

Graduate to Proficient:

Australian guidelines for teacher
induction into the profession

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has worked closely with key education stakeholders to develop the *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession* (the Guidelines). The Guidelines outlines the critical factors for high quality and effective induction of early career teachers.

In developing the Guidelines, AITSL consulted with national and international experts, state and territory education authorities, Catholic and Independent school authorities, teacher regulatory authorities, initial teacher education providers, and practising early career teachers and school leaders.

The Institute's responsibility to lead this work is outlined in the Australian Government response to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group report *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers*.

The *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession* was endorsed by Education Ministers at the Education Council on 21 July 2016.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was formed to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership with funding provided by the Australian Government.

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ISBN 978-1-925192-40-7

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The three most important things you need to know about induction are:

1

Effectiveness of induction programs increase as the range of supports and strategies provided increase. The best induction programs include practice-focused mentoring, leadership contact, participation in collaborative networks, targeted professional learning, observation and reflection on teaching, practical information and time allocation.

2

Of all the induction strategies available, practice-focused mentoring, by one or more expert colleagues, is particularly powerful in supporting the transition of a teacher from the Graduate to Proficient career stage.

3

Induction should focus on four key areas: professional practices, professional identity, wellbeing and orientation.



Introduction

Think of the best teacher you know. At one time, that teacher was a beginner, full of potential and with foundational skills, but with little of the confidence, professional understanding and rich and flexible repertoire of skills that characterise those at the height of the profession. This document is focused on the first major step in the transition of graduates to full engagement in the profession, a step that occurs for most teachers during their first two years in the classroom. In the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (the Standards), it is the transition from the Graduate to the Proficient career stage.

That step is best taken with the support of high quality induction. These guidelines provide advice on what induction is, why it matters, the conditions for good induction, the focus for induction, the strategies that are most effective, and the roles played by various agencies and individuals in managing and delivering induction programs.

The guidelines are intended for use by all those who have a part in supporting the induction of graduates. They will be used by policy makers, educational leaders, teachers and other key providers, as well as inductees themselves, to plan induction programs that meet the needs of early career teachers.

The guidelines are based on research and reflect what is known about the most effective forms of support for graduates. They offer a foundation for high quality induction. They will assist in developing, managing, delivering and evaluating programs that enable graduates to take a major step towards belonging to and fully engaging in the profession. This will, in turn, support early career teachers to maximise their impact on learner outcomes.

It is not expected that all induction programs will be identical:

- Leaders in systems, sectors and local education settings will make decisions about what support is available and what resources are devoted specifically to induction.
- The duration of induction, while proposed as a two year period, will vary for some teachers and in some situations.
- Local circumstances (e.g. small rural schools, non-school settings, those employed on a casual or part-time basis) will also play a role in shaping what is realistic and likely to be effective.

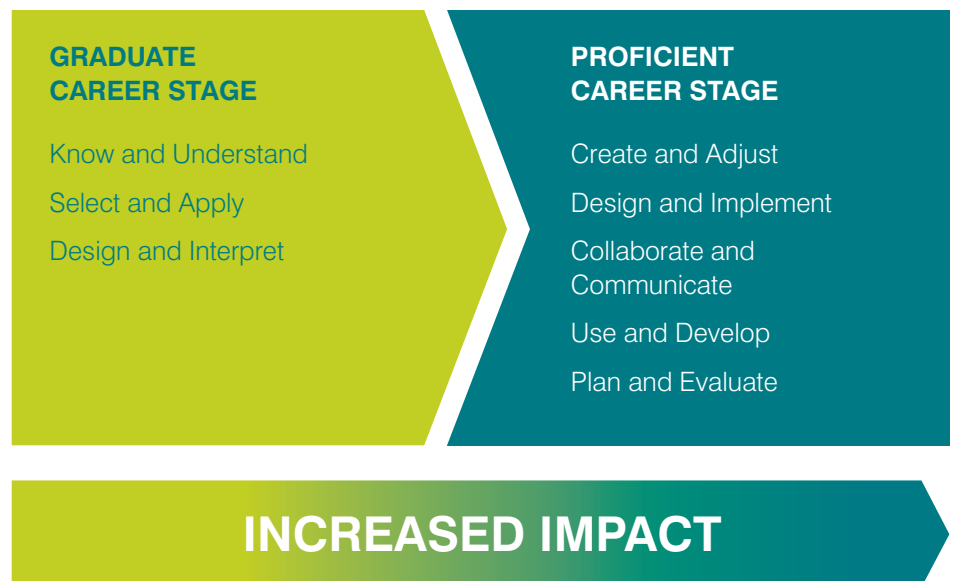
Induction is most effective where there is a strong culture of collaboration and professional growth and where effective processes are in place for all teachers to give and receive feedback on, and evidence about, performance and be challenged and supported to learn. Such a culture and processes are described further in the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* and the *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders*.

