

Validation Process for Early Childhood Teachers Frequently Asked Questions Updated September 2010

Standards:

1. Why have standards been introduced?

Recent international research provides compelling evidence that teacher quality is a very important determinant of student learning. In fact, teacher quality is more influential than resources, curriculum guidelines, assessment processes or the structure, culture and organisation of the educational setting. By utilising standards to define teacher knowledge, understanding, skills, principles and values, standards are regarded as the best way to ensure teacher quality and therefore educational outcomes for children.

2. Who do the standards apply to?

The standards apply to those Early Childhood Teachers who are:

- a. Employed by employers party to the VECTAA & LGECEEA or to an industrial agreement which commits to the VECTAA & LGECEEA structure; and
- b. Who are classified as Early Education Teachers (Graduate, Accomplished or Exemplary).

The standards do not apply to those Early Childhood Teachers who are classified as Preschool Field Officers or Advisers.

3. What is the relationship between the Standards and Indicators?

Standards are the basis of the validation process. Teachers provide evidence that they meet the standards. Indicators illuminate the standard so that teachers and others know the intent of the standard.

Eligibility:

4. Who is eligible for validation?

A Graduate teacher who has completed a minimum of 3 years experience (as defined in VECTAA & LGECEEA) and who has successfully completed the Professional Development and Enhancement Program (PDEP) requirements is eligible to seek reclassification, through the validation process, to the Accomplished level.

An Accomplished teacher who has completed a minimum of 6 years experience (as defined) and who has successfully completed the PDEP requirements is eligible to seek reclassification, through the validation process, to the Exemplary level. Further, in order to be eligible for validation, a teacher seeking reclassification from Accomplished to Exemplary will need to hold the relevant qualifications.

5. What qualifications does a teacher need to be able to apply for validation?

The teacher should hold a four-year early childhood teaching degree (*or its equivalent), or graduate diploma, for progression to exemplary level. However teachers who hold as a minimum a three year early childhood teaching degree or diploma (*or its equivalent) and were employed as an early childhood teacher on 17 February 2006 may progress to exemplary level (*as approved by the Victorian Branch of Early Childhood Australia).

An early childhood teacher employed after 17 February 2006 holding a three year early childhood teaching degree or diploma shall not be eligible to move to exemplary level unless an approved further early childhood teaching qualification is successfully completed.

An early childhood teacher holding a three or four year Primary teaching degree or diploma employed as an early childhood teacher on, or after, 17 February 2006, may proceed to accomplished level 2.2 but not to exemplary level unless an approved early childhood teaching qualification is successfully completed.

6. If an employer is not a VECTAA & LGECEEA respondent is the teacher eligible for validation?

If a teacher is employed by an employer party to the VECTAA & LGECEEA or to an industrial agreement that commits to the VECTAA & LGECEEA structure, such as through a local government or early intervention agency enterprise agreement, they are eligible to apply for validation.

7. Are Preschool Field Officers eligible to apply for validation?

No. The standards, and therefore the validation process do not apply to those Early Childhood Teachers who are classified as Preschool Field Officers.

8. How will an employer know if a teacher is eligible for validation?

For teachers to be eligible to apply for reclassification they must meet certain requirements:

- The teacher must have completed the required number of years of experience within each classification. (NB this may not necessarily be reflected by the teacher's current pay rate).
- Have satisfactorily completed their Professional Development Enhancement Program (PDEP) requirements.
- Hold an appropriate qualification

Staff personnel files, including payroll records eg; Payline Employee Record Card, should include information regarding the level the teacher is currently employed at and their Incremental Anniversary Date (IAD).

9. Many teachers are talking about the challenges of the validation process. So why should teachers apply for reclassification?

There are two parts to the answer to this question. The first relates to the individual, the second part to the profession as a whole.

Validation is a process, as the term conveys, of formal confirmation of a teacher's accomplished or exemplary work. The system is based on the individual choice of teachers as to whether they seek this formal confirmation. A decision by a particular teacher not to seek reclassification through the validation process does not provide a conclusion about the teachers' daily work. This may well be at accomplished or exemplary level but it has not been affirmed by the independent external validation process.

