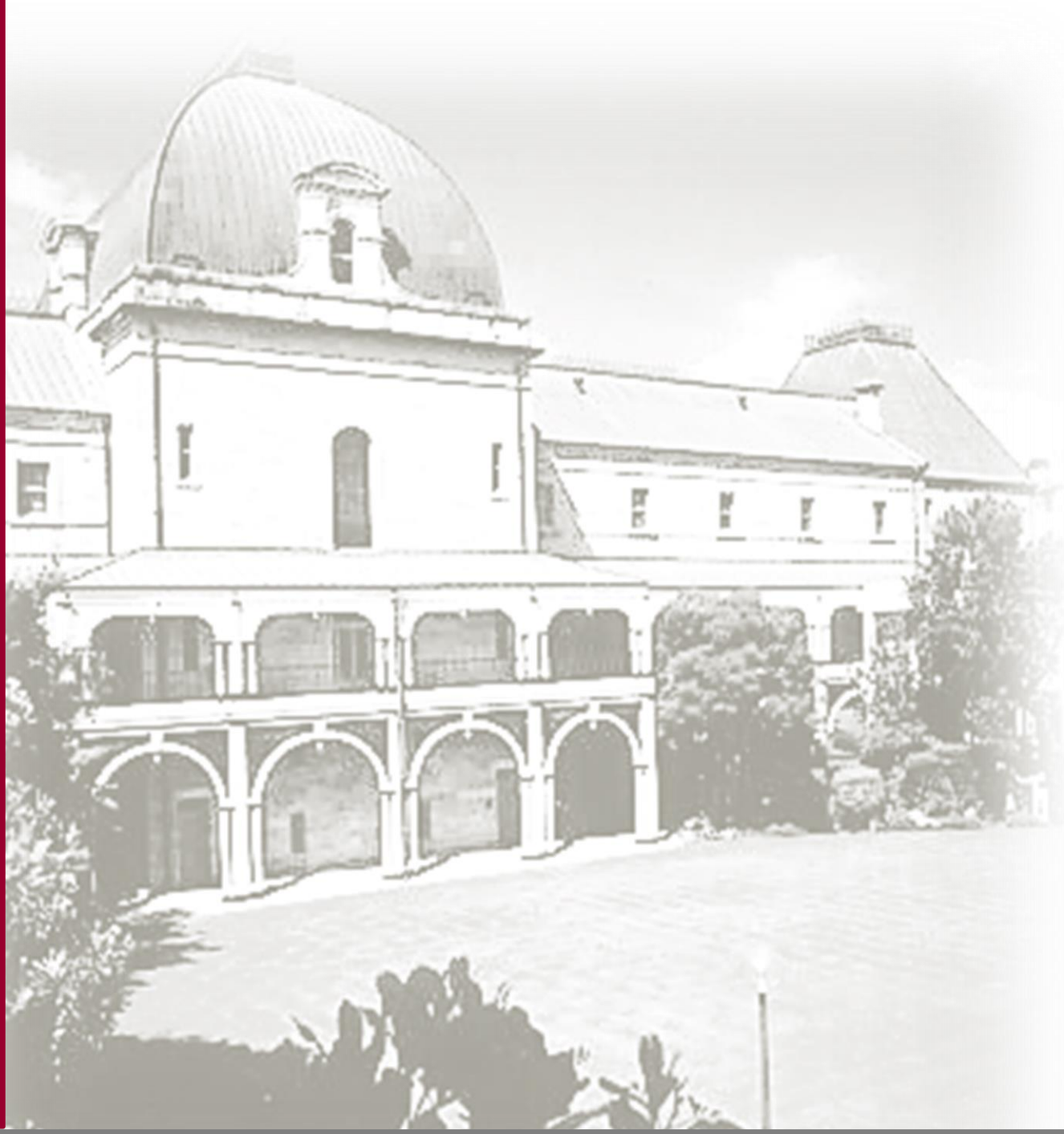
Queensland Audit Office
better public services

Managing the performance of teachers in Queensland state schools

Report 15: 2016–17



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QUEENSLAND

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Queensland Audit Office
better public services

28 April 2017

The Honourable P Wellington MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

Report to Parliament

This report is prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, and is titled *Managing performance of teachers in Queensland state schools* (Report 15: 2016-17).

In accordance with s.67 of the Act, would you please arrange for the report to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Close
Auditor-General (acting)

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Summary

Introduction

In 2016, the Department of Education and Training (DET) employed more than 49 000 teachers to teach more than 533 000 students enrolled in Queensland's state schools. Research shows that effective teachers make the biggest difference to student outcomes after family background. Teachers are our schools' most important resource.

Many factors, well beyond the school context, can influence student outcomes. Teachers are skilled to embrace these challenges. They are trained to adapt and change their teaching methods and materials to meet the needs of students with varying abilities, cultures and backgrounds in the same classroom.

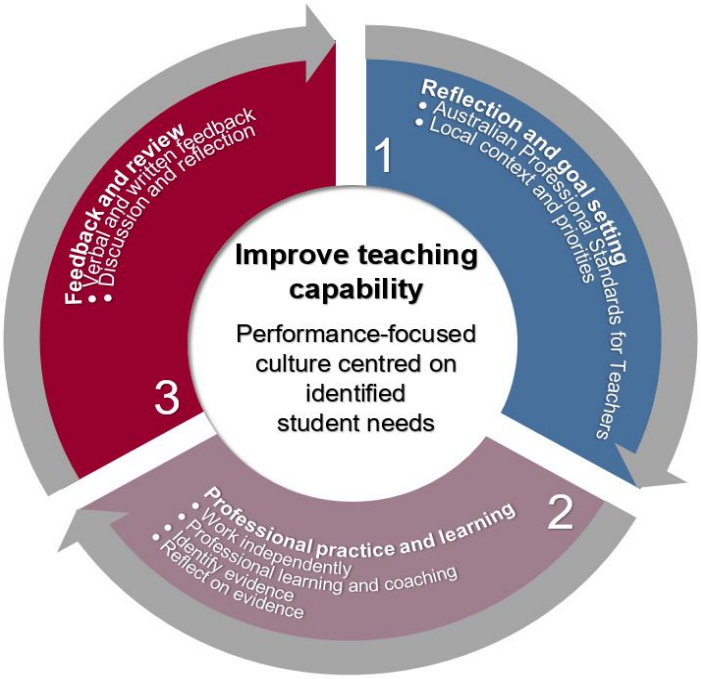
Teacher performance and development frameworks

The Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (August 2012) states there is strong evidence that better appraisal, coaching and feedback leading to targeted development can improve teacher performance.

An effective performance review framework can motivate and challenge teachers to cultivate their skills and knowledge. It also keeps teachers responsible and accountable for their teaching performance. It can be used to recognise high achievers, to identify under-performance, and to encourage conversations about performance.

In 2015, DET implemented a new version of its annual performance review process. The process supports teacher career and capability development to ensure that teaching practices focus on success for every student. Figure A shows the three phases of DET's annual performance review process for teachers.

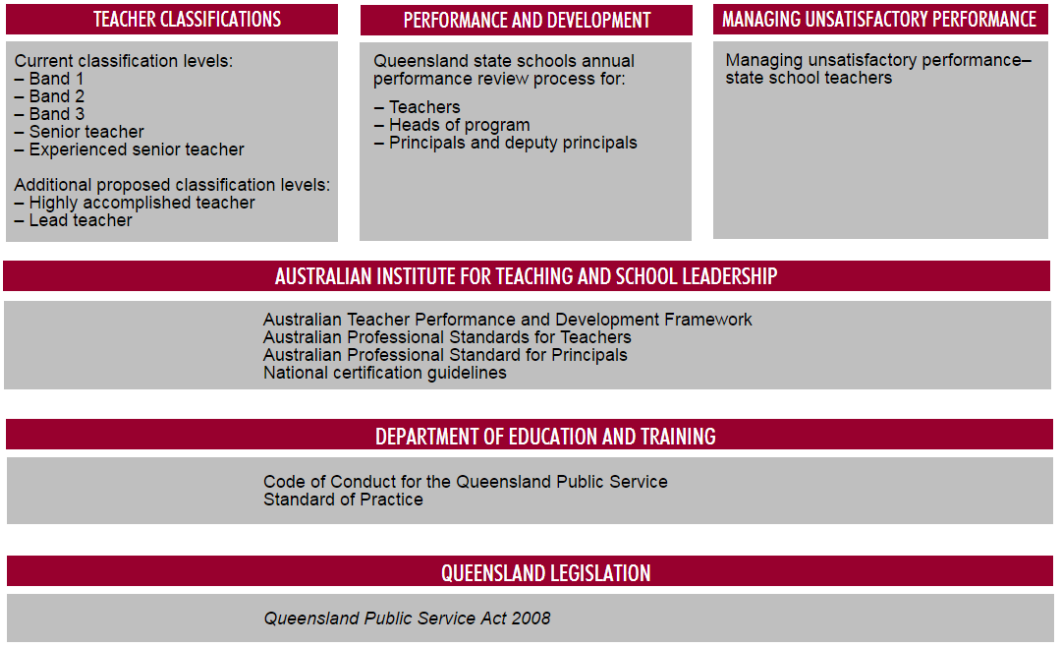
Figure A
Three phase annual performance review for state school teachers



Source: Department of Education and Training Queensland State Schools Annual Performance Review process for teachers.

DET's annual performance review process for teachers is part of DET's broader framework for managing the performance and development of teachers. Other processes include managing unsatisfactory performance and defining teacher classification levels. DET's performance management framework for teachers is underpinned by the *Public Service Act 2008*, documents from The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, the code of conduct for the Queensland Public Sector, and DET's standards of practice. Figure B shows DET's performance management framework for state school teachers.

Figure B
Department of Education and Training
Performance management framework for state school teachers



Source: Queensland Audit Office.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership defines four teacher career stages in its professional standards—graduate, proficient, highly accomplished, and lead.

Teacher progressions

Experienced teachers in state schools who wish to progress their careers need to move to roles outside of the classroom, such as heads of programs and school leaders. The current Queensland Government during the 2015 election campaign said it would create two new classifications to enable classroom teachers to earn higher incomes without needing to leave the classroom.

The idea of the additional proposed classifications is to offer an incentive for effective teachers to remain in the classroom. The two new classification schemes of Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher, are aligned to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership definition of teaching career stages.

DET is developing an application and certification process for assessing teachers against the Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher career levels. DET expects this will be in Queensland state schools by 2019, following a pilot in 2017.

Audit objective and scope

The objective of the audit was to assess whether DET's performance review process for teachers, as part of its overall performance management framework, improves teaching quality in public schools.

We assessed the design of DET's performance review process and undertook detailed fieldwork at 10 state schools to determine how well the annual performance review process has been implemented. We also assessed how DET meets teacher development needs and whether schools effectively manage unsatisfactory performance.

We did not review the design and implementation of the annual performance review process for heads of program, deputy principals and principals who have a similar, but separate, process to classroom teachers.

Audit conclusions

DET's new annual performance review process and its state schools strategy, are effective in helping schools create a performance and development-focused culture. The process has contributed to teaching effectiveness by making sure each teacher looks forward with a purposeful and structured plan to develop their teaching practices.

We found that all 10 schools we visited have commenced the performance review process implementation since its release in 2014, but none have effectively adopted all three phases of the cycle. School leaders are not prioritising the monitoring and discussions required around teacher development goals throughout and at the end of the cycle, due to competing priorities creating time constraints. This creates a risk that teachers perceive the process to be a compliance exercise or administrative burden.

Whilst a reflection on a teacher's strengths and areas for development are designed into the process, it doesn't, however, result in a documented summary of a teacher's past performance. This means it doesn't provide school leaders with evidence to objectively and equitably identify teachers who are performing beyond their expectations or identify unsatisfactory performing teachers in a timely manner.

The lack of teacher specific performance review documentation over time reduces the ability of the review process to support the unsatisfactory performance process. The number of teachers in DET who are being managed for unsatisfactory performance through a documented plan to improve performance is very low. At the time of the audit, DET was aware of 11 cases against a teaching complement of around 50 000. We acknowledge that DET does, however, collect and report a significant amount of school and classroom performance data as a separate process.

It is not possible for DET to reliably measure the actual impact of the annual performance review process on teaching quality because it has not monitored and evaluated the annual performance review process in the first two years of its implementation.

The annual performance review process in its current form, is challenged by the way it supports other aspects of the broader framework for managing performance and the new teaching classifications. By improving its design, and dealing with teachers' and supervisors' time constraints, the process could help school leaders and teachers better discuss and review their performance, and align it to their development needs and school priorities. It could also help teachers track their performance and development needs to meet and retain their status under the new classifications.

Whilst teacher performance is second to family background in achieving better student outcomes, it is the first factor within DET's control to leverage. Continued efforts in this area are needed to help teachers perform at their best to improve student outcomes.

Audit findings

Design and implementation of the annual performance review for teachers

DET's annual performance review process aligns with the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (the framework) and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (professional standards). This helps teachers demonstrate their ability to competently perform the roles described in the professional standards.

The annual performance review process guides teachers to identify their professional development needs. It encourages teachers to create development goals relevant to their teaching practice, student outcomes, and school priorities. DET's process provides for a formal discussion between a teacher and their principal or supervisor about the teacher's performance.

However, the process does not provide for teachers and their principals or supervisors to document and agree on an assessment of a teacher's ability to perform the requirements of their role. It does not differentiate between the expectations at the four career stages of the professional standards—graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead.

From our visits to 10 state schools, we observed issues that are reducing the effectiveness of the annual performance review process. We found that school leaders were not providing ongoing informal and formal feedback on the progress their teachers made against their development goals throughout the cycle. One reason for this is that school leaders found the annual performance review process a challenge to implement with limited time and resources available. Also, only one of the 10 schools maintains records of whether all teachers in their school have completed all three phases of the annual performance and review cycle. Not completing the cycle undermines the value of the process.

School priorities

Each school has a unique local context which can inform the school improvement agenda and priorities for student success. DET's annual performance development plan (APDP) template provides a section to include individual school priorities for teachers to consider when they develop their goals. DET developed the template in consultation with the Queensland Teachers' Union to ensure each school used the same template. DET's APDP template states that schools must not alter or modify the template in any way.

However, not all schools and teachers include their school priorities in the annual performance development plan. We identified that the school priority section for 43 per cent of the 157 teacher APDPs we reviewed for 2016 was blank. The APDP template is not flexible enough to allow teachers to show how each of their professional development goals addresses their local school's priorities. This weakens the focus on helping teachers achieve outcomes relevant to their particular schools.

