

REPORT

For the

VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF TEACHING

**The VIT Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered
Teachers:**

Evaluation of Implementation in 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) was established by an Act of Parliament in 2001 as a statutory authority with responsibility for the regulation and promotion of the teaching profession in Victoria. Registration is one of its main functions, the purpose of which is to ensure that teachers employed in Victorian schools are both qualified and competent.

The VIT Act led to important changes in the nature of registration. The new Institute gave the teaching profession greater responsibility for developing the standards that teachers had to meet to gain registration, as well as methods for determining whether they had met them. Significantly, it also gave the profession a much stronger role in determining who had met those standards, through school-based recommendation procedures. From 2004, the new procedures for provisional registration meant that registration changed from a “rubber stamp” event at the end of a university course to a process of support and learning over the first year or two of teaching.

Formerly, beginning teachers were automatically eligible to gain registration on completing an approved university qualification, despite the fact that this qualification was recognised as an uncertain guide to a teacher’s capacity to promote learning in real school contexts (Parliament of Victoria, Education and Training Committee, 2005). Most professions delay registration until a period of internship in workplace settings has been completed satisfactorily (Ingvarson et al., 2006). With the new act, registration for teachers now depended also on successful completion of a period of provisional registration supported by a mentor. By the end of this period, graduate teachers were expected to provide evidence that their practice met standards of performance established by the VIT before gaining full entry to the profession.

The VIT Act also meant better induction experiences for new teachers. Many reports on teacher education in Australia over the past thirty years had pointed to the inadequacy of arrangements for supporting beginning teachers in their induction period. The introduction of the VIT registration process was, in effect, a means for ensuring something was done on a broad scale to implement their recommendations for more organised support during this difficult time. It was also hoped that this process would have beneficial effects on retention rates for good teachers. The VIT standards and mentoring processes also supported and legitimated the efforts of many schools were making to build, for example, a performance and development culture and stronger professional learning teams.

The VIT Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program

The focus of this evaluation is the VIT’s *Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers*, a program designed to assist beginning teachers as they assemble evidence of their capacity to meet the VIT standards. ACER conducted an evaluation of the pilot version of this Program in 2003 (Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004). In 2004 the new requirements for Provisionally Registered Teachers (PRTs) were extended to include all schools and ACER was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the new support program for PRTs (Wilkinson, Ingvarson, Beavis & Kleinhenz, 2005).

The VIT grants provisional registration to all new entrants to the profession for 12 months initially. This period can be extended for a further 12 months (or a total of 2 years). Gaining

full registration is now contingent upon PRTs demonstrating that their practice has met the eight VIT Standards of Professional Practice.

Figure 1 below shows where the *Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers* fits into the continuum for professional learning, from initial teacher education, through induction and on to continuing professional learning. It also shows the separation that now exists between gaining a qualification from a VIT accredited university and gaining registration a year or two later as a competent practitioner from a professional body, after successful participation in an induction program with a trained mentor.

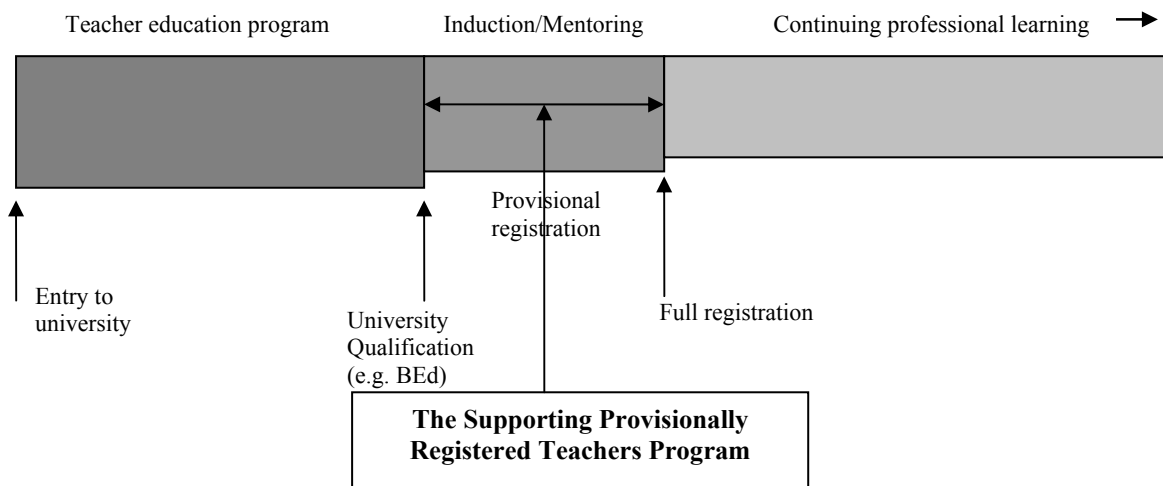


Figure 1: The Teacher Education Continuum

The VIT Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program has five major components.

1. The VIT *Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration*, which provide beginning teachers with a clear framework for their professional learning and their discussions with mentors and colleagues over the first year or two of practice.
2. Three structured activities for beginning teachers whereby they provide evidence of their professional practice against all of the standards.
3. Two half-day seminars for PRTs that provide training in the standards and methods for gathering evidence of their performance.
4. A two-day statewide training and support program for teacher mentors and mentor coordinators who support Provisionally Registered Teachers.
5. Guidelines for school-based panels that assess the beginning teacher's evidence and make recommendations to the VIT about whether to grant registration.

The VIT Standards for Registration

The VIT *Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration* includes the following three main components, with eight sub-elements:

- A. Professional knowledge
 1. Teachers know how students learn and how to teach them effectively.

2. Teachers know the content they teach.
3. Teachers know their students.

B. Professional practice

4. Teachers plan and assess for effective learning.
5. Teachers create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments
6. Teachers use a range of teaching practices and resources to engage students in effective learning.

C. Professional knowledge

7. Teachers reflect on, evaluate and improve their professional knowledge and practice.
8. Teachers are active members of their professional community

Each of the eight sub-elements within the *Standards* is described in further detail in the full set of VIT standards, which can be found on the VIT website (<http://www.vit.vic.edu.au>).

Assessing evidence of practice against the VIT standards

The VIT requires that PRTs provide evidence that their practice has met all eight standards. It is clear that no single form of evidence alone can provide evidence across such a range of different standards. Multiple forms of evidence are required. The VIT has developed three tasks or activities for PRTs to undertake, with the support of their mentor, over a period of several months. Each activity provides evidence of performance in relation to some of the standards. Together, the three types of evidence ensure that all the standards are covered. The three types of evidence include:

An Analysis of Teaching and Learning

In this activity, the PRT is asked to provide documentation relating to a unit of work or a sequence of learning undertaken with one of their classes, focusing on two activities undertaken by students during the unit and reflecting on the learning that has taken place, with a focus on providing detailed evidence of learning in at least two students.

Collegiate Classroom Activities

The PRT participates in three classroom activities in collaboration with their mentor or another teacher. This activity provides opportunities to observe the PRT's teaching. They plan the learning goals and activities jointly with a colleague, team teach the activity and reflect on the outcomes together. Both the mentors and the PRTs complete reflection sheets at the conclusion of the activity, using the VIT standards as a framework.

A Documented Commentary on Professional Activities

The PRT provides evidence of their engagement in a range of activities beyond the classroom in the wider school community. These might include contributions to their school team, their school and the profession. They also include a commentary on how at least three of these activities have helped their professional learning and practice.

Table 1 brings together the eight VIT standards and the three methods for presenting evidence. Its purpose is to show how the three assessment activities together provide evidence that covers the eight standards. This coverage of all the standards, using several

different sources of evidence, is essential to assuring the reliability and validity of the assessment for registration.

For example, the Analysis of Teaching and Learning activity provides evidence particularly relevant to the first four VIT standards. The Collegiate Classroom Activities enable mentors to observe evidence particularly relevant to standards Five and Six, but also relevant to Standards Four and Five. Gathering more than one form of evidence relevant to a standard increases the reliability of the assessment. Table 1 indicates that the third task, Commentary on Professional Activities, provides evidence relevant to Standards Seven and Eight. Table 1 shows how the three components that make up the VIT's *Evidence of Professional Practice* requirement ensures that evidence relevant to each of the eight standards is provided. Each of the Components calls for teachers to analyse and reflect on the evidence gathered.

Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration	Method of Gathering Evidence		
	Collegiate Classroom Activities	Analysis of Teaching and Learning	Commentary on Professional Activities
1. Teachers know how students learn and how to teach them effectively.		√	
2. Teachers know the content they teach.		√	
3. Teachers know their students.		√	
4. Teachers plan and assess for effective learning.	√	√	
5. Teachers create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments.	√	√	
6. Teachers use a range of teaching practices and resources to engage students in effective learning.	√	√	
7. Teachers reflect on, evaluate and improve their professional knowledge and practice.	√	√	√
8. Teachers are active members of their profession.			√

State-wide training and support program for PRTs, mentors and principals

The VIT provides two half-day seminars for all PRTs (over 2000 teachers) in nearly 30 centres across the state. The first seminar provides opportunities for teachers to share their experiences, be briefed on the requirements for registration and access resources for compiling their *Evidence of Professional Practice*. The second focuses on examining examples of evidence, preparing evidence of practice, and the school-based process by which their evidence will be assessed. The VIT aims to ensure that all beginning teachers are supported by a mentored induction program in their school, with opportunities to collaborate

with colleagues and consolidate their understanding of the standards, and receive support as they prepare evidence of their practice for full registration.

The VIT's two-day statewide support program for mentors and school leaders is offered in over 40 centres across the state. The first day of the program, held early in the year, focuses on planning successful induction programs and provides practical sessions on the skills and attributes of effective mentors. The second, held mid-year, focuses on training mentors in the evidence-based requirements for full registration.

The recommendation process

PRTs present their *Evidence of Professional Practice* to a school-based panel consisting of the principal and two teachers, one of whom is a teacher nominated by the PRT (this teacher can be the PRT's mentor). The other teacher must be a mentor trained in the VIT assessment processes (who may come from another school). The role of the panel is to assess the three types of evidence described above and make a recommendation to the VIT. The level of professional practice required for each of the standards is that which could reasonably be expected of a teacher following one year of teaching experience, and is articulated in the VIT's *Guide to Competent Practice*.

The panel may recommend that the VIT grant full registration or an extension of the period of provisional registration. The recommendation process usually occurs towards the end of a teacher's first 12 months of registration. PRTs need to have completed at least 80 days of teaching and prepared their *Evidence of Professional Practice*. In some cases this process will take longer than 12 months and teachers can extend their provisional registration for a further 12 months. The recommendation meeting provides PRTs with an opportunity for collegiate discussion and an affirmation of their developing practice in relation to the standards.

The sections above have described the main features of the VIT's arrangements for gaining registration as a teacher in Victoria. These arrangements for support and quality assurance of entrants to the profession are unique in Australia. No other state, except Queensland, requires a period of provisional registration. However, the Queensland College of Teachers does not determine requirements for assessing the performance of teachers for registration purposes.

In most jurisdictions in Australia, completion of a university preparation course leads automatically to registration. This has two significant consequences. The first is that registration is only weakly linked to the assessment and accreditation of teacher education courses. This is because little or no systematic data is gathered about the relative competence of graduates from different courses and their capacity to meet performance standards. The second, which is the focus of this evaluation, is that registration in other jurisdictions is not a process for supporting professional development and assuring that teachers have attained standards of performance expected of those entering the profession.