What is teacher induction?

The term 'induction' refers to a formal program and other support provided to assist early career teachers who have achieved the Graduate career stage in the Standards to move to the Proficient career stage - to learn, practise and refine the elements of the professional role that are best acquired while teaching.

Induction represents a more substantial and intense commitment to learning on the part of the early career teacher and those who support them, than the continuing professional development that is available to all teachers.

As they take the step from the Graduate to Proficient career stage, beginning teachers practise and refine their skills in designing and implementing teaching strategies. They become part of a team of professionals assessing the level and nature of their impact on their learners. They apply their understanding to ensure that what they teach is relevant and meaningful to learners and use feedback and assessment to analyse learning and plan interventions.



(Australian Professional Standards for Teachers)

Early career teachers become active participants in their profession, seeking and using collegial advice and evidence to improve their practice and communicate effectively with colleagues, parents and the community. They take responsibility for their own learning. They learn to manage both the personal and professional demands of the teaching role.



Why does induction matter?

As graduate teachers enter the profession they are characteristically enthusiastic, engaged and ready to make a difference. Effective support and active engagement in their own induction will assist the graduate teacher in their work towards achieving the Proficient stage in the Standards, the condition for full registration.

Substantial Australian and international research demonstrates that high quality induction has a dramatic effect on this transition process. It can strengthen the skills and knowledge of early career teachers, expand their teaching repertoire, improve job satisfaction and commitment and reduce teacher attrition in the early years. It supports early career teachers to manage their own wellbeing and career development.

High-quality induction programs lead to graduate teachers having a material impact on learner outcomes. Induction is an investment with high returns.



What are the conditions for good induction?

Research is clear about the conditions for successful induction. While high quality induction forms one phase in career-long professional learning, and must be sensitive to context, it has discrete characteristics.

The most effective teacher induction is extended (usually about two years), is embedded in daily practice, and emphasises skill development and inquiry into practice. Its focus is on maximising the teacher's impact on learners, building on what pre-service teachers have learnt in initial teacher education programs. It addresses both the personal and professional demands of the role and involves a range of agencies and individuals in supporting the graduate.

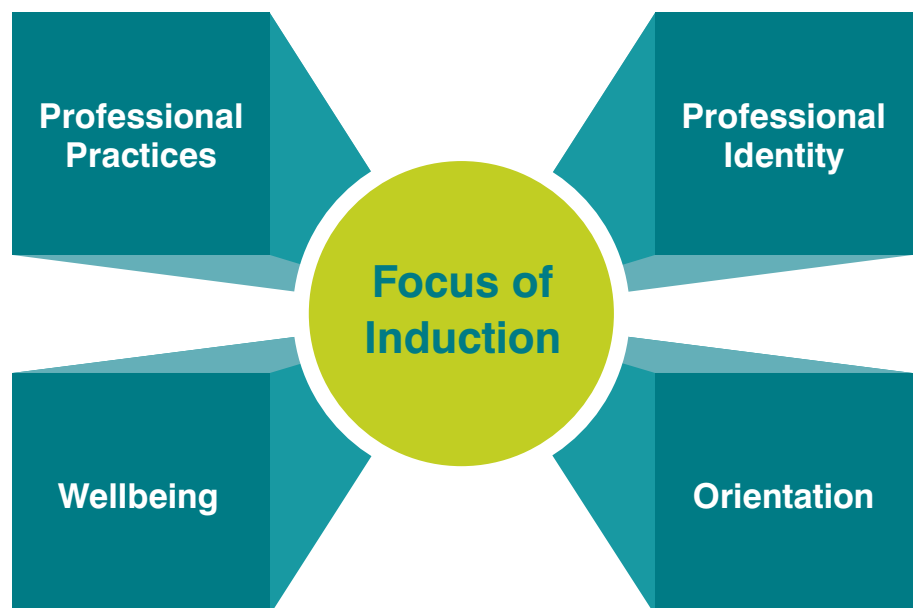
Induction is most effective when delivered in settings with a strong learning culture and strong professional relationships.

