

## **FINAL REPORT**

**PROVIDE EXPERT ADVICE, DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN  
ASSESSOR TRAINING PROGRAM FOR NATIONAL CERTIFICATION OF  
HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED AND LEAD TEACHERS**

**Request for Tender – 12/09**

**To**

**Australian Institute for Teaching and School  
Leadership**

**The SiMERR National Research Centre**

**The University of New England**

**ARMIDALE NSW**

**Tendering Organisation**

The SiMERR National Centre  
University of New England  
Armidale 2351  
NSW

**Principal contact person and Project Team Leader**

Professor John Pegg

**Contact details**

Professor John Pegg  
Director SiMERR National Centre  
Education Building  
University of New England  
Armidale 2351  
NSW

Phone Office (02) 6773 5065 or (02) 6773 5070

Mobile 0428 489 303

Fax (02) 6773 4291

Email [jpegg@une.edu.au](mailto:jpegg@une.edu.au)

# Table Of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Aim</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Rationale for the Introduction of Assessor Training: Training versus Experience</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Research methodology</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Assessor Training Program Structure and Content</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Learning design</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Assessor Training Outcomes</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Assessor Training Program Outputs</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Findings and Recommendations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1 Introduction and Background</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Introduction	8
1.2 Aim	8
1.3 Context	9
1.4 Overview of Research	10
1.5 SiMERR National Research Centre	11
1.6 Research Team	11
1.7 Acknowledgements	13
1.8 Structure of the Final Report	13
<b>2 Design</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Background	15
2.2 Methodology	15
2.3 Research Design	16
2.3.1 Phase 1: Pre-Project	16
2.3.2 Phase 2: Project Initiation	16
2.3.3 Phase 3: Development	17
2.3.4 Phase 4: Implementation	17
2.4 Forums	18
2.4.1 Individual Reflection Forum	18
2.4.2 <i>Group of Five</i> Discussion Forum	18
2.4.3 Shared Discussion Forum	18
2.4.4 Facilitator Discussion Forum	18
2.5 Modules and indicative hours	18
2.6 Required and recommended tasks	19
2.7 Workshops	20
2.8 Assessor Calibration Task (ACT) Now activities	20
<b>3 Environmental Scan of Assessor Training</b>	<b>21</b>

<b>3.1</b>	<b>Rationale for Introduction of Assessor Training</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Theoretical Framework: Frame-of-Reference Assessor Training</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Best Practice in the Assessor Training</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Overview of Training Program and Sample Description</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Overview Description of Assessor Training Program</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1.1	Sample Description	25
<b>5</b>	<b>Modules</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Module 1: Using the standards</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Module 2: Understanding the Certification Process</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Module 3: Walking in the Applicant’s Shoes</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Module 4: Classroom Observation (Prepared by AITSL)</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Module 5: Best practice communication</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Assessor Calibration Tasks (ACT Now)</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Types of Questions.</b>	<b>40</b>
6.2.1	ACT Now Results Summary	43
6.2.2	Individual ACT Now Questions	50
<b>7</b>	<b>Qualitative Analysis of ATP Participants’ Online Contributions: Individual Reflection Forums</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Module 1: Understanding the Standards</b>	<b>56</b>
7.2.1	Introduction	56
7.2.2	The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers	56
7.2.3	Language and terminology	57
7.2.4	Illustrations of Practice	58
7.2.5	Implications for Stakeholders	59
7.2.5.1	Assessors	59
7.2.5.2	Applicants and teachers	60
7.2.5.3	Systems and schools	60
7.2.6	Online Learning Environment	60
7.2.7	Conclusion	62
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Module 2: Understanding the Certification Process</b>	<b>63</b>
7.3.1	Introduction	63
7.3.2	Participants’ engagement with research	63
7.3.3	Improvement Discourse	64
7.3.4	Equity Discourse	66
7.3.5	Conclusion	67
<b>7.4</b>	<b>Module 3: Engaging in the Certification Process</b>	<b>68</b>
7.4.1	Introduction	68
7.4.2	Annotations	68

7.4.3	Bias	69
7.4.4	On-balance Judgements	70
7.4.5	Conclusion	71
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Module 4: Classroom Observations</b>	<b>72</b>
7.5.1	Introduction	72
7.5.2	Engaging Online Resources	72
7.5.3	Bias	73
7.5.4	Workshop 2 Activities	73
7.5.5	Transferability	74
7.5.6	Time	75
7.5.7	Conclusion	75
<b>7.6</b>	<b>Module 5: Best Practice Communication</b>	<b>76</b>
7.6.1	Introduction	76
7.6.2	Stage 2 -Professional Conversations	76
7.6.3	Appraisal	77
7.6.4	Workshop 2	78
7.6.5	Conclusion	78
<b>8</b>	<b>Qualitative Analysis of ATP Participants' Online Contribution: Facilitators' Forum</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Facilitators' Introductions</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>8.3</b>	<b>Online Learning Materials</b>	<b>81</b>
8.3.1	Module 1	81
8.3.2	Module 2	81
8.3.3	Module 3	83
8.3.4	Module 4	85
8.3.5	Module 5	86
<b>8.4</b>	<b>Overall Themes</b>	<b>87</b>
8.4.1	Assessors	87
8.4.2	Facilitators	88
8.4.3	Trust Discourse	89
8.4.4	Evaluation	90
<b>9</b>	<b>Recommendations and Final Remarks</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>9.1</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>91</b>
9.1.1	ACT Now Data	91
9.1.2	Discussion Forums	91
9.1.3	Future changes to the Assessor Training Program	92
9.1.4	Rolling out the Assessor Training Program	92
<b>9.2</b>	<b>Final Remarks</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>		

Table 1 Number of Attempts and Overall Average Scores for each Module	44
Table 2 Attempt Figures for Each Module	44
Table 3 Average Times for <i>ACT Now</i> Activity Completion	50

### List of Figures

Figure 1 "Overall Number of Students Achieving Grade Ranges" – Module 1	46
Figure 2 Highest Grades for Enrolled Users - Module 1	46
Figure 3 "Overall Numbers of Students Achieving Grade Ranges" - Module 2	47
Figure 4 Highest Grades for Enrolled Users - Module 2	47
Figure 5 "Overall Number of Students Achieving Grade Ranges" - Module 3	48
Figure 6 Highest Grade for Enrolled Users - Module 3	48
Figure 7 "Overall Number of Students Achieving Grade Ranges" - Module 5	49
Figure 8 Highest Grade for Enrolled User - Module 5	49
Figure 9 Distribution and Average Score for <i>ACT Now</i> Item Bank Questions - Module 1	51
Figure 10 Overall Facility Index and Discriminative Efficiency Values - Module 1	52
Figure 11 Distribution and Average Score for <i>ACT Now</i> Data Bank Questions - Module 2	53
Figure 12 Distribution and Average Score for <i>ACT Now</i> Data Bank Questions - Module 3	53
Figure 13 Distributions and Average Score for <i>ACT Now</i> Data Bank Questions - Module 5	54

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

This Final Report to the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) presents the products and findings of research conducted to provide expert advice, and design and develop an Assessor Training Program for national certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers. The research design and development of the Assessor Training Program, the associated expert advice and the Final Report were underpinned by participatory qualitative methodologies, informed by international research findings and delivered by a proven, highly respected and experienced research team from the SiMERR National Research Centre at the University of New England.

## Aim

The aim of the Assessor Training Program was to:

provide high level advice, design, develop and trial an Assessor Training Program which is based on the national processes outlined in the *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012a) and underpinned by the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011).

## Rationale for the Introduction of Assessor Training: Training versus Experience

Whilst experience is respected and highly valued, controlled empirical studies have demonstrated that assessor training dramatically increases assessor accuracy. Lievens' controlled study (2001), which compared the assessments of untrained and trained assessors, conclusively demonstrated that assessor training had the single, biggest effect on accuracy; it accounted for 94.4% of the variance. Lievens' study underscored "the necessity of thoroughly training people prior to serving as assessors" (2001, p. 262).

## Background

The Assessor Training Research Project built upon previous research projects that the SiMERR National Research Centre had undertaken in collaboration with AITSL. The research Project Team had a unique mix of prior research and considerable experience in working with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). At the developmental level, SiMERR validated the Standards in 2010.

The SiMERR research team also had extensive experience with evaluating the national implementation of the Standards across a range of contexts, including the Certification Pilot conducted by the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) in the ACT. The prior research work undertaken by SiMERR provided a strong analytical framework for the necessary high-level advice needed by AITSL.

## Research methodology

The development of the Assessor Training Program was based on a participatory Action Research Model (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) that enabled the program to be co-constructed. All participants were involved in the co-construction: trainee assessors, the

Certifying Authority Network, the SiMERR research team and AITSL. The participatory co-construction was an iterative process that enabled the Assessor Training Program to be reviewed and refined progressively. First drafts of the online learning materials were presented for constructive feedback from AITSL and the Certifying Authority Network, and then revised as required. Similarly, the initial workshops that were conducted in Sydney were evaluated by the SiMERR research team, AITSL and trainee assessors, and the feedback was incorporated into the subsequent workshops that were conducted in Perth.

Following the collaborative and iterative development, implementation and refinement of the Assessor Training Program, online participant data and monitoring and reporting outputs were analysed. Content analysis (Krippendorff, 2012) was used to identify recurring themes in online participant data. Attention was focussed on the aspects of the Assessor Training Program that participants addressed and how they were evaluated (Martin & White, 2007). The content analysis allows for further refinement of the content and design of the Assessor Training Program. The monitoring and reporting outputs that were generated by the online delivery platform were analysed in order to provide advice about how Certifying Authorities can best interpret and utilise the data when delivering the Assessor Training Program in the future.

## **Assessor Training Program Structure and Content**

The Assessor Training Program is a 50-hour blended-delivery program, involving online learning materials and two face-to-face workshops. The online learning materials comprise five innovative, online modules with assessor calibration tasks.

*Module 1: Understanding the Standards* (10 hours) draws upon the extensive work and documentation already completed by AITSL, including Illustrations of Practice. The differences between the Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher standards are investigated in depth.

*Module 2: Understanding the Certification Process* (5 hours) draws upon *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL 2012) and incorporates online activities that are informed by the Certification Pilot conducted by the ACT TQI, SiMERR and AITSL in 2012.

*Module 3: Engaging in the Certification Process* (10 hours) investigates applicants' and assessors' perspectives. The applicants' perspective is based upon the notion of 'Walking in their Shoes' and is investigated through the collaborative consideration of sample evidence and writing of annotations. The assessors' perspective is investigated through collaborative assessment of examples of practice.

*Module 4: Classroom Observations* (10 hours) presents the latest theory about best practice observation. Assessors use the selected observation tool to analyse AITSL videos of best practice.

*Module 5: Best Practice Communication* (5 hours) covers the latest theory of best practice communication and contains activities that involve the potential certification assessors in judging and modelling best practice communication.



The content of the Assessor Training Program was informed by international research and exemplifies best practice. The program incorporates content that has been proven to be essential, such as bias awareness (Nijveldt, Beijaard, Brekelmans, Wubbels, & Verloop, 2009), bias reduction activities (Szpara & Wylie, 2005) and the use of authentic materials (Nijveldt, 2007; Nijveldt, et al., 2009) that were submitted by certification applicants in the ACT TQI Certification Pilot. The Assessor Training Program also introduces the participants to various certification processes around the world, as well as drawing extensively on Australian materials, including *Australian professional standards for teachers* (AITSL, 2011), *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012a), *Guide to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2013c), *Certification documentary evidence supplement: Highly Accomplished teachers* (AITSL, 2013a), *Certification documentary evidence supplement: Lead teachers* (AITSL, 2013b) and *Illustrations of Practice* (AITSL, 2012b). Thus, the Assessor Training Program enables the participants to gain an in-depth understanding of certification in Australia and to position that understanding within the global context.

## Learning design

The design and delivery of the Assessor Training Program are also informed by international research. The Assessor Training Program design is based on ‘frame-of-reference training’ (Gorman & Rentsch, 2009; Lievens, 2001). Frame-of-reference training has been subjected to over 30 years of rigorous, controlled testing, which has consistently demonstrated that frame-of-reference training outperforms other modes of assessor training in relation to accuracy, inter-assessor reliability and discriminant validity. The frame-of-reference in this instance is the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011).

The blended delivery of the Assessor Training Program aligns with the best practice findings of the comprehensive meta-analysis of online learning studies conducted by the US Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (2010). The US Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development analysis empirically demonstrated the positive effects of blended learning over online-only and face-to-face-only adult learning.

The blended learning approach in the Assessor Training Program incorporates online learning materials and three face-to-face workshop days. Four types of online forums were available to participants in the program. The forums developed communities of learners and allowed for collaborative decision making, which were both supplemented by the face-to-face opportunities availed by the workshops. These aspects align with research-based best practice (Nijveldt, 2007; Nijveldt, et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010).

The online learning material also included online *Assessor Calibration Task (ACT) Now* activities. The *ACT Now* activities were included as the final required task for a module and questions were based on material presented during the module. Feedback was provided to participants to ensure that they were well positioned to proceed to the next module. Engaging with the online content, forums, *ACT Now* activities and the face-to-face workshops combined to provide a powerful learning experience.

The learning design was also attentive and responsive to the multiple, often competing, demands upon the participants' time and to equity considerations concerning access to and proficiency with online learning environments. The modular, asynchronous, online component of the Assessor Training Program provided flexibility to accommodate the different work habits and commitments beyond work of busy professions. ACT Now quizzes were open for a minimum of nine days that included two week-ends in order to provide maximum flexibility for the participants.

Care was also taken to ensure that participants were not discriminated against because of low levels of IT knowledge and experience or on the availability of a strong and reliable Internet connection. The SiMERR research team drew upon the unique experiences of staff at the University of New England (UNE) – Australia's longest continuous provider of distance education and a recognised leader and innovator in Australia of online learning – when developing the learning design.

## **Assessor Training Outcomes**

As a result of undertaking the training program, certification assessors have:

- a. developed a comprehensive understanding of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011), with specific knowledge of the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher Standards;
- b. developed a comprehensive understanding of the *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012a) and, in particular, of the role of assessors;
- c. developed an understanding of how the *Guide to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2013c), *Certification documentary evidence supplement: Highly Accomplished teachers* (AITSL, 2013a), *Certification documentary evidence supplement: Lead teachers* (AITSL, 2013b) and *Illustrations of Practice* (AITSL, 2012b) may support the work of certification applicants, assessors and Certifying Authorities;
- d. become capable of engaging in the certification process and making valid and consistent judgements when assessing applicants' evidence against the Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher Standards;
- e. become capable of undertaking classroom observations of applicants and reporting their findings using the appropriate tools and pro-formas; and
- f. become able to engage in effective communications with teachers, fellow assessors, principals and referees.

## **Assessor Training Program Outputs**

The Assessor Training Program Research Project resulted in the development of:

- 5 online Modules;
- Act Now Item Banks containing at least 30 questions, with feedback, for Modules 1, 2, 3, and 5;
- 2 Workshop presentations with supportive Presenter Notes; and
- 3 Workshop Resource Books.

## **Key Findings and Recommendations**

Given the collaborative and iterative nature of the design, development and implementation of the Assessor Training Program, many recommendations were made and acted upon

progressively. The recommendations provided here, therefore, pertain to the analyses of the (i) online participant data in the Individual Reflection and Facilitators' forums and (ii) monitoring and reporting outputs concerning the ACT Now data. These analyses were undertaken following the completion of the program.

The online participant data generally appraised the program positively. The postings also identified areas of particular interest, such as international approaches to certification. AITSL could consider adding additional recommended sections and/or resources that enable participants to pursue further areas of interest identified in the discussion forums.

It is planned that Module 4 will be revised following the development of the final Classroom Observation Tool and any associated documentation. It is, therefore, recommended that AITSL review the amount of time required to complete the next version of Module 4.

Many of the participants' postings also addressed other issues associated with time, especially:

- (i) the amount of time required for applicants undertaking certification;
- (ii) the amount of time required for assessors to perform certification assessments; and
- (iii) the impact of the time required upon other aspects of applicants' and assessors' work.

It is recommended that AITSL communicate, through the Certifying Authorities, the amount of time associated with certification and the impact that the amount of time could have on other aspects of applicants' and assessors' work. This would enable schools and systems to identify appropriate forms and levels of support.

In the context that the Assessor Training Program will be delivered to a larger and more homogeneous audience from 2014, the following recommendations are offered following analysis of the ACT Now data. Firstly, it is recommended that support material be provided to personnel who have access to the *ACT Now* data to facilitate:

- (i) navigation of the site;
- (ii) meaningful and accurate interpretation summary data; and
- (iii) monitoring of participants' progression to maintain the required performance standard and requirements of the program.

Secondly, it is recommended that further statistical analysis be performed on the *ACT Now* Item Banks to:

- (i) establish question difficulty; and
- (ii) ensure that the essential randomisation of the questions presents participants with ACT Now quizzes of comparable difficulty, thereby avoiding the creation of equity issues.

## References

AITSL. (2011). *Australian professional standards for teachers*. Carlton South, Vic.: Education Services Australia.

- AITSL. (2012a). *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in Australia*. Carlton South, Vic: Education Services Australia.
- AITSL. (2012b). *Illustrations of Practice*. Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership. <<http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/illustrations>> viewed 18 December 2012.
- AITSL. (2013a). *Certification documentary evidence supplement: Highly Accomplished teachers*. Carlton South, Vic.: Education Services Australia.
- AITSL. (2013b). *Certification documentary evidence supplement: Lead teachers*. Carlton South, Vic.: Education Services Australia.
- AITSL. (2013c). *Guide to the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in Australia*. Carlton South: Education Services Australia.
- Gorman, C. A., & Rentsch, J. R. (2009). Evaluating frame-of-reference rater training effectiveness using performance schema accuracy. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 94*(5), 1336-1344.
- Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2005). Participatory action research: Communicative action and the public sphere. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 559-603). Thousand Oaks, CA.: SAGE.
- Krippendorff, K. (2012). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.: SAGE.
- Lievens, F. (2001). Assessor training strategies and their effects on accuracy, interrater reliability, and discriminant validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(2), 255-264.
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2007). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nijveldt, M. (2007). *Validity in teacher assessment: An exploration of judgement processes of assessors*. Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands.
- Nijveldt, M., Beijaard, D., Brekelmans, M., Wubbels, T., & Verloop, N. (2009). Assessors' perceptions of their judgement processes: Successful strategies and threats underlying valid assessment of student teachers. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 35*, 29-36.
- Szpara, M. Y., & Wylie, E. C. (2005). National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Assessor Training: Impact of bias reduction exercises. *Teachers College Record, 107*(4), 803-841.
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development. (2010). *Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.



# 1 Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Introduction

This Final Report to the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) presents the products and findings of research conducted to provide expert advice, and design and develop an Assessor Training Program for national certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers. The research design and development of the Assessor Training Program, the associated expert advice and the Final Report were underpinned by participatory qualitative methodologies, informed by international research findings and delivered by a proven, highly respected and experienced research team from the SiMERR National Research Centre at the University of New England.

The Assessor Training Program Research Project built upon and extended the collaborative Certification Pilot in the Phase 2 Pilot Study, which was undertaken collaboratively by SiMERR, the ACT Teacher Quality Institute (ACT TQI) and AITSL. In this aspect of the Pilot Study Phase 2, members of the SiMERR Research Team had been involved collaboratively with AITSL and ACT TQI in working closely with three cohorts of teachers, namely, those aspiring to Highly Accomplished and Lead, and those wishing to take on the role of Assessors.

This Research Project provided the SiMERR Research Team the opportunity to extend its current research effort in the area of Assessor training by building upon the unique experiences of staff at the University of New England (UNE) – Australia’s longest continuous provider of distance education and a recognised leader and innovator in Australia of online learning.

The SiMERR Research Team drew on:

- its expertise and knowledge in working with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) across all jurisdictions in Australia;
- its experience in working collaboratively over an extended period with AITSL and significant stakeholder groups throughout Australia; and
- the ability of members of the team to draw on a vast experience of online education through courses of study offered by the University of New England.

The SiMERR research team delivered relevant and quality outcomes of importance to the conduct and understanding of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). The Assessor Training Program Research Program and the associated materials forged strong links with (i) the extensive work already undertaken by AITSL, such as the *evidence guides* and *illustrations of practice*, and (ii) the recent pivotal work and research findings by SiMERR teams and other groups in the AITSL pilot projects.

## 1.2 Aim

The aim of the Assessor Training Program was to:

provide high level advice, design, develop and trial an Assessor Training Program which is based on the national processes outlined in the *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (2012) and underpinned by the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011).

So that as a result of undertaking the training program, potential certification assessors will:

- a. develop a comprehensive understanding of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) with specific knowledge of the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher Standards;
- b. develop a comprehensive understanding of the *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012a) understanding of the certification process, and in particular of the role of assessors;
- c. develop an understanding of how the *Guide to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2013c), *Certification documentary evidence supplement: Highly Accomplished teachers* (AITSL, 2013a), *Certification documentary evidence supplement: Lead teachers* (AITSL, 2013b) and *Illustrations of Practice* (AITSL, 2012b) may support the work of certification applicants, assessors and Certifying Authorities.
- d. be capable of engaging in the certification process and making valid and consistent judgements when assessing applicants' evidence against the Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher Standards;
- e. be capable of undertaking classroom observations of applicants and reporting their findings using the appropriate tools and pro-formas; and
- f. be able to engage in effective communications to work with teachers and in schools, and with fellow assessors, principals and referees.

An experienced team of educators and researchers affiliated with the SiMERR National Research Centre worked together to achieve this aim. These academics have strong backgrounds in primary and secondary education, were able to draw on extensive experience working with teachers in Australia, and have all been previously involved in planning and undertaking innovative research programs in education related areas. Also, members of the research team have been successful in completing large and complex research projects both in Australia and overseas on time and within budget.

### **1.3 Context**

The research design was informed, in part, by the notion that there is a substantial basis already available primarily through the extensive work by staff in AITSL and also by the detailed work, collected in reports and data files, by SiMERR teams in the progress of earlier research. This material was constructively and strategically utilised and supported by other writings, which meant that more attention was placed on having the package respond directly to the needs and challenges that potential certification assessors brought to their learning.

Significantly, and a key part of the ACT TQI work, was that the Program was developed in such a way that enabled assessors to experience, at first hand, important aspects of what it is like to be a participant aspiring for higher-career status. This was achieved by expecting, as part of the training and their learning process, potential certification assessors to "walk in the shoes of applicants".

Also, built into the program was ongoing (formative) evaluation by capturing the "voices" of the potential assessors in training and considering their comments both as they proceed through the journey and as they reflect back on the process and their learning at the end. In

accordance with Ethics requirements, the data collected was analysed when the participants have completed the Assessor Training Program.

Given that the program was online, care was taken, especially early in the program, to ensure that potentially excellent assessors were not discriminated against because of low levels of IT knowledge and experience or on the availability of a strong and reliable Internet connection. Again the members of the team have been addressing these issues with university students at UNE for over a decade.

The research Project Team brought to this project a unique mix of prior research and considerable experience in working with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) and evaluating their national implementation across a range of contexts. The prior research work undertaken at UNE provided a strong analytical framework for the necessary high-level advice needed by AITSL. In addition, the project team had first-hand experience as part of the Phase 2 Pilots to be involved in the training of over 30 teachers training to be assessors for the ACT.

This background in working with Standards, as well as close ongoing contact with teachers and school executives, meant that the Assessor Training Program was designed to be able to connect to the working and life demands of teachers and be flexible in ways that best met the needs of all stakeholder groups including these teachers with busy life and work schedules. Again, the expertise within the team in working with thousands of external students (most with full-time work) meant that such issues while always present can be accommodated in a way that attrition rates can be reduced through advanced thoughtful planning and design.

Significantly, the Project Team included leading education designers who are working at the University of New England where all courses of study have an online component. Their work is at the cutting edge of research in the field and was critical to the design and development of the Assessor Training Program.

## **1.4 Overview of Research**

The Project was designed to gather information from educators involved in the Assessor Training from across Australia in such a way that would add value to the Modules and the overall running of the program. This was particularly important because states and territories will be expected to take responsibility for the process in their respective jurisdictions.

Data were collected on participants' views in distinct ways throughout the Project. The project design required participants to contribute regularly to online discussion forums: individual reflection forums, Group of Five Discussion forums, shared discussion forums and facilitator forums. The second was in the participant performance on the Assessor Calibration Task Now activities that was a measure of the nature and extent/depth of participant learning. The third was in different evaluative comments made during the workshops. Data from these sources was de-identified and analysed following the completion of the Assessor Training Program for the participants.

Overall, the research design for the Assessor Training Program was comprehensive in that it combined a number of research techniques to ensure reliable data. As a result, the nature and relevance of the assessor training was explored in a more insightful (and formative) way than might have been the case possible using a traditional summative survey. The findings from the research component of the project have informed the Recommendations.



