

INTRODUCTION: PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

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In this document, the South African Council for Educators (SACE) presents a draft set of national *Professional Teaching Standards* that seeks to promote professional teaching practice and embed a strong professional teaching culture in South Africa.

The South African education system has undergone a number of changes in respect of crafting a new society and new type of learning. It is constantly going through revisions to enable it to reach its ultimate goal of transformation.

Teachers and their teaching are one of the biggest influences on student learning. Committed, knowledgeable and skilful educators are among the country's greatest assets. There is therefore a need for professional standards to inform and strengthen the teaching profession and enhance the quality of education for all learners.

The South African education system is hampered by persistent inequality, high learner drop-out rates, and variable teaching quality. Thus, there is a need to develop a common understanding of professional teaching practice.

The SACE is mandated as per their Act 31 of 2000 as amended, to set and maintain ethical and professional standards for educators, and advise the Minister of Basic Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Training on the following:

- the minimum requirements for entry to all levels of the profession;
- the standards for programmes of pre-service and in-service educator education;
- the requirements for promotion within the education system; and
- educator professionalism.

In line with its mandate, in late 2016 the SACE set up a Standards Development Working Group of representatives of all key stakeholders: education departments, statutory bodies, teacher unions and associations, independent schools, teacher educators, academics, educators and researchers to develop professional standards for educators.

The result is 10 draft professional teaching standards (PTSs) that outline what is expected of educators in terms of their ethical and professional teaching practices. They describe in broad terms what an educator must know and be able to do to provide quality teaching and learning opportunities for all learners they teach in the diverse context of South African schools.

The draft PTSs comprise the standards expected of all pre-service and in-service teachers across all phases, subject specialisations, job descriptions and institutions. However, they are to be interpreted in the context, role and career stage of each individual educator.

While each Standard represents a different aspect of ethical and professional practice, there are many relationships within and between the draft PTSs. Teaching is complex work in which educators have to draw on different knowledge and skills to decide how best to create suitable learning opportunities for their learners, often in very challenging contexts. Teachers are expected to make wise decisions in situations that are often unpredictable, and to always be guided by a moral commitment to act in the best educational interests of their learners.

PURPOSE OF THE DRAFT PTSs

The aim of the Draft PTSs is to establish a set of standards for professional teaching and conduct that is theoretically informed, values based, appropriate to the South African context, and widely accepted by stakeholders.

It is intended that the draft PTSs will fulfil the following purposes:

- Promote a common set of knowledge, skills and commitments across the profession to enhance the learning opportunities of all learners.
- Strengthen the professional identity and enhance the status and public standing of the teaching profession.
- Provide a common language and a vision of the profession that all teachers can use to define and develop their practice.
- Support professional teachers to fulfil their professional roles and responsibilities, from pre-service to in-service teacher.
- Set standards for the providers of teacher education so that their programmes are designed and delivered in a way that enables all pre-service and in-service teacher to meet the standards.
- Provide a framework to guide the whole continuum of educator preparation and development from student selection, pre-service education, provisional registration of newly-qualified teachers, induction, full registration, educator evaluation, continuing professional development and career advancement.
- Facilitate (individual and collaborative): evaluation, reflection and professional development of teacher at all career stages.
- Guide educators to deepen and broaden their professional knowledge, skill and understanding as they gain experience.

The roll-out and implementation of the draft PTSs will be finalised by the SACE. The field-testing process will commence with newly-qualified teachers as well as in-service teachers. The process will be refined prior to implementation.

THE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The 10 draft PTSs were developed after 18 months of research, conceptualisation, discussion, drafting and consultation with key stakeholders. The conceptualisation of the draft PTSs was informed by an extensive international literature review of professional standards conducted by JET Education Services for the Centre for Development and Enterprise, by lessons from other national and international professional councils, teacher professionalisation research conducted by the SACE, as well as collaboration with other standards-setting processes of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

The Professional Teaching Standards for South African teachers consist of 10 Standards which are necessary and interlinked components of professional practice:

- Professional practice involves educators acquiring and using a range of effective teaching strategies to ensure learning opportunities for all learners through professional engagement and professional knowledge.

Each of the 10 draft PTSs include focus areas which explain what needs to be demonstrated to meet the standard.