

Professional growth cycle

Introduction

The Teaching Council directed schools to develop a professional growth cycle for use by the beginning of 2021 and circulated a template to help schools to design a “cycle for their own setting”.

PPTA has designed its own template in consultation with the Secondary Principals’ Council of Aotearoa (SPCA) which addresses the needs of both teachers and principals for professional growth and renewal of practising certificates.

Background

The Minister of Education Chris Hipkins, PPTA president Jack Boyle, and Secretary for Education Iona Holsted have all expressed no confidence in teacher appraisal, noting there is a lack of evidence that appraisal lifts teacher quality or improves student outcomes and because in some schools the process has become burdensome.

As a result, the Accord has committed to removing teacher performance appraisal.

Professional growth cycle

On Friday 20 August, the Teaching Council told schools that it no longer requires performance appraisal as an accountability instrument and wants to replace appraisal with a focus on professional growth.

The Council asked schools to spend the rest of this year designing a professional growth cycle. To help schools do this it supplied the following Quality Practice Template.

Quality Practice Template (QPT)

Quality Practice Template			
Standard	Elaborations	What quality practices do you use in your setting?	What data or information do you use to analyse, or interpret teaching and learning? What will learners, their whānau and families be saying?

PPTA is concerned that the QPT will result in schools designing a professional growth cycle that could be just as onerous as some of the school-designed processes for inquiry and appraisal¹.

For instance, there is concern that the heading ‘Elaborations’ may indicate to schools that teachers are expected to address all 30 elaborations despite the Standards for the Teaching Profession

¹ While the TC notes state that the QPT is not for individual teachers to complete as a record of their teaching or how they meet the Standards, and that a template would not have to be filled out every year, past experience is that schools often turn these templates into teacher checklists

(Standards) document stating “it is not expected that teachers would need to identify evidence of individual elaborations”². We are also concerned that the question about the analysis and interpretation of data will lead to schools requiring an inquiry. An inquiry is but one way to engage in professional learning. The PPTA view is that inquiry should only be undertaken if

- teachers are given time,
- teachers have, or receive, tertiary level training in inquiry methodology, and
- it is voluntary.

Many teachers do not value inquiry; it has not improved their student engagement and learning and has a high workload.

PPTA template

High trust model

For the above reasons PPTA is providing a professional growth template with an alternative approach to the Teaching Council QPT. It is both high trust and will not add significantly to teacher workload. In addition, we do not believe that 2,500 schools (plus ECE centres) should all duplicate the same task.

The Tomorrow’s Schools review found that NZ is plagued with a low trust education system - lots of rules from the centre, compliance requirements, monitoring and high workloads³. The legislation (now removed) requiring the Teaching Council to check up that schools are doing appraisal properly is a prime example.

The government is committed to building a high trust system. This needs to start at the school level.

Mana enhancing process

The professional growth cycle should be mana enhancing, where a teacher’s personal rangatiratanga (self-determination of thinking and actions) is respected and encouraged. We want schools to value, encourage and support teachers to act as professionals making choices to improve their practice.

Tuakana-teina

The PPTA model takes inspiration from the tuakana–teina relationship, an integral part of traditional Māori society; a knowledgeable colleague (tuakana, a brother, sister or cousin in Māori tradition) helps and guides a less experienced colleague (teina, originally a younger sibling or cousin of the same gender) in growing their knowledge of teaching and learning.

The tuakana–teina relationship also recognises the value of ako, where the expert/less experienced roles may be reversed at any time, as expressed in the whakatauki

Mā te tuakana te teina e tōtika, Mā te teina te tuakana e tōtika
(The older will lead the younger and the younger will lead the older)

What does rangatiratanga mean in this setting? It starts with the assumption that a teacher is competent and doing a good job. This enables a teacher to focus on their students rather than spend time collecting evidence to prove they are competent.

² Our code Our Standards, p.18

³ MoE (2019) Supporting all schools to succeed: Reform of the Tomorrow’s Schools system, p10

While the PPTA process presents a process that maintains a teacher's personal rangatiratanga, it still enables the knowledgeable teacher (tuakana) to attest (or otherwise) that the less experienced teacher (teina) meets the Standards for the purpose of the annual renewal of their practising certificate.

Will the template identify teachers who are not competent?

No. The professional growth cycle assumes that teachers are professionals who wish to improve their practice. It is about encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice and providing opportunities to build on their existing knowledge and skills.

The question of a teacher's competency was rarely identified solely through the old appraisal system. It was instead identified through student or parent complaints, student voice, a pattern of examination results, and information from colleagues (teachers care about their students so will not sit by when a colleague needs additional support).

Will this provide assurance for the annual renewal of practising certificates?

Yes. The evidence that teachers meet the Standards of the Teaching Profession is found in their classes, the day to day interactions with their students, their planning, while on duty, in departmental meetings, during form time and while doing extra-curricular activities. The advice that the Teaching Council gave in August 2019 about renewal of practising certificates was that principals should delegate this to teachers (tuakana) who are "familiar with the day to day work of the teacher". The robustness comes from this delegation.

If a principal is not confident that a tuakana has the skills and knowledge to make these professional judgements they may a) decide to negotiate with the teacher for an alternative tuakana or b) provide the tuakana with PLD on how to identify naturally occurring evidence of the Standards⁴.

Concerns about individual performance

A small number of teachers may require more guidance and support and could potentially be subject to competency processes. However, a school's professional growth cycle should treat those cases as exceptions, not the rule. The flowchart (Appendix) shows how schools should address these concerns usually starting by providing additional support. In these cases, the school would be justified in requesting additional evidence of progress above what is required in the normal professional growth cycle.

If a teacher currently does not meet the Standards, Teaching Council advice is that the principal should discuss this with the teacher and provide support to enable improvement. If sufficient progress is not made they may commence formal performance management processes outlined in employment agreements⁵.

What is the difference between certificate renewal, growth cycle and appraisal?

- Certificate renewal requires the principal to endorse that a teacher meets the Standards.

⁴ See *The Code of Professional Responsibility: Examples in Practice* and *Tātaiako* p.11

⁵ Professional Growth Cycle for Teachers https://teachingcouncil.nz/sites/default/files/TC-Professional%20Growth%20Cycle%20for%20Teachers_Elements_0.pdf

- A professional growth cycle begins with the teacher setting an objective, relating it to the Standards, reviewing it at the end of the year and either continuing with it or setting a new objective.
- Performance appraisal is having your performance judged, which often requires the appraisee to gather evidence to assist that judgement. In a high trust model where teachers are treated as professionals and personal rangatiratanga is valued, appraisal is not necessary.

Please see the PPTA professional growth cycle template with a brief introduction on its use.