

HALT Certification

Reducing the workload, increasing the
rigour and cutting the cost

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Introduction

In December 2022, federal, state and territory education ministers released a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan to improve teacher supply and retention in the profession. While recognising the important role that Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) certification could play, the plan also recognised that the current approach to certification was cumbersome for teachers and called for it to be 'streamlined'.

At the request of the education ministers, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has produced a revised Framework for the Certification of HALT Teachers.¹ Guided by the Framework, certifying authorities across state and territory school systems will be responsible for 'less onerous, while being rigorous' processes for assessing applications.

This paper is based on a project called the Portfolio Project conducted by ACER between 2015 and 2018 to develop methods to reduce the application workload for teachers and assessors while increasing the validity and reliability of the certification process. These methods were trialed with positive results. Based on lessons learned during the Project, this paper suggests ways to strengthen the efficiency and credibility of the HALT certification process, while also making it a more satisfying and effective vehicle for teachers' professional development.

Background

Education ministers identified priority areas for strengthening the profession in their recently released Teacher Workforce Action Plan.² These included the need to:

- 1 address the recruitment problem and attract enough high-quality graduates to meet the demand for new teachers
- 2 promote professional learning that impacts student outcomes
- 3 provide career pathways that reward the development of expertise
- 4 retain accomplished teachers and keep them close to classroom practice.

In addressing these needs, the Plan identifies the pivotal role that a national system for the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers could play in 'elevating the profession'.

These are the same priorities that, in 2010, Julia Gillard then Minister for Education charged AITSL with the responsibility of developing and implementing a nationally consistent certification system. The need for HALT certification is even more pressing in 2023, especially because the Plan recognises that the current rate of teacher application is disappointing. Only 1,200 teachers have gained certification since the scheme was introduced in 2013, less than 0.3% of teachers. The scheme is not achieving its potential.

¹ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2023). [Framework for the certification of highly accomplished and lead teachers](#).

² <https://www.education.gov.au/ntwap>

There are many reasons for the low adoption rate. Few employing authorities offered attractive incentives to undertake the challenging certification process. Few teachers saw the point in applying while older, easier avenues to promotion remained in place. Few enterprise bargaining agreements include attractive levels of remuneration for certification.

Other reasons arose from deficiencies in the certification process itself. Significant proportions of applicants dropped out. The process of providing evidence was cumbersome and inefficient. Gathering multiple sources of evidence for each of the 27 standards was arduous and atomised the teaching process. As a result, assessing applications was also time consuming and therefore costly. The credibility of the certification process as a valid and reliable assessment of accomplished teaching had yet to be demonstrated.

There was also uncertainty about the roles that certified teachers could play in their schools. If the expertise of certified teachers were to be accessible and capitalised on, new conceptions of leadership would be needed in schools. It was clear that career pathways based on certification could not be simply grafted onto unchanged organisational and managerial structures in schools. If career pathways generally were to place greater value on expertise, as called for by Jason Clare, the Minister for Education,³ it followed that, over time, certification should become an eligibility requirement for promotion to school leadership and principal positions.

The Teacher Workforce Action Plan

The Plan proposes to increase the number of teachers certified as HALT or equivalent from the present number of 1,200 to 10,000 nationally by 2025. This is a modest but realistic goal in the short term.

Long term, however, far more ambitious goals are needed if the Plan is to have a significant impact on recruitment, retention and the quality of teaching. Over the next 15 to 20 years, we should aim for a situation where most teachers and school leaders now progress through certification as a normal part of their career pathway to higher salaries and school leadership positions. Certification will become mainstreamed and not presented as an alternative career pathway.

The Plan calls for HALT processes to be 'streamlined' to make it less burdensome for teachers. Not mentioned, but equally important is the need to make assessing applications more manageable and reliable, and thereby more affordable.

Streamlining also calls for clearer and more authentic methods that teachers can use to show how they meet the standards. This paper aims to provide some ideas about how this might be done based on a research project conducted at ACER from 2015 to 2018 called the Portfolio Project.⁴

³ Clare, J. (2022, December 16). [Media release](#).