There is, therefore, considerable national and international interest in the outcomes of the VIT's *Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers*, especially in the current context of discussions about a national approach to teacher registration and the accreditation of teacher education courses. Key questions for this evaluation revolve around two issues:

- To what extent are the new arrangements for assessing teacher performance for registration perceived as valid, rigorous and therefore fair?
- To what extent do these arrangements promote professional learning and improved teaching practices?

The validity question is critical; do the VIT procedures provide the public and the profession with an assurance that new teachers are qualified and competent? So also is the impact of the Program on professional learning. Subsidiary questions include the effects of the Program on school culture and professional community, retention of beginning teachers in the profession and the manageability of the process for schools, teachers and mentors.

2: APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation was to gather the perceptions of PRTs, their mentors and principals, about the *Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program* and the new procedures for registration in Victoria. The main evaluation questions focused on perceptions of the validity and rigour of the new procedures and their effects on professional learning. Questions were also asked about mentoring and induction arrangements in schools to support beginning teachers, and the impact of these arrangements on professional collaboration and learning. Respondents were also given the opportunity to make comments on the new procedures for full registration.

Method

For this evaluation ACER developed and distributed three survey instruments for provisionally registered teachers, mentors and principals. These instruments were developed in collaboration with the VIT. Potential respondents were contacted by email and invited to complete an online survey administered by ACER. The survey instrument is included in Appendix 1.

The survey instrument for PRTs was divided into seven sections:

1. School and teacher information
2. Mentoring and induction experiences
3. Analysis of Teaching and Learning task
4. Collegiate Classroom Activities task
5. Professional Activities task
6. Evaluation and recommendation processes
7. General responses

Questions for PRTs, mentors and principals were, in almost all cases, identical. The survey instrument included questions about gender, teacher education course, location of school, level of school, school sector, and a number of other factors such as employment arrangements, support offered and participation in the VIT support program.

Surveys were sent to 3018 provisionally registered teachers who had applied for full registration during 2005 using the new evidence based process as of February, 2005, and mentors and principals from their schools. Responses were received from 792 PRTS, 818 mentors and 92 principals.

Characteristics of respondents

Gender

The gender breakdown of respondents was as follows:

Provisionally Registered Teacher (PRT) Respondents:	Female 73%, Male 27%
Mentor (M) Respondents:	Female 77%, Male 23%
Principal (P) Respondents:	Female 51%, Male 49%

Initial teacher education course

Forty-nine percent of the PRTs who responded to the survey had completed a post graduate course, usually a Diploma of Education. Thirty per cent had completed an undergraduate teaching degree, usually called a BEd, and 21 per cent had completed an undergraduate double degree such as BA/BEd.

Location of school

Sixty-three percent of PRT responses came from Melbourne metropolitan schools, 20 per cent from large regional towns or cities and 17 per cent from schools in rural areas.

Level of school

Forty-four percent of PRT respondents were from primary (Prep to 6) schools; 36 per cent were from secondary (7 to 12 schools); 11 per cent were from P to 12 schools; 3 per cent were from secondary (7 to 10) schools; 2 per cent from secondary (9 to 12) schools; 2 per cent from special settings and 2 per cent from other settings. There were similar response levels from mentors and principals. When the principal respondents are divided into exclusively primary and exclusively secondary, the respective percentages are 45 per cent and 36 per cent.

School sector

Seventy-one percent of PRT responses were from Government schools, 16 per cent from Catholic schools and 13 per cent from Independent schools. There were similar response levels from mentors and principals.

Employment arrangements

Fifty-one per cent of PRTs had permanent/ongoing appointment and 47 per cent had fixed term contracts. The remaining PRTs were part-time or casual relief teachers.

Attendance at VIT training sessions

A large majority of PRTs (92%) and mentors (88%) reported that they had attended VIT training sessions during 2005.

3: MENTORING AND INDUCTION EXPERIENCES

Most PRTs (99 %) who responded to the survey had been provided with a mentor in their induction year. Victorian schools are strongly encouraged to support provisionally registered teachers with both induction and mentoring processes at the school level. The majority of mentors taught in the same subject area (68 per cent), or were members of the same teaching and learning team (64 per cent).

As mentioned above, the VIT provides a comprehensive support program across the state. This includes meetings for PRTs, mentors and principals. During 2005, 92 per cent of the PRTs and 88 per cent of mentors surveyed had attended these sessions. Eighty per cent of principals had also attended special sessions related to their role in supporting provisionally registered teachers and conducting the assessment panels. Most of the principals (94 per cent) had also attended support sessions in 2004. Forty-two percent of the mentors who responded had also participated in the support sessions during 2004, which means that the number of experienced mentors is growing.

Table 2 summarises the perceptions of PRTs (T), mentors (M) and principals (P) about the mentoring process as they experienced it in 2005. It indicates that the majority of PRTs had similar attitudes about their mentoring experiences to those of this teacher.

Overall my school was very supportive and gave my mentor and I (sic) time to work on the process. My mentor was, and continues to be very supportive which I feel made my experience in the process from Provisional to Full Registration relevant and beneficial to my teaching practice.

Eighty-four per cent of PRTs agreed or strongly agreed that they had made significant improvements in their classroom work as a result of guidance and feedback from their mentors and other colleagues. Seventy-three per cent indicated that their mentor used the VIT standards to provide guidance and feedback. Seventy-six per cent of PRTs said they met regularly with their mentor to discuss their progress as a teacher (including developing and gathering evidence). A higher proportion of mentors (89 per cent) said they had met regularly with the PRTs. A large majority of PRTs (86 per cent) thought the choice of their mentor was appropriate, and 83 per cent were satisfied with the mentoring they received. Eighty-six per cent were satisfied with the level of support and encouragement they received from their school leadership team in gathering their evidence.

Table 2: Perceptions of the mentoring process and school support (% of respondents)

To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements?		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. As a result of guidance and feedback from my mentor and other colleagues I have significantly changed aspects of my classroom work for the better	T	3	13	61	23
	M	2	10	68	20
	P	-	6	74	20
b. My mentor used the Institute’s Standards of Professional Practice as a basis for providing me with guidance and feedback.	T	6	21	56	17
	M	2	8	63	27
	P	1	10	65	24
c. My mentor and I met regularly to discuss my progress as a teacher (including developing and gathering evidence).	T	5	19	43	33
	M	1	10	53	36
	P	1	1	56	42
d. Overall, the choice of my mentor was appropriate.	T	4	10	36	50
	M	2	6	59	33
	P	-	1	53	46
e. Overall, I was satisfied with the mentoring I received.	T	4	13	36	47
	M	1	8	65	26
	P	-	4	49	47
f. Overall I was satisfied with the level of support and encouragement I received from my school leadership team in gathering my three components of evidence.	T	3	11	48	38
	M	2	10	55	33
	P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

As there was a strong correlation in the pattern of responses between the items in Table A, these items were combined to form a scale, which we have called *School Mentoring Support* (SMS). Appendix 1 provides a factor analysis of the six items in the scale and measure of the scale’s internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha = 0.863). This measure has been used later in this report in conducting analyses of factors explaining variation in PRT perceptions about the registration process. The following quote is representative of PRTs in schools with well-supported induction and mentoring programs; that is, schools that were high on the SMS measure:

I was lucky to have a supportive mentor who was more than willing to help when necessary. I was allocated 1.5hr per week to work on my portfolio and without this I would not have been able to complete it without dramatically increasing my workload. I think a supportive professional mentor is more important than completing written work. I felt like there was a lot of work involved in completing the Portfolio; however it was not too much of a burden.

I feel I was fortunate to be very well supported at the school where I completed the Components of Evidence. I wonder how I would have done in meeting the standards had I not had this support.

Other PRTs were not so fortunate:

At my school, we did NOT receive a proper mentoring program whatsoever. I found I received more support from other beginning teachers, not only from my school, but from teachers I met during the Dip Ed year. I was so disappointed with the lack of support from the school, given that at my interview they gave me the impression that they were committed to the VIT Mentoring and Registration process. It seemed as if that was only at "face value".

Several PRTs pointed out the importance of schools taking care to appoint appropriate mentors.

The mentoring process is a good idea, but it is very important that the mentor is in the same subject area as the provisionally registered teacher. While my mentor was very nice, he was not able to offer me any helpful information as it was outside his area.

Table 3 compares responses to the same set of statements as in Table 2 of PRTs who completed the Standards and Professional Learning Program in 2004 and 2005. The overall message from Table B is one of little change in responses from 2004 to 2005, except for the suggestion that a higher proportion of mentors in 2005 (73% compared with 69% in 2004) were reported to be using the VIT standards to provide PRTs with guidance and feedback. In most schools, PRTs appear to be satisfied with the support they receive from mentors, but there is clearly a small group of schools where the quality of mentoring and time allocated to it can be improved.

PRTs in primary schools reported statistically significant higher levels and quality of *School Mentoring Support* than teachers in secondary schools. PRTs in government and Catholic schools were more likely to agree that their mentors had used the VIT standards as a basis for providing feedback than teachers in independent schools. Mentors who had attended the VIT state-wide training programs were more likely to meet regularly with PRTs and to use the VIT standards to provide feedback to PRTs.

However, more than any of these factors, the nature and extent of leadership support explained the variation in the level of PRT satisfaction with their mentoring, as this young teacher illustrates.

I was not happy with the lack of support and guidance I was given with the VIT process in my school during my first year of teaching. I didn't have a mentor and didn't have regular meetings or progress reports with anyone on how I was going, despite having a very heavy teaching load of VCE during my first year. Thankfully, I had supportive staff around me who helped me, but I think the program needs to be taken more seriously by some to support graduate teachers. I can now see why so many graduate teachers leave the profession, when so many demands are placed on us and no support structures are in place in some schools. Despite giving such feedback to my school, I don't believe much has been done.

Table 3: PRT perceptions of the mentoring process and school support: A comparison of 2004 and 2005 (% of respondents)

<i>To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements?</i>	PRT Cohort	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) As a result of guidance and feedback from my mentor and other colleagues I have significantly changed aspects of my classroom work for the better.	2004 2005	4 3	12 13	59 61	25 23
b) My mentor used the Institute’s Standards of Professional Practice as a basis for providing me with guidance and feedback.	2004 2005	10 6	20 21	43 56	27 17
c) My mentor and I met regularly to discuss my progress as a teacher (including developing and gathering evidence).	2004 2005	8 5	19 19	39 43	33 33
d) Overall, the choice of my mentor was appropriate.	2004 2005	6 4	10 10	31 36	53 50
e) Overall, I was satisfied with the mentoring I received.	2004 2005	7 4	12 13	31 36	51 47
f) Overall I was satisfied with the level of support and encouragement I received from my school leadership team in gathering my three components of evidence.	2004 2005	- 3	- 11	- 48	- 38

Mentors also recognised the critical importance of active support from the school leadership team.

The whole process needs to be supported by the school leadership team, principal, vice principal etc. This was sadly lacking in our school. I felt they did not understand the importance and relevance of the process and I felt the prov. registered teacher was sadly left in doubt about the whole process. As a mentor I was not invited to participate or attend the meetings until half way though the year. The choice of mentor was based on convenience, rather than needs, personality, enthusiasm or suitability of the people involved. At first one mentor was chosen for a group of provisionally registered teachers, then it was delegated to a second person. I am glad my provisionally registered teacher got through the process, with no thanks to the leadership (or lack thereof) within our school. Maybe the prov. reg. teacher should have a real say in who the mentor might be and the role needs to be clearly defined right from the start.

