

Professional PRACTICE



GOOD NEWS ON YOUR REGISTRATION CARD

Your 2012/2013 registration card will have a new look, and it won't just be a change of design. There are two important statements on the front of your card.

The first statement reads: 'The person identified by this card is registered to teach in a school in Victoria.' It signifies that you, as the card holder, have met and continue to meet the standards required to achieve registration as a teacher. It underpins your value as a member of the profession, and it provides assurance for your school, its community and the general public.

The second statement is new. It reads: 'The holder of this card is exempt from the Working with Children check' The Institute is aware that some teachers, although satisfying the requirements for a successful National Criminal History Record Check as part of maintaining their registration, have been asked to undergo a further Working with Children check on occasions when they have opted for volunteer work or sports coaching. As a result, after consultation with the Working with Children Check Unit, we are pleased to announce that the above statement on your registration card confirms that you are exempt from a further Working with Children check. Presentation of your registration card will be sufficient proof for any prospective employer or organisation using a teacher for work with children. That's good news for any teacher asked to do another Working with Children check, given that the cost of this check has recently gone up to \$100. You'll receive your new registration card once you have paid your annual fee and completed any other relevant registration requirements. You can find out more about what you need to do in this issue of *Professional Practice*.



Value learning. Value teaching.

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 12 | SEPT 2012

Professional Practice is the official newsletter of the Victorian Institute of Teaching and is used to communicate important policy decisions and developments that may affect a teacher's registration. It provides a forum for the discussion of professional issues most relevant to teachers: their learning, their practice and values. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not of the Victorian Institute of Teaching.



YOUR ANNUAL INVOICE ENVELOPE

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

YOUR ANNUAL FEE INVOICE

In the coming weeks you will be receiving an important envelope from the Institute. It will contain your invoice for annual fee payment and a letter explaining what you need to do.

Your envelope may also include a letter outlining how to renew your registration and if due, information on how to complete the National Criminal History Record Check.

My card has an expiry date of 30 September. Do I need to pay by then?

Your invoice has been issued later than usual this year, and as a result the payment will be due on 31 October. Although your current card has an expiry date of 30 September, you will remain registered until 31 December, to allow you to meet your requirements. The important date to remember this year is 31 October, as any payment received after 31 October and before the end of the year will be subject to a late payment processing fee.

How can I show that I am registered to teach?

Once we have received your payment and you have satisfactorily completed any other relevant requirements such as renewal of registration or your National Criminal History Record Check (NCHRC), we can issue your registration card, which is your proof that you are registered to teach. Your school can check online to confirm your registration until your card is issued.

How long is my registration valid for?

If you have made your payment and satisfactorily completed any other relevant requirements, your registration will be valid until 30 September 2013.

What if I'm provisionally registered?

The most important thing to remember is to pay your annual fee. If you are provisionally registered, you have been granted two years registration from your initial registration date, provided you pay your annual fee. The expiry date on your card will either show your next annual payment date, or the date when your provisional registration expires, whichever comes first.

Have you changed your address?

If you have changed your address and not notified us, your invoice envelope may have been sent to the wrong address. Remember that informing your school or the department of your change of address does not ensure that the Institute is informed of the change. So it's important to keep your details up-to-date, especially at invoice time.

If you have changed your contact details or no longer wish to be registered, go to <www.vit.vic.edu.au/updatemydetails>.

Teachers who receive a letter regarding their NCHRC

If you also receive a letter in your invoice envelope regarding your NCHRC, it means you need to update your NCHRC now so that it is valid all the way through the full year of your registration, until next year when you have to pay your annual fee. This is an important component of your registration, and you need to update it in order to receive your registration card.

You'll be asked to complete the NCHRC form online, print off and sign the 'Application Confirmation Page', and mail it, along with your correctly certified proof of identity documents to the Institute. The details will be contained in your letter.

Remember that your proof of identity documents need to be correctly certified. The online application will tell you what kind of documents you need to provide and how to get them correctly certified. You'll also find a list of persons authorised to witness documents.

Each time you update your NCHRC, you must submit proof of identity documents which have been correctly certified with a current date – even if you have submitted these documents to us on previous occasions.

Once you have satisfactorily updated your NCHRC and been issued with your registration card, the card will show that you are exempt from the requirement of a Working with Children Check, should you be asked to provide evidence of this.

The cost of your NCHRC fee will be included with your annual registration fee on your invoice.

NB: This only applies to teachers who receive a letter regarding these matters in their invoice envelope.

Teachers who receive a letter regarding renewal of their registration

If you receive a letter in your invoice envelope about renewing your registration, you'll need to follow the instructions and complete your application for renewal before 31 December 2012.

