



## **Quality educational leadership through principal certification**

A consultation paper seeking input on school principal certification to recognise and enhance educational leadership in Australian schools

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## Introduction

Principals Australia Institute (PAI) is leading the process on behalf of principals of all Australian schools and their state and national principal associations to develop a form of principal certification that recognises and strengthens the unique contribution that school principals make to the quality of the learning of all students.

PAI welcomes the views of individuals and organisations who have a specific interest in the leadership of Australia's schools about the proposals for principal certification outlined in the Consultation Paper.

PAI provides leadership development programs and professional assistance on behalf of the four peak Australian Principal Associations:

- the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia
- the Australian Primary Principals Association
- the Australian Secondary Principals Association
- the Catholic Secondary Principals Australia

## Context and background

In July 2012, the Board of PAI commissioned the national Principals School Leadership Survey with 1542 responses. The survey found:

- 63% of respondents supported a national qualification for all principals based on the Australian Principal Standard (as approved by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership)
- 77% of respondents agreed that the Australian Principal Standard should be used as the basis for accrediting professional learning and leadership development programs.

The Australian Principal Standard sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve in their work. The Standard is presented as an integrated model that recognises three leadership requirements that a principal draws upon within five areas of professional practice. The three leadership requirements are:

- vision and values
- knowledge and understanding
- personal qualities and social and interpersonal skills.

The five areas of professional practice are:

- leading teaching and learning
- developing self and others
- leading improvement, innovation and change
- leading the management of the school
- engaging and working with the community.

In November 2012, the Board of PAI endorsed the development of a voluntary Australian Principal Certification Program.

In March 2013, PAI held a National Forum comprising Australia's peak principal associations and presented a proposal (PAI, 2013) for the development of a voluntary Australian Principal Certification Program. PAI and the principal associations committed to work together to define and develop a certification process for Australian principals.

In September 2013, PAI convened the Melbourne Roundtable consisting of nominees from each state and territory's principal associations to consider expert reports on principal certification and to plan a national consultation process to inform the development of a draft model for voluntary principal certification.

Roundtable participants considered three papers prepared by Professor Brian Caldwell (2013), Dr Lawrence Ingvarson (2013) and Dr Paul Kilvert to assist the process of clarifying key issues relating to principal certification and affirming the focus for further consultation. Associate Professor David Giles also gave a presentation on the contribution of principal certification to the ongoing professional learning of leaders (Bell and Giles 2013).

This Consultation Paper presents the next step towards voluntary national principal certification. PAI acknowledges the assistance of Dr Kilvert in the preparation of the paper.

## Principal Certification

### What is principal certification?

PAI defines principal certification as “the formal procedure by which the achievement of principals is assessed, verified and recognised in writing by issuing a certificate as to the attributes, characteristics, quality, qualification or status of individuals in accordance with profession-developed requirements and the Australian Principal Standard”.

Principal certification is to be awarded by PAI as the independent professional body that works on behalf of all principals in Australian schools.

Principal certification is the recognition by the profession itself – through its own independent professional body – of a member’s demonstration of the Standard for the profession.

### What is not principal certification?

Principal certification is different from principal performance management. Performance management is appropriately part of an employing authority’s system for managing the performance of its employees. Principal certification instead focuses on the profession’s recognition of a member who demonstrates its professional Standard.

Principal certification is not an eligibility requirement for appointment as a principal. The definition of requirements for appointment as a principal are the separate and appropriate responsibility of employing authorities. Principal certification instead focuses on the profession’s own recognition of a principal’s demonstration of the Standard that applies to the profession.

Principal certification is different from a qualification that is awarded by an organisation or institution on the completion of a course or a defined set of study requirements, for instance a university diploma or degree. Such studies and qualifications are valuable in their own right and contribute to a principal’s professional learning. Principal certification focuses directly on the Standard for the profession as its reference point.

Principal certification is different from alternative forms of certification that may be issued by a government or non-government agency, for instance a First Aid Certificate. Principal certification is managed not by others, but by the profession itself. It is managed for the profession and for the ultimate benefit of the community.