Goal-setting

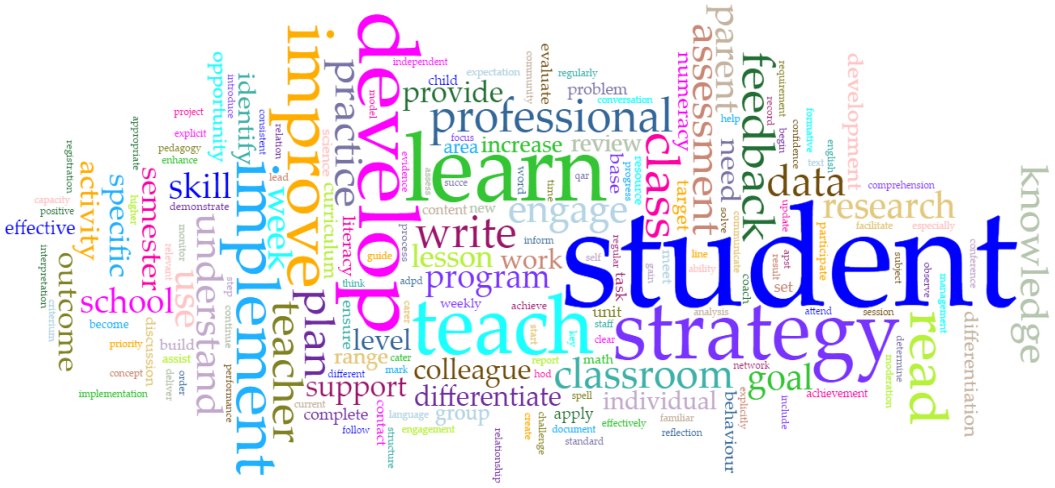
We obtained 558 teacher development goals from 201 annual performance development plans for 2015 and 2016. We found that teachers are not developing measurable goals to support an objective review of the impact of their teaching practice. This means it is hard to tell whether a goal has been achieved or not.

Teachers need further guidance and examples on how to develop meaningful development goals against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers which Queensland adopted in 2015. Principals and teacher supervisors need to check the goals are developed in line with the annual review process guide, which includes the need for goals to be measurable.

We found that the most common words teachers used in their development plans were 'students', 'learn', 'develop', 'strategy', 'teach' and 'improve'. This positive finding shows that teachers are primarily basing their goals on developing learning strategies to improve student outcomes. The challenge remains to identify how the effectiveness of these strategies can be measured.

Figure C shows a 'word cloud' of the most common words in goals teachers developed in their annual performance and development plans.

Figure C
Most frequently used words in teacher development goals



Note: This figure analyses textual data for common words. It assesses a sample of teacher development goals from annual performance development plans we obtained. The larger the text size, the more times a word is used across these goals.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

There is a clear alignment between the systemic professional development themes DET has identified in its *State Schools Strategy 2017–2021*, and the development needs teachers are identifying in their annual performance reviews.

Managing unsatisfactory performance

For a process for managing unsatisfactory performance to be effective, it requires a clear understanding of what 'unsatisfactory performance' is. DET has two policies for managing unsatisfactory performance—one for state school teachers, and one for all DET staff (excluding school teachers and principals). DET designed its annual performance review process to be separate and distinct to its process for managing unsatisfactory performance.

DET does not provide a clear definition of what constitutes unsatisfactory performance that enables a shared understanding between DET, schools, and teachers. While DET has documented the process for managing unsatisfactory performance, the lack of a clear definition creates subjectivity for when schools should initiate the process. DET has defined unsatisfactory performance for all other DET staff, but has not defined it for school principals and teachers. It refers teachers and principals to the overall public sector code of conduct.

The first stage of DET's process for managing unsatisfactory performance of teachers assumes a school principal has actively managed performance, before initiating the process for managing unsatisfactory performance. However, school principals cannot rely on the annual performance review process as a key input into this process. That is because the annual performance review process does not require school leaders to document and collate evidence of their assessment of a teacher's performance against expectations.

This means principals have to use their own performance management process to gain sufficient evidence, in addition to the annual performance review process, to justify commencing the process for managing an underperforming teacher.

As at December 2016, DET was aware of 11 ongoing cases where teachers were being managed for unsatisfactory performance through a documented plan to improve performance. This is less than 0.05 per cent of the total teaching workforce in state schools.

This low number indicates that DET's process for managing unsatisfactory performance may not adequately help schools to identify and manage teachers who consistently underperform. Reasons which contribute to this include:

- lack of consistent recording of teachers' performance
- extensive time school leaders need to invest in managing unsatisfactory performance which may deter them from initiating the process
- lack of a shared understanding of what constitutes unsatisfactory performance.

We found through interviewing 10 principals from the schools we visited that there was no common definition of unsatisfactory performance.

Performance and development culture

DET has a number of initiatives to help schools develop a performance-focused culture. The State Schools Strategy 2017-2021 is central to supporting regional and school planning to ensure every student benefits from excellent instruction. It identifies the need for all schools to use an explicit improvement agenda and to base improvement on data about student outcomes. Continuous use of student data at state, regional, and school levels is helping to identify teaching priorities. DET has also created master teacher positions to coach and mentor teachers, with the goal of improving student literacy and numeracy.

The strategy is supported by the School Improvement Unit, an internal reviewing body which provides assurance on how well schools are implementing DET's improvement agenda.

We found the 10 schools we visited were fostering stronger development and learning cultures focused on improving student outcomes. These schools share their individual school's priorities in school improvement plans. Their teachers participate in the annual performance review process, and develop goals to enhance their skills. Schools use 'data walls' to display students' examination results in ways that provoke discussion among teachers on teaching styles.

However, we also noted most schools did not complete all three phases of the annual performance review process. School leaders need to embed regular performance and development conversations with their teachers to ensure teachers receive timely feedback.

Program communications and monitoring

DET provided school leaders and teachers with the information they needed to understand and apply the annual performance review process. It also developed a framework to monitor how well the annual performance review process was being implemented.

However, it did not effectively monitor its communications strategy to ensure that teachers used those resources; nor did it implement its evaluation framework in a timely manner.

Recommendations

We recommend the Department of Education and Training:

Design of the annual performance review process for teachers

1. improves the self-reflection and goal-setting phase of the annual performance review process for teachers. (Chapter 2)

   Improvements should include:

   - aligning it to current and future-planned teacher classification levels to ensure all teachers are required to self-assess and develop goals against the level they are expected, or aspire, to perform at
   - requiring school leaders and their teaching staff to comment on, agree, and sign-off on the teacher's self-reflection of their performance and the development goals they should focus on

2. explores the potential for providing school principals and school leaders with a more flexible annual performance development plan template. (Chapter 2)

   Improvements should be focused on better alignment of teacher development goals to the individual school context and priorities.

3. provides teachers with more resources to compose measurable development goals, with clear links to the type of evidence that will be required to indicate goal success. (Chapter 2)

Managing unsatisfactory performance

4. considers defining and communicating its meaning of unsatisfactory performance. (Chapter 2)

   This will enable the department, school leaders and teachers to have a shared understanding of performance expectations.

Program monitoring

5. formally evaluates the effectiveness of its programs for state schools. (Chapter 4)

   The evaluation should test that the department can objectively assess, in a timely manner, how effective its communications and change strategies are for delivering the intended change.

6. assesses through its formative evaluation process the scale of the issue that schools are time-constrained to effectively implement the annual performance review process. (Chapter 4)

Reference to comments

In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009,* we provided a copy of this report to the Director–General of the Department of Education and Training with a request for comments. His view has been considered in reaching our audit conclusions and are represented to the extent relevant and warranted in preparing this report.

A response was received from the Department of Education and Training and is included in Appendix A.

Report structure

Chapter	
Chapter 1	provides the background to the audit and the context needed to understand the audit findings and conclusions.
Chapter 2	evaluates how well DET designed and implemented the annual performance review process to schools.
Chapter 3	considers whether DET and state schools are embedding a culture of performance and development.
Chapter 4	evaluates the effectiveness of DET's communication and monitoring strategy to implement the annual performance review process.

Report cost

This audit report cost $305 000 to produce.

1. Context

About performance management and development

'Performance management and development' is a well-established, all-encompassing phrase used to describe the practice that drives decisions about staff performance, remuneration, disciplinary procedures, terminations, transfers, and development needs within an organisation.

Performance management and development is much broader than a performance review or a disciplinary process. It aims to improve organisational, functional, team and individual performances. Effective performance management and development measures the progress staff make towards achieving their individual goals that contribute to their organisation's objectives.

Within this context, our audit focused on whether the Department of Education and Training (DET) performance review process for teachers is improving teaching quality in public schools, including how DET meets teacher development needs. We also examined how schools effectively manage unsatisfactory performance and recognise good performance.

Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

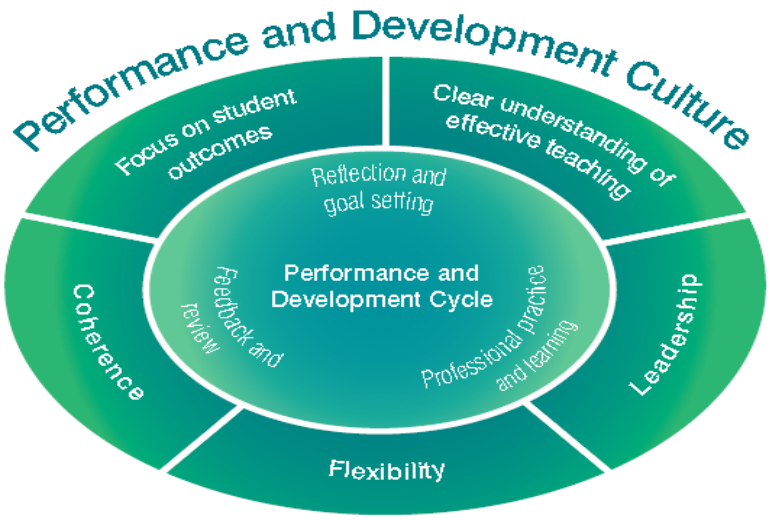
DET developed and aligned its annual performance review process for teachers to the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (the framework).

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) worked with education stakeholders to develop the framework. The Queensland Education minister, along with other state and territory ministers endorsed the framework in August 2012. The framework shows the elements that are needed for a comprehensive approach to teacher performance and development, but also provides for flexibility in how the elements are implemented across different teaching contexts.

The framework calls for the creation of a performance and development culture in all Australian schools. It describes the characteristics of an effective performance and development cycle, including the elements of the cycle that are essential for success and should be implemented in all Australian schools.

An effective approach to performance and development largely depends on school leaders creating a strong and supportive culture. AITSL's framework demonstrates that focusing on five key factors supports a performance and development culture. Figure 1A shows the framework and Figure 1B explains the factors which help to create this culture.

Figure 1A
Creating a performance and development culture



Source: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

Figure 1B
Key factors which help to create a performance and development culture

Key Factor	Explanation
Focus on student outcomes	Improving teaching is directed at improving outcomes for students. The framework defines student outcomes broadly to include student learning, engagement in learning, and wellbeing. It acknowledges that these can be measured in a variety of ways.
A clear understanding of effective teaching	Australia now has Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the standards), which outline what teachers should know and be able to do at four career stages—graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead. These standards present elements of effective teaching organised around the domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement.
Leadership	Leaders play a critical role in creating a culture of performance and development. The Australian Professional Standard for Principals makes clear the role of the principal in leading teaching and learning, developing him or herself and others, and leading improvement in a school. All these elements are central to a performance and development culture.
Flexibility	All schools are different, and need to respond to their unique contexts and histories. Schools vary widely in their existing approaches to teacher performance and development. The framework describes the elements of an effective approach to teacher performance and development, but acknowledges that these elements will look different in each school.
Coherence	It is important that performance and development processes fit with other arrangements in which schools, teachers and school leaders are involved. Performance and development processes and teacher goals should reflect the overall approach to teaching and learning within a school, and should be consistent with the school's plans.

Source: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

DET's annual performance review process for teachers

DET requires all state school permanent full-time and part-time teachers, and teachers who work at a school in a temporary capacity for at least one full term, to participate in an annual performance review process. The school principal is responsible for implementing the process, but may delegate the function to another school leader, for example a deputy principal or a head of department.

DET based its design of the annual performance review (APR) process on its Developing Performance Framework which had been in practice since October 2007 for all school and non-school based staff. DET's APR process commenced in 2015 exclusively for school-based employee groups—teachers, heads of program, deputy principals, and principals.

DET's APR process for teachers consists of three phases.

Phase 1: Reflection and goal setting

In the first phase of the performance review cycle, the teacher and their supervisor agree on the teacher's strengths and areas for development across the three domains of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers:

- professional knowledge
- professional practice
- professional engagement.

Teachers are expected to develop up to three performance development goals. Their goals should be based on their school's shared view of effective teaching as derived from the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, and reflect their school's local priorities and context. DET requests that teachers use the SMART goal concept to develop their performance goals—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-phased.

Teachers must document their self-reflection and performance development goals in an Annual Performance Development Plan (APDP). Appendix C shows the APDP template.

Phase 2: Professional practice and learning

In phase two, teachers concentrate on achieving their goals by working through the action plans they set in phase one. This provides teachers with the opportunity to have formal or informal professional development to accomplish their goals, with support from their supervisor. Teachers should receive ongoing formal and informal feedback and coaching throughout the 12-month cycle.

Teachers are also expected to identify and reflect on evidence that provides insight into the effectiveness of their practice. This should occur in a context of frequent formal and informal feedback.

Phase 3: Feedback and review

Teachers formally meet with their supervisors in phase three to review and reflect on whether they achieved their goals over the past year. This process provides a basis for teachers to reflect on their practice and to inform goal setting during the next cycle.

Roles and responsibilities

DET develops, communicates, and equips schools to implement its annual performance review process. School principals are responsible for implementing the process. They are responsible under the *Public Service Act 2008* (the Act) to actively manage the performance of their staff. Teachers in public schools are employed under the Act.

According to the Act:

> a public service manager must take all reasonable steps to ensure each public service employee under the manager's management is aware of the following—
>
> (a) The work performance and personal conduct expected of the employee;
>
> Further, a public service manager must—
>
> (a) pro-actively manage the work performance and personal conduct of public service employees under the manager's management
>
> (b) If a case of unacceptable work performance or personal conduct arises, take prompt and appropriate action to address the matter.

The Department of Education and Training State School Teachers' Certified Agreement 2016 requires DET to consult with the Queensland Teachers Union before it can make any changes to teachers' working conditions. This includes its process for managing teacher performance. The agreement states:

> It is a term of this agreement that no party will pursue any extra claims relating to wages or conditions of employment whether dealt with in this agreement or not.

Teacher classification levels

Teachers in the state school system have a three-stream salary schedule structure. Each stream has a number of classification levels and annual pay increments within each level.

Classroom teachers (stream one)

This stream comprises five classification levels—Band 1, Band 2, Band 3, Senior teacher and Experienced senior teacher. Graduate teachers are four-years trained and start on the Band 2 classification level. They have up to two years to qualify as a proficient teacher. Proficient teachers can apply to become a senior teacher or experienced senior teacher through a merit based selection process after nine years of service. They can also apply for a position in streams two or three through a merit based selection process to rapidly progress their career.

Heads of program (stream two)

This stream includes positions such as Head of Curriculum, Head of Department or Head of Special Education Service. DET appoints teachers to this stream through a merit based process.

School leaders (stream three)

School leader positions for schools include Executive Principal, Principal or Deputy Principal. Appointments are based on merit.

'Letting teachers teach' policy

The Queensland Government committed during the 2015 election campaign to create two new classifications. These would enable classroom teachers to earn higher income (without needing to leave the classroom) and take up a role in stream two. This was referred to under the Letting Teachers Teach Policy. The two new classification schemes of Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher are aligned to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership definition of teaching career stages.

