

Submission to the *Senate
Standing Committee on
Employment, Workplace
Relations and Education*

Inquiry into the
academic standards of
school education

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INTRODUCTION

The Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) welcomes the opportunity to respond to relevant aspects of the terms of reference issued by the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education. This response will confine itself to aspects that relate to the role of the QCT in ensuring, supporting and promoting a quality teaching workforce for Queensland schools through its legislated role and functions.

BACKGROUND

The Queensland Government has a significant and ongoing program of reform to transform Queensland into a 'Smart State'. Education is a key element in the Smart State agenda. Thus, Queensland is currently implementing the most significant program of education and training reform in the State's history.

This program includes the following essential elements:

- the introduction of a full-time preparatory year from 2007;
- the raising of the school leaving age from 15 years to 16 or 17 years such that all young people in Queensland will complete 12 years of schooling or equivalent;
- pedagogy to transform teaching, enhance student learning outcomes, and help prepare young people for the world-of-work and successful participation in society more broadly;
- the development of pathways through post-compulsory years to further education, training and work;
- a significant investment in information and communications technologies in schools; and,
- a commitment to the provision of lifelong education and training opportunities for all.

TEACHER REGISTRATION IN QUEENSLAND

Queensland has a long and proud history being the first state in Australia to mandate teacher registration and in many ways, has played a pioneering role in overseeing standards and practices in teacher education. In addition, in 2004 the *Review of the Powers and Functions of the Board of Teacher Registration* was commissioned to examine and strengthen professional standards in the teaching workforce and enhance the status of the teaching profession.

The QCT was established in 2006 as a statutory authority under the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 (the Act), funded by teachers, with responsibilities including:

- promoting the importance of teaching as a highly valued and ethical profession
- regulating entry to and ongoing membership of the profession in Queensland
- developing and applying professional standards and codes of practice for teachers that reflect the values, needs and expectations of teachers, students, other educational stakeholders and society; and
- approving and monitoring preservice teacher education programs.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR QUEENSLAND TEACHERS

The *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers*, developed by the QCT, for teacher registration purposes, describe the abilities, knowledge, understandings and professional values that teachers in Queensland schools demonstrate as they provide meaningful and high quality educational experiences for students. The standards celebrate, articulate and support the complex and varied nature of a teacher's work.

The *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* are central to the QCT's registration and approval functions. The standards provide benchmarks for the full registration of teachers for Queensland schools, and also will be used to inform the development of a range of policies and practices including:

- approval of preservice teacher education programs, guided by the standards, to determine the eligibility for provisional registration of graduates from Queensland higher education institutes;
- decisions for the granting of provisional and full registration to new applicants;
- the granting of full registration to provisional registrants;
- the Continuing Professional Learning Framework for teachers which supports and promotes a professional culture characterised by continual teacher self-reflection and ongoing professional development as a major component of the requirements for formal renewal of registration every five years;
- returning to teaching programs for those teachers returning to work in schools after a significant absence; and
- promotion of the teaching profession through raising awareness of the complex nature of teachers' work and strengthening public confidence in the profession.

As such, the standards have particular relevance to teachers across the career continuum including graduates, preservice teachers, those in leadership positions as well as employing authorities and providers of preservice teacher education programs in Queensland.

The QCT is committed to using the *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* to enhance teacher professionalism, boost public confidence in the profession and promote high quality teaching in Queensland schools.

The application of the standards is underpinned by a number of policies developed by the QCT as flagged above and by the following general principles:

- registration decisions are based on the standards;
- the standards will be applied differently at the different registration junctures;
- attainment of the standards will be supported by evidence appropriate to the registration juncture; and
- the standards, their application to the various registration junctures and evidentiary requirements will be subject to ongoing monitoring and review.

Context for the development of the standards

Forces for change and ‘knowledge society’ impacts:

A belief in the positive contribution that education makes to the life chances for students was fundamental to the expression of the *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers*. The acknowledgement of change as a constant in modern societies across the globe and education and specifically teachers are pivotal in preparing students to embrace a future that will include diversity and uncertainty with optimism and resilience.

The starting point for the articulation of the standards was an examination of the future developmental needs of students including the skills and knowledge they would need to participate in learning, earning (work), leisure and as an effective member of society - and the implications for the work of teachers.

The development of the *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* has been informed by a number of recent studies that focused on teacher quality, the changing nature of teachers’ work and the new demands being placed on teachers by students, their families and the broader society.