The second reason is that reclassification in the context of the professional standards provides the opportunity for formal recognition of the accomplished/exemplary practice of early childhood teachers. More broadly it also contributes to the recognition by the profession, the community and politicians of the work of early childhood teachers as comparable to teachers in other sectors who meet like standards.

The new system, whilst challenging at present, will overtime offer an aspirational career path, will inform professional development choices and will reinforce reflection and evaluation as tools to continuously improve practices. High quality teaching programs and benefit to children and families will result. Important too are the strengthening of supportive collegiate and professional relationships as well as the personal, individual affirmation.

Remember, teachers may withdraw at any time during the process by notifying the relevant employer(s) in writing.

Validators

10. Who will the Validators be?

Validators will be persons with an early childhood teaching qualification and a high level of understanding, experience and recognised expertise in early childhood education. They will have undergone rigorous selection and training. Validators will be required to abide by strict confidentiality guidelines and privacy legislation.

11. What sort of training will validators receive?

The Validators will receive training designed and provided by Monash University and Victoria University Early Childhood departments informed by consultation with the Tripartite Reference Group, which includes Department of Human Services (DHS), Australian Education Union (AEU), Kindergarten Parents Victoria (KPV) and Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).

The Validators will develop a comprehensive understanding of the new classification structures and processes and the interim standards. Validators will develop a comprehensive working knowledge of the validation system and understand the ethical and professional issues associated with validation. They will work according to agreed processes and will be informed and prepared to make objective judgements for desk assessments and site visits. They will be trained to prepare reports and recommendations, which are objective and sensitive to the recipients and provide explicit reasons for the outcomes that are reached.

12. How can teachers and employers be sure that validation assessments are consistent across the validators?

The training of the validators includes agreed processes of validation. Additionally there is moderation of the validation outcomes to ensure consistent results between validators. The validators will be skilled in observation and writing their reports and recommendations objectively and clearly. The validation processes will be monitored and the results of the validation process clearly documented so that outcomes are accountable.

Validation Process:

13. Where is the best place to find information and advice regarding the validation process?

Advice and assistance regarding the validation process can be found on the validation process website at www.validation.com.au or from the advice line at VETASSESS on 9655 4801.

14. Is it compulsory to participate in the validation process?

No. There is no obligation to apply for reclassification and there are no disciplinary consequences for not applying. The process is not intended to be punitive but rather aspirational. There is however no other way of progressing to the next classification. You retain eligibility to apply for reclassification provided you have met the criteria outlined (i.e. at least 12 months at the top of the current classification and completed the required PDEP).

15. Does an employer have a choice about making validation available to their teachers?

Teachers have the right under VECTAA & LGECEEA to apply for reclassification. Once they have satisfied the eligibility criteria outlined in VECTAA & LGECEEA appropriately qualified staff can proceed with the validation process and employers are obligated to cooperate with this process.

16. Are employers required to provide teachers with paid time to prepare their application for the validation process?

No. Teachers are required to undertake the necessary preparation work to support their application in their own time. Any variation to this requirement must be by agreement between the teacher and their employer.

17. Is there a financial cost for participating in the validation process?

No. Teachers and employers do not need to pay to access the validation process. The Department of Human Services has engaged VETASSESS to develop and deliver the system to support the validation process.

18. How will teachers know their Incremental Anniversary Date?

The Incremental Anniversary Date (IAD) is defined in VECTAA & LGECEEA. Personnel files should include information regarding a teacher's IAD. For example the employee record card will show the teacher's IAD as a significant date.

19. How does the validation process link with the employer's own performance management process?

The validation process is not linked to performance management. It is an aspirational process that allows teachers to progress through an enhanced career structure based on accepted teaching standards.

20. Do applications for validation have to be made online?

Applicants have the option of applying online or by print based form. The same process and timelines will apply to both online and print based applications. The online application is available at www.validation.com.au. Print-based forms may be downloaded from this site or available by telephoning VETASSESS on (03) 9655 4801.

