



**INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION OF AUSTRALIA –
QUEENSLAND AND NORTHERN TERRITORY BRANCH**

SUBMISSION

***PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS PROJECT -
ACCOMPLISHED TEACHERS
CONSULTATION PAPER***

**NORTHERN TERRITORY
STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL
PRACTICE FOR ACCOMPLISHED
TEACHERS**

NOVEMBER 2007

IEU-QNT CONTACT: CHRIS SEYMOUR

Telephone: (07) 3839 7020

Fax: (07) 3839 7021

<p style="text-align: center;">NORTHERN TERRITORY STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FOR ACCOMPLISHED TEACHERS</p>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. A GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHER STANDARDS	3
3. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE IEU-QNT SUBMISSION.....	4
4. SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO FOCUS QUESTIONS.....	5
5. CONCLUDING STATEMENT	8
6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	9

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Independent Education Union of Australia – Queensland and Northern Territory Branch (IEU-QNT) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Professional Standards Project – Accomplished Teachers Consultation Paper.
- 1.2 IEU-QNT consistently engages in education debate at both State and National levels through the IEU Branch Education Committee (a group of registered and practising teachers) and through its national counterpart the Independent Education Union Education Committee which receives input from teachers in all States and Territories.
- 1.3 In preparing this submission, IEU-QNT has engaged in a process of consultation with its members.
- 1.4 IEU-QNT is a federally registered union which represents teachers, support staff and ancillary staff in non-government education institutions in Queensland and the Northern Territory. IEU-QNT currently has a membership approaching 14,500.

2. A GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHER STANDARDS

A general framework based on standards developed in collaboration with the profession, research based and verified should identify and support an integrated career structure for teachers.

The Ministerial Council of State and Federal Education Ministers (MCEETYA) has already proposed a National Framework for Standards including four career dimensions (Graduation, Competence, Accomplishment and Leadership) and describes the work of teachers through four categories (Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, Professional Values and Professional Relationships).

IEU-QNT is pleased to note that the Teacher Registration Board – Northern Territory (TRB-NT) has based its structure on the work of MCEETYA and the work in a number of jurisdictions in Australia to date, and endorses the TRB-NT scaffold which broadly describes the teaching career structure with an appropriate hierarchy of standards for each band under the following headings:

Pre-service teacher education

Graduate teacher

Competent teacher

Accomplished teacher

Leadership

The IEU-QNT notes the work of a number of State registration authorities on standards including the Queensland College of Teachers, NSW Institute of Teachers and the Victorian Institute of Teachers as well as TRB-NT. The IEU-QNT supports the continuing work of the State registration authorities and believes that it will be possible in time to develop a Nationally Consistent set of Standards to describe and identify teachers across the various teacher career bands.

3. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE IEU-QNT SUBMISSION

IEU-QNT believes that the following principles are necessary in the development of any systemic approach to identifying and rewarding accomplished teachers.

3.1 *The importance of accomplished teaching*

- 3.1.1 Student achievement depends to a large extent on the knowledge, skills and application of their teachers
- 3.1.2 Greater value needs to be placed on the work of teachers who attain accomplished teaching standards to provide significant incentives for all teachers to develop their professional practice.
- 3.1.3 If greater value is to be placed on good teaching, it is necessary to increase our ability to evaluate teacher performance in ways that are valid, reliable and fair.

3.2 *Defining accomplished teaching*

- 3.2.1 Standards for defining accomplished teaching should be research-based, and subject to rigorous validation.
- 3.2.2 Standards for evaluating teacher performance should reflect the full scope of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do, and factors that are under their control.
- 3.2.3 The knowledge and skill underpinning effective teaching is sophisticated and complex – standards for accomplished teaching and methods for gathering evidence need to reflect this complexity.

3.3 *Assessing accomplished teaching*

- 3.3.1 Valid methods for evaluating teacher performance focus directly on evidence about what students are doing, learning and experiencing as a result of conditions for learning established by the teacher.
- 3.3.2 Systems for rewarding accomplished teaching should be based on high teaching performance standards, not on quotas. (It is in everyone's interest for all teachers to achieve high teaching standards.)
- 3.3.3 Such systems have a different purpose from annual reviews of performance based on contractual duties that are the responsibility of employers: they are intended to support major stages of career advancement.

