

Question 1. List existing national laws, regulations and policies establishing norms and standards for quality of education in your country. Please also include any guidelines on the quality of education.

All Australian Governments are committed to raising the education attainment of all Australian students, including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and low socio-economic status (SES) communities. This is administered under the National Education Agreement (NEA). The NEA articulates the commitment of all Australian governments to ensure that all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy.

Since January 2009, Australian Government funding for government schooling has been delivered through the funding framework associated with the NEA. Under this framework, the Australian Government provides supplementary funding for government schools through *National Schools Specific Purpose Payments (SPP)* to state and territory governments.

Australian Government funding for non-government schools as part of the National Schools SPP is provided under the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*, which also came into effect from January 2009.

National Partnerships

The Australian Government is providing \$2.59 billion nationally to the states and territories under three Smarter Schools National Partnerships (National Partnerships). These National Partnerships support reforms that will contribute to raising overall educational attainment levels so that all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to participate effectively in society. Funding through NPs is also allocated to non-government schools through state and territory governments.

The three Smarter School National Partnerships are listed in detail under item 4.

Review of Funding for Schooling

In 2010, the Australian Government commissioned a comprehensive review of funding arrangements for schooling.

The Review of Funding for schooling is a genuine opportunity to make an assessment of the funding arrangements that are currently in place to see how well they support all students to reach their educational potential. The Review Panel considered the strongest possible platform for long-term investment and improvement in educational outcomes beyond 2013. The Panel's recommendations are directed towards achieving a funding system which is transparent, fair, sustainable and effective in promoting great educational outcomes for all Australian students.

The Government received the Review Panel's report on 20 December 2011 and is carefully considering the recommendations. The Government will release the report early in 2012, after the beginning of the school year. When it is released, the Government will set out the next steps in the process, including consultation with stakeholders and the community.

Question 2. Describe briefly, applicable norms and standards and minimal requirements, especially with regard to the following:

- a. school infrastructure
- b. class size and pupil-teacher ratio
- c. teacher qualification
- d. working conditions for teachers and their professional development
- e. school curricula content and pedagogical materials
- f. teaching-learning processes
- g. school management, including student and parents participation
- h. methods to evaluate student performance and assess learning outcomes

Question 2 (a): school infrastructure

The Commonwealth funds some infrastructure for government schools. The **Building the Education Revolution (BER)** program was a key element of the \$42 billion *Nation Building and Jobs Plan* and consists of three elements:

1. Primary Schools for the 21st Century – providing \$14.1 billion for Australian primary schools to build new iconic facilities, such as libraries and multipurpose halls, or to upgrade existing facilities for, in priority order.
2. National School Pride Program – providing \$1.29 billion for minor capital works and refurbishment projects in all eligible Australian schools.
3. Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools – providing \$821.8 million for the construction of 537 new and refurbished science laboratories or language learning centres in secondary schools.

The Australian Government also contributes further to non-government school infrastructure via the Capital Grants Program, provided under the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*. Between 2009 and 2012, the program is estimated to provide \$543 million to non-government schools. Since 2009, Australian Government capital funding for government schools was rolled into the National Schools SPP.

Question 2 (b): class size and pupil-teacher ratio

Management of government schools, including decisions about class sizes is the responsibility of state and territory education authorities.

Question 2 (c): teacher qualification

The Australian Institute of Teaching Leadership (AITSL) manages a number of reforms relating to teacher qualifications including:

- **Nationally Consistent Registration of Teachers**
The Australian and state and territory governments have committed to share responsibility for implementing nationally consistent teacher registration to come into effect in 2013.
- **National Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs**
Under this reform, all initial teacher education programs will be assessed against national program standards that will be progressively implemented from 2013 (as programs become due for re-accreditation).
- **Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers**

AITSL is leading the development of a nationally consistent approach to the certification of teachers at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages, based on the National Professional Standards for Teachers.

Certification at the highly accomplished and lead career stages will enable teachers to gain recognition for the quality of their teaching and progress their careers while remaining in the classroom. A nationally consistent approach to the certification of highly accomplished and lead teachers will be available for implementation from 2013.

In addition, the Australian Government has introduced measures to attract graduates to the teaching profession:

- **Teach Next**

Teach Next will provide a new pathway into teaching for professionals with specialist qualifications in areas of demand such as maths and science, and place them in hard-to-staff schools, often in regional areas. This \$18.1m program will allow participants to complete their formal teaching qualifications over a two-year period while teaching in a school and earning a salary.

- **Teach for Australia**

The Teach for Australia program was established in 2008 to recruit high calibre graduates into teaching. The program provides an ‘employment-based’ pathway into teaching that combines the teaching of theory with practice. Participants have a reduced teaching load and receive a high level of ongoing support and training throughout their two-year placement period including a number of intensive residential training components. On completion of their two-year placement, participants are awarded with a Postgraduate Diploma of Teaching.