Irrespective of how the application is submitted teachers must supply signed originals of the *Notice of Intention to Apply for Validation* and *Application for Validation* and copies of supporting evidence. These documents should be posted to VETASSESS within five working days of lodgement of the application.

21. What if a teacher's personal or employment details change during the course of applying for validation?

If a teacher's personal or employment details change on or after submission of their application for validation the applicant must notify VETASSESS of the relevant change/s using the *change of details notification form* and submitting this to VETASSESS by post or e-mail.

The *change of details notification form* is available from www.validation.com.au or by contacting VETASSESS on (03) 9655 4801.

22. How much evidence should be provided?

No more than two pieces of evidence can be provided for each standard however the same example of evidence may be used for more than one standard but the description of how the evidence meets the particular standard needs to be provided for each standard.

23. Is it necessary for the teacher to provide evidence for every standard within the classification level to which they are applying?

Every standard needs to be addressed by the provision of relevant evidence and a narrative describing how the evidence demonstrates that the standard has been met. The same example of evidence may be used for more than one standard but the description of how the evidence meets the particular standard needs to be provided for each standard. No more than two pieces of evidence can be provided for each standard.

24.If a teacher submits two pieces of evidence for a standard and the validator assesses only one as demonstrating that the standard has been met, will the teacher be asked to re-submit in relation to the second piece of evidence?

No. Once a teacher has been assessed as having demonstrated that the standard has been met, that is all that is required.

25.If a teacher submits two pieces of evidence per standard and one piece of evidence was made up of a number of component parts, why does VETASSESS ask the teacher to choose from the evidence submitted which two pieces that the applicant wants the validator to consider?

It is correct that a piece of evidence can be made up of a number of components. These components however must be linked and provide a cohesive picture. In this scenario, the validator has considered the application and determined that the pieces of evidence supplied appear individual and un-related rather than aspects of the same piece of evidence. The validator does not have the capacity to choose which two pieces of evidence should be assessed – that is the applicant’s decision because it is their application.

26.Do teachers have to provide evidence for each of the indicators associated with a particular standard?

No. The indicators are not mandatory requirements to be met, they are just examples to assist teachers with their applications as there are many ways that a standard may be evidenced. Indicators are not intended to be prescriptive. Standards are the focus.

27.Will the employer see the evidence provided by the teacher?

The employer will be provided with a listing of the evidence utilised by the teacher. Should the employer wish to sight the actual examples of evidence used then they can make application to VETASSESS to have the evidence forwarded to them.

28.Must all the standards be met for a teacher to be reclassified?

Yes. All the standards for the classification to which a teacher seeks to be reclassified must be met. A Graduate teacher seeking to be reclassified to Accomplished must meet all ten standards for the Accomplished classification. An Accomplished teacher seeking to be reclassified to Exemplary must meet all eight standards for the Exemplary classification.

29.Who is notified if the validator requires further evidence?

A validator may provide an extension of time, no more than four weeks, if they believe additional information is warranted for them to come to a decision. The validator will determine the period of the extension of time. The teacher is notified of both the evidence requirement and the time frame for its submission. The employer/s is notified of the extension of time granted to the teacher.

30.Why are some teachers asked to re-submit information in relation to one or more standards? Does it mean that the teacher’s application for reclassification is unlikely to be successful?

The request for re-submission is not intended as a message of failure nor to reflect poorly on a teacher’s daily work. On the contrary, such a request conveys a confidence that teachers can articulate how they meet the requirements.

The request for re-submission means that a teacher has not in the first submission shown clearly that they have met the standard(s). The opportunity is given to teachers to refine their applications in light of the guidance and feedback provided by the validator. It is recommended that teachers read the validator’s comments carefully as this feedback will provide valuable guidance.

Whilst the integrity of the standards and of the validation process is critical, there is acknowledgement that some teachers will benefit from the opportunity to provide additional information in a second submission. This recognition was built into the VECTAA & LGECEEA provisions and is a particularly important consideration when the process is new and challenging. Teachers are being required to utilise some skills, which are

unfamiliar or 'rusty' for many – namely writing about themselves and their work and selecting 'snapshot' evidence of their work – all of which relate to the domains and the standards.