### Why is principal certification important?

- Principal certification recognises the central importance of educational leadership for the quality of student learning and the quality of schools. It recognises that the leadership provided by principals directly impacts on the work of teachers and the conditions for learning in schools.
- Australian Ministers for Education at the national and state levels have endorsed the Australian Principal Standard. Principal certification provides the professional and public recognition of principals who demonstrate the Standard. Principal certification is recognition of the Standard in action.
- Principal certification demonstrates the professional commitment of principals to the Australian Principal Standard and to its operation in Australian schools. It affirms the significance of principals taking professional responsibility for the recognition and application of those who demonstrate the Australian Principal Standard.
- Principal certification provides a significant reference point for principals in their professional learning and ongoing development. It contributes to the building and sustaining of expertise in the profession.
- The operation of a publicly credible system for principal certification elevates the status and esteem of principals in the community.

### What is PAI’s vision for principal certification?

Principal certification affirms the importance of educational leadership and strengthens the unique role of principals to improve the quality of learning and teaching in schools.

## Other Principal Certification Schemes

PAI commissioned Professor Caldwell to undertake a global scan to identify existing voluntary principal certification schemes and to identify critical issues in their design and delivery.

The following material draws from Professor Caldwell's report which can be read in full at [www.pai.edu.au/certification](http://www.pai.edu.au/certification)

For the Roundtable Professor Caldwell (2013) identified the following five major programs for voluntary principal certification from his national and international search.

**Principal Certification Program of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in the United States** The NBPTS was established in the late 1980s for the purpose of certifying teachers against a national set of standards. In 2010, it ratified a set of core propositions and nine standards for accomplished educational leaders. Between 2010 and 2013 two cohorts of a total of 120 principals have been participating in field tests of the certification process based on a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate their development against the standards. The NBPTS is currently validating the assessment rubric that will be used to assess principals against the standards.

**National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in England The National College for School Leadership (NCSL)** In England has responsibility for leadership development and certification of middle-level leaders, aspiring and serving headteachers. In 2004 the NCSL revised the set of National Standards to create a framework for leadership development, assessment and certification of aspiring headteachers through the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). The framework was initially a compulsory requirement for appointment as a headteacher as well as for shaping assignments for assessment and moderation of the development phase of the program. The program is now voluntary and takes between 6 and 18 months to complete.

**Principals Qualification Program (PQP) of the Ontario Principals Council** The PQP is conducted by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Participants must hold either a master's degree or a doctorate and have had at least five years of successful teaching. Each PQP program is delivered in two parts: a course component comprising 125 hours made up of approximately 20 online hours followed by 10 days in class usually conducted over five weekends; and a 60-hour practicum comprising a practical leadership project based on professional standards set by the Ontario College of Teachers.

**Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH)** In 2012 the General Teaching Council for Scotland ratified a new standard for headship in Scotland. The College of Education at the University of Edinburgh coordinates a voluntary program towards the SQH that is designed to demonstrate the full range of leadership and management competencies of the effective headteacher. The SQH comprises five courses. The first four each involve 200 hours of 'taught hours', directed study, work-based learning, individual study and preparation time for assessment. The fifth is a double course comprising 400 hours of taught hours, directed study, work-based learning, individual study and preparation time for assessment.

**Executive Leadership Program (ELP) of the Australian Council of Educational Leaders (ACEL)** The ELP is primarily focused on leaders within the Western Australian education system, but is available to all Australian principals. It is aligned to the Australian Principal Standard and comprises a six-day program spaced over six months. The first two days are 'live-in'. Participants engage with a set of leadership principles and reflect on their relevance to their workplaces.

Although Professor Caldwell found distinctive differences between the five voluntary certification programs, he observed they all possessed the common feature of a professional learning program aligned to a national standard for principals. He also found that the five programs generated a number of challenges and implications for PAI in its development of a certification program suitable for Australian principals.

The challenges and implications include the following:

- Principal certification needs to be based on a statement of a professional standard, but certification must also connect the standard with a set of strategies or techniques for identifying levels of personal capability that can be plotted against the standard and enable the individual to improve those levels of capability.