## 1.5 SiMERR National Research Centre

In July 2004, the SiMERR National Centre received an establishment grant of \$5 million from the Australian Federal Government. Since this time we have conducted over 140 projects around the country and supplemented these initial funds with over \$23 million from other sources. SiMERR has a state and territory hub at universities in each state and territory. We refer to this research network as SiMERR Australia. <http://www.une.edu.au/simerr/pages/index.php>

The SiMERR National Research Centre provides a national platform to undertake research projects that are of significance to education in Australia and that are particularly sensitive to those issues that impact on rural and regional areas. In particular, SiMERR carries out research and professional development activities with a focus on improving the learning outcomes of all students in Australia, especially those studying in rural and regional Australia.

Currently, SiMERR is undertaking International, National and State projects in using quality assessment in schools, developing programs for persistently underachieving middle-school students, ways to integrate ICT into classroom instruction, and has successfully undertaken the largest national survey of rural and regional teachers, parents to help identify reasons and strategies to improve underperformance of students in rural and regional areas. The Centre has been successful in securing a raft of grants from the Australian Research Council and the Federal Government in collaboration with state and territory governments.

## 1.6 Research Team

The research team from the SiMERR National Centre comprises Professor John Pegg, Dr Greg McPhan, A/Prof Joy Hardy and Dr David Paterson. This team was supported by Ms Rachael Adlington and Mr Stephen Grono, who are both employed as Educational Developers at UNE. Overall, the SiMERR Research Team brings to this project a mix of prior research, and experience in working with professional Standards for Teachers and evaluating their implementation, experience with blended learning models of teaching and the development of on-line courses that target a wide range of participant background knowledge.

The prior research, in particular, provides a proven evidential framework for the development of the AITSL Assessor Training Program.



Professor John Pegg

Project Team Leader and

Director of SiMERR National Centre



Dr Greg McPhan  
Project Executive Officer  
Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
SiMERR National Centre



Associate Professor Joy Hardy  
Principal Research Manager – Policy Frameworks  
SiMERR National Centre



Dr David Paterson  
Project Member  
SiMERR National Centre/School of Education



Ms Rachael Adlington  
Educational Developer  
School of Education



Mr Stephen Grono  
Educational Developer  
School of Education

## 1.7 Acknowledgements

The Research team acknowledges the ongoing support of numerous groups and people in the conduct of this research.

To the members of AITSL we acknowledge the close working relationship that developed and the ongoing support that was offered in working with Education Systems. In particular, we thank Anne Loos; Edmund Misson; Martin James; Melanie Boyd, Judy Petch, Lynne Williams, Amy Smith, Clare Kaczkowski and Cherie Kelly.

We acknowledge the work of the software and website development contractor, Theme Solutions and, in particular, Andrew Thompson, Murray Neville and Pep Oliveri.

To members of the SiMERR National Centre at the University of New England we extend a large thank you for your efforts in work behind the scenes, and the background administrative help that is always critical to the success of a large project. In particular, we acknowledge: Gerard Todd; June Billings (Report Preparation); Russel Glover (Finance and Contracts) and Rhiannon Wright (General Administration and Support).

## 1.8 Structure of the Final Report

This Final Report presents the findings of the Assessor Training Program. It consists of a Background and Executive Summary and Eight Sections and associated Appendices. (The Appendices appear in a separate volume).

**Section 1** provides specific information concerning the research design. This includes parts devoted to Background, Methodology, and Research Design. This is followed by a brief description of key elements of the Assessor Training Program.

**Section 2** provides a broad overview of the Assessor Training Program. In addition, a description of the participant sample is described.

**Section 3** provides the environmental scan of assessor training. In particular, the focus is on the international literature pertaining to assessor training. The Section considers issues associated with rationale, frame-of-reference training and best practice examples.

**Section 4** consists of a detailed overview of the five modules that comprise the Assessor Training Program. The five modules cover, respectively, Understanding the Standards, Understanding the Certification Process, Engaging in the Certification Process, Classroom Observations, and Best Practice Communication.

**Section 5** focuses on the Assessor Calibration Tasks (ACT Now). Initially the style of the questions is described. This is followed by an analysis of the results.

**Section 6** presents a qualitative analysis of the Individual Reflection Forum. This is a significant forum because although the content relates to the modules, the participants' reflections are otherwise unprompted/unsolicited.

**Section 7** presents a qualitative analysis of the Facilitators' Forum and, thus, presents a unique insight into the commentary provided by the future deliverers of the Assessor Training Program.

**Section 8** offers Recommendations and Concluding Comments from the Research Team

## 2 Design

### 2.1 Background

The research framework for this investigation was an expansion of work undertaken at developmental and implementation levels linked to the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) with AITSL and the ACT TQI.

The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) present a statement of what constitutes teacher quality, defining the work of teachers and making explicit the elements of high quality teaching for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In providing a framework, the Standards comprise descriptors that have been informed by teachers' understandings of what is required at each of four Career Stages. The Standards represent a continuum of development within the profession by providing a basis for attracting, preparing, developing and supporting teachers.

At the developmental level, the Standards were validated by a SiMERR research team in 2010 drawing on almost 6 000 teachers nationally who responded to two online surveys comprising both open and closed format questions. Focus Group meetings were also held in each State and Territory for stakeholders to provide additional information about issues associated with implementation of the Standards. Two important themes that emerged from the validation study were:

1. the alignment of the Standards' Descriptors with the core business of teaching; and
2. the delineation in terms of professional focus of the four separate Career Stages.

This current research investigation built on this base and informed the most appropriate design of an Assessor Training Program that can offer certifying authorities advice on targeted professional learning needs.

Whilst the design and development of an Assessor Training Program was a 'stand alone' project, there was potential to forge a strong and direct relationship between its deliverables and the ACT TQI Phase 2 Certification-Pilot project. The research team recognised that there were efficiencies to be gained from consolidating this relationship.

The methodology was designed to address fully and within the project budget, the project specifications set out in the Request for Tender documents developed by AITSL.

### 2.2 Methodology

The plan involved the development and implementation of an Assessor Training Program, comprising five modules designed to meet the specific needs of assessors of teachers aspiring to the higher-level career stages. The modules were designed so that Assessors would work through information, materials, and assessment items pertaining to Highly Accomplished and Lead career-stages in each module.

The Project Team was committed to ensuring that the Assessor Training Program encapsulated a high degree of rigour by expecting aspiring assessors to have levels of mastery in all aspects of the program. The implication here is that not all people who aspire to become an assessor would be successful. As a consequence, in the piloting of the program, special care was taken to establish a high performance standard to which both AITSL and the Profession could relate.

The Assessor Training Program has been designed to be flexible, allowing teachers to develop contextualised understandings from the modules and to work at different rates that

are commensurate with their life and work patterns. The Program, within certain time constraints, has encouraged the participants to work at times and places that best suited them. Also, there have been opportunities for the participants to revisit modules or go more deeply into particular modules that were of particular interest.

The SiMERR Project Team worked collaboratively with the project management group established by AITSL. The Assessor Training Program comprises 5 innovative modules that utilise best practice online pedagogy and participatory technological tools, such as personal reflection and group discussion forums. UNE personnel have the knowledge and experience of pedagogical work at the cutting edge of the use of such technologies and have matched the best learning tools to learning outcomes. The modules have drawn on the extensive work already completed by AITSL, including Illustrations of Practice and Evidence Guides, and align with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL 2011), *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012) and *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* (AITSL, 2012). Articulation of the Assessor Training Program to a Master of Education unit and partial credit arrangements will be established for potential certification assessors who wish to further their professional learning.

The methodology for the development of the Assessor Training Programs has been participatory, inclusive and formative. The participatory aspect promotes deep understanding and fosters a strong sense of ownership amongst participants through their collaboration in identifying, refining and particularising significant features of the Assessor Training Program and the various data collection processes. The inclusive aspect enables voices to be heard from key education stakeholder groups, especially those with teachers from diverse contexts across all sectors of schooling in all states and territories. The formative approach enables continuous and ongoing monitoring of progress that results in either confirmation or redefinition of the directions to be pursued and ongoing evaluation of the modules, their presentation, and content, especially in terms of the assessment items/approach and the user friendliness of the online instruments.

## **2.3 Research Design**

### **2.3.1 Phase 1: Pre-Project**

Once commissioned, the SiMERR Project Team provided a draft Project Plan that detailed:

- (i) key deliverables and milestone dates for each key aspect; and
- (ii) high-level descriptors of each of the components of the Assessor Training Program and the differentiated possibilities that can be included in the online program.

### **2.3.2 Phase 2: Project Initiation**

A mixed methods approach was implemented. A range of data sources was used with data gathered through:

- a. an environmental scan, including an analysis and critical review of existing assessor training programs;
- b. ideas drawn from the experience of UNE with online units; and
- c. the evidence and research describing the components of effective assessor training programs.

### 2.3.3 Phase 3: Development

In developing the Assessor Training Program, which involved the development, trialling and incorporation of learnings from the process in to a final package for AITSL to send out to the States and Territories, we were conscious in the design to cater to the needs of teachers across the country with different expertise in ICT skills and with various levels of Internet access. The program drew on:

- (i) the extensive material already developed by AITSL;
- (ii) the UNE experience of online learning;
- (iii) the knowledge produced and understandings gained from the Phase 2 AITSL *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) Pilot Studies and in particular the work carried out with the ACT TQI; and
- (iv) the accumulated knowledge of the Standards by the SiMERR team across several research investigations.

The Assessor Training Program contained five online modules and were designed to:

- a. take a suggested 50 hours to complete;
- b. be based upon the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) and *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012), and be underpinned by the *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* (AITSL, 2012);
- c. contain resources and formative and summative assessment items based on a mastery learning approach;
- d. contain differentiated design elements that accommodated and supported varying levels of ICT awareness, expertise, and access;
- e. have an element that enabled teachers to assess their readiness to begin the role of assessor;
- f. provide the opportunity for potential certification assessors to extend their professional learning through articulation to and partial credit arrangements with a Master of Education unit.

### 2.3.4 Phase 4: Implementation

The SiMERR Project Team ran the program in two phases some months apart. This enabled an Action Research (Kemmis & MacTaggart, 2005) review of the Assessor Training Program in the project plan in the light of feedback received from AITSL staff, the Certifying Authority Network, SiMERR personnel and participants, i.e., potential certification assessors. The second run through the program incorporated the agreed changes.

A broad representation of teachers and personnel from Regulatory Authorities were involved in the thorough testing of the program, including but not limited to:

- a. range of years of experience;
- b. different phases of schooling;
- c. a range of generalist and subject specialist teachers;
- d. across states and territories; and
- g. all sectors of schooling – government, Catholic and independent.

States and Territories selected the participants based on their own needs and implementation strategies. However, they were encouraged to ensure that a representative sample could engage with the program.

## **2.4 Forums**

Three types of discussion forums were available to all participants of the Program, with Facilitators having access to an additional forum specific to their role. The forums were integral to the Program design. The purposes of the forums have been outlined in the following sections.

### **2.4.1 Individual Reflection Forum**

An Individual Reflection Forum was provided for each participant to record thoughts and critical reflections over the course of the training program. Participants were encouraged to post commentary to the Individual Reflection Forum at the end of each component. The postings were to relate to the Component content, but they were otherwise unprompted. Thus, the participants provided commentary on topics that they deemed worthy. The Individual Reflection Forum was not shared with other participants, although Program providers had identified access to the commentary, enabling valuable insights to inform future roll-out of assessor training in all states and territories.

### **2.4.2 *Group of Five* Discussion Forum**

Participants were allocated to cross-jurisdictional *Group of Five* participant discussion groups to discuss focus questions in each component. Contribution to the *Group of Five* participant discussion groups was a requirement of the training program and it was expected that each member of the group would provide a weekly contribution.

In the final component of each module members within the *Group of Five* shared their responses to the focus questions. One person from the *Group of Five*, then, prepared a summary of the discussion about one 'Big Idea' or area of interest related to the module content. This 'Big Idea' could represent a shared understanding of the most interesting issue, a controversial issue or a consideration for further planning, etc.

### **2.4.3 Shared Discussion Forum**

Summary contributions (150-200 words) from each *Group of Five* were posted on the Shared Discussion Forum. This Forum was shared with all participants.

### **2.4.4 Facilitator Discussion Forum**

Participants representing certifying authorities were known as *Facilitator Assessors*. These assessors had a forum for discussing aspects of the course that impact on jurisdictional planning and the training of assessors beyond the Assessor Training Program.

## **2.5 Modules and indicative hours**

Each of the five modules comprised an online component that included *required tasks* and *readings* and a workshop component. Program material remained available throughout the program, enabling participants to review material at any time.



Regardless of the participants' commencement date, it was necessary that the required online components be completed prior to attending the workshops. Certifying authorities supported participants to achieve this where applicable.

**Module 1:** *Understanding the Standards* required 8 hours online engagement prior to Workshop 1 and 2 hours in Workshop 1

**Module 2:** *Understanding the certification process* required 4 hours online engagement prior to Workshop 1 and 2 hours in Workshop 1.

**Module 3:** *Engaging in the certification process* required 8 hours in Workshop 1 and 8 hours online engagement post Workshop 1.

**Module 4:** *Classroom observations* required 2 hours online engagement prior to Workshop 2, 4 hours in Workshop 2, and 2 hours online engagement post Workshop 2.

**Module 5:** *Best practice communications* required 4 hours in Workshop 2 and 4 hours online engagement post Workshop 2.

## 2.6 Required and recommended tasks

Each module had content and activities in 'components'. Each component had a certain number of *Required Tasks* and *Required Readings* provided for completion. These tasks and readings represented areas that were fundamental to the Assessor Training Program and they were sequenced to accommodate participants' other responsibilities. These tasks had to be completed by participants by specified dates.

In addition to the required material, a range of *Recommended Tasks* was included to enable participants to explore in further detail, at their discretion, related literature on aspects of certification and/or international perspectives concerning similar processes.

The structure of a typical component comprised:

- Engagement with introductory module learning material
- Required tasks typically consisting of:
  - Accessing online resources
  - Reading(s)
  - A focus activity or question
  - *Group of Five* contributions
  - Individual reflections
- Recommended task(s) typically consisting of:
  - Reading(s)

The necessary website links and cited works were provided within copyright regulations for participants in each module as required.

## 2.7 Workshops

Two mandatory workshops were scheduled during the training program. The first workshop covered material related to Modules 1, 2 and 3, and the second workshop covered material related to Modules 4 and 5. Participants could attend the workshops in Sydney or Perth. Workshop 1 was conducted on 21-22 March (Sydney) and 2-3 May (Perth), and Workshop 2 was conducted on 6-7 June (Sydney) and 16-17 July (Perth). The workshops conducted in Perth were modified in response to constructive feedback received from the workshops conducted in Sydney.

Attendance at the first two-day workshop was based on satisfactory and timely completion of *Required Tasks*, *Required Readings* and *ACT Now* activities for Modules 1 and 2. Attendance at the second workshop was based on satisfactory and timely completion of *Required Tasks*, *Required Readings* and *ACT Now* activities for Modules 3 and 4.

Whilst the second workshop was held over two consecutive days in 2013, it is anticipated that only 1 day of training will be required for Workshop 2 from 2014 onwards.

## 2.8 Assessor Calibration Task (ACT) Now activities

The final Component of each module contained an online *Assessor Calibration Task (ACT) Now* activity. The *ACT Now* activities were included as the final *Required Task* for a module and questions were based on material presented during the module. Feedback was provided to participants to ensure that they were well positioned to proceed to the next module. Instructions for submission and due dates of *ACT Now* activities were provided within each module. The due dates were non-negotiable.

### 3 Environmental Scan of Assessor Training

A range of assessor training programs and supporting documentation is available across international contexts. Many assessor training programs are standards-based, e.g., the New Zealand Qualifications Authority's Assessor Training Courses (EdBiz, 2012). Such documents can inform the development of the Assessor Training Program relevant to this tender.

This Section provides an environmental scan of the literature regarding Assessor Training.

#### 3.1 Rationale for Introduction of Assessor Training

1. Training v's experience alone:
  - a. Whilst experience is respected and valued highly, controlled empirical studies have demonstrated that assessor training dramatically increases assessor accuracy.
  - b. Lievens' controlled study (2001), which compared the assessments of untrained and trained assessors, conclusively demonstrated that assessor training had the single, biggest effect on accuracy; it accounted for 94.4% of the variance.
  - c. Lievens' study underscored "the necessity of thoroughly training people prior to serving as assessors" (2001, p. 262).
2. Demonstrated individual and whole-school professional learning:
  - a. Leonard & McAdam's study concluded, "Managers and others wishing to develop themselves professionally ... should be aware of the benefits of becoming an assessor to the individual and through organizational learning to the organization as a whole" (2003, p. 20).
  - b. According to the U.S. National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, a survey of NBPTS assessors revealed that:
    - 80 percent said the work was better than any other professional development activity; and
    - 64 percent said they had become more reflective about their own teaching practices.

[http://www.nbpts.org/get\\_involved/become\\_an\\_assessor/become\\_an\\_assessor](http://www.nbpts.org/get_involved/become_an_assessor/become_an_assessor)

#### 3.2 Theoretical Framework: Frame-of-Reference Assessor Training

1. The deliverables outlined in RFT 12/09 entail the development of a *Frame-of-Reference* Assessor Training Program.
2. Formulated by Bernardin & Buckley in 1981, *frame-of-reference* training "focuses on providing raters [assessors] with performance standards for each dimension to be rated" (Gorman & Rentsch, 2009, p. 1336). The performance standards, in this instance, are the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011).
3. *Frame-of-reference* training has been subjected to over 30 years of rigorous, controlled testing, which has consistently demonstrated that *frame-of-reference* training outperforms other modes of assessor training in relation to accuracy, inter-assessor reliability and discriminant validity.

### 3.3 Best Practice in the Assessor Training

The Assessor Training Program exemplifies best practice through the following features.

1. Bias Reduction is explicitly incorporated into the content of Stage 1 of the Assessor Training Program. Numerous controlled assessor training research projects have established and rigorously investigated the importance of bias reduction.
  - a. In Europe, Nijveldt, et al.'s study emphasised that "it is of great importance for assessors to be aware of the nature of their judgement processes, and of strategies and threats underlying a valid judgement process. ... it is important not only to extensively discuss the assessment framework underlying the assessment criteria, but also to attend to personal predispositions which might constitute bias. ... it is important for assessors to be able to recognize their personal biases." (Nijveldt, Beijaard, Brekelmans, Wubbels, & Verloop, 2009, p. 35).
  - b. In the US, Szpara & Wiley (2005) demonstrated the effectiveness of bias reduction exercises in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' (NBPTS) Assessor Training Program. Such exercises are integral to the AITSL Assessor Training Program.
  
2. In-depth examination of on-balance judgement.
  - a. Unlike the numerical rubrics used in some countries, e.g. the US National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification process (Ballou, 2003), the on-balance approach avoids the pitfall of reducing "the definition of teacher effectiveness to a single score obtained on an observation [or other assessment] instrument" (Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009, p. 17). The anti-simplificationist approach respects the complexity and depth of teachers' professional knowledge and practice (Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004). An in-depth examination of on-balance judgement, with activities, is incorporated in the Stage 1 modules.
  
3. Collaborative judgements using authentic teacher cases or parts thereof.
  - a. The Assessor Training Program offers opportunities for face-to-face and online collaborative judgements, using authentic teacher cases, as recommended in the research literature, e.g. Nijveldt, et al. (2009), Nijveldt (2007).
  
4. Blended Delivery: Online + 3 Face-to-Face Workshop Days
  - a. In 2001, Salas & Cannon-Bowers (2001, p. 490) foreshadowed the "promising" prospects of "intelligent tutoring systems, modelling and simulation, multimedia systems, learning agents, Web-based training, distance learning, and virtual environments" to enhance training programs.
  - b. The modular, asynchronous, online component of the Assessor Training Program provides flexibility to accommodate the different work habits and commitments beyond work of busy professions. Therefore, the program design is sensitive to and supportive of the competing demands on the participants' time, which can potentially reduce attrition from the program.

- c. The Assessor Training Program was developed and delivered by the University of New England, Australia's longest continuous provider of distance education, which is renowned for its extensive experience in the design, development and delivery of online and blended pedagogies.
- d. The blended delivery of the Assessor Training Program responds to the research-based recommendations that opportunities for face-to-face, collaborative dialogue and assessments be available for assessors-in-training (Nijveldt, et al., 2009; Nijveldt, 2007; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001).
- e. A comprehensive meta-analysis and review of empirical studies of online learning has demonstrated the positive effects of blended learning over online-only and face-to-face only adult learning (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010).
- f. Other blended delivery assessor training programs include:
  - The Trainer Assessment Program, UK, (The Training Foundation, 2001) and
  - Training Programme for External Quality Assessment Experts, Europe, (Leonardo da Vinci Project, 2005).

#### 5. Knowledge and Skills Calibration

- a. The importance of knowledge and skills calibration of assessors has been emphasised by Salas & Cannon-Bowers (2001). The Assessor Training Program incorporates opportunities for practice and feedback for participants, enabling mastery learning. Each module contains knowledge and skills calibration, enabling participants to gauge and gain feedback on their progress.
- b. Other Assessor Training Programs that contain knowledge and skills calibration activities as an integral component of their design include:
  - The Trainer Assessment Program, UK, (The Training Foundation, 2001);
  - Training Programme for External Quality Assessment Experts, Europe, (Leonardo da Vinci Project, 2005); and
  - The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards Assessor Program  
([http://www.nbpts.org/get\\_involved/become\\_an\\_assessor/become\\_an\\_assessor](http://www.nbpts.org/get_involved/become_an_assessor/become_an_assessor)).
- c. The inclusion of knowledge and skills calibration activities enables recognition of the Assessor Training Program in a unit of study in the UNE Master of Education.

## 4 Overview of Training Program and Sample Description

### 4.1 Overview Description of Assessor Training Program

The Assessor Training Program comprises 5 innovative, online modules with assessment tasks.

#### *Module 1: Understanding the Standards (10 hours)*

*Aim:* The potential certification assessors will develop a comprehensive understanding of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) with specific knowledge of the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher Standards.

The Understanding the Standards Module draws upon the extensive work and documentation already completed by AITSL, including Illustrations of Practice. The differences between the Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher standards are investigated in depth.

#### *Module 2: Understanding the Certification Process (5 hours)*

*Aim:* The potential certification assessors will develop an understanding of the certification process, and in particular of the role of assessors.

The Understanding the Certification Process Module draws upon *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL 2012) and incorporates online activities that are informed by the ACT TQI Assessor Training Day.

#### *Module 3: Engaging in the Certification Process (10 hours)*

*Aim:* The potential certification assessors will be capable of engaging in the certification process and making valid and consistent judgements when assessing an applicant's evidence against the Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher Standards.

The Engaging in the Certification Process Module investigates applicants' and assessors' perspectives. The applicants' perspective is based upon the notion of 'Walking in their Shoes' and is investigated through the collaborative consideration of sample evidence and writing of annotations. The assessors' perspective is investigated through collaborative assessment of examples of practice.

#### *Module 4: Classroom Observations (10 hours)*

*Aim:* The potential certification assessors will be capable of undertaking classroom observations of applicants and reporting their findings using the appropriate tools and pro-formas.

The Classroom Observation Module presents the latest theory about best practice observation. Assessors use the selected observation tool to analyse AITSL videos of best practice.

### Module 5: Best Practice Communication (5 hours)

*Aim:* The potential certification assessors will be able to engage in effective communications to work with teachers and in schools, and with fellow assessors, principals and referees.

The Best Practice Communication Module covers the latest theory of best practice communication and contains activities that involve the potential certification assessors in judging and modelling best practice communication.

#### 4.1.1 Sample Description

States and Territories selected the participants based on their own needs and implementation strategies. However, they were encouraged ensure that a representative sample could engage with the program. The number of participants from each jurisdiction is presented in Table 1.

Jurisdiction	Number of Participants
Australian Capital Territory	9
New South Wales	12
Northern Territory	9
South Australia	14
Tasmania	7
Western Australia	73

Four participants withdrew during the course of the program.

## 5 Modules

The Program consists of five online modules that drew upon:

- (i) the extensive work and documentation already completed by AITSL, particularly the *Illustrations of Practice* and *Evidence Guides*;
- (ii) SiMERR's in-depth, research-based knowledge and understanding of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011), the *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012) and *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* (AITSL, 2011); and
- (iii) the outcomes of the ACT TQI Phase 2 pilot to provide potential certification assessors with a rigorous and sophisticated program providing the knowledge and skills associated with certification.

The SiMERR research team also included leading innovations in differentiating online pedagogy to accommodate varying levels of ICT awareness, knowledge, skills, access and equipment.

The modules addressed:

- A. a comprehensive understanding of:
  - i. the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011), with specific focus on Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher career stages
  - ii. the *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012)
  - iii. the role and responsibilities of the assessor, including during site visits to an applicant's school.
  
