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Dear Anne,

Thank you for giving the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) the opportunity to respond to the consultation proposal on the draft Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework. This is a subject of acute importance to the teaching profession and the discipline of education. In particular, I greatly appreciate the leeway to respond after the original deadline.

The ACDE has utilised the **Network of Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching in Education** (NADLATE) to carry out a consultation with its members, representing 39 teacher education institutions. Representatives from the ACDE Board have endorsed this submission.

We have shaped our responses around the focus questions you provided, with an Executive Summary which draws upon the overarching points.



Professor Toni Downes  
President of the Australian Council of Deans of Education

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## **The draft Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework**

### ***A consultation response by the Network of Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching in Education (NADLATE) on behalf of the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE)***

#### **Executive Summary**

The Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) and the Network of Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching in Education (NADLATE) welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation proposal. Performance review is an important component of teachers' work and in maintaining a successful school system.

Our submission is shaped in response to the seven focus questions raised by AITSL in their consultation. Therein we argue that for this Framework to succeed in improving teacher performance and student outcomes it must not be seen by teachers as an insidious mechanism with punitive undertones. It must truly enable teachers' work by harnessing the collaborative nature of the profession, and explicitly acknowledging the good practice of teachers.

As teacher educators, we recognise the Framework's commitment to collaborative, ongoing professional learning. However, we argue that for this to be effectively implemented across the profession there must be a reconceptualisation of professional learning. This will require initial and continuing support.

Execution of this Framework presents a powerful opportunity to leverage implementation of sophisticated learning technologies to create a truly national discourse, with supportive knowledge development and practice sharing.

We recognise the importance of the Framework and research on teacher professional learning in informing university Graduate programs in Education, in Education Leadership, and similar programs which provide rigorous research-led teacher professional learning programs. ACDE and NADLATE would be pleased to continue a dialogue with AITSL over how to support implementation of the Framework's principles amongst pre-service teachers and in-service teachers enrolled in postgraduate professional development programs.

The Framework may benefit from a glossary list to assist in clarification of Framework's key components, i.e. essential elements. It would also be useful to either define or retitle key terms such as 'appraisal'; 'deliverables'; and 'delivering on agreed outcomes'.

## **1. How do the proposed principles and Framework align with your current practices at the system or school level?**

The proposed principles and Framework are clearly aligned with the literature on effective teacher development and reflect current practice within the Faculties and Schools of Education. The development of the knowledge and skills required for continual professional reflection and renewal is a cornerstone of teacher education programs. The processes described also semi align with the general teaching performance procedures that occur in universities for academics.

We recommend that the first principle should be 'Student learning' as opposed to 'Student outcomes'. It is significant to note that facilitating the process of learning, including its many cognitive functions, is the test of educating good citizens of the future. This principal implies a reference to the ongoing cycle for improvement in teacher performance which aligns to the ongoing everyday work a teacher does in the classroom, or a leader does within the school environment. So, it's a matter of emphasis which signals significance that a good teacher performs well when they affect the everyday learning practices of the student - of which student outcomes are an important part.

We note that successful implementation will rely on a shared understanding of both the principles and Framework, and strong leadership and culture in the school.

## **2. What would need to change through implementation of the Framework to create genuine improvements in teaching practice and student outcomes?**

A Teacher Performance and Development Framework should emphasise improvement over regulation and this would demonstrate professional leadership in this important area of performance management. While the draft Framework broadly aligns with current practice at school level, its implementation will necessarily rely upon schools' abilities to interpret an external policy framework into the realities 'on the ground'. This requires dedicated time allocations and financial resources as well as consideration of the culture of each school community.

Specifically teachers must be empowered to reflect on their practice within a supportive and professional environment of mutual understanding and respect, with a genuine commitment to a process that values professional growth over surveillance. This may involve open confrontation of the tension between professional development that satisfies compliance agendas and the kinds of collaborative, ongoing, school-based professional learning that research consistently shows leads to real improvements in pedagogy and student learning. While the Framework certainly places emphasis on the latter approach to professional learning, successful implementation will rely to some extent on a reconceptualisation of professional learning on the part of many teachers and school leaders, and bedding down of this new understanding on a very large scale.

