

Fact sheet

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 identified the context of your learners which gave you the base to work from in identifying your question. 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 is the most important thing to address?
- What will the learners most need to access the learning?
- Does the data support your thinking?
- What change would you like to see as a result of the Inquiry process?

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 in 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?

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. PRT survey data indicates that 81% of PRTs who completed the process in the past three years valued the opportunity to see what good practice looks like.

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, as you are writing and refining your Inquiry question.

At this point, armed with your understanding of your learner's needs and what may be required of you to progress their learning, it's time to create your question.



Etaoin Waters (registered teacher) with learners
Concord School

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.



Example questions

Below are examples of Inquiry questions that have been used for their Inquiry process. While looking at these may assist in understanding the format of a question, they have been developed with particular contexts in mind and are not transferrable to other situations.

Each question is unique because it has the particular learners and workplace context in mind when it is being developed.

- If I explicitly teach the 'if, then, finally' strategy to my Dragons reading group, will it enable them to summarise the main points in a narrative?
- Will using digital technology to publish learners' work encourage them to take more care in the editing process of writing exercises?
- Can reflective listening and redirection strategies support positive behaviour and engagement in learning and play?
- Can a proactive approach to directing children support the development of intrinsic motivation?
- Can the use of targeted 'hook in' activities at the start of a lesson decrease the transition time from entering the room to engagement?
- Can the use of exit passes be used to test learners understanding of the learning outcomes and provide reliable reporting data to the main classroom teacher?

Other contexts

Some of the questions above demonstrate how teachers can target transferable areas of focus across different classrooms and with different groups.

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, exit passes etc.

Teachers working across multiple environments, such as CRTs, will need to think about the 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.

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.

VIT support

Resources



register for a [PRT seminar](#)

download [PRT resources](#)

Professional Practice team



comprised of teachers, the team is available at prt@vit.vic.edu.au

Online support



read our [FAQs for PRTs](#)

explore our full suite of [PRT fact sheets](#)



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