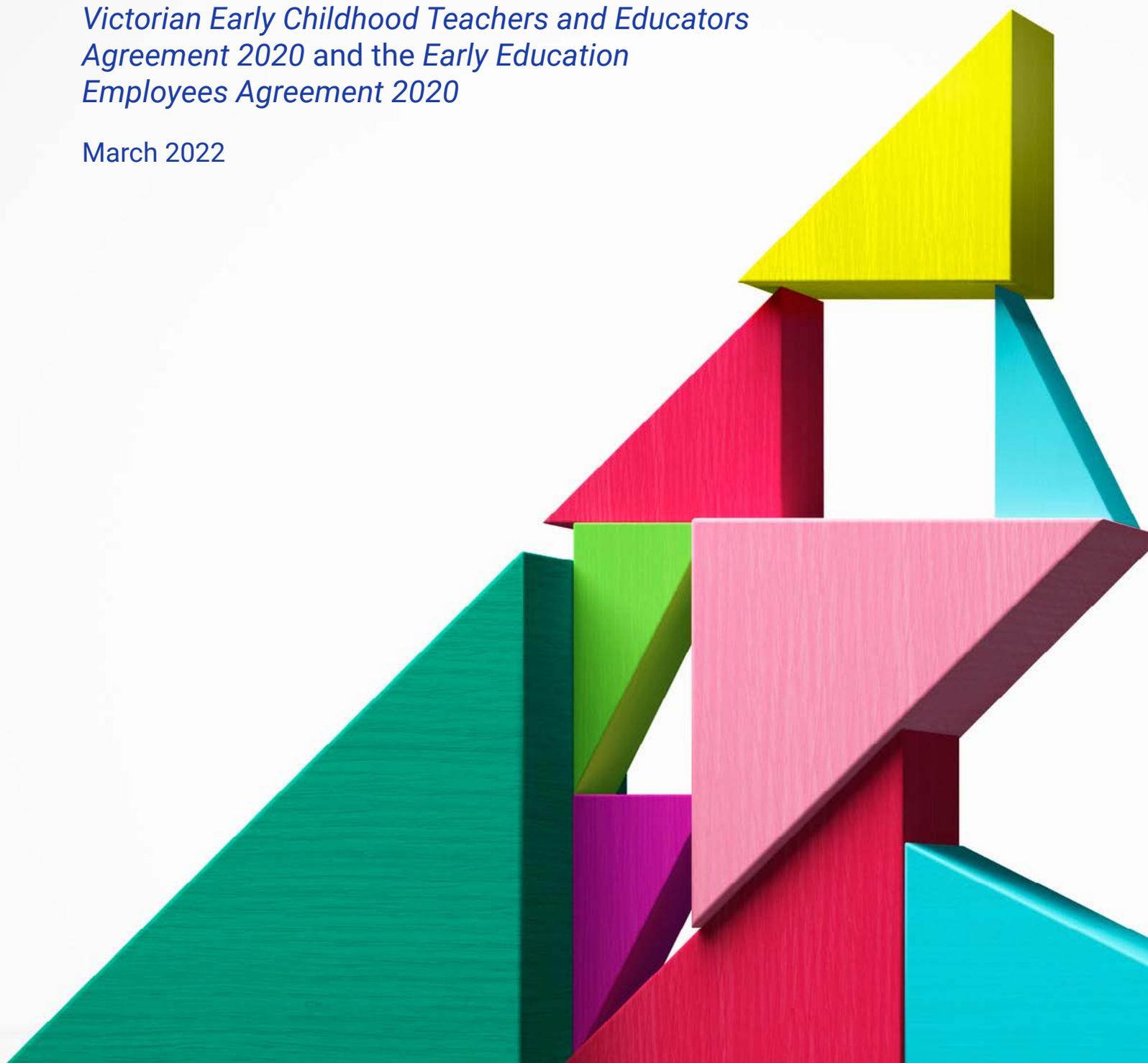


CAPABILITY

ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Supporting teachers and approved providers to undertake the Capability Assessment in the *Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020* and the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020*

March 2022



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**“EXPERT TEACHING SHOULD BE
BY DESIGN, NOT CHANCE”**

Laureate Professor John Hattie, AITSL Chair

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This publication was developed on the lands of the Kulin Nation and recognises that teaching and learning have taken place on this Country for as long as we can remember. We are indebted to the elders who have and continue to shape our understanding of First Nations' perspectives in early childhood education.