- B. the ability to:
  - i. plan a site visit ;
  - ii. undertake direct observations of a teacher's practice on a school site, including pre- and post-observation professional discussions with applicants, using an observation tool selected by AITSL;
  - iii. engage effectively with referees and obtain the appropriate feedback;
  - iv. confer with their co-assessor and come to an agreement on an applicant's outcome;
  - v. provide feedback to applicants;
  - vi. produce the required reports for applicants and certifying authorities; and
  - vii. engage in the certification process and make valid, reliable, fair, transparent and consistent judgements when assessing an applicant's evidence against the Highly Accomplished and Lead Standards.
  
- C. the necessary resources that complement the certification assessor training and guide users in the implementation of the training.



The five Modules are described in detail below.

## 5.1 Module 1: Using the standards

Module 1 comprised three components. These were: Situating professional standards in education; Career stages and descriptors: An examination of terminology; and, Standards Illustrations of Practice. There were twelve required tasks to be completed in addition to the Assessor Calibration Task (ACT).

During the first component participants developed an understanding of the context within which the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (AITSL 2011b) operates. It was important for those working with the Standards to appreciate the developmental process from which they have emerged, the key policy drivers and the key stakeholders. This component also outlined the purpose and uses of the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (AITSL 2011b).

Teacher career stages and statements that specify professional knowledge, practice and engagement associated with career stages existed in several Australian jurisdictions prior to the formulation of the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (AITSL 2011a), formerly known as the [National Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (AITSL 2011b), however the associated terminology varied. The learning materials presented in the first part of the second component introduced participants to the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL 2011a) and focus on the distinctive terminology.

The second part of component two, examining the terminology of the Standards, enabled Assessor Training Program participants to identify and become familiar with the 'common language' presented in the framework. This was essential because assessors assess certification applications against the Standards. Examining the terminology also allows much more, including increased assessor accuracy, increased inter-assessor reliability and appropriate report writing that specifically and explicitly aligns with teachers' career stages, each of which is essential to the integrity of work performed by assessors. The learning materials presented in this component provided a foundation for examination of assessor accuracy, inter-assessor reliability and appropriately targeted report writing in future modules.

In the third component, the material provided an overview of the *Illustrations of Practice* (IoPs) that are contained on the [AITSL website](#) (AITSL 2012). Specifically, the focus was the alignment of IoPs with the designated Standard Descriptor(s). An additional aspect of this engagement with the Standards was a consideration of the distinct differences between career stages, particularly the Highly Accomplished and Lead.

IoPs that currently appear on the website were described as a resource to 'help teachers to situate their practice within the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*' (AITSL 2012). In particular, two features of the Standards IoPs were highlighted by way of introduction.

The following provides an overall brief summary of this first module. Full details of Module 1 occur in Appendix A.

### *Component 1: Situating professional standards in education*

- Introduction

- Historical policy context
- Towards a national approach
- Validation
- Purposes and uses of the Australian Professional Standards for teachers
  - Purposes
  - Uses
- [Required Task 1.1a \(Viewing\)](#)
- [Required Task 1.1b \(Reading\)](#)
- [Required Task 1.1c \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- References

*Component 2: Career stages and descriptors: An examination of terminology*

- Introduction
- The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers' Framework: An overview
- [Required Task 1.2a \(Reading\)](#)
- Examining the terminology of the Standards
- [Required Task 1.2b \(Lexical Analysis\)](#)
- [Required Task 1.2c \(Lexical Analysis\)](#)
- Conclusion
- References

*Component 3: Standards Illustrations of Practice*

- Introduction
- Features of the Illustrations of Practice
- [Required Task 1.3a \(Viewing\)](#)
- Examples of Illustrations of Practice
- [Required Task 1.3b \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- [Required Task 1.3c \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- [Required Task 1.3d \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- [Required Task 1.3e \(Reading\)](#)
- [Required Task 1.3f \(Viewing\)](#)
- Recommended Reading
- References

[ACT Now 1](#)

## 5.2 Module 2: Understanding the Certification Process

Module 2 comprised three components: The Process; Evidencing the Standards: An introduction through the Lead initiative; and Workshop 1 (See Appendix B). There were eight required tasks to be completed in addition to the ACT.

During this Module participants were introduced to the different meanings assigned to the term 'certification' around the world. The term 'certification' commonly denotes a formal process by which members of a profession are awarded an official endorsement of attainment in accordance with specified standards. Various teacher certification processes have been operated by employers, regulatory bodies in partnership with employers, and professional associations in Australia for many years.

It is important to note that 'certification' refers to the *formal process* of esteeming applicant teachers' practice at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages. Given that 'certification' refers to the formal recognition and classification of *teachers' practice*, the terms 'Highly Accomplished teacher' and 'Lead teacher' do not refer to job positions. This makes certification portable within and across sectors, states and territories.

The focus of this Module is the second element of the Certification process, namely *Assessment Stage 1* that follows an applicant's pre-assessment during which time they determine their readiness to apply for certification. This is a period when the core work of assessors begins, as the first major decision is made about the further progress of an applicant's submission of evidence. That decision is encapsulated in the statement:

**Stage 1** – assessment of evidence submitted against the Standards, which includes annotated evidence of teacher practice, a written statement addressing the Standards, observation reports and referee comments. (AITSL, 2012, p7).

A recurring consideration by assessors during the assessment process relates to the connections made by applicants in their annotations of evidence – artefacts of practice, against Standard Descriptors for the relevant Career Stage.

The following provides an overall brief summary of this second module. Full details of Module 2 occur in Appendix A.

### *Component 1: The process*

- What is Certification? National and international perspectives
- Purposes of teacher certification in Australia
- Principles of teacher certification in Australia
- [Required Task 2.1a \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- The process of teacher certification in Australia
- Facilitator Task / Reading
- [Required Task 2.1b \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- Recommended Reading
- Conclusion

- References

*Component 2: Evidencing the Standards: An introduction through the Lead initiative*

- Introduction
- Stage 1: Submission of evidence
- [Required Task 2.2a \(Reading\)](#)
- The Lead initiative
  - Written description of a Lead initiative
- Relating the Lead initiative to the Standards
- [Locating the Initiative within the Standards](#)
- [Required Task 2.2b \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- [Required Task 2.2c \(Viewing and Focus Activity\)](#)
- Lead applicant's leadership
- Impact on colleagues
- Capacity
- [Recommended Task 2.2d \(Reading\)](#)
- [Required Task 2.2e \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- Contextual issues
- [Required Task 2.2f \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- References

*Component 3: Workshop 1*

[ACT Now 2](#)

### 5.3 Module 3: Walking in the Applicant's Shoes

Module 3 comprised three components as illustrated in the Figure below. These were: Walking in the Applicant's Shoes; Developing the mindset of an assessor: Bias, bias reduction, accuracy and reliability in certification assessments; and, Becoming an Assessor. There were ten required tasks to be completed in addition to the ACT.

The components of Module 3 explicitly and formatively addressed aspects of the judgements that assessors are required to make.

The purpose of this Component – and the entire Module, was to identify and elaborate key aspects of becoming an assessor. For Stage 1 of the certification process, these aspects encompass engagement with artefacts of practice and being able to articulate on-balanced judgements about the alignment of a Collection of Evidence with the Standards at the relevant career stage.



One of the ideas subsumed in the activities for this Module was the notion that 'walking in the applicants' shoes' is an informative perspective from which to make on-balanced judgements about artefacts of practice. The value of taking on another's perspective prior to making judgements is an idea that has been attributed to the Cherokee Native Americans, and its value in reducing bias has been documented in recent research literature ([Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson & Galinsky, 2011](#)).

Component 1 comprises three activities that focus on the writing of annotations, requiring the assessor to assume the role of an applicant, something that could be regarded as the first step in becoming an assessor.

The second component highlighted the commitment to raising awareness and reducing the impact of bias, which is being actively promoted and pursued in many professional fields. The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership is committed to reducing bias across the spectrum of processes involving teachers' progression through the four developmental career stages presented in the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011), from the accreditation of initial teacher education courses to the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers.

Nijveldt *et al.*'s (2009) study of assessors working with pre-service teachers concluded that it:

is of great importance for assessors to be aware of the nature of their judgement processes, and of strategies and threats underlying a valid judgement process. Assessor training should thus explicitly aim to increase

awareness of the relevant judgement processes, in addition to focusing on the actual content or soundness of assessors' judgements ... it is important not only to extensively discuss the assessment framework underlying the assessment criteria, but also to attend to personal predispositions which might constitute bias. (p.35)

Building upon this and other research on certification processes (McCaffrey & Rivkin 2007; Pearlman 2008; Szpara & Wylie 2005; Tigelaar, et al. 2005), the Certification Assessor Training Program's online learning materials and workshop activities engaged participants in the identification and examination of various forms of bias. Drawing upon best practice research, the aims were to (i) elevate awareness of bias, and (ii) promote open and informed discussions of bias.

In the previous component of this Module, the concept of 'inter-rater reliability' was introduced as an indicator of comparability between assessments made by two different individuals. In the third Component, reliability was considered more generally along with one other concept, namely 'validity'. Coverage of these two concepts highlighted the quality assurance and credibility aspects of the certification process.

The following provides an overall brief summary of this third module. Full details of Module 3 occur in Appendix A.

#### *Component 1: Walking in the Applicant's Shoes*

- Introduction
- Identifying relevant evidence for given Focus Areas
- [Required Task 3.1a \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- Writing annotations for Focus Areas
- [Required Task 3.1b \(Focus Activity\) – Planning an annotation](#)
- [Required Task 3.1c \(Focus Activity\) – Writing an annotation](#)
- [Required Task 3.1d \(Focus Activity\) – Comparing annotations](#)
- References

#### *Component 2: Developing the mindset of an assessor: Bias, bias reduction, accuracy and reliability in certification assessments*

- Introduction
- Defining bias
- Types of bias: Implicit v explicit bias
- [Recommended Task \(Undertaking an Implicit Association Test\)](#)
- Other categories of bias and triggers
- [Required Task 3.2a \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- Tips for assessors to reduce bias
- Error and inter-assessor reliability
- References

### *Component 3: Becoming an Assessor*

- Section A: Issues related to correspondence between the elements of the artefact-annotation-Descriptor unit
  - Introduction
  - [Recommended Task 3.3a](#)
  - Reliability
  - Reliability and assessors
  - [Recommended Task \(Focus Activity\)](#)
  - Validity
  - Validity and assessors
  - [Recommended Task \(Focus Activity\)](#)
  - Final comment
  - References
- Section B: On-balance judgement
  - Defining on-balance judgement
  - Using heat maps when making on-balance judgements
- Section C: Assessment Stage 1 Report
  - Key features of Stage 1 Reports
  - Factors to consider when writing the Stage 1 Report
    - Audience
    - Style
    - Layout and format
    - Balance feedback to the applicant
    - Suggested structure of the Stage 1 Report
- [Required Task 3.3a \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- References

[ACT Now 3](#)

## 5.4 Module 4: Classroom Observation (Prepared by AITSL)

Module 4 comprised two components. These were: 'Certification and classroom observation'; and, 'The classroom'. There were seven required tasks to be completed in addition to the ACT.

Requirements for assessor training in 2013 for classroom observation included two hours online, eight hours face-to-face training, and rating classroom footage online following the face-to-face training.

Central to the concern in this Module was that a national approach to Certification must maintain consistency of standards and judgements across the nation, while being able to be implemented at scale in the diverse Australian contexts in which teachers work. A mandated element of the process is *the direct observation of the teacher's practice on site by a trained external assessor* who will gather additional evidence to assist in determining whether the teacher meets all the relevant Standards. This follows two observations of a teacher's practice by designated staff within the school. Throughout this module there were hyperlinks to referenced models, frameworks and research.

Conversations about quality teaching must begin with uncovering assumptions about how students learn. Theories of learning drawn from the research base are often distilled into learning principles that endeavour to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Learning theories can provide ways of looking at classroom practice and some rational explanations for what occurs. However, the day-to-day reality of classroom life is influenced by many variables, and no single theory explains how they will all come together under different circumstances. Teachers must always take into account their specific classroom situations and students, and determine when and how various ideas can inform their practice. Integrating theory and practice is a process of connecting what teachers know about their own students with what they know about learning.

The following provides an overall brief summary of this fourth module. Full details of Module 4 occur in Appendix A.

### *Component 1: Certification and classroom observation*

- Classroom practice
- [Required Task 4.1a \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- [Required Task 4.1b \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- The nature of expertise and expert performance
- [Required Task 4.1c \(Reading\)](#)

### *Component 2: The classroom*

- Pedagogical frameworks
- [Required Task 4.2a \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- Observing teachers in the classroom
- [Required Task 4.2b \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- What does the research say about classroom observation?
- [Required Task 4.2c \(Reading\)](#)
- The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and Classroom Observation



- [Required Task 4.2d \(Reading\)](#)
- [References](#)

[ACT Now 4](#)

## 5.5 Module 5: Best practice communication

Module 5 comprised four components: Stage 2 professional conversations; Stage 2 site visit and best practice certification feedback / recommendation writing; Assessor Training Program Review and Workshop 2 (See Appendix C). There were four required tasks to be completed in addition to the ACT.

Using a research metaphor for certification assessment recognises and affirms the complexity and rigour of the analysis that is performed by assessors. In reaching a final recommendation for a certifying authority, assessors need to make and justify a valid, holistic recommendation that draws upon:

- on-balance judgement of a collection of evidence against the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011);
- referee statements;
- observations of practice; and
- professional discussions.

Thus, certification assessment can be likened to mixed, multiple and emergent research methods, which utilise a range of data collection and analysis methods to provide rich understanding of phenomena under investigation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Other aspects of teachers' work may, similarly, require the evaluation and synthesis of different *types* of information to reach a final judgement, e.g., final student grade or ranking based on oral, written and practical tasks.

The use of multiple data collection and analysis methods – such as document analysis (e.g., Stage 1 assessment of a Collection of Evidence), observation (e.g., Stage 2 lesson observation) and interviews (e.g., Stage 1 telephone interviews with referees and Stage 2 on-site professional discussions) – increases the robustness of the findings. Thus, it is unsurprising that mixed, multiple and emergent research methods are widely used.

In 1978, Denzin stated: “I now offer as a final methodological rule the principle that multiple methods should be used in every investigation” (1978, p. 28). In 2010, Denzin stated: “Mixed, multiple and emergent methodologies are everywhere today, in handbooks, readers, texts. Their use is endorsed by major professional societies, as well as by public and private funding agencies and institutes” (2010, p. 419). The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, like the many other institutes to which Denzin refers, has devised processes that embed the principle of multiple methods. The diverse nature of the forms of evidence that are incorporated in the certification process increases the robustness of the final recommendation and credibility of the process.

Stage 2 consists of direct observation of the applicant's practice and discussion with the applicant and with his/her supervisor, and other colleagues as required by an assessor. Stage 2 provides additional evidence to inform a final judgement as to whether an applicant meets the Standards, and allows the applicant to reflect on and demonstrate deep understanding of the evidence presented during Stage 1.

Following successful completion of Stage 1, there will be contact between the applicant and one of the assessors involved in Stage 1 about which areas within the Standards will be the focus of the site visit. The applicant will then take responsibility for structuring the site visit to allow observation of these agreed priority areas.

The second component also introduced the participants to an analytical and explanatory model of evaluative language: Appraisal (Martin & White, 2007). An understanding of the Appraisal framework can assist assessors when writing evaluative feedback (Stage 1) and recommendations (Stage 2). An understanding of Appraisal can also assist assessors to identify and analyse the use of evaluative language in (i) annotations and artefacts that applicants present in collections of evidence, (ii) telephone conversations with referees and (iii) professional conversations.

The concluding component material in the Assessor Training Program reviews key processes, themes and concepts across the modules, enabling linkages and synergies to be highlighted where applicable. The review was structured according to the following headings.

- Language focus
- The Terminology of the Standards
- Evaluative Language: Appraisal
- IOPs and the Lead initiative
- Quality assurance
- Correspondence, validity and reliability
- On-balance judgements
- Classroom observation
- Best practice professional conversations
- The certification process: Overview
- Complete ATP reference list

A reading was provided by way of introduction. The choice was prompted by Forum postings and Workshop conversations around the notion of teacher effectiveness. In particular, questions such as, ‘can a teacher at the Graduate Career Stage demonstrate Lead attributes?’ or ‘Is there a limit on the number of Lead teachers who achieve certification?’ have the potential to generate insightful discussion.

The article, [Why are Some Teachers More Effective Than Others?](#), may provide additional insights into, and stimulate further conversations about, the articulation of distinct differences between Career Stages within the overarching theme of “great teaching”. Much of the article focuses on a two-dimensional framework called the *Competing Values Framework*. An interesting exercise would be to consider whether or not the holistic descriptors of the four Career Stages could be mapped onto a similar grid. As well, a major theme in the ATP program, that of ‘alignment’ of practice with a more holistic idea, is mentioned at the end of the Introduction.

The following provides an overall brief summary of this fifth and final module. Full details of Module 5 occur in Appendix A.

#### *Component 1: Stage 2 professional conversations*

- Conceptualising certification assessments as research
- Best practice professional conversations
- Types of questions to avoid
- Hints for the difficult interview
- [Required Task 5.1a \(Conversation Analysis\)](#)
- Analysing professional conversations
- [Required Task 5.1b \(Focus Questions\)](#)
- References

*Component 2: Stage 2 site visit and best practice certification feedback / recommendation writing*

- Stage 2 Site visit
- [Required Task 5.2a \(Focus Activity\)](#)
- Correspondence and validity in certification feedback / recommendations
- Evaluative language
  - The Appraisal framework
  - The Attitude Domain: Affect
  - The Attitude Domain: Judgement
  - The Attitude Domain: Appreciation
  - Putting it all together
- [Required Task 5.2b \(Focus Questions\)](#)
- References

*Component 3: Assessor Training Program Review*

- Processes, themes and concepts
- Language Focus
  - The terminology of the Standards
  - Evaluative language: Appraisal
- IoPs and the Lead initiative: Evidencing the Standards
- Quality assurance
- Correspondence, validity and reliability
- On-balance judgement
- Classroom observations
- Best practice professional conversations
- The certification process: Overview
- Complete Assessor Training Program Reference List

*Component 4: Workshop 2*

[ACT Now 5](#)

## 6 Assessor Calibration Tasks (ACT Now)

### 6.1 Introduction

The importance of knowledge and skills calibration of assessors has been emphasised by Salas & Cannon-Bowers (2001). The Assessor Training Program incorporates practice and feedback opportunities for participants to demonstrate mastery learning. Each module contains Assessor Calibration Tasks (ACT Now) that enable participants to gauge and gain feedback on the progress of their knowledge and skills. The Assessor Calibration Tasks require a high and rigorous standard; participants must receive a minimum score of 80% in order to progress to the next module. Participants were able to undertake up to three attempts, if necessary, to achieve 80%. Any participants who did not meet the required standard after three attempts were to be withdrawn from the program. The high and rigorous standard is an important aspect of quality assurance and promotes the principle of credibility that underpins the certification process (AITSL, 2012).

The ACT Now tasks are based on best practice pedagogy; they are integral to the learning design. The formulation and presentation of the ACT Now questions incorporated materials developed by AITSL, such as *Illustrations of Practice* and key AITSL diagrams, wherever possible. In addition, all questions provided detailed feedback for the participants, often directing the participants to precise content in key documents, such as *The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011), *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012) and *Guide to the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2013).

Other Assessor Training Programs that contain knowledge and skills calibration activities as an integral component of their design include:

- The Trainer Assessment Program, UK, (The Training Foundation, 2001);
- Training Programme for External Quality Assessment Experts, Europe, (Leonardo da Vinci Project, 2005); and
- The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards Assessor Program ([http://www.nbpts.org/get\\_involved/become\\_an\\_assessor/become\\_an\\_assessor](http://www.nbpts.org/get_involved/become_an_assessor/become_an_assessor))

The inclusion of knowledge and skills calibration activities enables recognition of the Assessor Training Program in a unit of study in the UNE Master of Education and in courses offered by other initial teacher education institutions.

The SiMERR project team developed ACT Now Item Banks, containing at least 30 questions, for Modules 1, 2, 3 and 5, and the AITSL team developed an item bank for Module 4. A wide range of question types was used; examples illustrating the range of question types are given below. Please note that in order to maintain the security of ACT Now Item Banks, the questions below are **not** related to the content of the Assessor Training Program. ACT Now quizzes were open for a minimum of nine days that included two week-ends in order to provide maximum flexibility for the participants when managing busy work schedules and personal responsibilities and commitments.

The differentiated access levels of Assessor Training Program website enabled secure access to ACT Now data for authorised personnel. Those who had authorised access could extract and analyse participant and cohort performance data that included:

- the number of attempts undertaken
- the questions that answered (in)correctly
- the time taken to complete the ACT Now tasks; and
- (un)satisfactory progression.

Such data can be used to refine the online learning material and ACT Now Item Banks as required.

## 6.2 Types of Questions.

### 1. True/False Type Questions

**Question 1**

Not yet answered

Marked out of 1.00

Flag question

[Edit question](#)

1. True/False Question - Ask a question, specify if the correct answer is 'true' or 'false', provide feedback to display depending on which of the two they chose.

Eg. My favourite colour is green

Select one:

True

False

### 2. Multiple Choice

**Question 2**

Not yet answered

Marked out of 1.00

Flag question

[Edit question](#)

2. Multiple Choice - What day comes directly after Friday?

Select one:

a. Wednesday

b. Saturday

c. Monday

### 3. Matching Questions

**Question 3**

Not yet answered

Marked out of 1.00

Flag question

[Edit question](#)

3. Matching Question - Match the numerals below

2

Choose...

Choose...

3

Five

One

5

Four

Two

1

Three

Choose...

### 4. Cloze

#### Question 4

Not yet answered

Marked out of 3.00

Flag question

Edit question

4. Cloze - This type allows for a lot of customisation. You can write text in any format, and replace certain words with dropdowns of choices or blank spaces to have answers written into.

Eg:

The  brown fox  over the lazy .

## 5. Short Answer

#### Question 5

Not yet answered

Marked out of 1.00

Flag question

Edit question

5. Short Answer - This type lets the student write in a short response, if the response matches exactly then they get the points. You can have multiple correct answers to try to cover possible options, but you have to be specific, so best for objective questions with a clear 'correct' answer.

Eg: How do you spell 'aeroplane'?

Answer:

## 6. OU questions

Drag and drop the words from the list below to fill the blank spaces and correctly complete the sentence.

At 25°C all aqueous basic solutions have  ion concentrations less than  mol litre<sup>-1</sup> and pH values  than .

hydrogen   positive   hydroxide   negative

10<sup>7</sup>   7   1   10<sup>-7</sup>

greater   less

Check

# Drag and Drop markers

[https://moodle.org/plugins/view.php?plugin=qtype\\_ddmarker](https://moodle.org/plugins/view.php?plugin=qtype_ddmarker)

Please place the markers in their correct positions on the diagram.



- OU
- SSCC
- CMK
- Railway station

Check

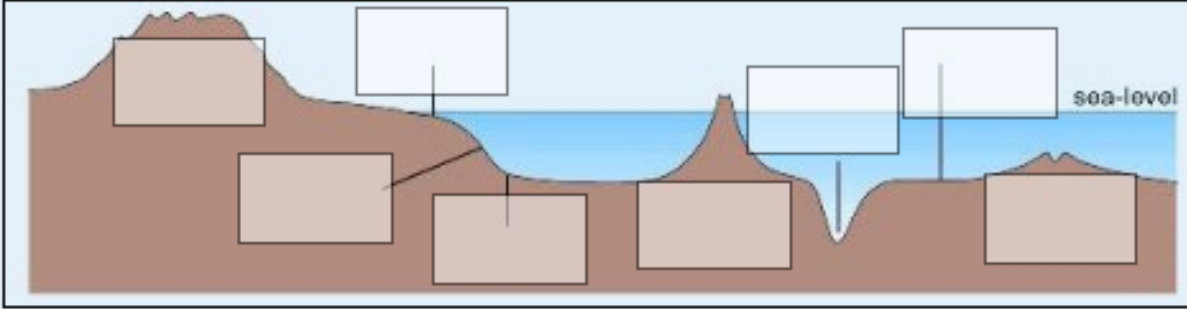


## Drag and Drop onto Image

[https://moodle.org/plugins/view.php?plugin=qtype\\_ddimageortext](https://moodle.org/plugins/view.php?plugin=qtype_ddimageortext)

Identify the features in this cross-section by dragging the labels into the boxes.

Use the mouse to drag the boxed words into the empty boxes. Alternatively, use the tab key to select an empty box, then use the space key to cycle through the options.



island arc    mid-ocean ridge    abyssal plain    continental rise    ocean trench    continental slope

mountain belt    continental shelf

Check

### 6.2.1 ACT Now Results Summary

This section provides some summary information concerning the website documentation of the ACT Now activities. The structure of the activities for Modules 1, 2, 3 and 5 consisted of Multiple Choice, Drag and Drop, Cloze and True/False questions drawn from material presented in the Components of each these Modules and the associated data are discussed here. Participants received feedback on their scores on the basis of which subsequent attempts may have been required if a participant score was less than 8.00 (80%). Because of the focus of Module 4, the associated *ACT Now* activity required participants to view a minimum of five videos as part of their engagement with the Classroom Observation Framework. Participants received feedback on the alignment of their judgements of observed behaviours with the Australian Professional Teaching Standards. The feedback provided to participants for Module 4 is provided in Appendix E.