This is a separate process from paying your annual registration fee. You will be required to complete an online form, making declarations about your continuing suitability to be a teacher and the maintenance of your professional practice. There is no additional charge for renewal of registration; however, you must pay your annual fee to remain registered.

Your renewal requirements may be different to your colleagues, depending on whether you are completing a 5 yearly renewal or annual renewal.

If requested, you may be required to provide evidence of your professional practice in support of the declarations you have made online.

NB: These renewal requirements only apply to teachers who receive a letter regarding these matters in their invoice envelope.

What if I'm not teaching or don't intend to teach?

If you do not want to teach in a Victorian school then you can:

- pay the annual fee and request non-practising registration
- notify the Institute that you do not want to be registered and not pay the annual fee. Your name will be removed from the register
- or simply by not paying your annual fee, your registration will be suspended at the end of the year.

What is non-practising registration?

Non-practising registration shows you have maintained your suitability to teach. The card you are issued can be used instead of a Working with Children Check. Non-practising teachers cannot teach in a Victorian school.

Teachers who cannot meet the professional practice requirements for renewal of registration but remain suitable to be a teacher, can request non-practising registration when they indicate on their online renewal form that they can't meet the required days teaching and/or the hours of professional development.

Completing your registration requirements online, using MyVIT

Those teachers who are required to update their NCHRC or renew their registration will need to complete these processes online, via their MyVIT account. Those who don't already have a MyVIT account will be sent an email containing their log in details. This is another good reason for keeping the Institute informed about any change of contact details.

The letters that are contained in the invoice envelope will detail the specific instructions for completing each process online.



TRIALLING NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE PROFICIENT TEACHERS

The Victorian Institute of Teaching has asked a selection of teachers and principals to participate in a trial of a revised process to meet the National Professional Standards for Teachers for Full Registration (Proficient level).

In October 2011, the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) endorsed a proposal regarding a nationally consistent approach to teacher registration, including the use of National Professional Standards for Teachers.

This means that the Institute will need to revise the evidence-based process for provisionally registered teachers to apply for full registration to accommodate the standards at the Proficient Teacher level. The Institute conducted a small pilot project for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) at the end of 2011 to test the proficient standards within our current process. The findings were very positive and we are now ready to build on this pilot to trial a revised process using the new standards.

The purpose of the trial is to:

- test a revised process for full registration using the proficient standards
- develop samples of evidence
- seek feedback on any issues arising from application of the revised process.

The Institute invited the teachers, with the support of their mentors, to use our new process during semester 2 to develop evidence of professional practice for full registration.

A workshop was held at the Institute for participants and their school principals at the end of Term 2.

Vikki Bearman from St Richard's Primary School Kilsyth, one of the teacher mentors in attendance, felt the information session gave the teachers and mentors enough support to go ahead with the trial

'The information session was fantastic. It gave us time to sit together and plan what the next move will be and take a strategic approach. Graduate teachers have so much to think about as it is, so we don't want to overload them. For them organisation is really important.'

The fact that the standards are designed to reflect the everyday work of the teacher was something Vikki considered crucial: *'It's applicable to what they're doing in class. The Helen Timperley model is really relevant.'*

Sue MacKay, mentor coordinator at Tintern Schools also felt the process was positive for graduate teachers: *'I like that they have to target an aspect of their practice. It gives them an opportunity to do action research. It sits alongside what they're doing anyway, so that is fantastic.'*

Vikki felt that the information session helped to recognise that the current standards and the new national standards were 'really not that much different', while Sue MacKay praised

Manager, Professional Standards Rhonda McPhee speaks at the Institute



the way the session helped the teachers feel confident about meeting the requirements: *'The Institute is working to embed and help the process of ticking off all the descriptors. It enables you to cite where the standards are present in the process.'*

Participation in the trial will replace the prescribed full registration process for the teachers involved. For the mentors, the Institute will also recognise their participation as meeting the professional development requirement for their current period of renewal of registration.

The Institute is pleased to be able to contribute to the implementation of the national standards through a practical, school-based trial that also supports the development of teacher practice. We welcome the involvement of principals and teachers and anticipate their contribution will be most informative and helpful for the profession.

While Sue MacKay felt that the trial would require some intense focus, she felt that the results would be positive: *'There's much greater acknowledgement that there needs to be evidence of every descriptor. We're trying to bring more rigour to the profession, and there's no harm in us raising the bar.'*

Vikki Bearman is confident in the teachers she is mentoring: *'The girls are doing some collegiate lessons, and a plan of action is in place. I think they'll get a lot out of it.'*

EXTENSION

FOR TEACHERS RENEWING FOR THE FIRST TIME AFTER FULL REGISTRATION



An important component of your ongoing registration is the need to renew it on a regular basis. This is the process where you make declarations about your continuing suitability to be a teacher and the maintenance of your professional practice.

