

Advice to the Interim ATEC

Enhancing professional practice in Australian higher education teaching

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Overview

This paper presents recommendations for national action to drive continuing improvement of teaching quality and enhance professional practice in Australian higher education teaching. It has been commissioned by the Interim Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and developed in consultation with key stakeholders. National action on teaching quality and enhancement of professional practice in teaching is an interim strategic priority for the ATEC.

The rationale for action is driven by the urgent need to support teachers and teaching teams to manage complexity and change in higher education by building and sustaining professional practice in teaching. Action is also driven by the need to explicitly demonstrate action on quality improvement and accountability to stakeholders including students, external partners, regulators and Government.

The recommendations comprise an action plan for integrated action to enhance professional practice in Australian higher education teaching. Under the action plan, the paper proposes specific, co-ordinated actions on national standards, evaluative measures and indicators, and the enhancement of professional capability for teaching. The paper presents preliminary considerations for implementation and proposes the establishment of a *Higher Education Teaching Hub* to support sustained improvement. Collectively, this action will focus effort and resources to ensure higher and more consistent quality in university teaching.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1:

- that ATEC adopt a *Professional Practice Action Plan* to drive improvement in teaching quality and professional practice in teaching that sustains ongoing improvement in outcomes for students and institutions. Adoption of the Plan will set new standards for teaching practice, agreed measures for teaching quality and minimum standards for professional learning for educators.

Recommendation 2:

- that ATEC recommend amendment of the Higher Education Standards to introduce a new standard for teaching practice and a revised standard for staffing qualifications with supporting amendments in governance.

Recommendation 3:

- that ATEC create and maintain national guides for evidence of teaching quality and professional practice comprising a *Good Teaching Descriptor* and a *Guide for Teaching Quality Measures and Indicators*

Recommendation 4:

- that ATEC create and maintain a *Professional Learning Guide for Higher Education Teaching* that describes credible professional learning and how institutions can meet a new standard for professional learning.
- that ATEC support the sector to develop collective professional learning and share good and innovative practice

Recommendation 5:

- that ATEC develops a detailed transition plan in consultation with higher education institutions and stakeholders which generates positive engagement with the action plan and sustained improvement and manages risk.

Teaching in Higher Education

The goal of higher education teaching is to support and enable student learning. Enhancing teaching is an important mechanism for higher education institutions and educators to improve student learning outcomes and student experience as noted in the Australian University Accord Review¹. While recognizing student success is complex and multi-factorial, the quality of teaching is a key factor in learning outcomes and within the immediate control of teaching institutions. Good teaching practice is a learned skill enhanced through experience and intentional professional learning. Complexity and change in higher education means the path to high quality learning and teaching is through continuous quality improvement.

Higher education learning and teaching is complex and dynamic, spanning a wide range of institutions, curricula, students and educators. Teaching occurs across multiple modes (physical campuses, online, hybrid), uses a wide range of teaching designs including block mode, intensives, work-based learning, self-directed learning and research-based learning, and is packaged into a broad range of courses² spanning anywhere between 6 months and 4 or more years. Large institutions typically offer a wide range of degree programs.

Australian higher education courses share some universal characteristics as specified by the Higher Education Standards³. Course learning outcomes are required and typically span a broad range of transferable capabilities such as ways of thinking (problem-solving, analysis, evaluative judgement) and ways of working (communication, teamwork, ethical awareness) as well as discipline knowledge and skills⁴. More recently the rapid spread of generative AI technologies has sharply focussed attention on digital and genAI fluency. Critically, all Australian universities have committed to embedding Indigenous knowledges and culture in all degree programs and improving education attainment for First Nations peoples⁵. As well as embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, this commitment is now fostering new pedagogies based on Indigenous culture and education. The teaching capability needed to support this wide range of education outcomes is intrinsically complex.

Higher education teaching relies on considerable supporting services for students and teachers. Positive student experience, engagement and belonging supports student retention and completion hence higher education institutions are expected to invest in effective and inclusive supporting strategies and services⁶. Teaching teams work collaboratively with a wide range of student services including study support, equity and inclusion, wellbeing, careers and peer-led programs alongside student or course administration. Teaching teams also work closely with education specialists in academic and professional roles including educational and inclusive design, learning environments, libraries, industry-connected learning and specialist Indigenous centres. Higher education teachers and teaching teams work in complex environments demanding deep collaboration and complementary expertise.

Higher education is facing significant change. Three themes are particularly pertinent to learning and teaching: diversity and inclusion, digital disruption and academic workforce trends.

- The move from elite to mass higher education is a global phenomenon and has been accompanied by increased expectations for institutions to produce work-ready graduates. The Australia Government has committed to a target of 80 per cent of the working age population holding a tertiary qualification by 2050⁷ as recommended by the Australian Universities Accord Review¹. As noted by the Australian Universities Accord Report, increasing participation will increase student diversity and place more emphasis on 'scaffolded support through the learning journey'. Increasing student diversity brings richness into learning but also places more pressure on teaching teams. Specialist support and capability is crucial for students and teachers.
- Generative AI is proving to be a deep disruptor for conventional teaching, and particularly for assessment in higher education which has previously relied heavily on evaluation of a product of study. Since generative AI can radically improve student outputs used for assessment, considerable attention has turned to assessment of observed performance and evaluating the process of learning⁸. This is a major shift in teaching practice and

¹ Department of Education. (2024). *Australian Universities Accord final report*. Australian Government. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/final-report>

² In this document, 'course' represents a degree program consistent with use of that term in the Higher Education Standards

³ Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 made under section 58(1) of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*, Compilation No. 1, Compilation date: 9 December 2021, Includes amendments up to: F2021L01731. Accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2021L00488/latest/text>, Jan 2026

⁴ Oliver, B., & Jorre de St Jorre, T. (2018). Graduate attributes for 2020 and beyond: Recommendations for Australian higher education providers. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(4), 821-836.

⁵ Universities Australia (2022). *Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025*. Universities Australia. <https://universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UA-Indigenous-Strategy-2022-25.pdf>

⁶ Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, Good Practice Note: Improving retention and completion of students in Australian higher education – February 2020. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/resources/good-practice-notes/good-practice-note-improving-retention-and-completion-students-australian-higher-education>

⁷ Commonwealth of Australia. (2024). *Budget measures: Budget paper no. 2 2024–25*. budget.gov.au p62

⁸ Ashford-Rowe, K (2026). *The next necessary leap in generative AI*. <https://needednowlt.substack.com/p/the-next-necessary-leap-in-generative>

has prompted a nation-wide collective effort and intense pressure on teaching teams to upskill and redesign assessment⁹. Teaching capability must shift to adapt to digital change.

- Shifts in the higher education teaching workforce are also changing the higher education landscape. Australian tertiary education institutions have a relatively high student:staff ratio which has been increasing over the last decade (Fig 10)¹⁰. The growth of education-focused academic roles implies a growing section of the teaching workforce explicitly focused on adult learning (Fig 3a)¹¹. Blurring of academic and professional roles has fostered new conceptions of cross-over roles described as either third-space professionals or third-space academics¹¹. Recent Australian Government legislation changes to the definition of sessional work¹² is prompting universities to re-imagine these roles which are primarily in teaching. Teachers and teaching teams are changing.

Complexity and change are driving forces that will shift the quality of higher education teaching and the capability needed to deliver it. This proposal explores national action that will support and grow good teaching practice for the benefit of students, teachers, institutions and stakeholders.

Rationale for action on professional practice

The quality of teaching in higher education is difficult to define largely due to the complexity of teaching¹³. However, using a suite of measures and indicators that reflect the perspectives of multiple stakeholders is informative. Broad standards for learning and teaching derive from the *Higher Education Standards* with institutional compliance monitored by the Tertiary Education Quality Assurance Agency (TEQSA). Many individual institutions have developed or adopted descriptors of teaching quality that are most relevant to their students, teachers and contexts. Creation of national approaches to improve teaching quality will assist by building a collective, national view of quality.

Professionalism of teaching in higher education has been described as ‘the knowledge and skills in designing curricula, planning and implementing teaching and learning experiences, supporting students and assessing student progress and outcomes — in other words, knowledge and skills in teaching and learning.’¹⁴ Professional practice is the expert use of this knowledge to achieve desired outcomes for students, staff and universities. Professional practice places university teaching as an expert activity using a developed skill set to agreed professional standards.