Question 2 (d): working conditions for teachers and their professional development

While the Australian Government does not employ or register teachers, it is working with states and territories to implement consistency in this area. Initiatives include:

National Professional Standards for Teachers

- The National Professional Standards for Teachers, developed by AITSL, are a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality and sets out what teachers should know and be able to do at different stages across their careers. The Standards comprise three domains: professional knowledge; professional practice and professional engagement; each with a number of standards that articulate the knowledge, skills and attributes required across the four career levels.

The Standards are an objective tool to measure teaching capability at the various levels of a teacher’s work cycle.

- **Rewards for Great Teachers**

The Australian Government will provide \$1.1 billion over eight years (2011- 2012 to 2018-2019) to recognise and reward the best teachers in Australia. The reward payment scheme is linked to the National Professional Standards for Teachers.

When the scheme is implemented, all teachers will participate in an annual appraisal process where they will receive regular and constructive feedback on their performance, as

well as identify opportunities for further professional development.

The first reward payments will be made in the first half of the 2014 calendar year.

- **Teach Remote**

Teach Remote is a collaborative initiative between the Australian Government and the National Alliance for Remote Indigenous Schools, which is targeting the recruitment, training, supporting and rewarding of teachers working in remote and very remote schools.

- **More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative**

The *More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers* Initiative is a national program aimed at addressing the low numbers and retention rates of Indigenous teachers in Australian schools.

The project will determine future priority initiatives that would help to deliver against the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator Workforce Strategy* objectives in relation to increasing the numbers and retention of Indigenous teachers in Australian Schools.

Question 2 (e): school curricula content and pedagogical materials

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was established to oversee the development of a national curriculum, as well as manage assessment and reporting at a national level.

The Australian Curriculum seeks to improve the quality of the country's education system by providing agreement on the curriculum content that all Australian school students should be taught, as well as explicit advice on the achievement standards that these students should be meeting, regardless of their circumstances, the type of school that they attend or the location of their school.

ACARA's work to develop the Australian Curriculum is well underway. In December 2010, all Australian Ministers with responsibility for school education endorsed the content of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum in the first four learning areas of English, Mathematics, science and history. On 14 October 2011, ministers approved the Foundation to Year 10 achievement standards for these same four learning areas.

ACARA is currently undertaking work to develop an Australian Curriculum for the senior secondary years, as well as for the learning areas of languages, geography and the arts. Future phases of work will involve the development of Australian Curriculum in the learning areas of health and physical education, information and communication technology, design and technology, economics, business, and civics and citizenship.

Under the *National Education Agreement* (NEA) and the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*, all schools and school systems have committed to introducing the Australian Curriculum into their classrooms substantially by the end of 2013. However, the implementation of the Australian Curriculum is the responsibility of the states and territories, and this includes decisions about the development and use of pedagogical materials.

Question 2 (f): teaching-learning processes

Government schools are managed by individual state and territory education authorities and the development of learning plans is the responsibility of individual schools and teachers.

The Australian Government, together with the State and Territory Governments has made a major investment in the National Digital Learning Resources Network, a repository of nationally available digital curriculum resources for students and teachers. The repository is maintained by Education Services Australia (ESA). In addition, the Australian Government has recently provided additional funding to ESA to enhance the pool of nationally available digital learning resources and professional support for teachers to implement the Australian Curriculum. The funding will focus on filling resource gaps identified for English, mathematics, science history, geography, languages and the arts as well as supporting teachers to develop flexible learning approaches and integrate digital learning resources into the classroom. ESA is working in partnership with education authorities and other groups to maximise the benefits of this initiative.

Question 2 (g): school management, including student and parents participation

School leaders can make a greater difference in school and student performance if they are granted autonomy to make important decisions. The Australian Government's *Empowering Local Schools* initiative aims to provide schools with greater capacity to make decisions at the local level thereby enabling them to better respond to local school community needs and provide the services required to ensure their students achieve the best educational outcomes.

Parents, carers and families are the first and most important influence in a child's life, instilling attitudes and values that support young people to participate in schooling and contribute to communities. The Australian Government provides funding and supports the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO), (representing parents of students attending government schools), the Australian Parents' Council (APC) (representing the non-government sector) and the Isolated Children's Parents Association (ICPA) (representing parents of students who live in rural and remote areas).

The Government has also provided funding to ACSSO and APC to operate the *Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau* (the Bureau). The Bureau will work at a national level with principals' associations, education authorities, schools and community organisations to develop and encourage effective partnerships between schools, families and the broader community to improve students' learning experiences and outcomes. The Bureau will research and examine ways in which schools can be made more welcoming and inclusive, especially for those families who are currently disengaged from their child's school.

