

professional PRACTICE

Welcome to *Professional Practice*

The official newsletter of the Victorian Institute of Teaching

NEWSLETTER – Issue #1 April 2014

RENEWING YOUR REGISTRATION IN 2014

If you are renewing your registration this September, find out what you need to know about the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

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NEED FURTHER INFORMATION?

If you have any questions regarding your registration please visit the [Institute's website](#):

@ www.vit.vic.edu.au

RENEWING YOUR REGISTRATION IN 2014

If you are one of the majority of teachers renewing your registration this September, part of the process will require you to meet the requirements for Professional Practice: days teaching, equivalent practice or educational leadership, and hours of professional development (PD) activities. This means you will need to reference the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST).

WHAT ARE THESE STANDARDS?

THE BACKGROUND

When established in 2002, one of the first tasks undertaken by the Victorian Institute of Teaching was to develop standards of professional practice. This was done through an extensive consultative process with the profession. Eight standards emerged articulating what teachers should know and be able to do and these were organised under the three domains of knowledge, practice and engagement.

These standards continued to be used for the purpose of full registration and renewal until 2013 when the

Institute transitioned to the APST. Prior to this time significant work was undertaken by various national bodies. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) assumed responsibility for validating and finalising the APST in July 2010.

THE NEW STANDARDS

All registered teachers need to maintain the APST at the proficient level. If you are renewing your registration in 2014, as a requirement for your PD you need to reference at least one standard from each of the three domains – professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement.

Domains of Teaching	Standards
Professional Knowledge	1. Know students and how they learn 2. Know the content and how to teach it
Professional Practice	3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning 4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments 5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning
Professional Engagement	6. Engage in professional learning 7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community

RENEWING YOUR REGISTRATION IN 2014 (CONT.)

WHAT HASN'T CHANGED?

Victorian teachers already use standards. There is very little difference between the standards you have been using and the APST. Victorian teachers will continue to show that they have maintained their professional knowledge, practice and suitability through a renewal process.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

All teachers who are renewing in September 2014 will be reminded that they should know about [the Codes of Conduct and Ethics](#). For most teachers who are renewing as part of the annual renewal process, there has been an increase in the minimum days practice that is required.

WHERE TO FIND OUT YOUR SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR RENEWAL

Go to your MyVIT account, log in and click 'RENEWING YOUR REGISTRATION THIS YEAR: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW'. You will find your specific requirements listed under 'WHAT HASN'T CHANGED?' and 'WHAT HAS CHANGED?' You will also find useful information about equivalent practice, educational leadership and non-practising registration.

WHEN WILL YOU NEED TO DO THIS?

To renew your registration this year, you will need to:

Pay your annual fee

Possess a current and satisfactory National Police History Check

Declare that you are suitable to teach

Meet the requirements for Professional Practice: days teaching, equivalent practice or educational leadership, and hours of professional development activities

- You will receive an invoice in the coming months outlining the tasks you need to complete by the end of September in your MyVIT account. These will need to be done consecutively and completely to have your registration renewed.

In addition to the online tasks you may be required to do any of the following:

- If you have to update your National Police History Check (NPHC) you will need to provide to the Institute certified proof of identity documents attached to the confirmation page that will be emailed to you.
- The Institute may contact you to provide evidence to support your declarations about days teaching and hours of PD activities.
- If you do not pay your renewal fee online you will have to send payment attached to the payment slip that will be emailed to you.

ALL THESE TASKS MUST BE COMPLETED BY 30 SEPTEMBER 2014.

[Read more about the APST.](#)

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS

All registered teachers need to maintain the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) at the proficient level. The APST are a public statement that describes the professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement required of teachers.

This is the first of a series where we look in detail at one or more standards in each of the three domains.

Domains of Teaching	Standards
Professional Knowledge	1. Know students and how they learn 2. Know the content and how to teach it
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Under the 'Professional Practice' domain, there are a range of skills required of teachers:

Teachers are able to make learning engaging and valued. They are able to create and maintain safe, inclusive and challenging learning environments and implement fair and equitable behaviour management plans. They use sophisticated communication techniques.