Presently, senior teachers and experienced senior teachers who wish to progress their careers beyond the experienced senior teacher level need to move to roles outside of the classroom, such as heads of programs and school leaders. The Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher classifications will provide teachers with national recognition of their teaching experience and reward them with appropriate remuneration. This intends to provide an incentive for effective teachers to remain in the classroom.

DET is developing an application and certification processes, in line with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership national certification guidelines, for assessing teachers against the Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher levels. DET will be required to assess evidence provided by teachers who apply for certification in relation to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. DET expects this will be in Queensland state schools by 2019, following a pilot in 2017.

Government initiatives to enhance teacher performance

Great teachers = Great results

In April 2013, the then Queensland Government announced an initiative called Great teachers = Great results which aimed to elevate teaching standards and improve outcomes for students. This initiative was to cost $535 million over four years from 2015 and included 15 actions which targeted the state school sector. It focused on reform in two areas:

- professional excellence in teaching—elevating teaching standards across the board, rewarding high performance, and positioning the highest performing teachers where they are needed most
- boosting school autonomy—empowering and enabling school leaders and teachers to drive outcomes for students.

Eleven of the 15 Great teachers = Great results actions related to professional excellence in teaching. Some of these actions included:

- introducing a structured annual performance review process (action 1)
- creating 300 new master teacher positions in targeted schools (action 5)
- establishing a bonus pool to reward the highest performing teachers and school leaders (action 7)
- making performance bonuses available to state school principals (action 8)
- offering scholarships for high performing teachers to undertake a relevant Master's degree (action 10).

This initiative was in line with the four-year National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2013. This was established to drive and reward systemic reforms to improve the quality of teaching and leadership in Australian schools. One of the outputs of this agreement was to recognise and reward quality teaching.

On 7 August 2014, the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) General Secretary and the Director-General of the former Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) signed a joint statement formalising their agreement on a new annual teacher performance review process. The agreement was reached following 16 months of negotiations between the two parties.

The negotiated outcome resulted in significant changes to the first action of the Great Teachers = Great Results program, and a structured annual performance review process was introduced. A QTU newsletter stated:

> As a consequence of the clear indication of QTU members in last year's ballot that they would be prepared to take industrial action if the government sought to implement a teacher performance appraisal system that resulted in ranking, the new process is significantly different from that originally proposed in Action 1 of Great Teachers = Great Results and is vastly different from that announced by the Minister last year.

The QTU newsletter also communicated:

- the process does not include teacher ranking and rating systems
- it is not an appraisal process
- it is not linked to performance bonuses
- goals and the evidence for reflection must be jointly agreed between the teacher and their supervisor (not prescribed).

DETE introduced the annual performance review process to all public schools through an induction and familiarisation process in October 2014, and required all schools to implement the process from 2015.

Teaching and school leadership program

In early 2015, after the election of the current government, the number of actions from the Great teachers = Great results was reduced from 15 to five (including one action which was already completed), and DET renamed the program to 'Making it happen'. This resulted in the investment for the program reducing by $314 million to $223 million over four years. DET's original funding of $6.5 million to implement an annual performance review process for teachers remained. In 2016, DET renamed the program again from 'Making it happen' to the 'Teaching and school leadership program'. Appendix E shows the original 15 actions and the four actions which were retained.

Advancing Education Action Plan

On 14 October 2015, the Premier and the Minister for Education launched Advancing education:

> We will advance Queensland through a world-class education system that supports students to develop the knowledge, skills and qualities they need for the future.

DET is offering eligible Queensland state school teachers the opportunity to participate in professional development and up-skilling courses. A suite of online Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) professional development opportunities are now available for Queensland state school teachers, which DET delivers in collaboration with Griffith University and the Queensland University of Technology.

The department's initiatives to enhance teaching quality

DET developed the following plans and strategies to enhance the quality of teaching in state government schools. They support the ongoing development of teacher professional practice and engagement.

Strategic Plan 2016–20

DET's strategic plan sets the direction for it to deliver high quality learning and skilling opportunities for all Queenslanders to reach their full potential.

Every Student Succeeding State School Strategy 2017–2021

DET's State Schools Strategy 2017–2021 outlines a three-step school improvement model to help schools achieve their goals:

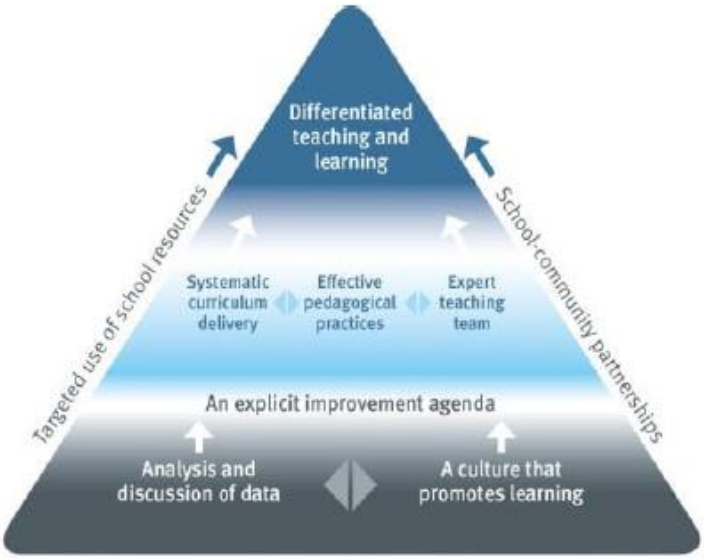
- the school improvement hierarchy — provides guidance on where schools are in their improvement journey
- the inquiry cycle — provides a process for learning from improvement initiatives
- the standards of evidence — provides a common language for evaluating improvement efforts.

The school improvement hierarchy includes an explicit improvement agenda to improve school performance. This includes:

- applying learnings from school reviews and the school's data profile to develop an explicit improvement agenda
- identifying one to three areas for improvement
- developing an annual implementation plan
- developing measures, targets, and timelines and monitor progress.

To facilitate this, DET provides schools with the School Improvement Hierarchy Reflection Tool to help them review and reflect their efforts to improve the quality of classroom teaching and learning. This combines a number of interconnecting elements to improve school performance and achieve differentiated teaching and learning to enhance student outcomes. Figure 1C illustrates the School Improvement Hierarchy.

Figure 1C
School Improvement Hierarchy



Source: Department of Education and Training

The purpose of this strategy is to prepare Queenslanders with the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate effectively in the community and the economy. Enhancing Teaching Quality is one of the objectives of the strategy that can be achieved through teachers developing their professional knowledge, practice and engagement. DET's strategy includes a focus on collaboration to link six key elements. DET and schools are required to implement various actions linked to each element to encourage improvement across the education system. Figure 1D illustrates the actions of DET's state schools' strategy to support teacher development and student learning.

Figure 1D
Department of Education and Training State Schools Strategy 2017–2021

Key actions to support teacher development and student learning	
Teaching quality	▪ develop a deep understanding of the Australian Curriculum and P-12 curriculum, assessment and reporting framework ▪ implement a school-wide pedagogical framework ▪ improve students' literacy and numeracy achievement in all learning areas ▪ ensure consistency of teacher judgment and accurate reporting against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards ▪ improve assessment and moderation processes and practices. ▪ use the annual performance review process to support career and capability development ▪ create a systematic approach to professional learning, coaching, mentoring and feedback to improve teaching practices.
Principal leadership and performance	▪ be an instructional leader ▪ establish an inclusive school-wide curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and instructional leadership model ▪ establish an assessment and feedback culture ▪ support professionalism and leadership to all staff ▪ create future leaders ▪ lead and engage in evidence-informed inquiries about effective practices drawing on the teaching standards ▪ lead and model student-centred professional learning communities ▪ focus direction, build inclusive and collaborative cultures, deepen learning and foster accountability ▪ contribute to the evidence base of student-focused innovation, learning and improvement.
School performance	▪ dig deep into data and evidence to identify a focus for improvement or significant problem of practice ▪ plan with intent to improve student outcomes ▪ scan and assess evidence about student learning ▪ triangulate data to monitor performance and inform practice ▪ use research and evidence to determine what works best in each context ▪ apply learnings from school reviews when scanning and assessing ▪ drive school improvement through an inclusive and explicit improvement agenda ▪ work collaboratively within and across schools to improve outcome ▪ plan how you will know and measure student success early in the inquiry cycle ▪ develop action plans for improvement and/or innovation ▪ review the impact on student outcomes using evidence ▪ scale up and share successful practice.

Key actions to support teacher development and student learning	
Successful learners	▪ regularly analyse student data to monitor progress, guide teaching practice and prompt early intervention ▪ create inclusive opportunities for all students to reach their potential as successful people; identify and support at-risk students, provide vocational education and training options in schools ▪ expand opportunities for students to reach their potential ▪ implement, monitor and review attendance, behaviour and attainment strategies for continuous improvement ▪ create a culture of engaging learning that improves wellbeing and achievement, values diversity and responds to student needs and interests ▪ provide challenging learning experiences ▪ provide opportunities for students to identify their intended learning options and pathways ▪ cater for individual students' academic, social and emotional needs.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education and Training State Schools Strategy 2017–2021.

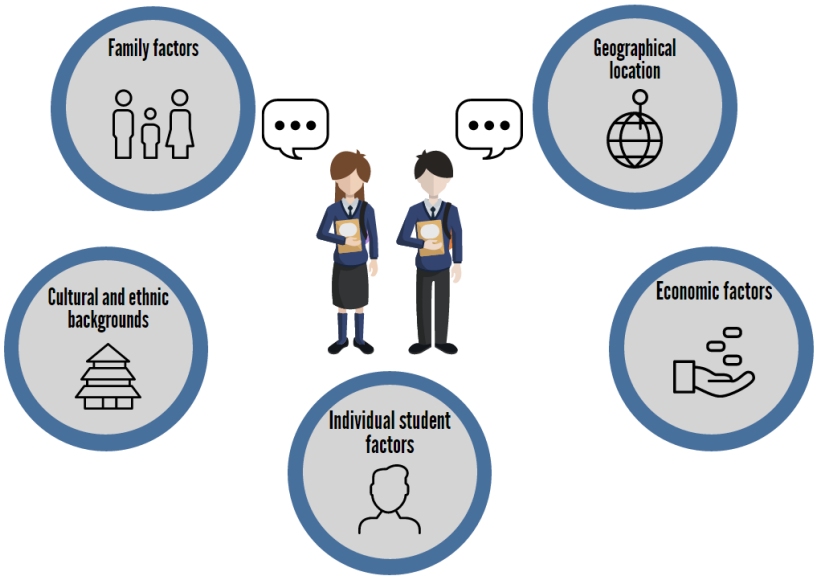
Factors which influence student outcomes

While research shows that teacher effectiveness is the largest factor within the educational system that influences student outcomes, other factors outside of teachers' control may have an impact and should be considered.

Factors that can influence students' behaviour and their commitment to school activities include differing beliefs and values, parenting practices, poor health, linguistic challenges, domestic violence in family homes, single parenthood, parents with irregular work schedules, differing socio-economic status, itinerate families and being bullied. Even geographic locations can affect student outcomes; schools in rural and remote locations may have restricted and limited subject choices and limited recreational and educational facilities.

Figure 1E shows some of the external factors which influence student outcomes.

Figure 1E
External factors which affect student outcomes



Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Data used to track student outcomes

DET and schools track student data to identify overall system-level performance, classroom performance and individual student progress. The two main areas of student data assessment are National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and Student A-E grading. Schools do not rely solely on individual assessment methods due to possible bias or limitations. Therefore, teachers use a range of student assessment data for a more consistent result and an accurate portrayal of an individual student's progress. Student data alone does not determine a teacher's effectiveness; however, it can help DET identify strategies to improve overall student outcomes. It can also help teachers better understand how to be an effective educator to meet their students' needs.

National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

NAPLAN is an annual assessment of students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. It provides a moderated snapshot assessment of students in all states and territories—of how they perform against national standards in reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation) and numeracy. NAPLAN assessments began in 2008.

The results of NAPLAN provide an indicator of how well students at a school, or at a state-level, perform against national standards as well as identifying areas that require greater attention. The same measure cannot be used to measure a teacher's individual performance. Factors outside a teacher's ability to influence may affect how well students perform in the test, including the quality of their education in previous years. However, it provides an indicator of student progress and how effective the overall teaching programs are performing. DET and schools use this information to inform policy decisions to improve student outcomes.

Queensland's NAPLAN results show an improvement in all numeracy and literacy assessment domains from 2008 to 2016 with the exception of 'writing' for years seven and nine. The percentage of students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard for 'writing' in:

- Year 7, fell from 89.9 per cent in 2008 to 87.3 per cent in 2016
- Year 9, fell from 83.7 per cent in 2008 to 78.6 per cent in 2016.

The percentage of Queensland students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard for all assessment domains generally sit between a mid to higher ranking of all Australian states and territories.

Student A-E gradings

Teachers use A-E gradings (or an alternative five-point scale for prep to grade two) to assess students for all subjects. Of these, teachers input their student A-E gradings for English, mathematics and science subjects into DET's OneSchool system so that DET can monitor the results from years one to 12. This helps to inform DET's strategic plan.

A-E results have improved over four years, from 2012 to 2016. However, English results in years one to five, whilst improving, show that less than 80 per cent of students achieved a C grade. About 30 per cent of Year 1 students in semester one of 2016 did not achieve a C grade.

Similar to NAPLAN, schools can use A-E results as another indicator of how well students are performing. However, the usefulness of this data is limited because the reporting of grades requires teachers to use their judgement in relation to the Australian National Curriculum. State high schools use moderation processes after assessments to consider consistency of student results in all subjects for years 11 and 12.

Despite this limitation, DET's data indicates that there are system-level performance issues in schools, particularly in primary school years. To address these issues, DET has incorporated 'know our data' in its State Schools Strategy for 2017–2021. This includes DET triangulating available data to monitor school performance and inform practice.

DET monitors the data and develops an annual report for each school, on the percentage of students who achieve a C grade or better in English, mathematics and science for years one to 10.

Appendix D shows the percentage of students across year levels one to 10 who achieved a C grade or better in semester one of 2012 and 2016 for English, mathematics and science.

OneSchool

DET uses OneSchool, a web-based software system to collate and centrally store data to support teachers, administrators, students and parents in:

- student management
- curriculum and learning management
- finance and asset management
- resource management
- performance, reporting and analysis.

Through OneSchool, principals and teachers can monitor trends in student performance, measure outcomes, and identify trends for individual students, class groups and year levels.

Data Walls

A data wall is a visual representation of students and their academic results in selected subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics. Schools display this information on a board or a wall, usually in a private room such as teacher staff rooms. Teachers update their students' results regularly to show how they align with targets. Data walls create discussion among teachers and school leaders to guide decisions around teaching and learning. It helps teachers to:

- track student progress
- identify students who need more assistance
- reflect on their teaching practice and identify new teaching methods to improve student results.

2. Design and implementation

Chapter in brief

From 2015, all teachers in Queensland state schools must participate in a revised annual performance review process, which has become a mandatory formal written plan. The greatest change to the revised teacher performance review is that teachers must reflect on their own teaching strengths and areas of development against the Australian Professional Standards of Teaching. The review process it replaces was linked to state-based standards: the Queensland College of Teacher standards or Department of Education and Training's (DET's) Professional Standards for Teachers.