**3. How adequately and clearly do components of the Framework; principles, supportive school context, performance and development cycle, and outcomes of teacher performance and development, describe a comprehensive teacher performance and development approach that supports ongoing teacher improvement?**

The Framework itself is broad and flexible, while at the same time highlighting approaches and supporting procedures. This is far preferable to a 'one size fits all' approach. However, the challenge will be to build the kind of shared understanding across the system to ensure that the spirit of the Framework drives its implementation in diverse school and system contexts.

Within the Framework there is some lack of clarity over what are the 'objectives' related to a teacher's impact. For instance, how does one measure a teacher's ability to inspire students? Careful consideration should be given to terminology such as 'appraisal'; 'deliverables'; and 'delivering on agreed outcomes' as they carry baggage from previous, less consultative reforms of the school sector and will not aid effective implementation of the Framework. Consideration should be given to using work 'goals' instead of 'objectives', as per HR toolkits that support this sort of performance management. Goals may be a better career development signal to the teaching community.

We recommend making explicit the way in which specific principles align with one (or underpin all) of the three components of the Framework. This could be easily achieved by grouping the principles under each component of the Framework; i.e. School context (component of the Framework) is underpinned by the following two principles: i) a focus on student outcomes; and ii) a clear understanding of what effective teaching is. We note that the role of professional learning is not explicit in this Framework and believe this is an omission.

We would also encourage a greater emphasis on what is already happening within schools. It is important to build from the positives and current goals as this empowers and recognises teachers, and demonstrates that current practice has been considered and valued.

The Framework also provides an opportunity to strengthen the notion of research and rigour in teacher learning and the undernoted Graduate programs that universities offer to scaffold, inform and research practice for teacher learning. In the current draft, this opportunity has not been taken.

**4. Do the essential elements adequately describe and encompass what should be present to best serve students in all Australian schools?**

It is not immediately clear (despite their title) what the essential elements are; if they refer to elements essential to the performance and development cycle, then greater clarity is required about the elements, how they are categorised and how they can be referenced in implementation of the cycle and by whom. Upon review of the FAQs, it became clear that they are the 'mandatory minimum common requirements' that are expected to be met by all Australian schools. The essential elements should therefore be more explicit in the Framework and consideration given to the use of a glossary.

The notion of ‘ways of measuring’ achievement against objectives is likely to require further elaboration and explicit specification. We caution against measurement of student achievement in a narrow context, i.e. an over-reliance upon NAPLAN. Given the wide range of school contexts we would want to ensure that this is defined in such a way as to provide multiple forms of evidence of learning in a range of contexts. For instance, there is a growing body of research suggesting teachers building relationships with students is a reliable indicator of student learning and development.

The Framework must better recognise that increased student learning outcomes are not only aligned with excellent leadership in schools and classrooms but also effective leadership at the national, state government and district level. There thus should be a greater emphasis on the importance of collaborative partnerships at all levels of the educational landscape. We urge the Framework to advocate the use of sophisticated learning technologies to support a professional network which fosters a truly national discourse, with supportive knowledge development and practice sharing.

## **5. What are priorities for support, who needs support, and what forms of support should be available?**

We endorse the Framework’s explicit recognition that support to schools is critical to successful reform. It is also implicit that support needs to be multi-layered to meet the diversity of school needs. It is apparent that accessing support will inevitably add to the time pressures of teachers.

Essentially, the Framework suggests that teaching would best be served by becoming what Lawrence Stenhouse wrote of in the 1970s as a ‘research-based profession’, where teachers routinely, both individually and collaboratively, inquire into their practice and draw together data to inform practice. This kind of approach relies on teachers and school leaders who know how to collect and interpret evidence from a wide range of sources, and, most importantly; understand the evidence related to teaching to be complex enough to require a more ‘forensic’ than ‘adversarial’ approach. In other words, that evidence is collected and interpreted in order to ‘shed light’ on practice rather than to provide incontrovertible proof about practice.

