

GUIDELINES FOR NOMINEES PREPARING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PORTFOLIO

Once nominated, nominees are invited to enter the next stage of the *NSW Quality Teaching Awards*. In this stage, each nominee is asked to prepare and submit a professional learning portfolio centred on the stated criteria for accomplished teaching. The guidelines, which follow, have been prepared to assist you in the preparation of your professional learning portfolio.

The integration of work and learning is an important element of professional development as a teacher and a key concept for learning communities and organisations. By compiling a portfolio, each nominee has an opportunity to:

- provide a window into his or her professional practice
- demonstrate professional accomplishment
- give insights into what accomplished teachers know, understand, can do, and value
- enhance professional learning and quality improvement practices within his or her workplace.

Successful applicants in the Quality Teaching Awards all speak highly of the value of preparing portfolios.

SUBMISSION OF PORTFOLIOS

The closing date for the submission of the professional learning portfolio is **Friday 29 June 2007** lodged with **the Chair of the relevant sub-group**

THE CONTENTS OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PORTFOLIO

The essential components of your portfolio are as follows:

1. A cover page
2. A table of contents
3. A career map
4. A statement of your professional beliefs and values
5. Some observations on the context of your teaching
6. Evidence of your professional accomplishments as they relate to:
 - (a) curriculum content
 - (b) pedagogy
 - (c) assessment and reporting of student learning
 - (d) professional values, learning and development.

OUTLINE OF THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

1. *Cover page*

This provides details about you including your name, address for correspondence, workplace, position and contact details including telephone number, postal address and e-mail.
2. *Table of contents*

This acts as a quick guide to your readers regarding what has been included in your teaching and learning portfolio and, ideally, why.
3. *Career map*

This is your professional biography; a journey of your professional career to date. Limit this to one page. Do not try to include everything but identify key moments that contributed to your professional learning and growth and achievement. The career map may not necessarily be linear; it may be in a graph or some other pictorial form. It should give an insight into your reflections of your professional growth as a teacher.

4. *Statement of your professional beliefs and values*

This provides an indication to the reader on the basis upon which you carry out your professional work. What are the key points that underpin your work as a teacher? How do you see your role as a teacher? What do you value in your teaching? What do you believe are desirable features of class and school/workplace teaching and learning practices?

5. *Observations on the context of your teaching*

This tells something about where you teach as it relates to characteristics of your students, the nature of your workplace and the expectations of the communities you serve. It also shows how your professional beliefs and values translate to specific goals and strategies for these students.

6. *Evidence of your professional achievement as it relates to each of the four domains described below.*

This is the key section of your portfolio in which you clearly address the stipulated criteria outlined on page 3 of this document. While there is an understandable inter-relationship among many of these criteria, the following domains provide a useful structure for your portfolio:

(a) Curriculum content

- How and in what ways have you demonstrated a deep and critically informed understanding of, enthusiasm for, and engagement with the content of the areas that you teach?
- What will you include in your portfolio to demonstrate this understanding of, enthusiasm for and engagement with such content, and why?

(b) Pedagogy

- How and in what ways have you effectively engaged students in their learning and developed pedagogical strategies to enhance students' learning outcomes?
- What will you include in your portfolio to demonstrate these pedagogical strategies, and why?

(c) Assessment and reporting of student learning

- What have been the outcomes of students' engagement in learning?
- How and in what ways has the learning been demonstrated, validated and reported?
- What will you include in your portfolio to demonstrate the outcomes of student learning, and why?

(d) Professional values, learning and development

- How and in what ways have you demonstrated commitment to:
 - your own professional values?
 - your own professional learning?
 - the sharing of your learning with colleagues?
- What will you include in your portfolio to demonstrate growth in your professional learning and values, and the influence which these have had on others?

ABOUT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PORTFOLIOS

The notion of a professional learning portfolio is not new. Portfolios have been used in other professions for some time. In education, there are an increasing number of teachers who are now developing portfolios in their work. Examples include those developed in initial teacher education and early career stages, those constructed in preparation for educational leadership, those designed for practitioner research, and those prepared for award programs that recognise professional excellence.

Portfolios are used for a number of purposes such as to:

- give insights into accomplished teaching practice
- assemble a career record
- assist in applications and promotion for a position
- record continuing professional development

- reflect on past practice
- assist self-evaluation
- celebrate growth and achievement
- acquire new skills
- formalise key experiences
- gain recognition/accreditation by external organisations
- help and encourage others.