3.4 Implementing systems for identifying and recognising accomplished teaching

- 3.4.1 Governments, employing authorities, registration bodies, the teaching profession and their unions all need to be involved in designing and implementing systems for identifying recognising accomplished teaching.
- 3.4.2 A system for identifying accomplished teachers needs to be administratively feasible, publicly credible, professionally acceptable, legally defensible and appropriately funded.
- 3.4.3 Systems for identifying teachers who attain high standards of teaching should be profession-wide and provide teachers with a widely-recognised portable certification.
- 3.4.4 Promotional positions need to be available in schools for teachers who are awarded professional certification to capitalise on their expertise and capacity for teacher leadership.
- 3.4.5 An effective system for rewarding accomplished teachers will require additional recurrent funding from governments.

4. SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO FOCUS QUESTIONS

4.1 Do the draft Professional Standards for Accomplished Teachers adequately reflect accomplished teacher's work?

IEU-QNT is generally comfortable with the initial drafting which links accomplished teaching to its impact on student outcomes through the demonstration of professional attributes.

We are further encouraged by the inclusion of standards which reflect and recognise accomplished teachers' commitment to professional learning, active engagement in the life of the school, as well as the teacher's commitment to and provision of opportunities in the learning environment of students. This reflects the community's expectations that a full and positive school experience provided by accomplished teachers for students is manifestly more substantial and broader ranging than the overly simplistic notion of assessing teachers through student outcomes on the national testing benchmark agenda.

4.2 Do the Professional Standards for Accomplished Teachers reflect the variety of unique teaching sites in the Northern Territory in which accomplished teachers practise?

The words in the Standards do not specifically include or exclude reference to the variety of unique teaching sites in the Northern Territory.

The Standards do, in part, raise expectations that teachers will employ strategies to take account of, or recognise, the demands of unique teaching sites and the diverse needs of students in them.

This expectation contributes to the complexity of teaching in these sites but no additional reference is made in the Standards to rewarding this expectation, even though research underlines the positive impact of a responsive accomplished teacher has on student outcomes at all ability levels.

There is little recognition in the Standards document of specialisation, remoteness, paucity of technology and difficulties in providing release for accomplished teachers to engage in collegial activity outside of their rural or remote areas (eg there is no Performing Arts Teachers Association in the Territory and interstate liaison would be required). Without contextualising these Standards, IEU-QNT is not satisfied that the standards adequately take account of the variety of unique teaching sites in the Northern Territory.

4.3 Do the draft Professional Standards for Accomplished Teachers recognise accomplished teachers' understanding of the curriculum in the learners' contexts and cultures?

IEU-QNT believes the draft Standards set a high expectation of accomplished teachers in understanding of curriculum in the learners' contexts and cultures.

Whilst noting Section 4 of the Standards (Accomplished Teachers know how students learn and how to teach them effectively), the Standards seem reliant on accomplished teachers providing leadership on techniques for understanding and seeking to ameliorate special learning needs and utilising knowledge of student background, interests and prior achievements.

The intent of the Standards appears to be to recognise that student engagement and performance is influenced by multiple factors, however much of this understanding comes from accomplished teachers using their knowledge, experience and research skills to particularise teaching and learning and remove barriers to responding to diversity.

The knowledge, experience and skills of accomplished teachers is not recognised or rewarded in a positive way in these Standards and clarity needs to be brought to how accomplished teachers will see career progression, recognition and financial reward for their accomplished status.

4.4 Do the draft Professional Standards for accomplished teachers reflect the high standard of leadership expected of accomplished teachers in developing professional engagement across the school community?

IEU-QNT notes the draft Standards articulate, to varying degrees, an expectation that accomplished teachers will drive vision and influence direction within a community, school or department context.

Whilst research supports the view that collaboration and collegial relationships in schools are healthy and contribute to quality outcomes in student learning, we are concerned that such expectations are time consuming and draining on teachers where time release and opportunities to renew and recharge are not funded by employers/government.

This is particularly noticeable in rural/remote community schools and schools where the environment and particularised student disadvantage makes staff turnover a major factor in planning and delivery.