Teachers have a repertoire of effective teaching strategies and use them to implement well-designed teaching programs and lessons. They

regularly evaluate all aspects of their teaching practice to ensure they are meeting the learning needs of their students. They interpret and use student assessment data to diagnose barriers to learning and to challenge students to improve their performance.

Teachers operate effectively at all stages of the teaching and learning cycle, including planning for learning and assessment, developing learning programs, teaching, assessing, providing feedback on student learning and reporting to parents/carers.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS (CONT.)

STANDARD 3: PLAN FOR AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Proficient teachers use a range of sources, including student results, to evaluate their teaching and to adjust their programs to better meet student needs.

There are illustrations of practice linked to standards at www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/. Just click on the 'Illustrations of Practice' tab, then select 'Find by Standard', and look under standard '3'.

There are specific references to:

- The use of relevant teaching strategies to develop knowledge, skills, problem solving and critical and creative thinking,
- The use of a range of resources, including ICT, to engage students in their learning, and
- The effective use of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to support student understanding, participation, engagement and achievement.

There is also an expectation that teachers will plan for appropriate and contextually relevant opportunities for parents/carers to be involved in their children's learning.

AITSL has also developed a self-assessment tool that can assist teachers to identify for themselves their areas of strength and areas for development. It is available at www.selfassessment.aitsl.edu.au.

Further information about the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Illustrations of Practice and other related information can be accessed at www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/.

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WHY MENTORING MATTERS

‘Hit the ground running’ is certainly a phrase that applies to the expectations of a beginning teacher. How many other professions require a newly graduated employee to do the same job as a 10 year veteran? Such is the challenge facing beginning teachers, as they attempt to grasp the nuances of classroom management and responding to students’ learning needs. This is why mentoring is so important – not just to help a beginning teacher negotiate this difficult stage in their journey, but importantly, to ensure that they establish practices that provide for strong and effective teaching.

In Victoria, teachers entering the profession are granted provisional registration and must undertake an evidence based process to demonstrate that they meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the Proficient level. Pivotal to this process is the allocation of a mentor. Mindful of this, the Institute has positioned itself to use and promote best practice. In a recent paper published by the HayGroup, [Building the right foundation: improving teacher induction in Australian schools](#), eight characteristics were highlighted as necessary for an effective induction program. The characteristics noted were:

- Provision of a mentor
- Opportunity for collaboration
- Structured observations
- Reduced teaching and/or release time
- Teacher evaluation
- Opportunities for professional discussions and/or communication
- Professional support and/or professional networking
- Part of a program of professional development

While some of the above characteristics are not solely the domain of the Institute – e.g. reduced teaching time, which is an industrial matter – all of the above are incorporated or recommended in our full registration process.

To support schools and those who are mentoring new teachers the Institute runs a two day training program which is co-facilitated with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). A key function of this program is to inform mentors of their role in supporting and advising beginning teachers about full registration. We emphasise with our mentors that this process is about the day to day work of a teacher and is not a ‘project’ or a ‘portfolio’. It enables mentors to determine the best possible support that can be offered to a beginning teacher. This could include facilitating discussions, providing feedback, modelling practice, linking a beginning teacher with other experienced teachers and classroom observations.

The annual evaluation conducted by the Institute strongly endorses the value of our programs and our process. 80% of provisionally registered teachers (PRTs) and 90% of mentors thought the process supported PRTs to make beneficial changes to their teaching practice. PRTs and mentors also valued the professional development offered by the Institute to support the

WHY MENTORING MATTERS (CONT.)

process for full registration, with 94% of PRTs and 99% of mentors indicating that they found the Institute seminars useful.

The latest evaluation highlights the significance of supported entry into the profession with key findings indicating an increased likelihood of teachers staying in the profession as a result of school based support. In 2011, 74% of beginning teachers indicated this to be so. This compares with 28% of beginning teachers from the 2004 cohort.