The purposes for which portfolios are prepared determine their structure.

CONSTRUCTING YOUR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PORTFOLIO

A professional learning portfolio goes beyond the traditional *resume* or *curriculum vitae*. These document a person's career experience. For the purpose of these *Quality Teaching Awards*, the defining characteristic of the portfolio is to demonstrate excellence in teaching. A portfolio is, essentially, a collection of evidence that demonstrates the knowledge, understanding, skills and professional values that find expression in your teaching practices.

NB Data must not be used where it can identify an individual, including students. For example examination/test results of an individual must not be used.

It can include:

- lesson plans
- student assignments
- teacher's written descriptions
- professional journals and other forms of reflective practices
- video tapes
- electronic entries
- formal evaluations by supervisors
- supporting statements
- letters of recommendation from peers, supervisors, students, parents, members of the wider community
- awards and prizes
- outcomes of evaluations
- supporting materials
- details of professional learning that has been undertaken.

A professional learning portfolio is more than a miscellaneous collection of artefacts. **Careful selection against defined criteria is the key.** To provide the evidence of your learning, you will need to be selective and take care that you do not leave your reader drowning in data. You will need to consider what is the most significant entry for each category and how each entry adds value to your portfolio and assists in demonstrating your accomplishment as a teacher. Ideally, your portfolio will demonstrate your accomplishments over an extended period. It can be constructed electronically; or through a combination of electronic and other forms of media, and hard copy; or hard copy only.

One of the most important aspects of constructing a portfolio is that it can clearly show evidence of learning through reflection. This means that you will need to have an inquiry orientation to the construction of your portfolio, **constantly asking and responding to the question "how am I demonstrating excellence and accomplishment as a teacher?"**

DEMONSTRATING ACCOMPLISHED PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

In thinking through what you might include in Section 5 of your portfolio, you need to focus on the criteria that are used in determining the *Quality Teaching Awards* (See page 3). The criteria have been grouped below under four headings for ease of reference in preparing your portfolio.

(a) Curriculum content

Accomplished teachers demonstrate their expertise by:

- having a broad, deep, and critically aware knowledge, understanding of and enthusiasm for the intellectual content, discourses, and values associated with disciplines from which the subjects (or curriculum areas) they teach are derived and as appropriate to the specific contexts within which they teach
- being both transmitters and critical interpreters of the knowledge, understanding, skills, and values associated with their subject areas, recognising that knowledge is often contestable; and by developing programs that fully implement the aims and objectives of the relevant curriculum.

b) Pedagogy

Accomplished teachers demonstrate their expertise by:

- enjoying teaching students and by holding the highest expectations of what each student is capable of achieving: being aware of the individual needs, interests, capacities of their students; and challenging their students accordingly by inspiring, motivating, correcting, and supporting their students, even in the face of temporary or apparent failure
- having a sense of humour and being able to empathise with their students
- displaying adeptness and discernment in the creative use and critical evaluation of information technologies for assisting their own teaching and in advancing the learning of their students
- demonstrating excellence in the practical, pragmatic craft of teaching and in managing a learning environment that is interesting, challenging, purposeful, safe, supportive, positive, and enjoyable: which fosters co-operation and collaboration, independence, responsibility, and creativity
- exercising high communication and interpersonal skills
- taking due account of the educational implications of the community's cultural diversity: in particular, by including within their teaching those Indigenous issues and perspectives necessary to help achieve reconciliation between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians; and by being sensitive and responsive to the educational issues generated by and within Australia's multicultural society within the context of continuing to develop a socially cohesive Australian society.

(c) Assessment and reporting of student learning

Accomplished teachers demonstrate their expertise by:

- providing regular, accurate feedback to students and monitoring the growth in students' learning: not only to assist in the assessment of students' growth as a basis for reporting each student's achievements against the required learning outcomes regarding what students know, understand, can do, and value as specified by the formal curriculum; but

also as a means of judging the effectiveness of their own teaching.