The success or failure of the program seems to depend on how seriously the school takes the task, in terms of allotting time to the task etc... It also relies heavily on making a good match between mentor and mentoree. My PRT was in a different KLA and a different staffroom so opportunity for informal discussion and what you might call touching base was impaired.

Fortunately, as the data in Table 2 above indicates, these experiences were rare. Most school leaders took their responsibilities seriously to ensure that effective induction programs were in place and that beginning teachers and mentors had the support they needed to fulfil the VIT requirements for entry to the profession. (However, more primary (91%) than secondary school mentors (83%), were satisfied with the level of leadership support they received). Most PRTs thought the choice of mentor was appropriate and that their mentors had helped them to improve their teaching. Many mentors, in like vein, commented on the value of formalising the place of the mentoring process in schools as a means of support and advice to beginning teachers.

I am delighted with this process. I have worked with people who should never have been registered but by the time they faced this a career change was very difficult. This is a helpful process that formalises what should have been happening in an informal way anyhow but did not always occur. The process makes it easy for both the PRT and the mentor to enter each other's classroom with no threat or loss of face. It is now just a part of the normal process. The dialogue that is begun is most helpful.

4: ANALYSIS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (EVIDENCE COMPONENT 1)

The Analysis of Teaching and Learning (ATL) activity requires a PRT to describe and evaluate a unit of work that he or she has planned and undertaken with a class over several weeks, as part of his or her normal teaching practice. The task essentially asks the PRT to provide evidence that they have promoted learning of worthwhile content and/or skills in their students over a period of time.

The ATL task asks PRTs to describe two activities that students undertake during the unit of work, one early in the learning sequence and another toward the end of the unit of work. PRTs are then asked to provide samples of the work that two of their students have produced as a result of completing these two activities, together with an analysis of what these samples illustrate about these students' development and learning over time and a commentary on its implications for their teaching practice. In preparing this entry for their portfolio, the PRTs also provide a description of the main features of the school context in which they teach.

This component follows the teaching and learning process from planning, through delivery, to assessment and reflection. It is usually about five pages long, with the selection of student work samples as appendices. In summary, the main sections in the entry include a description of the:

1. sequence of learning, the class group and two students;
2. teaching context;
3. teaching and learning plan;
4. planned learning outcomes and the teaching and learning activities;
5. analysis of student work; and
6. a reflection on the teaching and learning.

The ATL component provides evidence related to six of the eight VIT standards and it is clear from these steps that undertaking the task has the potential to engage teachers in effective forms of professional development and deepen their awareness of individual students.

Attitudes to the Analysis of Teaching and Learning (ATL) component

The evaluation examined the attitudes of PRTs, mentors and principals to the several aspects of the ATL task. These aspects are set out in the statements contained in Table 4 below. These statements ask respondents to evaluate the capacity of the ATL task to fulfil its main functions: for example, to promote professional learning and to provide a valid and rigorous measure of teaching performance.

Table 4 indicates that respondents generally evaluated the ATL task very positively. Three statements related to the impact of the ATL task on professional learning. Seventy-five per cent of PRTs thought the ATL task had deepened their understanding of the VIT standards, 76 per cent thought that feedback from their mentor had helped them improve their teaching and 69 per cent said that undertaking the task had benefited their teaching. Mentors and principals were even more positive about the impact of the ATL task on PRTs professional learning.

Four statements related to the validity of the ATL task as a measure of teacher performance. Eighty-three per cent of PRTs thought the task gave them a good chance to show how they met the VIT standards and 84 per cent thought the task provided authentic evidence of their teaching. Seventy-four per cent of PRTs thought the ATL task was an valid way of assessing whether they had met the VIT standards and 69 per cent thought it was a rigorous method of assessing their performance. Table C indicates that mentors and principals, once again, were even more positive in their evaluation of these validity aspects of the ATL task.

Table 4: Perceptions of the Analysis of Teaching and Learning component (% of respondents)

			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<i>To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about the Analysis of Teaching & Learning component of evidence?</i>						
a. Completing the Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence has deepened my understanding of the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T		5	20	66	9
	M		2	9	72	17
	P		-	5	75	20
b. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence gave me a good chance to show how I met the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T		3	14	71	12
	M		2	6	69	23
	P		-	3	73	24
c. The feedback given to me by my mentor about my Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence has helped me to improve my teaching.	T		5	19	63	13
	M		2	9	73	16
	P		-	3	73	24
d. Completing the Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence has benefited my teaching.	T		7	24	59	10
	M		3	11	69	17
	P		-	5	75	20
e. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards.	T		6	20	66	8
	M		3	12	69	16
	P		1	9	73	17
f. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards.	T		6	25	59	10
	M		3	20	61	16
	P		2	16	60	22
g. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence reflected authentic aspects of my own work as a teacher.	T		5	13	69	13
	M		2	8	69	21
	P		-	10	63	27

Table 5 provides a comparison of responses from teachers who completed their provisional registration year in 2005 with those who completed the same process in 2004. ACER used the same set of statements in its previous evaluation of the Professional Standards and Learning Project¹. The 2004 and 2005 cohorts of PRTs responded to the same set of statements as set out in Table 4.

¹ Wilkinson, J. Ingvarson, L. Beavis, A. & Kleinhenz, E. (2005). *The Victorian Institute of Teaching Standards and Professional Learning Project; Evaluation of Implementation in 2004*. Melbourne: Victorian Institute of Teaching. http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/files/documents/749_ACER-Final-Report-2004.pdf

Table 5 indicates two consistent changes. The 2005 cohort of PRTs who completed the Analysis of Teaching and Learning consistently rated the impact of the process on their professional learning more highly than did the 2004 cohort. Seventy-five per cent, compared with 69 per cent in 2004, agreed or strongly agreed that completing the ATL task had deepened their understanding of the VIT standards. Seventy-six per cent, compared with 70 per cent thought the mentoring process about the ATL had helped to improve their teaching, an indication that that the VIT's training of mentors was consolidating and paying dividends. Sixty-nine per cent, compared with 54 per cent of the 2004 PRT cohort, agreed or strongly agreed that completing the ATL task had benefited their teaching. This indicates that mentors and PRTs are becoming more adept at ensuring the ATL task provides a useful learning experience.

Table 5: PRT perceptions of the Analysis of Teaching and Learning component: A comparison of 2004 and 2005 PRTs (% of respondents)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<i>To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about the Analysis of Teaching & Learning component of evidence?</i>					
a. Completing the Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence has deepened my understanding of the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	2004	9	23	58	11
	2005	5	20	66	9
b. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence gave me a good chance to show how I met the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	2004	7	16	64	14
	2005	3	14	71	12
c. The feedback given to me by my mentor about my Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence has helped me to improve my teaching.	2004	7	24	47	23
	2005	5	19	63	13
d. Completing the Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence has benefited my teaching.	2004	16	30	45	9
	2005	7	24	59	10
e. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards.	2004	16	26	53	8
	2005	6	20	66	8
f. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards.	2004	10	26	47	17
	2005	6	25	59	10
g. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence reflected authentic aspects of my own work as a teacher.	2004	10	17	60	13
	2005	5	13	69	13

PRT perceptions of the validity of the ATL task as a method of assessing their performance against the VIT standards had also improved between 2004 and 2005. Eighty-three per cent, compared with 78 per cent of the 2004 cohort, thought the ATL task gave them a good chance to show how they met the VIT standards. Seventy-four per cent, compared with 61 per cent of the 2004 cohort, thought the ATL task was a valid way of assessing whether they had met the VIT standards. Sixty-nine per cent, compared with 64 per cent thought it was a rigorous way of assessing their performance. Eighty-two per cent, compared with 73 per cent for the 2004 cohort, thought the ATL was an authentic assessment task. These improvements probably reflect increased familiarity with the task and better implementation, partly as a

result of refinements the VIT has made to the task guidelines to accommodate the diversity of teaching contexts.

Mentors' and principals' perceptions of the ATL task and its impact on professional learning changed very little and remained very positive from 2004 to 2005. As they were already so positive, there was little room for improvement from 2004 to 2005. The pattern of responses for mentors' and principals' in 2005 was very similar to that obtained in 2004.

The level of *School Mentoring Support* was the most important factor explaining variation in PRTs' perceptions of the ATL activity. This tended to be higher in primary schools. (Appendix 1 provides a regression analysis comparing the comparative effects of several possible factors that may influence PRT's perceptions, including school system, school level, gender and teacher education course type).

Although most PRTs thought that the ATL task provided valid evidence about their teaching and had beneficial effects on their teaching, there were strong comments from some PRTs about other aspects of the task. Some PRTs perceived the ATL task as similar to the type of assignment they had to do in their training:

I felt like I was back at university doing a university assignment I had done about fifteen times at university already.

In addition, many PRTs saw the ATL task as an addition to their busy workload, rather than something that is part of what most teachers normally do.

The process was far too time consuming. It was like completing another university assignment, which took away from the time that should have been put towards the development of my students' learning.

Although there are useful elements to the process, it seems an onerous requirement to be hoisted on people perceived most time-poor. Mentoring and collegiate activities are beneficial, but the current way it is implemented makes it appear like yet more written project work continuing their university experience - even after they have 'graduated'. Beginning teachers would benefit from greater time allocation to preparation - rather than perceive additional 'projects' expected of them.

Attention needs to be given to why some teachers in some schools perceive the ATL task as university type assignment, when the VIT's guidelines only ask, in the main, for evidence that a competent teacher will normally gather and record as part of their professional work; in this case, teaching a unit of work and documenting unit aims, activities, assessment methods, and analyses of student work and learning. A key purpose of this task is that PRTs will provide evidence that they can promote learning in their students, something for which all teachers are accountable.

Once again, the factor that relates most strongly to the variation in PRT perceptions of the task is the school context, as measured by the variable *School Mentoring Support* (Appendix 2). In the opinion of one teacher:

Whilst it is a lot of work - it makes you really reflect on your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. The workload was made very easy by the support of my mentor and colleagues. It has made our staff work together in a more collegial way.

However, in the opinion of another teacher in a different school:

This whole process was exceptionally burdensome and completely unreasonable to expect of a first year teacher. I found that the process created a massive amount of work for me, far more than I feel was even remotely necessary to achieve the goals of the VIT. Prior to my employment as a teacher, I was an attorney, and I can honestly report that I spent more time and effort on the VIT application than I ever did preparing for a major jury trial. The amount of unnecessary and frankly "busy-work" type activities involved in the application was staggering. And yet my sixty eight page application remains gathering dust in the principal's office, unseen by anyone other than those on my panel.

Sixty-eight pages is well beyond VIT guidelines and expectations. This comment points to the need for more clarity about expectations among school leaders responsible for the VIT registration process in their schools.

Summary

Most PRTs, mentors and principals perceived the ALT activity as a valid means of gathering evidence about their capacity to meet the VIT standards. Most also perceived that undertaking the task had promoted professional learning and improved their teaching practice. While there is clearly room for refining the task to improve its reliability and rigour, there was little questioning that the nature of the task was appropriate to its purpose. The perceived manageability of the activity depended more than any other factor on the effectiveness of arrangements made by school leaders to support induction and mentoring in their schools.