⁴ Ingvarson, L. C. (July 2019). Teaching standards and the promotion of quality teaching. *European Journal of Education*, 54(3), 337–355. Details of the Portfolio Project can be found at <https://portfolio.acer.org/>

Why is HALT certification important to the Plan?

If larger proportions of high-ability students are to be recruited and retained in the teaching profession, salaries at the top of current scales must lift to levels that make teaching competitive with similar professions for high-quality graduates, to increase by at least 25 per cent.⁵

This is unlikely to happen, however, without a guarantee that increases are based on evidence of high-quality teaching. A rigorous HALT certification process can provide this guarantee.

High-achieving countries have one thing in common: effective recruitment policies. Salaries and conditions are such that enough academically successful graduates from schools or universities choose a career in teaching and remain in that profession. Australia lacks a similar commitment.

Recruitment is the most important factor that determines the quality of teachers in a school system.⁶ Over recent years reviews of teacher quality have focused too much on blaming teacher education when its problems have largely stemmed from its inability to compete with other professions for high-quality graduates.⁷ The proportion who chooses teaching has fallen dramatically over the past 20 years or more. Relative salaries and long-term career prospects are among the main reasons they give. No plans to address current shortage and retention problems can be taken seriously unless governments address the need for more effective recruitment policies.

The traditional salary structure in teaching is a weak instrument for promoting professional development. A rigorous certification process is a highly effective vehicle for lifting the quality of teaching. Preparing for certification places teachers in an active learning role. It necessarily engages them in analysing their practice in the light of standards for accomplished teaching and reviewing its impact on student learning. It provides clear direction and incentives for teachers' professional learning. When most teachers participate, a certification system leads to wider implementation of proven successful teaching practices.

A rigorous and well-rewarded certification system will replace old assumptions about what it means to have a career in teaching. Moving on no longer necessarily means moving away from teaching into executive positions. The Plan calls for career pathways that reflect increasing expertise. Certification celebrates and rewards what matters most in student learning; what good teachers know, do and care about.

The powerful effect of professional recognition should also be mentioned. Perhaps the most important benefits of a rigorous and respected certification system are the effects recognition has on teacher self-esteem and agency. Certification values what matters most in a school system, a sure path to 'elevating the profession', not only for educators but for parents, politicians, the media, and the public.

⁵ Ingvarson, L. C. (2018). *What remuneration levels should apply to Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher certification?* <https://research.acer.edu.au/workforce/5/>

⁶ Ingvarson, L. C., & Rowley, G. (2017). Quality assurance in teacher education and outcomes: A study of 17 countries. *Educational Researcher*, 46(4), 177193.

⁷ Wilson, R. (2020). *The profession at risk: Trends in standards for admission to teaching degrees*. [Commissioned report]. NSW Teachers Federation. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.13444.76160>

By providing a basis for new career pathways closely related to practice and higher levels of remuneration based on expertise, a certification system can increase the retention of experienced and accomplished teachers in the profession.

Certification needs psychometric backing

The Plan calls for the HALT certification processes to be streamlined to increase the number of applicants. It is unclear what this means or how it will be done. The workload certainly needs to be reduced. But this will achieve little without making fundamental changes in how teachers are asked to provide evidence of their practice and assurance of its validity.

At the request of ministers of education, AITSL has produced a revised Framework for the Certification of HALT Teachers.⁸ Certifying authorities across state and territory school systems will now be responsible for developing their own processes for assessing applications, guided by that Framework. These processes are to be ‘less onerous, while being rigorous’.

The Framework calls for certification processes to be ‘evidence-based’:

Certification processes must be built on nationally and internationally recognised best practice and contribute to the development of evidence about what works in promoting and recognising teacher quality.

What needs to be appreciated in developing those processes is that the workload is excessive because of limitations in the current assessment methods. These limitations also make the process of assessing applications more time consuming and expensive than it needs to be. More effective and efficient methods for assessing applicants are needed. It’s the quality of the evidence that matters, not the quantity.