(d) **Professional Values, Learning, and Leadership**

Accomplished teachers demonstrate their expertise by:

- exemplifying the qualities that they seek to inspire in their students: including intellectual curiosity and rigour, tolerance, fairness, common sense, self-confidence, respect for self and others, empathy, compassion, appreciation of diversity, and acknowledgment of cultural differences
- treating all students justly and equitably: recognising and appreciating the range of values held by individuals as well as within families, groups, cultures, and the wider school community; and abiding by all statutory, legal, and ethical obligations incumbent upon them as teachers
- being reflective practitioners who critique the impact of their teaching and professional values upon students, colleagues, and others in the wider learning community: by having a critical awareness of the role played by their own educational, social, cultural, religious, financial and other background experiences; and how these experiences may have helped to shape their own values, their approach to teaching, and their assumptions about education
- being committed to their own professional development: seeking to deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment, expand their teaching repertoire, and to adapt their teaching to educationally sound developments arising from authentic research and scholarship
- exercising educational leadership: working collaboratively with their colleagues; and helping to ensure that the essential goals of their own educational institution are met.

The accomplished teaching criteria should be seen as inter-dependent: not reducible to a lock-step 'tick-a-box' set of reductionist or decontextualised 'competencies'; not comparatively 'weighted' between or among the various characteristics of accomplishment; and not listed in any necessary order of precedence. Rather, they attempt to highlight and identify aspects of the wholistic complex of knowledge, understanding, skills and professional values that characterise outstanding teaching.

It is not expected you will be outstanding on every single criterion. Your portfolio should, however, address each of the four domains of accomplishment, guided by each of the criteria within them.

Recipients of Quality Teaching Awards have reported that the preparation of a portfolio is invariably a professionally rewarding and valued experience.

ASSESSING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Your portfolio will be assessed with regard to the extent that it demonstrates professional accomplishment as a teacher.

Portfolios will be assessed by members of the sub-groups for the *Quality Teaching Awards* convened by the Australian College of Educators. Because the construction of a portfolio is such an individual matter, is undertaken voluntarily, and because we are all still learning from each other about the concept, it is reasonable to expect that a wide range of approaches will be used by nominees. The organising committee encourages this diversity. Each portfolio should give substantial insights into your teaching practice.

The processes employed in assessing each portfolio against the published criteria will include:

- validity - does the evidence demonstrate what it claims to?
- authenticity – has the evidence been verified as genuine?
- reliability – is the evidence sound enough to ensure that different assessors would reach similar conclusions?
- currency - is the evidence relatively recent?
- sufficiency – is there sufficient evidence to justify the claims being made?

All portfolios will be returned to applicants at the completion of the assessment process. Sub-group assessors will respect the confidentiality of the nominee and the information and material he or she provides.

IN SUMMARY

The construction of portfolios for the *Quality Teaching Awards* in 2007 will contribute substantially to our further learning about this key component of teacher professionalism. It demonstrates to others in the profession and in the general community why you are an accomplished teacher and some of the outcomes of your achievements to date. The contribution you make in preparing your portfolio for the *Quality Teaching Awards* plays an important part in its own way to further improving quality teaching in your workplace and across NSW.

FURTHER REFERENCES

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**CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF
PORTFOLIOS IS FRIDAY 29 June 2007.
LODGED WITH THE CHAIR OF THE RELEVANT
SUB-GROUP:**

Early Childhood

Professor Jennifer Sumsion
School of Teacher Education
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
BATHURST NSW 2795
Ph 02 6338 4423 Fax 6338 4417
jsumsion@csu.edu.au

Primary

Tracey Hayne
Principal Liaison Officer
Deputy Director-General, Office of Schools
NSW Department of Education and Training
35 Bridge St
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Ph 02 9561 1177 Fax 02 9561 8558
Mob. 0401 004 125
tracey.hayne@det.nsw.edu.au

Secondary

Doreen Wilson
Awards and Recognition Unit
Locked Bag 53
DARLINGHURST NSW 2010
Ph 02 9518 0978 Fax 02 9244 5646
Mob. 0425 283 949
doreen.wilson@det.nsw.edu.au

TAFE NSW

Alison Bray
TAFE Accreditation, Registration and Quality Services
Level 16, 1 Oxford Street
DARLINGHURST NSW 2010
Ph 02 9244 5034 Fax 02 9244 5019
alison.bray@tafensw.edu.au

University

Dr Catherine Scott Awards and Recognition Unit
Locked Bag 53
DARLINGHURST NSW 2010
Ph 4456 1411 Fax 02 9244 5646
lomas52@yahoo.com.au