Question 2 (h): methods to evaluate student performance and assess learning outcomes

Under the NEA all government schools and school systems have agreed to participate in the National Assessment Program (NAP), and through the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*, the non-government sector has also agreed to participate in national assessments. There are three components to the NAP:

- National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).
 - Full population assessments for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in literacy and numeracy held in May each year. NAPLAN tests are used to identify whether all students have the literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge that provide the critical foundation for other learning and for their productive and rewarding participation in the community.
 - NAPLAN results are also used to report on the agreed outcomes of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform agenda on literacy and numeracy achievement in NEA Performance Reports.
- NAP Sample Population Assessments in Science Literacy, Civics and Citizenship and ICT Literacy.
- Australia's participation in International Assessment. The international assessments are sample population tests, these include: Program for International student Assessment (PISA); Trends in

International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS); and Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS).

Question 3. Identify the institutional mechanisms in your country used to collect and process information, and to assess adherence to norms and standards established to ensure quality of education. (Please specify if there are different mechanisms monitoring public and private institutions)

To improve student outcomes and ensure excellence and equity for all students, all governments have agreed to a performance reporting framework which governs the collection and publication of student and school data for three purposes:

1. high quality accountability to students, parents, carers and the community
2. tracking the progress against COAG targets for school education
3. providing evidence to support future policy reforms and system improvements including the aim of better directed resources

The NEA's accountability framework, applied to government schools, includes a set of performance indicators and encompasses elements for a streamlined and consistent reporting on the outcomes of schooling in Australia. The NEA applies to the reporting framework agreed under the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* and is based on:

- high-level performance indicators
- the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service having overall responsibility for collating the necessary performance data; and
- the COAG Reform Council publishing performance data relating to National Agreements, and National Partnerships.

This framework allows reporting on national progress towards achieving the national outcomes, including four COAG targets for schooling.

The reporting under the NEA and the *School Assistance Act 2008* also includes annual national reports on the outcomes of schooling in Australia, a biennial COAG report on Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, national reporting on the performance of individual schools, provision of plain language student reports to parents and carers and publication of school annual reports.

In addition, ACARA is responsible for a national data collection on individual schools that is published on the *MySchool* website. The website records a description of the school (supplied by the school or jurisdiction), student numbers, staffing numbers, attendance rates, NAPLAN performance data, senior secondary outcomes and an index reflecting the socio-educational advantage of students to allow comparisons of school performance to be made between schools with students from statistically similar backgrounds. This data supports accountability, school evaluation and resource allocation. See www.myschool.edu.au

Workforce Data Reform

A National Teaching Workforce Dataset is being established Under the Smarter Schools - Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership (TQNP) reform to improve the quality and availability of workforce data. It is intended that this mechanism will collect and report teacher workforce data to promote quality in education by assisting with more effective workforce planning.

Question 4. Provide information on other relevant initiatives and developments aiming to promote quality in education.

Through the *Smarter Schools National Partnership* agreements, the Australian Government has provided funding to states and territories for the priority reform areas, including literacy and numeracy, improving teacher quality, and improving educational outcomes in disadvantaged school communities.

National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy was developed in collaboration with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities. This National Partnership (NP) provides \$500 million, (\$150 million in 2009-2010 for facilitation; and \$350 million in 2011-2012 for reward), for states and territories to implement evidence-based initiatives to drive accelerated improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes.

The **Smarter Schools National Partnership for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities** aims to address educational disadvantage associated with low socio-economic status. Reforms under this National Partnership are improving the quality of teachers, allowing schools to be more flexible in how they operate and encouraging different ways of learning so that individual student needs are better met. Fostering overall student wellbeing and encouraging better connections with families and the local community are key aspects of this Partnership. The NP provides \$1.5 billion Commonwealth funding over seven years (2008-09 to 2014-15).

Smarter Schools Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership (TQNP) was introduced in recognition that teacher quality is the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and achievement and that improving teacher quality requires both strong school leadership from principals and new approaches to teacher recruitment, retention and reward. Under the TQNP, Australian governments are implementing a range of nationally significant and sustainable reforms targeting critical points in the teacher ‘lifecycle’ to attract, train, place, develop and retain quality teachers and leaders. The Australian Government has committed \$550 million to this NP.

The Digital Education Revolution (DER)

The Australian Government is investing over \$2.4 billion to support the effective integration of ICT in Australian schools in line with the Government’s broader education initiatives. This includes:

- ongoing management of the National Secondary School Computer Fund and other programs to improve access to computing devices
- supporting initiatives which promote the effective integration of ICT in schools: interoperable ICT systems, appropriate copyright licensing arrangements for educational use and support for other elements of the schools reform agenda including the Australian Curriculum
- management of projects under the ICT Innovation Fund, which support teachers’ and school leaders’ professional development in the use of ICT.

Building on the investments made through the DER, the Australian Government has committed to a number of education and training reform initiatives to support the use of ICT in learning and promote quality in Australian education. These include:

- developing and implementing the Online Diagnostic Tools initiative which will deliver nationally available tools for teachers, parents and students that provide individualised information about student’s strengths and learning needs
- developing and implementing strategies to leverage the National Broadband Network investment and rollout to education institutions including through the NBN- Enabled Education and Skills Services Program.