- In demonstrating a standard through principal certification, it is not sufficient for principals to only demonstrate knowledge and understanding. They must also be able to provide evidence that demonstrates what they 'do' and 'achieve'.
- Demonstration of the standard should be connected with a principal's professional learning. Principal certification best operates if it is more than a 'one-off' exercise for participants and is multi-staged.
- The mechanism for considering the evidence of the standard must have credibility and rigor. It is essential to define the assessment and evaluation process that will be used to consider the evidence and to identify who will undertake the assessment and evaluation of the evidence. It is important that there be in place a suitable quality assurance process to address any prior association or conflict of interest for individuals involved in the process.
- It is essential that there is principal ownership of the standard and the accompanying principal certification program. Thus principals must be directly engaged in the development, implementation and operational phases of principal certification.
- Principal certification needs to possess its own integrity and independence, but cannot work in isolation of other providers of professional learning programs for principals.
- The integrity and independence of principal certification is related to the role and responsibility of PAI to collaborate with employing authorities about the purposes and uses of principal certification.
- PAI is committed to addressing these challenges and implications in the development and operation of the Australian Principal Certification Program.

## Applying the Standard in Principal Certification

PAI commissioned Dr Ingvarson from the Australian Council for Educational Research to investigate and provide further information about how principal certification can best incorporate a process for collecting and evaluating evidence of a principal's demonstration of the Australian Principal Standard.

The following material draws from Dr Ingvarson's report which can be read in full at [www.pai.edu.au/certification](http://www.pai.edu.au/certification)

Dr Ingvarson (2013a) reiterated the key point that principal certification must be distinguished from "licensure" or the determination of a principal's eligibility for appointment. He affirmed that certification is instead the endorsement by an independent professional body that a person's performance in the role meets a high standard.

Dr Ingvarson further reiterated that certification needs to be distinguished from performance management. Performance management systems are the responsibility of employing authorities, whereas it is a professional body that manages the certification system independent of particular employing authorities.

In his report, Dr Ingvarson focused on how assessment and evaluation of evidence should best operate in a standards-based certification system. He emphasised that assessment in this context should not be regarded as a regulatory function. Instead it is based on the use of valid and insightful assessments of professional practice based on standards to improve practice.

Dr Ingvarson reported that the use of assessment and evaluation of a principal's professional practice in relation to a standard creates a number of challenges and implications for a principal certification program that include the following:

- The task of describing standards needs to be distinguished from that of setting standards. Describing standards is the articulation of the professional knowledge, understanding and skill that is valued. It is different from setting standards which is instead about the determination of how the standard is to be demonstrated.
- The certification process must include the development of valid and consistent methods for gathering evidence about what the principal knows, understands and is able to do in relation to the standard.
- The certification process must include the development of reliable procedures for assessing and evaluating the evidence and deciding whether it demonstrates that the standard has been met.
- Methods for gathering evidence relevant to standards for certification must be rigorous and credible. Strategies must be put in place to maximise the reliability of standards-based assessments for certification.

PAI is committed to addressing these challenges and implications through the development and inclusion of an appropriate Assessment and Evaluation Framework in the Australian Principal Certification Program.

# Towards Australian Principal Certification

Principal Australia Institute proposes the following 7-point plan for the development of the Australian Principal Certification Program:

- 1 Affirm the Vision, Purpose and Propositions for Australian Principal Certification
- 2 Affirm the four key components of the Australian Principal Certification Program
- 3 Collaborate with providers of principal professional learning to identify programs that can contribute to the Australian Principal Certification Program
- 4 Develop the Assessment and Evaluation Framework for the Australian Principal Certification Program using the Australian Principal Standard and develop exemplars to illustrate the Framework
- 5 Trial methods for the collection and use of evidence for demonstrating the Australian Principal Standard through the Assessment and Evaluation Framework
- 6 Collaborate with systems, sectors and employing authorities of principals to build understanding and acceptance of Australian Principal Certification
- 7 Communicate and promote Australian Principal Certification and its benefits with principals and the wider community

Details about each point in the plan are presented over the following pages. In the management of the 7-point plan PAI is committed to appropriate lines of communication with principals, school and system leaders, principal associations and the Ministers for Education of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.