This publication would not have been possible without the paid and volunteer contributions of many people: teachers, managers, researchers, policymakers, and administrators. Over time, they have worked together to build our collective understanding of the exemplary teaching practices that deliver high-quality early childhood education to Victoria's children.

This Guide is jointly sponsored by:



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Education
and Training

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Capability Assessment Guide.

Central to the intent of this Guide is the opportunity to recognise exemplary teaching practice as one of the most significant ways to uphold the rights and best interests of young children.

In supporting teachers and approved providers to undertake the Capability Assessment successfully, we significantly contribute to enhancing the quality of children's education and care in Victoria.

Purpose of the Guide

This Guide is designed to support the teachers and approved providers undertaking the Capability Assessment process, specified in the *Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020* (VECTEA) and the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020* (EEEA), to facilitate eligible early childhood teachers to move from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1 in the career structure, following the removal of the previous validation process from February 2022.

The information and resources in this Guide have been specially designed for funded kindergarten providers and teachers who use the above Agreements. The process aims to streamline and enhance engagement in the Capability Assessment and does not change the requirements in the Agreements. The Guide hopes to make it more straightforward for all parties to apply the process in their context.

The development of the Guide has been shaped by the feedback and practice advice of several individuals and organisations, including teachers and approved providers and the peak bodies who represent them. Their advice, combined with research evidence and key policy documents, have provided the parameters for the development of the process and the advice and resources outlined in the Guide.

A suite of overarching principles has been formulated to ensure that the Capability Assessment process remains true to its intent

and purpose and assists participants to engage in the process in positive and beneficial ways.

- Accessibility – enabling ease of use by diverse participants
- Practicality – ensuring participants find the process useful and not onerous
- Transparency – articulating the process and intent openly and clearly, including all roles and/or responsibilities
- Collaboration – encouraging a high level of teamwork and respectful cooperation
- Communication – maintaining open and considered dialogues
- Shared understanding – clarifying and discussing the achievement of mutually beneficial outcomes
- Recognition – ensuring acknowledgement of exemplary teaching
- Consistency – confirming a consistent application of the process that is logical, accurate, and fair.

How to use the Guide

This Guide and related tools have been designed to support those participating in the Capability Assessment process specified in the Agreements. However, it is important to note that the process outlined in this Guide is not compulsory. Parties are welcome to

utilise aspects of the Guide to support existing processes, for example, a teacher might use TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE to prepare for an existing assessment process. Likewise, the process outlined here could complement protocols that an approved provider already has in place.

The process, including each step's specifics, has been described from both the **teachers'** perspective (indicated in pink) and **approved providers** (indicated in green). Additional advice is offered for volunteer committees of management where applicable.

The Guide is constructed to mirror the Capability Assessment process itself, following a logical sequence from rationale and descriptors of the capabilities to the communication of the final decision.

Approved providers and teachers are welcome to use the Guide in whichever way is most helpful. This process can be used in the absence of the approved provider having another process already in place however it is not an expectation this process must be used.

The Guide includes live hyperlinks to tools and resources that can assist participants to manage and complete the process. The tools are provided in both **WORD** and **PDF** format to ease use and modification as required (adding a logo, for example).

There are also tips and suggestions offered through the Guide that offer helpful advice to streamline or enhance the process.

The tools and tips are highlighted using the following symbols.



Tools that both teachers and approved providers may find helpful to support the process.



Ideas, suggestions, or tips that teachers and approved providers may find helpful as they implement the process.

Background

Under the previous Early Childhood Enterprise Agreements (2016 VECTEA and EEEA), early childhood teachers had an opportunity for a salary progression from a Level 2.5 to Level 3.1, subject to undertaking an external validation process.