31.If an applicant carefully considers the Validator's feedback and request for resubmission of information and decides that the best piece of evidence was not selected in relation to a standard, is it permitted to replace the original evidence with a new and alternate piece?

Yes, the applicants are able to do this. The applicant should make their intention clear by providing the Evidence Number for the piece that is being withdrawn and clearly state it is being withdrawn and being replaced with a new piece of evidence. Give it the same Evidence Number e.g. perhaps indicate it is Evidence No. 8(a) to replace previously submitted Evidence No. 8.

32.Is there a particular form or format that should be used to provide the re-submission of additional evidence?

The key response is to provide what the validator has requested. It might be further evidence, a more detailed explanation of the evidence and how it meets the standard or a clarification of the material presented. The format of type of evidence, description of evidence and thirdly how the evidence demonstrates how the standard has been met should be maintained. The resubmission, once received, will be attached to the original submission then returned to the validator for re-evaluation. The new material can be presented as is most suitable. It can be typed, handwritten etc.

33.If the validator is not certain that a teacher has met all standards and an extension of time is granted, will the teacher have to provide additional evidence for all standards?

No, only the standard/s which the validator believes have not been shown to be met.

34.Do teachers have to inform their employer that they intend to apply for validation?

Yes. Employers will be required to sign the Employee Declaration section of the *Notice of Intention To Apply For Validation*. This ensures that the employer is aware of the teacher's intentions and to confirm that the person applying for Validation is the person named on the application and that person has met the eligibility requirements to proceed to the next classification.

35.What do teachers have to do if they have a new employer?

Teachers are required to advise their new employer that a *Notice of Intention to Apply for Validation* and, if applicable, the *Application for Validation* has been lodged. Teachers are also required to complete a change of details notification form and provide this to VETASSESS. The *change of details notification form* is available from www.validation.com.au or by contacting VETASSESS on (03) 9655 4801.

36.What happens if there is more than one employer?

In cases where more than one employer employs an early childhood teacher, all employers must sign the employer declaration on the *Notification of Intention to Apply for Validation* form.

The validator will process the application and forward it, along with their recommendation to all employers. All employers will have the opportunity to endorse the outcome of the validation process for their employee.

37.What if there are several employers and one of them does not endorse the validator's recommendations?

Where there is a non-unanimous recommendation by an employer/s and the validator (ie, between the validator and one or more of the employers) a site visit will occur at the site/s related to the non-unanimous recommendation.

38. How can employers be sure that the information provided by the teacher is their own work?

When considering the validator's recommendation, employers are able to ask to see the evidence teachers have used in their application. Employers may request to see this evidence from the teacher or contact VETASSESS to obtain copies of the evidence.

39. What information will VETASSESS provide to employers when they are forwarding the validator's recommendations to the employer for the endorsement?

The employer/s will be provided with a copy of the application, the list of evidence utilised by the teacher and the description of how the evidence demonstrates that the standards have/have not been met. An employer recommendation sheet will be provided for the employer(s) to complete.

40. How will the employer/s determine whether they should endorse the validator's recommendations, particularly if the teacher has only recently been employed?

The employer/s should use their knowledge of the teacher's practice (even if only for a short time) and ask to see the evidence submitted by the teacher. Where the employer is a committee of management it is also important that at the time of handover the current committee fully inform the incoming committee about the validation process and the teacher's application.

41. When do site visits occur?

Site visits occur when there is a non-unanimous recommendation between the validator and the employer(s) following the desktop validation. A second validator is appointed to undertake the site visit. The site visit may involve observation of teaching time. It will depend on the standard(s) being validated. The teacher will be notified and suitable arrangements made for the visit. The teacher is required to notify their employer/s of the site visit, however the employer is not required to be present during the site visit.

42. How much information is provided to the teacher in the event of a non-unanimous decision, prior to the site visit?

Prior to the site visit the teacher will be notified of the standard/s where there has been a non-unanimous decision. It is only the standard/s where there is a non-unanimous decision that will be considered by the second validator at the site visit.

