



Section P Guidelines: Annual Professional Learning Program

Purpose

These guidelines provide advice schools in implementing Section P of the *ACTPS Education and Training Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2014-2018* (Agreement) with respect to:

- planning and implementing the school's annual professional learning program
- teachers' participation in the program.

Overview

Clause P6 of the Agreement sets out the requirement for schools to conduct an annual professional learning program, including:

1. two days of approved professional learning during stand down
2. a professional learning community program during school terms.

Teachers are required to participate in both components of the school's annual professional learning program.

The annual professional learning program must be developed in accordance with the Government's professional learning framework described within the *ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act 2010* and associated Regulations, Directions and procedures, which can be accessed on the [ACT Teacher Quality Institute](#) website.

1. Two days of approved professional learning

System day

This day is designated for a whole of system or whole of sector professional learning priority as determined by the Directorate. Schools are notified by end of October each year on whether the system day will be conducted during the following January. If not required, this day will be conducted as a school professional learning day (see below).

School day

This day is designated for a professional learning priority determined by the school.

Teacher attendance

All teachers are required to attend the two days of approved professional learning. A teacher who cannot attend may:

- a) request approval to make up the professional learning activity at an alternate time agreed with the principal; or
- b) for absences known in advance, submit an application for leave in advance of the absence, accompanied by documentary evidence; or
- c) for unexpected absences, submit an application for leave accompanied by documentary evidence as soon as the teacher returns to work.

Any request for personal leave on days of approved professional learning must be accompanied by a medical certificate from a registered health professional or by reasonable evidence that the leave is essential at that time.

Any teacher not attending professional learning who is not covered by a), b) or c) above will be deemed to be on unauthorised leave without pay. Non-attendance may constitute misconduct and could be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Casual teachers regularly engaged by the school should be invited to attend.

Scheduling

The two days of approved professional learning are to be conducted, where possible, during the week following the Australia Day public holiday and before the start of the school year.

In any year where it is not possible to conduct both days during this week, the principal, in consultation with staff, will designate one day of stand down during a term break for the school day of approved professional learning.

Program design and content

The two days of approved professional learning must be a coherent program, consistent with the system/school development plan and identified teachers' development needs. The school day is usually designed by the school leadership team in consultation with staff.

Schools should consult the relevant advice on the [ACT Teacher Quality Institute](#) website in designing the program for the two days.

While it is acknowledged that schools may need to conduct administrative and procedural training from time to time, the program should focus on the core role of teachers and:

- enhance the knowledge or skills of teachers that will lead to improved student learning
- enable teachers to reflect on their current practice
- involve teachers in collaboration with other teachers or relevant professionals
- lead to follow up activities such as further research, discussion, experimentation or collaboration associated with the professional learning communities program

- provide teachers with opportunities to develop leadership capabilities
- build quality teaching practice.

2. The professional learning community program

The professional learning community program involves teachers regularly coming together to engage in professional conversations and investigations at the workplace. With the support of colleagues, teachers focus attention on addressing educational issues directly relevant to their students' learning needs in the classroom and to their own teaching practice to meet these needs. Professional learning community programs include, but are not limited to:

- peer observation in the classroom, reflection and feedback;
- analysis of evidence for student learning
- examination and development of teaching practices to meet student learning needs
- school based action research groups

Teacher attendance

The professional learning community program is to be conducted during the school's required hours of attendance in term time.

Engagement in professional learning is part of the core role of teachers, in accordance with subclause Q1.1 of the enterprise agreement. Teachers are required to participate in the scheduled professional learning community program for a minimum of 15 hours during the school year.

Where a teacher is unable to attend a scheduled professional learning community activity, the normal arrangements for absence during required hours of attendance at the school will apply.

Casual teachers regularly engaged by the school should be invited to attend the professional learning community program. Their participation may be on days they are engaged to work at the school and voluntarily on other days.