Under the new Early Childhood Enterprise Agreements (*Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020* and the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020*), early childhood teacher validation through an external process VETASSESS will no longer be required for eligible teachers to progress from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1. The external process will be replaced with an internal validation process, titled the Capability Assessment, conducted by the approved provider.

The new arrangements will apply with respect to the progression of teachers from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1 as set out in the 2020 Early Childhood Enterprise Agreements.

Eligibility

The eligibility requirements for a teacher to progress from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1 include that the teacher must:

- have a minimum of 5 years teaching experience;¹
- have been at Level 2.5 for a minimum of 12 months;¹
- hold full Victorian Institute of Teaching registration.
- hold an approved four-year early childhood teacher training qualification, or if less than a four-year approved qualification, must be recognised for progression;¹ and
- not have been the subject of any disciplinary outcome by the employer that is related to their professional practice and/or conduct in the 12 months prior to the date of progression.

¹ Refer to clause 50.3 of the VECTEA and clause 54.13 of the EEEA for reference to other clauses

Implementation of the new Capability Assessment

Phase 1 – teachers at Level 2.5 for 12 months or more as of 1 February 2022:

- A Capability Assessment shall be undertaken by the employer for teachers who satisfy the eligibility requirements in the applicable Agreements;²
- Teachers who meet the Capability Assessment shall increment to salary Level 3.1 on 1 February 2022;³ and
- The new incremental anniversary date for these teachers shall become 1 February annually.

Phase 2 – Level 2.5 teachers who reach their 12-month anniversary after 1 February 2022:

- Employers shall determine those teachers who satisfy the eligibility requirements as at their incremental anniversary date.
- A Capability Assessment shall be undertaken for teachers who satisfy the eligibility requirements.³
- Teachers who meet the Capability Assessment shall increment to salary Level 3.1 on their incremental anniversary date.³

The Capability Assessment

Teachers who satisfy the eligibility requirements are required to participate in a Capability Assessment process based on the following criteria articulated as the roles and responsibilities and professional standards of a Level 3 teacher contained in the industrial Agreements:

- The teacher demonstrates a clear understanding of, and contribution and commitment to the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)⁴ of the service.

- The teacher must demonstrate a well-developed level of understanding of and developing capabilities relevant to the roles and responsibilities and professional standards of a Level 3 teacher in the following areas:
 - i. Pedagogical excellence and expert teaching skills.
 - ii. Comprehensive knowledge and practice in developing innovative programs and curriculum.
 - iii. An ability to respond to emerging trends and issues within early childhood education, their service and community.
 - iv. Provision of leadership and role modelling to other early childhood staff within the service.
 - v. Provision of expert advice and support to parents and the broader community in the development and delivery of early childhood education; and
 - vi. Actively pursues opportunities to advocate on behalf of children and the development and delivery of early childhood education by working collaboratively and effectively with appropriate groups in the broader community.
- Plays a significant role in leading and supporting programs determined by state and federal authorities.

The Capability Assessment is a critical accountability mechanism within the Agreements that requires both teachers and approved providers to accept responsibility for their role in the process.

Why a Capability Assessment?

Defining and publicly declaring the capabilities of expert early childhood teachers serves a range of purposes.

By far, the most important reason for undertaking an assessment of teacher capability is to promote the children's rights and best interests. The evidence is overwhelming – more highly qualified educators deliver better outcomes for children (The Front Project, 2021). It follows then that these outcomes will be further enhanced in the hands of exemplary teachers.

In the first instance, a Capability Assessment supports a more profound understanding across the profession and the broader sector about

2 Refer to clause 50.5 of the VECTEA and 54.15 of the EEEE for reference to other clauses

3 Refer to clause 50.5 of the VECTEA and 54.15 of the EEEE for reference to other clauses

4 Approved early childhood education and care providers must ensure a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is in place for each service. The aim of a QIP is to help providers self-assess their performance in delivering quality education and care, and to plan future improvements. The QIP also helps regulatory authorities with assessing the quality of the service.

what is meant by exemplary teaching practice in the early years. In addition, it also signals a shared understanding, and importantly, provides a resource to support continued professional learning and growth it helps promote regard for the expertise of the teaching profession as they work with the community's youngest children.