5: COLLEGIATE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES (EVIDENCE COMPONENT 2)

For this component of their *Evidence of Professional Practice*, provisionally registered teachers are required to participate in three classroom activities in collaboration with their mentor or another teacher. They plan the learning goals and activities jointly with a colleague, team teach the activity and reflect on the outcomes together. Two of the activities take place in the PRT's classroom and one takes place in another teacher's classroom. Each of the three *Collegiate Classroom Activities* provides an opportunity for mentors to observe the PRTs and to recognise their strengths, affirm their practice and identify areas of practice that need further development.

The activities can occur at any time during the year. For each *Collegiate Classroom Activity*, mentors provide feedback to PRTs about their teaching in relation to the VIT standards. Both the mentors and the PRTs complete a reflection sheet at the conclusion of the activity, using the VIT standards as a framework. These form a component of the evidence. Once again, it is clear that undertaking the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task has the potential to engage PRTs in valuable forms of professional collaboration and effective forms of reflection and development.

As indicated earlier, the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* are designed to provide observational evidence related to four of the eight VIT standards. These tasks enable the mentor to gather first-hand evidence about a PRT's ability to: plan a unit of work with activities and assessments suited to the learning goals; to create a safe and challenging learning environment; to use a range of teaching practice to engage students in effective learning; and to evaluate and reflect realistically on the effectiveness of their teaching. Records from each of the three *Collegiate Classroom Activities* form part of the *Evidence of Professional Practice* or presentation later in the year to their school's recommendation panel.

Perceptions of the Collegiate Classroom Activities Component

PRTs, mentors and principals were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several aspects of the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task. These aspects are set out in the statements contained in Table E below. These statements ask respondents to evaluate the capacity of the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* to fulfil their main functions: that is, to promote professional learning and to provide a valid and rigorous measure of teaching performance.

Table 6 indicates that respondents generally evaluated the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* very positively. Three statements related to the impact of the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task on professional learning. Seventy-three per cent of PRTs thought the task had deepened their understanding of the VIT standards and 74 per cent said they had made beneficial changes to their teaching. Once again, mentors and principals were even more positive about the impact of this task on PRTs' professional learning.

Four statements related to the validity of the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task as a measure of teacher performance. Eighty-three per cent of PRTs thought the task gave them a good chance to show how they met the VIT standards and 82 per cent thought the task provided authentic evidence of their teaching. Seventy-two per cent of PRTs thought the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task was a valid way of assessing whether they had met the

VIT standards, but only 63 per cent thought it was a rigorous method of assessing whether their performance met the VIT standards. Table 6 indicates that mentors and principals were more positive in their evaluation of these validity aspects of the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task, but a significant proportion (25 %) of mentors also had reservations about its rigour.

Table 6: Perceptions of the Collegiate Classroom Activities component (% of respondents)

To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about the Collegiate Classroom Activities component of evidence?		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Completing the Collegiate Classroom Activities component of evidence deepened my understanding of the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T	6	21	64	9
	M	2	7	72	19
	P	1	4	74	21
b. The Collegiate Classroom Activities component of evidence gave me a good chance to show how I met the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T	4	13	70	13
	M	2	5	69	24
	P	-	2	63	35
c. I have made beneficial changes to my teaching as a result of feedback given to me by my mentor and my own reflections on the Collegiate Classroom Activities component of evidence.	T	5	21	60	14
	M	2	8	69	21
	P	-	7	66	27
d. Completing the Collegiate Classroom Activities component of evidence was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards.	T	7	21	61	11
	M	3	11	67	19
	P	-	11	67	22
e. Completing the Collegiate Classroom Activities component of evidence was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards.	T	7	30	54	9
	M	3	22	61	14
	P	1	17	62	20
f. The Collegiate Classroom Activities component of evidence reflected authentic aspects of my own work as a teacher.	T	4	14	69	13
	M	3	8	67	22
	P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 7 provides a comparison of responses from teachers who completed their provisional registration year in 2005 with those who completed the same process in 2004. ACER used the same set of statements as those in Table 7 in its previous evaluation of the Professional Standards and Learning Project. The 2004 and 2005 cohorts of PRTs responded to the same set of statements as set out in Table E.

Table 7 indicates two consistent movements from 2004 to 2005. The 2005 cohort of PRTs who completed the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* component consistently rated the impact of the process on their professional learning slightly higher than the 2004 cohort. Seventy-three per cent, compared with 66 per cent in 2004, agreed or strongly agreed that completing the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task had deepened their understanding of the VIT standards. Seventy-four per cent, compared with 72 per cent thought the mentoring process

related to the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* had helped to improve their teaching, an indication that that the VIT’s training of mentors was consolidating and paying dividends.

PRT perceptions of the validity of the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task as a method of assessing their performance against the VIT standards had also improved slightly. Eighty-three per cent, compared with 80 per cent of the 2004 cohort, thought the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task gave them a good chance to show how they met the VIT standards. Seventy-two per cent, compared with 69 per cent of the 2004 cohort, thought the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task was a valid way of assessing whether they had met the VIT standards. However, only sixty-three per cent, compared with 61 per cent in 2004, thought it was a rigorous way of assessing their performance. The statement (f) about the authenticity of this method of assessing performance was not included in the 2004 survey.

Table 7: PRT perceptions of the Collegiate Classroom Activities: A comparison of 2004 and 2005 PRTs (% of respondents)

<i>To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about the Collegiate Classroom Activities component of evidence?</i>		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Completing the <i>Collegiate Classroom Activities</i> component of evidence deepened my understanding of the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	2004	9	25	55	11
	2005	6	21	64	9
b. The <i>Collegiate Classroom Activities</i> component of evidence gave me a good chance to show how I met the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	2004	8	13	64	16
	2005	4	13	70	13
c. I have made beneficial changes to my teaching as a result of feedback given to me by my mentor and my own reflections on the <i>Collegiate Classroom Activities</i> component of evidence.	2004	9	18	54	19
	2005	5	21	60	14
d. Completing the <i>Collegiate Classroom Activities</i> component of evidence was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the Institute’s standards.	2004	11	19	55	14
	2005	7	21	61	11
e. Completing the <i>Collegiate Classroom Activities</i> component of evidence was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the Institute’s standards.	2004	11	29	44	17
	2005	7	30	54	9
f. The <i>Collegiate Classroom Activities</i> component of evidence reflected authentic aspects of my own work as a teacher.	2004	-	-	-	-
	2005	4	14	69	13

Mentors’ and principals’ perceptions of the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task and its impact on professional learning changed very little and remained highly positive from 2004 to 2005. The pattern of responses for mentors’ and principals’ in 2005 was a very similar to that obtained in 2004. The one aspect about where a significant proportion of respondents indicated there is room for improvement in both years is in the rigour of the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* task.

Once again, PRT attitudes to the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* were strongly correlated with the quality of mentoring and level of leadership support as measured by School Mentoring Support (see Appendix 1). As one mentor pointed out:

Whilst I think the process is valid, it is quite rigorous. I am thankful that my school gives the extra time and support to complete the requirements of the portfolio. I would find it very difficult to complete the process, if my provisionally registered teacher and myself were not given this assistance and I wonder how others in other schools, who are not given this time and support can complete it. Simplifying the process significantly would ease the pressure in an already pressured school environment. Having said all of that, all of the provisionally registered teachers I have worked with, and myself have enjoyed working together through the process.

And a PRT commented:

The Mentor aspect of the program proved invaluable, and I still liaise and discuss my professional progress with my mentor. This aspect should be encouraged. However, many people I know found that their mentors did not understand the requirements and did not provide enough support. Overall I enjoyed the process, and feel that it demonstrated my development personally and professionally. I feel that it was beneficial, but it needs to be modified for more people to be able to attain their registration in the first year.

Summary

Most PRTs, mentors and principals perceived the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* component of evidence as a valuable experience and a valid means of gathering evidence about their capacity to meet the VIT standards. Most also perceived that undertaking the task had promoted professional learning and improved their teaching practice. While respondents indicated there is clearly room for refining the task to improve its reliability and rigour, few questioned that the nature of the task was appropriate to its purpose. Once again, the perceived manageability of the activity depended more on the effectiveness of arrangements to support induction and mentoring made by school leaders than any other factor (See Appendix 1).

6: DOCUMENTED PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (EVIDENCE COMPONENT 3)

This purpose of the Documented Professional Activities task is to provide PRTs with a means of providing evidence of their engagement in a range of activities beyond their classroom in the wider school community. For this task, PRTs are required to develop a list of professional activities undertaken beyond the classroom during their induction year. These include activities that contributed to their school team, their school and the profession. They are also asked to include a commentary on how three of these activities have helped their professional learning and practice.

This component aims to affirm and encourage professional engagement and to recognise the breadth of contribution PRTs have across the year. Its central purpose is to provide evidence related to two of the eight VIT standards related to professional engagement. Specifically:

- Teachers reflect on, evaluate and improve their professional knowledge and practice.
- Teachers are active members of their professional community

PRTs are encouraged to develop this component throughout the year, affirming achievements at the end of each term. Development of this entry is useful for discussion of other elements of professional learning with mentors and other teachers and it can be useful for interviews and performance appraisal processes.

Perceptions of the Documented Professional Activities task

PRTs, mentors and principals were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several aspects of the *Documented Professional Activities* task. These aspects are set out in the statements contained in Table 8 below. These statements ask respondents to evaluate the capacity of the *Documented Professional Activities* to fulfil its main functions: that is, to promote professional learning and to provide a valid and rigorous measure of teaching performance.

Table 8 indicates that respondents generally evaluated the *Documented Professional Activities* positively, though less so than the previous two sets of tasks. Mentors and principals were usually more positive than the PRTs, though again, less so than they were about *Analysis of Learning and Teaching* and *Collegiate Classroom Activity*. Two statements related to the impact of the *Documented Professional Activities* task on professional learning and collaboration. Sixty-one per cent of PRTs thought the task had deepened their understanding of the VIT standards and 70 per cent said that the task had had a beneficial effect on the extent to which they collaborated with colleagues and engaged with the profession. Mentors and principals were also positive about the impact of this task on PRTs professional learning and collaboration.

Three statements in Table 8 relate to the validity of the *Documented Professional Activities* task as a measure of teacher performance. Seventy-nine per cent of PRTs thought the task gave them a good chance to show how they met the VIT standards. Eighty per cent of PRTs thought it was a valid way of assessing whether their performance met the VIT standards and 69 per cent thought it was a rigorous way of assessing whether they had met the VIT's standards for professional engagement. Table G indicates that mentors and principals, once

again, were positive in their evaluation of these validity aspects of the task, but a significant proportion (25 per cent of mentors and 30 per cent of principals) had doubts about its rigour.

Table 8: Perceptions of the Professional Activities Component (% of respondents)

<i>To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about the Commentary on Professional Activities component of evidence?</i>			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities has deepened my understanding of the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T		8	31	55	6
	M		3	12	71	14
	P		1	12	71	16
b. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities gave me a good chance to show that I had met the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T		5	16	66	13
	M		2	7	72	19
	P		-	9	70	21
c. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards for 'Professional Engagement'.	T		5	15	68	12
	M		3	9	72	16
	P		-	15	71	14
d. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards for 'Professional Engagement'.	T		6	25	61	8
	M		3	22	63	12
	P		1	29	55	15
e. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities had a beneficial effect on the extent to which I collaborated with colleagues and engaged with the profession.	T		8	22	59	11
	M		3	13	65	19
	P		1	15	64	20

Table 9 provides a comparison of responses to the same set of statements as those in Table 8 from PRTs who completed their provisional registration year in 2004 and 2005.