Main findings

- DET's process for reviewing teacher performance aligns with the professional standards for teachers and the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework. It also provides for a formal discussion between a teacher and their supervisor about the teacher's capability, and helps teachers create development goals relevant to their teaching practice, student outcomes, and school priorities.
- DET's process does not provide for teachers and their supervisors to document and agree on an assessment of a teacher's ability to perform against the requirements of their role, nor in a way which differentiates between the levels of teaching proficiency.
- DET does not clearly define unsatisfactory performance for school principals and teachers. This means that that there is no shared understanding between DET, schools and teachers on what unsatisfactory performance is.
- From our visits to 10 state schools, we observed that
  - all 10 schools have commenced DET's annual performance review process. Teachers are reflecting on their teaching practice against the standards, and developing goals
  - some teachers view the process as a compliance exercise
  - all 10 schools document their school priorities in a school improvement plan but not all schools include their school priorities in the annual performance development plan templates. Thus, it is not clear how teachers' development goals directly relate to local school priorities
  - teachers are developing goals, but they are generally not measurable. Thus, the goals do not support an objective review of the impact of their teaching practice
  - some teachers commence their annual performance development plan, then do not give much thought to their goals again until the end of the annual performance plan cycle
  - school leaders find the annual performance review process a challenge to implement with limited time and resources
  - not all school leaders maintain records that indicate teachers have completed all three stages of the annual performance review process
  - school leaders are not providing ongoing informal and formal feedback to teachers on their progress against their development goals throughout the cycle.

Introduction

The Department of Education and Training's (DET) performance review process for teachers covers a 12-month cycle where teachers reflect on their teaching practice, set development goals and, at the end of the cycle, review whether they achieved their goals. Each school principal can determine what time of year the cycle commences.

Teachers are required to complete the cycle through three phases:

- reflection and goal setting
- professional practice and learning
- feedback and review.

DET's annual performance review process has the essential elements contained within the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (the framework) and is framed against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the standards). DET's annual performance review process for principals, school leaders and classroom teachers replaced the previous Developing Performance Framework.

There are four professional career stages within the three domains of the standards: graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead. DET encourages all teachers to reflect on their performance against the proficient level of the standards and agree on development goals with their supervisor. Teachers record their self-reflection, development goals and subsequent feedback and review in DET's Annual Performance Development Plan (APDP) template.

DET requires all schools to use the APDP template for performance reviews of teachers. The Queensland Teachers Union expressed concern during the design of the process that, if schools used their own templates, performance reviews across schools would be inconsistent and principals could impose any goals on teachers. The union and DET therefore agreed to mandate that the template should not be altered or modified in any way.

We assessed the effectiveness of DET's design of the framework to manage teacher performance and schools' implementation of the annual performance review process.

Audit conclusions

DET's annual performance review process for teachers is well aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework for teacher development, but should be strengthened in terms of considering actual performance.

The process is effective as a forward planning tool for teacher professional development. By referring to the standards, teachers can know and understand what is expected of them in their role. The process helps teachers identify areas for development, and set goals to achieve performance objectives and standards.

The gap in DET's framework for managing teacher performance and development (which includes the annual performance review process) is that it does not require supervisors or principals to formally assess teacher performance against the expectations of their role. DET has processes for managing development and managing unsatisfactory performance, but not for measuring a teacher's actual performance.

This limits schools' ability to objectively recognise teachers who perform well, and address those with performance issues. The annual performance process cannot provide specific and documented examples of poor performance to therefore support the formal process to manage unsatisfactory performance.

Schools are implementing the process, but school leaders should improve the way they engage with their teachers throughout the annual cycle. School leaders should commit more time to providing all teachers with ongoing formal and informal feedback about progress towards their development goals. They also need to give teachers more help in developing measurable goals, so that teachers can show how their development activities affect their teaching effectiveness. School principals and teachers need more resources from DET showing examples of good professional development goals.

Design of the annual performance review process

From our review of DET's annual performance review process against the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (the framework), we identified that the process was well designed in the following ways:

- teachers are using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to assess their teaching practice against the four career stages, in particular the proficient stage
- DET's process is aligned to the framework and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
- the annual performance review process guides teachers to look forward and identify their professional development needs to support their teaching careers
- DET's process provides for a formal discussion between a teacher and their supervisor to help teachers reflect on their teaching practices against the professional standards, and identify areas for development
- DET's process encourages teachers to create development goals relevant to their teaching practice, student outcomes, and school priorities
- DET has a separate process for managing unsatisfactory performance.

We identified the following weaknesses with the design of DET's annual performance review process:

- DET's process does not require teachers and their supervisors to document an assessment of a teacher's performance against the requirements of their roles. DET designed its process to focus on development goals. This means, unless schools have their own process or documentation, there isn't any evidence that they have reviewed a teacher's performance against the expectation for their level of experience
- DET does not clearly define unsatisfactory performance. DET advised it relies on information prescribed under the *Public Service Act 2008* (the Act). However, the Act describes work performance and personal conduct principles and misconduct, rather than unsatisfactory performance
- DET reports that underperforming teachers are identified through processes such as complaints and teacher observations. However, the type and level of feedback teachers receive on their performance will depend on what processes exist in the school they work in.

Figure 2A shows the results of our assessment of DET's process against the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework against our observations in practice from our visits to 10 Queensland state schools.

Figure 2A
Variation of reflection and goal setting processes

National framework	DET's framework	Our findings from school visits
Reflection and goal setting		
Goals should address both teacher performance and teacher development.	Partially	Partially
Goals should be clearly articulated (between teacher and principal or delegate) based on school's shared view of effective teaching (derived from the APST).	Yes	Yes
Reflection on own teaching practice should be informed by evidence and feedback, school strategic plan and goals or priorities set for teams and teachers within the school.	Yes	Yes
Performance and development should be aligned to policies and process at the national, system and school levels.	Yes	Partially
Goals should be measurable and have a clear link to the types of evidence to be used for feedback and reflection.	Yes	No
Professional practice and learning		
Collecting evidence should inform growth and provide the basis for feedback, reflection and further development.	Yes	Partially*
All teachers should be supported in working towards their goals, including access to high quality professional learning.	Yes	Yes
Feedback and review		
Principal or delegate should provide timely, frequent and improvement-focused feedback.	Yes	No
Goals should be reviewed regularly and adjusted as circumstances change.	Yes	No
Managing underperformance		
The performance and development processes may also identify teachers who are underperforming against the requirements of their position, or against the requirements for continued registration.	No	Partially
Underperformance will be managed through separate processes which are negotiated industrially.	Yes	Yes

* Five of the 10 schools we visited have not completed an annual performance review cycle and have therefore not collected evidence. Not all supervisors collected evidence to support the goals from the other five schools because they collate evidence throughout the year as part of other processes.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Levels of teacher performance

Teachers are required to acquire an understanding of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the professional standards), align them to their own teaching practice, and reflect on their capability against the 'Proficient' level of the standards. They may also reflect on their teaching practice against higher career levels to consider their professional career goals and aspirations, but there is no requirement to do so.

The school leaders and teachers we spoke to indicated that reflecting against the standards was the most challenging part of the process. This is because the new process was aligned to the professional standards which teachers had not been asked to reflect against before. The professional standards were first published in February 2011.

DET has not aligned its teaching classification levels to the standards to guide teachers on the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours expected of them, based on their experience and years in service.

By 2019, DET plans to introduce two new teacher classifications—Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher through the Letting teachers teach initiative. These classifications are consistent with the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages of the standards. Teachers will be assessed and certified against the Highly Accomplished teacher and Lead teacher career stages of the teacher standards, through a rigorous and nationally aligned certification process. The intention of this is to allow for higher salaries and therefore keep experienced teachers in the classroom. The certification process will be piloted in 2017.

We interviewed a school principal who recognises a weakness in the annual performance review process in that it does not support an assessment of teacher capabilities. The principal has therefore introduced a process at their school to develop and monitor teacher capability as Case study 1 shows.

Case study 1

Teacher performance initiatives

A principal introduced the following two systems to assist with developing teacher capability within the school's selected style of teaching practice:

- teacher capability development system
- teacher coaching system.

Teacher capability development system

The heads of departments (HOD) and heads of special education services (HOSES) apply the teacher capability development system to support the development of teachers. It measures teacher performance against the four descriptors in the region's teacher capability development continuum (foundation, proficient, highly accomplished and lead) and observation feedback forms from lessons. The system helps the principal track teacher growth over a period of time.

Teachers have lesson observations once a term by the HOD/HOSES and once per year by the principal. All teachers have the opportunity for feedback and for individualised professional development opportunities through this system with their line manager.

HOD/HOSES assess against explicit teaching elements such as consolidation, lesson opening, teacher model, guided practice, independent practice, and closing. They also assess against the following criteria:

- teacher organisation (e.g. teacher timeliness, lesson planned, entry and exit routines)
- classroom environment (e.g. establishing expectations, clear rules, rapport and manner with students)
- classroom management (e.g. establish expectations, managing disruptive behaviour, clear instructions, encouraging body language, redirection to learning, choices with consequences)
- class display (student work displayed, clean and tidy classroom, desks facing forward).

The HOD/HOSES record the results from the observations in a confidential spreadsheet and they collate the teacher growth data once a term. This data informs individual teacher development, faculty-specific professional development and whole-of-school professional development planning.

The HOD/HOSES reflect and discuss this data at work progress review meetings. They triangulate the data with the principal's observations and student results. This provides a consistent approach across all faculties and formalises line manager's observations of teachers. HOD/HOSES may escalate details to the executive team for future action.

Teacher coaching system

The principal has introduced a coaching system that provides teachers with individualised professional development opportunities to improve explicit teaching skills. Teachers of all competency levels are encouraged to undertake the coaching to progress their career.

The principal meets with the HOD/HOSES twice a term in work progress review meetings to discuss teacher competency and development needs and identify teachers who require coaching.

Teachers identified for coaching are required to agree with and meet the coaching requirements including times for observations and feedback. The coaches usually run the session over a 10-week period.

The teacher coaching system is interrelated to the teacher capability development system. These systems help the principal and line managers monitor teacher progress and provides a performance measurement tool.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Managing unsatisfactory performance

DET has two policies for managing unsatisfactory performance—one for all DET staff excluding school principals and teachers, and one for state school teachers.

Clause 5.5.1 in the Department of Education and Training State School Teachers' Certified Agreement 2016 states:

> Subject to the provisions of the Award, progression from one salary step to the next salary step by annual increment will be subject to a satisfactory performance.

DET has formal processes for managing teacher development and unsatisfactory performance, but not for measuring teacher capabilities. DET's annual performance review process does not help schools record evidence of whether a teacher is performing to a satisfactory standard, nor is there an alternative process which schools can use to document this.

The first stage of DET's process for managing unsatisfactory performance assumes a school principal has first actively managed performance. DET's process for managing unsatisfactory performance is a separate process to its annual performance review process. The fact that it is a separate process is appropriate; the weakness is that there is no formal requirement for supervisors to document and collate evidence showing how their teachers perform against teacher standards.

Consequently, principals need to keep documentation outside of the annual performance review process to support the process of managing under-performance. Principals have OneSchool data to monitor their teachers' performance, but they are not required to retain evidence of regular reviews, nor to document how well teachers perform against the requirements of their role.

Most school leaders we interviewed said they could generally identify a teacher who was not meeting teaching capability. They used various methods such as classroom observations and observations or complaints from other teachers, students or parents. However, any concerns identified through these processes are not noted in performance reviews.

DET advised that there were 24 known cases throughout 2016 of teachers in state schools who were being managed for unsatisfactory performance through a documented plan to improve performance. And, as at December 2016, 11 known cases remained active. This represents less than 0.05 per cent of teachers. This does not include teachers who are supported by their principal to improve their performance through coaching, without a formal performance improvement process.

This low number may indicate that the process does not adequately identify and manage teachers who consistently underperform. Reasons which contribute to this include:

- the lack of consistent recording of teachers' performance
- the extensive time school leaders need to invest in managing unsatisfactory performance, which may deter them from initiating the process
- a lack of a shared understanding of what constitutes unsatisfactory performance.

What is unsatisfactory performance?

Initiating the management of unsatisfactory performance is subject to regular informal performance discussions between the teacher and the principal. These preliminary discussions identify issues that may contribute to unsatisfactory performance of a teacher. If the teacher's performance fails to improve, the principal and teacher formalise the ongoing performance concerns in a managing unsatisfactory performance plan.

DET's 'managing unsatisfactory performance—state school teachers procedure' does not adequately address the question or clearly define 'What is unsatisfactory performance?' This creates subjectivity for how schools apply the guideline. We asked all 10 principals of the schools we visited if they have a definition of underperformance. Their responses indicate that there is inconsistent understanding on the definition of underperformance. Figure 2B lists quotes from principals answering this question.

Figure 2B
Principals' understanding of underperformance

Does your school have a definition of underperformance?*
▪ *"It's about if teachers are meeting the standards".* ▪ *"The school has good processes so they can 'iron' out underperformance".* ▪ *"There is no definition from Education Queensland of what underperformance is".* ▪ *"Underperformance is known by behaviour management, parent complaints and student complaints".* ▪ *"Everything runs on principal judgement. There are no standards to guide judgement".* ▪ *"We do not look at teacher standards as a measure of under-performance".* ▪ *"There is no set definition of underperformance – it's a bit loose".* ▪ *"Managing Unsatisfactory Performance (MUP) is about student outcomes – first indicator is student and parent complaints".* ▪ *"There is clear department documentation for underperformance".* ▪ *"Schools try to set definitions of good performance, rather than underperformance".* ▪ *"Would like training and MUP needs to be reviewed".*

* Note: Underperformance precedes unsatisfactory performance which for the purpose of this report we define as continued instances of underperformance.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

DET's definition of unsatisfactory performance for employees excluding teachers and principals is:

> Unsatisfactory Performance can include the inability and/or willingness to utilise relevant skills to carry out tasks and major accountabilities associated with an employee's particular position in a manner that meets the reasonable expectations and service standards of the role.
>
> Unsatisfactory performance may be attributable to lack of appropriate skills/experience, incomplete knowledge, an illness or injury, unscheduled ongoing absenteeism, and/or lack of commitment.

DET's definition of unsatisfactory performance for state school teachers lacks clarity. It only states:

> Work performance by an employee that is below the satisfactory standard for the role in which they are engaged.

Schools' implementation

We visited 10 schools and interviewed more than 50 teachers to understand their perception of the annual performance review process and to determine how well schools had implemented the process for teachers.

The overall response around the process was positive and many teachers believed it helped contribute towards them being better teachers. We observed the following positive outcomes from our 10 school visits:

- all 10 schools we visited began implementing DET's annual performance review process
- teachers are reflecting on their teaching practice against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to determine areas of strength and areas for development. This assists teachers to personally reflect their capabilities against the teaching standards and identify their areas of strength, and areas which require further development to enhance good teaching practices and career development
- all 10 schools documented their priorities and focus areas in a school improvement plan. This plan sets out the strategies, expectations and accountabilities to improve student outcomes. These plans demonstrate that schools assess how they need to improve which helps to create a high performing culture for teachers to work in.

