

Fact sheet

Inquiry process stage 2: The Inquiry question and professional learning

How do you develop an Inquiry question that best meets your needs and those of your learners?

The Inquiry question and professional learning stage is where you should spend time ensuring you have a solid Inquiry question to drive your process forward. Audit data suggests that teachers who have a specific and strong Inquiry question produce stronger evidence of the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (APST).

Selecting your area of focus

During stage one, you considered your context and the content that you will be teaching based upon the relevant curriculum. According to the [Timperley model](#), the learner is at the heart of everything that teacher's do, and therefore, it is their needs that will direct your question.

Think about the knowledge and skill of your learners as well as relevant curriculum requirements.

- What are the most important learning outcomes in the area of curriculum focus?
- What does the data say about your learners' needs?
- What strategies will best support your learners to achieve these outcomes?

If your workplace has a particular teaching and learning priority, then it is a good idea to adopt this as your area of focus. This will be data driven, as these priorities are set using whole cohort data. There is a good chance your workplace will have a lot of resources and professional learning opportunities available to support the work in this area. You will be expected to be working on this area anyway and so this fits with the stipulation that the Inquiry should support your current work.



At this stage, you should be thinking about your own knowledge and skill when teaching in your area of focus.

- What knowledge and skills do you have in teaching the area of potential focus?
- How can you improve your knowledge and skills in this area of potential focus?

Alisha Negi (registered teacher) with learners
McClelland College

Your professional learning in this area can take many forms, you may undertake professional reading, seminars, professional discussions and, of course, observations.

The VIT Inquiry process stipulates that you must observe your mentor or another fully registered experienced teacher at least once. We suggest you take the opportunity to see what proficiency looks like through observations in the area that you will be focusing on.

The Inquiry process also requires you to have at least two professional discussions with your mentor about the Inquiry. Now is a good time to have these conversations.

Your Inquiry question

When writing your Inquiry question, avoid the temptation to pick a question that's broad – you have to make your focus specific and measurable.

To assist you, VIT has developed the [SMART Inquiry question tool](#). This is specifically to assist you to test the viability of your question against the questions in the tool.

Other contexts

Teachers working in non-school settings where you may be providing sessional teaching may like to gather data and feedback on the learners understanding of the content and concepts that are covered in your lessons. This can be used to develop a strategy to better target that understanding and record your results via feedback or mini assessments such as quizzes, transitions, exit tickets etc.

Teachers working across multiple environments, such as CRTs, will need to think about the learning needs you see in common across the contexts that you teach in and develop strategies to promote positive change. Your Inquiry question reflects the change you are trying to bring about across all of your sessions. You may like to narrow things down by targeting particular year levels, age groups or curriculum areas.

The [PRT Companion Guide](#) and [Casual Relief Teacher Evidence Guide](#) are helpful resources for teachers working as CRT's or in non-school settings.

We recommend you spend some time to develop a strong Inquiry question so you are clear about the change you are trying to achieve. Once your question is ready, you will find it much easier to write your action plan, which will be the roadmap for your Inquiry process.

For more information and resources visit vit.vic.edu.au/prt#resources or contact prt@vit.vic.edu.au.



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