Australian higher education institutions have existing and explicit commitments to good quality teaching. Nonetheless, the reported experience of students and educators indicates quality is inconsistent and improvement activities can be constrained – particularly in an environment of rapid change. Lifting teaching quality and enhancing professional practice in higher education teaching requires system-wide action to ensure consistency and ongoing commitment to improvement. Australian higher education institutions have considerable autonomy in managing teaching, noting varying capacity to invest, within an over-riding requirement to meet the national Higher Education Standards. Institutions are accountable for the quality of their teaching and must report on this to their own governing bodies as well as appropriate external stakeholders. Alignment of local autonomy and responsibility with national drivers creates a powerful impetus for better teaching practice.

This proposal is based on five foundational observations:

1. Given the necessity of widening participation to achieve ambitious attainment targets associated with a more diverse student body, the looming impact of AI and the need for curriculum and pedagogical reform, there is a critical need to **build capability** in our academic teaching workforce to manage and thrive in change.
2. Universities remain **anomalous** in comparison to all other educational sectors in not requiring some form of mandated teacher accreditation and ongoing professional learning and this should be addressed.

⁹ Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (2024) *Request for information: Addressing the risk of artificial intelligence*. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/higher-education-good-practice-hub/artificial-intelligence/request-information-addressing-risk-artificial-intelligence>

¹⁰ Department of Education (2025) Key findings from the 2024 Higher Education Staff Statistics. <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/staff-data/selected-higher-education-statistics-2024-staff-data/key-findings-2024-higher-education-staff-statistics#toc-section-4-student-to-staff-ratios-table-a-and-b-universities>

¹¹ Whitchurch, C. (2015). The rise of third space professionals: Paradoxes and dilemmas. In *Forming, recruiting and managing the academic profession* (pp. 79-99). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

¹² Fair Work Commission (2024) Fair Work Commission fact sheet: Changes to casual employment laws. <https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/resources/fact-sheet-changes-to-casual-employment-2024-08-19.pdf>

¹³ Probert B. (2015) *The quality of Australia's higher education system: How it might be defined, improved and assured*. Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, Sydney

¹⁴ James, R., Baik, C., Millar, V., Naylor, R., Bexley, E., Kennedy, G., ... & Booth, C. (2015). *Advancing the quality and status of teaching in Australian higher education*. Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, Sydney.

3. There is a reported **lack of consistency in teaching quality** within and across the sector and a formal response is warranted.
4. It is arguable that the **lack of confidence in the sector and the loss of social license** is at least in part attributable to a lack of visible commitment to quality teaching - building trust through valuing and recognising quality teaching as core to our commitment to students is vital.
5. Moving to a system focus on universities demands **a whole of sector approach to quality** and consequently must include teaching.

Improvement in teaching quality must be a sustained endeavour to achieve lasting change. It must build from current good practice to leverage existing excellence, minimize cost and accelerate uplift. Sector-wide changes to higher education teaching must be impactful, feasible and accountable. Recommendations presented are designed to:

- apply to all higher education institutions while allowing for diverse institutional missions
- recognise and leverage existing good practice in higher education teaching
- align to existing quality assurance and improvement mechanisms to avoid duplication and minimize regulatory cost
- respect institutional responsibility while driving consistency in good teaching practice across higher education
- be accountable to stakeholders including students, institutional partners, community and Government
- drive cultural change that persists in a dynamic environment

Developing the recommendations

The recommendations presented in this paper were developed through a sequence of workshops and consultations from November 2025 to April 2026. Development of the recommendations was discussed with Interim ATEC Commissions throughout the process.

Timeline:

		Consultation
Dec 2026	EPPHE Workshop 1: Provocation paper setting out issues to consider for action to improve teaching quality and professional practice.	Participants: • Table A/B providers: DVCA/E or nominee • Nominees from non-University provider organisations: IEAA, IHEA, ITECA, TDA, Country University Centres • Nominees from Chairs of Academic Boards (OzCABS. CoCABS)
Feb 2026	EPPHE Workshop 1: Discussion paper outlining a possible model for action	As above
Feb/Mar 2026	Consultation on draft recommendations	University VCs (written feedback invited) HESP (discussion with Chair) TEQSA (discussion with Chief Commissioner) NTEU (discussion) NUS (discussion)

Development of this proposal has been rapid with limited time for feedback. Further consultation will be needed to guide implementation of any adopted recommendations. In particular, a broader diversity of student views on teaching practice should be sought as they are active participants in learning and teaching and from Indigenous education leaders to ensure alignment with action on Indigenous education. Input from relevant professional associations and specialist education groups would also be valuable to explore options for professional learning.

Integrated action

Professional Practice Action Plan

Enhancing teaching quality and professional practice in teaching must be a collaboration between educators, institutions and their leaders, and regulators. All bear responsibility for teaching quality. Effective action is based on shared and trusted views of quality and its drivers, while recognizing the complementary roles of all participants and learning from feedback from students and external partners. Efficient action leverages existing mechanisms and expertise, local autonomy and management, and the education mission of institutions and disciplines. Sustainable action sets out clear governing principles with space for review and revision to respond to a dynamic environment.

The *Professional Practice Action Plan* is designed to operate holistically drawing together regulation, guidance, implementation and accountability. It proposes overarching national standards for teaching in higher education with a new standard for teaching practice and amendment of existing standards for teaching capability and the governance of teaching within institutions. Achievement of the new standards becomes part of the re-registration of higher education institutions, is driven through institutional performance goals aligned to institutional mission and monitored through internal governance and, for the relevant providers, through annual institutional compacts with the ATEC¹⁵.

The action plan is owned and delivered by the ATEC. TEQSA, as the system regulator, will enforce application of the new standards, assist institutions with guidance and is a key partner. In its role as system steward, ATEC has responsibility to build and protect the quality and reputation of the tertiary education system. It guides system performance by improving long-term quality, sustainability, and outcomes through ongoing improvement.

The proposed action plan is summarised in Figure 1. National standards (left box) are expanded to explicitly set standards for teaching practice and amended to uplift teaching capability standards with supporting changes in the governance of teaching. The new teaching practice standard introduces requirements for evidence-based teaching practice and deeper understanding of student cohorts. The **authorising environment** is constructed through the co-ordinated action of ATEC (system steward and HESF responsibility) and TEQSA (system regulator).

Implementation of the national standards requires guiding documentation explaining what practice and evidence would comply with the standard and how institutions could excel. Collectively these **guides** assist institutions to comply and assist the regulator, TEQSA, to work with institutions on re-registration (second left box). They comprise: (1) a national description of good teaching in higher education which is a statement establishing shared language and expectations, (2) a description of appropriate and reliable evidence to demonstrate teaching quality and professional practice and (3) a guide to enhanced professional learning for teachers including formal and informal activities. The guides are living documents responsive to sector change. They are updated regularly and inform future revision of the standards.

Higher education institutions remain responsible for **teaching design, delivery and evaluation**, and **teacher professional learning** within their institution (second right box). Institutions must be able to tailor teaching to their mission, context and for their student cohorts. Institutions set their own goals for improvement in teaching and seek continuous improvement, drawing on the standards and the enabling guides.