In this way, the Capability Assessment process celebrates the art and science of teaching and is an opportunity to recognise these skills through increased financial remuneration.

The Capability Assessment also serves as an essential accountability mechanism that offers teachers and those who manage them, confidence about the expertise and practice skills being demonstrated.

In addition, a Capability Assessment process of this nature aligns favourably with other such teaching performance measures and articulated understandings of teaching excellence emerging across Australia and internationally, such as the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, and related information for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (Early Childhood Evidence Guide Highly Accomplished Teacher in NSW (NESA, 2018)).

Understanding the capabilities

The capabilities have been developed to articulate the expected practices required from a teacher to progress from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1 in the teacher career structure in the *Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020* and the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020*.

The capabilities define what an experienced teacher performing at an exemplary level can do combined with their professional disposition. They are the valued abilities that a teacher consistently undertakes as they work with children, families, colleagues, and the wider community.

Understanding what it means to practice at an exemplary level is the subject of ongoing research and policy development. By way of context, it is helpful to signpost some key definitions of teaching at this level.

Many years ago, Lillian Katz, a well-regarded elder of the early childhood community, described the developmental stages of teachers in four stages culminating in maturity (Stage IV). At this level, the early childhood professional is

'... likely to have come to terms with herself as a teacher and to have reached a comfortable level of confidence in her own competence. She now has enough perspective to begin to ask deeper and more abstract questions, such as "What are my historical and philosophical roots? What is the nature of growth and learning? How are educational decisions made? Can schools change societies? Is early childhood teaching really a profession?" Perhaps she has asked these questions before. But with experience, the questions represent a more meaningful search for insight, perspective, and realism.'

(Katz, 1995)

Since then, there has been much sector-led discussion alongside academic research defining what it means to be an early childhood professional and, more particularly, an effective teacher. It is not the purpose of this Guide to outline this body of work. Instead, it is recognised as forming the context in which this Guide is developed and has enabled a more rigorous approach to interpret the capabilities and the process through which a teacher's practice is assessed (ECA, 2019; NAEYC, 2020; The Centre for Policy Development, 2021; The Front Project, 2021). It is worth noting that alongside the discourse on professional identity and the art of teaching is a growing consensus that teaching quality matters and is one of the most significant factors in ensuring outcomes for children.

'The most important part of 'quality' is the value-add that teachers and educators provide through the learning opportunities they create and in the way they talk with children and stretch their thinking (Wall, Litjens, & Taguma, 2015). Factors like qualifications, group size, the ratio of educators to children, the physical space and regulations around health and safety are all essential in creating the conditions in which teachers and educators can be effective.

(Torii, Fox, & Cloney, 2017)' (The Front Project, 2021)

To further understand the nature of exemplary teaching practice, sharing an example from further afield is helpful. The National Association for the Education of Young Children in the USA have defined teaching in many ways, for example:

'A highly-qualified early childhood educator--one who knows how to create a dynamic, accountable learning environment-- is at the center of a high-quality early learning experience.

(NAEYC, n.d)

'To deepen their understanding of and ability to navigate complex situations, early childhood educators develop a habit of reflective practice, including integrating their knowledge and practices across all six standards in order to create optimal learning environments, design and implement curricula, use and refine instructional strategies, and interact with children and families whose language, race, ethnicity, culture, and social and economic status may be very different from educators' own

backgrounds. It is this knowledge and practice that will allow teachers to transform a new group of babies in the infant room or a group of second graders on the first day of school into a caring community of learners.'

In the Australian context, the NSW Education Standards Authority are the only Authority to have described teaching at this level in the *Early Childhood Evidence Guide: Highly Accomplished Teacher*, updated August 2018.

'Teachers who operate at this level are identified as 'highly effective, skilled practitioners who routinely work independently and collaboratively to improve their own practice and the practice of colleagues. They are knowledgeable and active members of the early childhood service.