The Moodle platform that provided the online delivery mode for the Assessor Training Program includes a number of monitoring and reporting options for tracking participant engagement and performance. For the available information to be used confidently, there are a number of aspects of Moodle functionality that may need to be further investigated by AITSL and its education developers in order that personnel within education jurisdictions who might access the information are able to use it successfully. The information presented in this Summary is taken from the Results and Statistics links for the *ACT Now* activities for each Module.

A requirement for satisfactory completion of the *ACT Now* activities was a score of 8.00 (80%) or greater. The number of attempts undertaken by enrolled participants for each Module and the associated average scores are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Number of Attempts and Overall Average Scores for each Module**

Module	Number of Attempts			Overall Average Score
	1	2	3	
Module 1	74	27	4	8.34
Module 2	71	25	6	8.4
Module 3	65	32	9	8.17
Module 5	71	24	8	8.26

These data represent the attempts submitted by enrolled users although some care and caution needs to be exercised when downloading and ‘cleaning’, i.e. preparing for analysis, the relevant files from the Moodle platform. When accessing results for Module *ACT Now* activities, a number for Attempts appears at the top of the page. This figure is consistent with data in the ‘All User’ file and includes participants who have withdrawn from the program and personnel from AITSL and SiMERR who may have attempted the activities. The ‘Enrolled User’ file provides a more meaningful indication of meaningful attempts. Figures for Module 1, for example, are 154 for ‘All Users’ and 140 for ‘Enrolled Users’. This information is provided in Table 2 along with similar figures for the other Modules. Participant withdrawals from Western Australia accounted for much of the difference between the two ‘User’ figures for Modules 1 and 2.

**Table 2 Attempt Figures for Each Module**

Module	Number of Participants			
	<i>ACT Now</i> Data File*	<i>ACT Now</i> Highest Grade	<i>ACT Now</i> Highest Grade	Website Grade Graph
	(all attempts)	(≥8.00)	(<8.00)	(Score > 8.00)
Module 1	140 (154)	103	4	108
Module 2	139 (154)	101	-	117
Module 3	156 (163)	105	1	107
Module 5	143 (146)	101	1	101

\*Note: The first figure represents ‘Enrolled Users’ and the second represents ‘All Users’.

The figure of 140 ‘Enrolled Users’ is consistent with the number of attempts for Module 1 in Table 1, i.e., 74 single attempts, 27 double attempts (n=54), and 4 triple attempts (n=12) giving a total of 140 attempts. Once the second and third attempts are removed from the data files, the actual number of attempts from participants is obtained – referred to as the

'Highest Grade for each user' in Moodle. These data are presented in the third and fourth columns of Table 2. This information indicates that there were 107 enrolled users in the program, four of whom recorded scores of less than 8.00, the required condition for satisfactory completion of a Module.

Two further attempts were available to participants if they did not achieve the requisite score on their first attempt. The time frame set aside for the completion of each set of *ACT Now* activities was to be nine days – two weekends and a working week. This timeframe did vary during the program, e.g., for Module 1 it was 9 days 15 hours and for Module 5 it was 24 days 14 hours. It is of interest to note that the six participants whose 'Highest Grade' was less than seven were different individuals and they also remained in the program until the end of Module 5.

An additional point of interest in the information in Table 1 relates to Module 3, where the number of repeat attempts is the highest for the four Modules reported. Module 3 *ACT Now* activities were undertaken after the first face-to-face Workshop. In the context of material content development across the Modules, Modules 1 and 2 were conceptualised as introductory to support participants' introduction to the range of policy materials and resources that assessors might draw on. Examples of such content included the certification process and particular aspects of evidencing the Standards, such as the Lead initiative. The content of Module 3 required assessors to engage at a deeper conceptual level with material related to a greater range of topics than in previous Modules and which included the preparation of effective annotations, reliability and validity issues, bias, and on-balance judgements. This shift in content emphasis may provide a basis for interpreting the data for Module 3.

The fifth column of Table 2 provides an instance of Moodle functionality resulting in the need to exercise caution when viewing or accessing information. On the Results page of the *ACT Now* activities, a bar graph is provided of the "Overall number of students achieving grade ranges" (Figure 1).

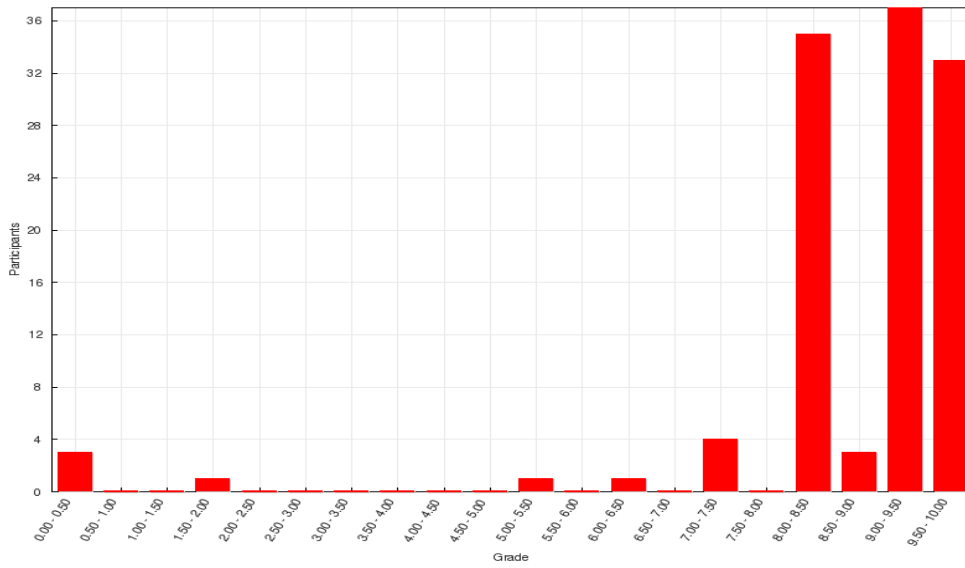


Figure 1 "Overall Number of Students Achieving Grade Ranges" – Module 1

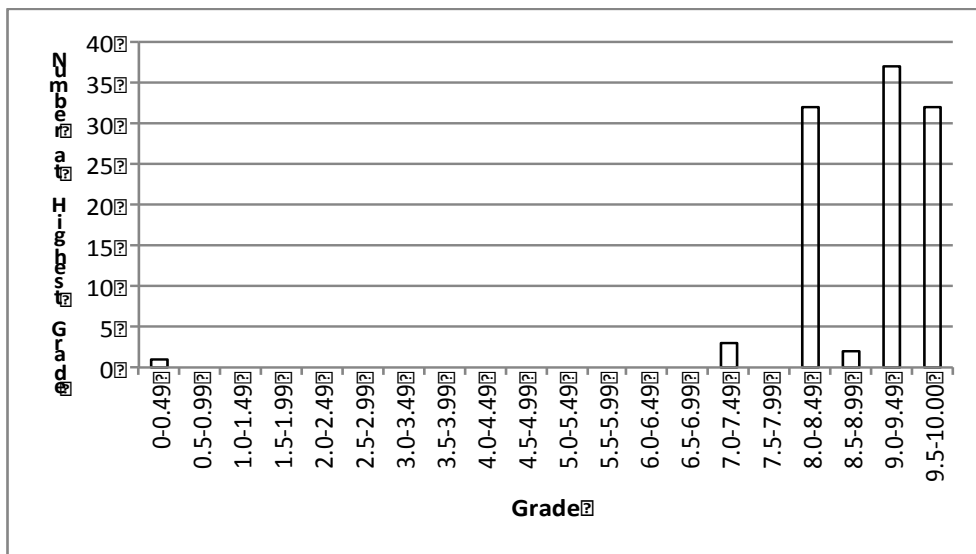


Figure 2 Highest Grades for Enrolled Users - Module 1

From inspection of the bar graph, the total number participants achieving grades  $\geq 8.00$  is 108, and the overall total is 118. Whilst the first figure is a close approximation of reality, it is not accurate and personnel planning to use such information need to be aware of the limitations. The second figure of 118 does not appear to refer to anything meaningful. A bar graph of the 'Highest Grades' for 'Enrolled Users' for Module 1 is provided in Figure 2 as a point of comparison. Figures 3 – 8 provide similar comparisons of the *ACT Now* activities bar graphs and the 'Highest Grades' from the Enrolled User' spread-sheet for Modules 2, 3 and 5.

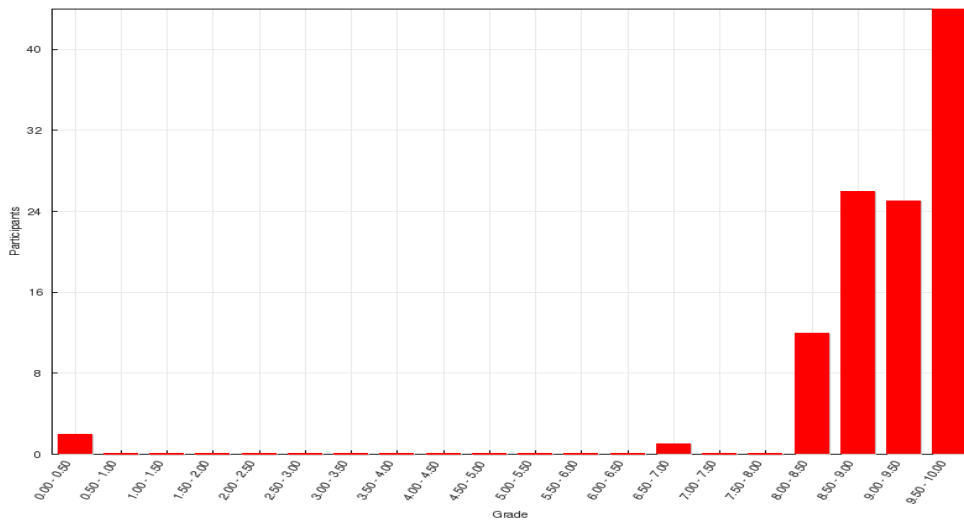


Figure 3 "Overall Numbers of Students Achieving Grade Ranges" - Module 2

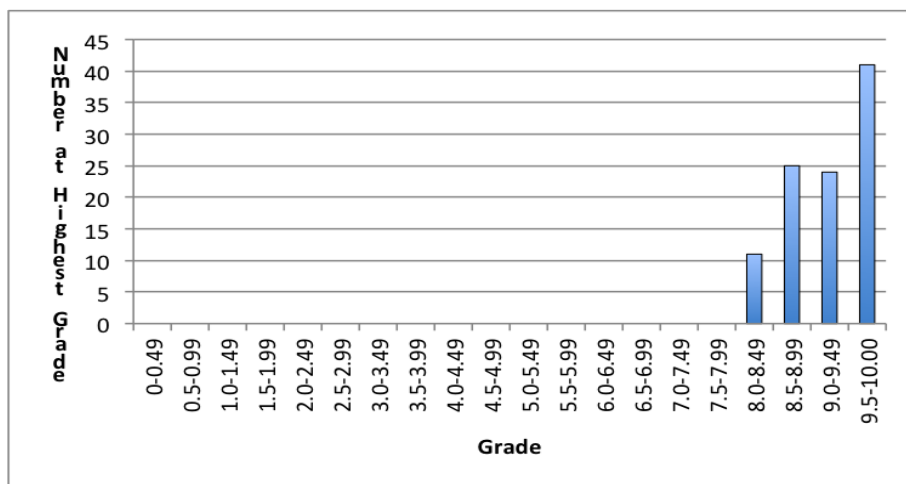


Figure 4 Highest Grades for Enrolled Users - Module 2

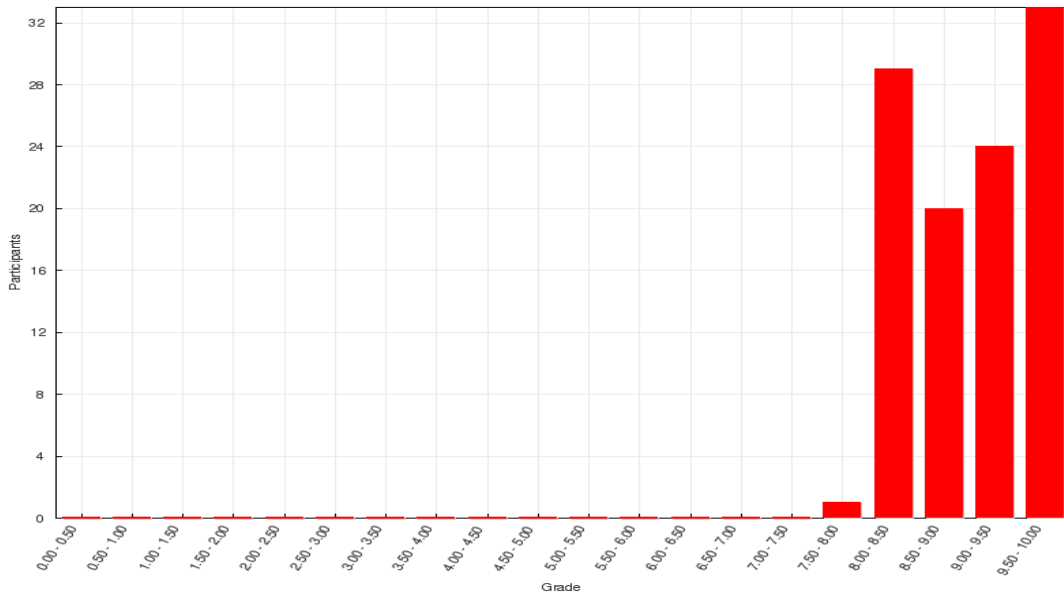


Figure 5 "Overall Number of Students Achieving Grade Ranges" - Module 3

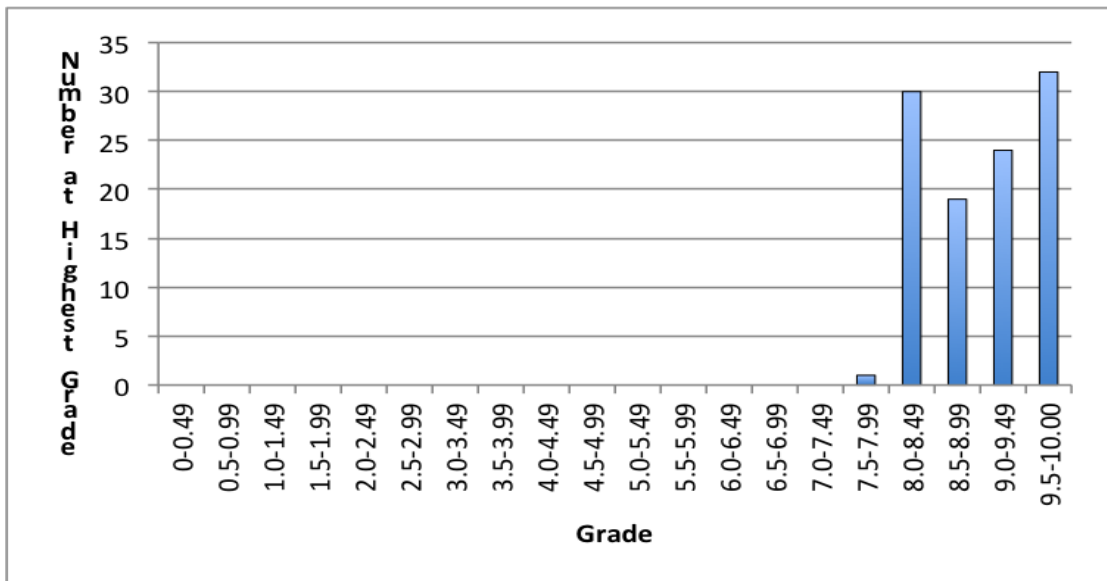


Figure 6 Highest Grade for Enrolled Users - Module 3

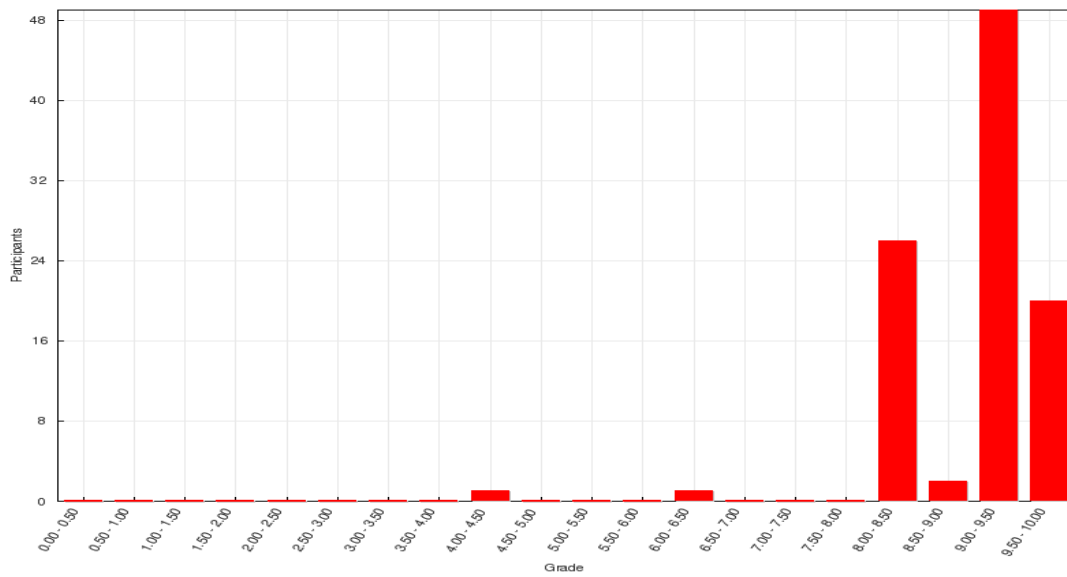


Figure 7 "Overall Number of Students Achieving Grade Ranges" - Module 5

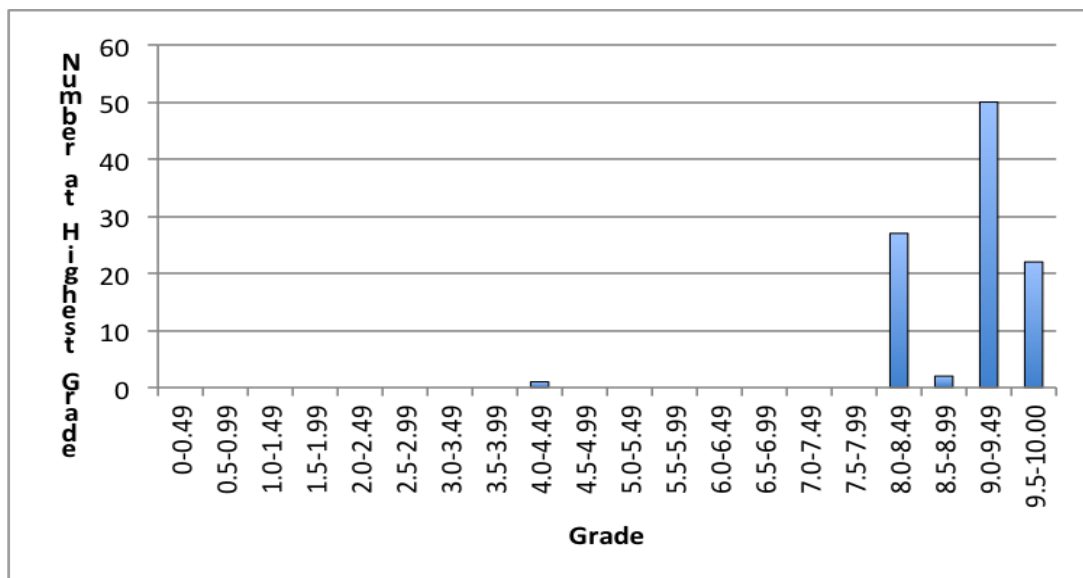


Figure 8 Highest Grade for Enrolled User - Module 5

Related to the number of attempts undertaken are the times taken by participants to complete the set of activities. As previously mentioned, a nine-day period was the ‘ideal’ timeframe assigned for completion of the ACT Now activities. This period corresponded to the last week of a Module during which participants could review any material presented in the Module and complete the activities. A mandatory time limit for the *ACT Now* activities was not specified in the introductory Orientation material for the Assessor Training Program, however, an indicative time of 30-60 minutes was discussed at different forums, e.g., AITSL-SiMERR planning meetings and at the first Workshop in response to participant questions.

The relevant data for each Module indicating the shortest and longest times for participants to complete the *ACT Now* activities are presented in Table 2. These data are based on all participants who completed the activities in less than one hour.

**Table 3 Average Times for *ACT Now* Activity Completion**

Module	Time Taken Range (minutes)		Overall Average (minutes)
	shortest	longest	
Module 1	5.6	56.9	20.9
Module 2	3.7	58.4	20.2
Module 3	4.3	59.5	20.8
Module 5	2.6	58.8	13.9

For participants who took longer than one hour to complete the activities, the range of times extended to 21 days. For each Module the number of such attempts that were not incorporated into the information presented in Table 2 were eighteen, nineteen, fifteen and eight for Modules 1, 2, 3 and 5 representing 13%, 15%, 10% and 6% of all attempts by ‘Enrolled Users’.

### 6.2.2 Individual ACT Now Questions

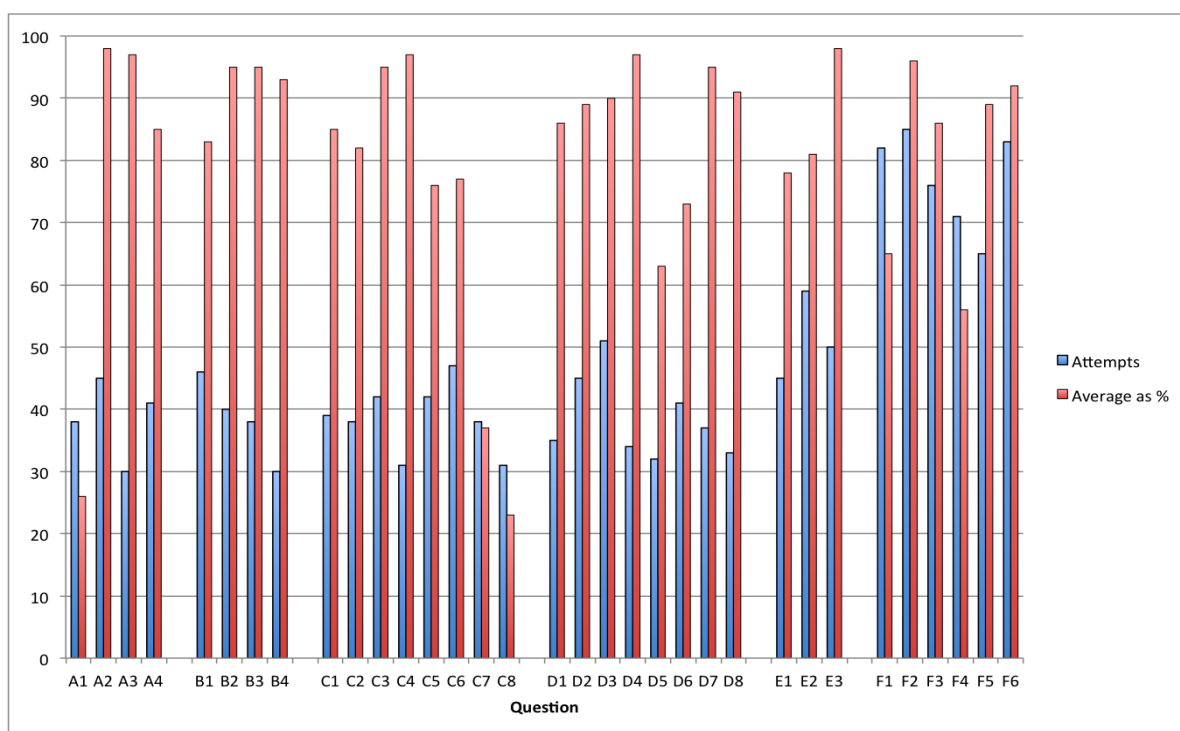
For each *ACT Now* activity, 10 items were randomly selected from groups of questions within Item Banks of questions for Modules 1, 2, 3 and 5. The number of items from each question group was specified to ensure an appropriate mix of question types and Module content. Complete sets of grouped questions for the Modules, with an indication of the number of questions from each group to be included in and *ACT Now* activity, are provided in Appendix D. To provide an overview of the questions attempted by participants, four elements of the Moodle Statistics report are discussed:

1. The number of attempts for each question;
2. The average score for each question expressed as a percentage;
3. The Facility Index; and
4. The Discriminative Efficiency.