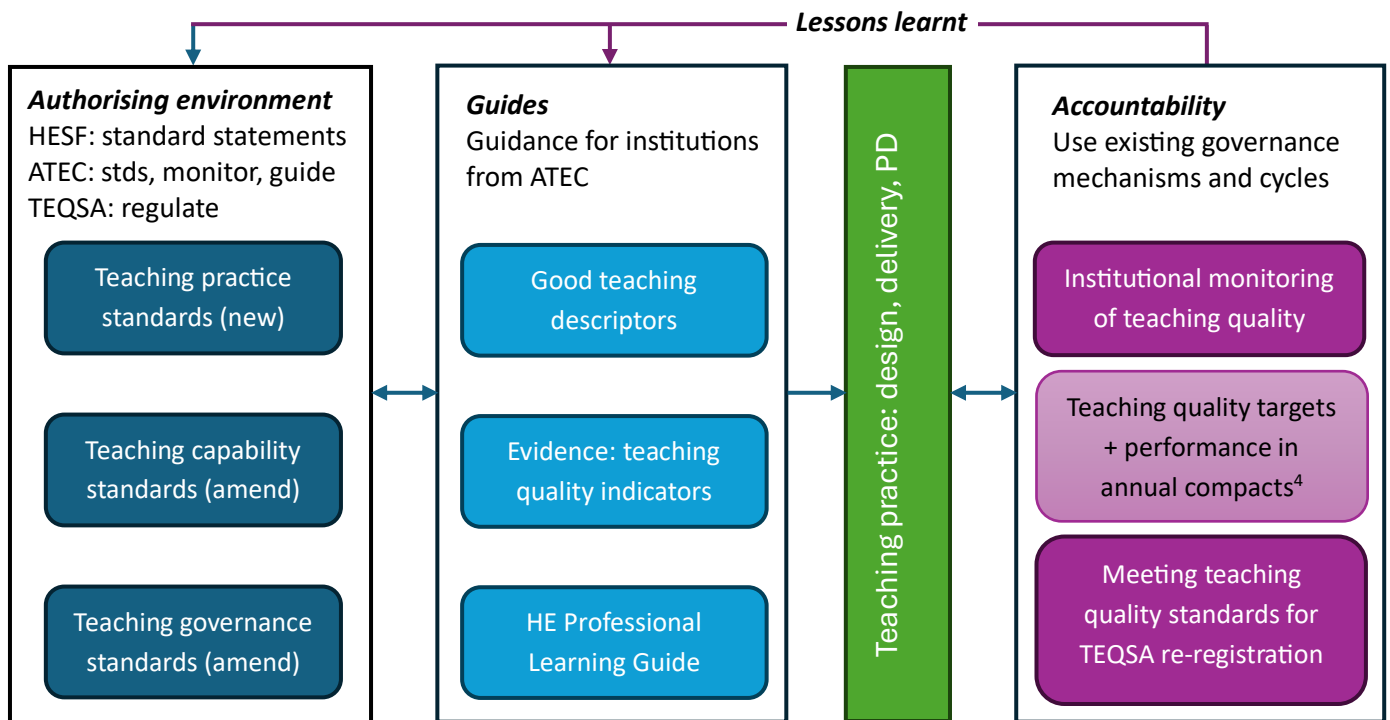
Accountability for teaching performance and capability requires institutions to report progress through internal governance (eg Academic Board, Council) and externally through re-registration processes (TEQSA) and, where applicable, through institutional compacts (ATEC) (right box). Accountability should drive continuous improvement and feed directly into teaching practice. Lessons learnt feed back across the action plan to maintain efficacy and inform regular review of the guides and standards. Reporting should be aligned across all accountability mechanisms to remove duplication. Internal reporting should inform and roll up to external reporting.

Recommendation 1:

that ATEC adopt a *Professional Practice Action Plan* to drive improvement in teaching quality and professional practice in teaching that sustains ongoing improvement in outcomes for students and institutions. Adoption of the Plan will set new standards for teaching practice, agreed measures for teaching quality and minimum standards for professional learning for educators.

¹⁵ Accountability via institutional compacts applies only to relevant institutions. Mission-based institutional compacts are currently made with individual providers that receive grants governed by the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) (Table A and Table B providers).

Fig 1: Professional Practice Action Plan



Interpreting and implementing the action plan

The action plan needs a considered program of work that prompts active participation and does not leave institutions unable to meet the standards. Implementation should not duplicate existing systems or processes, and should re-use and expand effective practice. Feedback, testing and collaboration should inform and streamline implementation.

1. Standards and accountability

Teaching quality and professional practice will be enhanced by a national context which actively demands consistency in teaching quality. This comprises:

- a specific standard requiring institutional action to support and continually improve teaching practice and teaching capability
- a specific standard requiring foundational qualifications in teaching and continuing professional learning (formal or informal) in teaching for HE teachers
- a requirement to demonstrate continuous improvement using quantitative and qualitative indicators through periodic institutional re-registration and specific regulatory action as required, and annual compact agreements for relevant providers.

Teaching standards are established within the Higher Education Standards Framework which sets the regulatory requirements for registration and continued operation of higher education institutions. The standards recognise the prescribed autonomy of HE institutions, describing the outcome required with space to adapt to local context.

Further detail on proposed changes to the Higher Education Standards is discussed below.

2. Guides

In practice, new standards require system-wide guides that interpret the standards for educators and students, institutions and the regulator. Guides also provide benefit in their own right as resources for institutions to develop and refine internal quality frameworks and monitor quality. Proposed guides (further discussed below) comprise:

- a national *description of good teaching practice* that confirms a common language and expectations. The description will be detailed enough to include key characteristics which are based on evidence from educational research and the scholarship of learning and teaching. The description will guide institutions in development of their own more detailed teaching quality frameworks or adaptation of existing recognized quality frameworks.

- description of *credible evidence (measures and indicators)* of teaching quality and professional practice that promote improvement and evidence compliance with the standards.
- *description of recognised professional learning* in teaching for HE that enhances teaching practice and meets the requirements of the standards.

Guides align to the Higher Education Standards and are sponsored by ATEC as the system steward. They are developed drawing on recognized HE expertise and leadership under the auspices of ATEC and in consultation with the regulator, TEQSA. They are living documents that can adapt to external change and emerging issues, risks and opportunities. Guides provide the foundations for institutions to exceed the standards and excel in teaching quality.

Further detail on development of guides is discussed below.

3. Feedback, review and development

Higher education teaching cannot be static. Further work on teaching quality over time will revise and enhance the action plan, create new guidance or may suggest adjustment of the standards. Ongoing review and revision is embedded within the action plan via a feedback flow from institutions and stakeholders. Implementation of the action plan should include strategic pilot implementation and thorough evaluation.

Proposals for implementation of the action plan are discussed below.

What would change for institutions?

The *Professional Practice Action Plan* practice is intended to improve teaching quality and enhance professional practice in teaching consistently across the higher education sector making this a visible priority that can respond well to change at every institution. Delivery, review and improvement of teaching remain the responsibility of individual institutions, educators and teaching teams. Institutions are expected to embed action within existing quality practices. If implemented, institutions will:

- specifically monitor the quality and impact of teaching practice and report on progress internally through existing governance and externally in re-registration processes
- be accountable for teaching capability and monitor teaching and learning qualifications and continuous professional learning, in addition to current records of qualifications in a discipline.
- for relevant institutions, set contextualised annual targets and report progress on teaching quality and professional teaching practice via ATEC compacts
- contribute to system-wide quality improvement activities co-ordinated by ATEC and/or TEQSA

Sector feedback on the draft proposal

Consultation with higher education institutions, the National Tertiary Education Union, the National Union of Students and the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations showed universal support for the ambition of improving teaching quality and strong support for a national approach on professional practice. Institutions were concerned about implementation, explicit consideration of the range of learning and teaching including Indigenous perspectives, workforce implications and the impact of the current volume and pace of change. Stakeholder feedback included:

- concerns about the **operation of new regulation** in practice. Institutions noted the importance of driving positive engagement and avoiding compliance-driven behaviours. Feedback also suggested role clarification between the steward (ATEC) and the regulator (TEQSA), in particular clarifying the authority of enabling documents and alignment of institutional compacts with compliance activities.
- the critical importance of **sector-led development of** guides and thorough consultation with key stakeholders including staff and student associations. Institutions and professional associations hold deep expertise on teaching and teaching quality which should be leveraged to ensure efficacy and build trust. ATEC as the owner of the plan would be responsible for commission and review of work and final decision-making.
- significant concern that introduction of new standards and expectations will add **additional cost and regulatory burden**. Institutions commented on the current rate and volume of change including: funding, workforce management, new legislative requirements, support for students and the impact of generative AI.

Feedback highlights the critical importance of careful implementation and engagement of the sector through thorough and reciprocal consultation and sector-led development of guides.

Standards for teaching quality

Universities have long-standing systems of quality assurance for their education mission that are ultimately governed by the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF). The HES Framework requires institutions to monitor the quality of teaching and supervision of research students (standard 5.3.3) and to monitor and report on quality with academic oversight (standard 6.3.2) with appropriate processes and procedures (standard 6.3.1). The HES does not define the quality of teaching expected, the mechanisms to maintain good teaching practice or specify indicator measures. In practice, higher education institutions have considerable autonomy in determining and maintaining teaching practice.

New and amended standards will create sector-wide imperatives for action to improve teaching, and to enhance professional teaching practice. Standards are set nationally to build and maintain trust in higher education while allowing action to meet the standards to be tailored to each institution.

Recommendation 2:

that ATEC recommend amendment of the Higher Education Standards to introduce a new standard for teaching practice and a revised standard for staffing qualifications with supporting amendments in governance.

Recommendations for revision of Higher Education Standards

Introduction of a new standard for teaching practice and amendment of existing standards of staffing for teaching and the governance of teaching are proposed in the context of the existing standards framework. Changes will:

- maintain principle-based approach of HESF.
- introduce more explicit requirements for ongoing improvement of teaching practice and teaching capability.
- be supported by guidance documents/resources explaining how institutions are expected to demonstrate they have met the standard.

Table 1: Proposed changes to the standards (indicative draft text).