However, our visits confirmed that schools still have a way to go to implement the annual performance review process in a way that facilitates regular engagement between teachers and their supervisors to promote professional development. We observed the following weaknesses from our 10 school visits:

- teachers expressed concern that some of their colleagues viewed the process as a compliance exercise
- teachers completed the annual performance development plan (APDP) at the beginning of the year and didn't give considerable thought to it and their goals until the end of the year
- teachers did not develop goals that were measurable to support an objective review of the impact of their teaching practice
- DET's APDP template provides a section for school priorities to be stated for teachers to consider when they develop their goals. We noted out of 157 APDPs we reviewed for 2016, the school priority section was blank for 67 (43 per cent). This weakens the focus on school priorities and achieving outcomes relevant to the school's context
- of the seven schools that completed the annual performance reviews in 2015, we were unable to obtain assurance that schools completed the third phase of the cycle—feedback and review. This is because only one school maintained records to know if all teachers in their school had completed all three phases of the annual performance and review cycle. The APDP is retained by the individual teacher and schools do not keep a copy
- not all teachers receive regular informal and formal feedback in relation to their development goals to support ongoing reflection and development throughout the year
- while a great deal of time was invested in developing goals and having conversations at the beginning of the cycle with supervisors, not all staff had formal conversations towards the end of their cycle with their supervisor to discuss the achievement of their goals
- none of the schools we visited could clearly define what unsatisfactory performance was. We did not test how well schools applied DET's procedure for managing unsatisfactory performance (which is separate to the annual performance review) because none of the 10 schools we visited had any teachers who were subject to a managing unsatisfactory performance process at the time of the audit.

School priorities

DET's guidance material suggests that teachers should consider their school's priorities when developing their performance development goals. However, the design of the annual performance development plan template is not flexible enough to enable schools to focus teacher development needs on their local school priorities. Because of this, it is not clear how each of a teacher's professional development goals directly relate to local school priorities.

During our school visits, we observed one of the 10 schools used its own annual performance development plan templates instead of the standard template, so they could guide their teachers to develop goals specific to their school context as well as to the professional teaching standards.

Each school is different and has a unique local context, and different priorities and challenges for student learning. It is important for schools to understand their individual priorities and develop an improvement plan and an educational framework to achieve good student outcomes. This should inform teachers' goal development for the annual performance review process.

Goal setting

We obtained 558 teacher development goals from 201 annual performance development plans for 2015 and 2016. A consistent theme from these development goals is that the indicators of success were not measurable, and so could not support an objective assessment of whether the teacher achieved the goal. School principals and teacher supervisors have not always checked that teachers are developing goals correctly to ensure they include an effective measure.

DET's step-by-step guide to the annual performance review process for teachers states that teachers' development goals should be:

- specific—Is your goal formulated in a way that you and others understand what is to be achieved?
- measurable—Is it possible to tell at any point in time if your goal has been achieved or not? Does your goal clearly link to the types of evidence you will collect throughout the review period?
- achievable—Is your goal a stretch, but also realistic?
- relevant—Does the achievement of your goal have meaningful positive implications for your own teaching practice, student outcomes, and the overall goals of your school?
- time-phased—Is the time in which this goal should be achieved clear?

While development goals need to be specific to a teacher's local context, teachers need further guidance and examples of how to develop meaningful goals against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which Queensland adopted in 2015.

Regular feedback

Ongoing formal and informal feedback and coaching throughout the 12-month cycle is part of the annual performance review process.

DET's guide to the annual performance review process emphasises the importance of regular conversations about a teacher's progress. It states:

> Having agreed on the plan and goals, it is important to have regular conversations about progress. These may be both formal and informal. The plan should be a 'living document' that is referred to regularly. Formal reviews should be undertaken during the agreement period, and at the end, to review progress toward goals and agree on actions following the review. Identifying and reflecting on evidence will enable review of progress toward goals.

In phase three of the annual performance review process, teachers should receive formal feedback on whether they have achieved the goals they agreed to in phase one of the process. This is recorded in the teacher's annual performance development plan. If the teacher does not achieve their goals, the teacher and their supervisor will use the feedback as the basis for self-reflection in the next cycle of the process.

We identified through our interviews with approximately 50 teachers that there is little evidence that regular performance and development conversations occur. Many teachers we spoke to said their annual performance development plan was placed in a drawer and not consciously thought about until phase three of the process when formal feedback is received.

This indicates that DET needs to reinforce to school principals the importance of providing regular feedback to their teaching staff on their professional development. It also indicates that teachers should be more active in seeking feedback from their supervisors.

Capacity to complete the performance review process

Of the ten schools we visited, two indicated they did not have capacity to fully undertake the annual performance review process for 2016, and another school did not implement it until the week of our pre-announced visit in September 2016.

The principal at one of these schools was new, had no other lead staff members, and was managing two time-intensive staff unsatisfactory performance processes at the beginning of the year. They did not complete the annual performance development plan (APDP) template. Instead, all staff completed a one-page document that outlined their areas of strength and two development goals.

Another school completed the APDP templates for all teachers, but found it challenging to find the budget and time for the process. The principal purchases relief time for teachers to allow time for conversations and personal development with the permanent teachers. This school also found it challenging to fully complete stage three of the annual performance review process by the end of term four with many other demanding end-of-year activities.

3. Developing a culture for teacher performance and development

Chapter in brief

School principals are responsible for linking their school improvement agendas to DET's State Schools Strategy 2017–2021. This strategy aims to drive school improvement and student achievement. Principals can best implement their agendas by creating a positive culture that inspires teachers to improve their teaching practices.

Main findings

- DET has implemented a number of initiatives to support a performance-focused culture in schools. These include a state schools' strategy; a mandatory annual performance review process; a review body known as the School Improvement Unit; use of data to help improve student results; and the creation of master teacher positions.
- DET and schools are collaboratively developing a data-driven culture. This means DET, regions and schools are using student data to drive improvement in the areas most needed.
- There is a clear alignment between the systemic professional development themes DET has identified in its State Schools Strategy 2017–2021, and the development needs teachers are identifying in their annual performance reviews.
- The common professional development needs of teachers we found include:
  - developing strategies for more effective student learning
  - using data to understand student learning needs
  - being able to differentiate between unique student needs and developing appropriate strategies to satisfy those needs
  - helping improve student outcomes with literacy and numeracy.

Introduction

DET's State Schools Strategy 2017–2021 aims to ensure school leaders drive school improvement and student achievement.

Principals have a responsibility to create a performance-focused culture. It helps to support school leaders and teachers to improve their teaching capabilities with a focus on optimum student outcomes.

The Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders states that a high quality, professional learning culture will be characterised by:

- a high degree of leadership support for ongoing adult learning and risk taking
- collective responsibility for improving practice
- disciplined collaboration aimed at specific and relevant goals that relate to the learning needs of students
- high levels of trust, interaction, and inter-dependence
- support for professional learning through school structures, explicit planning, and the allocation of time
- a focus on the professional learning that is most likely to be effective in improving professional practice and student outcomes.

An effective professional learning culture will also focus on data to track student progress collectively and individually. Results can influence teachers to apply new knowledge and skills in the classroom or modify their teaching delivery technique.

DET has implemented several initiatives to support a performance-focused culture in schools. We examine one of these—the annual performance review process—in chapter two. We examine further initiatives in this chapter.

Audit conclusions

DET and state schools are working effectively together to create a performance and development culture that inspires teachers to develop their teaching abilities to improve student achievements. As a result, teachers increasingly accept the idea of continually improving their teaching practices. Our analysis of teacher development plans shows that when teachers develop their professional goals, they focus on developing their teaching strategies to improve student outcomes.

Schools are also introducing master teachers who contribute to the performance and development culture with the aim of improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. Master teachers provide professional coaching and guidance to teachers.

Implementing a performance culture in state schools

In addition to the annual performance review process, DET has implemented several other initiatives to support a performance-focused culture in schools. These includes its:

- State Schools' Strategy which identifies the need for all schools to use an explicit improvement agenda and data to improve teaching quality
- School Improvement Unit which provides assurance on how well schools are implementing DET's improvement agenda
- continuous use of data at state, regional and school levels to identify teaching priorities
- creation of master teacher positions to lift student literacy and numeracy outcomes by coaching and mentoring teachers.

State Schools Strategy

We found that school leaders are reflecting on the context of their individual schools and putting clear school-wide targets for improvement in place. Schools are introducing coaches or master teachers to communicate clear teaching expectations to teachers so they know what and how to teach and what students should learn. This leadership creates a culture to influence the behavior of all teachers with a strong focus on achieving good student outcomes.

All 10 schools we visited were implementing the explicit improvement agenda and have developed an annual implementation plan. In addition to having annual performance reviews for teachers, they use a combination of activities to develop a culture which sets high expectations and positive attitudes to improving professional practice and engaging students. These activities include:

- using student data to identify school priorities and areas of specific focus and development
- conducting student focus meetings through the use of data walls, or student charts, to continually monitor student performance. This facilitates regular conversations among teachers about student progress and suggestions on different teaching approaches to move students to higher levels
- encouraging teachers to plan for differentiated teaching where they identify individual student needs, and personalise teaching and learning with an aim to improve results for selected students or groups of students
- applying distinct pedagogical practices (such as varying concepts of explicit instruction) for all teachers to deliver effective teaching practices
- using regular classroom observations (formal and informal) to provide the opportunity for school leaders to give feedback to teachers on their teaching practice
- using peer observations, which encourage transparency of practice and allow teachers to learn from each other and suggest improvements
- coaching teachers to help build teacher capability
- encouraging staff to visit other schools to learn other teaching practices and to build professional learning networks
- arranging collegial meetings to share pedagogical experiences, and to provide professional and personal support for each other through informal and formal interactions.

Case study 2 shows an example from our school visits where we found evidence of a school principal creating an environment where teachers are open to, and benefit from, feedback on their teaching practice.

Case Study 2

Feedback on teaching practices

The five teachers we spoke to at one state school we visited said they appreciated the observations they received from their principal. The principal provides them with continued guidance on their progress, because the principal offers observations on a regular and consistent basis.

The teachers value the feedback they receive and the ongoing support. They are given the opportunity to respond to feedback, and they are given time to implement suggestions the principal makes before another observation takes place.

This leadership from the school principal has helped create a collegial environment—teachers share ideas and teaching methods, and support each other.

The principal uses the 'mark book feedback' and informal observations to provide feedback to teachers.

Mark book feedback

This method involves the teacher submitting their workbook to the principal for review. The principal provides verbal feedback to the teacher and then completes a mark book feedback template to formally document feedback. The teacher is also allowed to formally document feedback to the principal on the same template. The teacher keeps this document as part of their portfolio to provide evidence of their teaching approach against the standards. The template includes:

- A focus area from the **Australian Professional Standards for Teachers** at the top of the page—selected by the principal that applies to the teaching situation. It acts as a visual for the teacher to gain familiarity with the standard and describes what is required for each of the four career stages (graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead).
- A **commendation section—**the principal writes directly to the teacher and outlines observations and thoughts from the work submitted. It includes class facts such student data. The principal may then pose questions or thoughts for the teacher to reflect on such as 'How do you feel about this as a class average?'
- **Recommendations—**the principal provides guidance based on what they observed in conjunction with facts about the class. This can include pointing the teacher in a direction of areas to review, and areas the teacher needs to strengthen.
- **Wonderings—**The principal poses questions to the teacher, such as 'What strategies will you employ to strengthen…?', 'What are your thoughts in relation to…?' and 'What might you do to strengthen…?'
- **Response to commendations, recommendations, and wonderings—**This provides an opportunity for the teacher to respond to comments the principal has made.

Informal classroom observation

The principal also conducts frequent informal observations of teachers in the classroom, and provides feedback in the form of a letter/email specific to the lesson that was observed. The feedback includes:

- **General cover sheet—**this includes a thanks to the teacher for accepting to have the principal in the classroom.
- **Principal's detailed observation notes—**specific sections of the lesson are broken down and comments provided.
- **Highlights from the lesson—**this covers what was observed, what the teacher did well, and how the students responded.
- **Improvement directions—**the principal gives guidance to the teacher for the future.

Teachers can request feedback from the principal—which is especially useful for feedback on new concepts and methods that have been introduced. It allows the principal to provide further guidance. When a teacher demonstrates high standards of teaching practice, the principal will recommend that the teacher shares their practice with other teachers.

Peer observations

Teachers in this school are able to observe other teachers' lessons. The teachers have found this helps develop collegial and collaborative teaching. It is about building other teachers up, not about keeping teaching methods or resources private. It helps teachers build confidence, knowing they're seen as having skills that other teachers can learn from.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Master teachers

Schools are introducing master teachers to promote clear teaching expectations, and plan ways of teaching that meet the specific needs of different students. The intention of having master teachers is to help create a culture focused on achieving good student outcomes.

In 2016, DET funded 304 full-time equivalent fixed-term master teachers at 464 targeted schools to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. DET's master teacher initiative is one of the actions in the Great Teachers = Great Results policy with a cost of $135 million. A master teacher position is an additional classified teaching position DET appoints through a merit process. DET identified 464 schools to receive a master teacher by analysing the 2014 NAPLAN scores. It allocated master teachers to individual schools or to school clusters, that is schools in close proximity and who share common needs and approaches to school improvement strategies. About another 60 schools have chosen to self-fund their own master teachers.

School Improvement Unit

DET's School Improvement Unit ensures that schools are implementing an explicit improvement agenda—a strategy in DET's State Schools Strategy 2017–2021.

The unit reviews every state school at least once every four years which identifies improvement strategies, and they produce an annual report showing the systemic issues that all schools need to address. In 2015, it conducted a review of 369 state schools and produced its first annual report: *Queensland: A state of Learning*.

Schools receive a report showing findings and improvement strategies against the nine domains included in the National School Improvement Tool. These include:

- an explicit improvement agenda
- analysis and discussion of data
- a culture that promotes learning
- targeted use of school resources
- an expert teaching team
- systematic curriculum delivery
- differentiated teaching and learning
- effective pedagogical practices
- school community partnerships.

These reviews enable DET to monitor whether schools are effectively implementing explicit improvement agendas. They give DET the opportunity to recommend to a school actions for improvement, where necessary.

Use of data

DET and schools are developing a data-driven culture by using relevant school data to inform strategic improvement, school focus areas, and classroom teaching.

DET provides all schools with a headline indicator report which highlights areas where schools need to focus their attention to improve performance. This data helps determine whether DET's and schools' strategies are effective in improving teaching quality at a system level. The headline indicators include:

- attendance rates
- literacy and numeracy achievement
- English, maths and science percentage of students with a C grade or better
- Year 12 attainment
- post-school destinations to track the destination of school leavers
- four-year enrolment trend
- behaviour of students including short suspensions, exclusions and cancellations
- staff, parent and student satisfaction.

Both DET and schools use data results to determine focus areas for improvement. The State Schools Strategy 2017–2021 shows that to improve teaching quality, as part of developing professional practice, DET will seek to 'improve students' literacy and numeracy achievement in all learning areas'. This is informed by the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results for Queensland. The NAPLAN results show that Queensland schools have improved their performance in literacy and numeracy considerably since 2008, but that Queensland results are still marginally lower than the national average.