Figures 9 and 10 provide a summary of this information for Module 1. Both Figures contain information that appears on the Statistics page for each Module; however, Figure 9 is not



generated by Moodle whereas Figure 10 does appear on the Statistics page for each Module. There are three features of interest to be noted in Figure 9.



**Figure 9 Distribution and Average Score for ACT Now Item Bank Questions - Module 1**

The first feature relates to the distribution of questions selected from each group in the item bank from any particular *ACT Now* activity, indicated by the blue 'Attempts' bar in Figure 9. Given that there was a random selection across activities, no one particular question in each group over-represented. The second feature, indicated by the red 'Average as %' bar, provides the average score of each question as a percentage. The average for most of the questions is high (above 80%). The third feature of the Figure is the identification of questions that appear as problematic, namely A1, C7 and C8, and another two of interest (F1 and F4).

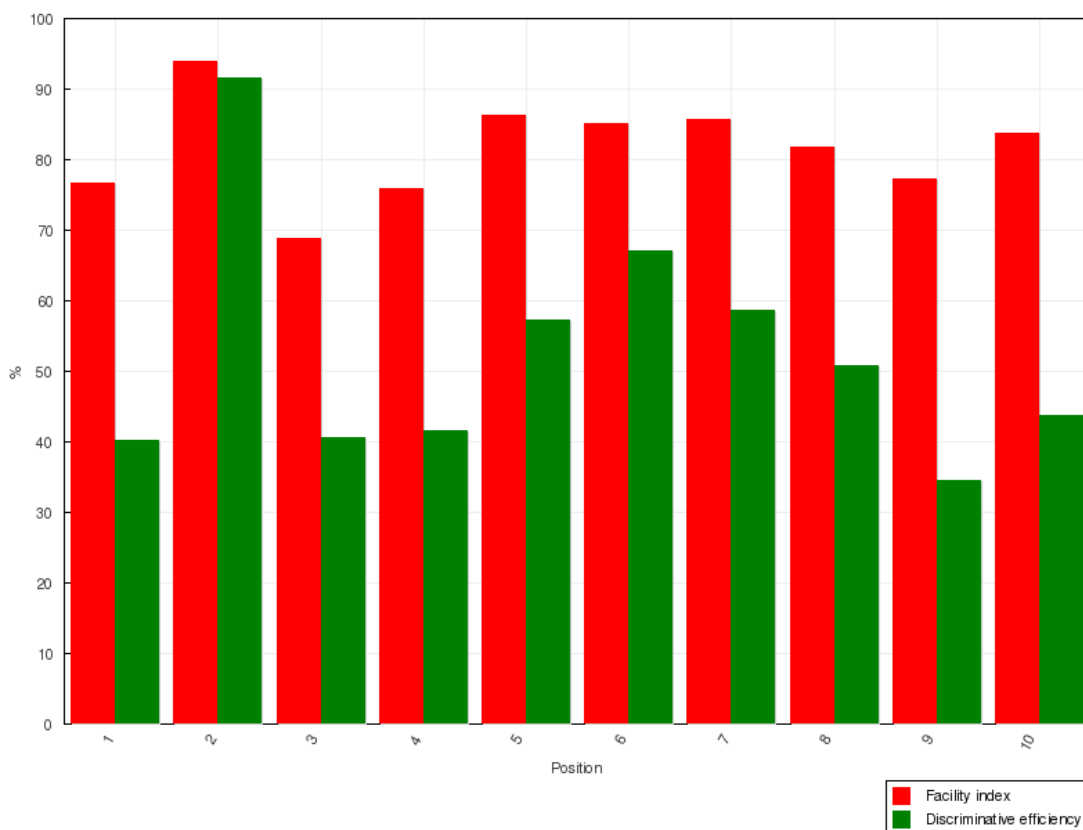
The content of the problematic questions was as follows:

- A1: Lexical patterns being common across Career Stages
- C7: Identifying Lead exemplary practice in the description in an Illustration of Practice
- C8: Identifying the way a teacher leads colleagues in the description of an Illustration of Practice

The remaining two questions (F1 and F4) were items that required participants to locate particular terms within the APST, namely 'differentiated professional knowledge, practice and engagement' and 'working with colleagues'. Related to these high and low average values is the notion that, overall, the *ACT Now* activities provided sufficient questions for participants to achieve the 80% success criterion readily in the context of mastery learning that underpinned *ACT Now* activities, whilst at the same time providing some questions that

were more searching. Figures 11-13 provide summaries of similar information for Modules 2, 3 and 5.

In line with the notion that many of the questions were closely aligned, and readily identifiable, with the content of Modules, Figure 10 provides another indication of question ‘facility’. The Facility Index – red bars, provides an overall representation of the detail for each group of questions in Figure 9, i.e., the first group represents questions A1-A4. The remaining 9 bars correspond to other test questions. Figure 9 indicates that the 10 questions were selected from 6 groups (A-F, see Appendix D). In Figure 10, bars 3 and 4 represent two questions from Group C; bars 5 and 6 represent two questions from Group D; and bars 8-10 represent three questions from Group F. The Index is, relatively, the lowest for items in groups A and C, and these lower values reflect the inclusion of questions identified as problematic in Figure 9.



**Figure 10 Overall Facility Index and Discriminative Efficiency Values - Module 1**

The Discriminative Efficiency (green bar) provides an indication of question appropriateness in terms of how a participant performed on a question. Again, the Figure provides an overview for all questions in each group of items and so needs to be interpreted with some caution. Discriminative Efficiency is usually an indicator of how well a question separates respondents of similar ability, e.g., if respondent A is regarded as more able than respondent B, then a question with high Discriminative efficiency is able consistently to indicate this on any two given questions. Given that there is randomisation of items within a group of questions, it is problematic interpreting the output of the data as represented in Figure 10. A

deeper statistical analysis would be needed around item difficulty to draw any further conclusions.

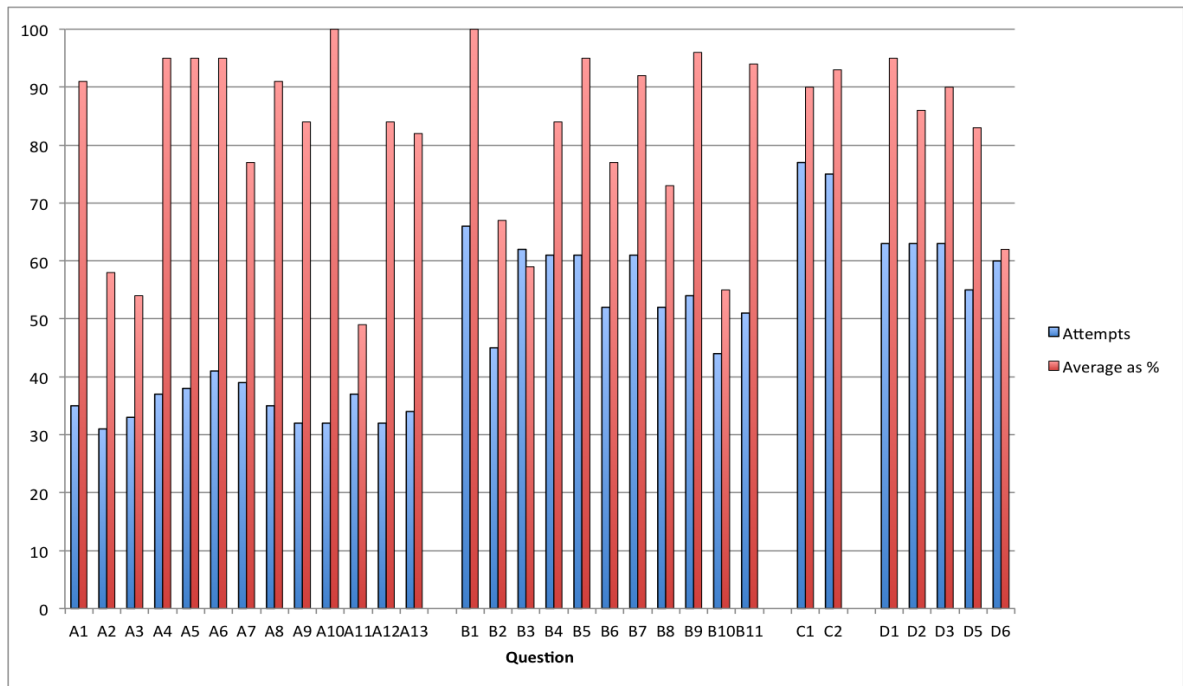


Figure 11 Distribution and Average Score for ACT Now Data Bank Questions - Module 2

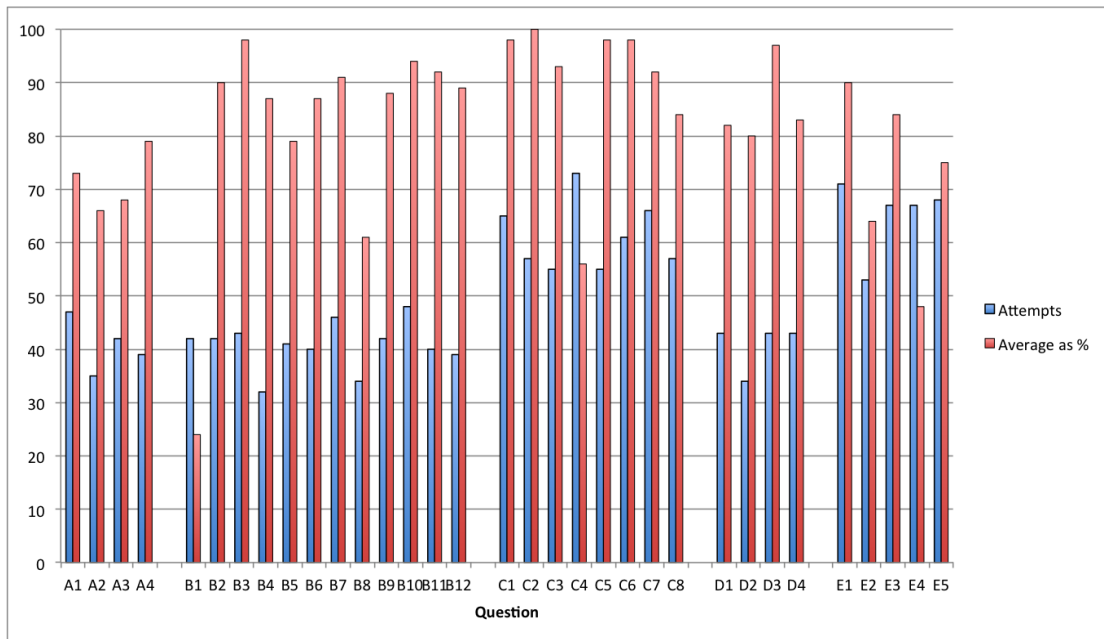
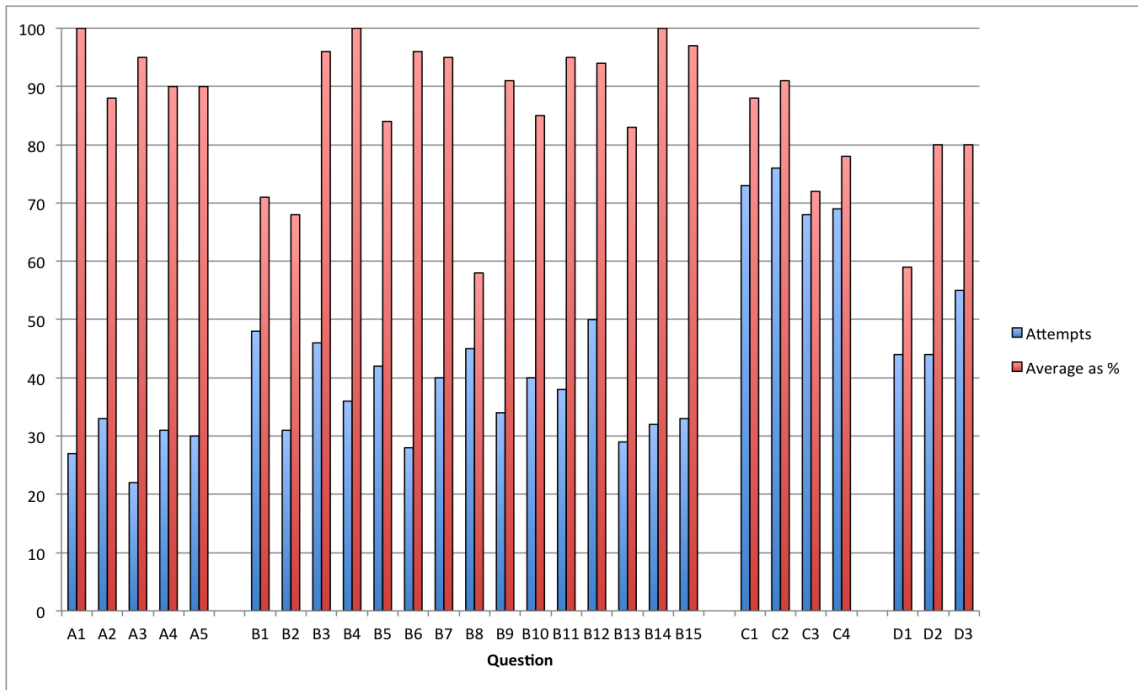


Figure 12 Distribution and Average Score for ACT Now Data Bank Questions - Module 3



**Figure 13 Distributions and Average Score for ACT Now Data Bank Questions - Module 5**

## 7 Qualitative Analysis of ATP Participants' Online Contributions: Individual Reflection Forums

### 7.1 Introduction

The online participant data collected from the Assessor Training Program has exceeded all expectations. It constitutes a large, rich and complex corpus that documents the views of teachers and Certifying Authority personnel as they progressed through the Assessor Training Program. The entire corpus contains approximately 620,000 words. The content is rich, documenting the participants' progressive learning, the 'aha moments', conversations, questions, affirmations, concerns and frustrations. The data cover numerous forums, including the Group of Five Discussion Forums, Individual Reflection Forums and Facilitators' Forums, as well as responses to the numerous Required and Recommended Activities that were interspersed throughout the online learning materials.

In light of the size and complexity of the entire corpus, it is necessary to analyse it in sections. The analysis presented here focuses on the Individual Reflection Forums. The Individual Reflection Forums were selected as the focus for the first analysis of the online participant data for two main reasons. Firstly, Individual Reflections were uploaded at the end of each component; thus, they provide a time sequence that documents the participants' learning, etc., at regular intervals, approximately weekly. Secondly, the Individual Reflection Forums were selected as the focus for the first analysis of the online participant data because, although the content related to the modules, the participants' reflections were otherwise unprompted. Thus, they document what the participants considered important enough to include, thereby providing a unique perspective into the impact of the online learning materials and workshops.

The qualitative analysis employs Content Analysis (Krippendorff, 2012; Messinger, 2012; Smith & Hope, 1992). Smith & Hope describe Content Analysis as:

*the systematic analysis of text or pictographic material. The main aim in content analysis is to identify the presence or absence of patterns or recurring themes in one or more pieces of textual or pictographic material. (Smith & Hope 1992, p. 86)*

Messinger (2012) adds that Content Analysis involves the analysis of 'social artefacts'; thus, it is ideally suited to the analysis of the Individual Reflection Forums.

The entire Individual Reflection Forum corpus comprised approximately 53,000 words and involved all Assessor Training Program participants. The analysis presented here was based on a sample of the entire Individual Reflection Forum corpus, comprising approximately 22,400 words (42% of total words). The analysis identified themes through a systematic reading of a sample of individual reflection entries that were uploaded to the Individual Reflection Forums. The analysis has been supported by extensive use of quotations from the sample corpus. **Please Note:** In order to respect the voice of the participants and to provide authentic data, the quotations have not been edited. They may, therefore, contain typographical errors, etc.

## 7.2 Module 1: Understanding the Standards

### 7.2.1 Introduction

This section provides an analysis of themes identified through a systematic reading of a sample of individual reflection entries that were uploaded to the Individual Reflection Forums in Module 1. The entire set of Individual Reflection Forums in Module 1 comprised a corpus of approximately 16,360 words uploaded by 101 participants. The sample for analysis comprised a corpus of approximately 5,690 words (35% of total words), which represented the uploaded reflections from 35 participants (34% of total participants).

The aim of Module 1 was to provide potential certification assessors with the opportunity to develop a comprehensive understanding of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) with specific knowledge of the Highly Accomplished and Lead Career Stage Standards. The Module drew on the extensive work and documentation already undertaken by AITSL, such as, the *Standards' Illustrations of Practice*. Key differences between the Highly Accomplished and Lead Career Stages were investigated in depth through an analysis of the Standards' terminology as well as through observation of teacher practice as documented in the *Illustrations of Practice*. Module 1 comprised three online Components:

1. Situating the Professional Standards Education
2. Career Stages and Descriptors: An examination of terminology
3. Standards *Illustrations of Practice*

This Section is organised into five sub-sections that correspond to the main areas identified in the analysis of participant commentary, namely:

1. The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011)
2. Language and Terminology
3. Illustrations of Practice
4. Implications for Stakeholders
5. The Online Learning Environment

### 7.2.2 The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Component 1 of the Module required participants to engage with readings and activities designed to provide them with an appreciation of the development, context – both national and international, and purpose of the Standards. Participants' commentary associated with their detailed reading of the Standards and related literature suggest that the time spent was insightful and rewarding, summed up in one comment indicating that the writer was "*enjoying unpacking the Standards and expanding my knowledge and understanding*" (Sample Participant 27).

In addition to the increased personal awareness that was gained about aspects of the Standards, participants identified a number of distinct benefits for the profession in having a nationally consistent framework for teacher quality that "*very much reflects that nature of the work particularly in regards to working with colleagues*" (Sample Participant 19). These benefits were linked to having: (i) a common language; (ii) a clearly defined and supported career path; and (iii) clear expectations.

The shared, common language that the Standards provide was viewed positively by participants, particularly the notion that teachers are now able to articulate their practice clearly, and as expressed by one participant:

*... will enable greater coherence in teacher skills and provide a benchmark for professional discussions relating to performance, including areas for improvement. From my experience, many experienced teachers are not demonstrating many of the standards at the Proficiency level despite claiming that they are. The Standards provide specific descriptors of areas in which they need to improve and demonstrate.* (Sample Participant 6)

The Standards were also recognised as “a great planning tool for those teachers who aspire to build their careers” (Sample Participant 3). Reference was again made to the common language, and also to the differentiation of terminology that provided support for career development between Career Stages. Participants also referred to the expectations generated by differentiated language at each Career Stage. A perceived benefit of the associated discourse identified by one participant was:

*All stakeholders now know exactly what is expected of them at the Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher Stage.* (Sample Participant 2)

### **7.2.3 Language and terminology**

Activities in Component 2 of Module 1 provided participants with opportunities to investigate more deeply the “shared, common language” of the Standards from an assessor perspective by considering the differentiation between each Career Stages:

*Understanding and interpreting terminology was a feature of the module for me. Reading the AITSL document every time it was referred to with a link was fundamental not only to my understanding but my need to interpret the language from an assessor perspective.* (Sample Participant 7).

*The significance of language should not be underestimated when dealing with this subject matter ... This will be of most use when seeking to identify what separates one group from another* (Sample Participant 16).

In particular, the use of lexical patterns introduced in this Module “brought the importance of words and their context to the forefront” (Sample Participant 14) and supported what participants referred to as making the “fine-grained differentiation between career stages [which] I believe is essential to the work of an assessor” (Sample Participant 6) or refining “the accuracy of expectations” (Sample Participant 10). Lexical differences between the Highly Accomplished and Lead Career Stages, for example, meant that the necessary distinctions could be made between ‘supporting’ and ‘leading’ (Sample Participant 10).

Whereas some delineating terminology, such as, ‘inspire’, ‘exemplary’, ‘innovative’ and ‘respected’ (Sample Participant 25) helped to define a particular Career Stage for some participants, others noted that terms frequently or routinely used in some schools had limited use in Descriptors, namely ‘coaching’ and ‘mentoring’ (Sample Participant 7).

An additional perspective was provided by one participant on the role of a “*common language*” when making judgements. The point was made that the “*common language*” brings a national consistency to the scrutiny of teachers’ practice at particular Career Stages; assessors’ assessment judgements may also come under scrutiny in the case of an appeal for example. To that end, it was noted that “*Assessors will need to justify judgements using the ‘common language’*” (Sample Participant 26). This view reinforces the statement made elsewhere that “*all parties have a strong working familiarity with all of the processes and the language used to describe them*” (Sample Participant 16).

#### **7.2.4 Illustrations of Practice**

An additional dimension related to the differentiation of Career Stages was provided in the activities of Component 3 of Module 1. Participants had the opportunity to observe instances of teacher practice through selected *Illustrations of Practice* from the AITSL website. Most of the reflections indicated that participants viewed them as “*authentic representations of descriptors*” (Sample Participant 6) and as “*a guide for making judgements against the standards*” (Sample Participant 20). In relation to the notion of consolidating the skill of aligning teacher practice with Descriptors at the relevant Career Stage, commentary from three participants is pertinent:

*I have a deeper understanding of the standards and descriptors across the 4 career stages, which will develop further looking at illustrations of practice. (Sample Participant 9)*

*Watching the IoPs and looking at descriptors across the career stages it is really clear of how skills develop across the continuum and with practice I believe MOST of the time it will be clear where teachers fit in the career stages. (Sample Participant 19)*

*Watching the examples clarifies what is a high level piece of evidence for the lead or highly accomplished teacher and is an excellent reference point for staff when asking about what constitutes evidence at this level (Sample Participant 33)*

Also evident in participant reflections was the idea that IoPs would be the main form in which evidence is presented for assessment. In line with this point of view, a number of related issues were raised, including:

The quality of videos produced:

*I ... wonder if all teachers are going to have the resources and expertise to create such polished and well edited short films about themselves. (Sample Participant 28)*

The time needed to align IoP with 37 Descriptors:

*Illustrations of practice will be the hardest part of an assessor’s workload ... the alignment of the IoP with the Standard, Focus Area and Descriptor will be time consuming. (Sample Participant 2)*

Deciding whether an IoP addresses a Descriptor partially or completely:



*The focus of the descriptor is going to be a challenging part of this as I found in the ACT Now activities when they selected portions of the descriptors to measure the IoP against rather than the descriptor in total. (Sample Participant 21)*

In addition to the role that IoPs have in supporting assessors to observe the continuum of Descriptors across the Career Stages, a more general application was identified for use in teacher professional learning contexts:

*The illustrations of Practice will prove very helpful in the future. I decided to use these at a professional learning afternoon with staff at different career stages looking at the relevant IoP and engaging with the discussion questions. This proved very effective and promoted strong discussion amongst staff. (Sample Participant 25)*

*The IoPs are a great tool for all teachers to view to give ideas about practice but also about how to reflect on ones own teaching. (Sample Participant 27)*

## **7.2.5 Implications for Stakeholders**

In addition to the reflections about specific materials and activities presented in the program, participants also made reference to areas that might have planning relevance for stakeholders in the certification process. Such areas included the challenges faced by assessors, the time demands faced by teachers to undertake certification, and the opportunities provided by schools for potential applicants. Some of these areas are described below.

### **7.2.5.1 Assessors**

In their reflections, assessors made reference to a number of considerations that related either to their overall role in the certification process, e.g., “ensuring consistency in making judgements is critical” (Sample Participant 14) or to skills that they intended to, or needed to, prioritise, e.g., “During training I intend to focus on the report writing aspect ...” (Sample Participant 14). Additional commentary that exemplified these two issues are provided below:

*Understanding of fine-grained differentiation between the career stages ... I believe is essential to the work of an assessor ... The standards have been carefully constructed in order to differentiate between the career stages. As an assessor, it is crucial to understand these well to enable internal and external consistency with assessment of teachers. (Sample Participant 6)*

*I can certainly see many issues in **ensuring consistency** in assessment of candidates. The issue of **bias** will obviously be a big part in our conversations but also how a standard is actually demonstrated (either in isolation or in a complex example). The difference between HA and lead is becoming quite obvious but **providing feedback** to applicants is going to be challenging. How to make sure that they know the difference can be a fine line. providing feedback on examples will need to be carefully worded. (Sample Participant 30, emphases added)*

Assessors also identified aspects of their own professional practice that they could draw on to support their engagement with the certification process:

*When I am an assessor, my skills as a Cognitive Coach will be very useful when having reflective conversations with the teacher. (Sample Participant 31)*

#### 7.2.5.2 Applicants and teachers

A key planning issue identified by assessors related to the impact on classroom activities as a result of the time required for applicants to engage in the certification process. A number of extracts made reference to this classroom impact issue, which was seen against the backdrop of application of the Standards to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

*There is a demand upon Lead teachers that requires them to be many things to many people, with a role extending beyond their classroom. To be leading so much within their school/district, this would place constraints upon how much classroom teaching they actually do, again impacting upon whether they can meet all Focus Areas. There is a need for teachers to think strategically about their workload. (Sample Participant 3)*

*Time for teachers to work with colleagues is imperative ... In the certification process a challenge for the teacher being assessed may be that they become focussed on themselves as an individual seeking recognition and lose connection with the 'team' and the environment where their practice is being validated. (Sample Participant 7)*

*I became concerned about the extraordinary amount of work teachers will have to put in to prove themselves as lead or highly accomplished teachers and the time this may take away from their teaching duties especially with filming and editing. (Sample Participant 21)*

#### 7.2.5.3 Systems and schools

A number of participants posted reflections that considered the use of the Standards/certification process in schools to support the career development of all teachers. The substance of the comments indicated that this support has motivational considerations as well as a resource dimension, as in the case of access to ICT where “*some school have it and some school don't*” (Sample Participant 29). Two extracts that are indicative of the provision of support are provided below.