Table 9 indicates a slight increase in the percentage of PRTs who agreed or strongly agreed that completing the *Documented Professional Activities* task had deepened their understanding of the VIT standards (from 57 to 61 per cent). Noteworthy is the significant increase in the percentage of PRTs who thought that the task had a beneficial effect on their level of collaboration with colleagues and engagement with the profession (from 57 to 70 per cent). This may be a result of increasing familiarity with the purposes of the task and better planning about how to meet the standards over the provisional registration year, as well as the training that the VIT provides to mentors, principals and PRTs.

Table 9 also shows PRT perceptions of the validity of the *Documented Professional Activities* task as a method of assessing their performance against the VIT standards had remained around the same level. Seventy-nine per cent, compared with 86 per cent of the 2004 cohort, thought the *Documented Professional Activities* task gave them a good chance to show how they met the VIT standards. Eighty per cent, compared with seventy-eight per cent of the 2004 cohort, thought the *Documented Professional Activities* task was a valid way of assessing whether they had met the VIT standards, and sixty-nine per cent, compared with 62 per cent in 2004, thought it was a rigorous way of assessing their performance.

Table 9: PRT perceptions of the *Documented Professional Activities* component: A comparison of 2004 and 2005 PRTs (% of respondents)

<i>To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about the Commentary on Professional Activities component of evidence?</i>		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities has deepened my understanding of the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	2004	15	28	47	10
	2005	8	31	55	6
b. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities gave me a good chance to show that I had met the relevant standards in the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	2004	6	9	65	21
	2005	5	16	66	13
c. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards for 'Professional Engagement'.	2004	8	14	60	18
	2005	5	15	68	12
d. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the Institute's standards for 'Professional Engagement'.	2004	10	29	48	14
	2005	6	25	61	8
e. Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities had a beneficial effect on the extent to which I collaborated with colleagues and engaged with the profession.	2004	15	27	41	16
	2005	8	22	59	11

Mentors' and principals' perceptions of the *Documented Professional Activities* task and its impact on professional learning changed very little and remained positive from 2004 to 2005. The pattern of responses for mentors' and principals' in 2005 was a very similar to that obtained in 2004. The one aspect about where a significant proportion of respondents indicated there is room for improvement is in the rigour of the *Documented Professional Activities*. More than a quarter of mentors and principals had reservations about the rigour of the task in its present form as a method for assessing whether PRTs had met the VIT's standards for Professional Engagement.

There was variation from school to school in PRT, mentor and principal attitudes to the *Documented Professional Activities* as a method of gathering evidence. This variation was mainly due to variation in the level of leadership and support for the mentoring program from school to school (Appendix 2).

Summary

Most PRTs, mentors and principals perceived the *Documented Professional Activities* component of evidence as a valid means of gathering evidence about their capacity to meet the VIT standards. While respondents indicated there is clearly room for refining the task to improve its reliability and rigour, few questioned that the nature of the task was appropriate to its purpose. Changes in responses from 2004 to 2005 indicate that schools are becoming more adept at ensuring that this task provides the basis for useful professional development. Once again, the perceived manageability of the activity depended more on the effectiveness of arrangements made by school leaders to support induction and mentoring than any other factor (See Appendix 1).

7: RECOMMENDATION PROCESSES

Previous sections of this report have examined the activities that PRTs undertake to provide evidence that they have met the VIT standards. This section of the report examines the process by which this *Evidence of Professional Practice* is assessed at the school level, usually by the end of the first year of teaching. Assessment of the three types of *Evidence* is conducted by a panel consisting of the principal and two teachers, one of whom is a teacher nominated by the PRT (this teacher can be the PRT's mentor). The other teacher must be a mentor trained in the VIT assessment processes. Gaining full registration is contingent upon PRTs demonstrating to this panel that they have met the eight VIT Standards of Professional Practice. The role of the panel is to use the evidence to make a recommendation to the VIT about a PRT's eligibility for full registration.

Perceptions of the Recommendation Process in schools

PRTs, mentors and principals were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several aspects of the process for judging PRTs' *Evidence of Professional Practice* as implemented in their school. These aspects are set out in the statements contained in Table J below. These statements ask respondents to evaluate the capacity of the judgement process to fulfil its main functions: that is, to ensure that the process of assessing the evidence about a PRT's teaching performance is fair, and rigorous.

Table 10 indicates that most respondents thought the judgment process, as implemented in their school, was fair and valid. Over 90 per cent of PRTs mentors and principals agreed or strongly agreed that the evidence was sufficient for the panel to make a judgment about whether the VIT's standards for registration had been met. Over 90 per cent agreed that panels used the VIT standards in making their judgments and over 95 per cent thought the process was fair.

While nearly 80 per cent of PRTs thought the assessment process was rigorous, the fact that 20 per cent did not indicates that this is an area where further refinements to the process may be needed. Similarly, most (over 80 per cent) of PRTs mentors and principals thought their school allocated sufficient time and resources to carry out the assessment process effectively, but it is evident that there is variation in the quality of the process across schools. About one school in six, according to the PRTs who responded, needs to give more attention to the all-important stage of providing feedback about their evidence that is grounded in the VIT's registration standards.

Table 10: Perceptions of processes used by school-based panels to assess PRT performance for registration (% of respondents)

<i>To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about your school's final processes for recommending your eligibility for full registration</i>		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. My three components of evidence provided the Principal and panel with sufficient evidence to judge whether I met the Institute's standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration	T	2	7	59	32
	M	2	5	58	35
	P	2	3	55	40
b. The Principal and panel used their knowledge and understanding of the Institute's standards of professional practice to make their judgement about my eligibility to gain full teacher registration.	T	1	8	62	29
	M	1	5	61	33
	P	-	3	61	36
c. The Principal and panel gave me feedback that was grounded in the Institute's standards of professional practice.	T	2	13	61	24
	M	2	7	60	31
	P	2	4	65	29
d. My school allocated enough time and resources to effectively carry out the final recommendation processes for my full teacher registration.	T	4	13	54	29
	M	5	14	53	28
	P	-	4	61	35
e. The final recommendation processes used in my school to assess my evidence were fair.	T	1	2	59	38
	M	1	2	55	42
	P	-	-	47	53
f. The final recommendation processes used in my school to assess my evidence were rigorous.	T	3	18	56	23
	M	1	13	57	29
	P	-	7	48	45

One PRT reported that:

I think it should be mandated for all leaders in schools to have knowledge about this program. At my school the Principal and Deputies were unaware of the program, and myself and my mentor had to actively seek information from other sources. We almost missed out on vital information. Once the Principal saw my presentation she was impressed with the whole idea. However the deputy principal of Teaching and Learning is still relatively unaware of the process.

Table 11 provides a comparison of responses to the same set of statements as those in Table 10 for PRTs who completed their provisional registration year in 2004 and 2005. Table 11 indicates a similar pattern of responses for the 2004 and 2005 cohorts of PRTs. There has been little change in the percentage of PRTs who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements in Table 11. There was also little change in the responses patterns for mentors and principals from 2004 to 2005.

Table 11: PRT perceptions of processes used by school-based panels to assess performance for registration: a comparison of 2004 and 2005 PRTs (% of respondents)

<i>To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about your school's final processes for recommending your eligibility for full registration</i>		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. My three components of provided the Principal and panel with sufficient evidence to judge whether I met the Institute's standards of Professional Practice for full Registration	2004	3	7	43	48
	2005	2	7	59	32
b. The Principal and panel used their knowledge and understanding of the Institute's standards of professional practice to make their judgement about my eligibility to gain full teacher registration.	2004	3	12	51	34
	2005	1	8	62	29
c. The Principal and panel gave me feedback that was grounded in the Institute's standards of professional practice.	2004	4	14	50	33
	2005	2	13	61	24
d. My school allocated enough time and resources to effectively carry out the final recommendation processes for my full teacher registration.	2004	7	15	47	32
	2005	4	13	54	29
e. The final recommendation processes used in my school to assess my evidence were fair.	2004	1	2	45	52
	2005	1	2	59	38
f. The final recommendation processes used in my school to assess my evidence were rigorous.	2004	5	21	48	27
	2005	3	18	56	23

Once again, there was a strong correlation between PRTs' judgments about the quality of the panel assessment and recommendation process and our measure of School Mentoring Support as described in Appendix 1, as the following comments from a small number of PRTs illustrate:

The school I worked at was a large school so I did not have to present my registration to a panel. I presented to one vice principal who was overworked and so didn't really pay much attention to what I was doing.

At the school I received the registration they took into account more about what they had observed and heard from other teachers. They questioned me on several key points, but did not even look at the documentation. Many graduates here took the option of just having the principal observe a class and then had their registration endorsed without completing any of the appropriate documentation. I believe that unless this is more tightly controlled, then there will always be a differing amount of effort to gain the same result.

(There is a need) to somehow ensure that the schools are obliging to the registration process and not just the applicant. My school were not aware (and made no effort) of their or my requirements to the registration process. I was not allocated a mentor - who ensures that this occurs and is implemented accordingly.

After speaking with fellow graduates many of us felt 'ripped off' by schools who did not uphold their side of the registration process.

Fortunately, as the data in Table 10 above indicates, these experiences were rare. Most school leaders took their responsibilities seriously to ensure that panel assessment and recommendation procedures were implemented in ways that would ensure fairness and rigour and that beginning teachers would receive a valuable opportunity for feedback and fulfil the VIT requirements for entry to the profession.

8: IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM

The survey instrument probed attitudes about the overall value of the procedures for provisional registration; in particular, its effects on professional discussion with colleagues, on PRT knowledge and skills and on the likelihood that PRTs would remain in teaching.

Table 12 indicates that most PRTs, mentors and principals thought the VIT's program for supporting PRTs had helped PRTs to discuss professional practice with others to a moderate or major extent. Mentors and principals were strongly of the view that the VIT program had enhanced the level of professional discussion among PRTs and experienced teachers.

Similarly, most PRTs, mentors and principals thought the VIT's program had improved the professional knowledge and skills of PRTs to a moderate or major extent.

One of the most important reasons why school systems are investing in programs to support beginning teachers is to increase retention rates over the first five years or so. Thirty-six per cent of PRTs did not think that the Program had affected their decision to remain or not remain in teaching. A small number of PRTs made it clear that it had reduced that likelihood. However, it is noteworthy that 64 per cent of PRTs thought that the VIT processes they had completed in their first year of teaching had affected their intentions positively at least to some extent.

Table 12: Effects of the VIT program for supporting PRTs (% of respondents)

		Not at all	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a major extent
<i>To what extent did completion of the Institute's Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program help you to:</i>					
a. discuss professional practice with others?	T	7	28	50	15
	M	3	15	48	34
	P	-	10	52	38
b. improve your professional knowledge and skills?	T	8	26	48	18
	M	3	14	52	31
	P	-	7	58	35
c. increase the likelihood that you will stay in teaching ?	T	36	23	30	11
	M	14	21	45	20
	P	17	18	46	19

Table 13 provides a comparison of responses to the same set of statements as those in Table 12 from PRTs who completed their provisional registration year in 2004 and those who completed the same process in 2004. Statement C was not included in the 2004 survey in this form.

Table 13 indicates a significant shift in the pattern of responses from 2004 and 2005. Sixty-five per cent of PRTs thought that the VIT Program had helped them to discuss professional practice with others to a moderate or major extent, compared with only 51 per cent in 2004. Similarly, sixty-five per cent of PRTs thought that the VIT Program had helped them to improve their professional knowledge and skills with others to a moderate or major extent,

compared with only 51 per cent in 2004. This is an indication that the VIT support program is increasing in its effectiveness.