DET's OneSchool system allows teachers to collect and record student achievement data from a range of sources including standardised testing data and class-based assessments. The system also records student attendance.

All 10 schools we visited use data to monitor student outcomes, using sources such as NAPLAN for literacy and numeracy achievement, reading levels, and the A to E assessments for all subjects.

School leaders and teachers plot student achievements on data walls to track student progress. This encourages teachers to have conversations about student needs and supports teaching and learning to improve student outcomes.

Identifying and delivering professional development programs

DET provides a schedule of events to support individual teacher learning and growth, as well as organisational planning and development through its professional development calendars.

DET provides teachers with online access (through its corporate intranet) to information, resources and support to improve the effectiveness of teaching. It has also created a register of suppliers of professional development courses which schools can use. Schools are accountable for deciding what professional development their teachers need, and for funding their attendance. This approach gives schools autonomy to select the training provider they assess best meets their local needs.

The Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders:

- affirms the importance of learning in improving the professional knowledge, practice and understanding of all teachers and school leaders to achieve improvement in student outcomes
- articulates the expectation that all teachers and school leaders actively engage in professional learning throughout their careers
- describes the characteristics of a high quality learning culture and of effective professional learning, to assist teachers, school leaders and those who support them to get the most from their professional learning.

DET online training

DET's online training portal, the Learning Place, provides teachers with access to 36 online training courses, of which 27 are self-paced. This provides an efficient and flexible delivery channel for providing training to teachers in all parts of Queensland. It means that teachers can access the training at a time convenient to them, and from any location. However, DET does not monitor how frequently teachers access the training, nor assess whether the training satisfies teachers' development needs.

Teacher professional development needs

There is a clear alignment between the systemic professional development themes DET has identified in its State Schools Strategy 2017–2021, and the development needs teachers are identifying in their annual performance reviews.

From our review of 157 teacher annual performance and development plans for 2016 across the 10 state schools we visited, the common areas for teacher professional development include:

- developing strategies for more effective student learning
- using data to understand student learning needs
- being able to differentiate between unique student needs, and developing appropriate strategies to satisfy those needs
- helping improve student outcomes with literacy and numeracy.

Phase 1 of the annual performance review process requires teachers to identify areas for development against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Our review of the development areas teachers identified in 2016 shows that:

- 42 per cent sought development in standard 3 (professional practice)—plan for and implement effective teaching and learning
- 40 per cent sought development in standard 1 (professional knowledge)—know students and how they learn.

Figure 3A shows the development areas 157 teachers identified in 2016.

Figure 3A
2016 annual performance and development plans for 157 state school teachers

Standard number	Standard description	Number of teachers	Number of teachers %*
1	Know students and how they learn	53	40
2	Know the content and how to teach it	39	30
3	Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning	55	42
4	Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments	36	27
5	Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning	45	34
6	Engage in professional learning	28	21
7	Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community	42	32

Note: Does not add to 100% as teachers could select more than one standard.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

To complete phase 1 of the annual performance review process, teachers create development goals by referencing the areas for development they identified from their self-reflection. We reviewed 157 annual performance development plans (APDP) teachers completed in 2016. These APDPs comprise 447 development goals. We analysed these goals to identify the most frequently used words.

Using a ‘text mining’ method, we identified the most common words teachers used in their development plans were 'students', 'learn', 'develop', 'strategy', 'teach' and 'improve'. This shows that teachers are primarily basing their goals on developing learning strategies to improve student outcomes. DET has provided state school teachers with comprehensive guidance on the curriculum, and teachers are aiming to develop and improve their teaching methods and practice.

Figure 3B shows the top 10 ranked sentences based on the number of words within those sentences which occurred most frequently in the in 157 annual performance development plans we reviewed.

Figure 3B
Top ten sentences with most frequently used words

	Summary
1	By the middle of Term 3, I will **develop** and **implement improved practices** for **student feedback** by providing individual and group **learning** goals. By the end of Term 3 **students** will **develop** and set their own goals using thinking **skills** language
2	By the end of the year I will research and **develop writing** activities and **strategies** to assist students in developing **writing** so that students **reading skills** are **improved**
3	By the end of the year, I will read and research the signs of dyslexia and begin to **develop** some **strategies** to support **students** with **reading** difficulties so that students can gain confidence in **reading** using their new **strategies**
4	By the end of Term 2 I will research and **implement** effective **teaching strategies** so **students** are able to communicate mathematical learning goals with me in a conference situation. I will design, **implement** and **assess** learning and teaching of the TENS programs on a regular basis.
5	By the end of Term 2 I will select and use relevant **teaching strategies** to **develop student** vocabulary so that **student reading** and **learning** is more independent and is reflected in their Science and Maths explanations and discussions
6	By the end of the year, I will enhance my understanding of how to **develop** and **implement** a range of **strategies** for **differentiating teaching** so that the specific needs of students is catered for, with a particular focus on the higher achieving **students**
7	Monitor and evaluate the implementation of **teaching strategies** within the **school** to improve **students'** achievement in numeracy using research-based knowledge and **student data**
8	Develop the Year 10 science program by leading colleagues to select and **develop teaching strategies** to **improve student learning** in science
9	Two social and emotional **learning** skills will be **taught** specific to each **students'** needs will be addressed. Short term individual **student** goals will be set, the achievement of which will provide evidence of the **development** of the required skills
10	By the end of term 1 I will coordinate data collection and therefore **improve teaching practice** using a **differentiated teaching strategies** with colleagues using **data** outcomes to improve **student** outcomes

Note: Words in **bold** appeared frequently throughout the population of goals we reviewed. The top 10 sentences were ranked higher because they contained the words which occurred the most frequently.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

4. Evaluating the process

Chapter in brief

Since 2015, all state school teachers are required to participate in an annual performance review process, which is aligned to the professional standards for teachers. With more than 49 000 teachers in state schools, this significant change requires effective communication.

Main findings

- DET provided school leaders and teachers with adequate information to help them understand and apply the annual performance review process.
- DET did not monitor the effectiveness of its communication with schools and teachers on the annual performance review process; nor did it have, or create, the data capability to enable it to do so.
- DET uses the term 'annual performance review process', but this term does not accurately communicate to teachers and the public, the actual intent of this process. DET's annual performance review process has changed from its original design and is more about reviewing teachers' future development than their performance.
- DET did not action its monitoring program in time to evaluate the outcomes of the annual performance review process and three other actions which form part of the 'Teaching and school leadership program'. DET has not delivered the second formative evaluation report which was due in June 2016. This is because it did not issue its survey to teachers in time, and the survey was delayed to February 2017.
- DET's 2015 survey results show that more than half of the teachers surveyed agreed the annual performance review process supports the teaching profession; however less than half the teachers were satisfied with the process.

Introduction

From 2015, DET introduced a formal annual performance review process for all state school teachers. Teachers were familiar with DET's previous performance review process, called the Developing Performance Framework. This was linked to the Queensland College of Teacher standards or DET Professional Standards for Teachers.

DET aligned the new annual performance review process to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The introduction of these standards was the most significant change from the existing process. With more than 49 000 teachers in state schools, this significant change required effective communication.

In 2014, DET developed a communication and marketing plan to promote the introduction of the new teacher performance review process to Queensland schools, Queensland state school staff, and other stakeholders.

In 2015, DET began a formative evaluation process of the 'Making it Happen′ program (now Teaching and School Leadership program). A formative evaluation is a method of judging the success of a program while the program is still in progress to inform future investment decisions. DET's objective for this evaluation is to determine the success of the four actions which remained after the previous government's *Great teachers = Great results* program. The annual performance review process is one of those four actions.

The results of the evaluation will inform future investment decisions. This formative evaluation process included four reporting milestones from 2015 to 2018.The purpose of the evaluation is to assess:

- how the objectives of the program have been met as a result of the program
- the impact of these investments in the short, medium and long-term.

DET's program objective for the annual performance review process is to: *ensure every school teacher and leader is performing at their best through standards to inform the development of our teachers and school leaders, and an accredited mentoring program so that beginning teachers learn from experienced teachers in the classroom*.

We assessed whether DET:

- effectively communicated and equipped schools to use the annual performance review process
- implemented a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the annual performance review process.

Audit conclusions

DET equipped schools with the resources they needed to implement the annual performance review process, but it did not effectively monitor its communications strategy to ensure that teachers used those resources. This means it could not identify whether its resources were adequate, or whether schools and teachers needed additional resources to implement the process.

DET developed an adequate strategy for evaluating the success of the annual performance review process implementation. However, its own survey results bring into question what impact the annual performance review process is having on enhancing teaching effectiveness. It has also not conducted any survey of teachers on the effectiveness of the process since it conducted its last survey in 2015. This shows it has not monitored the effectiveness of the process, as it intended to do. As a result, DET does not have any current data to give it a true indicator of how effective the process is.

Both its communications strategy and its process for evaluating the process show that, while DET designed these processes well, it did not adequately follow-through with them to ensure they achieved their intended purposes.

Equipping schools to use the process

Online resources for using the performance review process

DET provided school leaders and teachers with adequate information on the annual performance review process. The information teachers need to understand and implement the process is available on DET's website, and school leaders also have access to further training on DET's corporate intranet site.

DET prepared and published communication and training materials in 2014 to equip school leaders and teachers to implement the annual performance review process from 2015. Principals and teachers had access to training on the annual performance review process through DET's corporate intranet. DET provided school leaders and teachers with a documented overview of the process, a step-by-step guide, and templates. These are available on DET's website. DET also provided a roadshow to some of the regions to help school staff to understand and implement the new process.

In addition to developing and providing online resources which describe the annual performance review (APR) process for classroom teachers, DET used its web-based learning platform, Learning Place, to equip school principals, deputy principals, heads of programs and classroom teachers across the state to use the APR process.

DET developed and provided the following online sessions in the Learning Place:

- **Teacher Annual Performance Review process**—provided an overview and a step-by-step guide for teachers to complete their Annual Performance Development Plan.
- **Unpacking the Australian Standards for Teachers**—designed to support teachers and their supervisors to use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the standard). It helps teachers and supervisors to reflect on their teaching performance and capability against the standard as part of Phase 1 of the Annual Performance Review Process.
- **SMART goals development in APR**—designed to support teachers, middle managers and school leaders to create performance development goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-phased.
- **The APR process for Principals and Deputy Principals**—provided an overview and a step-by-step guide for principals and deputy principals to complete their APDP. It also provided guidelines on Unpacking the Australian Standards for Teachers.
- **Heads of Program APR process**—provided an overview and a step-by-step guide for Heads of Programs (Master teachers, Guidance Officers, HOCS, HOSES, HODs) to complete their APDP. It also provided guidelines on Unpacking the Australian Standards for Teachers.

Performance review process communication and marketing plan

DET's communication and marketing plan for the annual performance review process included three measures for assessing the effectiveness of communications:

- increase in the number of hits to DET's annual performance review webpage
- the number of downloads of the APR step-by-step guide, process and templates
- anecdotal feedback from teachers, principals and other school leaders.

DET did not monitor these; nor did it have, or create the data capability to enable it to do so. DET has not monitored how many teachers in Queensland have accessed its online resources to determine whether its marketing and communications plan is effective.

When we requested DET to provide us with data on how many times its annual performance review process resources have been accessed, it advised that it could not do so because of an error when its annual performance review for teachers website was launched in 2015. It also could not provide data showing how many times the teaching population accessed its corporate intranet resources.

Communicating the intent of the performance review process

DET has used the term 'annual performance review' process which was a term developed in the Great Teachers = Great Results direct action plan released in April 2013. However, this term does not properly communicate, to teachers and the public, the actual intent of this process. DET's annual performance review process has changed from the original design and is more about identifying development needs and monitoring the success of actions to meet these needs. It does not measure or record actual performance against the requirements of their role and classification.

The former Government announced its Great Teachers = Great Results program on 8 April 2013. The program's direct action plan which was released on this date, shows that the annual performance review process was foundational to other aspects of the program such as:

- rewarding high performing teachers with performance bonuses and scholarships for undertaking master's degrees in teaching
- providing an accelerated pathway to high performing teachers to the experienced senior teacher classification.

DET completed its design of the annual performance review process for teachers in August 2014, following extensive negotiation with the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU). By this stage, the process was re-designed to ensure the focus was on future development, rather than performance. However, despite this shift in focus, DET retained the term 'performance' in the process title.

Framework to evaluate success

DET has devolved responsibility for implementing the annual performance review process to school principals. As such, it does not require school principals to report whether their school has implemented the process and when all teachers have completed all stages of the process.

Instead, DET tracks the success of the teacher's annual performance review process through its formative evaluation process. A formative evaluation is a method for judging the worth of a program, while the program is still in progress to inform future investment decisions. DET's formative evaluation takes the form of an annual review which DET designed to determine the success of the four remaining actions from the 'Teaching and School Leadership program until 2018. The annual performance review process is one of these actions. The purpose of the formative evaluation is to assist DET to demonstrate:

- how the objectives of the Teaching and School Leadership program have been met as a result of the program investment
- the impact of these investments in the short, medium and long term.

DET designated following timeframes for Evaluation reporting:

- End of 2015 (formative evaluation report)
- June 2016 (formative evaluation report)
- June 2017 (formative evaluation report)
- June 2018 (summative evaluation report).

DET uses a range of sources to inform its formative evaluation including two surveys:

- its annual School Opinion Survey (SOS)
- an additional survey of schools it selects across regions and school types who had begun using the annual performance review process (formative evaluation survey).

As at February 2017, DET has not delivered the second formative evaluation report which was due in June 2016. This is because it did not issue its survey to teachers in time, and the survey has been delayed to February 2017.

Without regular evaluations, DET may be missing opportunities to identify improvements to the annual performance review process.

School opinion survey

DET conducts a school opinion survey annually. Through this survey, it seeks opinions from parents and caregivers in all families and a sample of students from each school on student learning and student well-being. The survey also includes all state school staff and principals to obtain their views of their school as a workplace.

We found it too soon to evaluate the annual performance review process through the high-level questions in the school opinion survey which relate to the annual performance review process. This was because of the short time span from when schools began implementing the process 2015 to when the latest survey was conducted in 2016.

