



Certification Referees

Guidelines for certification application referees

Certification 

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Introduction

These guidelines provide an overview for colleagues who have been asked to act as a referee for a teacher applying for Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher certification.

Further information about the referee role can be found via the links at the end of this document, or by contacting the Queensland College of Teachers' (QCT) certification team at certification@gct.edu.au

Certification process

Certification is a national process developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to recognise those teachers performing at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stages of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards).

It is carried out by certifying authorities in participating states and territories in Australia. For Queensland state school or Catholic school teachers, the certifying authority is the QCT.

Benefits of certification

Certification benefits all those involved in the process, including teachers, school leaders, education systems and students. It encourages teachers to be reflective practitioners against the Standards.

Certification of teachers improves teaching quality and student outcomes by:

- esteeming high-performing teachers
- building a professional growth culture
- facilitating collaboration
- creating mentors
- developing instructional leaders¹.

Certification enhances the professionalism of teachers, enabling them to progress their careers while remaining in the classroom.

1. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2018, *Getting the best from your teachers - A principals' guide to national teacher certification*, AITSL, Melbourne

Referee roles

Referees play a significant role in supporting an applicant to achieve certification, therefore it is an important professional responsibility. Referee input is valuable in helping assess an applicant's abilities, experience, knowledge, and skills to ensure they meet the Standards at the relevant career stage.

This way of using referee evidence is aligned to the national [Framework for the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers](#). The applicant is required to elect 3–5 referees who can affirm their practice and/or verify their application evidence against selected Standard descriptors. One of the elected referees must be the applicant's principal or principal's delegate.

Principals may choose to delegate this responsibility to another suitable member of their school leadership team. Delegations may be required when a principal is on leave, new to the school, or where the responsibilities related to capability development and support of teachers is the responsibility of another senior school leader. A nominated delegate will be required to undertake the same responsibilities required for a principal referee, including confirming the professional relationship of the applicant and their other selected referees.

As a referee, you may have various roles in the certification process:

Any referee may

- Affirm the applicant's practice for up to 10 Standard descriptors in total and/or
- Verify that application evidence is an accurate representation of the applicant's practice against Standard descriptors.

Principal/delegate will

- Act as one of the applicant's elected referees
- Confirm the professional relationship/knowledge of practice between the other referees and the applicant.

Completing the referee verification form

The referee verification form has two parts:

Part 1:

Affirmed descriptors

- Up to 10 Standard descriptors may be deemed demonstrated by referee affirmation
- The applicant and each referee collaborate on which Standard descriptors will be allocated for affirmation
- Referees provide a mandatory comment for each Standard descriptor specifying their direct, first-hand knowledge of the applicant's practice.

Part 2:

Verified evidence

- Evidence against all remaining Standard descriptors should be verified
- The applicant and each referee collaborate on which Standard descriptors will be allocated for verification
- The applicant provides the referee with the details of the evidence to demonstrate each Standard descriptor
- From their direct, first-hand knowledge, referees verify the evidence as an accurate representation of the applicant's practice against the Standard descriptors.

Referees will sign the verification form against each section they complete. The applicant's current principal/delegate needs to provide signed confirmation of both the referees' professional relationship with the applicant and their knowledge of the applicant's practice. This confirmation is important to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the referees' verification and contributes significantly to a thorough and fair evaluation of the applicant's capabilities.

If a referee is unsure of their suitability, or they believe a conflict of interest exists, they should discuss this with the applicant or seek advice from the QCT.

Referee discussion

A nationally trained certification assessor may request a discussion with a referee if elaboration is required about any of the applicant's evidence. The assessor will make contact to arrange a mutually convenient time to have a discussion of up to 30 minutes duration.

During the discussion, the assessor will complete a written record of the referee's comments and provide a copy to the referee for approval. In circumstances where a timely discussion cannot be organised, email contact will be made.

Referee preparation

If you proceed to act as a referee, you agree to be available to participate in a discussion with an assessor at either stage of the assessment process.

To prepare for this, the following actions are suggested:

- Understand your responsibilities
- Be ready to discuss the applicant's abilities, experience, knowledge, and skills, including:
 - teaching and learning initiatives
 - professional learning and development
 - organisation and involvement in activities and events
 - impact on the practice, knowledge, and capacity of colleagues
 - impact on the learning, wellbeing, and achievement of students
- Utilise the reflective questions and prompts (see resources below)
- Complete the referee planning template in collaboration with the applicant.

Tips for referees

- Ensure you have direct involvement with the applicant and first-hand knowledge of their practice against the selected Standard descriptors for which you are a referee
- If affirming a Standard descriptor, provide a concise and specific comment detailing how the applicant's practice demonstrates that descriptor
- Know the evidence in the application that you have been asked to verify
- Become familiar with the question framework in the event a discussion is requested
- Avoid making generalised comments, providing a character reference, or restating the Standard descriptors.

Useful links

QCT:

- [Policy for Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers](#)
- [Certification Guidelines](#)
- [FAQs for Referees](#)
- [Highly Accomplished teacher referee verification form – download from our website](#)
- [Lead teacher referee verification form – download from our website](#)
- [Reflective questions and prompts \(HAT\)](#)
- [Reflective questions and prompts \(LT\)](#)

AITSL:

- [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#)
- [Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles](#)
- [Getting the best from your teachers - A principal's guide to national teacher certification](#)
- [AITSL Teacher Self-Assessment Tool](#)

For further information, please email the QCT's certification team at: certification@qct.edu.au