Highly Accomplished teachers contribute to their colleagues' learning. They may also take on roles that support, guide or advise others. They regularly initiate and engage in discussions about effective teaching to improve the educational outcomes for children. They maximise learning opportunities for children by understanding their backgrounds and individual characteristics and the impact of those factors on their learning. They provide colleagues, including teacher education students (pre-service teachers), with support and strategies to create positive and productive learning environments. Highly Accomplished early childhood teachers have in-depth knowledge of the principles, practices and outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework, and model sound

teaching practices within their sphere of responsibility. They work with colleagues to plan, evaluate and modify teaching programs to improve child learning. They keep abreast of the latest developments in early childhood education and the general education sector.

Highly Accomplished teachers are skilled in analysing child assessment data and use it to improve learning and teaching. They are active in establishing an environment which maximises professional learning and professional practice opportunities for colleagues. They monitor their own professional learning needs and align them to the learning needs of children and the Standards. They behave ethically at all times. Their interpersonal and presentation skills are highly developed. They communicate effectively and respectfully with children, colleagues, other educators, families and community members.

(NESA, 2018, p. 1–2)

In referencing the NSW Education Standards Authority, it is important to note that there is no equivalent document produced in the Victorian context. The Victorian Institute of Teaching adopts a proficient teacher level for teacher registration with no option to move to Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher status.

The following table briefly describes the interrelated knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions relevant to the role, responsibilities, and professional expectations of a Level 3 teacher.

It is important to note that the descriptors below align with and build on the professional standards outlined in the Agreements (Schedule 6 – Teacher Standards), namely Professional Knowledge, professional practice, and Professional engagement and commitment and assume that these are well understood and draw on a range of key documents and research evidence that inform best practice in early childhood education and care. However, they are not an exhaustive commentary on exemplary practice and could be developed further to reflect understandings of teaching that responded to local contexts or from the perspective of a particular approved provider.

Understanding the capabilities

Capability	Descriptor
50.4(b)	<p>The teacher demonstrates a clear understanding of, and contribution and commitment to the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)⁵ of the service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement and strive for best practice in their work with children, families, and colleagues as described in the National Quality Standard:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Inherent within the NQF is a commitment to continuous improvement and striving for best practice underpins this commitment. While the NQF does not prescribe what best practice looks like, it encourages education and care services to draw on a range of current research, theory and understandings about early and middle childhood. This can provide educators with an understanding of best and most suitable practice in the unique and changing context of their service. (ACECQA, 2020, p. 8)– Understand that improvement processes work best when a collaborative approach that welcomes multiple perspectives listening carefully to context and the shared aspirations of the community of learners is used. At the same time, teachers skillfully use research and emerging understanding of contemporary practice to ensure that challenges and proposed improvements respond to the best available evidence.• Use critical reflection, inquiry, and innovations to develop and lead more effective approaches to learning and teaching to promote and sustain positive outcomes for children.• Understand themselves as champions in continuous improvement and take an active part in promoting, supporting, and scaffolding others towards growth and change.

⁵ Approved early childhood education and care providers must ensure a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is in place for each service. The aim of a QIP is to help providers self-assess their performance in delivering quality education and care, and to plan future improvements. The QIP also helps regulatory authorities with assessing the quality of the service.

50.4(c) The teacher must demonstrate a well-developed level of understanding of and developing capabilities relevant to the roles and responsibilities and professional standards of a Level 3 teacher in the following areas:

i. Pedagogical excellence and expert teaching skills;

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contemporary professional teaching and learning practices as described in the foundation documents that inform early childhood education and care in Australia, for example, but not limited to, the Victorian Early Year Learning and Development Framework and the National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2020; Department of Education and Training, 2016; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010).
- Are committed to and participate in ongoing critical reflection that challenges taken for granted ways of knowing and doing and lead others to examine practices that ensure every child is enabled to grow and learn.
- Articulate and demonstrate the suite of diverse teaching and learning strategies that inform their curriculum decisions and those of the teams they lead.
- Adapt new teaching strategies emerging from research evidence, collaborative thinking with children, families and other professionals and, through their practice, shape progressive understanding of early childhood education.
- Are well-read and closely connected with colleagues within and outside the service they work within and use these interactions to guide their thinking and practice (Early Childhood Australia, 2016).