In order for this more generative approach to take hold, teachers will need support around the execution of inquiry-based professional learning. A possible model for this might involve funding teachers to engage in collaborative inquiry with support from an academic partner with expertise in this kind of work, along with online support and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues utilising Web 2.0 technologies.

Principals and other school leaders responsible for mentoring and coaching colleagues will need support on a range of levels to be most effective in this work. Such support might focus on the leadership and management dimensions of this work and should support leaders in developing support networks across schools and building and improving skills related to the ‘human’ dimensions of performance management.

Four areas of support are identified within the Framework. While these support structures are comprehensive they are also rather broad. There will need to be a mix of theoretical models and good practice examples to unpack these four areas. The good practice models of support for professional learning and development must cover the different levels of reform. In particular, examples of self and peer assessment strategies should be identified and developed to extend practice and help teachers and schools to use the richness of multiple sources of evidence to underpin teacher development goals. In addition, models are emerging where clinical models for professional learning and development are being used to support teacher learning<sup>1</sup>.

## **6. How adequately and clearly does the structure and the language used make the Framework accessible to the profession?**

We acknowledge that the Framework is constructed in a very clear and accessible way. The flexibility offered by the draft Framework is highly preferable to a one-size-fits-all approach.

We urge AITSL to explicitly refer to the effective practice that already exists around the country. Further, the key message within the Framework is the need for teachers/schools/ systems to ‘improve teaching’. While identifying the issue is critical to reform there is a risk that it can also disengage and disempower teachers. For this reason, it would be helpful to introduce a more positive concept where teachers (with the support of schools and systems) are recognised as ongoing professional learners, placing themselves at the centre of their professional learning and development, in order to improve their teaching and their student learning. The concept of trust in the profession needs to permeate the principles of the Framework so that rather than a mechanism for surveillance the process becomes an opportunity for real growth rather than compliance. Such an approach helps to contextualise teachers with agency for their professional learning and development for improving student learning.

Deriving a “school’s shared view of effective teaching” from the National Standards could be problematic, however, given that the Standards do not provide direct guidance on effective classroom practice. The Standards are more oriented at defining effective teachers than effective teaching in its broadest sense. This distinction is subtle yet important and will require further work to recalibrate the essence of the Framework.

## **7. Are there any critical areas of teacher performance and development that require further consideration or elaboration?**

The Framework is structured in such a way as to allow critical areas of teacher performance and development to be identified on a local scale; this is a good model. However, we caution against an approach that fails to provide some guidance to teachers about how to analyse and improve their teaching. Many studies have demonstrated the challenges within professional learning communities of reaching any kind of agreement about what constitutes good teaching. Without a Framework from which to commence discussions among teachers,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance: City, EA, Elmore, RF, Fiarman, SE and Teitel, L. 2009. *Instructional rounds in education: A network approach to improving teaching and learning*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

and among teachers and leaders, teachers will be subjected to the arbitrary, idiosyncratic, and contestable views of colleagues and school leaders. Of course, any guidance issued would be most effective if it adhered to the rule of not leading to a prescriptive approach to adherence – the balance with substantiveness will again be important.

This ‘total’ openness, while appealing to many educators who value professional autonomy and judgement, can limit the benefits of their professional conversations and thwart their attempts at building professional community and improving practice. The view that annual performance review should be undertaken by the principal or delegate might not deliver the required improvements in and support for individual teachers, unless there is some agreement on these matters.

It is worth reiterating here an assertion made against point four: there is a powerful opportunity for the National Framework to be underpinned and implemented through sophisticated learning technologies. This would better enable a National Framework for Teacher Learning which moves the sector towards a discourse which is challenging, informed, collegial and diverse.

With regards to the Teacher Performance and Development Framework, the learning technology could incorporate a process of formative feedback on performance, e.g. external peer review, to share understandings of what improving teaching & learning looks like, lifting standards collaboratively. These types of peer review would complement the more summative form of performance review by the principal.