*How can schools use this framework for experienced teachers who are proficient but not interested in taking their career future [further] and or resistant to active engagement in these types of initiatives. (Sample Participant 3)*

*Are all schools in a position to provide opportunities to all staff to become lead teachers thus reaching the pinnacle of their profession? Without opportunity to lead one cannot achieve this status. (Sample Participant 21)*

### 7.2.6 Online Learning Environment

In their reflections for Module 1, participants referred to a number of features of the online learning environment. These included:

Time management:

*Note to self – Need to pace myself more with the next module (just like we tell studnets all the time). (Sample Participant 15)*

*I have found that my knowledge of much of the content of this first module is high. I have struggled to find the dedicated time to complete the tasks amidst the day to day demands of my work. (Sample Participant 23)*

Structure of the program:

*I am finding the shared discussion forum good and fascinating all at the same time ... the research that people have added has been interesting and great to see an Australian context. (Sample Participant 14)*

*The fora are starting to be very stimulating and valuable. There is more think time online than in a real time conversation and the less casual and more deliberative opportunities has advantages. (Sample Participant 22)*

*Found the online learning system quite easy and interactive. Good balance of reading, viewing and response. Repetitive nature of some articles at teimes was boring but also provided consolidation and ensured the message was delivered in a variety of ways. (Sample Participant 36)*

Growth:

*The module itself and the tasks have required me to clarify my understanding, challenge some assumptions and develop my joined up thinking. Very valuable. (Sample Participant 22)*

*I believe the activities have given me a good understanding of the standards and their planned progression through the four career stages from Graduate to lead teacher. (Sample Participant 24)*

*During the ACT Now activity it was the questions that required the interpretation of 'how does this show ...?' where I need to practice refining my skills in selecting key information that is relevant to be able to evaluate a person's performance against the standard. (Sample Participant 20)*

Access to resources and links:

*I found reading the Melbourne Declaration in detail very interesting. I agree with the target areas of this document and particularly was interested in the need to improve the outcomes for students from Indigenous and low-socioeconomic backgrounds. (Sample Participant 28)*

*The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project uses a rubric for assessing teachers. This form of assessment allows teachers to really demonstrate what they are doing in the classroom. (Sample Participant 31)*

## 7.2.7 Conclusion

The Individual Reflection entries indicated that the sample participants engaged with the online learning materials and workshop activities substantively. The reflections demonstrated the participants' knowledge of the key themes and concepts presented within the Module. The participants demonstrated in-depth engagement with the resources and associated activities. Specifically, the participants made reference to a progression of learning across the three Components:

*Component 1 - Provided a clear overview of the development and purpose of professional standards. This information provided a really sound base developing my understanding of the background and context of the Standards. (Sample Participant 31)*

*Component 2 - This component definitely goes deeper into the standards to start unpacking their composition and meaning. This has been an extremely beneficial component for me and something I will most definitely want to look into further. (Sample Participant 31)*

*Component 3 - Matching the standards to the IoP was a useful exercise (Sample Participant 31)*

*Module three has been an excellent slow release of information so that I have been able to see through examples, how an Illustration of Practice needs to be structured. watching the examples clarifies what is a high level piece of evidence for the lead or highly accomplished teacher and is an excellent reference point. (Sample Participant 32)*

In summary, the sample participants demonstrated critical engagement with the online learning materials and workshop activities.

The sample participants also evaluated the module and aspects that it contained. Some evaluations – although very few, were negative, e.g.:

*I found this module very dense in terms of the historical development of the Standards. Also, maybe it's just me, but it took me quite some time to complete the readings. (Sample Participant 4)*

The negative evaluations, however, were outnumbered by positive evaluations, e.g.:

*The quality of the online materials is high - very thorough and detailed information. (Sample Participant 11)*

*I have enjoyed this module as a starting spot for training as an Assessor. (Sample Participant 12)*

*I am enjoying unpacking the standards and expanding my knowledge and understanding. (Sample Participant 26)*

*It's been extremely useful to have detailed background on standards, their development and their place in education across Australia. (Sample Participant 32)*

*This was a very interesting module to be involved in. (Sample Participant 18)*

## **7.3 Module 2: Understanding the Certification Process**

### **7.3.1 Introduction**

This section provides an analysis of themes identified through a systematic reading of a sample of individual reflection entries that were uploaded to the Individual Reflection Forums in Module 2. The entire set of Individual Reflection Forums in Module 2 constituted a corpus of approximately 13,500 words and involved 104 participants, 84 of whom uploaded reflections. The sample comprised a corpus of approximately 4,600 words (34% of entire corpus) and involved 35 participants, 28 of whom uploaded reflections (33% of total participants who had uploaded reflections).

Module 2: Understanding the Certification Process aimed to develop the potential certification assessors' understanding of the certification process and, in particular, the role of assessors. The module drew extensively upon *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* (AITSL, 2012) and incorporated online activities that were informed by the ACT Teacher Quality Institute Assessor Training Pilot. The Module comprised three components, two online components and the first face-to-face workshop:

- Component 1: The Process (online);
- Component 2: Evidencing the Standards: An Introduction through the Lead Initiative (online); and
- Component 3: Evidencing the Standards: Stage 1 Certification (workshop).

The following discussion has synthesised themes in the Module 2 sample corpus into three sections:

- Participants' engagement with research;
- Improvement discourse; and
- Equity discourse.

### **7.3.2 Participants' engagement with research**

Component 1: The Process positioned the development, nature and implementation of the certification process in Australia within the context of international research. The online materials drew extensively upon the large body of research concerning certification in the USA, which has been in operation since 1987. Foregrounding the international research had high impact and the participants' engagement with research on teacher certification that was cited, outlined and/or provided as readings in Module 2 was a notable feature of the associated Individual Reflection Forums. The engagement was constructive and often sustained.

Participants engaged with the research in various ways. Some participants aligned their beliefs and/or practice with the research. In relation to the former, one participant commented:

*I agree with Ingvarsoon and Rowe re Conceptualising & Evaluating teacher quality... where they state that ..."appraisal of quality teaching is strongly interpretative and requires high levels of discerning on part of the evaluators". (Sample Participant 21, ellipses in original)*

In relation to the latter, one participant reflected:

*As a Level 3CT I believe engaging with the process has given me similar outcomes to the USA research findings and I believe I have become a more effective teacher. I feel more informed, validated and a more reflective teacher. (Sample Participant 22)*

Participants also positioned certification in Australia in relation to past and anticipated future research. In relation to the former, Sample Participant 28 explicitly acknowledged the importance of international research underpinning the development and implementation of teacher certification in Australia, whereas Sample Participant 3 clearly positioned and distinguished certification in Australia *vis-à-vis* the international research context. In relation to the latter, Sample Participant 5 commented, *"it will be interesting to see how the AITSL certification process will contribute to this ongoing research"*.

Some participants in the sample also drew upon the research literature substantively to provide structural elements in arguments they were presenting in their reflections, whereas others reiterated key findings from the research. The following statement exemplified the former.

*There is a growing market for Certified teachers because research has proven quality of teaching evident in classroom and resulting in significant student outcomes. (Sample Participant 21)*

As an overall feature, the sample participants consistently appraised their engagement with the research positively, frequently evaluating it as 'interesting':

*It was **interesting** to follow the debate on how to define and measure quality teaching. (Sample Participant 5, emphasis added)*

*It was also **interesting** to see how the research highlights the standards-based approach to quality education as transformative and to follow the debate on effective tools to measure quality teaching. (Sample Participant 6, emphasis added)*

*The evidence of the benefits of certification is an **interesting** area of research. ... The results impressed me. (Sample Participant 15, emphasis added)*

### 7.3.3 Improvement Discourse

A sustained improvement discourse was evident within the sample corpus of Individual Reflections. The improvement discourse was articulated variously to: the research base(s) evidencing improvement; the recipients / targets of improvement, e.g., student, teachers, and/or systems; and the source of improvement, e.g., the Standards and/or Certification.

In addition to Sample Participant 6 (cited in the previous section), who made reference to transformation and quality teaching/education evidenced in the research, Sample Participant 3 commented:

*Internationally there is unequivocal evidence that better appraisal, coaching and feedback leading to targeted development can improve teacher performance.*

In relation to the beneficiaries/targets of the improvement discourse, 60% of the reflections referred to improvements for teachers, 10% referred to improvements for students, another 10% referred to improvements in teaching and learning generally and the remaining 20% did not specify the beneficiary or target of improvement. The source of the improvement was similarly varied; when specified, the source was attributed to the Standards or Certification. It is not possible within this brief section to illustrate examples that represent every combination of factors presented within the improvement discourse across the sample corpus; however, several examples are presented below.

The most common combination configured the improvement discourse in terms of the Standards promoting improvement for teachers, e.g.:

*As a continuum the standards give teachers a clear pathway for professional growth and development.* (Sample Participant 3)

*Many of the teachers I work with express a desire to improve their knowledge and qualifications but are given limited opportunities to do so. I hope that these standards will alert all Principals to the benefits of allowing systematic, targeted and coordinated professional learning for their staff ... Furthermore, these Standards should encourage greater sharing and collegiality on campus, which to my mind can only improve both the work environment and the quality of education delivered to the students.* (Sample Participant 31)

Wider specification of beneficiaries, but lack of attribution of the source was exemplified by Sample Participant 3:

*The value of building capacity of the profession is that it benefits the specific students, schools and system, but the ultimate beneficiaries are the future members of society.*

Sample Participant 31 attributed improvement in teaching and learning generally to the role of the Standards in the certification process:

*The certification process has 3 main purposes - the most important one for me is the ability to use the standards to direct improvement in teaching and learning. . The standards has several improvement agenda embedded within the descriptors (see Groups of 5 Forum), and I believe this is a more effective way to drive improvement within education than the typical top down directive approach.*

Finally, Sample Participant 12 implicitly raised the role of assessors in the improvement discourse:

*I am feeling alittle daunted by the responsibility but also excited about the opportunity to assist teachers bring out their best.*

### **7.3.4 Equity Discourse**

A multifaceted equity discourse had a high profile across the sample corpus. Participants explicitly identified (i) the role of assessors and (ii) quality assurance mechanisms embedded in the certification process in promoting equity in the certification process. In relation to the former, the assessment of Lead Initiatives was identified as a potential source of equity issues and the participants repeatedly identified assessors' consideration of context as a way of promoting equity. This view was exemplified in the following extract.

*The work we have done on the **lead initiative** has been really useful in providing practice at looking at the specific bits of each descriptor. ... **Context?** so important. Cant be underestimated, and adds a real **equity** issue to the process. (Sample Participant 10)*

Context was also identified more generally as an important aspect of promoting equity, as demonstrated by the following comments.

*Glad to see context issues addressed. I was concerned that some people might be disadvantaged by there context. Good that you can refer to knowledge, and not necessarily direct experience in areas such as aboriginal or disabled students. (Sample Participant 5)*

*Contextual isses could be problematic and consistency is so important. (Sample Participant 23)*

The participants also highlighted the role of quality assurance mechanisms embedded in the certification process to promote equity. Specifically, the participants identified the role of nationally consistent assessor training, the consequent common understanding of assessors, and moderation processes as key elements that promote equity, as illustrated by the statements below.

*Supporting online and face to face forums by the certification authorities in the different jurisdictions will ensure that assessors are consistently trained and be able to moderate evidence as part of a group when needed, supporting a consistent approach. These moderation mechanisms will encourage teachers in the field about the validity and fairness of the process. (Sample Participant 3)*

*The training of assessors in the Assessor Training Program is integral to maintaining the highest level of quality assurance. The Program provides a platform for assessors to further develop their knowledge and to develop shared understandings of the APST and Certification process. The delivery of the Program through one organisation, AITSL, ensures consistency in delivery to assessors in the materials provided, tasks required and essential readings. The online platform supports the development of shared understandings across diverse educational settings and within various jurisdictions. The face-to-face workshops will provide further opportunities to develop shared understandings. Working with other assessors is a key component of the certification process which occurs at Stage 1 and Stage 2. Working with another*



*assessor will assist in maintaining consistency in judgements and within different contexts. (Sample Participant 24)*

*The moderation mechanisms for the certification process are an important element to ensure consistency of judgments throughout jurisdictions. ... It is important to note the standards are context free as they apply to teaching practice thus not advantaging or disadvantaging sites. (Sample Participant 3)*

### **7.3.5 Conclusion**

The themes identified in the three syntheses that have been presented in this section indicate that the participants have substantively engaged key concepts from the online components and that the participants are linking the key concepts in constructive and sophisticated ways. The research paradigm that was used to frame the certification process has had high impact and participants have drawn upon the research to elaborate and defend the certification process. Both of these outcomes are significant; they indicate that the participants have gained an in-depth, evidence-based knowledge of the certification process and that they can be critical ambassadors for certification.

The participants also articulated links between the research findings and the improvement discourse that underpins the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) and the certification process. The participants also demonstrated in-depth knowledge of the Lead initiative and quality assurance mechanisms embedded within the certification process. This knowledge was applied in the presentation of a sustained equity discourse across the sample corpus.

The participants also evaluated the online components positively. Sample Participant 28 evaluated the entire module positively: *“This module was very interesting to undertake”*. Whereas, other participants, such as Sample Participant 22, evaluated individual aspects of the components, *“The work we have done on the lead initiative has been really useful”*. In addition to evaluating the online learning materials positively, the participants presented positive evaluations of the benefits they derived. For example, Sample Participant 28 reflected:

*My understanding of the Certification Process, in particular the key components of each stage is clearer. I also have a clearer understanding of the certification assessment and the roles and responsibilities of an assessor in the certification process.*

Only one participant commented on the workshop component of the module. This may have been due to the timing of the workshop; many participants may have completed the Individual Reflection prior to the workshop. Nevertheless, the Participant who reflected on the workshop appraised it positively, commenting:

*The workshop in Sydney was very beneficial for me. I enjoyed meeting my colleagues, sharing discussions face to face and meeting the AITSL and SiMMER staff. The sessions on terminology and lexical patterns, writing annotations and examining an application were most informative. (Sample Participant 28)*

## 7.4 Module 3: Engaging in the Certification Process

### 7.4.1 Introduction

This section provides an analysis of themes identified through a systematic reading of a sample of individual reflection entries that were uploaded to the Individual Reflection Forums in Module 3. The entire set of Individual Reflection Forums in Module 3 comprised a corpus of approximately 11,450 words from 71 participants who uploaded reflections. The sample for analysis comprised a corpus of approximately 8,170 words (71% of total words) that represented the uploaded reflections from 34 participants (48% of participants who posted reflections).

The aim of Module 3 was to provide potential certification assessors with the opportunity to engage in the certification process and gain experience in making valid and consistent judgements when assessing an applicant's evidence against the Highly Accomplished and Lead Career Stage Descriptors. Both applicant and assessor perspectives were investigated in this Module. The applicant's perspective was based on the notion of 'Walking in their Shoes' and was developed through the selection of sample evidence and the preparation and analysis of annotations. The assessor perspective was developed through a detailed, collaborative assessment of a Collection of Evidence. Module 3 comprised three Components:

1. Walking in the Applicant's Shoes
2. Developing the Mindset of an Assessor
3. Becoming an Assessor

This Section is organised into three sub-sections that correspond to the main areas within each Component, namely: (i) Annotations; (ii) Bias; and (iii) On-balance judgements.

### 7.4.2 Annotations

Considerable diversity was evident in participant reflections related to 'Walking in the applicants' shoes' by constructing annotations. There was a group of reflections that contained specific advice to applicants, e.g., "*Annotations need to be really clear and show the teachers understand the link between their evidence and descriptor*" (Sample Participant 19):

*Annotations are going to be integral for applicants to draw links to the evidence at the specific career stages. It will be important to run specific PD in this area so applicants understand it is their role to draw the links for the assessors and not assume the assessors will make inferences.* (Sample Participant 4)

*When devising annotations for evidence, applicants need to break the descriptor down into a number of threads to ensure they have covered everything the descriptor is indicating. As many descriptors can be broken down into numerous permutations, applicants need to determine at least one way in which they have covered all threads.* (Sample Participant 6)

A second group of reflections indicated that engagement with the online materials presented some challenges, e.g., "*I would have liked more structure to use for writing my annotations*" (Sample Participant 5) and "*I find it difficult to construct an annotation for an artefact that is not mine*" (Sample Participant, 32):

A third group of reflections highlighted the extent to which constructing annotations can support assessors to engage more deeply with the certification process:

*The annotation process and the idea of walking in the shoes of the applicant is an essential component of the process. I found this a good exercise but also challenging in that you had to be mindful of the language and accuracy of each statement you wrote. (Sample Participant 17)*

*'Walking in the applicants shoes'. The design of each activity in this component required one to 'drill down further' into what is evidence and annotating evidence. The activities clearly highlighted again the importance of annotations. Supporting applicants to write effective annotations that clearly articulate the connection between the artefact of evidence and the Standard\Descriptor is essential. To effectively write an annotation the Descriptors language needs to be unpacked and essential elements of the Descriptor identified. The annotation structure in the Guide to the Certification Process is very helpful to both applicants and assessors. Providing an annotation structure guide provides consistency across all of the jurisdictions. However, the information provided also allows flexibility for an applicant presentation and writing style. The activities focusing on writing annotations were difficult because it required interpreting artefacts of evidence examples and reading between the lines to write an annotation. A difficult task when the writer is not informed about the context or all the information. However, it certainly made me walk in the applicants shoes! (Sample applicant 27)*

### **7.4.3 Bias**

Participants framed their discussions of bias in three ways. The first of these acknowledged the importance of recognising its existence as well as highlighting the importance of its reduction, e.g., *“Bias needs to be constantly revisited when assessing applications”* (Sample Participant 12) or *“I need to be aware of my own biases when looking at the evidence”* (Sample Participant 20). The majority of reflections were of this type and included affirming statements about bias being an issue that was “really important”, “very important”, “such a big thing” or that addressing it was “stimulating and challenging”. The commentary indicates an awareness of bias but does not relate its existence in any detailed way to the certification process.

*Bias to varying degrees will exist within this Certification process as it would in any process involving people. We all carry various “baggage” from life experiences, past and present, which will cause us to look more favourably or less favourably on certain application or applicants. Acknowledgement of this is the key: we are all biased at different times and to different extents. Explicit bias will be more easily dealt with than implicit bias, which we won’t be easily aware of. (Sample Participant 2)*

*The ability to recognise your bias in order for it not to be an influence will be crucial for assessors. (Sample Participant 15)*

The second type of reflection elaborated on the consequences of bias in the assessment or certification process. Few participants contributed reflections that provided a personal consideration of the consequences of bias. One participant acknowledged the associated Component readings to reflect on bias.

*It is important as an assessor to be aware of a variety of implicit and explicit biases in order to provide a fair and equitable assessment for applicants. (Sample Participant 6)*

*In the context of certification, bias refers to prejudice in favour of or against an application (Stage 10 and/or person (Stage 2), compared with another, that would result in an unfair certification outcome. Unfair advantage or disadvantage is the defining aspect of bias in this context ... Bias reduction greatly increases the likelihood that the evidence candidates submit attesting to their accomplished teaching practices should be viewed and interpreted comparably by different sets of equally trained and qualified assessors. (Sample Participant 29)*

The third group of reflections focused on strategies that minimised bias, e.g., “*Bias will reduce as the inter-assessor reliability increases*” (Sample Participant 4). Again, many participants drew on the Component materials, e.g., Slide 6, Component 2, to support their contributions, indicating a positive engagement with the online materials:

*A set of strategies to reduce bias can be as follows: raising personal awareness of implicit bias (not enough on its own), consciously acknowledging differences (individual and group), regularly checking thought processes for biases, identifying stressors and removing them from the assessment environment and identifying and if possible removing sources of ambiguity ... the AITSL frame-of-reference training and standards provide a common language for ... reducing bias. (Sample Participant 6)*

#### **7.4.4 On-balance Judgements**

The issues related to making on-balanced judgements were succinctly summarised in the following extract from the reflection of one participant. References to ‘correspondence’, ‘lexical footprint’, and ‘impact on colleague’s practice and student learning’ suggest a detailed engagement with the online materials.

*If the applicant has totally achieved four descriptors and most of the other three then the assessor forms a collective average and decides. A clear correspondence between the artefact, annotation and Descriptor is required so the assessor can read the evidence to prove the achievement of the Standards. Familiarity with the lexical footprint of each career stage will support the correspondence between evidence and Descriptor. Aligning of actions by the applicant with the Standards is referred to as correspondence. Awareness of context, relevance of the Descriptor, impact on colleague’s practice and student learning will also help to inform an assessor’s decision. (Sample Participant 2)*

The notion of correspondence was not discussed extensively in participants’ reflections, although it was referred to indirectly in discussions about annotations, e.g.:

*Annotations need to be really clear here and show the teachers understand the link between their evidence and the descriptor, they need to make the link to show their professional understanding and capacity. (Sample Participant 19)*

*It is the applicants responsibility to ensure that the assessor can understand the nature of the evidence, why it has been included and the connection between the artefact, descriptor and the Standards. Effective annotations will address the connection*

*between the artefact, descriptor and Standard, have language that is consistent with the Standards, shows analysis and reflection on practice demonstrated, impact on student learning outcomes and the practice of colleagues. (Sample Participant 28)*

The essence of 'correspondence' was summarised by one participant as:

*I am also realising the vital nature of the correspondence in helping us as assessors determine the strength of their application and allow us to "see" their practice. An artefact in itself only gives an outcome and we need to have a good feel from the correspondence of the process undertaken by the applicant and the part they played in achieving the final result. (Sample Participant 20)*

An interesting comparison can be drawn between the reflections provided by Sample Participants 28 and 20, since the two reflections highlight the differing outcomes from engagement with the online materials. The reflection from participant 28 highlights the importance of the connection between artefact, Descriptor and Standard whilst the reflection from participant 20 refers to the notion that an artefact is an outcome and that the correspondence (between artefact, Descriptor and Standard) provides the necessary insight into the applicant's practice. The second reflection is indicative of substantive engagement with the materials resulting in an assessor 'mindset' that sets the scene for making judgements.

#### **7.4.5 Conclusion**

The Individual Reflection entries indicated that the sample participants engaged with the online learning materials and workshop activities substantively. The reflections demonstrated the participants' knowledge of the key themes and concepts presented within the Module. The participants demonstrated in-depth engagement with the resources and associated activities. Specifically, the participants made reference to a progression of learning across the three Components summarised in the commentary from one participant:

*This module made me be aware of the need to approach the process with a high degree of self awareness and constant need to refer to the unbiased decision making process based on the descriptors. the annotation process and the idea of walking in the shoes of the applicant is an essential component of the process. I found this a good exercise but also challenging in that you had to be mindful of the language and accuracy of each statement you wrote. (Sample Participant 17)*

In summary, the sample participants demonstrated critical engagement with the online learning materials and workshop activities.

The sample participants also evaluated the module and aspects that it contained. Some evaluations – although very few, were negative, e.g.:

*I had trouble understanding what was expected in some of the activities ... I found understanding the concepts and differences between reliability and validity difficult and had to read over them several times and make notes under each of the bulls eye diagrams to get my head around the concept.. (Sample Participant 26)*

*Component 1 - I found the directions for the required tasks a little confusing in this component. As I worked through the required tasks I could see that they were building on each other however I was not quite sure that I was understanding the purpose of the activities. (Sample Participant 30)*

The negative evaluations, however, were outnumbered by positive evaluations, e.g.:

*Writing annotations was a good experience. (Sample Participant 10)*

*I have enjoyed this module as a starting spot for training as an Assessor. (Sample Participant 12)*

*I feel that I am really beginning to understand the process of assessing an application in a reliable and valid manner. (Sample Participant 20)*

*I learn a considerable amount when I was required to walk in the shoes of the applicant. (Sample Participant 33)*

## **7.5 Module 4: Classroom Observations**

### **7.5.1 Introduction**

This section provides an analysis of themes identified through a systematic reading of a sample of Individual Reflection entries that were uploaded to the Individual Reflection Forums in Module 4. The entire set of Individual Reflection Forums in Module 4 constituted a corpus of approximately 5,400 words and involved 104 participants, 40 of whom uploaded reflections. The sample comprised a corpus of approximately 2,600 words (48% of entire Module 4 corpus) and involved 35 participants, 17 of whom uploaded reflections (42.5% of total participants who had uploaded reflections).