## 1 Affirm the Vision, Purpose and Propositions for Australian Principal Certification

PAI invites comment on the following proposed Vision, Purpose and Proposition statements

### Vision

Principal certification affirms the importance of educational leadership and strengthens the unique role of principals to improve the quality of learning and teaching in schools.

### Purpose

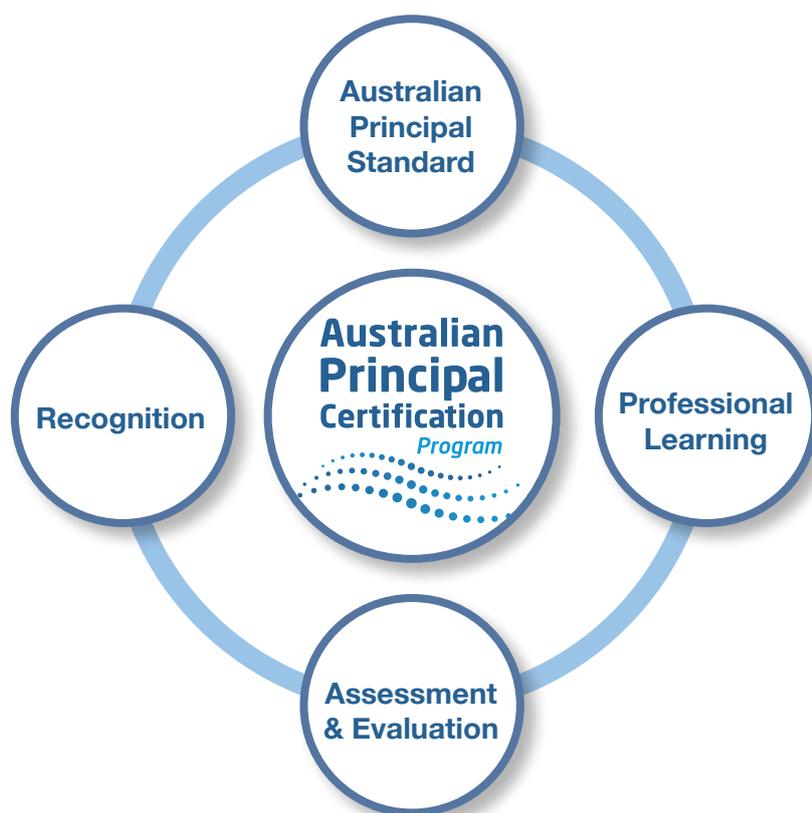
- 1.1 To provide professional recognition of exemplary educational leadership.
- 1.2 To recognise a principal's demonstration of the Australian Principal Standard.
- 1.3 To recognise the professional commitment of principals to quality learning, quality teaching and quality schools through the Australian Principal Standard.
- 1.4 To affirm that principals are integral to student success.
- 1.5 To act as a point of reference for a principal's professional learning and guide ongoing development.
- 1.6 To build and sustain expertise within the profession.
- 1.7 To provide a portable form of professional certification that belongs to the individual rather than a specific position, school or employing authority.
- 1.8 To elevate the status and esteem of principals in the eyes of the community.

## Propositions

Principal owned:	Principal certification is by principals and for principals and for the benefit of the community.
Independence:	Principal certification exists in its own right.
Accessibility:	Principals in all schools and locations have access to certification.
Voluntary:	The decision to seek certification rests with the individual.
Portability:	Principal certification is tied to and follows the individual.
Professional learning:	Principal certification is connected to and assists the ongoing professional learning of the principal.
Standard based:	Principal certification is referenced to the Australian Principal Standard.
Integrity:	Demonstration of the Standard is based on evidence.
Credibility:	Assessment of evidence of the Standard is rigorous and quality assured.
Flexibility:	Evidence of the Standard is provided through different mechanisms and different contexts.

## 2 Affirm the four key components of the Australian Principal Certification Program

PAI seeks comment on the proposal that the Australian Principal Certification Program consists of the following four key components. PAI acknowledges the contribution of Dr Ingvarson (2013b) to the development of the model.