Table 13: Effects of the VIT program for supporting PRTs: a comparison of 2004 and 2005 PRTs (% of respondents)

		Not at all	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a major extent
<i>To what extent did completion of the Institute's Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program help you to:</i>					
a. discuss professional practice with others?	2004	17	32	37	14
	2005	7	28	50	15
b. improve your professional knowledge and skills?	2004	16	32	38	13
	2005	8	26	48	18
c. increase the likelihood that you will stay in teaching ?	2004	-	-	-	-
	2005	36	23	30	11

These three indicators of impact were highest in schools where there was strong leadership and support for the VIT mentor training and the mentoring process (Appendix 2).

Perceptions of validity and rigour of assessment methods

Table 14 brings together perceptions of the validity and rigour of the three tasks for providing performance evidence in relation to the VIT standards. Points to note include: in terms of validity and rigour, there are only small variations across the three methods of gathering and presenting evidence, as perceived by PRTs, mentors and principals. Overall, the majority of PRTs, mentors and principals are positive about the methods. However, while still positive, PRTs tend to have a lower estimation of the validity and rigour of each of the three methods than mentors and principals. Roughly a quarter of PRTs think the activities lack validity and nearly one third of PRTs think that the activities lack rigour. Principals think that the Documented Professional Activities task was less rigorous than the other two methods of providing evidence.

Table 14: Comparison of validity and rigour of assessment methods (% of respondents)

<i>To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about the component of evidence?</i>			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) Completing the <i>Collegiate Classroom Activities</i> component of evidence was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the Institute’s standards.	T	7	21	61	11	
	M	3	11	67	19	
	P	-	11	67	22	
b) The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the Institute’s standards.	T	6	20	66	8	
	M	3	12	69	16	
	P	1	9	73	17	
c) Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the Institute’s standards for ‘Professional Engagement’.	T	5	15	68	12	
	M	3	9	72	16	
	P	-	15	71	14	
d) Completing the <i>Collegiate Classroom Activities</i> component of evidence was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the Institute’s standards.	T	7	30	54	9	
	M	3	22	61	14	
	P	1	17	62	20	
e) The Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of evidence was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the Institute’s standards.	T	6	25	59	10	
	M	3	20	61	16	
	P	2	16	60	22	
f) Providing a list and commentary of my professional activities was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the Institute’s standards for ‘Professional Engagement’.	T	6	25	61	8	
	M	3	22	63	12	
	P	1	29	55	15	

The current methods for presenting *Evidence of Professional Practice* have been in operation for three years. They are the first of their kind in Australia. These methods must meet high standards for educational measurement if the registration process is to build professional and public credibility. As a result of the VIT Program, a great deal has been learned about how to assess teacher performance against teaching standards. These findings suggest that, although the current methods have served their purpose well, it would be appropriate to undertake a period of review and refinement of the methods for presenting *Evidence of Professional Practice* to ensure that all stakeholders perceive them to be rigorous and fair, as well as effective vehicles for professional learning.

9: COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS

As in the previous ACER evaluation of the VIT Program (Wilkinson, et al., 2005), respondents were given the opportunity to add comments at the end of the survey. About a third of respondents took the opportunity to do so and this section of the report summarises those comments.

While the survey indicated that the VIT registration process was clearly perceived as valid and beneficial by a majority of PRTs, mentors and principals, the comments section was useful in pointing to aspects of the process that might need further refinement and development. The comments from PRTs covered a range of issues, which can be grouped into two main areas:

- Effects on workload
- The nature and rigour of the assessment procedures

Workload

The most common type of comment from those PRTs who added comments to the survey referred to the impact of the VIT requirements on their workload (about 20% of the total number of respondents). These comments are typical.

It was a lot of work to be expected to complete in the first year of teaching. It was hard enough keeping up with everything else we had to do without that as well! I believe it was beneficial but it was too much too soon.

This process is a considerable burden and stress to the already massive workload and stress levels of first year teachers.

Whilst at the end of it all it appeared to be useful to me as a teacher, the amount of workload required to complete the portfolio was far too much for a graduate teacher. Graduates have a lot to deal with in their first year of teaching and the portfolio only added to that stress and workload!

Although only a small proportion of PRTs who responded to the survey added specific comments about workload, we believe their comments are pointing to an issue that needs to be addressed, without, of course, compromising the rigour of the process for assuring quality of entrants to the profession; that is, how to ensure that the VIT requirements are manageable for PRTs and mentors. The data gathered in the survey suggest three strategies for consideration

Improve the clarity of the requirements related to providing Evidence of Professional Practice and ensure consistency in PRT and mentor understanding of these requirements

It is apparent from the data that workload per se in an objective sense, as set out in the VIT requirements, is not the main issue here. Some PRTs, such as those quoted above, commented on the workload, but there were many who said the workload was manageable. The workload or stress level for PRTs appears to depend on the way in which school leaders, mentors and PRTs interpret and implement the VIT requirements. An example of an extreme interpretation was the teacher mentioned earlier who said:

. . . The amount of unnecessary and frankly "busy-work" type activities involved in the application was staggering. And yet my SIXTY EIGHT-page application remains gathering dust in the Principal's office, unseen by anyone other than those on my panel. What a complete and total waste of time! . . .

While in other schools there were teachers who said:

This program, although a lot of work on top of all that first year teachers have to get their heads around, was a fantastic idea. I believe I benefited greatly from the program, as it provided me with the mean to critically analyse my own teaching and open communication channels with fellow teachers, support staff and leadership.

The first PRT has clearly been misled by his or her mentor, or school, about the type and amount of evidence that is expected in a portfolio. The second PRT has apparently been guided clearly through the year about expectations and how to make the VIT procedures manageable.

To achieve manageability for PRTs, it is important that the VIT guidelines are clear and go to the heart of what exactly it is that PRTs should provide evidence of. For example, the purpose of the *Assessment of Teaching and Learning* task is that a PRT provides evidence that they can promote worthwhile learning in students during a unit of work that they have devised. This evidence can be provided in a few pages, mainly based on records that teachers make in the normal course of their work, together with attachments of student work samples. The quality of the evidence and the analysis of that evidence, as indicator of standards capabilities, is what matters, not the quantity.

It is evident from some PRTs comments that the distinction between the *Evidence of Professional Practice* and a CV or resume needs to be clarified. The evidence of professional practice and student achievement gathered is very different from the usual CV. The latter rarely includes first-hand evidence of practice such as videotapes or student work samples. Some PRTs did not understand that they were being asked to show what they know and can do, not to produce a CV. (It may be important to explain more clearly to PRTs why they are being asked to do this and the difference between gaining entry to a profession (i.e. registration) and applying for a job with a specific school.) There is a need to keep to the essentials of valid evidence, as one principal pointed out:

Any requirements for Registration have to be deeply rooted in the real work of teachers and not add any additional burden which is not relevant in this very demanding first year. The evidence should be based around the presentation of the normal practices and processes found in schools - work programs, planners, evaluation records etc. I found my team creating significant documents additional to their normal work which distracted them from their students and classrooms and created a great deal of pressure and stress - which young teachers do not need if we are to keep them.

Consistency in interpretation of requirements is a necessary condition for fair as well as valid standards-based performance assessment. The VIT might consider forming a working party that includes past PRTs and mentors to review and perhaps revise its guidelines to ensure

consistency in the interpretation of workload requirements. Schools with PRTs should also be strongly encouraged to send mentors and PRTs to the VIT training sessions.

Assist schools to manage the process and ensure appropriate time allocations for PRTs and the mentoring process are in place

One PRT captured the views of many PRTs.

It is vital that the school allocates enough time to allow the PRT's to complete this process.

As reported earlier, the evidence from the survey indicates that PRTs' perceptions of workload vary greatly from school to school. As we understand it, there are recommendations to schools that first year teachers should be given a 0.9 teaching allotment. This reduced allotment gives PRTs at least a half day a week approximately throughout the year for a range of activities to support their teaching, including mentoring and preparing evidence for VIT registration. As indicated earlier in this report, schools with effective mentoring arrangements ensure that mentors have similar time allocations for their role. PRTs in such schools were more likely to make comments such as the following.

Whilst it is a lot of work - it makes you really reflect on your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. The workload was made very easy by the support of my mentor and colleagues. It has made our staff work together in a more collegial way.

It seems quite unreasonable to expect a program like the VIT's *Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers* to be effective without ensuring tangible forms of support such as time allocations are in place in schools. This is another example of how important the partnership is between schools and school systems and the VIT in assuring the quality of entrants to the profession. Effective induction programs are a shared responsibility and wise investment from which all sections of the education system benefit as well as the public. They increase retention of good teachers. They promote high standards of teaching and effective habits of on-going professional learning. They also help to guide ineffective teachers to other occupations and minimise money that might have to be spent later on managing their performance. Allocating funds to provide reduced teaching allotments for beginning teachers and mentoring makes economic sense. It is also important to ensure that the induction programs integrate with and are part of other areas of effective school functioning. As this mentor points out, a professional school culture is vital:

In our case it was relatively easy to support and assist the provisionally employed teacher to achieve the requirements. The existing school systems, processes and team support and planning resources made achieving the outcomes an integrated part of delivering the curriculum and working effectively with the school. Effectively resourced and managed school environments are what provide the real support for beginning teachers. Mentor training is beneficial but supportive organisational culture is essential.

Extend the period of time over which PRT's may prepare for registration

Several PRTs commented that they would have found the workload more manageable if they could have completed the VIT requirements over two or three years.

I feel that the process would have been more beneficial in my second year of teaching rather than the first. I think it is a heavy burden to have on a first year teacher who is just trying to get themselves settled in the profession and get used to the job just as it is.

A worthwhile experience, however would have been easier to complete in the second year of teaching, when the pressure of being 'new' in the field is off.

Having these requirements in the first year is too much, setting these requirements to be met in the 3rd year when teachers are getting excited about the things they are trying in class would be better. The mentoring should go for longer and include more than one mentor for different teaching methods.

I know the process can be done over two years, but I really felt that it was putting me under considerable duress having to complete my evidence for full registration in the first year, which was what our school encouraged us to do. I felt that it would've been better to complete this process in the second year, where I would also have had a valuable first year to reflect on.

A mentor commented that:

In the current climate with VELs & curriculum reform, many of our teachers are opting for full registration in the 2nd year. The workload is VERY HIGH and fulfilling the requirements can be very difficult given the other demands on a graduate. Also, we believe that it is often only after a full year of teaching that one is able to fully reflect on one's teaching practice. Perhaps this should be a consideration when reviewing the VIT provisional registration.

These comments make sense, especially the point that new teachers would probably be in a better position to analyse and evaluate their teaching in the second year. However, there were other PRTs who mentioned that they preferred the opportunity to get through the registration process as quickly as possible and preferably in one year. Some mentors also pointed out that if a PRT was having major difficulties in meeting the VIT standards, it might be best to make them aware of this as soon as possible to limit the consequences for their student. There is obviously an issue here worth further deliberation by the VIT and other stakeholders.

