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Guidelines for the appointment of Specialist Classroom Teachers (SCT)¹ in Secondary Schools

These guidelines provide advice to employers appointing a teacher to the Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT) role. A notification and time allowance application form is attached.

The establishment of the SCT role in secondary schools was part of the 2004 Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement and was seen as providing support for professional learning in schools. In addition, the role allowed for the development of a different career opportunity to retain teachers in the classroom through the provision of an alternative career path to the more traditional management one.

The SCT role offers a career opportunity for secondary teachers to develop and demonstrate their professional learning leadership skills. This is an on-going and evolving role and will be further developed over time, informed by the findings of the Review of the 2006 SCT Pilot.

The Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement 2011-2013 provides the on-going terms and conditions of the SCT role in secondary schools. There are no changes from the previous Collective Agreement (2007-2010), which brought in:

- The time allowance is increased to 8 hours in schools of roll size of 1201 and above, from 28 January 2008.
- The salary allowance is increased to the value of two units, from 28 January 2008. Please note that the allowance, although set at the *value* of two units, is not the *equivalent* of units.
- Each SCT shall have an entitlement of up to two reimbursements of study fees towards post graduate qualifications which are relevant to the role. Each reimbursement shall be a maximum of \$1000. Only one reimbursement shall be paid in any one year. Only one entitlement per teacher in an SCT role will be available.

As the pilot/trial phase has now been completed schools are expected to comply with the eligibility requirements and the terms and conditions of appointment.

These guidelines, which include the changes, have been agreed by the Ministry of Education, PPTA and NZSTA. Employers must ensure that appointments to the SCT role are consistent with the guidelines.

¹ Schools may have a different title for this role eg –Professional Support Teacher, Teaching support, Professional Learning Leader.

Aims and Objectives of the SCT Role

The PPTA, NZSTA and the Ministry of Education agree that a fundamental goal of education policy is to contribute to high education outcomes for all students. There is also recognition of a range of characteristics of quality teaching that are effective in producing improved learning outcomes for all students, especially those most at risk of underachievement.

The aim of the SCT role is to contribute to the enhancement of such quality teaching practices in all schools by providing support for the professional growth of other teachers in the school. This could be through:

- Supporting and assisting beginning teachers to develop and demonstrate effective teaching practices;
- Supporting and assisting beginning teachers to maintain a purposeful learning environment that engages students;
- Supporting and assisting other teachers in the school with effective teaching practices and maintaining a purposeful learning environment that engages students;
- Supporting and assisting teachers to expand their knowledge, skills and attributes to increase teaching effectiveness;
- Encouraging collaborative, reflective and shared practice
- Providing leadership in school wide professional learning and development.

Implementation of the SCT role in schools has seen a wide range of support provided to teachers: coaching, mentoring, leading mentoring programmes, leading professional learning groups, providing professional reading and leading discussion groups, developing reflective practice, classroom observations/support, supporting beginning teachers, developing classroom management strategies, leading professional learning programmes in the school, facilitating and supporting professional learning communities.

Background

As part of the 2004 settlement of the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement (STCA), the parties agreed to establish a new role in secondary schools – referenced as Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT) in the Agreement.

The establishment of this role came from a recommendation made by the Ministerial Taskforce on Secondary Remuneration (2003) that a broader range of career pathways be developed to offer more attractive career prospects to teachers. Having a wider range of career opportunities available is expected to aid in the recruitment of graduates and assist in the retention of experienced teachers who wish to focus on professional teaching practice. The SCT role was identified as one from which all schools could benefit.

The review of the SCT pilot year has been completed. A copy of the summary version of the review was sent to all schools in mid 2007. All reports from the review (the full report, the summary report and the case studies report) are available from http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/index.html (use the search function using 'Specialist Classroom Teacher review'). Findings and recommendations from the review will inform the evolving shape, conditions and extent of the SCT role.

SCT Role Description

Implementation during 2006 and 2007 has seen SCTs providing a wide range of varying support to teachers. Teachers appointed to the SCT role or continuing in the role are encouraged to continue the broad exploration of the possibilities this teacher support role offers.

It is not proposed that this role should necessarily replace any existing arrangements schools have for the induction and support for beginning teachers or teachers new to the school, or to replace any other professional development programme in the school, for example it is not intended to replace the PRT Co-ordinators. However, it may well complement existing support or be incorporated into it.

It is important that this role is kept separate from any appraisal, performance management or competency judgements. The SCT should always be seen in a support and guidance role, in order to operate with their teacher colleagues in a high-trust and confidential relationship.

Some schools have extended the duties and functions of their SCT by providing further time or recognition, or by providing additional resourcing and recognition to enable another teacher to work in a teacher support role. To remain eligible for the additional resourcing associated with the STCA provisions any teacher who operates in an extended role must continue to be a practising classroom teacher, and is expected to be teaching, as a guide, a minimum of 12 hours per week in order to maintain credibility as an effective classroom teacher.

Employers will need to develop their own role description for the SCT in their school, outlining the specific roles the SCT will perform. Regional Advisors from NZSTA or Leadership Advisors from School Support Services may be able to give further advice and guidance on developing job descriptions.