Module 4: Classroom Observations aimed to prepare the potential certification assessors to (i) undertake classroom observations and (ii) report their findings using appropriate tools and proformas. The Module comprised two online components:

- Component 1: Certification and Classroom Observation; and
- Component 2: The Classroom.

The discussion is divided into five sections:

- Engaging online resources;
- Bias;
- Workshop 2 activities;
- Transferability; and
- Time.

### **7.5.2 Engaging Online Resources**

The Individual Reflection entries demonstrated that the participants engaged the online resources substantively and constructively. In almost all instances the participants appraised the online resources positively, e.g., *“Berliner, Tsui and Hammond describe the development*

*from novice to expert teacher vividly*” (Sample Participant 27) and *“The Hattie research is outstanding”* (Sample Participant 34).

The participants did not simply offer evaluations, however. They invariably engaged explicitly with the ideas being proposed, e.g., Sample Participant 34 elaborated:

*The Hattie research is outstanding. The five dimensions articulated by Hattie provides a wealth of information to reflect upon and discuss.*

Similarly, Sample Participant 27 reflected:

*I enjoyed the Video Clip of Allan Luke and very much agreed with his opinions about having varied teaching strategies that are responsive, flexible and appropriate to students, content and context.*

The participants frequently aligned or distanced themselves vis-à-vis the positions presented by the leading theorists’ views presented in the online resources, thereby demonstrating critical engagement, e.g., *“I don’t necessarily agree with the statement by Fink and Markholt”* (Sample Participant 5). In some instances, the participants went further, forging links with key concepts in the module. This was exemplified in the reflection from Sample Participant 5, who wrote:

*I agree with Allan Luke.... His position on being an agnostic, in my opinion, is valid. ... It is important to keep this [pedagogical agnosticism] in mind as assessors in order to reduce bias.*

### **7.5.3 Bias**

The participants engaged constructively with the key consideration of bias that was introduced in Module 3 and revisited in the context of the Site Visit in Module 4. The participants identified key aspects of assessors’ conduct during the site visit that could reduce the likelihood of bias affecting assessor’s judgements, e.g., Sample Participant 27 highlighted the importance of focussing on evidence *“in order to avoid to avoid bias and inferences”*.

Other participants accentuated Stage 2 features of the certification process that reduced the possible effect(s) of bias. This was exemplified in the statements below.

***External** assessor observations of applicants classroom practice will enable the assessor to see if observations by school based staff were biased in favour of the applicant, show whether classroom practice is what it has been described as being.* (Sample Participant 1, emphasis added)

*[Being] ever mindful of bias and **working with fellow assessors** should ensure integrity and validity and reliability in the process.* (Sample Participant 35, emphasis added)

### **7.5.4 Workshop 2 Activities**

The Individual Reflection entries provided constructive feedback on the Classroom Observation activities conducted at Workshop 2. The sample participants commented

positively on (i) the acknowledgement of their experience and expertise, (ii) the discussion that the activities generated, (iii) the clarification that they gained from the discussion and/or (iv) the confidence/reassurance gained from undertaking the activities, e.g.:

*After the session yesterday I have a better understanding of the complexity of this.*  
(Sample Participant 20)

*The discussion in Sydney were so worthwhile and I felt that those running the course were much more open to the thoughts and opinions of those doing the training. I think it was acknowledged that there was a vast amount of expertise and experience in the room and that the voice of the participants was worth hearing.* (Sample Participant 13)

Another participant highlighted the shared understanding that was gained from undertaking the Classroom Observation activities and identified links with key concepts/principles, such as bias and the focus on evidence.

*By the time I got to the end of the 4th video and we had discussed the footage within our group, it became quite obvious that we were generally picking up on similar classroom practices, both from a student and teacher perspective. At one point we discussed bias from an EC teacher, who disagreed with the room set up for an EC setting. At another point we reminded ourselves about what we were seeing, as opposed to what we thought should be there. The group discussion in doing the videos together was a positive way to get through the activity.* (Sample Participant 22)

One participant, however, evaluated the selection of videos for the activities negatively:

*It was disappointing that the videos were all primary school and all female teachers.*  
(Sample Participant 24)

### **7.5.5 Transferability**

The design of the Assessor Training Program was shaped, in part, by SiMERR's contention that,

*being involved in the process of becoming an assessor will have both formal and informal formative dimensions through its use to inform processes, such as performance review, as well as teacher self-reflection as a basis for furthering professional learning.* (SiMERR, 2012, p. 3)

Thus, the program design was underpinned by the belief that participants would critically evaluate and appropriate knowledge and skills that they deemed relevant and transferrable to other aspects of their work.

The Individual Reflection entries indicated that participants found many aspects of Module 4 relevant and applicable to other aspects of their work, as evidenced by the following statements.

*I am interested to try out some teacher observation frameworks in my own role as a performance manager at my school.* (Sample Participant 27)



*[Reflection upon the practice of expert teachers] also enable[d] me [to] set goals for improvement for myself as a classroom teacher, as a colleague, as a member on the school leadership team and as an assessor. (Sample Participant 30)*

### **7.5.6 Time**

All participants in the sample who commented on the time required to complete Module 4 presented negative statements. The following reflection epitomises the negative sentiment.

*While I have enjoyed looking at the videos I am really quite stressed at the time required to complete this module. This has been seriously under estimated by the designers of this program. The timing of such an assessment for incredibly busy 'volunteers' at the end of second term is unhelpful. If AITSL needs to reconsider the amount of time this takes for educators in schools at this time of year. (Sample Participant 22)*

### **7.5.7 Conclusion**

The Individual Reflection entries indicated that the sample participants engaged with the online learning materials and workshop activities substantively. The reflections demonstrated the participants' knowledge of the key themes and concepts presented within the Module. The participants demonstrated in-depth engagement with the resources and associated activities. Specifically, the participants demonstrated knowledge of the key themes/concepts presented by leading theorists whose work was showcased in the resources. In addition the participants frequently evaluated the themes/concepts that were presented, dis/aligned themselves from/with the themes/concepts, and/or forged links with major themes/concepts in the Assessor Training Program, such as bias. In summary, the sample participants demonstrated critical engagement with the online learning materials and workshop activities, and this extended to their engagement with the Workshop 2 activities as well.

The sample participants also evaluated the module and aspects that it contained. Some evaluations were negative, e.g.:

*I found this module very intense, and the ACT Now task frustrating and onerous. (Sample Participant 33)*

*Module 4 was by far the most challenging of all the modules. (Sample Participant 25)*

The negative evaluations, however, were outnumbered by positive evaluations, e.g.:

*I enjoyed this component. (Sample Participant 31)*

*it was interesting to reflect on how one masters learning and to relate that to how we know we know. (Sample Participant 13)*

*It was very worthwhile examining viewpoints and reflecting deeply about what expert teachers do. (Sample Participant 34)*

*This was a very interesting module to be involved in. (Sample Participant 18)*

The participants' reported application of knowledge and/or skills gained in this module to other aspects of their work is testament to the Module's impact.

## **7.6 Module 5: Best Practice Communication**

### **7.6.1 Introduction**

This section provides an analysis of themes identified through a systematic reading of a sample of individual reflection entries that were uploaded to the Individual Reflection Forums in Module 5 by 5 August 2013. The entire set of Individual Reflection Forum entries in Module 5 at the time of analysis constituted a corpus of approximately 6,500 words and involved 45 participants, 37 of whom uploaded reflections. The sample comprised a corpus of approximately 1,400 words (21.5% of entire Module 5 corpus) and involved 14 participants, 11 of whom uploaded reflections (30% of total participants who had uploaded reflections). It should be noted that the Module 5 corpus was incomplete at the time of analysis. The discussion of themes that were emerging in the sample corpus, therefore, needs to be regarded as provisional.

Module 5: Best Practice Communication aimed to prepare potential certification assessors to engage best practice communication in (i) professional conversations with teachers, other assessors, principals and referees, and (ii) written recommendations and reports for Certifying Authorities. The Module comprised four components, two online components that presented new material, one online component that presented an overview of the entire Assessor Training Program, and the second face-to-face workshop:

- Component 1: Stage 2 – Professional Conversations
- Component 2: Stage 2 Site Visit and Best Practice Certification Feedback/Recommendation Writing
- Component 3: Overview of the Program
- Component 4: Workshop 2

The following discussion of the themes that were present in the limited number of individual reflections that were available at the time of analysis is necessarily brief. It addresses professional conversations and Appraisal, which were major aspects of components 1 and 2, respectively. Workshop 2 is also addressed briefly.

### **7.6.2 Stage 2 -Professional Conversations**

Component 1 presented mixed methods research methodology (Denzin, 2010) as a lens to view the certification process in its entirety and to position the information collected in professional conversations within the total set of information that assessors must evaluate in certification assessments. Participants affirmed the relevance of the mixed methods comparison and identified constructive links with other key aspects of the certification process such as bias reduction; e.g., Sample Participant 4 commented:

*Mixed method research is beneficial when research is coming from two or more perspectives, as is the case with the certification process. ... pre-existing assumptions are less likely due to the multi modal collection.*

Participants commented on the relevance of explicit coverage of best practice communication in the online learning materials and the personal benefit gained from

engaging with the material. In relation to the former, Sample Participant 11 commented: “The focus on best practice professional conversations was relevant”. In relation to the latter, Sample Participant 13 commented:

*Looking at how questioning techniques and the language used in conversations was impactful for me. I became more aware of what and how I say things in various dialogue with students, parents and colleagues both in formal and informal settings. ... I learnt a lot about the various types of questions and dialogue techniques.*

Sample Participant 13, however, indicated strongly that the online material on professional conversations should be developed further.

*I am not convinced that the activities in Module 5 provide enough learning for assessors unfamiliar with effective questioning techniques and the developing of rapport. I think that there is an assumption that assessors will have this knowledge from their experience as classroom teachers however I am concerned that this will not be true in all cases. I think this is something that needs more explicit teaching through training and that as facilitators this would be an area for greater focus.*

### **7.6.3 Appraisal**

Appraisal (Martin & White, 2007) was introduced as an explanatory and analytical framework to promote assessors’ understanding, identification, analysis and appropriate use of evaluative language across all aspects of the certification process. The Appraisal framework was new to most assessors and, although some indicated that understanding the framework was challenging at first, all of the sample participants who reflected on Appraisal indicated that they understood the framework and affirmed its relevance and usefulness in the certification process. Sample Participant 10, for example, commented:

*It took me a while to understand the difference between Judgements and Appreciations but I think I've got it. Reading others posts was a great help with this. Appraisal Theory provides an interesting lens to view written evidence through and also in developing recommendations. Interesting.*

Some participants indicated that they were now using Appraisal reflexively to analyse and inform their language use, as indicated by the following statements.

*I became more aware of what and how I say things in various dialogue with students, parents and colleagues both in formal and informal settings. (Sample Participant 13)*

*I use affect words regularly in my vocabulary, however I understand that it is not appropriate to refer to a teachers passion or enjoyment of the students in feedback for a lesson. (Sample Participant 9)*

One participant who was familiar with the Appraisal framework prior to undertaking Component 2 affirmed the relevance of Appraisal to multiple aspects of the certification process.

*I already knew about the Appraisal system but it had not occurred to me how useful it's application would be (a) to notice the patterns and differences of HAT and Lead (b)*

*for considering the language required for writing the assessors' reports (c) avoiding (or locating one's own) bias when reading an applicant's collection of evidence. (Sample Participant 14)*

Unanimous positive assessment of the relevance and applicability of Appraisal to assessors' work was presented in the sample corpus.

#### **7.6.4 Workshop 2**

Only one participant in the sample commented on Workshop 2. Sample Participant 9 commented:

*I look forward to the face to face training days and have been happy to be engaged in the training so far and look forward to using the knowledge gained in the future.*

#### **7.6.5 Conclusion**

The Individual Reflection entries in the sample indicate that the Assessor Training Program participants had substantively engaged key concepts from Components 1 and 2. They participants' reflexive use of the key concepts indicates the impact of the online learning materials. In addition to evaluating individual aspects of the components positively, as indicated in the sections above, the sample participants evaluated the entire module positively, as indicated in the reflections below.

*Module 5 was an interesting one. (Sample Participant 13)*

*Module 5 contextualises the entire Certification Process. (Sample Participant 11)*

*The professional learning involved throughout was both informative and stimulating. (Sample Participant 3)*

## 8 Qualitative Analysis of ATP Participants' Online Contribution: Facilitators' Forum

### 8.1 Introduction

The Assessor Training Program participants comprised two distinct cohorts: Assessors and Facilitators. The term 'Facilitator' referred to participants who will have responsibility for delivering the Assessor Training Program from 2014. Facilitators included Certifying Authority personnel and others who had been identified by Certifying Authorities, such as practising and retired teachers and school leaders. The Facilitators' Forum was created to enable Facilitators to establish a cross-jurisdictional professional network, discuss matters that pertained to their future work of training assessors and engage with the online learning materials. The Facilitators' Forum comprised a corpus of approximately 15,000 words, containing 124 entries from 33 Facilitators. The manageable size of the Facilitators' Forum enabled Content Analysis (Krippendorff, 2012) to be applied to the entire corpus rather than a sample.

Some of the themes that emerged from the corpus pertained to material presented in particular modules, e.g. annotations and bias, whereas other themes were applicable to the whole program and/or its implementation, e.g. trust and necessary attributes of facilitators'/assessors'. The entries in which Facilitators introduced themselves also presented distinctive themes, e.g. hopes and expectations. The analysis that follows has been structured according to whether themes emerged in the introductions, pertained to particular modules or had general applicability/relevance to the entire Assessor Training Program and/or certification. The analysis concludes with the Facilitators' positive evaluation of the Assessor Training Program.

The analysis is supported by the extensive use of quotes from the Facilitators. **Please note:** In order to respect and preserve the integrity of the Facilitators' voice, the quotes have **not** been edited. They may, therefore, contain typographical errors, etc.

### 8.2 Facilitators' Introductions

Several distinct themes were discerned in the introductions. In addition to introducing themselves, many of the Facilitators disclosed their hopes for, expectations of and interests in the Assessor Training Program and certification. Many of the postings also foreshadowed key concepts that were included in the Assessor Training Program. Some Facilitators also used their introductory posting to showcase their prior experiences with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) and/or certification or former equivalent processes.

The introductory postings were unanimously positive; none conveyed reluctance to being involved in, or skepticism about, the Assessor Training Program / Certification. The hopes, expectations and interests expressed in the introductory postings documented that the Facilitators entered into the Assessor Training Program with very positive outlooks and with great anticipation. The positivity and anticipation were exemplified in the following postings.

*I look forward to the wonderful opportunity that has presented itself to become fully involved with the training around the Australian Certification process for the Teaching Profession. I know I have a lot to learn. (Facilitator 2)*

*I am looking forward to the challenge of grasping all that is involved with the implementation of the Standards and assisting schools in their work to foster aspirational environments. ... I am looking forward to the discussions around the processes we will be using. (Facilitator 21)*

*It is inspiring and exciting to know that we will all have a role in influencing quality teaching as part of a nationally consistent approach. (Facilitator 12)*

Many of the postings also foreshadowed key concepts that were included in the modules and workshops, especially key concepts that were related to language and quality assurance, e.g.:

*I am very interested in the training as a way of ensuring **common language** and understanding of the standards and the demonstration of evidence against the standards. This will assist us in all aspects of our work with teachers. (Facilitator 19, emphasis added)*

*I know I have a lot to learn especially when making **reliable and valid judgements** about the teaching and learning practices of others. (Facilitator 2, emphasis added)*

*This training provides a great opportunity but also a real responsibility in working together and with others into the future to ensure **validity** and **authenticity** in the Certification process for the profession. (Facilitator 16, emphasis added)*

*I, too, am very excited with this next venture in maintaining teacher quality not only across [Jurisdiction] but across Australia. I'm very interested, particularly as a future facilitator, in the process of ensuring **consistency** in the implementation of the standards across the states and sectors of education. (Facilitator 31, emphasis added)*

Some Facilitators outlined experiences that they had had with certification equivalent processes in their particular jurisdictions. Facilitators without such experiences indicated that they looked forward to learning from those who had such experiences, e.g.:

*It is great to see that there are people who have experience with the [Jurisdictional Authority]. Hopefully you will have a lot to share. (Facilitator 10)*

*It is good to know that many others have considerable knowledge and experience to share in this area. (Facilitator 2)*

The Facilitators' postings also indicated appreciation of the Facilitators' Forum and they indicated the Facilitators' willingness to become involved in online discussions.

*It has been good to start getting to know the group! (Facilitator 10)*

*I welcome the introduction of standards and look forward to learning from and with you all. (Facilitator 10)*

*I'm glad to be on board and look forward to many professional discussions with you all. (Facilitator 23)*

*I am pleased to participate and look forward to our communications and to more exchanges of views when we meet later this month. (Facilitator 26)*

## **8.3 Online Learning Materials**

### **8.3.1 Module 1**

The Facilitators' discussion of the online material in Module 1 focused mainly on the "examination of the language of the standards and the deeper reflection on the meaning of statements" (Facilitator 22). The Facilitators commented on the importance and usefulness of both the 'common language' of the Standards and the examination of lexical fingerprints. In relation to the former, two Facilitators posted:

*The APST are welcomed in the Archdiocese of [name deleted] as we have not been able to have a 'common language' about what teachers do across our system. (Facilitator 17)*

*I am very interested in the training as a way of ensuring common language and understanding of the standards and the demonstration of evidence against the standards. (Facilitator 19)*

In relation to the examination of lexical fingerprints, Facilitators commented on the insights gained from the activity in Component 2 that involved identifying and examining the use of the term 'colleague' across the career stages. The Facilitators' comments also referred to the usefulness of recognising such patterns more broadly. This was exemplified in the following postings.

*I found Required Task 1.2d (searching the word Colleague across career stages) very interesting but would have liked it to be broader. I am wondering whether AITSL will provide us with other key words which create the patterns of terminology across career stages. (Facilitator 30)*

*I too found Task 1.2d useful as a way of taking a closer look at the distinctions between the career stages. (Facilitator 21)*

*Completing the 'search' activity as well as the additional information we were given in Sydney around the use of lexical fingerprints was an eye opener for me and I will be using this as a 'discovery' activity with applicants prior to introducing them to articulating annotations. (Facilitator 30)*

### **8.3.2 Module 2**

The Facilitators' discussion associated with Module 2 contained two main threads: the first addressed understanding the certification process and the second addressed the importance of context. In relation to the former, the Facilitators' discussion pertained to Component 1,

which positioned certification in Australia within the international context of existing certification processes and the associated research. Framing certification in this way had high impact and was evaluated positively by the Facilitators.

Following a brief summary of certification in the USA, England and Scotland, Facilitator 30 commented:

*I think that the way we are progressing this in Australia will be crucial to its [certification's] success. We should learn from our predecessors!*

Making more explicit links to the research presented in Component 1, two Facilitators wrote:

*I found the most interesting aspect of module 2 was reading the research of Ingvarsen and Kleinholz - particularly the review of overseas models. The values based Standards of the US, and their distinction between "good" teaching and "successful" teaching intrigued me. (Facilitator 13)*

*Component 1 - The last section of this component which discussed the impact of national certification in the USA on both teacher practice and student outcomes was particularly interesting. (Facilitator 30)*

The second thread in the discussion, i.e. the importance of context, focussed on the need for Facilitators to be aware of and attentive to the context of future trainee assessors and the impact of context in certification assessments, as exemplified by the following statements respectively.

*Having just about completed Module 2, I have been considering the notion of context. This presents issues also for assessor training, where assessors not only need to understand the issues in their own context but also in those of the trainee assessors in order to help them to see beyond their own experiences. It will be important for facilitators to know who is in their workshops for training, their contexts and their backgrounds so that we can best support the analysis of the impact of context with those in the workshops. (Facilitator 16)*

*As assessors it will be so important to have our panorama lenses on - to take into consideration all factors as we explore collections of evidence. (Facilitator 34)*

The Facilitators also evaluated positively the inclusion and opportunity to discuss the issue of context and often explicated links to quality assurance considerations, such as bias and equity, as typified by the following comments.

*This is a great discussion about context, the role of assessors and significance of evidence in the process. ... Taking this time to discuss these issues during this assessor training process is vital and a tremendous opportunity to have clarity in a national endeavour. (Facilitator 34)*



*I have enjoyed reading the discussion about context and like others believe the key will be evidence. Our job will be to be cognisant of all factors to ensure equity and accuracy. (Facilitator 18)*

*I see 'contextual issues' as a key area for discussion to ensure equity in the process. (Facilitator 20)*

### **8.3.3 Module 3**

The online learning materials for Module 3 generated a great deal of discussion in the Facilitators' Forum: approximately 36.5% of all postings related to the modules addressed Module 3. Bias, annotations and indirect evidence were the major topics in the discussion.

The Facilitators commented that the Assessor Training Program had been designed to reduce bias and identified the importance of addressing bias in the program, as articulated in the following statements.

*I think a number of processes have been effectively built into the assessor training to reduce the effect of bias. (Facilitator 13)*

*This discussion is really important for assessor training because it highlights the importance of bias, being aware of it should help reduce it. (Facilitator 17)*

Facilitators also discussed elements of the certification process that aim to mitigate the effect of bias, particularly being teamed with another assessor, e.g.:

*Also working with another assessor, with oversight from the jurisdiction and sector will provide a further safety net in regard to reducing the effects of negative bias. (Facilitator 13)*

*Fortunately there will be two assessors individually assessing each application, before they come together to discuss their findings. An important and necessary aspect of this conversation will be the discussion or challenging of possible bias of one or both assessors. (Facilitator 2)*

The Facilitators often went beyond merely acknowledging the inclusion of teamed assessors in the process, articulating the nature of the relationship that the teamed assessors needed to cultivate in order to be able to address the issue of bias, e.g.:

*Thinking about whether a response to an application is biased will need a strong relationship between assessors so they can have strong robust discussions about this. (Facilitator 17)*

*Working with a colleague Assessor is fantastic to air assumptions and biases and you must feel safe to do so. (Facilitator 29)*

*How well you know your fellow assessor will determine how freely you challenge their assessment (especially if you think bias may apply). (Facilitator 2)*

Annotation was another major theme that Facilitators discussed at length. The discussion included the usefulness of writing annotations as an exercise and applicants' responsibility to clearly articulate correspondence in annotations. Comments concerning the usefulness of writing annotations as an exercise were polarised. Some Facilitators expressed frustration in response to the exercise that required them to write annotations. The frustration stemmed mainly from the requirement to write annotations for artefacts that were not their own, i.e. their reported frustration was attributed to their lack of understanding about the development, context and application of the artefacts provided. The frustration may have been avoided by requesting that the Facilitators write annotations for materials that they had developed and/or delivered. This may have been difficult, perhaps impossible, however, for Facilitators who were not practising teachers, e.g. Certifying Authority personnel. Other Facilitators commented on the usefulness of the exercise and their use or intended use of the exercise as a training activity for potential certification applicants.

The following postings exemplify the polarised responses from Facilitators.

*To ask an assessor to annotate an artefact without the background knowledge of why the artefact was included, why the program was initiated and the processes that were followed puts the assessor at a great disadvantage. This process only allows for a superficial coverage of an annotation to be written and as such, I question the validity of completing such a task. (Facilitator 2)*

*I found this module to be particularly frustrating from the point of view that it wasn't just asking me to walk in the shoes of the applicant it was asking me to talk in the words of an applicant. (Facilitator 12)*

*Here in [Jurisdiction] we ran our first session to support applicants last Tuesday. Overwhelmingly people wanted the opportunity to write their own annotations. We ensured that there was time for this when we ran it again on Saturday and next time we will ask people to bring some artefacts that they are thinking of using for evidence. The confidence they gained in making a start, and gaining feedback from one another was highlighted in their evaluation of the workshop. (Facilitator 15)*

*Supporting applicants to write annotations that clearly articulate the connection between the artefact of evidence and the Standard\Descriptor is essential. ... Good idea to request interested applicants to bring artefacts of evidence to focus their annotation writing in the workshop. (Facilitator 27)*

The polarisation related to the intended audience. Facilitators reported frustration when required to perform the task themselves, but evaluated they it positively as an activity for potential applicants.

The Facilitators were forthright in presenting the view that it was the responsibility of Applicants to ensure that the correspondence between artefacts of practice and Descriptors was clearly articulated. This was exemplified by Facilitator 3, who wrote:

*The essence of annotation is that applicants articulate the correspondence between the piece of evidence and the Standards/descriptors that they believe it demonstrates achievement of, and how outcomes for students/colleagues have been impacted. It is*

*not up to assessors to make the connection for the applicant nor to go mining for this understanding.*

The Facilitators' comments concerning the concept and use of indirect evidence mostly documented a positive reaction. Facilitator 10, for instance, commented, *"The concept of evidence not directly related to the descriptor providing evidence of the descriptor does fascinate me"*. The Facilitators' comments also documented a positive evaluation of the online materials addressing indirect evidence. This was exemplified by a comment from Facilitator 22, who wrote: *"I think the example in Module 3 about descriptor 1.4 is a very realistic scenario which we will meet quite often"*. S/he continued: *"I have heard this expressed relatively often by teachers in relation to the Standards"*.