- **Australian Principal Standard:** the statement of the leadership requirements and professional practices of principals
- **Professional Learning:** the professional learning of principals that contributes to ongoing professional improvement and that relates to, but does not cease with, principal certification
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** the valid and consistent methods for gathering evidence about what the principal knows, understands and is able to do in relation to the Standard
- **Recognition:** the presentation and celebration of an individual's receipt of principal certification.

### **3 Collaborate with providers of principal professional learning to identify programs that can contribute to the Australian Principal Certification Program**

- 3.1** PAI continues to work closely with Principals Associations to identify, develop and provide professional learning programs for principals that align with the Australian Principal Standard and to build the professional capabilities of principals through the Australian Principal Certification Program.
- 3.2** PAI works collaboratively with the systems, sectors and employing authorities in each state to strengthen the alignment between their professional learning programs for principals and the Australian Principal Certification Program.
- 3.3** PAI works collaboratively with Leadership Institutes and Centres in each state and territory to identify professional learning programs for principals that align with the Australian Principal Standard and articulate with the Australian Principal Certification Program and its professional learning component.
- 3.4** PAI works collaboratively with the Deans of Education in Australia universities to identify how their courses and programs for principals can best articulate with the Australian Principal Certification Program.

### **4 Develop the Assessment and Evaluation Framework for the Australian Principal Certification Program using the Australian Principal Standard and develop exemplars to illustrate the Framework**

- 4.1** PAI works collaboratively with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to define and clarify the relationship between the Australian Principal Standard and the Australian Principal Certification Program.
- 4.2** PAI identifies and engages principals who wish to contribute to the development of the Assessment and Evaluation Framework for the Australian Principal Certification Program.
- 4.3** PAI engages the professional expertise of a renowned agency to work with a working party of principals to develop, critique and refine the Assessment and Evaluation Framework for the Australian Principal Certification Program.
- 4.4** In collaboration with principals and principals associations, PAI develops exemplars that illustrate methods for collecting and presenting evidence of the Australian Principal Standard and that demonstrate the Assessment and Evaluation Framework in practice.

### **5 Trial methods for the collection and use of evidence for demonstrating the Australian Principal Standard through the Assessment and Evaluation Framework**

- 5.1** PAI identifies and engages principals who wish to participate in a trial program to develop and evaluate methods for the collection and use of evidence that demonstrates the Australian Principal Standard.
- 5.2** PAI incorporates the outcomes of the trial program into the support materials for the Australian Principal Certification Program and the associated professional learning activities for principals.
- 5.3** PAI makes the outcomes of the trial program available to other providers of professional learning programs for principals.

### **6 Collaborate with systems, sectors and employing authorities of principals to build understanding and acceptance of Australian Principal Certification**

- 6.1** PAI formally and informally liaises with employing authorities in each state and territory about the vision, purpose and propositions of the Australian Principal Certification Program and the four key components of the Program.
- 6.2** PAI works collaboratively with employing authorities in each state and territory to build a common commitment to the appropriate uses and intended applications of the Australian Principal Certification Program.

## **7 Communicate and promote Australian Principal Certification and its benefits with principals and the wider community.**

- 7.1** PAI develops and manages an ongoing communication strategy with principals and principals associations about the vision, purpose, propositions and key components of the Australian Principal Certification Program.
- 7.2** PAI develops and manages an ongoing communication strategy about the Australian Principal Certification Program with school communities and governing bodies.
- 7.3** PAI manages a promotion and marketing strategy about the Australian Principal Certification Program with key stakeholders and the general community.

### **Next steps**

During October – December 2013, PAI will use this Consultation Paper as the basis for a series of forums with principals in each state and territory to clarify and develop the Australian Principal Certification Program.

During October – December 2013, PAI seeks and welcomes written and on-line comment from key stakeholders on this Consultation Paper. Please visit [www.pai.edu.au/certification](http://www.pai.edu.au/certification) to provide feedback during the national consultation period.

In early 2014 PAI will present the outcomes of the consultation process to principals, principals associations and key stakeholders for further consultation and engagement towards the development of the Australian Principal Certification Program.

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