Resourcing for Appointments to the SCT Role (Salary and Time Allowances)

The STCA provides that each secondary school board is entitled to appoint one teacher to the SCT role and will, on notification of an appointment, receive an additional 4 hours staffing per week to resource it. Schools of roll size of 1201 and above receive 8 hours staffing. This time allowance must be dedicated to the person in the SCT role to fulfil their SCT duties and is in addition to their 5 non-contact hour entitlement (which applies to all full-time permanent and long-term relieving secondary teachers).

Teachers appointed to the SCT role will receive an allowance per annum which is equivalent to the value of two units.

The time and salary allowances cannot be split.

Please note that the allowance, although set at the *value* of two units, is not the *equivalent* of units. This allowance does not enable an SCT to progress through their qualifications maximum. Employers and SCTs should be aware of this when making/accepting appointments to the SCT role.

Eligibility for Appointment to the Role

These eligibility requirements have been set as a guide to schools to appoint an experienced, well established teacher, with demonstrated knowledge about and expertise in teaching, to a professional learning leadership role in the school. This level of experience and expertise has been shown to be essential to the success of the role in a school.

The eligibility requirements were adjusted as a result of experiences and findings in the implementation phase. Schools must comply with these eligibility requirements.

In order to be eligible for the SCT role, a teacher must: (refer STCA 2011-2013 3.8B.4)

- Be a permanently appointed registered teacher, and
- Have at least six years total² teaching experience (either in NZ or overseas), and
- Have had three successive successful attestations against the experienced teacher standards in the STCA, or overseas equivalent ³, and
- Be a full time teacher, or a part time teacher with a significant classroom teaching load (as a guide of at least 12 hours per week) at time of application, and
- Meet other criteria in the agreed guidelines.

Terms and Conditions of Appointment to the SCT Role

The SCT role offers an alternative career pathway for those teachers who want to remain centred in teaching practice through supporting and encouraging effective teaching, rather than following a management and administration pathway. As such, schools are asked to minimise other responsibilities of SCTs in order to allow them to focus on this important professional support role (eg it is not expected that SCTs will also hold senior or middle management roles).

Schools must comply with these terms and conditions, and will need to ensure that the focus of the role is on teacher professional learning.

SCTs may need to make choices about roles they wish to hold, which to forego, and career opportunities they wish to take.

Appointment to the SCT role:

- Appointees to permanent SCT roles *must* relinquish all salary units* but may hold *one* fixed term unit where the school requires continuation of a specific responsibility, or chooses to extend the purpose and functions of the SCT role and provide further recognition;
- Appointees to fixed-term SCT roles *must* relinquish, for the term of the appointment, all salary units* but may hold *one* fixed term unit where the school requires continuation of a specific responsibility, or chooses to extend the role and functions of the SCT position and provide further recognition;
- Appointees to fixed term SCT roles are entitled to protection of their current position subject to any existing agreement for that position.

*Note: This does not restrict employers from allocating MMAs and 3R payments in the normal way.

Support for the Role

Where possible, schools should consider providing the following support for SCTs:

- A confidential but accessible office space away from the management/administration area of the school.
- Access to the network of others who have some aspect of professional oversight of teachers such as professional learning coordinator, HoDs, and possibly guidance counsellors.
- Professional learning opportunities that will support the work of the SCT.
- Relief cover to attend local SCT cluster or regional meetings.
- Resourcing for materials such as internet access, printing, photo copying, professional reading, etc.

² This may be a combination of periods, eg with breaks out of teaching.

³ If the appointee has overseas experience and attestation, evidence should be supplied with the application form.

Professional Development Support for SCTs

SCTs are encouraged to participate in training days, network/cluster groups, and relevant professional learning opportunities offered by School Support Services in their region.

It is not intended to review and redistribute the *SCT Handbook 2007*. For most experienced SCTs that material has probably been superseded by other reference material, books or teacher professional learning websites. Copies of the *SCT Handbook 2007* are available from the Ministry of Education or regional School Support Services.

Entitlement for fees reimbursement as study support

The STCA (2011) provides for professional development support for SCTs with an entitlement to a reimbursement of fees for study towards relevant post graduate qualifications up to a maximum of \$1000 a year for each of two years.

The study undertaken should be agreed in discussion between the principal and the Specialist Classroom Teacher. The study should take into account the relevance to the role, the professional development needs of the SCT, and the professional learning support needs in the school. There is no need to seek approval for course(s) prior to commencing study.

The purpose of the SCT role is seen as: supporting other teachers to improve and develop practice; leading professional learning in the school; developing teacher practice for improved student outcomes.

Examples of areas for the post-graduate qualifications that SCTs may wish to consider could include: adult education, mentoring/coaching, teacher professional learning.

Application forms, to apply for reimbursement, are available on the Ministry of Education website.

Advertising, Selection and Appointment Process

For the pilot phase all appointments to the SCT role were required to be internal. The expectation is that this will continue to be the case, as the trust and confidence of the staff in the person appointed is crucial to the success of this role. However, in certain circumstances, where schools have been unable to appoint internally and have an actual teaching vacancy, they may advertise externally in the Education Gazette and other media usually used.