In addition to positive evaluations of the concept and use of indirect evidence, the Facilitators engaged deeply with the concept and possible scenarios concerning its implementation. They expressed some guarded reactions, identified perceived challenges, and suggested possible responses, as illustrated by the following postings.

*Until we see successful applications that address Descriptors with indirect evidence, we will all be a little uncomfortable about it. ... An added difficulty is that as soon as we have examples that are successful these may well become models of a kind for others and we could see lots of very similar evidence being provided. (Facilitator 17)*

*Another possible way for a teacher to meet such Descriptors might be to create a context specific scenario, such as a new family enrolling at the school that will bring Indigenous students to the school for the first time, with a researched and documented action plan for supporting colleagues. (Facilitator 16)*

#### **8.3.4 Module 4**

Only two posting in the Facilitators' Forum related specifically to Module 4 and they both presented positive evaluations of Allan Luke's discussion about Adaptive Teaching (Component 2, Required Task 4.2a):

*I like the very last sentence a lot. The dance depends a lot on the music and who your partner is. If you are reflective it is harder to be dogmatic. I have said once or twice to pre-service teachers that you can't fix a car with only a screwdriver. Also, new is always equated with better in people's minds and you often see PL converts who come back from a conference with some zeal about what they have learned in lieu of, not in combination with, what they have always known. (Facilitator 29)*

*I also agree with Alan Luke that teachers adapt to whatever arises in their classroom at any given time. The example given of the teacher who was able to distinguish which students were not able to complete the rich task and then take them aside to give direct instruction, indicates to me an expert teacher. He/she was able to do this instinctively and move between the needs of the students at the time and place depending on the situation. It is most important that teachers are well versed in many pedagogical theories and how to implement these in the classroom in an instinctive way. Perhaps the difference between an experienced teacher and an expert teacher is how experts act seamlessly and instinctively? Also "loved his final line: The dance depends on the music and who your partner is. (Facilitator 17)*

### 8.3.5 Module 5

Module 5 focussed on developing an understanding of Stage 2 of the certification process and its relationship to Stage 1. The certification process was likened to mixed-methods research. The following extended excerpts demonstrated that the mixed-methods research comparison resonated with the Facilitators and that they engaged with the comparison in depth, forging links to key quality assurance and equity issues such as objectivity, triangulation, credibility, accuracy, validity, bias, fairness and holistic judgement.

*The conceptualising of assessment as research with multiple data sources and analysis methods brings the complexity of the thinking required to the front of my mind. Having the multiplicity of data sources and analysis methods does not guarantee the objectivity of the researcher. The assessor role is named as an objective one but the assessor's self awareness of personal bias is critical to behaving in an objective way. Elevating the process to a scientific level may assist with keeping a mindfulness about objectivity. The personal skills of the assessor for example, a good questioning technique is an acquired skill in the mix and cannot be assumed to be present. Without such a skill the quality of evidence collected may be compromised and therefore potentially the assessment may be flawed. (Facilitator 22)*

*Strong connections can be drawn between the certification process and research. In both cases it is essential that assessment are based on evidence collected from a range of sources and that there is a consistency in how that data is collected. In research it can be that the same survey is distributed to a selection of people in order to gather information. Similarly as assessor must be aware of using similar questioning techniques and styles to each applicant in order for the process to be credible. This requires careful planning from the assessor so that each applicant is given the same amount of time for their interview so that they have every opportunity to receive an accurate and valid assessment. Using mixed method research is the best option to ensure the process remains fair and without bias. (Facilitator 6)*

*Both the Certification assessment process and good research require rigorous interrogation. This is best done through the multiple collection of information " data. It is through the triangulation of information from multiple sources that a valid holistic judgement can be made. The Certification Process has embedded multiple data collection and as such the assessors are obligated to ensure the final assessment t is authentic or true to the intent of the process. (Facilitator 32)*

The Facilitators also engaged deeply with the two aspects of professional conversations that were presented in Module 5, i.e. questioning/interviewing techniques and evaluative language. In relation to questioning/interviewing techniques, the Facilitators' comments reinforced the importance of focused and purposeful preparation to ensure the collection of meaningful and relevant information to share with the teamed assessor and inform the final certification assessment. The Facilitators also emphasised the importance of these aspects in assessor training. The following statement typifies the Facilitators' comments.

*Correct questioning will also enable the assessor to be clear in their communication with the other assessor about what information was being collected from the applicant. ... Planning and preparation is the key for this process to achieve what it intended to which is gather evidence of a teacher's practice against the standards. I*

*believe time for practice in doing this would need to be part of the assessor training we as facilitators will provide. (Facilitator 6)*

The Facilitators also used the forum to share their analysis of evaluative language in the Standards and they identified key similarities and differences across the career stages. They also shared their analyses of an extract from a certification report from the ACT TQI Certification Pilot. The Facilitators demonstrated a sound understanding of the Appraisal framework and its relevance to assessors' work. The value of understanding the Appraisal framework was emphasised by Facilitator 19, who indicated the intention of a number of Facilitators to further develop and refine their Appraisal analysis skills:

*I think this is a really good way to look at the descriptors and extract the most applicable language. We (meaning our group of assessors) are going to get together at some point soon and work through each of the descriptors and use different coloured highlighters to positive judgement and positive appreciation language. (Facilitator 19)*

## **8.4 Overall Themes**

In addition to themes that were specific to the introductions and certain modules, there were also distinct overarching themes that were pertinent to the Assessor Training Program and certification as a whole. Such themes included:

- attributes of assessors;
- attributes of Facilitators and the nature of their work;
- a trust discourse; and
- general evaluations of the Assessor Training Program.

Each of these themes is addressed in the following sections.

### **8.4.1 Assessors**

The Facilitators' frequently commented on attributes that assessors should possess. Overwhelmingly, the Facilitators identified the importance of assessors having thorough and current knowledge of the Standards, descriptors and the certification process in order to support national consistency, to be able to analyse effectively the wide range of information that is presented/collected for assessment, and to mentor/coach prospective applicants, e.g.:

*It is essential for assessors to know and understand these documents and to refer to these documents throughout the assessment process to support consistency and objectivity across jurisdictions and States\Territories. (Facilitator 27)*

*I think it is important for the assessors to understand the standards and descriptors but also to work with teachers in their jurisdictions to develop a very good understanding as well. ... Assessors, in time, could be a source of information and support for applicants and members of their school who are acting as mentors and coaches. (Facilitator 9)*

Another aspect of the discussion concerning assessors' knowledge emphasised the importance of initial assessor training and ongoing learning, e.g.:

*Specialised training for assessors with a coordinated systematic common approach is vital. (Facilitator 17)*

*The knowledge, skills and capabilities required by teachers who are making judgements about the practice of others is indeed very complex and will require ongoing learning and reflection. (Facilitator 16)*

*The role of assessor will be ongoing and requires of me and the system I am in to ensure we remain refreshed and rigorous in our knowledge and practices. (Facilitator 30)*

Facilitator 9 went further, asserting that assessors' knowledge needs to be formally acknowledged and contribute to career progression.

*Assessors need to be formally recognised for their expertise. Being an assessor should support teachers' career development and contribute to their development as educational leaders. (Facilitator 9)*

In addition to the possession of thorough knowledge, the Facilitators also identified the importance of assessors possessing confidence and clarity of purpose and judgement.

*Assessors will need the confidence and experience to not only conduct the professional discussion with both the principal/supervisor/delegate and the applicant, but also to make meaning of that which they are told. (Facilitator 16)*

*I believe that assessors need to be clear in their own intentions when working with teachers and ensure that the teacher is also clear on the intention of the interaction. (Facilitator 30)*

#### **8.4.2 Facilitators**

Facilitators commented on attributes that they required and the nature of Facilitators' work. Such comments were made consistently throughout the duration of the Assessor Training Program. In relation to attributes that Facilitators required, they identified that, like assessors, they needed to have a thorough knowledge of the certification process. This view was exemplified by Facilitator 16, who wrote:

*Certification processes will need to be deeply and accurately understood by each of us as we facilitate future assessor training programs. Especially in the early days, teachers will not be clear on what they need to do and it will be key that we are able to lead others with confidence and correctness around how processes will work and the requirements of both assessors and applicants.*

Consistency was, overwhelmingly, the major theme raised by the Facilitators in relation to their work. There were several foci in the Facilitators' online discussion about consistency. The Facilitators identified that their role was central to ensuring consistency in the assessor training that they will deliver and that consistency of understanding among Facilitators was crucial to achieve this. The following statements typify the discussion of consistency.

*Our roles as facilitators will be central to building consistency in certification of HAT and LT across all States. ... I think the crucial element is consistency in demonstration of practice as a HAT and LT and our facilitation of both training and assessments will help consistent assessment and professional judgements about how HAT and LT career stages should be demonstrated. (Facilitator 8)*

*Another important issue for facilitators is consistency in the information delivered through training. A common\shared understanding of the attributes of each Career stage and processes involved in training. (Facilitator 27)*

*The challenge for me will be in making consistent judgements. I am looking forward to the discussions around the processes we will be using. (Facilitator 21)*

*as facilitators it will be important to ensure consistency in information and also depth of information. (Facilitator 30)*

### **8.4.3 Trust Discourse**

A multifaceted trust discourse was evident in the Facilitators' Forum throughout the duration of the Assessor Training Program. The Facilitators repeatedly articulated the *need* for trust. They specifically identified the *need* to trust the certification process, the *need* to trust that assessors have been well trained, the *need* for trust between teamed assessors, and the *need* for assessors to trust applicants.

In relation to the certification process, the Facilitators expressed the need to trust that due process had been applied in the national negotiations involving Jurisdictions. Research was also invoked to position the process as being trustworthy. The following statements illustrate these aspects of the trust discourse, as well as the need to trust applicants.

*I think that we have to trust the process, understanding that the certifying authorities have debated at length and agreed upon the interpretation of principles and processes for consistency of 'conditions' across the jurisdictions. (Facilitator 3)*

*As assessors, I feel that we need to trust the process that has been researched and provided and to trust the applicant. (Facilitator 2)*

*I agree that as assessors we need to trust in the process and the applicant. (Facilitator 30)*

As noted above, the Facilitators also articulated the need to trust that assessors had been well trained. They also identified the need for trust between teamed assessors. Trust between teamed assessors was identified as being necessary for candid communication to confront bias when required, e.g.:

*We do need to trust that the assessors have been well trained and are knowledgeable and experienced educators. (Facilitator 10)*

*Relational trust with your fellow assessors needs to be fostered and rules of engagement or protocols which allow for open and equitable communication*

*identified. This is particularly true where assessors hold different positions on the hierarchy scale. (Facilitator 30)*

*I agree a strong relationship, trust and confidence to disagree is going to be a vital part. Heathy debate will critical and help alleviate bias ! (Facilitator 18)*

#### **8.4.4 Evaluation**

The Facilitators evaluated the Assessor Training Program positively throughout the duration of the program, e.g.:

*Despite feeling like I had a thorough knowledge of the APST and extensive experience in accreditation of teachers against agreed criteria the modules have been extremely helpful in enhancing my understanding of the career stages. (Facilitator 8)*

*robust discussion at the training was very worthwhile and we need to ensure that all assessors are prepared and able to engage in this type of debate which will ensure a robust process. (Facilitator 20)*

*I think that we have all found the training to be credible and challenging. (Facilitator 3)*



## **9 Recommendations and Final Remarks**

### **9.1 Recommendations**

The development of the Assessor Training Program was based on a participatory Action Research Model (Kemmis & MacTaggart, 2005) that enabled the program to be co-constructed. All participants were involved in the co-construction: trainee assessors, the Certifying Authority Network, the SiMERR research team and AITSL. The participatory co-construction enabled the Assessor Training Program to be reviewed and refined regularly. The first drafts of the online learning material were presented for constructive feedback from AITSL and the Certifying Authority Network, and revised accordingly. The workshops that were conducted in Sydney were evaluated by the SiMERR research team, AITSL and trainee assessors, and the feedback was incorporated into the second versions of the workshops that were conducted in Perth. In summary, then, Recommendations have been progressively made and acted upon throughout the development and delivery of the Assessor Training Program. In light on the ongoing evaluation of the Assessor Training Program, the recommendations that follow are based primarily on the analysis of the ACT Now data and the qualitative analyses of the Individual Reflection Forum and the Facilitators' Forum.

#### **9.1.1 ACT Now Data**

In the context that the Assessor Training Program will be delivered to a larger and more homogeneous audience from 2014, the following recommendations are offered following analysis of the ACT Now data. Firstly, it is recommended that support material be provided to personnel who have access to the ACT Now data to facilitate (i) navigation of the site, (ii) meaningful and accurate interpretation summary data and (iii) monitoring of participants' progression to maintain the required performance standard and requirements of the program. Secondly, it is recommended that further statistical analysis be performed on the ACT Now Item Banks to establish question difficulty so that the randomisation of the questions, which is a necessary feature of the ACT Now activities, presents participants with ACT Now quizzes of comparable difficulty, thereby avoiding the creation of equity issues.

#### **9.1.2 Discussion Forums**

Postings to the Individual Reflection and Facilitators' Forums generally appraised the program positively. They also identified areas of particular interest, such as international approaches to certification. AITSL could consider adding additional recommended sections and/or resources that enable participants to further pursue areas of interest identified in the discussion forums.

Many participants negatively evaluated the amount of time required to complete the online learning materials and ACT Now quiz for Module 4. Given that Module 4 will be revised following the development of the final Classroom Observation Tool and any associated documentation, it is recommended that AITSL review the amount of time required to complete the next version of Module 4.

Many of the participants' postings also addressed other issues associated with time, especially (i) the amount of time required for applicants undertaking certification, (ii) the amount of time required for assessors to perform certification assessments and (iii) the

impact of the time required upon other aspects of applicants' and assessors' work. It is recommended that AITSL communicate, through the Certifying Authorities, the amount of time associated with certification and the impact that the amount of time could have on other aspects of applicants' and assessors' work. This would enable schools and systems to identify appropriate forms and levels of support.

### **9.1.3 Future changes to the Assessor Training Program**

It is recommended that AITSL update resources associated with the Assessor Training Program regularly to ensure that the program remains current. In keeping with the principles that underpin certification (AITSL, 2012), it is recommended that any substantive changes to the content of the Assessor Training Program be evidence-based. Accordingly, it is advisable that any forthcoming revisions be informed by the data and analyses presented here. Feedback from smaller, perhaps specialised groups, is unlikely to be representative of the data and analyses presented here, which have drawn comprehensively from the large, rich and complex corpora and extensive quantitative ACT Now data that were collected throughout the duration of the program.

### **9.1.4 Rolling out the Assessor Training Program**

The integrity, credibility and efficacy of the Assessor Training Program depend upon the integrated learning design that incorporates online content, required and recommended activities, resources, discussion forums and ACT Now tasks. It is recommended that AITSL communicate, through the Certifying Authority network, that the success of the Assessor Training Program is contingent upon the sum of its parts. Therefore all aspects of the Assessor Training Program are mandatory and the indicative hours should be observed.

## **9.2 Final Remarks**

AITSL can feel confident that the Assessor Training Program has achieved its central aim, specifically to:

*provide high level advice, and design and develop an Assessor Training Program that is based on the Australian Professional Standards of r Teachers and supports the implementation of the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers: Principles and processes. (AITSL, 2012, p.2)*

Achievement of this aim is summed up in the comment of one participant:

*Having completed all of the modules and attended the face to face training i now feel confident i have a good understanding of the standards and the role an assessor plays in the certification process. (Participant 46, Module 5)*

Through the Individual Reflection Forums, participants have drawn attention to a number of delivery and structural features of the program that highlight its formative dimension for groups and individuals. Whilst there were some comments that drew attention to technical issues associated with the delivery platform, participant commentary was consistently affirming of the benefits that they were experiencing as learners.

Technical issues related mainly to user facility – something that improved over time and access to some of the resources:

*I am now familiar with the format of the online training so I think Module 2 will be much smoother. (Participant 45, Module 1)*

*I'm used to personal learning about various things but really needing to know how to navigate the site and complete the tasks is an added dimension to the content. (Participant 62, Module 1)*

*I have completed all the tasks but can't currently engage in the group of five discussion nor upload completed worksheets. (Participant 82, Module 2)*

*It took me some time to track down the resources as some of the links did not work. This made my progress slower, however I have reviewed some documents a number of times which has been useful. I am still having some technical difficulty with getting the videos to load and this is making the task take a longer time. (Participant 66, Module 4)*

*Blurry tables and missing articles, Forums not working. (Participant 94, Module 2)*

The benefits to participants as learners can be summarised in terms of three elements: (i) the extent to which materials provided in Modules stimulated meaningful and relevant discussions; (ii) the development of communities of learners, and (iii) development of an assessor identity.

Much of the commentary from participants made reference to personal 'revelations' and to discussions that were generated through engagement with Module materials, the associated activities and the readings:

*Have found the reading in this module time consuming but worthwhile Some very interesting information that has been helpful to me speaking with my own staff about the Lead career stage. I am looking forward to some good discussions in Sydney. (Participant 71, Module 2)*

*I will be interested in discussing the Illustrations of Practice with a wider group, noting that these can be " lists" of assertions that need to be backed up with quality annotations and evidence. (Participant 98, Module 2)*

*I really enjoyed going back over Hattie's article. It was an important reminder of the difference between an experienced and an expert teacher... The Marzano map is also a very useful tool ... I agree with Luke's idea of 'adaptive teaching'. When he discusses the different pedagogies, he reminds me of the work of Scott Paris (who has also worked in Singapore). ... In the MET project data, we see that teachers with higher degrees are not necessarily those who get the best results. I was also shocked to see that the highest rate of 'unsatisfactory' in the teacher practice table was for communicating with students. (Participant 93, Module 4)*

The support that the Assessor Training Program provided for communities of learners was articulated by a number of participants. They noted that the blended approach of online and face-to-face components was central to their development as assessors:

*My learning has been significant in learning about the APST but also engaging in a new method of online learning and communication through forums. (Participant 17, Module 1)*

*Module 2 came to life for me during discussions at training workshops in Sydney. (Participant 16, Module 1)*

*The activities generated discussion across the group about the importance of possessing a common language when communicating about the APST with colleagues and assessors. (Participant 72, Module 1)*

*... our group is diverse in our locations and our work and experiences. As a group we are enjoying the Assessors training and for some, taking on new challenges with the online platform and contributing to forums. We all look forward to meeting face-to-face in Sydney. (Participant 72, Module 1)*

*This module was again supported by time spent with colleagues in Sydney...a lot of this work has (by necessity) been done in isolation and at times I felt very lacking in confidence about the knowledge and skills I have, or my capacity in the area. The times spent with colleagues were affirming and clarifying and served to broaden my understandings and insights ... and certainly hugely broadened my perspective! (Participant 43, Module 5)*

At a personal level, participants were only too ready to document their perceived 'growth' as assessors:

*A disciplined online learning model is a new experience for me ... The fora are starting to be very stimulating and valuable. There is more think time on line than in a real time conversation and the less casual more deliberative opportunities has advantages. (Participant 62, Module 1)*

*Information provided in this component has caused some dissonance for me which I still need to reflect on and consider. Required Task 2.1b engaged me in thinking more about the future of my role as opposed to the present. The role of assessor will be ongoing and requires of me and the system I am in to ensure we remain refreshed and rigorous in our knowledge and practices. (Participant 92, Module 2)*

*Module 3 has consolidated lots of the work from the 2 days of training in Sydney. I am reflecting on the notion that I know a lot and have experienced a lot, but need to unlearn some of it so that I am able to appropriately assess applicants in this process. (Participant 60, Module 3)*

*The overall learnings of the Module were invaluable, particularly when linked to the Sydney workshops- greatly supported me in identifying and reflecting on my skills and bias in observation and assessment. (Participant 98, Module 4)*

*The professional learning involved throughout was both informative and stimulating. (Participant 12, Module 5)*

As a final comment about participant growth, it is interesting to chart the commentary of one participant throughout the Assessor Training Program via the Individual Reflection Forum. Embedded in the commentary of this participant is an appraisal of the scope of the task ahead, personal reflection about perceived benefits, the identification of discussion

points for sharing with others, and elements of the program that support the development of an assessor identity. A consistent theme throughout this sequence of Individual Reflections is professional growth through the consolidation of new insights and understanding, individually and collaboratively. The reflections evidence that the participant's engagement with multiple elements of the program resulted in sustained anticipation and motivation.

*The content of this module was significant, challenging and highly interesting/informative. i have gained a stronger understanding of the assessment procedures and been able to unperpin my learnings with both practical and research based resources. (Module 2)*

*I will be interested in discussing the Illustrations of Practice with a wider group, noting that these can be " lists" of assertions that need to be backed up with quality annotations and evidence. (Module 2)*

*I found this module very intense, and the Act Now task frustrating and onerous ... The overall learnings of the Module were invaluable, particularly when linked to the Sydney workshops - greatly supported me in identifying and reflecting on my skills and bias in observation and assessment. (Module 4)*

*... a lot of this work has (by necessity) been done in isolation and at times I felt very lacking in confidence about the knowledge and skills I have, or my capacity in the area. The times spent with colleagues were affirming and clarifying and served to broaden my understandings and insights... and certainly hugely broadened my perspective! (Module 5)*

## 10 References

- AITSL. (2011). *Australian professional standards for teachers*. Carlton South, Vic.: Education Services Australia.
- AITSL. (2011). *National professional standards for teachers*. Carlton South, Vic.: Education Services Australia.
- AITSL. (2012). *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in Australia*. Carlton South, Vic: Education Services Australia.
- AITSL. (2012). *Illustrations of Practice*. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Melbourne, viewed 18 December 2012, <<http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/illustrations>>
- AITSL. (2012). *Request for Tender 12/09*. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Melbourne.
- AITSL. (2013). *Guide to the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in Australia*, Education Services Australia, Carlton South, Vic.
- Ballou, D. (2003). Certifying accomplished teachers: A critical look at the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 78(4), 201-219.
- Bernardin, H. J., & Buckley, M. R. (1981). Strategies in rater training. *Academy of Management Review*, 6, 205-212.
- Denzin, N. K. (2010). Moments, mixed methods, and paradigm dialogs. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(6), 419-427.
- Gorman, C. A., & Rentsch, J. R. (2009). Evaluating frame-of-reference rater training effectiveness using performance schema accuracy. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(5), 1336-1344.
- Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (2005). Participatory Action Research: Communicative action and the public sphere, In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (pp. 559-603). Thousand Oaks, CA.: SAGE.
- Kleinhenz, E., & Ingvarson, L. (2004). Teacher accountability in Australia: Current policies and practices and their relation to the improvement of teaching and learning. *Research Papers in Education*, 19(1), 31-49.
- Krippendorff, K. (2012). *Content Analysis: An introduction to its methodology* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Leonard, D. & McAdam, R. (2003). Impacting organizational learning: The training and experiences of quality award examiners and assessors. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 27(1), 16-21.

- Leonardo da Vinci Project. (2005). *Training programme for external quality assessment experts*. Vilnius: Education and Culture, Leonardo da Vinci Project.
- Lievens, F. (2001). Assessor training strategies and their effects on accuracy, interrater reliability, and discriminant validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(2), 255-264.
- Little, O., Goe, L. & Bell, C. (2009). *A practical guide to evaluating teacher effectiveness*. Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Centre for Teacher Quality.
- Martin, J. R. & White, P. R. R. (2007). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Messinger, A. M. (2012). Teaching Content Analysis through *Harry Potter*, *Teaching Sociology, 40*(4), 360-367.
- Nijveldt, M. (2007). *Validity in teacher assessment: An exploration of judgement processes of assessors*. Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands.
- Nijveldt, M., Beijaard, D., Brekelmans, M., Wubbels, T., & Verloop, N. (2009). Assessors' perceptions of their judgement processes: Successful strategies and threats underlying valid assessment of student teachers. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 35*, 29-36.
- Salas, E., & Cannon-Bowers, J. A. (2001). The science of training: A decade of progress. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*, 471-499.
- SiMERR (2012). Request for Tender 12/09: To Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership – Addendum to Main RfT.
- Smith, D. & Hope, J. (1992). *The health professional as researcher: Issues, problems and strategies*. Sydney: Social Science Press.
- Szpara, M. Y., & Wylie, E. C. (2005). National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Assessor Training: Impact of bias reduction exercises. *Teachers College Record, 107*(4), 803-841.
- The Training Foundation. (2001). *Guide to the Trainer Assessment Program: Skills certification for trainer and learner support roles*. Coventry: The Training Foundation.
- U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning Evaluation and Policy Development. (2010). *Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.