Developing rigorous methods for standards-based assessment of teacher performance is a highly complex measurement exercise.⁹ It raises more complex psychometric challenges than in the development of methods for assessing student performance, such as NAPLAN. Developers could not proceed with a program like NAPLAN without evidence that it met high psychometric standards.

Even now, after 10 years of operation, little research has been conducted on the psychometric quality of the HALT assessment process. Consequently, the quality of teaching required for certification remains unclear and therefore vulnerable to questions about its credibility.

At its heart, HALT certification is a standards-based assessment of professional performance. Its psychometric credentials need to be demonstrated. Tough questions will inevitably arise about its ability to reliably distinguish between teachers who have attained the HALT standards and those who as yet have not. They will not go away. International experience shows that certification systems live or die to the extent that stakeholders are confident about their validity and reliability.

⁸ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2023). [Framework for the certification of highly accomplished and lead teachers](#)

⁹ Ingvarson, L., & Hattie, J. (Eds.). (2008). Assessing teachers for professional certification: The first decade of the National Board for Professional Teaching (Advances in program evaluation, Vol. 11). Elsevier Press.

The following sections offer suggestions that may be helpful to certifying authorities as they develop or refine their own certification processes consistent with internationally recognised best practice, as required by the revised Framework.¹⁰

Making HALT certification more manageable, credible, affordable & rewarding

Step 1: Develop an assessment framework for the certification process

Streamlining the HALT certification process would be greatly helped by the development of an assessment framework that gives applicants a clear indication of the evidence they will need to prepare for certification.¹¹

Figure 1 shows an example of an assessment framework that the Portfolio Project developed and trialled for highly accomplished primary teaching. It sets out what is being assessed linking to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), and how it is being assessed using 4 portfolio tasks. It also shows how the assessment methods together provide evidence to cover all the standards to ensure content validity.

Three tasks ask applicants to describe a unit of work they have prepared and taught over several weeks. The fourth, asks them to describe a leadership initiative undertaken with colleagues to meet the needs of a designated group of students. (These tasks are described in more detail below.)

The excessive workload for applicants stems mainly from a lack of clarity about what is being assessed and how it is to be assessed. Legitimate questions from applicants such as, ‘What do you expect me to do to show how my teaching meets these standards?’ need clear answers. A framework also helps applicants by limiting the amount of evidence they need to provide.

Figure 1 shows that each entry provides evidence related to several standards (indicated by the shading), thereby reducing workload. Together, the 4 entries provide several independent sources of evidence that address each of the 7 standards, as called for in the revised AITSL Framework and thereby increasing the reliability of certification decisions.

A framework such as the one shown in Figure 1 would also ensure a sound basis on which to make generalisations about an applicant’s practice. If the certification process is to be credible, it needs to ensure that the evidence provides a representative sample of what a teacher is expected to know and do. This means that, together, the assessment methods need to provide:

¹⁰ Stake, R. E., Kushner, S., Ingvarson, L., & Hattie, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Assessing teachers for professional certification: The first decade of the National Board for Professional Teaching (Advances in program evaluation, Vol. 11)*. Elsevier Press.

¹¹ The revised AITSL Framework is not an assessment framework in the sense that will be used here. The revised Framework covers matters such as eligibility, portability and appeals processes but does not describe the methods Authorities are to use for assessing applications.

- evidence covering the main components of the curriculum that a teacher is responsible for teaching and show evidence of teaching in several learning areas not just one
- evidence covering a range of teaching skills, as Standard 3 requires, reflective of research on accomplished teaching, not just a single skill.

Figure 1 illustrates how the Portfolio Project tried to meet these requirements for primary teachers. Entries 1–3 ask for evidence about the main curriculum areas that primary teachers are usually responsible for teaching. Applicants are asked to describe and document 3 different units of work they have planned and taught, one in English, one in mathematics and one in science or humanities and social studies.