Once teachers achieve full registration, they are required to renew their registration annually. The date for renewal of registration is 30 September, which means that a teacher is required to complete a renewal of registration application form by that date, regardless of when they were granted full registration.

In any year, the majority of provisionally registered teachers are granted full registration between November and March. As a result, these teachers have less than twelve months before they are required to renew their registration by demonstrating they have maintained the standards of professional practice.

The administrative burden for both the teacher and the Institute in this situation is greater than for other teachers who are required to renew their registration at the end of a full twelve month period.

The Institute has approved a new policy, where teachers granted full registration from 1 October in any year have their registration period automatically extended by the Institute for a further twelve months. This will replace the current policy that requires a teacher granted full registration to renew by the following 30 September and meet a pro rata requirement for professional practice.

Renewal of registration is about public assurance that the practice and knowledge of a registered teacher has been kept up-to-date.

A teacher granted full registration has undertaken a school-based process to meet the standards. This requirement is far more comprehensive than that required for renewal of registration. The recent demonstration of the standards means that a teacher with their registration extended as suggested is likely to be up-to-date in their knowledge and practice.

So how does it work? It's simple.
If you achieve full registration on any date between 1 October 2012 and 30 September 2013, you will need to renew your registration by 30 September 2014.



If you achieve full registration on any date between 1 October 2013 and 30 September 2014, you will need to renew your registration by 30 September 2015. And so on.

This way, every teacher who has just gained full registration will have at least 12 months to complete the requirements for their first renewal of registration. After that, they will renew their registration at the same time every year.

The Institute will advise you when you need to complete your renewal – it will be included with your annual invoice.

FORMAL HEARING DECISIONS

The Institute conducts formal hearings on matters relating to fitness, conduct and competence of registered teachers. Here is a summary of two findings and key learnings that can be useful for all teachers in their practice.

Respectful behaviour towards colleagues

A teacher was found guilty of serious misconduct and to be unfit to teach as a result of a number of incidents of aggressive, intimidatory and disrespectful behaviour towards colleagues. This included confronting teachers in front of their class. The teacher was also found to have failed to follow and deliver the required curriculum and failed to maintain a safe learning environment. The behaviour was considered to be serious and not isolated to a single incident. The behaviour brought disrepute to the profession and placed young people at risk. It was not in the public interest for the teacher to engage with students.

Mindful of the seriousness of the conduct and the detrimental effect it had on students and other teachers the Panel found the registered teacher guilty of serious misconduct and unfit to teach. The Panel cancelled the registration of the teacher.

Providing a safe learning environment

A teacher was found to have failed to provide a safe environment, by failing to supervise and discipline students. The issues arose as the teacher could not or would not implement the school's student management policy. The conduct occurred over a short period and was not continuing and persistent.

The teacher understood that the provision of a safe environment was of paramount importance, but failed however to give due consideration to the school's belief, given the make up of their student cohort, that a consistent and meticulous adherence to its school management procedures was crucial to the provision of that environment. The teacher's own versions of supervision and discipline were at odds with colleagues who often felt that the teacher's practices were haphazard in application and required them to take responsibility for behavioural problems of the teacher's making. On balance, the Panel did not believe that the teacher's performance, inadequate as it was, indicated a teacher who was 'ignorant of basic rules or indifferent to rudimentary professional requirement'. Hence, the Panel's judgement that the teacher had shown incompetence at the time, but was fit to teach, rather than the more severe one of serious incompetence and unfitness to teach.

Key learnings: Both examples relate in different ways to a teacher's working relationship with their colleagues. The *Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct* is not solely relating to a teacher's conduct with students. The Code maintains that 'collegiality is integral part of the work of teachers' and that teachers demonstrate collegiality by:

- treating each other with courtesy and respect
- valuing the input of their colleagues
- using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters
- sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts
- respecting different approaches to teaching
- providing support for each other, particularly those new to the profession
- sharing information relating to the wellbeing of students.

In both cases, the teacher's collegiality was called into question. The incidents in the first examples were of a severe nature, while the second example indicates a teacher who understood the need to provide a safe environment for students, but failed to comply with the school's policy to ensure this. It also demonstrates that mitigating circumstances are considered in the findings of a hearing, and in this example, the teacher was found to be fit to teach. The vast majority of teachers understand and have no difficulty demonstrating collegiality, thereby complying with the *Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct*.



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Design by:
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Published by:
Victorian Institute of Teaching
©The State of Victoria
Victorian Institute of Teaching
September 2012

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