IEU-QNT believes issues relating to isolation and disadvantage be recognised in the Standards and/or in supporting material which contextualises the Standards.

4.5 Do the Professional Standards for Accomplished Teachers reflect accomplished teachers' deep knowledge of curriculum, pedagogical practice and learning processes of students across contextual settings?

IEU-QNT believes that the draft Standards recognise the needs of students to be lifelong learners with a skill set which is both transferable and robust enough for them to effectively contribute to and be effective citizens in a modern Australia.

The role of accomplished teachers in providing subject expertise, coupled to skills in teaching and learning, is well articulated.

We are not sure that the need to provide ways for accomplished teachers to acquire new skills is adequately articulated nor the impediments to quality professional learning in rural and remote communities adequately addressed.

4.6 Do the draft Professional Standards for Accomplished Teachers reflect the extent of accomplished teachers' ongoing engagement in research and evidence based learning?

IEU-QNT believes the draft Standards reflect an appropriate expectation of ongoing engagement in research and evidence based learning.

Quality professional learning for accomplished teachers is often impacted by access to technology, teleconferencing facilities and teacher release capacity in less well resourced schools and/or in many rural and remote schools.

Professional renewal is essential if accomplished teachers are to critically reflect in their practice and ground their standards in contemporary research and the needs of a contemporary society.

We do not believe the Standards can be effectively met in this context without adequate resourcing which must be seen as an investment in the accomplished teacher's ability to:

- Engage in the school, community or broader learning community;
- Use ICT and other resources to access educational research, learning communities and professional networks to support professional learning, self assessment and development;
- Engage in mentoring and coaching techniques; and

- Develop strategies for reflective practice, professional renewal and ongoing professional learning.

The Northern Territory Government must accept responsibility to adequately fund schools so that accomplished teachers can meet the Standards relating to ongoing engagement in research and evidence based learning.

4.7 **Do the draft Professional Standards for Accomplished Teachers identify the elements of practice required of accomplished teachers?**

IEU-QNT has assumed that there is some agreement about what constitutes the “elements of practice” referred to in the question.

If we accept that accomplished teachers use their skills, knowledge and expertise to analyse, make and act on professional judgements whilst taking account of contextual factors then the Standards do adequately identify the elements of practice required of accomplished teachers.

We also believe the Standards recognise the ways effective teachers support the social development and participation of young people in a safe environment and in worthwhile ways.

We believe the Standards go much further than this and recognise the leadership accomplished teachers provide to their learning communities in areas such as vision, intellectual and pedagogical leadership, professional development through modelling and mentoring, partnerships with the community and empowerment of others through informed and collegial decision making.

IEU-QNT believes leadership of this calibre needs both recognition through career enhancement and remuneration at levels which reflect the critical role accomplished teachers play in their schools, systems and learning communities.

5. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) of Australia supports the recognition of accomplished teachers in schools. For two decades, the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) has argued for recognition arrangements that provide teachers with opportunities for more varied, fulfilling and better paid jobs and improvement in the educational opportunities and collegial support in schools

5.1 IEU-QNT believes such a package should involve a well supported program of teacher skill development – which we view as a professional right – that is integrated into a democratically managed program of whole school development.

5.2 The IEU-QNT notes and endorses key elements of the TeacherSolutions report by the Center for Teaching Quality (www.teacherleaders.org) and in particular

notes the following recommendations underpinning any scheme to recognise accomplished teaching:

- It is critical that the base-pay structure is enhanced to correctly reflect the skills and qualifications of teachers so that accomplished teachers can be rewarded above and beyond the base-pay spine.
- Any scheme must be open to all; that is, no artificial cap or quota and not limited to subjects that are tested
- Recognition for relevant additional degrees and Professional Development
- Encourage collaboration
- Incentives for high need areas
- Include teachers in the development

5.3 We believe that any set of Standards which set out to articulate what accomplished teachers know and do should also sit alongside a career structure which recognises and remunerates those who achieve this standard.

5.4 Failure to recognise this need (5.3) will result in the continued exodus of accomplished teachers and a continuation of the perceived lack of attractiveness of teaching as a destination for high quality graduates.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The IEU-QNT thanks the Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory for the opportunity to respond to the draft Accomplished Teacher Standards.