Figure 1: Example of an assessment framework for highly accomplished primary teaching

APST Standards				
Curriculum focus	1 English: Writing	2 Mathematics	3 Science or Humanities/Social Studies: Inquiry skills	
Teaching skill	Monitoring and feedback	Whole-class discussion	Collaborative group work	
Main sources of evidence				
1 Know students and how they learn				
2 Know the content and how to teach it				
3 Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning				
4 Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments				
5 Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning				
6 Engage in professional learning				
7 Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community				

Figure 1 shows that applicants have to provide evidence of different teaching skills to complete each task. Most important for credibility purposes, each entry calls for clear and convincing evidence of what students are doing and learning as a direct result of conditions created by the teacher.

Entry 1 focuses on samples of student writing over time and the quality of feedback and annotations the applicant provides. Entries 2 and 3 call for video clips from stages while teaching the relevant work unit. Entry 2 clips focus on the quality of class discussion of mathematical content created by

the teacher. Entry 3 clips focus on how the teacher engages students in collaborative group work that develops their inquiry skills.

As Figure 1 shows, completing each provides evidence related to Standards 1 to 5. The heavier shading shows the main standards covered by each method. The Framework shows how a small number of assessment tasks can supply several examples of evidence for each Standard.

The Portfolio Project provided teachers with detailed guidelines about how to prepare each portfolio entry. These provided a structure with scaffolding prompts to give a clear and common understanding of each task, also vital for the assessment’s reliability.¹²

Entry 4 was designed to directly address Standards 6 and 7, which state that HATs are active contributors to their schools as professional learning communities. Entry 4 invites teachers to initiate and document a small project that engaged colleagues in improving learning opportunities for a designated group of students.

Similar frameworks can be developed readily for other fields of teaching. We also developed one for secondary science teachers. The basic structure is the same for all fields of teaching while varying in detail. However, Entry 4 remains the same for all fields.

Figure 2 shows an example from a framework we developed and trialled for secondary science teachers. Once again it shows 4 portfolio entries, covering different areas of the Australian Curriculum for science, each focusing on a different teaching skill. To add to the validity of the process, applicants are asked to make sure each entry is based on teaching a different class.

Figure 2: Portfolio entries for AC: Science

Curriculum focus	1. Building science understanding over time	2. Conducting a whole-class discussion	3. Science inquiry and investigation	4. N/A Teacher leadership initiative
Teaching skill	Linking goals, activities and assessments	Whole-class discussion	Collaborative group work	Engaging your professional community
Main sources of evidence	Student work samples	Video-based	Video-based	Documented accomplishments
Relevant content strands of the AC:S or mandated variant	SU & SHE/SIS	SU/SHE/SIS	SIS & SU/SHE	Depends on the project

¹² Details of portfolio entry guides can be found at <https://portfolio.acer.org/>

Step 2: Provide greater clarity about what is being assessed

The second step in making the certification process more manageable is to ensure applicants and their assessors have a clear and common understanding of what they are expected to demonstrate or assess.

Reducing workload means not leaving applicants with only a vague idea about what they are expected to do apart from 'gathering evidence'. This approach is a bit like asking an Olympic diver or skater to show the judges they can dive or skate without having been given information about the abilities they are expected to perform, or the criteria used to assess them.

What is being assessed when we assess accomplished teaching? Applicants, for example, are expected to show they 'know the content and how to teach it' and 'know their students and how they learn'. These standards did not get us far. The nature of this knowledge is not spelled out, nor the levels that meet the Accomplished Teacher standard.

Additionally, the assessment of accomplished teaching differs significantly according to the areas of learning a teacher is expected to teach. What an accomplished primary teacher knows about teaching early literacy is very different from what an accomplished secondary science teacher knows about making scientific concepts meaningful.

One way to provide greater clarity about what is being assessed is to link the teaching standards and the curriculum learning areas and levels an applicant is responsible for teaching. Most teachers are expected to teach specified learning areas in the Australian Curriculum (or the local variant). Using the curriculum being taught gives applicants and assessors a clearer and more meaningful idea of what they are expected to demonstrate and assess.