Formative evaluation survey

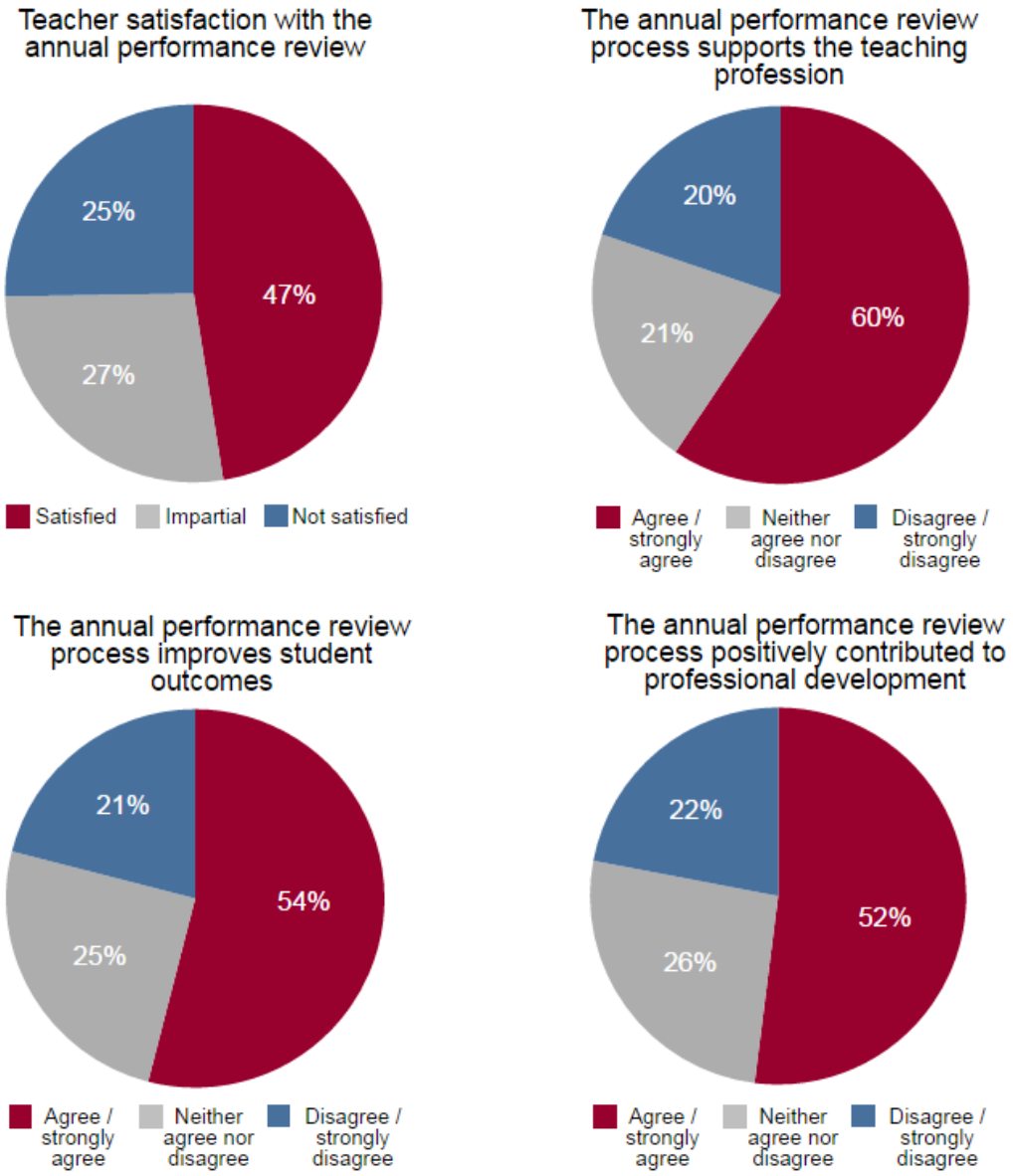
In 2015, DET surveyed teachers from 50 state schools who started using the new annual performance review process from the beginning of 2015. DET received responses from 418 teachers across 31 schools.

DET's survey asked teachers:

- Were staff engaged in some form of self-reflection prior to completing Phase 1 of the APR?
- What forms of feedback did staff engage with to self-reflect?
- Did your goals align to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)?
- Did your agreed goals involve collaboration with your supervisor?
- Did you record your APR goals in the annual performance development plan template?
- What was the impact of the APR process on teaching practice? Did it support the teacher profession, improve student outcomes and positively contribute to professional development?
- How satisfied are you with the annual performance review process?

DET's survey results show that more than half of the teachers surveyed agreed the annual performance review process supports the teaching profession; however less than half the teachers were satisfied with the process. We have defined satisfied as those teachers who answered with a score of 7 or higher out of 10 to the survey question ‘how satisfied are you with the annual performance review process?’ Figure 4A shows the most notable results from the survey.

Figure 4A
Results from 2015 survey data



Source: DET's Formative evaluation report 2015

Some of the comments teachers provided to the survey were:

- higher expectations need to be placed on the process, as many teachers did not value it and were simply ‘going through the motions’
- the annual performance review process needs to be linked to the school's annual improvement plan as much as it does to the standards
- teachers don’t have time for the performance review process and are only complying with the process to ‘tick boxes’.

Appendices

Appendix A — Full responses from agencies

As mandated in Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to the Department of Education and Training.

The head of this agency is responsible for the accuracy, fairness and balance of their comments.

This appendix contains the agency's detailed responses to our audit recommendations.

Comments received from Director-General, Department of Education and Training

Queensland Government

Office of the
Director-General

Department of
Education and
Training

21 APR 2017

Mr Anthony Close
Acting Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Mr Close

Thank you for your letter dated 31 March 2017 regarding the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) Performance Audit on Teacher Performance Management and Development.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed report and the courtesy QAO has provided officers of the Department of Education and Training to provide input and comment on the report throughout its development.

I am pleased to advise the Department accepts all six recommendations outlined in the report. The Department will work with its stakeholders to consider and implement these recommendations as a means to refine and improve our annual teacher performance review. Please find enclosed the Department's response to the recommendations.

Like many other organisations, the Department does not rely solely on an annual performance process to manage employee performance. It is the Department's view the annual review processes are poor substitutes for ongoing and regular performance discussions and actively encourages and supports its school leaders to provide regular and timely feedback to staff.

Annual performance review processes are just one part of our broader commitment to lifting the performance of Queensland state schools and it is worth noting that NAPLAN results show Queensland schools are amongst the most statistically improved schools in the nation.

It is pleasing to note the performance audit identified there is clear alignment between the national standards for teachers and the Department's strategic priorities. It is also pleasing to observe that the audit found the professional development areas identified in annual teacher performance reviews reflect these strategic drivers.

The report also identifies the Department provided teachers and school leaders with a wide range of resources and support material to accompany the implementation of these processes and we will continue to refine and monitor these as we consider the findings of this review.

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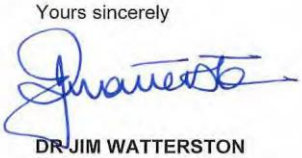
Given the timing of this report, it will allow the Department to engage with stakeholders in a collaborative manner to ensure we continue to meaningfully build on our work to date.

Should you require any further information or to discuss the details of this letter, I invite you to contact Mr Jeff Hunt, Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services, on telephone 3034 4771.

I sincerely thank you and the audit team for their work on this matter and their consideration of the Department's feedback throughout the audit.

Yours sincerely



DR JIM WATTERSTON
Director-General

Ref: 17/197039

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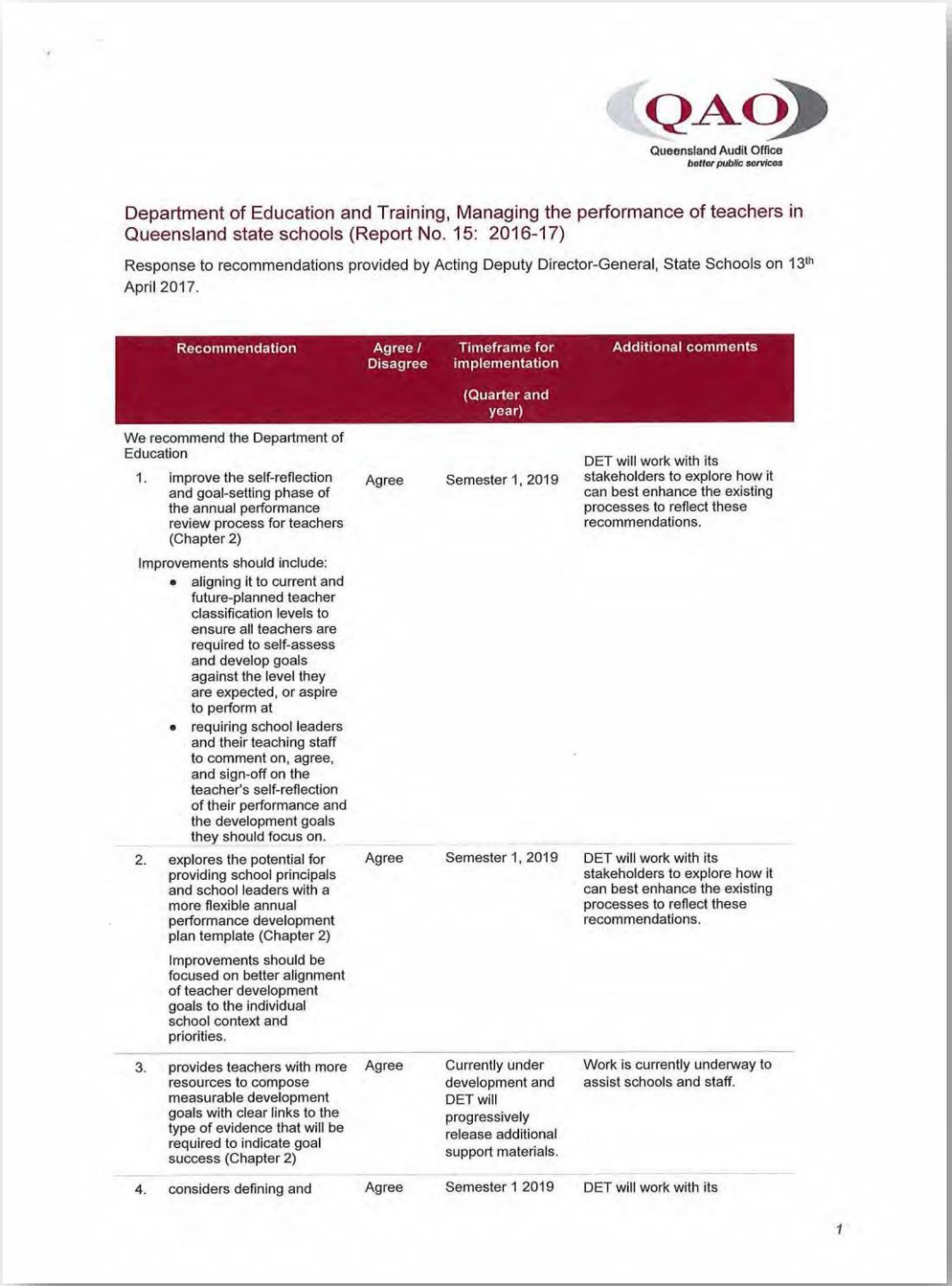
Responses to recommendations



Queensland Audit Office
better public services

Department of Education and Training, Managing the performance of teachers in Queensland state schools (Report No. 15: 2016-17)

Response to recommendations provided by Acting Deputy Director-General, State Schools on 13th April 2017.

Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and year)	Additional comments
We recommend the Department of Education 1. improve the self-reflection and goal-setting phase of the annual performance review process for teachers (Chapter 2) Improvements should include: • aligning it to current and future-planned teacher classification levels to ensure all teachers are required to self-assess and develop goals against the level they are expected, or aspire to perform at • requiring school leaders and their teaching staff to comment on, agree, and sign-off on the teacher's self-reflection of their performance and the development goals they should focus on.	Agree	Semester 1, 2019	DET will work with its stakeholders to explore how it can best enhance the existing processes to reflect these recommendations.
2. explores the potential for providing school principals and school leaders with a more flexible annual performance development plan template (Chapter 2) Improvements should be focused on better alignment of teacher development goals to the individual school context and priorities.	Agree	Semester 1, 2019	DET will work with its stakeholders to explore how it can best enhance the existing processes to reflect these recommendations.
3. provides teachers with more resources to compose measurable development goals with clear links to the type of evidence that will be required to indicate goal success (Chapter 2)	Agree	Currently under development and DET will progressively release additional support materials.	Work is currently underway to assist schools and staff.
4. considers defining and	Agree	Semester 1 2019	DET will work with its

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Queensland Audit Office
better public services

	Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and year)	Additional comments
	communicating its meaning of unsatisfactory performance (Chapter 2) This will enable the department, school leaders and teachers to have a shared understanding of performance expectations.			stakeholders to explore this consideration.
5.	formally evaluates the effectiveness of its programs for state schools (Chapter 4) The evaluation should test that the department can objectively assess, in a timely manner, how effective its communications and change strategies are for delivering the intended change.	Agree	Periodic review	DET will include assessing effectiveness of communications as part of its evaluation activity.
6.	assess through its formative evaluation process the scale of the issue that schools are time-constrained to effectively implement the annual performance review process (Chapter 4)	Agree	Periodic review	DET will continue to monitor this activity.

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Appendix B — Audit objectives and methods

Audit objective and scope

The objective of the audit was to assess whether the Department of Education and Training's performance review process for teachers is improving teaching quality in public schools.

The audit addressed the objective through the following sub-objectives and lines of inquiry outlined in Figure B1.

Figure B1
Audit Scope

Sub-objectives		Lines of inquiry	
1	Has DET effectively designed and enabled a framework for managing teacher performance and development and does it monitor its effectiveness?	1.1	Is DET's APR process aligned to better practice and professional standards for teachers?
		1.2	Did DET effectively equip schools to create a performance and development culture?
		1.3	Has DET developed and facilitated access to internal and external programs to address teacher development needs?
		1.4	Does DET effectively monitor the program's implementation and does it have reliable data to measure the program's effectiveness?
2	Have schools effectively implemented DET's APR process?	2.1	Have schools established a performance and development culture?
		2.2	Have schools implemented the cycle for managing teacher performance and development?
		2.3	Do schools conduct annual performance reviews to a consistent standard?
		2.4	Do schools effectively manage underperformance and recognise good performance?

