



QUEENSLAND INDEPENDENT EDUCATION  
UNION

INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION OF  
AUSTRALIA – QUEENSLAND AND NORTHERN  
TERRITORY BRANCH



## CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING POLICY

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### 1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 In a context of constant change and pressure to meet growing social and economic expectations, schools generally, and teachers and other education staff specifically, need to be equipped professionally to provide quality educational experiences for the students in their care. One of the key factors in ensuring the quality of education provision is the maintenance of a highly skilled workforce in non-government schools.
- 1.2 All employees in the non-government sector of education have a right to professional learning which meets their needs and equips them with the knowledge and skills and develops the attitudes necessary to provide quality educational experiences for students in their care. Such professional learning should also assist employees to reach their full potential as educators and as human beings.

The provision of professional learning should:

- Identify and minimize structural barriers to the accessing of and participation in professional learning;
- Accommodate diversity of all sorts within the education profession;
- Be cognizant of employment modes and roles;
- Identify and respond to characteristics in the educational workforce such as:
  - Gender
  - Geographical location
  - School/system viability
  - Family demands/responsibilities
  - Age
  - Career trajectory
  - Career aspirations
  - Abilities and talents
  - Culture

- 1.3 This policy acknowledges that teachers are constantly engaged in a wide variety of professional learning activities including:
- professional reading;
  - collegial discussion and team work;
  - professional reflection on students' learning, assessment and reporting;
  - conference participation, external workshops, staff presentations, in-service seminars, action research projects;
  - formal university studies;
  - QSA in-service;
  - relevant professional practice in non-school settings; and
  - mentoring of student teachers, interns, early career teachers or returning to teach registrants etc.
- 1.4 This policy further acknowledges that school officers and support staff are constantly engaged in collaborative and personal vocational learning as well as mandated professional learning.

## 2. Definitions

- 2.1 Key considerations in the definition of professional learning include:
- Professional learning is defined as a life-long on-going process which aims to develop, sustain and extend professional knowledge and competencies of all employees; and
  - The process by which employees acquire or enhance skills, knowledge and/or abilities that impact upon their personal professional development and impact on their current or future job performance.
- 2.2 Given the key considerations above, our union accepts as a basis of this policy the official Queensland College of Teachers definition that:
- “Continuous professional learning is a process which enriches teaching and learning through involvement in a diverse range of formal and informal activities which enable employees to enhance their skills, abilities, values, knowledge and understanding”.
- 2.3 Employee Personal Professional Learning
- This learning arises out of the emergent need of the individual employee, often from formative appraisal but always consistent with a perceived need at a particular time on an individual learning continuum. This may be undertaken in employer time and at employer expense, in employee time and at employee expense or a combination thereof.
- 2.4 Employer Mandated Professional Learning
- This is professional learning required by the employer to meet a school or system need. This professional learning should be in employer time and at employer expense.

### **3. Rationale for Continuous Professional Learning**

Any definition of professional learning should take account of the way adults learn and the experience the employee brings to the learning opportunity when examining the breadth of professional learning.

3.1 Our union believes that in-service training and professional learning are the cornerstones of innovation in any organisation. Schools, as organisations, must place significant budgetary and policy importance on the provision of high quality training and professional learning. This should include the appointment of a designated Professional Learning Co-ordinator in every school. In addition, schools must actively develop the culture of learning communities in order to support the professional learning of staff in an ongoing way.

3.2 Our union endorses the importance of professional learning as essential:

- to ensure that employees can respond professionally to economic, social, cultural, technological and scientific change through the development of personal and intellectual qualities;
- to respond to the demand for increased quality of educational outcomes by improving teachers' classroom capabilities, knowledge base and professional judgments;
- to support employees in meeting their responsibilities for learning in schools through their own pursuit of learning and excellence;
- to provide enabling conditions for employees, employing authorities and other agencies to initiate creative approaches to emerging educational issues;
- to recognise the professional status of teachers and the consequent career long nature of the professional development process;
- to sustain the motivation, commitment and enthusiasm of employees and to enhance their self-esteem and sense of control over their professional lives by providing opportunities for employees to reflect on, analyse and improve their own performance; and
- to allow teachers to develop new competencies and skills as they move from classroom positions to administrative or specialist positions, or to new environments.

3.3 The above may be achieved by the following:

- work on personal professional research and projects;
- investigation;
- reading programs;
- collegial support;
- structured collegial discussions;
- professional learning packages;
- seminars and conferences;
- support from colleagues, eg PAR's, Lead(ing) Teachers, Experienced Teachers;
- on the job training;
- mentoring;

- coaching;
- industrial placement;
- job rotation;
- secondments and higher duties / relieving opportunities; and
- on-line learning.

3.4 Professional learning can be stimulated in many different ways including observing other employees, introduction of new technologies, evidence of social injustice, policy initiatives by schools and systems, development of theory and practice of teaching. Once stimulated, the workplace learning of employees occurs in both informal and formally planned ways.