The APST standards are written at a general level; they apply to all teachers. But practice is specific. Highly accomplished teachers are highly accomplished teachers of 'something'. All teachers are specialists in this sense. A standard such as 'knows the content and how to teach it' is only meaningful in a context where what is being taught and to whom is clear.

The national curriculum statements (and local variants) give a contemporary vision of what learners need to know and be able to do in each field of study. While the HALT standards remain generic, the statements enable greater specificity in the nature of the evidence required. They provide a clear focus for what our assessment tasks should be asking HALT applicants to demonstrate.

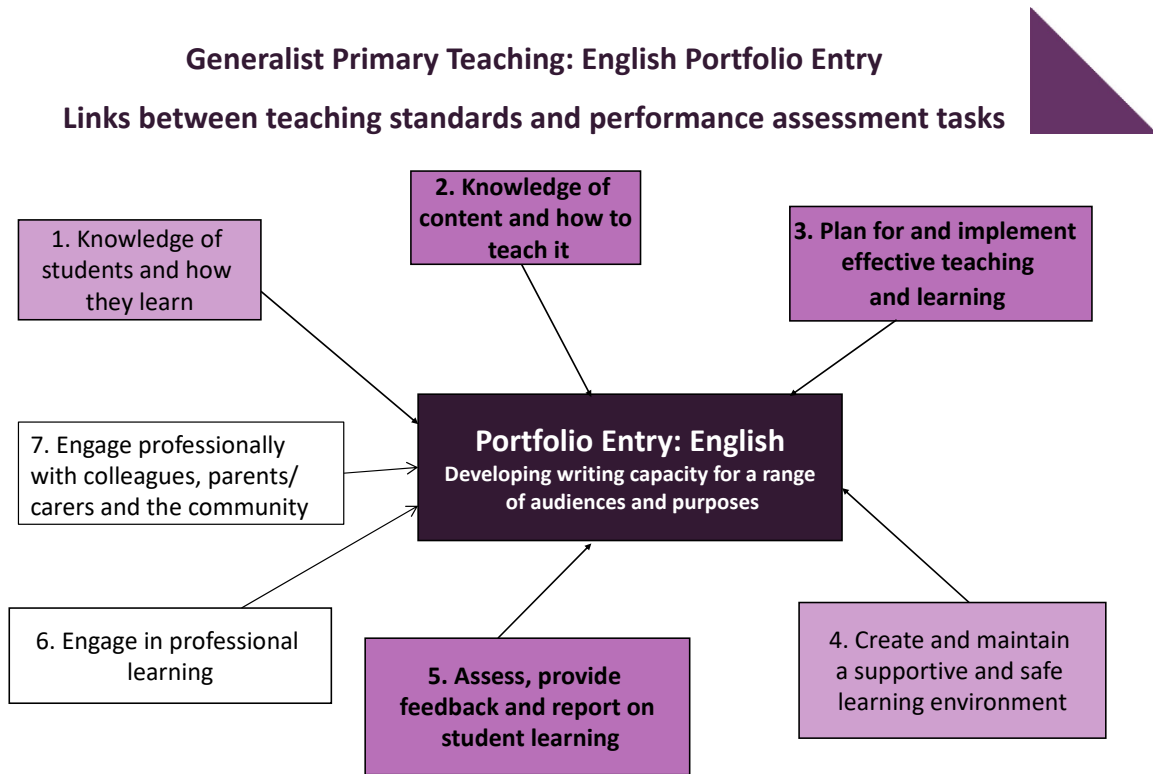
To illustrate, most primary teachers are expected to teach English, mathematics, science, humanities and social sciences. A primary teacher applicant might choose to document a unit of work in English in which they planned to

engage students in writing for a range of purposes and audiences, catering for the diverse learning needs of students in planning classroom activities and enabled all students to make progress in their knowledge and understanding of writing. ([e.g. ACELY1694](#))

This statement from the Australian Curriculum gives a clear indication of what an applicant needs to demonstrate in a portfolio entry. How a teacher does this is for the teacher to decide, but it is surely non-negotiable that a highly accomplished primary teacher should be able to do this. As with all the

entries we developed, it calls for evidence of impact on what students are doing and learning. Figure 3 shows how completing this entry would provide evidence related to several standards at the same time.