	Existing standard	Proposed standards
Teaching practice	No explicit standard for teaching practice <i>Note</i> reference to teaching design at 3.1.3	Introduce a new standard for teaching practice that requires: • Evidence-based practice • Continuous improvement • Thorough understanding of the principles of learning and teaching • Supporting student progression to independent learning Re-number clauses to place teaching practice immediately after design.
Teaching capability	• HE standard 3.2.3 requires: staff have content knowledge level at one qualification higher than being taught and contemporary knowledge, and relevant teaching skills • No requirement for training or continuous professional learning. • <i>Note</i> clause 3.2.4 provides a developmental pathway for specialists (including industry partners) or new teachers.	Amend 3.3.3 to require the following for 'staff with responsibilities for academic oversight and those with teaching and supervisory roles in courses or units of study': • Qualifications or demonstrated experience in contemporary HE teaching • Continuous professional learning
Monitoring teaching quality	HE Standard 6.2.2: • measurement (6.2.3e, f, h) • monitoring and reporting teaching quality (6.2.3h)	Amend 6.2.2 to include explicit monitoring of teaching qualifications

Indicative text for new and revised standards

Changes to the Higher Education Standards require careful and deep review. As system steward, ATEC is responsible for the standards with advice from the Higher Education Standards Committee, and as regulator, TEQSA must advise on standards and the feasibility and means of implementation. The following text is presented as an indicator of what could be included while maintaining the integrity of the current Standards. It is not prescriptive and should be considered in light of deeper consultation and feedback, notably from TEQSA, on the feasibility of ensuring compliance.

Possible text amendments to Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021¹⁶ with proposed changes in black and existing text in grey.

3 Teaching

3.2 Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is the design, delivery and review of taught, facilitated or supervised learning activities.

1. Teaching is designed and delivered to optimise student learning outcomes.
2. Teaching is informed by contemporary educational research and evidence-based practice. Teaching within specific disciplines is informed, wherever appropriate, by discipline-based educational research and practice.
3. Teaching is appropriate for its student cohorts, is informed by knowledge of student cohorts, applies appropriate scaffolding of knowledge and skills, and fosters independent learning.
4. Teaching is continually improved through active monitoring and review that results in uplift of teaching performance and student outcomes.

3.3 Staffing

3. Staff with responsibilities for academic oversight and those with teaching and supervisory roles in courses or units of study are equipped for their roles, including:

- a. having knowledge of contemporary developments in the discipline or field, which is informed by continuing scholarship or research or advances in practice
- b. having a qualification or equivalent demonstrated experience in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment principles relevant to the discipline, their role, modes of delivery and the needs of particular student cohorts,
- c. having a qualification in a relevant discipline at least one level higher than is awarded for the course of study, or equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice-based experience and expertise, except for staff supervising doctoral degrees having a doctoral degree or equivalent research experience, and
- d. demonstrate participation in continuous professional learning for learning and teaching in higher education

3.4 Learning Resources and Educational Support

6 Governance and Accountability

6.3 Academic Governance

2. Academic oversight assures the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training effectively, including by:

- a. developing, monitoring and reviewing academic policies and their effectiveness
- b. confirming that delegations of academic authority are implemented
- c. critically scrutinising, approving and, if authority to self-accredit is held, accrediting or advising on approving and accrediting, courses of study and their associated qualifications
- d. maintaining oversight of academic and research integrity, including monitoring of potential risks
- e. monitoring and initiating action to improve performance against institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes
- f. critically evaluating the quality and effectiveness of educational innovations or proposals for innovations
- g. evaluating the effectiveness of institutional monitoring, review and improvement of academic activities, and
- h. monitoring and reporting to the corporate governing body on the quality of teaching, teaching capability and capacity, learning, research and research training.

¹⁶ Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 made under section 58(1) of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*, Compilation No. 1, Compilation date: 9 December 2021, Includes amendments up to: F2021L01731. Accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2021L00488/latest/text>, Jan 2026

Evidence: teaching quality indicators and professional practice indicators

Quality in higher education teaching is historically complex, multi-factorial and fluid¹⁷. To be effective, improvement in teaching quality must be underpinned by shared language and trusted evidence. Australian higher education has no single definition of, or criteria for, teaching quality. Individual institutions have developed their own teaching capability frameworks or have adopted existing frameworks such as the UK Professional Standards Framework¹⁸ which is currently used in many Australian universities. Given the existing variety of frameworks in use in the sector and the cost of implementation, this proposal suggests institutions develop, adopt or adapt detailed teaching capability statements that are best matched to their mission while meeting an agreed national description of good teaching in higher education.

Good practice in teaching and learning should be both measurable and meaningful, with reliable indicators that are sensitive to context, aligned with student outcomes, institutional goals, and sector-wide priorities, and incorporate different stakeholder perspectives. Measures and indicators should recognize different dimensions of quality and prioritise the impact of teaching. They should:

- provide constructive information for improvement of teaching quality and capability
- be context-appropriate, reliable and comprehensible to educators, students and stakeholders
- be readily accessible to teaching decision-makers, and relevant external stakeholders
- be aggregated for external reporting and accountability, with external benchmarking where possible.

Periodic course review and regular interim monitoring is currently mandated by the HE standards for all courses in higher education institutions (Standard 5.3). Course review is comprehensive including 'the expected learning outcomes, the methods for assessment of those outcomes, the extent of students' achievement of learning outcomes, and also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students and identified risks to the quality of the course of study' (HE Standard 5.3) and with the addition of a new standard will include teaching practice indicators. Measures and indicators provide evidence for thorough evaluation and recommendations for action.

Recommendation 3:

that ATEC create and maintain national guides for evidence of teaching quality and professional practice comprising a *Good Teaching Descriptor* and a *Guide for Teaching Quality Measures and Indicators*

Good Teaching Descriptor

Good teaching practice is described by a range of existing teaching quality frameworks which generally include a thorough knowledge of how students learn and how to teach them, skills in teaching methodologies, values that support student learning, and collaborative and reflective practice. Good teaching is continually refreshed and adapts effectively to changing circumstances and the needs of diverse students.

The proposed national statement on good teaching, the *Good Teaching Descriptor*, identifies core principles and characteristics of quality drawing on extensive existing descriptors. The principles and criteria are then applied to institutional frameworks which cover all aspects and modes of teaching, intersection with a supported student learning experience and leadership of teaching. Institutional frameworks allow effective response to the specific circumstances of disciplines, institutions and student cohorts. The national statement is broad enough to allow individual institutions to draw on a variety of professional learning activities and resources.

Guide for Teaching Quality Measures and Indicators

The *Guide for Teaching Quality Measures and Indicators* is a national resource that describes credible evidence of good teaching practice, quality and capability and lists agreed measures and indicators of teaching quality and capability. It is a living document supported by regular evaluation of listed measure and indicators to ensure validity and reliability. It will be used internally by institutions to drive teaching improvement and by institutions, ATEC and stakeholders to provide evidence of compliance, progress and outcomes.

¹⁷ Probert B. (2015) *The quality of Australia's higher education system: How it might be defined, improved and assured*. Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, Sydney, p18-

¹⁸ Advance HE, GuildHE and Universities UK (2023) *Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education* 2023. Accessed from <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/teaching-learning/professional-standards-framework>

Measures and indicators can be applied to institutions as a whole and also individual courses and units of study (subject/unit/module) to monitor performance. Institutions and discipline groups (Faculties/ Schools/ Departments) use measures and indicators for systematic review/analysis and benchmarking, to direct action to ensure continuous improvement, and to be accountable for progress and outcomes. Teaching teams and educators use measures and indicators to monitor, review and revise teaching and innovations. Institutions also use measures and indicators to build a positive teaching culture that recognizes and rewards good teaching practice.

The most frequently used metrics for educational quality in higher education are (1) student and graduate perceptions, as measured by national (student experience survey (SES), graduate outcomes survey (GOS)) and institutional surveys, and (2) student outcome data including success, retention and progression rates. While important, each measure has limitations. Considerable research shows student success in higher education is complex and dependent on factors within an institution and externally such as a student's prior experience of learning, social capital and current circumstances¹⁹. Quantitative metrics of success, retention or progression may not be sufficiently informative to drive improvement. Qualitative benchmarks may have more depth but can be more difficult to apply requiring expert interpretation.