The advertising, selection and appointment process should be as follows:

- 1. The employer must ensure that there is an **open and transparent** internal process of advertising, selection and appointment to the role;
 - All teachers in the school must be notified of the eligibility requirements, role description and the selection process
 - Experience from the pilot indicated that it was useful to include staff consultation and involvement in the selection process, in order to secure staff awareness of and confidence in the role.
 - It is the responsibility of the employer and principal to ensure that the most suitable applicant, according to the criteria, is selected for appointment to the SCT role.

- 2. Options for appointment:
 - Where the employer is confident that an applicant will clearly meet eligibility requirements, role description and criteria, it will be able to offer a permanent appointment to the SCT role.
 - Where a permanent appointment is not made, the employer may:
 - 1. Offer a fixed-term appointment ⁴; or
 - 2. Advertise externally if the school has an actual teaching vacancy; or
 - 3. Make no appointment.

Criteria for Appointment to the SCT Role

Certain knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities make for an effective SCT who is able to fulfil the aims and objectives of the role.

Applicants will need to demonstrate expertise in a number of the following areas.

Knowledge/Skills

The SCT is a highly effective classroom teacher who consistently demonstrates exemplary practice by:

In own teaching:

- Demonstrating expertise and refined strategies in the practice of teaching, including:
 - high and clear expectations of all learners' abilities to achieve
 - ability to respond flexibly and appropriately to the needs of diverse learners
 - use of evidence to guide teaching and learning
 - use of reflective inquiry in their own teaching practice
 - purposeful relationships with learners, families, communities and colleagues
- Demonstrating a sound knowledge of the theory and practical application of curriculum, learning and assessment
- Being conversant with current educational research, best practice and current issues and initiatives in education to inform teaching practice

Transfer of knowledge:

- Understanding how adults learn and having knowledge of effective professional learning strategies for teachers
- Effectively communicating sound knowledge and practice of teaching and learning to other teachers across subject, class and school contexts
- Assisting colleagues to apply reflective practice in working to address problems, improve student engagement and raise student achievement
- Creating opportunities to share current educational research, best practice and current issues and initiatives in education with colleagues
- Being a highly skilled observer and providing timely and sufficient feed-back and feedforward to colleagues

Experience

Relevant experience for an appointee to the SCT role could include:

- Extensive teaching experience⁵
- Successful collaboration with other teachers to improve teaching practice
- Successful experience in mentoring beginning teachers
- Successful experience in mentoring/coaching other teachers
- Leading or facilitating the professional learning of other teachers

⁴ NOTE: a fixed-term appointment is not to be made in order to establish the suitability of an employee for permanent appointment.

⁵ Minimum of six years for eligibility to apply for the SCT role

Attributes/Dispositions

In their professional practice, the applicant:

Self

- Demonstrates a strong commitment to being a highly effective classroom teacher and improving student learning
- Is seen by teaching staff as being a highly effective and credible secondary school teacher
- Demonstrates a commitment to ongoing professional learning
- Is seen as approachable by teachers in the school
- Demonstrates leadership and innovation in working to resolve problems and improve student achievement

Others

- Has the trust, respect and confidence of teaching staff and personal status within the school
- Develops effective and supportive working relationships with colleagues to other teachers and builds teachers' self-esteem and motivation
- Shows respect for diversity and appreciation of differences eg culture, gender, ethnicity, in both students and colleagues

Process for Resourcing the Role – Making an Application

Principals should apply to the Ministry of Education for the SCT time allowance by filling out a *Specialist Classroom Teacher Time Allowance Application Form*, available on the website alongside these guidelines on www.employment.education.govt.nz

It is preferable that schools make appointments to the SCT role as early as possible in Term 4 of the year prior to a new appointment to facilitate the timely application of allowances and so that new appointees to the SCT role can begin preparation for the following year. While there is no absolute "cut-off point" after which appointments to the role cannot be made, wherever possible the process should be completed, and the Ministry Resourcing section notified by the end of Term 4 in the year prior to taking up the role.

The application form will serve as notification to Payroll, who will then process the salary allowance along with the SCT's base salary and adjustment of any other applicable salary allowances.

The staffing allowance will be added to the school's staffing notices on receipt and approval of your application.

Principals will need to notify their payroll service if a fixed term unit is to be applied, in accordance with these guidelines.

Principals will need to notify their payroll service of any relinquished units which have been reallocated.

If the SCT has been appointed permanently to the role or to a fixed term role for more than one year, there is no need to reapply for the time allowance in subsequent years. But where a new appointment to the role (permanent or fixed term) needs to be made, the Principal should submit a *Specialist Classroom Teacher Time Allowance Application Form*.

For SCTs appointed permanently to the role, the allowances will continue until the appointee resigns from the role. The ministry must be notified if the appointee resigns, or of any replacement.

For fixed term appointments to the role, the allowance approval is valid until the end of the term of appointment. Schools will need to submit a *Specialist Classroom Teacher Time Allowance Application Form* for any new fixed term appointment.