Figure 3: Generalist primary teaching: English portfolio entry



The tasks in the Portfolio Project also reduce the workload for assessors who know what they have to look for. The assessors trained in the Portfolio Project were taught to look for clear and convincing evidence that the applicant’s students had progressed in their writing abilities because of their teaching and the annotation and feedback they provided.

In mathematics, a primary teacher might choose to demonstrate

how they have planned and taught a unit of work which built students’ understanding of important mathematics content as described in the Australian Curriculum, and how they used class discussion about important mathematics content to move student learning forward.

In science or social studies and humanities they might choose to demonstrate

how they planned and taught a unit of work which engaged students in collaborative investigations that strengthened their inquiry skills and deepened their conceptual understanding, as described in the Australian Curriculum, and developed students’ capacity to be competent, critical and creative users of inquiry methods and skills.

Assessment methods like these gather authentic (that is, valid) examples of teaching. They reflect the complexity of what highly accomplished teachers know and do. Most important for credibility purposes, they call for evidence about the impact of their teaching on students. They provide clear

and convincing evidence of what students are doing and learning as a direct result of conditions created by the teacher. As Figures 1 and 2 indicate, that evidence can take a variety of forms such as samples of student work over time, test results or video clips.

Step 3: Prepare a portfolio of evidence

The third step in reducing workload is to develop methods applicants can use to describe how they have taught units of work, such as the ones discussed, *as they teach them*. This is consistent with the revised Framework, which states that ‘certification processes should be integrated into teachers’ daily practice to help prevent duplication or unnecessary additional work in the application process’.

The Portfolio Project developed and trialled guidelines applicants could use to prepare examples of each in their portfolio of evidence. These provided a clear structure with scaffolding prompts showing the evidence required. Figure 4 shows extracts from the portfolio guidelines for the entry on teaching writing.

The earlier AITSL Guide to the Certification of HALTs gave the impression that applicants were expected to ‘gather existing evidence’ for each of the 37 standard components in turn. This led teachers to prepare too much evidence, often disjointedly. Similarly, this meant that assessors focused on individual standards, not the quality of teaching as it was performed.

Sensibly, the revised Framework requires assessment to be based ‘on an “on-balance” judgement of demonstrated achievement of each of the 7 Standards’, rather than 37 indicators.

Such examples aren’t documented in the normal course of a teacher’s work. They are not lying around waiting to be gathered. They have to be created. When assessing applicants for certification, we need evidence of teaching, *as it is performed*. Not each standard in isolation. Nor individual lessons in isolation as required in Stage 2 of the current HALT guidelines. (This form of evidence is an unreliable guide to highly accomplished teaching, expensive and unnecessarily stressful.)

An important feature of the ACER portfolio approach is that teachers prepare evidence of the standards prospectively not retrospectively; entries are based on teaching initiatives that teachers undertake *once they decide to become candidates* for professional certification.

As they plan and teach units of work over time, teachers are seamlessly drawing on their knowledge of their students and their knowledge of the relevant subject matter, while creating a safe and challenging learning environment. We felt that new guidelines were needed that teachers could use proactively to describe and document case studies of their teaching, as they taught them.

How to do this? There is a basic structure to accomplished teaching. In fact, it is reflected in the way the APST are organised. As a group, the first 5 standards are designed to reflect the common, dynamic nature of what effective teachers know and do when they plan and teach units of work. They were never intended to be addressed individually as the earlier HALT certification guidelines suggested.