The *Guide for Teaching Quality Measures and Indicators* should inform the review and revision of national instruments, such as the QILT data sets, and measures used for professional accreditation of higher education courses. Further work will be needed for collaboration with QILT and professional accreditation bodies. Appropriate measures may change over time as curriculum design, teaching delivery and student cohorts shift but should maintain longitudinal data sets where possible to monitor trends.

a) Teaching quality indicators

Measurement of teaching quality should reflect the breadth and depth of institutional teaching and learning contexts. The impact of good teaching and professional practice on student learning is not simple to measure. Effective measurement of teaching quality must use a range of measures and indicators²⁰, which though imperfect can be useful in driving change. Quantitative and qualitative indicators focussing on outcomes include:

- learning outcome data including student success, progression and retention
- student satisfaction with teaching derived from student feedback on teaching quality
- teacher and teaching team review of teaching and student outcomes
- peer evaluation of teaching
- external benchmarking relative to discipline, cohort and good practice principles

All measures and indicators need interpretation in the local context. Aggregate measures which are easier to benchmark between institutions may mask localised issues. Targets for improvement should consider the mission, context and student cohorts for individual institutions.

b) Teaching capability indicators

Teaching capability is measured by its impact, by peer review and indicated by input measures such as professional learning and esteem. Capability is evident at multiple levels: institutions, teaching teams, individual educators.

Institutional investment in teaching capability is an indicator of commitment to continuous improvement. Indicators are applied in aggregate to institutions to demonstrate accountability with staffing standards, and include:

- completion of formal qualifications in learning and teaching
- completion of continuous professional learning
- career progression on basis of teaching excellence (appointment, academic promotion, leadership)
- use of teaching review processes such as peer review of teaching
- frequency and distribution of peer esteem measures including fellowships and leadership

Teaching in higher education is often delivered by *teaching teams* as a collective responsibility rather than by individual teachers. Teams benefit from the combination of different capabilities and allow individuals to focus on their strengths. Teaching team capability and associated leadership is most often measured by the outputs of teaching through course/subject review.

¹⁹ Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) (2017) *Final Report - Improving retention, completion and success in higher education*. Accessed at <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/retention>. Nov 9, 2025

²⁰ James, R., Baik, C., Millar, V., Naylor, R., Bexley, E., Kennedy, G., ... & Booth, C. (2015). Advancing the quality and status of teaching in Australian higher education. *Office for Teaching and Learning, Sydney*.

Indicators of *individual teaching performance* should be used to foster career development of individual educators and describe effective and reflective practice, capability, innovation and leadership. Input measures such as professional learning should be matched by output assessment such as achievements, peer review and esteem indicators and contribution to teaching teams. Regular reflection on teaching should form part of annual career discussions.

Input measures such as professional learning are made credible by national statements defining the range of credible formal and informal learning that enhances teaching capability. The *Professional Learning Guide for Higher Education Teaching* (see below) will describe formal qualifications (modules, degrees, achievement fellowships) and continuous professional learning for teaching that is recognised as evidence of capability.

c) *Teaching capacity*

Adequate teaching capacity is determined by individual institutions. The Higher Education Standards explicitly require:

- 3.2.1. The staffing complement for each course of study is sufficient to meet the educational, academic support and administrative needs of student cohorts undertaking the course.
- 3.2.2. The academic staffing profile for each course of study provides the level and extent of academic oversight and teaching capacity needed to lead students in intellectual inquiry suited to the nature and level of expected learning outcomes.¹⁶

Institutions have autonomy in meeting these requirements noting staffing models and workloads are also governed by institutional enterprise agreements and policy. Variation in staffing models and the variable requirements of teaching modes, disciplines and expertise are complex and must be considered by each institution for each teaching context. This proposal does not recommend including staffing complement as an indicator of teaching quality or professional practice.

Options for teaching measures and indicators

A *Guide for Teaching Quality Measures and Indicators* in higher education should be designed for efficacy and feasibility. The statement should acknowledge the complexity of measuring teaching quality and will include multiple measures and indicators that give a rich picture of teaching performance. It should note measures and indicators that apply at institutional level and those that are most useful for individual teachers and teaching teams. The statement and its measures and indicators should be reviewed regularly to evaluate efficacy, relevance and value. Measures and indicators may include items such as those presented below.

Table 2: Aggregate teaching measures and indicators applied at institutional, discipline and course level

Indicator	Measure/indicator	Data source	Continuous improvement targets
Learning outcomes	Aggregate and cohort data on: • Student success • Student retention • Assurance of learning (assessment validity and reliability)	Institutional data	Nominated by institutions noting external benchmarks, including by field of education/ discipline
Student satisfaction	Aggregate and cohort data on student feedback on teaching quality	• Institutional surveys of courses, units/subjects • Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) items on teaching quality • Student Experience Survey (SES) on teaching quality and engagement	Nominated by institutions relative to external benchmarks including by discipline and student cohort
Peer evaluation of teaching (course)	Qualitative review post-teaching	Institutional review data	Participation Teaching improvement
External benchmarking relative to discipline, cohort, HE Standards	External review	External peer review of courses/ disciplines and disciplinary accreditation	Student outcomes Successful adaptation to change
External indicators of teaching capability	• External esteem measures including professional fellowship • Distribution of external recognition measures	Institutional data on external recognition	Participation and achievement
Governance indicators of teaching quality	• Delivery and impact of program/ course/ subject reviews	• Institutional review data	Periodic review of all courses

Governance indicators of professional practice	- Regular review of teaching capability - Reporting and discussion of teaching quality at institutional governance bodies and externally	Aggregate data on professional learning participation	Increasing qualifications and participation in PD
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Table 3: Individual teaching indicators applied with individual educators

Evidence of individual performance in teaching should be appropriately recognized in workforce management and career development. This will require appropriate consultation and alignment.

Indicator	Measure/indicator	Data source	Continuous improvement targets
Teacher and teaching team reflection	Qualitative review post-teaching	Institutional review data	Participation Teaching improvement
Peer evaluation of teaching (educator)	Qualitative review	Individual review data	Participation Teaching improvement
Skill development	- Teaching qualifications - Continuous professional learning - External esteem measures including professional fellowship	Institutional data	Achievement against professional learning plan
Contribution to teaching quality	- Contribution to review of teaching - Contribution to scholarship and practice communities as appropriate	Institutional data	Achievement against professional learning plan

Mission-based institutional compacts

Institutional mission-based institutional compacts will be made between the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and individual providers that receive grants governed by the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) (Table A and Table B providers).

The purpose of a mission based compact between the ATEC and a Table A or Table B provider is to give the provider flexibility to pursue their goals and mission while also enabling the provider to:

- (a) contribute to diversity within the higher education system; and
- (b) contribute to higher education priorities including those set out in the statement of strategic priorities prepared under section 43; and
- (c) meet the higher education needs of the provider's students and community.

Universities Accord (Australian Tertiary Education Commission) Act 2026 (Cth) s28²¹

Targets for improvement in teaching quality and professional teaching practice will be included in negotiation of annual compact agreements²². The purpose of the targets is to maintain focus on continuous improvement on an annual basis. Targets are intended to monitor longitudinal progress and use recognized measures and indicators for teaching quality and capability nuanced by institutional mission. Targets may address specific areas (discipline, student cohort, teaching model) where an institution seeks to excel. Targets should align to institutional mission and to the Higher Education Standards may also include additional targets may nominated by individual institutions.

Review and revision of teaching indicators and measures

It is acknowledged that current measures may be imperfect, given the complexity of work in higher education, but nevertheless many can be useful in driving positive change. As multi-factorial measurement of teaching quality and professional practice becomes normalised, it is likely more and better quality indicators will emerge. Measures and indicators must also respond to changes in the higher education context, cohorts of students and shifts in way learning occurs. For example, the mass uptake of artificial intelligence may have profound effects on the nature of knowledge and skills, and how relevant capabilities are learnt.

Regular review of the outcomes of improvement activities, and progress of institutions towards universal good teaching practice and enhanced professional practice, will identify which measures and indicators are most useful.

²¹ *Universities Accord (Australian Tertiary Education Commission) Act 2026 (Cth)* <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2026A00025/asmade/text>

²² Mission-based compacts. Australian Tertiary Education Commission <https://www.atec.gov.au/what-we-do/mission-based-compacts>

Enhanced professional learning in teaching for higher education

Professional learning for learning and teaching is effective when it contributes to improvements in teaching. Professional practice can be enhanced through multiple learning pathways including:

- formal qualifications (including foundation study modules and award courses)
- review, research, independent learning and reflective practice that results in quality improvement
- participation in communities of scholarly practice and/or the scholarship of learning and teaching
- innovation and curriculum development projects
- leadership and mentoring experience

Current provision of training in HE teaching varies considerably between higher education institutions. A recent snapshot survey (Panther et al, 2024)²³ shows the large majority of Australian universities offer some form of formal learning, and almost all sponsor communities of practice in learning and teaching. Foundation/induction programs are most common and are often delivered via one or more modules of study as teachers begin their teaching career. However, requirements to complete foundation study vary between institutions and there is very little requirement for ongoing professional learning. In a dynamic environment with increasing load on teaching, this is a significant gap.

