

Assessment Process for contract & probationary teachers

In recognition of their professional standing, public school teachers are involved in the assessment of colleagues involved in contracts and probation, as well as in the selection of new teachers to the system and for those applying for promotion. The probation and contract assessment process is designed not only to assess, but also to assist the development of professional practice. This structured process provides an opportunity for teachers to work within a team which can provide guidance and support on a regular basis. For the teacher on contract, the assessment report can be used as a professional reference when applying for permanency or continued contract employment.

Probation:

It is widely acknowledged that the steepest learning curve in all professions occurs at the point of transition from trainee status to actual practitioner. As professionals, teachers are committed to ongoing professional learning. All teachers newly appointed [offered permanency] to the ACT public education system must undergo one year on probation. This is a formal process of support from supervisors and colleagues to assist you to achieve your goals in your first year of teaching. Within the first three weeks of starting at your workplace, your probation panel should be set up.

Professional Pathways:

All teachers employed by the Department of Education and Training undertake a professional development plan called Professional Pathways. This is an annual process which focuses on system, school and personal priorities. Teachers recognise the importance of life-long learning and Professional Pathways supports them in continually honing their skills. For contract teachers, Pathways is optional but is highly recommended as a way to build professional learning and support into their work. Probationary teachers *combine* their Pathways plan with the probationary process.

What to expect:

All probation and contract teachers should be provided with a booklet, prepared by the Department, which explains in detail every aspect of the assessment process, including your responsibilities, your panel's responsibilities, timeframes and the form of reporting. Make sure that your panel is set up in the first few weeks. One of the most common hazards occurs when a panel is not formed until many weeks into the assessment period. Without a panel, which is the vehicle to provide feedback, advice and support, you are in effect sailing without a compass. In a rushed process, with minimal support, the loser is inevitably the person being assessed. If you have any questions or difficulties with your teaching, your panel is there to advise you. [This does not mean that you shouldn't feel free to approach any colleague for professional help.] The probation or assessment process is one in which all participants have the opportunity for professional learning.

What if there are concerns:

Prevention is better than cure so make sure that your panel meets with you regularly, and that you receive early advice about areas of your work that you do well and those that need improvement. Be specific, and ask if there is any area needing attention. Advice from your

panel about any areas of concern should always be accompanied by positive suggestions about strategies that may resolve problems and lead to the desired improvement.

If you find that your probation or assessment is not proceeding well, or is not fulfilling the purpose for which it was designed, seek assistance from your panel. If you believe that the panel is part of the problem, you should call the AEU for advice on 6272-7900.