The basic structure of teachers’ work is the unit of study with clear goals, plans, learning activities and assessments. Figure 4 shows how our portfolio guidelines were based on this structure. It may

cover a few lessons but usually covers several weeks. It may be as long as a term or semester. But it has internal coherence. In preparing each portfolio entry, applicants demonstrate how they made clear links between their student's needs, learning goals, planning, learning activities and assessments of student progress. Assessors look for coherence and clear links between these when judging portfolio entries.

This coherence is what makes a unit of study suitable as the fundamental unit of measurement when assessing teaching. Asking teachers to present examples of units of work they have taught necessarily provides evidence related to Standards 15.

The portfolio tasks developed in the Portfolio Project were based on this structure. Detailed examples of the portfolio guidelines can be found on the [Portfolio Project website](#). Teachers who trialled our tasks appreciated the structure and did not feel constrained by it.

Figure 4: Example of a portfolio entry structure (extracts only)

Focus: How students are taught to develop their capacities in writing for a range of audiences and purposes.

Select a suitable unit of work on writing.

Describe:

1. School context

Provide an *outline* of the characteristics of your school and its wider community to give a context for your entry.

2. Teaching context

Describe the characteristics of the class from which the samples were drawn that might influence the teaching and learning of these students in writing at this time.

3. Relevant research on effective practice in teaching writing

Select a small number (24) of key research studies and explain how this research has informed and influenced your approach to teaching and learning writing.

Written commentary

4. Description of your teaching plan and implementation

This section requires a description of the overall goals that established the purpose, focus and context of the learning activities the students engaged in during the development of the annotated writing samples. You should also describe how you assessed students' work in order to determine where they were in their learning at the time of assessment, and how you then used this data to inform your teaching.

5. Analysis and discussion of student writing and annotations

This section of the entry should analyse the evidence contained in your students' writing samples and annotations in terms of your teaching goals, the effectiveness of the classroom practices you designed to implement these goals, and the impact on students' learning. Refer to your overall planning and selection of teaching strategies, and to the learning environment that you created and maintained in your classroom during the whole period of the featured writing program.

6. Reflection

The written commentary should conclude with a reflection in which you evaluate and reflect critically on your teaching as demonstrated in the annotated writing samples and the artefacts with the intention of improving students' learning and your teaching practice.

Attachments:

- Annotated samples of two students' writing
- Teacher artefacts used to guide and support student's writing

Field testing the portfolio tasks

The portfolio tasks were subjected to a careful review of their clarity, validity, and fairness by external panels of teachers in each field. After revision, and a second review by the external panels, a general invitation was sent out to teachers in each field to undertake one portfolio task. Twenty-one teachers completed a portfolio entry and submitted it electronically. Trial teachers were also provided with an [Evaluation Guide](#) for each portfolio entry, indicating the evidence that assessors would be looking for and how they would make their overall judgment of their entries.

Table 1 shows the results from a survey of trial teachers in which they rated the clarity, validity and fairness of the portfolio tasks highly. It also shows that teachers found that preparing their entry was a valuable professional learning experience that improved their teaching.

Table 1: Survey results from trial teachers about portfolio tasks

	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Portfolio Guidelines and the Field Test	Agree or Strongly agree
a	The portfolio entry guidelines made it clear what I was expected to do and what evidence I was expected to provide	20/21
b	The guidelines for preparing the portfolio entry provided a helpful way for me to show how I meet the standard for highly accomplished teaching	18/21
c	The portfolio task I did was a valid way to assess whether a teacher meets the highly accomplished level.	17/21
d	The task was authentic, i.e. it was representative of work that teachers engage in normally as part of their practice.	21/21
e	The entry guidelines did not force me use a particular method or style of teaching different from what I normally use	21/21
f	The evaluation guide made it clear to me how my portfolio entry would be assessed	19/21
g	The portfolio task was fair; a teacher applying for highly accomplished certification should be able to do what is required for this task no matter where they teach	18/21
h	Completing the portfolio entry was a valuable professional learning experience for me	21/21
i	I will be a better teacher as a result of completing my portfolio entry	18/21

Assessor's views of the portfolio tasks and the assessment process

Sixteen primary teachers were trained to assess the primary entries.¹³ Results showed high levels of agreement among assessors and the ability to identify benchmark entries. Entries illustrated different levels of performance, including entries that assessors agreed clearly met the standard for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher certification.