When schools are selecting a teacher to become a mentor and to attend a program it would be worthwhile to consider the following characteristics of an effective mentor:

- A genuine desire to take on a pivotal role that impacts in many ways, e.g. student learning, teacher well-being, teacher retention
- Ability to 'walk in the shoes' of a beginning teacher
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Leadership qualities

The appointment of a mentor to assist and guide new career entrants has been proven to have positive effects on teaching practice. Mentoring is a relatively low-cost investment that brings with it high-end gains; it is both an investment in a school's human resource capabilities as well as in the future of the teaching profession.



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PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT UPDATE

This is the first in our ongoing quarterly updates about the Institute's professional conduct and practice activities. These updates will give you information about the types of concerns we deal with, case studies and examples of how we respond to conduct and practice issues.

CONCERNS

2014 has seen some concerns about conduct being raised with the Institute variously from members of the public and employers. The Institute also receives information from Victoria Police when a teacher is found guilty of a serious criminal offence ('indictable offence').

Here are some of the more prevalent concerns that are being raised with us about teachers:

- Social media continues to be an emerging area of risk for teachers. We have received complaints about deliberate misuse of social media (i.e. engaging in inappropriate contact with students) and situations where good intentions (i.e. providing pastoral care) quickly get out of control, resulting in serious boundary crossings. You can find further discussion about this topic in last December's Professional Practice and we also encourage you to visit the DEECD website or talk to your employer for information on using social media.
- We have received a number of complaints about inappropriate communication with students, including offensive language and over friendly conversations. In trying to establish rapport, some teachers have failed to maintain objectivity in their relationships with students, including divulging inappropriate information about their personal lives. Remember, the Code of Conduct calls for teachers not to draw students into their personal agendas or to violate the limits and boundaries to their

relationships with students.

- Employers have been vigilant in reporting fraudulent activities to us, including the use of false medical certificates and misrepresentations about qualifications and experiences. These are matters the Institute takes very seriously and can also constitute a criminal offence.

If concerns of this nature are substantiated a teacher faces the prospect of: having conditions put on their registration; being cautioned or reprimanded; having their registration suspended; and having their registration cancelled, with or without a period of disqualification.

CASE STUDY – RECREATIONAL DRUG USE

In a recent hearing a teacher was found to have engaged in misconduct by virtue of undertaking the duties of a teacher in circumstances where the teacher was likely to have been under the influence of an illegal drug. The teacher had been a frequent drug user and it was found, while the teacher was not using at school, it was likely the teacher was affected by the drug the morning after use. The teacher acknowledged the dangers of their drug use and had made considerable lifestyle changes. The panel found this conduct to be a departure from acceptable professional standards and issued the teacher with a caution, noting the serious consequences for any further similar conduct.

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HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR CONTACT DETAILS?

Under legislation, teachers need to inform the Institute within 30 days of a change of address. It is important for you to inform us of **any** change of contact details, so that you can receive important information about your registration during the year.

Changing your details is a simple process.

Go to your MyVIT account. Log in with your registration number and your password, and click 'Update My Profile'. Change your details and click 'update'.

The screenshot shows the MyVIT account dashboard. The top navigation bar includes links for 'Find it fast', 'Registration', 'Standards & learning', 'Conduct', 'Teacher support', 'School', and 'My VIT'. A 'View our online newsletter' button is also present. The left-hand banner displays a 'Welcome' message and registration details: 'Registration Status: Not Current', 'Permission To Teach', 'Registration Number: 313638', 'Required PD Hours: 20', and 'Verified Hours: 176.0'. Below this, there are sections for 'My Applications', 'My Correspondence', 'My PD', 'My Events', 'Forms', and 'Tutorial'. At the bottom of the banner, the 'Update My Profile' button is circled in red. A red arrow points from the text 'To change your contact details, click 'Update My Profile' on the left-hand banner.' to this button. The 'Logout of MyVIT' button is also visible at the bottom of the banner.

To change your contact details, click 'Update My Profile' on the left-hand banner.

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