#### **4. Purpose**

4.1 The purpose of professional learning is to develop a strong commitment by staff to their own professional growth through the recognition that quality professional development:

- embodies principles of effective learning;
- has substance, credibility and worth;
- is adequately supported and resourced;
- is an effective form of self-determined learning; and
- is beneficial to the individual and, through the process of personal development, contributes to the enhancement of the quality of learning within the school.

4.2 In planning professional learning it is important to recognise the value of a sense of ownership, knowledge of appropriate competencies, the presence of incentives for commitment and adequate and appropriate resourcing in terms of time and financial support.

Professional learning should also take into account a range of contexts such as:

- the individual;
- colleagues within the school;
- the supervisor;
- school support centres;
- private providers;
- subject conferences;
- professional knowledge;
- professional practice;
- professional values; and
- professional relationships.

#### **5. Principles of Professional Learning**

Our union believes:

- School employing authorities must ensure access to quality professional learning by all employees through an equitable and transparent processes. The range of

professional learning opportunities that can be accessed should be both clearly identified and publicised;

- These opportunities should be designed collaboratively to meet the specific needs of the individual, as well as needs which may arise through school, system and legislative requirements;
- Whilst many teachers engage in personal professional learning in their own time and at their own expense, a significant quantum of professional learning opportunities must be made available during ordinary hours of work;
- Employees in regional and rural locations must have access to quality professional learning opportunities which, as far as possible, should be delivered in their geographical area. The employer must provide flexible learning opportunities through, for example, video conferencing, online conference or a suitable replacement and time for the employee to travel, if necessary, for professional development purposes, as well as fund accommodation, child care and out of pocket expenses on a reasonable basis;
- School employers must provide adequate support for employees involved in attaining Vocational Competencies (VET) or formal study which is relevant to their school role, including at least 5 days paid study leave each year plus paid leave to attend all required work experience or examinations and a significant contribution to the payment of HECS/fees. Where an employee is required by the employer to gain a particular credential, the employee must have paid leave to attend all classes and the school must pay the full costs of the course;
- State and federal governments must adequately resource teacher professional development programs either directly or through targeted programs. In particular, the state government must include funded professional learning for both government and non-government teachers in the implementation of any federal or state government education initiatives; and
- Outside of paid employer time, participation in professional learning is determined by individual learners.

## **6. The Role and Responsibility of the School/System**

The school/system as employer has a range of responsibilities in relation to providing access to quality professional learning for staff. Specifically:

- The school should ensure a mix of self-initiated professional learning with “external” requirements (i.e. school, system, State);
- In-service provision should avoid “one-off” opportunities, and should be organized in appropriately spaced, sequential modules which allow for input, reflective practice, and further development and refinement;
- All schools need to allocate sufficient flexible time within the school year timetable (i.e. student free days) for professional learning so that opportunities can occur in ways most appropriate to meet the needs of employees (i.e. allow for team approaches, sequential modules, action research approaches, teacher exchanges/school visits, etc). This approach would clearly indicate (and support) the view that professional learning is a significant and integral part of the school yearly plan;
- Schools should be committed to providing, over a given cycle (e.g. three year period) sufficient professional learning opportunities so that all employees, including administrators, experience a number of in-service opportunities adequate

- to both their needs and that of the school/system. This would allow for a more systematic yet flexible approach to models of provision (e.g. block, team, etc);
- In-service / professional learning opportunities should be in school time (but may be augmented by additional personal time, consistent with the employee’s personal professional needs and at the discretion of the employee);
  - Schools and individual teachers should be able to plan their own professional learning programs over a year or cyclical period, having regard for a mix of personal, school and system needs;
  - Schools should ensure that the co-ordination of the provision of professional learning opportunities is carried out and recorded in an adequately resourced manner with annual statements of professional learning, provided to employees, sufficiently detailed to meet Queensland College of Teachers’ regulations relating to registration requirements; and
  - Employees may request that elements of their personal professional learning be recorded in the annual statement of learning, the design of which will be sufficient to meet Queensland College of Teachers’ audit requirements or requirements of successor agencies.

## **7. Access to Effective Professional Learning**

Employees are entitled to have access to quality professional learning opportunities. Professional learning activities should be guided by best practice elements of effective adult learning including:

- participation being voluntary;
- content has been negotiated in the planning stages by course implementers with prospective participants;
- builds on individual’s skills and experiences;
- encourages “learner collaboration”;
- recognises the interdependence of individuals and their institutional settings;
- starts with work-a-day experiences and perceptions of individuals;
- addresses “social” as well as “material” realities;
- includes adequate follow-up and support to participants at the end of the course;
- course allows participants to proceed at their own pace;
- people in leadership positions within schools also participate; and
- the desirability of mentoring so that one has the support of at least one other colleague on staff.

## **8. Access to a Variety of Models of Effective Provision**

Employees’ professional learning should not be delivered via one model only. Employees benefit from experiencing a variety of models of professional learning and schools need to ensure that their teaching staff are able to access a range of professional learning modes including:

- individual skill and knowledge development, either face to face or on-line, in conjunction with a reflective model of adult learning;
- school-focused, i.e. job-embedded and institutional specific learning activities (individual or team approach);
- employee action research – e.g. small scale intervention by teachers in their own classrooms or schools;

- school-based collaborative action research; and
- school cluster approaches which maximise resources and knowledge and which allow for broader reflection.