Assessors were also asked to complete a survey similar to that completed by the field test teachers. Table 2 shows assessors had similar views on validity and fairness and the need for some more work

¹³ Details of the training can be found in Ingvarson, L.C. (July 2019). Teaching standards and the promotion of quality teaching. *European Journal of Education*, 54(3), 337-355.

on the clarity of the guidelines. Note that that assessors felt increasingly confident about their consistency in making judgments and that they found the assessment process a valuable professional learning experience.

Table 2: Assessor feedback survey

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following general statements about the entry guidelines and assessor training?	Agree or strongly agree
Validity	
a The portfolio tasks were authentic; that is, they were representative of work that teachers engage in normally as part of their practice.	20/20
b The tasks were based on aspects of teaching that any highly accomplished teacher should be able to demonstrate.	20/20
c Together, the 4 portfolio tasks provide a valid basis on which to assess a highly accomplished primary teacher's performance.	19/20
d Together, the 4 tasks provide sufficient evidence to make a reliable judgment about a teacher's performance	19/20
Fairness	
e The tasks give teachers a fair chance to demonstrate the quality of their practice, no matter where they teach.	19/20
f These tasks do not force a teacher to use a particular method or style of teaching; that is, they do not 'standardise' teaching.	20/20
g The tasks are flexible: that is, they do not stop a teacher using innovative and creative approaches to teaching.	20/20
h Teachers should be able to do what is required for these tasks no matter where they teach.	19/20
Clarity	
i The entry guidelines make it clear what teachers would have to do to provide evidence of their practice.	13/20
j The evaluation guides and criteria make clear to teachers how their portfolio entries will be assessed.	13/20
k The entry guidelines are not ambiguous; that is, teachers interpret the requirements in the same way.	9/20
Assessor training	
l As a result of the assessor training, I was gaining confidence that I was able to assess the portfolio entries consistently	20/20
m The assessor training was a valuable professional learning experience for me	19/20

Summary

The Teacher Workforce Action Plan recognises the central role that a national system for the certification of highly accomplished teachers could play in strengthening the profession. Providing the basis for better-rewarded career pathways based on expertise would strengthen its capacity to recruit, develop and retain high-quality teachers. The Plan recognises, however, that the current requirements for certification have deficiencies and calls for them to be streamlined.

As certifying authorities across state and territory school systems develop and refine their own certification processes, this paper suggests an approach to make the process more manageable, credible and affordable. It shows how the validity and reliability of the certification process can be strengthened using an assessment framework that summarises what is to be assessed and how. It shows how the workload can be reduced to a smaller number of clear tasks, each giving valid evidence of accomplished practice and evidence related to several standards.

These methods clarify the task and reduce the workload by linking the teaching standards to the curriculum being taught. They also provide teachers with a structure within which to show how they meet the standards. Teachers don't have to guess what assessors will be looking for. The validity of certification is increased because it is based on authentic chunks of work that matches what accomplished teachers do in the normal course of their work. It asks for evidence of what students are doing and how they have progressed in their learning over time. These methods also reduce the time it takes assessors to assess applications, the main cost in a certification system. After training and some experience, we found that assessors took between one and one-and-a-half hours to judge each portfolio entry. Four entries would take no more than 6 hours, significantly less than the time we believe it currently takes for assessments of each application.

The methods reported in this paper are freely available from ACER. Certifying authorities might encourage teachers to use them in preparing their applications for certification. Teachers could undertake each of the 4 tasks in turn as modules, preferably as part of a support program with a cohort of other applicants.

Teachers and assessors who took part in the ACER Portfolio Project had very positive views about the clarity, validity and fairness of the assessment methods. This approach points the way to a more credible, economically affordable, administratively feasible and legally defensible certification system, all major long-term considerations if a certification system is to 'go to scale' and fulfil its potential.