Central to a consideration of the future needs of students is acknowledgement of a society faced with rapid social, economic, technological and cultural change. Globalisation, the explosion in the use of ICT, diverse family structures and changing workforce patterns, including a growing tendency towards ‘portfolio’ careers, are impacting on society and the way we prepare young people to be effective citizens. They denote a society where the ability to acquire and apply knowledge, rather than just knowledge itself, is valued.

To effectively participate in the future, students need to be lifelong learners, developing transferable skills that will enable them to contribute meaningfully to society. Of paramount importance is the need for education to equip students with the skills required to learn, transfer learning, use ICT, contribute to teams, manage change and be self aware.

As professionals, teachers themselves need to possess, apply, articulate and model the same *knowledge worker* skills that they seek to develop in students.

Other key influences:

As well as devoting considerable attention to knowledge worker themes, the *Report of the Review of the Powers and Functions of the Board of Teacher Registration* (McMeniman, 2004) called for the establishment of explicit and robust professional standards for determining entry to and continuing membership of the profession.

The *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* initiative (Queensland Government, 2002) echoes these themes and calls for relevant and engaged learning targeted to meet the needs of students in the early, middle and senior phases of learning.

The *Report on Indigenous Education* (Ministerial Advisory Committee for Educational Renewal, 2004) finds that quality teaching attends to individual needs, sets high expectations, provides meaningful learning experiences and forms the basis for the rigorous pursuit of improved outcomes for Indigenous students.

Reports such as *Raising the Standards* (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002) and *Teaching Reading*, the report of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005) provides specific advice about national priorities in these two important areas.

A further key influence on the *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* is the *National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching* that was endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in 2003.

Both the *National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2003) and the *Report of the Review of the Powers and Functions of the Board of Teacher Registration* (McMeniman, 2004) highlight the need for and benefits to be gained from establishing robust standards for the teaching profession that:

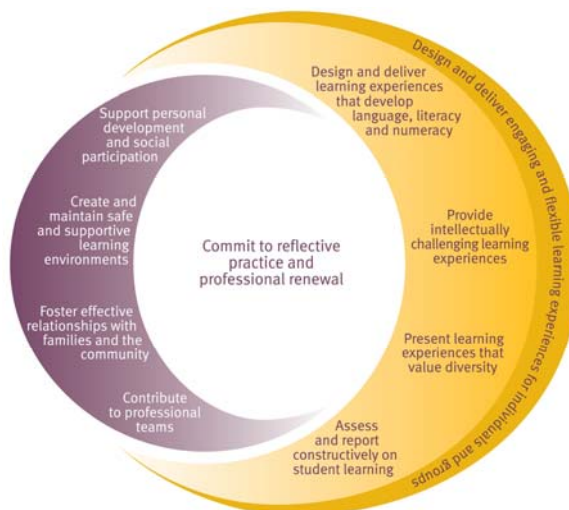
- authentically reflect the complex nature of teachers' work
- recognise and integrate the knowledge and skills that teachers need to provide quality education
- acknowledge the professional commitment and contribution teachers make in their daily work
- address the broad cross-sectoral priorities in education in Queensland and nationally.

Collectively, the range of reports reviewed has shaped the inclusive and learner-centred nature of the standards, including the approach to addressing the needs of Indigenous learners and the embedding of ICT across the standards.

Model

The *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* outline the capabilities that teachers must possess in order to provide high quality instruction and support improved student learning.

The standards align closely with the key elements of the *National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching (2003)* – professional practice, knowledge, relationships and values. They cluster around three key facets of teachers' work – teaching and learning, professional relationships and professional growth.



One cluster focuses on **teaching and learning**, and the teacher's role in designing and managing individual and group learning experiences that:

- develop students' language, literacy and numeracy;
- are intellectually challenging;
- value diversity; and
- incorporate effective assessment and reporting of student learning.

As generic standards, important categories of knowledge are embedded and require that within each highlighted aspect of practice, teachers know and understand:

- the content, processes and skills of the areas they teach, including links across content areas;
- the socially, culturally and historically constructed nature of knowledge; and
- relevant curriculum frameworks and the programs developed from them.

A second cluster highlights the way in which effective teachers build **relationships**, both within and beyond the school, that:

- support the social development and participation of young people;
- create safe, supportive and stimulating learning environments;
- foster effective relationships with families and the community; and
- contribute to effective professional teams.