Induction supports a new generation of teachers to take on full professional responsibility. Because of its importance, it should be subject to continuing evaluation to ensure it is effective and to identify areas in which induction practice can be improved. Evaluation should be built into induction programs from their establishment, so that findings can serve a formative, developmental function. Induction evaluation should measure outcomes including the impact on the early career teacher's practices, satisfaction and retention, and in particular their impacts on learner outcomes.

What is the focus of induction?

Induction programs that make a difference attend to four areas:

- 1. Professional Practices:** The knowledge and skills involved in effective teaching are substantial. Some are learned in initial teacher education, but full engagement in teaching practice requires a deeper range of skills and increased sophistication in their application. Graduates need advice, feedback, access to good practice, evidence of their impact and the opportunity to examine and analyse their practices to identify what works best.
- 2. Professional Identity:** Every teacher develops a teaching identity made up of their knowledge about good teaching, their relationships with peers and the community, and their understanding of the significance of their profession. Graduates need assistance in understanding what is expected of teachers, both in the school/education setting and more broadly, and the technical, intellectual, ethical and cultural elements that make up professional responsibility. They need to be part of a continuing professional conversation through formal and informal networks and positive relationships with learners, parents and colleagues.
- 3. Wellbeing:** Teaching offers challenges and rewards not only professionally but personally. The role requires resilience, emotional wellbeing and supportive connections with other professionals. Graduates need colleagues who are alert to their needs and aware of how the highs and lows of teaching affect newcomers. With this understanding, colleagues can strengthen the individual's capacity to manage the personal demands of the role.
- 4. Orientation:** Like all professions, teaching takes place in an institutional context. This requires understanding of formal requirements (policies, practices, procedures and compliance demands) and informal ways of operating (cultural, interpersonal and administrative). Graduates need help in learning the formal requirements and rules and understanding the informal expectations of colleagues and the community.



Which strategies should be employed?

The research offers two key conclusions about the strategies to be employed in implementing induction programs that take teachers from the Graduate to Proficient career stage:

1 Programs are more effective as the range of supports and strategies provided expands.

2 Practice-focused mentoring by one or more expert colleagues is particularly powerful in achieving the desired transition.

Multiple strategies

The following strategies have been demonstrated to be effective:

- Practice-focused mentoring: Regular access to mentoring that is intent on supporting an early career teacher's growth and impact (elaboration below).
- Leadership contact: Regular interactions with leaders to assist an early career teacher's wellbeing, support an understanding of the goals, culture and operations of the school/education setting and convey expectations of professional responsibilities.
- Networks and collaboration: Involvement in teacher networks, including formal and informal networks within and beyond the school/education setting, to gain access to others' knowledge and skills and insights into the profession.
- Targeted professional learning: Professional learning opportunities throughout the induction period, focused on relevant issues.
- Study of teaching: Opportunities, preferably with other teachers in like content or year level areas, to study one's own teaching and that of others to encourage the teacher to reflect on, analyse and evaluate practice. This is most effective when it involves structured observations of and by the teacher, to broaden the teacher's experience base and to offer feedback, evidence and advice based on observed practice.
- Practical information: Consistent information and advice about school/education setting practices, compliance matters and broader professional responsibilities.
- Time allocation: Time should be made available in the initial period to enable effective conduct of the range of activities identified above.



Practice-focused mentoring

Practice-focused mentoring by one or more expert colleagues, is particularly powerful in supporting the transition from the Graduate to Proficient career stage. It is highly valued by inductees, effective in improving their knowledge and skill, and is also a means of delivering or supporting other strategies (e.g. feedback and engagement in professional networks).

A key role for the mentor is in ensuring that the early career teacher understands that a commitment to improvement should be embedded in daily practice rather than occurring in association only with formal professional learning opportunities.

Practice-focused mentoring is defined as:

A strong professional relationship that attends to the professional development of early career teachers through ongoing observation, conversations, evidence about and assessment of practices, goal-setting aligned with standards of quality teaching, and technical and emotional support.