## **9. Access to a Variety of Content for Professional Learning**

It is widely acknowledged that employees' ongoing professional learning plans should contain a variety of focus areas. The focus of professional learning that is provided and funded by the school should be identified by the individual teacher in discussion with the school's professional development co-ordinator or the designated person with responsibility for professional learning.

## **10. Credentialing of Professional Learning Activities**

Employers must ensure that employer mandated professional learning activities meet the professional standards as designated by the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) and/or carry credit for the continuing professional learning requirements of the QCT. Some activities may carry credit for university and/or other higher education courses. Such credit transfer arrangements help to ensure the quality of provision and facilitate ongoing participation in further training by employees.

## **11. Queensland College of Teachers Re-Registration Requirements**

The imposition of professional development requirements by the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) linked to re-registration, requires collaboration between employees and the employer to make sure that a quantum of professional development articulates to the QCT Professional Standards and therefore meets the re-registration requirements of QCT. To satisfy these requirements:

- Professional development offered to teachers at designated pupil-free days throughout the academic year should consist of professional development that articulates with QCT professional standards;
- Professional development offered at various other times throughout the school year, such as occurs at staff meetings, should articulate to QCT professional standards;
- Principals should make available to staff, upon request, and at the relevant junctures, a full accounting of professional development offered by the school or facilitated by engagement at the school and undertaken by employees in a proforma which meets QCT audit requirements; and
- Casual teachers regularly employed in specific schools or systems, and teachers on extended leave, should be offered access to professional development necessary to assist them to meet the QCT requirements for continued registration.

## **12. Planning Professional Learning**

12.1 The Queensland College of Teachers have identified areas where professional development should be targeted in the Professional Standards for Teachers. Other

employees should be encouraged to access professional development relevant to their professional standards, eg psychologist.

- 12.2 Any planned professional learning must take account of the phases through which employees move. An example for teachers would be:
- Nascent / Graduation – in the early years;
  - Competence / Identification – with teaching as a career;
  - Accomplishment / Consolidation and extension in teaching – strong sense of competency in the classroom and beyond; and
  - Leadership / Increased influence – looking for wider responsibility within the education service.
- 12.3 The implication of the above for professional learning is that teacher learning cannot be forced. Teachers gain new ideas and increase their knowledge and skills as an integral part of their working lives and as part of a personal learning continuum.

### **13. Guidelines for Implementation**

#### **13.1 Personal Professional Learning**

Employees, as professional people, are competent judges of what forms of development they require, either arising out of appraisal or identified as part of a personal professional learning plan. Personal professional learning is voluntary. However, our union encourages all members to recognise the need for upgrading skills and urges them to take all reasonable opportunities to do so.

Our union recognises that many teachers seek to extend their professional skills and competencies through engagement with professional learning, often at their own expense and in their own time as part of the individual teacher's personal professional development plan.

#### **13.2 Employer Mandated Professional Learning**

Employer mandated professional learning may relate to accreditation or specific initiation within a school or system. As such your employer may require you to participate and offer the learning program in paid time.

Our union believes that the most effective school based programs are those where employee input relating to program organisation and subject input are part of an ongoing consultative process.

Consistent with the above the following guidelines should be applied:

- Mandated professional learning should be fully funded by employers (as the principal beneficiaries) where the program has any relevance to teaching or school administration situations. It is the role of the employer to identify appropriate available funding for professional learning;
- Where professional learning is undertaken which is directly related to a school situation, employers should support staff fully by recognising that such commitments take precedent over "out of hours" school activities;

- Our union recognises that management may require certain skills from employees to increase administrative efficiency (e.g. computer literacy). Staff may be required to acquire these skills, provided this is done during working hours. Where such employer mandated professional learning occurs outside of normal working hours, time off in lieu must be provided or in the case of school officers or supportive staff, overtime rates apply where it is difficult for the employee to take time in lieu; and
- Where administration seeks to introduce new subjects to the curriculum for which staff must be trained, the voluntary nature of professional learning must be strictly observed and all training must be on time release during normal hours and at full pay.

#### 14. Policy Development

Our union recognises that concepts of lifelong learning and the developmental steps along a personal learning continuum are grounded in substantive research.

Consistent with this, our union views this policy as an evolving document and commits to reviewing it on a regular basis to maintain its currency and relevance to members.

The Education Committee notes the possible merger between various agencies including the Queensland College of Teachers. Where reference is made to the QCT this will be applied to any successor authority.

#### RELATED DOCUMENTS AND LINKS

Document ID	Document Type	Document Name
Nil		

#### REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Date	Made By	Approved By	Reason
1	September 2007	Education Committee	QIEU Council	New Policy
2	October 2007	Education Committee	QIEU Council	Update
3	May 2010	Education Committee	IEUA-QNT Branch Executive	Update