The nature and rigour of the assessment procedures

The second most common type of comment from PRTs who added comments to the survey referred to the nature and impact of the VIT assessment procedures (about 15% of the total number of respondents). These include comments related to the procedures by which PRTs provided their *Evidence of Professional Practice*. These comments generally fell into the following categories:

- Use observation and feedback more in the first year as a method of gathering *Evidence of Professional Practice* and delay requirements for written work until the second year
- Revise assessment tasks so that they do not seem like a duplication of university assignments or requirements for performance review
- Ensure that schools implement the VIT recommendation process consistently

Use observation (with feedback) more in the first year as a method of gathering 'Evidence of Professional Practice' and delay requirements for written work until the second year

Comments in this category also stem from concerns about workload, as discussed above, but focus on suggesting that the workload could be reduced if methods of assessing performance focused more on observation in the first year, leaving written requirements to the second year.

I think registration should depend more on performance within the classroom than assessing a portfolio of evidence. Compiling the evidence and the process places a high workload on beginning teachers who are sometimes already struggling with their workload in their first year of teaching.

There are two basic ways of gathering evidence about practice. In the first, the teacher plays an active role in providing the evidence of how their practice meets the standards, as with the *Analysis of Teaching and Learning* and the *Documented Professional Activities* tasks. This approach gives the teacher flexibility in showing how they meet the standards and promotes the expectation that professionals keep good records of their work, document student outcomes and reflect on their practice. In the second approach, akin to the *Collegiate Classroom Activity*, the teacher plays a less active role. Instead, carefully trained expert peers, such as mentors, use interviews and observation to gather evidence in relation to the standards.

It is important not to see these as either-or approaches to assessing teacher performance. Valid and reliable assessment of teacher performance for high stakes decisions, such as VIT registration, depends on multiple forms of evidence relevant to the standards, judged by multiple trained assessors. The issue for PRTs, as illustrated by the above comments, was one of timing.

It was clear that most PRTs had no problem with the expectation that they demonstrate that their practice meets the registration standards. What some teachers were indicating in their comments was that, in their first year of teaching, they would prefer expert teachers to come to their classrooms and interview them about what they were planning to do, observe their classroom practice and provide informed feedback based on the standards. They would prefer to do the other two tasks in their second year. They thought this would help to reduce their workload, while ensuring that they received useful and supportive feedback. Such feedback, though essential to professional learning, is rare in teaching.

. . . I feel that as a graduate teacher I need someone in my room giving me feedback on my practice, not only would that have built up my failing confidence, but they would also have been able to make those assessments without my

needing to use up my own time and my teaching release time writing up pointless documents. I would encourage VIT to revise the program to become more of a supervisory program, and to work with schools to reduce teachers own assessment of their professional progress to reduce the instance of teachers, like myself who enjoy teaching and are committed, from leaving a now overly laborious and stressful career.

Whilst the concept is good, the process should not just be based on what is presented in writing. Whilst feedback is given on collegiate activities, that is the only part of the process which requires an experienced teacher to observe a graduate teaching. The written process is time consuming and those who cannot present themselves well on paper can easily fall between the cracks.

I think that in your first year of teaching completing this portfolio adds extra stress that you don't really need. All of the work is completed through class practice anyway and putting it all together to present takes a lot of time. Maybe the principal could come into your room and see you in practice and assess your teaching that way?

I think that the paperwork aspect of the tasks was generally too onerous. I would love to see other methods of data collection (e.g. regular survey, observation by mentor, etc.) be used rather than primarily based on own written responses. I would love to see some focus on whole year planning and not just topical planning to help instil the concept of subject being taught sequentially and planned at a macro, medium and micro level.

A small number of teachers felt that observations should be conducted by a visiting teacher.

I believe that this is an ineffective way to determine whether or not a PRT should become fully registered. I believe that a VIT representative should visit the schools and observe how PRTs work in the classroom.

Another PRT indicated that, in certain circumstances, the observational requirement for the *Collegiate Classroom Activities* may be implemented in ways that render them invalid as a standards-based assessment of PRT performance.

My provisionally registered teacher observed my class and critiqued it. She then opted to have a "friend" on the staff complete the collegiate activity in her classroom and to fulfil the written requirements with her. I withdrew from the school's panel voluntarily because I had not observed her classroom practice at all. For that reason, I have responded with "Disagree" to some of the questions because there was no opportunity to indicate that I honestly did not know much about her professional practices in the classroom.

If there is such an option for an observation by an untrained "friend", it needs to be reviewed as this comment points to a practice that would undermine confidence in the validity of the VIT registration process and its ability to promote professional development. Another PRT pointed to the need for rigorous training of mentors, if their observations are to be reliable as standards-based assessments of performance.

I believe that the mentors' training program should be more rigorous. I am alarmed at the fact that a teacher is considered a mentor after two days training.

Work completed at ACER indicates that it takes about four to five days of training for observers/mentors to reach acceptable levels of consistency in the way they apply standards rubrics (Ingvarson et al., 2005). Training to this level is time consuming and expensive, however consistency or reliability in assessments across mentors and schools has to be an important aim if VIT registration is to gain credibility. As yet, there is no data about the level of consistency in the way mentors apply the standards and it might be timely for a research project to be initiated in this area.

The comments above from respondents provide useful ideas for VIT consideration in reviewing its current procedures to minimise workload while still assuring the rigour of its assessments.

Duplication

A number of PRTs felt that there were elements of duplication in the VIT requirements. The ALT task, for example, was perceived by some as similar to an assignment they had had to complete in university.

The process was extremely similar to the assignments I completed as part of my Dip Ed year. I felt like I was covering 'old' ground and the learning experience was therefore very minimal - particularly in comparison to the outlay of time required to complete the set tasks.

The time involved in completing the requirements was far too extensive. The Collegiate Classroom activities were effective in developing my teaching practice, but the Analysis of Teaching and Learning was repetitive of work undertaken at university, and thus, unnecessarily time consuming.

Duplication in itself is not necessarily a bad thing. Once again, these comments point to the need to ensure that PRTs (and mentors) are clear about how to show that their teaching meets the standards. The intention of the ALT task is that it should represent part of the normal activities of a competent teacher; that is, to document and reflect on evidence of student progress and achievement *as a result of their teaching*. This is a reasonable expectation that any teacher is expected to fulfil. It is not a university assignment. Nor is it an expectation that a teacher can fulfil while on a teaching round in someone else's classroom. It is part of the professional work of a teacher. If the central purpose of this assessment task can be kept front and centre in the minds of all concerned – that is, that it asks a PRT to provide evidence that they can plan and implement a unit of work that leads to student learning of worthwhile subject matter or skills – it is more likely to be viewed as an authentic assessment task and a reasonable expectation for beginning teachers to meet.

A small number of PRTs indicated duplication of another kind; that is, with various procedures schools use for annual performance reviews of all teaching staff. While it is understandable that school principals want new staff to participate in these procedures, it is debatable whether they should be applied to teachers who have not yet gained full

professional registration and, thereby, on-going employment. This may be an important area for further cooperation between the VIT and employing authorities.

Ensure that schools implement the VIT recommendation process consistently

Comments from a few respondents indicated that an unprofessional “us” and “them” culture persists in a small number of schools with respect to the VIT instead of an attitude of joint responsibility for assuring the quality of entrants to the profession. This culture may be a carry-over from attitudes to outside groups in general, such as “the Department”, university teacher educators and the VCAA for example. This issue has been discussed earlier; however it becomes a matter of acute concern if it threatens the credibility of the quality assurance mechanisms that the teaching profession develops and applies through the VIT to determine who joins the profession.

At the school I received the registration they took into account more about what they had observed and heard from other teachers. They questioned me on several key points, but did not even look at the documentation. Many graduates here took the option of just having the principal observe a class and then had their registration endorsed without completing any of the appropriate documentation. I believe that unless this is more tightly controlled, then there will always be a differing amount of effort to gain the same result.

When a principal (perhaps untrained) acts in this ad hoc way they may believe they are helping the PRT in coping with “them”, the VIT. In practice, what they may be doing is sending the message to new teachers that “anything goes” in teaching and that, teachers therefore can not aspire to be members of a profession. Another PRT commented that:

I undertook my so-called 'Registration' at a very busy large, modern Government school. We just ignored it until the very last week as there is simply so much work to do especially when you have Y11 and Y12 classes. Neither myself and those around me took it all that seriously . . . The application was put together in a week during non-teaching time when I should have been marking and doing preparation. The VIT process was viewed by all from my unofficial mentor to the AP staff as a waste of time and a barrier to cross in order to be 'allowed' to teach. In any event, the process does not work and can be subverted quite easily in order to get able and articulate teachers through. I still meet hopeless teachers with full VIT Registration who can't spell never mind teach. I had to rewrite all the end of year reports for one 25 year old 'Graduate' English/SOSE teacher because his spelling and general English was so poor. He is still teaching in an ongoing position, so obviously his level of spelling and articulacy is fine by the VIT even though he is a laughing stock amongst his work colleagues.

It has to be a matter of concern that beginning teachers are being encouraged by experienced teachers in some schools not to take quality assurance procedures seriously, when it is their own professional body that is attempting to establish these procedures. The internal contradiction in this comment is rather breathtaking. The comment disparages the rigour of VIT registration while the writer is complicit him or herself in undermining its processes.

These comments indicate that there is a small number of schools where an “us” versus “them” culture has expanded to embrace the VIT as well. The VIT was launched by the-then

Minister for Education with the challenge, “It’s Your Profession!” One of the main challenges this Minister gave to the teaching profession was to demonstrate that it could be trusted to take a major responsibility for developing and applying competency standards for entry to the profession. It is apparent from comments such as those above that there are a few schools where the importance of joint responsibility for the quality of teaching and common purpose with VIT needs discussion and further development. Everyone has an interest in promoting the quality of teachers and teaching.

10: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As indicated earlier, the central questions for this evaluation revolved around two issues:

- To what extent are the new arrangements for assessing teacher performance for registration perceived as valid and rigorous?
- To what extent do these arrangements promote professional learning and improved teaching practices?

Subsidiary questions included the effects of the Program on school culture and professional community, retention of beginning teachers in the profession and the manageability of the process for schools, teachers and mentors.

Perceptions about the validity and rigour of the registration process

The success of the *Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers* relies fundamentally on the validity and rigour of the methods used to assess whether PRTs have reached the VIT's standards for registration and full entry to the profession. Without validity and rigour, the Program and the VIT's registration processes cannot achieve their purposes. Nor will they win respect and support from the profession, or promote the status of the profession with the public. If the registration process is unable to distinguish those who are competent to teach from those who are not, there is little point to the program.

The surveys yielded convincing evidence that most PRTs, mentors and principals thought that the VIT registration process was valid and fair. Few questioned the need for and appropriateness of a period of provisional registration, during which beginning teachers would be expected to provide evidence that they had met performance standards for full registration. It was recognised that universities have difficulties in ensuring that their qualifications are a sure guide to the capacity of graduates to meet the VIT standards in authentic work settings when they have full responsibility for classes.

I think that the process is OK but does not address the problem. I think Dip Ed. courses need to be audited and approved by the VIT as many are not rigorous (sic) enough to teach new teachers anything. Start there!

Mentors and principals valued the opportunity the VIT registration processes gave for the profession to play a greater role in assuring the quality of entrants. As one mentor commented:

I strongly support the requirements set out for teachers. It will weed out unsuitable staff and also help individual teachers decide if a career in teaching is really what they want. At my P.L.T. meetings I have presented the Standards of Professional Practice as a reminder of expectations.

This study indicates that the VIT procedures are increasingly being implemented as intended and that confidence in their validity is growing. Although the program is well regarded, considering its youth and innovativeness, this evaluation also indicates that after three years of experience the time may have come for a review of the methods used for gathering evidence and assessing performance against the standards. Such a review should aim to

enhance the rigour and consistency of the registration procedures across schools, while maintaining its capacity to provide support and professional learning.