A third dimension underlines the commitment of the professional to **reflective practice**, **professional renewal** and ongoing contribution to a vibrant profession.

While each standard highlights a distinct aspect of professional practice, it is important to recognise that the standards are interdependent and interconnected. For example, in order for teachers to work effectively with diverse groups of learners, it is critical that they are able to create safe and supportive learning environments and gain the support of and are supportive of other members of the team. The standards are a total package of integrated components to be applied holistically, not used as a checklist of competencies.

While the standards outline clearly *what* teachers need to demonstrate, it is important to note that they do not attempt to prescribe *how* this should be done. Individually and in teams, teachers call on vast repertoires of practice and this diversity serves to enrich students' educational experiences. Teachers use their skills, knowledge and expertise to continuously analyse, make and act on professional judgements, while taking account of contextual factors. These ongoing decisions are the hallmark of and reflect the complex work of the contemporary professional. The standards provide a framework and a common language to support teachers to identify, assess and strengthen their professional commitment, professional relationships and understandings about teaching and learning.

QCT PROGRAM APPROVAL GUIDELINES

The *Program Approval Guidelines* constitute the policy underpinning the QCT's approval of Queensland preservice teacher education based on the *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers*. Preservice teacher education programs offered in Queensland must be approved by the QCT in order for graduates to be granted provisional registration as a teacher in Queensland.

The *Program Approval Guidelines* are an expression of the practice and knowledge requirements expected of a preservice teacher on graduation from an approved program (derived from the Standards) combined with additional program requirements. The document includes:

- information about the application of the Professional Standards at graduate level;
- mandatory program requirements to enable programs to be approved by the QCT; and
- program approval procedures.

The *Program Approval Guidelines* include a guide to the application of the standards for purposes of approval of preservice teacher education programs, derived from the *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers*. The guide orients the standards to the level of preservice teacher education.

The program guidelines within the document address areas including requirements of the higher education institution such as staffing and resources, the conceptual framework, design and structure of programs and entry requirements for entry to preservice teacher education. Guidelines are provided for the breadth and depth of preparation of graduates and for the professional experience (practicum) of programs. Priority areas (eg Indigenous education, literacy and numeracy, individual learning needs, ICT, classroom management skills) are also identified, with recognition that these will need to be regularly updated.

A two-phase approval process detailed in the guidelines offers consultation and advice for higher education institutions in order to achieve confidence by the QCT in the preparation and early implementation of programs supported by strengthened monitoring of outcomes.

The first stage of the approval process includes both preliminary consultation and consideration of the formal submission that demonstrates how the program meets the requirements of the *Program Approval Guidelines*. This initial approval enables a program to commence and remains in place until completion of the first full cycle of offering the program. At this time, the program is re-approved through the Phase Two process which involves a review of both the operation and the outcomes of the program. Phase Two approval is thereafter renewed on a five-yearly basis.

The remaining suite of programs is set for completion in an intensive development timeline that is currently well underway.

SUITABILITY TO TEACH AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

The regulation of the profession and enhancing public confidence in the quality of the teaching profession is underpinned and strengthened by ensuring a person's suitability to teach and where necessary applying rigorous standards in considering a person's professional conduct. Integral to quality teaching in Queensland is the role of the QCT in maintaining public confidence in the system of professional registration of teachers and ensuring high standards of conduct and ethical behaviour in the teaching profession.

Due to the importance of the suitability and conduct of teachers the QCT is embarking on the development of a code of ethics for teachers in Queensland through consultation with major stakeholders and members of the profession.

The fundamental ethical values aimed at strengthen the teaching profession in Queensland arise around the principles of ensuring that teachers continue to demonstrate integrity, dignity, responsibility, justice and care.

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CONSISTENCY

Teacher registration and accreditation authorities across Australia and New Zealand collectively, through the *Australasian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities (AFTRAA)*, are working together to develop and ensure consistently high standards for teacher registration and accreditation and the approval of preservice teacher education programs across Australia.

Appendices:

Appended to this overview submission are:

- State of Queensland (Queensland College of Teachers) 2007, *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers*, Queensland College of Teachers, Brisbane; and
- Program Approval Guidelines 2007, Queensland College of Teachers, Brisbane

References

Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005.

McMeniman, M 2004, *Report of the Review of the Powers and Functions of the Board of Teacher Registration*, State of Queensland (Department of Education and the Arts), Brisbane.

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