Scheduling

The professional learning community program is to be conducted during the school's required hours of attendance in term time. Configuration of the minimum 15 hours can be determined at the school level, for example 1 hour per fortnight over three terms.

Scheduling the program over the school year needs to be carefully planned and adjustments made to teachers' responsibilities to ensure workload remains manageable. See also the *Section Q Guidelines: Addressing teacher workload*.

Scheduling considerations include:

- peak periods in teachers' other professional responsibilities, such as report writing and parent/teacher interviews
- adjustments to scheduling of other meetings, such as whole staff and faculty/team meetings
- timetabling to facilitate peer observation and reflection sessions
- adjustments to teachers' participation in school activities such as assemblies.

The principal will provide written advice to staff [*BY THE END OF TERM 1?*] specifying the scheduling of the professional learning community program during the school year.

Program design and content

The design and content of the school's professional learning community program must address the development needs of range of teachers on staff, including new educators, experienced classroom teachers and school leaders. Schools should consult the relevant advice on the [ACT Teacher Quality Institute](#) website in designing the program.

The examples below illustrate a range of designs and content for schools to consider in planning this component of the annual professional learning program.

1. Stimulus day plus sequenced professional learning communities

The school PL day at the beginning of the school year has an agreed focus.

This agreed focus is built upon during the school year as teachers in smaller groups meet as professional learning communities, scheduled as ten 1½ hour sessions each fortnight over two terms.

Readings and discussions focus on an agreed aspect of the teaching and learning program at the school. Support materials, such as the *Classroom Practice Continuum* developed by AITSL and *Graduate and Grow* developed by the Principals Australia Institute, support the work of the professional learning communities.

Time is quarantined through the weekly afternoon meeting cycle moving to a fortnightly focus. The professional learning communities program and scheduling is mapped in the first weeks of the school term and provided to teachers to support planning and attendance.

2. Quality Teaching (QT) rounds

Quality Teaching Rounds involve teachers working in professional learning communities cycling through a sequence of three components:

- i. discussion of readings, reflecting on experiences since the last meeting and preparing for the next two sessions
- ii. classroom observation and coding of a lesson taught by one teacher, using the Quality Teaching Classroom Practice Guide
- iii. discussion of the pedagogy, the coding, the Quality Teaching model (Ladwig & Gore 2004) and teachers' reflections on their learning.

Classroom observation and coding times are identified through timetabling on lines off or by temporary adjustments to the timetable to enable members of the professional learning community to view and code lessons.

Post-observation discussions and reflections are supported by finding time from adjustments to the scheduling of staff meetings and teachers' participation in school assemblies, extra subjects and extra-curricular activities.

3. Structured teacher release program

All teaching teams are released together for blocks of two hours per week to undertake an ongoing structured planning cycle comprising reflection and discussion of:

- i. student assessment data
- ii. individual student learning needs
- iii. teacher action learning
- iv. collaborative planning.

Key questions facilitate site-specific inquiry and problem solving focused on evidence for what students currently know and can do and next steps in individual students' learning.

The program is supported by the timetabling of executive and specialist staff to release teaching teams and allocation of funding to support the model. Support staff are deployed to assist with administrative tasks that may take teachers' release time in order to focus teacher time on improving student learning.

4. Teacher inquiry program

A teacher inquiry program is professional learning approach based on principles of learning by design that develops teachers' engagement with educational research and builds their practitioner-research capacity.

Teachers undergo an annual professional inquiry cycle: experiencing, conceptualising, analysing and applying a research-based response to an educational challenge in the school community. Teachers select an inquiry focus based on their professional interests and skills. The findings of teachers' professional inquiry projects are utilised to enhance classroom pedagogy, school improvement and student learning outcomes.

Teachers' professional inquiry is supported by:

- 16 hours of professional learning in practitioner-research skills
- 25 hours of dedicated release for self-managed research
- support from a teaching research specialist
- funding for related course and conference attendance
- workshops and networking opportunities with interdisciplinary academics
- program links with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and Professional Pathways.