Perceptions about the effects of the registration process on professional learning and practice

The surveys yielded convincing evidence that most PRTs, mentors and principals thought the registration process had led to significant professional learning for PRTs. The VIT intention is that the tasks and activities for gathering evidence of practice will *necessarily* engage beginning teachers in effective modes of professional learning. These include reflection on evidence about the effect of their teaching on student learning and receiving informed feedback and assessment of their teaching from mentors. The VIT standards provide a framework and direction for this learning and the registration decision provides a powerful motivator to meet these standards. Paradoxically perhaps, the impact of these formative activities on professional development depends on the rigour and seriousness with which the summative assessment is conducted, as this comment from a mentor indicates:

Makes young teachers more accountable and aware of what is expected of them - gives them a focus and direction. My 3 graduates found there was a lot of time spent to prepare their evidence and write it up. This process was fantastic in developing a rapport with these beginning teachers and gave us valuable time to discuss issues facing the teachers. It also made me more aware of the standards in relation to these teachers. It helped me reflect on my teaching also even though I have been teaching for many years.

The extent to which the VIT registration process had positive effects on PRT's professional learning and practice depended most on the level of support and encouragement the process received from the leaders in their school (See Appendix 1). This point cannot be emphasised too much. School leaders in high impact schools ensured that: induction programs for new teachers were in place; care was taken in selecting appropriate mentors; VIT training for mentors and PRTs was supported; time was set aside for mentors and PRTs; and that VIT procedures for assembling evidence and making recommendations were implemented faithfully.

As reported by PRTs, school leaders in low impact schools were more likely to take a rather cavalier approach to the registration process. School leaders in these schools did not see themselves as partners with the VIT in supporting beginning teachers and assuring the quality of new entrants to the profession. PRTs in these schools were more likely to comment that they had not followed the VIT guidelines in preparing their evidence for registration, that the process was too stressful and time-consuming and that their school had let them down.

The following comments are representative of schools that worked with the VIT's *Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers*. The first comes from a PRT,

Overall my school was very supportive and gave my mentor and I time to work on the process. My mentor was, and continues to be very supportive which I feel made my experience in the process from Provisional to Full Registration relevant and beneficial to my teaching practice.

The second comment comes from a mentor with a clear sense of ownership and responsibility for the quality of the process.

Highly motivated, dedicated professionals such as my Provisionally Reg. Teacher make the process a learning and developing process for all involved. I was matched very well with my colleague and we worked and grew together throughout the year. She was most receptive to new and old ideas and took on board discussion points well. This makes the process easy. Other people have however, said that new PRTs just did the paperwork without the depth of development and completing the actual analysis and course work. I think it is up to us as teachers to instil that our profession is as strong as we make it. We need to support and help these new PRTs - not fudge their ability if it isn't up to scratch. I like the way there is a way to extend the time frame as required to allow for some individual s and their needs. I do feel that the Program is necessary if we are to create quality teachers in the future

A third comment comes from a principal.

The whole process is just fantastic..a pity all teachers did not go through this. For me as a Principal it was amazing to actually sit with a teacher for 1-2 hours and see the passion of the new teachers.

Other findings

There were no significant differences in attitudes to the PRT procedures according to gender, location of school, qualifications for teaching allotment or employment arrangements (See Appendix 1). There were occasional differences in responses according to school level or school sector. As mentioned already, the factor that most strongly correlates with variation in attitudes to the VIT *Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers* and methods of assessment for registration purposes was the level of leadership support (See Appendix 1). This study suggests that as schools become more familiar with and experienced in the processes, the processes themselves are being managed more efficiently and are therefore regarded as less demanding.

Our previous evaluation indicated that an increasing proportion of PRTs (79%) and mentors (88%) thought that sufficient time and resources were being allocated to support the *Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers*. It also reflected on the differences in responses between PRTs and mentor/principals continues throughout the survey, which was very marked in some of the open-ended responses. Principal and mentors consistently saw the PRTs as having gained more from the process than the PRTs did themselves. A number of possible explanations were offered.

This study does not provide definitive findings about the impact of the Program on teachers' decisions to remain in teaching. It is clear that many other factors are at play in this regard. While a very small number indicated that the workload involved in the Program was a negative factor, most PRTs indicated that the Program had influenced their attitude towards remaining in teaching positively.

Some mentors and principals commented on the inherent quality and efficacy of the PRT as an issue. Among PRTs there will be, in addition to outstanding graduates, a small number

who are unsuited for the teaching profession. There can, of course, be problems caused by inexperience or inadequate training. These problems can be addressed. However, there may still be a small number of PRTs who will not attain the standards whatever happens in the form of mentoring or support. It is surely better for all stakeholders, including the first year teacher, to clarify this situation early - to extend the registration process, if necessary, as currently occurs - but ultimately to ensure that only those who are suited for the profession become fully registered teachers. Again, the role of the VIT framework and requirements is vital in supporting schools as they meet this new professional responsibility.

Duplication of effort was raised as an issue by a number of respondents. It is clear that many schools have already developed firm cultures of professional learning and collaboration, and some respondents expressed irritation that they had to “jump through VIT hoops.” While VIT requirements may in some cases be “preaching to the converted”, this may not be the case for all schools, and any standards program that focuses on effective teaching and learning across all levels and sectors can only benefit Victorian students. If appropriate procedures and processes are already in place at a school, it may be of benefit for the school to further streamline the methods of demonstrating this. It remains essential, however, that full admission to the profession is based on a valid assessment against professional expectations and standards and that these assessments and procedures are comparable across schools, levels and sectors. There may need to be a clearer understanding that assessments against standards prior to full registration is a separate process from ongoing performance management processes in schools. One way of reducing workload for teachers seeking registration would be for school performance reviews to be delayed until full registration is achieved.

The VIT’s Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers and its registration procedures are increasingly seen as valid and fair. The Program is generally perceived as leading to improvements in teaching practice. Principals and mentors were very positive about the program, and consistently reported high levels of satisfaction with its implementation.

Research has repeatedly found that significant reforms are often accompanied by a degree of unease and resistance, and this has been the case with the introduction of the VIT standards and registration requirements. School leaders play a vital role in leading their schools through these changes. This study has found that school leaders are playing a significant role in reducing the level of unease and resistance in most schools, but they need support to ensure the requirements are manageable. It may be important to reiterate that the VIT standards processes in Victoria are in keeping with standards assessment for other professions and with educational practice in comparable countries across the world. As the VIT standards processes continue to develop and are themselves subject to review, they should greatly benefit the educational teaching and learning needs of Victorian teachers and students.

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APPENDIX 1

A. Principal Component Analysis of six items on Mentoring and School Support (Respondents = PRT)

Total Variance Explained^a

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.585	59.756	59.756	3.585	59.756	59.756
2	.727	12.121	71.877			
3	.618	10.295	82.172			
4	.593	9.890	92.062			
5	.353	5.875	97.937			
6	.124	2.063	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. Respondent = PRT

Component Matrix^{a,b}

	Component
	1
As a result of guidance and feedback I have significantly changed aspects of my work for the better.	.690
My mentor used the Standards of Professional Practice as a basis for providing me feedback.	.615
My mentor and I met regularly to discuss my progress as a teacher (including developing and gathering evidence).	.837
Overall, the choice of mentor was appropriate.	.863
Overall, I was satisfied with the mentoring I received/gave/at my school.	.899
Overall I was satisfied with the level of support and encouragement I received from school leadership.	.690

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

b. Respondent = PRT

**B. Reliability statistics for Scale: Mentoring and School Support
(Respondents = PRT)**

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.863	6

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
q20a	15.69	10.203	.567	.855
q20b	15.89	10.150	.492	.868
q20c	15.70	8.729	.739	.824
q20d	15.42	8.767	.764	.819
q20e	15.46	8.520	.818	.808
q20f	15.50	10.007	.564	.855

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
18.73	13.169	3.629	6

C. Regression

1. Factors affecting *Attitude to Collegiate Classroom Activities Task*

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q21 Attitude to Collegiate Classroom Activities	663	6	24	16.77	3.402
Valid N (listwise)	663				

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.450 ^a	.202	.196	3.013

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1406.119	5	281.224	30.969	.000 ^a
	Residual	5548.316	611	9.081		
	Total	6954.434	616			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

b. Dependent Variable: Q21 Attitude to Collegiate Classroom Activities

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.295	.769		12.084	.000
	Male	-.088	.276	-.012	-.318	.750
	Secondary school	-.268	.274	-.040	-.978	.328
	Government School	-.141	.302	-.017	-.465	.642
	Post Grad Course	-.045	.265	-.007	-.168	.867
	Q20 School support	.415	.035	.438	11.803	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Q21 Attitude to Collegiate Classroom Activities

2. Factors affecting Attitude to *Analysis of Teaching and Learning* task

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.405 ^a	.164	.157	3.588

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1548.009	5	309.602	24.047	.000 ^a
	Residual	7879.564	612	12.875		
	Total	9427.573	617			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

b. Dependent Variable: Q22 Attitude to Analysis of Teaching and Learning

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	11.530	.914		12.616	.000
	Male	-.087	.329	-.010	-.266	.791
	Secondary school	-.008	.326	-.001	-.025	.980
	Government School	-.321	.359	-.033	-.892	.373
	Post Grad Course	.166	.316	.021	.524	.601
	Q20 School support	.444	.042	.403	10.643	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Q22 Attitude to Analysis of Teaching and Learning

3. Factors affecting *Attitude to Commentary on Professional Activities Task*

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.405 ^a	.164	.157	3.588

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1548.009	5	309.602	24.047	.000 ^a
	Residual	7879.564	612	12.875		
	Total	9427.573	617			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

b. Dependent Variable: Q22 Attitude to Analysis of Teaching and Learning

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	11.530	.914		12.616	.000
	Male	-.087	.329	-.010	-.266	.791
	Secondary school	-.008	.326	-.001	-.025	.980
	Government School	-.321	.359	-.033	-.892	.373
	Post Grad Course	.166	.316	.021	.524	.601
	Q20 School support	.444	.042	.403	10.643	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Q22 Attitude to Analysis of Teaching and Learning

4. Factors affecting *Attitude to School-based Panel Recommendation Process*

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.475 ^a	.225	.219	2.586

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1189.188	5	237.838	35.573	.000 ^a
	Residual	4091.718	612	6.686		
	Total	5280.906	617			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

b. Dependent Variable: Q24 Panel Process

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	12.431	.659		18.877	.000
	Male	-.442	.237	-.067	-1.864	.063
	Secondary school	-.290	.235	-.049	-1.234	.218
	Government School	-.349	.259	-.048	-1.347	.178
	Post Grad Course	.157	.228	.027	.689	.491
	Q20 School support	.375	.030	.454	12.455	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Q24 Panel Process

5. Factors affecting *Impact*

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.427 ^a	.182	.176	2.135

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	622.321	5	124.464	27.305	.000 ^a
	Residual	2789.713	612	4.558		
	Total	3412.034	617			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q20 School support, Male, Government School, Post Grad Course, Secondary school

b. Dependent Variable: Q25 Impact

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.736	.544		5.032	.000
	Male	.189	.196	.036	.965	.335
	Secondary school	-.225	.194	-.048	-1.163	.245
	Government School	-.155	.214	-.027	-.726	.468
	Post Grad Course	.068	.188	.014	.363	.717
	Q20 School support	.274	.025	.413	11.031	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Q25 Impact