43. If a site visit is required, does the same validator that did the initial assessment of the application also conduct the site visit?

Where there is a non-unanimous decision a different validator will be appointed to attend the site visit and conduct an assessment of the standard/s identified as non-unanimous.

44. What is the dispute resolution mechanism?

The APPEALS COMMITTEE is charged with the responsibility of attempting to resolve disputes where an employer does not approve an application made by a teacher for reclassification but whose application is endorsed by the validator. The APPEALS COMMITTEE comprises representatives of DHS, KPV and an equal number of AEU representatives and is chaired by Fair Work Australia.

The Committee shall endeavor to do this by consensus, and accordingly the parties who comprise the Committee are not there to represent specific parties to the process but rather to consider the application, evidence and the recommendations of the validator and relevant employer/s. In exercising this role the APPEALS COMMITTEE will utilise the principles of natural justice, which will ensure that the views of the parties to the process (teacher applicant, employer/s and validator/s) can be heard.

This approach is consistent with that specified for the Chair of the APPEALS COMMITTEE who, in the absence of agreement, shall determine the matter. VECTAA & LGECEEA

specifies that in performing their function, the Chair of the APPEALS COMMITTEE will inform him/herself of the relevant matters in such a manner as he/she considers just.

45. How long will it take for the outcome to be known for an applicant who has been requested and lodged a resubmission of information?

The Validator must reassess the application in light of the additional information that has been provided. The time this takes will depend upon how many standards were being responded to. Nevertheless validators endeavour to complete these as efficiently as possible. Once they have done so, their recommendation is sent to the employer. The employer has 26 days from the date VETASSESS sends the Validator's recommendation to complete and return the Employer Recommendation Sheet to VETASSESS. Applicants will then be advised by mail from VETASSESS when the Validator's recommendation has been sent to the employer.

If there is a unanimous decision of the validator and the employer, the teacher will receive advice from VETASSESS within 10 days of VETASSESS receiving the employer's response.

The employer will then take the necessary steps to record the new classification and adjust the salary rate. Further the employer will make the back payment for applicants subject to the transitional timeframe.

No teacher who has met the required timeframe will be disadvantaged by the time delay.

Where there is a non-unanimous recommendation there is a sequence of other processes to occur prior to a final outcome being determined. These processes and associated timeframes are detailed in the 'Pathway for Validation Process' document and the 'Validation Process Flowchart' on this website.

46. Will employers need to increase the salary of a teacher who has successfully been reclassified?

Yes. VECTAA & LGECEEA, and industrial agreements committing to the VECTAA & LGECEEA structure and salaries, provide for salary increases associated with reclassification (for example Graduate Level 1.3 to Accomplished Level 2.1; or Accomplished Level 2.4 or 2.4A to Exemplary Level 3.1).

47. What does an employer need to do once they have received notification from VETASSESS regarding the teacher's successful application?

The employer should provide a letter of confirmation to the teacher regarding progression to the next level i.e. 2.1 (Graduate to Accomplished) or 3.1 (Accomplished to Exemplary)

- Employers who use the Kindergarten Payroll Service (ADP) should call ADP to inform them of the teacher's new hourly rate and classification prior to the next pay process.
- Employers who do not use the Kindergarten Payroll Service will need to discuss the specific requirements for changing details of pay rates with their payroll officer.

48. What does the employer need to do about back-pay that may be owing to a teacher?

Employers will need to determine the amount of back pay owing.

- Employers who use the Kindergarten Payroll Service (ADP) should put the amount of back-pay in the BPAY column of the next timesheet
- Employers who do not use the Kindergarten Payroll Service should notify the payroll officer of the amount to be paid.

49. If a teacher is successfully reclassified what is the outcome?

The teacher will be reclassified to the next classification and be paid at the appropriate pay rates for the new level.

50. How long does the reclassification last? Is there a review process?

Once a teacher has successfully completed the validation process and is reclassified (either to Accomplished or Exemplary as the case may be), the teacher continues to be classified as such unless, in the case of an Accomplished teacher, at a later date they successfully seek reclassification to Exemplary. There is no review process.