At present, professional learning in higher education remains largely voluntary and is rarely comprehensive. Some institutions offer formal qualifications as a Graduate Certificate of Higher Education or equivalent, with a small number of universities requiring completion to satisfy probation in ongoing academic roles. However, most academic roles and supporting roles for teaching do not require professional learning to teach or to lead teaching. Notably little training or professional learning is provided to sessional teaching staff and contributing industry and research experts.

Non-university providers (NuHEPs) often record high student satisfaction with teaching and experience in national surveys (QILT) and may have high levels of industry collaboration in teaching. However, smaller organisations may have limited capacity to support independent programs of professional learning. Further consultation with NuHEPs and the associated HEPP-QN network will advise suitable guidance for professional learning in this context.

Provision of professional learning for higher education teaching is scattered. Foundation programs are typically offered in-house although online options may provide feasible alternatives (eg the *Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching* MOOC²⁴). Other forms such as professional fellowships, can indicate and grow individual teaching capability for educators or, in aggregate, for institutions. Notable formal programs are offered by AdvanceHE²⁵ and professional associations (examples: HERDSA, ASCILITE and ACODE²⁶). Working party members suggested exploring collective provision of professional learning options to improve feasibility, leverage institutional expertise and improve access.

Informal professional learning is widespread but typically voluntary. Institutions offer specialist modules for specific aspects of teaching and many institutions provide considerable resources for self-directed upskilling. Educators also refine their skills through curriculum and assessment review and revision, student experience uplift and participation in teaching communities of practice and the scholarship of learning and teaching (SoLT).

Professional learning is a critical pathway to lift teaching capability throughout teaching careers. Levels of required professional learning should reflect the responsibility and teaching workload of teaching roles noting inclusion of diverse expertise is a strength of higher education teaching. Professional learning requirements must support good teaching and should not exclude occasional contributors. For a professional workforce, professional learning should be a requirement for all educators who are responsible for teaching design and delivery, assessment and leadership.

Professional learning should be seen as an asset to educators and institutions; it must be an institutional and personal investment. Institutions should build on existing provision backed by evaluation of the impact of professional learning to best target investment and be sustainable. For individual educators, professional learning should be part of career planning. National standards and descriptors will allow professional learning to be overtly transferable between institutions simplifying future careers.

²³ Panther, B., Samarawickrema, G. & Warburton, S. (2024) *The provision of professional learning in Australian and New Zealand universities: An environmental scan*. Council of Australasian Leaders of Learning and Teaching (CAULTT), October.

²⁴ The *Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching* MOOC was developed via funding from the Office for Learning and Teaching with Creative Commons licensing and is currently sponsored by CAULTT, <https://theslowacademic.com/contemporary-approaches-to-university-teaching/>

²⁵ AdvanceHE has 36 Australian member universities in 2026, <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/fellowship/fellowship>

²⁶ HERDSA (<https://herdsa.org.au/joining-herdsa-fellowship-community>), ASCILITE (<https://telas.edu.au/>), ACODE (<https://acode.edu.au/ltti/>)

Implementation of enhanced professional learning relies on sector-level guidance on 'what counts' as credible professional learning that can satisfy a new standard for teaching capability.

Recommendation 4:

- that ATEC create and maintain a *Professional Learning Guide for Higher Education Teaching* that describes credible professional learning and how institutions can meet a new standard for professional learning.
- that ATEC support the sector to develop collective professional learning and share good and innovative

Professional Learning Guide for Higher Education Teaching

The *Professional Learning Guide for Higher Education Teaching* is a national statement on professional learning that includes advice on:

- characteristics of effective professional learning,
- the range of available professional learning that meets the new standard,
- clear description of, and evidence for, scholarly teaching and scholarship of learning and teaching,
- indicative levels of professional learning appropriate to educator needs and career stage, and
- recording (and reporting on) professional learning.

The Guide is not prescriptive. As for other Higher Education Standards, institutions retain the responsibility to demonstrate compliance with the relevant standards. The Guide sets expectations for professional learning.

a) Recognized professional learning

Professional learning must be dynamic to respond to a changing environment as shown dramatically by the rise of generative artificial intelligence. A static list of approved professional learning is not enough to help the sector respond to change. The *Professional Learning Guide for Higher Education Teaching* will set out the characteristics of effective professional learning and core learning outcomes that can guide institutions to identify and develop high-quality learning. To ensure positive impact on teaching quality and strong participation, enhanced professional learning will:

- be based firmly on educational research, the scholarship of learning and teaching and acknowledged effective practice;
- be highly relevant to contemporary teaching practice and globally-connected;
- foster scholarly practice, scholarship of learning and teaching, and cutting-edge practice and innovation;
- be recognised in industrial agreements;
- be appropriately resourced and embedded in institutional practice;
- be trusted by educators and institutions to foster strong engagement and a positive teaching culture.

The Guide describes criteria for formal and informal professional learning and the range of activities which meet, and exceed, the requirements of the revised Higher Education Standard for Staffing. Using these criteria, the Guide presents examples of current professional learning activities and programs that meet the new standard, cross-referenced with skill development indicators included in the *Guide for Teaching Quality Measures and Indicators*. The Guide also describes appropriate evidence for recognised informal learning – particularly for self-directed learning, scholarship of learning and teaching and leadership in teaching.

b) Professional learning for different teaching roles

Requirements for professional learning will vary with teaching responsibilities, roles and stage of career. Teaching teams may include discipline academics, education-focussed academics, education specialists in design and delivery, contributing experts including sessional educators, researchers, adjunct appointees or industry experts, learning and teaching leaders and students. Institutions and individuals should have scope to direct investment in professional learning where it will have greatest positive impact on teaching. The Guide presents an indicative guide to levels of professional learning appropriate for teaching role needs and career stage. This should not be prescriptive but rather allow for individual career pathways within a range.

Professional learning should be considered in role descriptions, appointments and promotions, alongside reward and recognition of excellence in teaching practice. Academic workload will also be a key consideration, noting current concerns regarding overwork and unsustainable pressures. Sessional teaching staff deliver considerable proportion of teaching and assessment and need special consideration to build and assure their teaching capability.

c) *Monitoring professional learning*

Higher education institutions currently record qualifications in a disciplinary area for individual teachers to ensure compliance with the Higher Education Standards requirement for disciplinary expertise for teaching. These systems could be adapted to record formal qualifications and professional learning for teaching. Informal learning could be recorded through existing performance management plans – particularly as part of a career development plan. Aggregate data on professional learning will be part of evidence of institutional investment and support for enhancing teaching capability.

Implementing enhanced professional learning

Introducing requirements for professional learning will be a cultural shift for most higher education institutions. It should be introduced as a positive step for individual teachers and a productive investment for the institution. Positive engagement with this domain of the action plan will be generated by:

- engaging institutions and educators in sector-led development of the *Professional Learning Guide for Higher Education Teaching*;
- extended transition that recognises existing expertise and avoids disruption to teaching;
- fostering collaborative work on shared professional learning resources;
- fostering the sharing of good practice in professional learning.

The *Professional Learning Guide for Higher Education Teaching* will be regularly reviewed to ensure its provisions reflect contemporary good practice and are effective in achieving improvement in teaching capability. Shared professional learning resources could be developed by either commissioned work or a small grant round.

Enhancing professional learning is one aspect of improving teaching capability. Other areas for attention include broader work on academic careers, and reward and recognition of excellence in learning and teaching. Further work in these two areas will help to normalise and sustain professional learning.

Implementation

Implementation of these recommendations is intended to achieve long-term cultural change in teaching in higher education. If implementation is feasible and sustained, the *Professional Practice Action Plan* will eventually create an ongoing positive improvement cycle as institutions normalise good practice and set enhanced goals. Guiding principles for implementation are presented below. Implementation should:

- be **co-ordinated and sequenced** for efficiency and to produce immediate benefits

The *Professional Practice Action Plan* shows a workflow from revised standards through guiding documents to practice and accountability. In practice, work should begin with development of consensus descriptors for good practice and trusted measures for monitoring teaching quality to enable drafting of revised Higher Education Standards and accountability measures. Construction of guiding documents will provide space to investigate scope and alignment and will foster immediate action within higher education institutions ahead of national regulation.

- be **feasible** for higher education providers to embed within existing management mechanisms

Higher education is governed by a complex set of legislative, funding and organisational arrangements. Existing quality assurance mechanisms for teaching should form the basis of improvement to avoid duplication and increased cost. The Australian Government has recently established its *Better Regulation Working Group* to 'streamline processes and improve efficiency'²⁷. New requirements should minimize any additional regulatory burden and consider the collective impact of changes to regulation and new and existing initiatives from national bodies.