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Entities subject to this audit

- The Department of Education and Training

We randomly selected the following state schools for field visits:

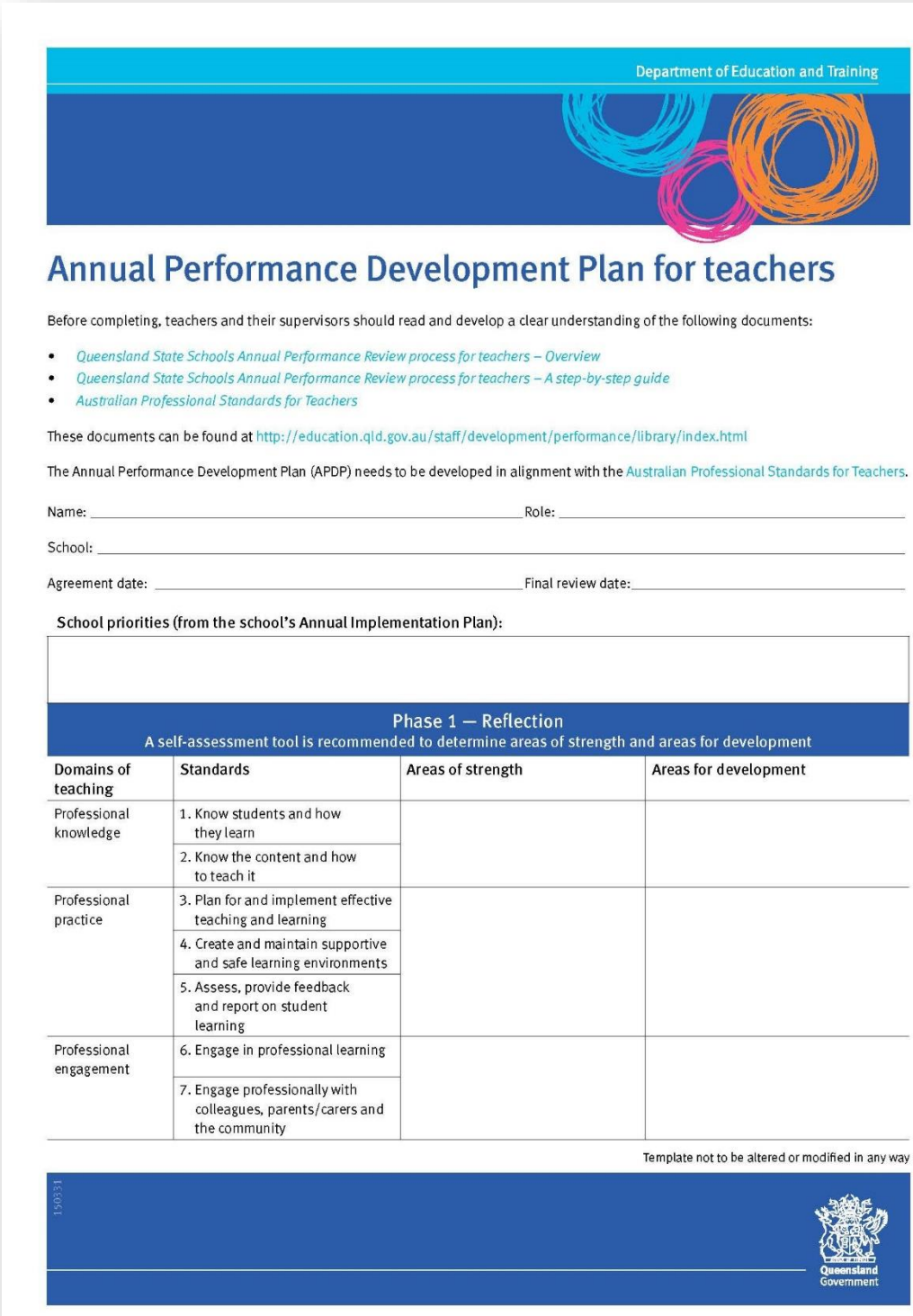
- Hamilton State School
- Inala State School
- Innisfail East State School
- Kedron State High School
- Longreach State High School
- Longreach State School
- Lota State School
- Woodcrest State College
- Woree State High School
- Wynnum State High School

The audit was conducted in accordance with the Auditor-General of Queensland Auditing Standards—September 2012, which incorporate the requirements of standards issued by the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

The audit was conducted between August 2016 and November 2016. The audit included:

- interviews with Department of Education and training staff from the Office of the Deputy Director-General corporate services area, Organisational Transformation and Capability—Human resources, the State schools performance unit and the School Improvement Unit
- an interview with representatives from the Queensland Teachers Union
- interviews with principals, deputy principals, master teachers, heads of department, heads of curriculum and teachers across 10 state schools
- analysis of 2015 and 2016 teacher annual performance development plans collected from the 10 schools visited
- analysis of data from:
    - school data profiles
    - headline indicators
    - all regional data profiles
    - regional data walls
    - Final NAPLAN results 2008–2016.

Appendix C — Annual performance development plan



Department of Education and Training

Annual Performance Development Plan for teachers

Before completing, teachers and their supervisors should read and develop a clear understanding of the following documents:

- *Queensland State Schools Annual Performance Review process for teachers – Overview*
- *Queensland State Schools Annual Performance Review process for teachers – A step-by-step guide*
- *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*

These documents can be found at http://education.qld.gov.au/staff/development/performance/library/index.html

The Annual Performance Development Plan (APDP) needs to be developed in alignment with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Name: _____ Role: _____

School: _____

Agreement date: _____ Final review date: _____

School priorities (from the school's Annual Implementation Plan):

Phase 1 — Reflection
A self-assessment tool is recommended to determine areas of strength and areas for development

Domains of teaching	Standards	Areas of strength	Areas for development
Professional knowledge	1. Know students and how they learn		
	2. Know the content and how to teach it		
Professional practice	3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning		
	4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments		
	5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning		
Professional engagement	6. Engage in professional learning		
	7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community		

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Department of Education and Training

Phase 1 & 2 — Goal setting, professional practice and learning These should be framed through reflection on areas of strength and areas for development within the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.				
Focus areas for development As per reflection	**Agreed performance development goals** Refer to SMART goals framework - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-phased	**Actions to develop capability** Be specific about what actions you intend to undertake and the support and professional learning you will require.	**Indicators of success** What will you/others see if your goal is achieved? Refer to Documentary Evidence Guides	**Phase 2 - Reflections, comments and notes on professional practice and learning** During this phase, the teacher's APDP is put into action during day-to-day work and is supported by professional learning to achieve goals.

Optional

Career aspirations	Career goals	Actions to develop capability	Indicators of success

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Annual Performance Development Plan for teachers

Department of Education and Training

Phase 3 — Feedback and review (final review) Review of performance against planned goals			
Focus areas for development	Agreed performance development goals	Performance outcome (achieved, ongoing, not achieved)	Comment

Teacher overall comment

- What has been a significant area of growth or success in my teaching practice and why?
- What have been some of the challenges in my teaching focus and why?
- What areas do I need to focus my teaching on next?
- What are my strengths and how can I build on them?
- What are my career aspirations and what pathways are available to me?
- What support and professional development do I need to further my teaching performance and development?
- What action is required if I do not meet performance expectations on a regular basis?

Comment (teacher)

Comment (supervisor)

Signature and date (teacher)	Signature and date (supervisor)

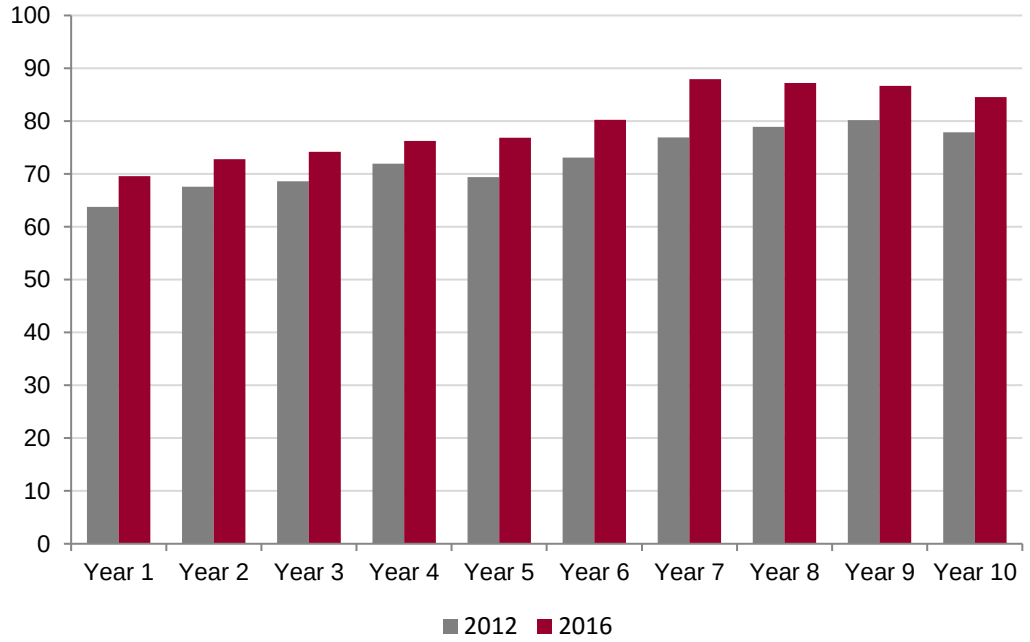
Template not to be altered or modified in any way

Annual Performance Development Plan for teachers

Appendix D — Student achievements in 2012 and 2016

English

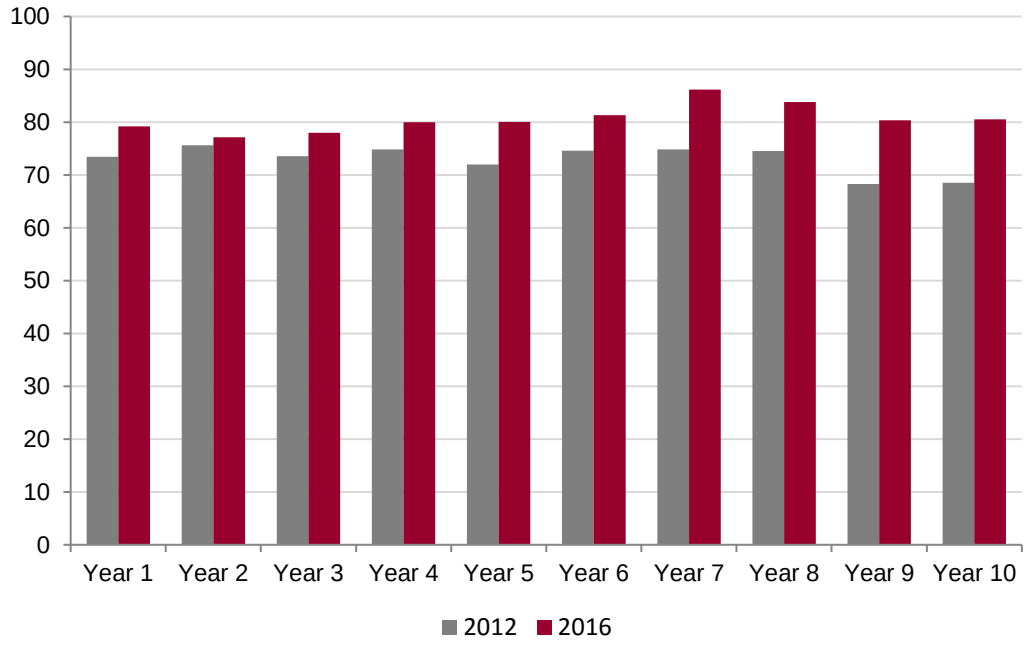
Figure D1
Percentage of students across years one to 10 year levels with grade C or better — 2012 to 2016



Source: Queensland Audit Office from data provided by the Department of Education and Training.

Mathematics

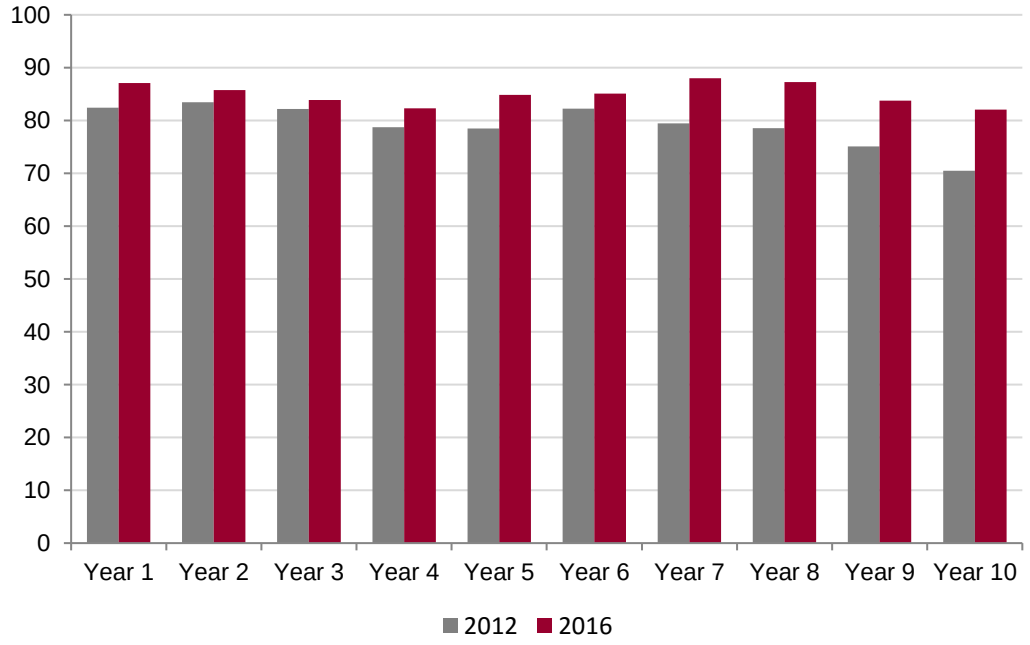
Figure D2
Percentage of students across years one to 10 year levels with grade C or better — 2012 to 2016



Source: Queensland Audit Office from data provided by the Department of Education and Training.

Science

Figure D3
Percentage of students across years one to 10 year levels with grade C or better — 2012 to 2016



Source: Queensland Audit Office from data provided by the Department of Education and Training.

Appendix E — Great Teachers = Great Results actions

In 2015, the number of actions from the Great teachers = great results program (later changed to the Teaching and School Leadership program) was reduced due to a change in government policy. Funding remains for four of the 15 actions (one, two, five and six) as part of this program. DET completed action 15 before the funding changed.

Funding ceased for actions three, four, seven, eight, 12 and 13 and these actions have not continued. Actions nine and 14 did not continue and did not require funding. Funding for actions 10 and 11 were redirected to other initiatives.

Figure E1 shows all 15 actions.

Figure E1

Great Teachers = Great Results action items
Action 1: We will introduce a structured annual performance review process to ensure every school teacher and leader is performing at their best
Action 2: We will introduce an accredited mentoring program for beginning teachers to learn from experienced high performing teachers in the classroom
Action 3: We will strengthen the requirements for experienced senior teacher positions
Action 4: We will provide an accelerated pathway for high performing teachers to the experienced senior teacher classification
Action 5: We will create 300 new master teacher positions in targeted schools
Action 6: We will provide master teachers in primary schools with an early years resource package to boost literacy and numeracy outcomes
Action 7: We will establish a bonus pool to reward the highest performing teachers and school leaders
Action 8: We will make performance bonuses available to state school principals
Action 9: We will introduce performance based fixed-term contracts for principal and deputy principal positions
Action 10: We will offer scholarships for high performing teachers to undertake a relevant master's degree
Action 11: We will offer scholarships to school leaders to undertake relevant post graduate qualifications
Action 12: We will provide all schools with the opportunity to become independent over time
Action 13: We will develop the capacity of schools to become independent over time
Action 14: We will remove union representatives from principal selection panels
Action 15: We will enhance discipline powers across the state schooling system and develop and implement an action plan to strengthen discipline in state schools

Source: Department of Education and Training.

Auditor-General Reports to Parliament

Reports tabled in 2016–17

Number	Title	Date tabled in Legislative Assembly
1.	Strategic procurement	September 2016
2.	Forecasting long-term sustainability of local government	October 2016
3.	Follow-up: Monitoring and reporting performance	November 2016
4.	Criminal justice data—prison sentences	November 2016
5.	Energy: 2015–16 results of financial audits	November 2016
6.	Rail and ports: 2015–16 results of financial audits	November 2016
7.	Water: 2015–16 results of financial audits	December 2016
8.	Queensland state government: results of financial audits	December 2016
9.	Hospital and Health Services: 2015–16 results of financial audits	January 2017
10.	Efficient and effective use of high value medical equipment	February 2017
11.	Audit of Aurukun school partnership arrangement	February 2017
12.	Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases	March 2017
13.	Local government entities: 2015–16 results of financial audits	April 2017
14.	Criminal justice data–reliability and integration of data	April 2017
15.	Managing the performance of teachers in Queensland state schools	April 2017

www.qao.qld.gov.au/reports-resources/parliament