy will be published on the TQI Portal and website and made available in printed format on request. The version of the policy on the Portal can be regarded as the policy in force at that time.

Review and changes to policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years from the date of approval, or earlier if required. All changes to the policy are approved by the TQI Board.



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