Successful implementation must take into account the varying context for different providers. Governing bodies will need to consider how best to meet the costs of additional professional learning, for example to systematically include sessional teachers and industry or community partners. Further advice on implementation should be sought from providers – particularly smaller and specialist providers. Collective or shared solutions to minimize cost should be considered.

Higher education providers will have variable capacity to deliver new requirements for professional learning. Providers could collaborate on provision of teaching and learning professional learning with the added benefit of broader peer-to-peer learning. The existing free open online course, *Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching* MOOC (CAULLT) is an example of a collaborative and accessible professional learning pathway.

- **motivate and engage** institutions, educators and stakeholders

Successful implementation of the *Professional Practice Action Plan* will ultimately rely on willing participation from all stakeholders. Implementation should demonstrate the benefits of investment in high-quality teaching for institutions, educators, students and partners and foster early gains.

- use **existing expertise** to create guidance documents

The Australian higher education sector has considerable expertise in higher education learning and teaching which is recognised globally. This expertise should be used to develop guiding documents, particularly on quality measures and indicators, and effective professional learning. Sector-led development should require cross-institutional collaboration and involve professional associations such as the Council of Australian Directors of Learning & Teaching (CAULLT) which has led work on professional learning, and HEPP-QN, the quality network for private higher education providers. Sector-led construction of guides would be overseen by ATEC as the decision-maker.

- foster **sustained work** on teaching quality with embedded review

These recommendations seek cultural change which needs long-term commitment. In parallel, the environment for higher education is dynamic and will demand continuous change in teaching. Mechanisms for change must be adaptable and regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and aligned to internal and external goals.

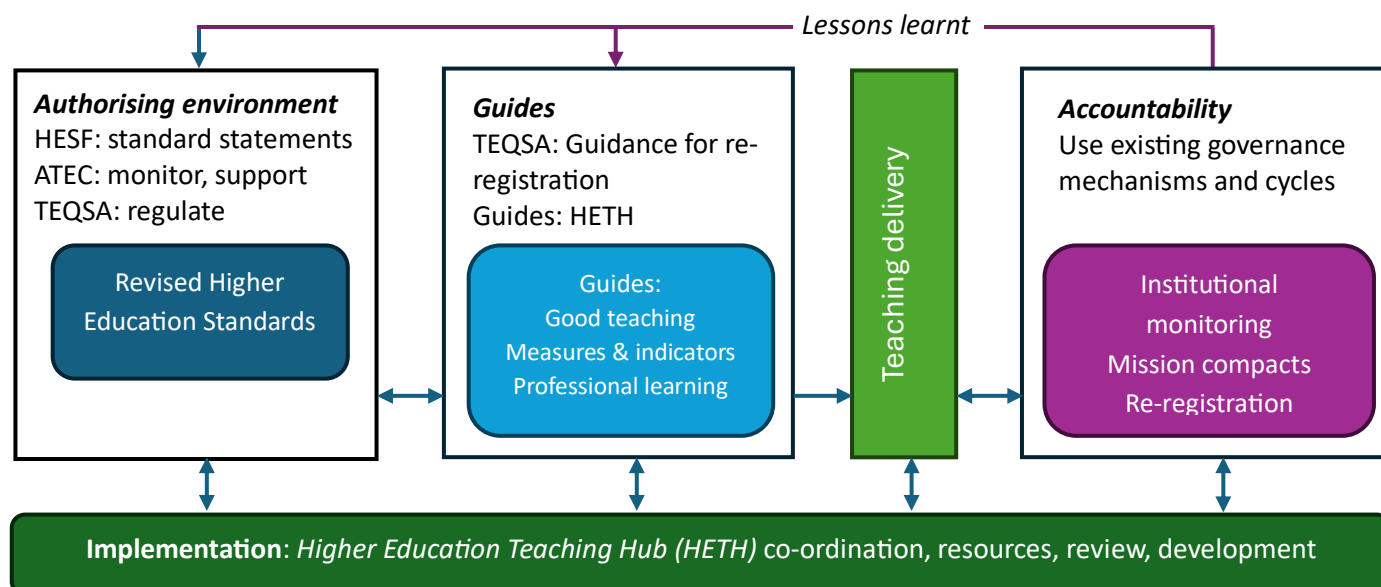
The action plan recognizes successful implementation needs support for development and roll-out of new standards and will benefit from collaborative action. The action plan proposes support and development is delivered/ co-ordinated through a **specialist body** within ATEC (eg *Higher Education Teaching Hub*) that can leverage existing expertise and the work of professional groups (Fig 2, bottom box).

²⁷ <https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/better-regulation-working-group-established>

Recommendation 5:

that ATEC develops a detailed transition plan in consultation with higher education institutions and stakeholders which generates positive engagement with the action plan and sustained improvement, and manages risk.

Fig 2: Implementation of the *Professional Practice Action Plan*



Higher Education Teaching Hub

This paper proposes establishment of the *Higher Education Teaching Hub (HETH)* to consolidate, evaluate and draw insight from existing information and research. The Hub works across four primary domains linked directly to the Higher Education Standards. It regularly reviews and updates advice to ensure relevance.

- **Teaching quality:** credible description of good teaching practice, description and evaluation of measures and indicators of good teaching practice.
- **Teaching capability:** description of effective professional learning activities for higher education educators and teaching teams, fostering reward and recognition of teaching excellence, and supporting cross-institutional collaboration and dissemination of high quality professional learning
- **Teaching design and delivery:** identify and support dissemination of effective practice and innovation in teaching and advise on links between student experience, teaching, assessment & curriculum,
- Support **further national collaboration** on specific issues in teaching quality as directed by ATEC, such as growing Indigenous learning and teaching, teaching support for equity cohorts and effective response to impacts on teaching of digital transformation including GenAI, tertiary harmonisation and social change.

The Hub is constituted within ATEC to support the role of ATEC as a system steward and TEQSA as system regulator by providing trusted and useful advice. It is grounded in 'what works' and is a connector that collaborates with partner organisations such as the *Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES)*. It is proposed as an ongoing function within ATEC but could be initially trialled during action plan implementation.

The core role of the Hub is to co-ordinate implementation of the action plan and review of outcomes. It acts as the ongoing curator of the action plan guides on behalf of ATEC. As it develops its networks and expertise, the Hub will be a catalyst for continuous improvement that can respond effectively to further change in teaching in higher education. Further priorities for the *HE Teaching Hub* will be determined by ATEC drawing on consultation with TEQSA, government and higher education institutions.

The Hub will:

- support the implementation of the Professional Practice Action Plan, in particular the sector-led creation, ongoing review and update of the *Guide for teaching quality measures and indicators* and the *Guide for*

Professional Learning for Higher Education Teaching. These resources are crucial to help institutions apply the standards in their context and may be aligned to current TEQSA Good Practice Guides.

- operate at the direction of ATEC on issues of national importance in higher education teaching;
- consolidate, analyse and extend contemporary information to create insight and advice for ATEC and higher education institutions on teaching practice, quality, and capability, and effective response to changing environment/context for teaching;
- work with institutions to foster a positive culture for good teaching, including recognition and dissemination of good practice;
- draw on existing expertise within Australian higher education and collaborates constructively with HE professional bodies and groups.

Beyond implementation of new standards for teaching, the *HE Teaching Hub* could, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, lead or co-ordinate ongoing work on other national issues such as:

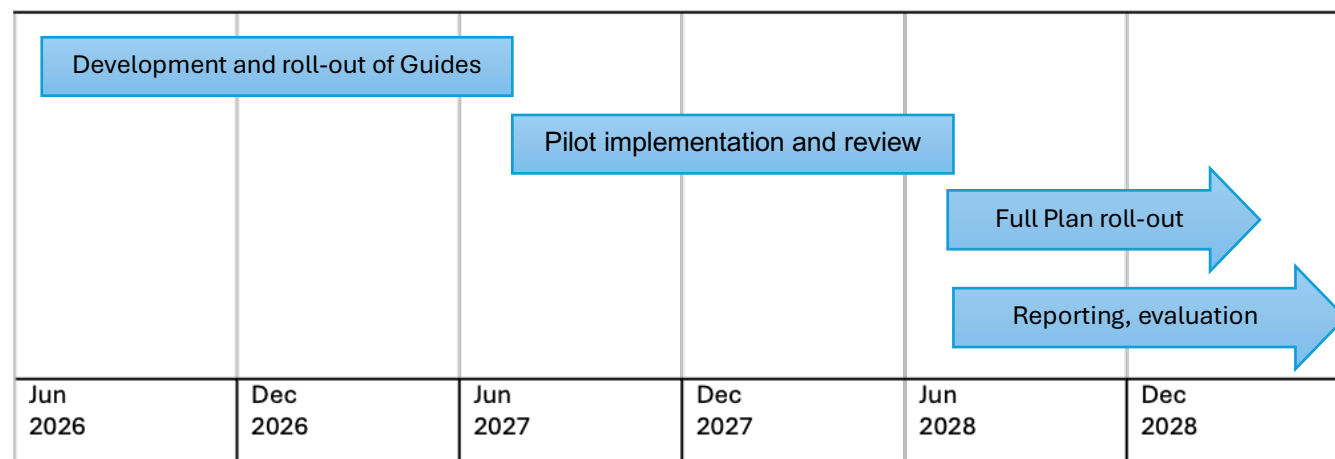
- recognition of teaching excellence and dissemination of effective innovation in teaching
- description of higher education teaching roles and career development
- specific issues in contemporary higher education learning and teaching including the Indigenous learning and teaching, digital and artificial intelligence technologies, team or group teaching models.