(based on Achinstein & Villar's (2004) definition of mentoring)

To ensure high quality mentoring is occurring in induction it is important to know what practice-focused mentoring is and isn't:

+	-
Practice-focused mentoring is...	Practice-focused mentoring is not...
a mentor and early career teacher having a common teaching area	randomly assigning a mentor to an early career teacher
the mentor coaching, supporting and challenging the early career teacher to improve practice	criticising 'weak' practice
the mentor modelling good practice addressing agreed subject content and teaching practices	just sharing lesson plans or tips garnered over a career
using observations and data to focus attention on learner outcomes and encourage reflection by the early career teacher and mentor on their practice	advice based on only 'gut instinct' or personal past experience
using information about learner outcomes to enable the early career teacher to improve the effectiveness of teaching approaches	setting goals and finding learning opportunities that are not related to the needs of the learners and early career teacher
the mentor playing a role in support of the early career teacher's wellbeing	simple, sporadic check-ins on the early career teacher's wellbeing
regular, scheduled discussions and activities taking place, and sanctioned time set aside for mentor-teacher interactions	impromptu conversations that have no set purpose and no support from leadership in structuring the time
using multiple mentors, online media or networks to draw on expertise	always a one-to-one relationship



Who should play a role in teacher induction?

Induction is a responsibility shared across the profession. It is everyone's responsibility to assist graduates to make the transition to the Proficient career stage in the Standards. Within that broad expectation individuals and agencies play specific roles.

Initial teacher educators

While induction programs formally start once a teacher is employed, teacher educators begin the process. They support the development of the knowledge, skills and personal capacities that underpin effective entry to teaching and further professional progress. They also foster the development of an early career teacher's professional identity.

This requires high quality professional experiences and partnerships with local education settings, jurisdictions and sectors, which should continue once the formal teaching role begins.

Systems, sectors and regulatory authorities

Systems, sectors and regulatory authorities deliver the policy, program, resourcing, evaluation and accountability frameworks that enable early career teachers to benefit from comprehensive, structured and effective induction programs. They facilitate the provisional to full registration process which is begun through induction. They also take account of varying employment arrangements and local circumstances that affect the implementation of induction.

This requires providing early career teachers with learning experiences and opportunities to network to build their expertise. Regular evaluation of induction policies and programs are essential to maximise effectiveness as well as to ensure consistency with other policies and programs.

Educational leaders

Leaders foster a strong learning culture in their schools and education settings as the foundation for good induction. More specifically, they establish and resource arrangements for the induction and support of early career teachers. Leaders also play a key role in establishing professional relationships with graduates to support their wellbeing and help them understand the culture, practices and expectations of the local setting.

This requires taking a personal interest in the early career teacher's welfare and development, to model and foster trust and collegial relationships. It also requires resourcing and facilitating collaborative opportunities for early career teachers and ensuring the provision of training and support for mentors.



Teachers


Practice-focused mentors (see previous) are the main support for early career teachers in schools and education settings, but all teachers have a role to play. All teachers need to welcome graduates to the profession, supporting them to become part of the professional community. Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers guide and advise their colleagues, including early career teachers, by modelling good practice, encouraging innovation and creativity and contributing to the culture of learning.

This requires establishing relationships with the early career teachers to build their sense of connectedness to their school/education setting, community and the profession. Collaborative impact can be achieved when all teachers share their expertise, and inspire, extend and support graduates to improve their practice.

Graduates

Graduates are active agents in their own induction, not simply beneficiaries. In addition to fully engaging in any induction programs and activities, and meeting the expectations of the school/education setting, they seek additional experiences, engage with professional networks, identify their own learning requirements and take responsibility for ensuring that their induction meets their needs.

This requires engaging in self-reflection, identifying learning needs and setting goals with mentors. It includes challenging assumptions about teaching and actively seeking expertise from colleagues and networks. It also requires committing to continuing learning and improving, embedding that improvement in day-to-day practice and maximising the impact they have on learners.



Induction is part of the way the profession renews itself. It is the way new teachers are supported to belong and fully engage in the profession. It instils a commitment to ongoing professional learning, continually improving practice and ensuring the impact on learner outcomes is maximised.

Induction ensures that all teachers have the opportunity, and the support they need to make a positive difference to learner's outcomes.



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AITSL is funded by the Australian Government

ISBN 978-1-925192-40-7