

National Professional Standards for Advanced Teaching and for Principals

Second Consultation paper

See <http://www.teachingaustralia.edu.au/ta/go> for information about the consultation process and to access the consultation paper.

Teaching Australia

Comments and feedback from the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc. (AAMT)

10 Please note that this is an initial draft only. It has been prepared for further input from members, through the AAMT website. Feedback on this draft is due by Friday 15 August. Please send comments to feedback@aamt.edu.au

Background

The AAMT has been involved in work on professional teaching standards in mathematics for more than the past decade. The Association has taken a keen interest in the work of Teaching Australia in this area, and has consistently provided feedback when appropriate. Hence, much of what is contained in the Second Consultation Paper has been commented on before — most of the comments that follow deal with Part II of the document.

Part 1: What's happened so far...

20 **Section 1 The Process of Developing National Professional Standards**

No comments

Section 2 Why National Professional Standards are Valuable

The sentence “Standards make professional knowledge and skills more accessible and usable and therefore better valued” is misleading; only well-written standards that reflect the views of the relevant professionals around ‘best practice’ make professional knowledge and skills “more accessible” and “better valued”. This is the heart of the reason that the AAMT takes the view that to be useful, professional standards need to reflect ‘specialisations’ in teaching, a view that it seems is shared by Teaching Australia.

30 The second last paragraph (“Teaching Australia has acknowledged...”) refers to the May 2006 statement from the Board. The AAMT believes that Teaching Australia should, as a matter of urgency, put aside the view that discussion of accreditation against standards is a task for the future and begin this work now. The current debate around performance pay urgently requires a voice from the profession that the most appropriate means for identifying those who are working at high levels of

accomplishment are through rigorous assessment against profession-owned standards.

Section 3 The Standards Model

The model is slightly changed from the previous version:

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- The change from “leadership Capabilities” to “Principal Capabilities” is appropriate as it enables appropriate elaboration of the aspects of advanced teaching that relate to leadership in education.
 - The failure to be able to agree “Organising Categories” is regrettable as it masks the sense that there is something of a continuum from advanced teaching to principal — real life people make this transition, and the inconsistency sends an unfortunate message.
 - The matter of whether there should or should not be Levels of Accomplishment for the principal standards ought to have been determined by now — that this matter remains undecided detracts from the solidity of the
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- overall model and, by inference, what it can represent and achieve for the profession.

The second last dot-point on page 6 should omit the reference to “within schools”. Advanced teaching can also exercise leadership *beyond* schools — the existence and work of professional associations is based on this leadership by teachers.

Section 4 Principles

No comments

Section 5 Charter

The AAMT has supported the Charter in the past and is comfortable with it as the ‘highest level’ statement in the Advanced teaching Standards.

Part 2: What happens next...

Section 6 Capabilities

The term “capabilities” is inappropriate as it does not describe what these statements are.

The term “authoritative” is problematic. Whilst its definition (“able to be trusted as being accurate or true”) implies it is appropriate in this contest, many associate the term with positional authority (bossiness).

The following reflect the natural comparison with the AAMT *Standards for Excellence in teaching mathematics in Australian Schools*:

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- Of the three clusters of Advanced Teaching Capabilities, two are identical with the AAMT *Standards* — Professional Knowledge and Professional Practice.
 - The third cluster (Professional Leadership) covers and extends, in a positive way, what is contained in the Professional Attributes section of the AAMT *Standards*. The explicit articulation of teacher-leadership is welcome.

- Overall, the Advanced Teaching Capabilities do not appear to be oriented towards positional leadership in schools (Coordinator, Head of Department etc. This is positive.

80 A small group of AAMT members with good knowledge of the AAMT *Standards* was able to quite quickly cut-and-paste the AAMT *Standards* into the Capabilities. This was a very rough, first pass, but one that gives confidence that the AAMT *Standards* can nestle within the framework of the Teaching Australia Capabilities.

A matter of concern has been alluded to before. It is the lack of articulation between the standards for Advanced Teaching and for Principals. People need to be helped to make this transition, and the current discontinuity does not help.

Whilst the AAMT respects the need for practising principals to have control of the finalisation of Principal Capabilities, we would urge there to be close attention to this issue of articulation.

Section 7 Descriptors of Accomplishment

90 The very rough work outlined above to place the AAMT *Standards* under the Advanced Teaching Capabilities suggests that these Descriptors are feasible. It may be that the level of detail in the AAMT *Standards* is appropriate — this may be a guide for others.

Section 8 Governing a National Standards System

In relation to the Role and functions:

- The second and third dot points, in particular, will require a further initial function. This will be the development of criteria for processes like ‘review’, ‘validating’, endorsing.
- The second last dot point uses the ‘old’ language of “quality teaching and school leadership”. This should be changed.

100 The comments on Composition of Standards Council outline appropriate principles, but are silent on how the positions on the Standards Council will be filled. The AAMT would argue that expertise is the key criterion. As a stakeholder, the AAMT will need to be comfortable that the process finally adopted is consistent with the principles.

This is not to say that the AAMT would expect to be represented on the Council. Indeed, there is a strong case for the members to be seen to be, and to act as unaffiliated in executing their duties on the Council. They should have no role to represent another group.

110 Hence, whilst it is feasible for people with the relevant expertise to be affiliated with stakeholders such as unions, employers, education policy makers and regulatory bodies, these people should contribute to the work through an advisory structure of some kind and not be members of the Council — Council members should be associated with professional associations.

Section 9 Developing a national Code of Ethics

The AAMT is equivocal about the need for a national Code of Ethics at this time, given that the legislative framework is well-established in the states and territories.

One suggestion has been that in Western Australia the WA College of Teachers looks to the values expressed in the WA curriculum in this regard. In the context of a national curriculum it may be possible for the national approach to values to take a similar approach.

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