Creating a mechanism for national collaboration in learning and teaching offers considerable advantage for future issues as they arise. As demonstrated by the success of work on generative AI impacts in higher education led by TEQSA during 2024-2025, initial support for national discussion can generate ongoing and independent sector leadership and innovation. As sector steward, ATEC may consider the HETH a useful and flexible mechanism for sustained and effective responses to teaching and learning issues.

Implementation options

The *Professional Practice Action Plan* has been designed holistically for full implementation. However, a staged implementation will be more practical to better manage cost and risk, to test and revise elements through pilot implementation and to provide quick wins to institutions and stakeholders (Fig 3). Indicative timing is highly dependent on prioritisation within the ATEC workplan. Staging may slow adoption of new measures but does offer the advantage of building trust and more thorough engagement amongst institutions and academics.

Fig 3: Indicative timelines for stages of implementation



Delivery of steps within each phase (Table 4) will be contingent on funding and available workforce. The initial phase of staged implementation works through sector-led working groups. This could be achieved through commissioned projects or working groups led by professional associations or higher education institutions. Work on the impact of generative artificial intelligence²⁸ led by TEQSA is a useful example.

²⁸ Gen AI knowledge hub leveraged sector expertise and feedback to develop resources, exemplars and guides for institutions, <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/higher-education-good-practice-hub/gen-ai-knowledge-hub>

Table 4: Indicative activities for implementation stages

Output	Action	Responsibilities
1. Guides for enhancing professional practice		
TEQSA Alignment	Test Action Plan with TEQSA to ensure feasibility and appropriate management of regulation	ATEC/TEQSA
<i>Good Teaching Descriptor</i>	Sector-led working group on good teaching descriptors and teaching quality frameworks	ATEC/HETH: co-ordination and dissemination Sector experts: working party members
<i>Guide for Teaching Quality Measures and Indicators</i>	Sector-led working group on measures and indicators for teaching quality	
<i>Guide for Professional Learning for HE Teaching</i>	Sector-led working group on criteria for recognized professional learning and indicators of compliant activities	
Publication of Guides	Publish guides for internal institutional use as a first step towards sector-wide implementation	
Alignment	Test Action Plan with - existing regulation - impact on professional accreditation requirements - impact on workplace agreements	ATEC/HETH: consultation and delivery
2. Pilot and review		
Pilot phase: testing application of guides and sharing existing good practice	Pilot-scale implementation (5-10 institutions) Case studies in good teaching, professional learning, monitoring quality Shared national resources for professional learning	HETH: co-ordination, dissemination and review
Review	Evaluation of pilots Interim evaluation of Action Plan for feasibility and continued relevance	ATEC/HETH
Revised Higher Education standards	Draft standards (HESP or equivalent) Re-registration guidance (TEQSA) Publish: <i>Good Teaching Descriptor</i> , <i>Guide for Teaching Quality Measures and Indicators</i> and <i>Guide for Professional Learning for Higher Education Teaching</i>	ATEC: co-ordination and support
3. Action Plan roll-out		
Sector-wide adoption	Full roll-out of the <i>Professional Learning Action Plan</i> Hyper-care and review of roll-out	HETH: co-ordination, support, review
4. Accountability and sustainability		
Reporting	Reporting on teaching quality and professional learning embedded in institutional reporting, TEQSA re-registration processes and (where applicable) mission-based institutional compacts	Higher Education providers: internal governance, annual reports TEQSA: re-registration processes ATEC: mission-based institutional compacts
Review and update as needed	Evaluation of impact of <i>Professional Learning Action Plan</i>	HETH: evaluation, reporting and recommendations as required

Risks

Risks in implementation of the Professional Practice Action Plan were identified by EPPHE Workshop participants representing sector institutions and in feedback from consultation. Key risks arise due to the volume and pace of change, cost to institutions, staff engagement and competing priorities which may limit resourcing, engagement or capacity. Other risks include the management of transition and suitability of provision for diverse providers in a dynamic environment. Apart from resourcing constraints, most risks will be best mitigated by leveraging sector expertise and deep consultation. Key risks identified with the project working party are outlined below (Table 5).

Positive engagement from institutions, teaching and support staff is the most reliable path to improvement in teaching quality. Although changes to the Higher Education Standards will drive compliance, continuous improvement relies on willing engagement. The action plan has been designed as a collaborative effort to generate trust and buy-in from the sector. Clear articulation of the rationale for change, and the benefits to institutions and individuals will help to promote positive engagement.

Table 5: Identified risks to implementation of the Professional Practice Action Plan

Domain	Cause of risk	Risk Issue/Event	Risk Impact	Risk Mitigation
Program	Rate of change	Implementation moves too fast for institutions to adjust	Implementation is delayed Teaching quality remains vulnerable	Collaborate with institutions to define appropriate transitions Test implementation in pilot phase
	Partial implementation	Timeline for revision of standards is delayed due to other external change	Implementation is delayed Teaching quality remains vulnerable	Engage with institutions during preparatory stages to raise awareness and foster early action ahead of mandated action on standards
Resourcing	Resources are not available within ATEC to co-ordinate/ lead the project	Subsequent budgetary decisions deprioritise teaching quality project	Response becomes fragmented with less consistency in quality	Clarify ATEC resource commitment and use external resources where appropriate to minimize cost. Prioritise guides to release early value
	Resources are not available within institutions to deliver the project	Competing priorities limit institutional investment	Improvement will be slower and less consistent	Align action to existing mechanisms with process improvement, avoid duplication
Efficacy	Outputs (standards and guides) do not address actual blocks to teaching quality	Guides do not align to the lived experience of teachers and students	Quality does not improve	Sector-led development of guides to focus action on 'what works' Case studies and exemplars to spread good practice
	Standards are difficult to enforce	Compliance is unclear or difficult to evidence	Quality does not improve	Collaboration with TEQSA on enforceability and evidence
	Standards and guides become out of date and irrelevant	Guides do not align to the lived experience of teachers & stakeholders	Quality does not improve	Review impact of action plan regularly and revise as needed
	Professional learning guide does not align to all modes of employment	Appropriate professional learning for sessional teachers and external partners is difficult to implement due to cost, workload or staff availability	Improvement will be less consistent	Thorough consultation with institutions and NTEU, AHEIA re EBAs Foster innovative professional learning programs and paths Align professional learning requirement to responsibility
Engagement	Lack of alignment between project objectives and institutional mission	Competing priorities will limit engagement and participation	Improvement will be less consistent	Consider institutional context for quality targets & timelines Demonstrate benefits to stakeholders early and often
	Lack of engagement from teachers, teaching support staff and education leaders	Action to improve quality is reduced to tick box behaviours	Quality does not improve	Build positive culture Demonstrate benefits to teachers and education leaders early and often Link quality improvement to reward, recognition and academic careers
Participant Workload	Action on teaching quality is added to teacher workloads without other adjustment	Teaching workloads increase unsustainably	Teaching quality and professional learning are seen negatively and resisted Implementation creates additional stress for teachers and teaching teams	Test implementation feasibility and cost in pilot phase Monitor the impact of implementation on academic roles and careers Demonstrate benefits to teachers and education leaders early and often
	Action on teaching quality is added to management and governance workloads without other adjustment	Regulatory workloads increase unsustainably	Teaching quality and professional learning is seen negatively and resisted Implementation creates additional stress for managers and QA teams	Test implementation in pilot phase Align action to existing mechanisms using process improvement and avoid duplication