ii. Comprehensive knowledge and practice in developing innovative programs and curriculum;

- Demonstrate the ability to facilitate creative solutions and imaginative strategies to deliver programs and curriculums that best meet the learning needs and aspirations of children and their families.
- Keep abreast of innovative teaching and learning strategies being discussed across the education sector and make reflective practice decisions about which resonate with the learning community they lead.
- Are skilled at challenging practices that pose barriers to innovations and respectfully and carefully facilitate and enable new ways of thinking and working with the early childhood service members (children, families and educators and approved providers) into new ways of understanding early childhood education (ACECQA, 2020; Meade, 2005).
- Are bold thinkers and persistent self-starters who seek new ways of practising that deliver enhanced outcomes and pursue implementation in sustained and relevant ways.

Capability	Descriptor
<p>iii. An ability to respond to emerging trends and issues within early childhood education, their service and community;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a keen interest in and engagement with the broader context of early childhood education and care locally, across Australia, and globally and actively seek a deeper understanding of the emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities relating children’s needs and best interests and their families in the sector and the broader community. • Have a growing appetite for complexity (Gibbs, 2021) and welcome the opportunity to connect, reflect on the implications of emerging trends and issues with local contexts and consider what these might mean for the lived experience of early childhood education and care to which they are responsible. • This capability manifests in many ways, from connections in online communities, memberships of professional organisations and interest groups to active monitoring of policy updates and local changes to community life. • Ultimately this commitment results in their ability to respond to these trends and issues in meaningful ways that relate directly to outcomes for children (Early Childhood Australia, 2016).
<p>iv. Provision of leadership and role modelling to other early childhood staff within the service;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates the capabilities and dispositions to lead people – children, families, educators, and other professionals to deliver high-quality early childhood education and care. • These capabilities, attitudes and skills can be described in many ways, but fundamentally, they are about a teacher’s capability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Build respectful and collaborative relationships with a range of people and organisations – Use their professional knowledge and expertise to guide curriculum decision making and the process of continuous improvement – Demonstrate professionalism and ethical behaviour – Act with professionalism and ethics – Use an interpretive lens grounded in critical reflective practice to determine the most appropriate course of action. (Gibbs, 2021; Stamopoulos, 2012; Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018; Waniganayake et al., 2017). • In addition, teachers at this level work collaboratively with all team members to drive change for the better, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enacting a vision for educational leadership as a mechanism for improvement recognises that the role is much more than the sum of its parts. More than a requirement—although these are critical tools to ensure a consistent approach across the country—educational leadership is about driving change for the better. – Motivating others to follow ship—that is, effective leaders motivate, inspire and aspire others to realise shared goals (Rodd, 2013, p. 36). – Being agents of change on the journey to exemplary education and care provision, they also promote a sense of professionalism for the sector now and in the future. – Make learning visible to others and challenging assumptions that working with young children is not babysitting (Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley & Shepherd, 2017, p. 118). – Leading and driving change, with the courage to imagine what is possible. (ACECQA, 2019, p. 8; 2020).

Capability	Descriptor
<p>v. Provision of expert advice and support to parents and the broader community in the development and delivery of early childhood education; and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture respectful and collaborative relationships with families (parents and carers and extended family members) reflective of the expectations of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Every partnership will be unique, just as each family is unique with different values and priorities. Early childhood professionals work in partnership with all families within communities to build links between home and other settings a child attends. This provides greater consistency and complementarity for the child. (Department of Education and Training, 2016, p. 9). • Offer timely and appropriate advice and support centred using a strengths-based approach around their expertise regarding children’s learning and development and the role of early childhood education. • Recognise their role in providing support and advice to the broader community in terms of early childhood education and care. • The advice and support are offered in multiple ways, formally and informally, that is unique to the community they are part of and at times extend to a broader platform that fosters enhanced understanding of the roles of early childhood in society (Hadley & Rouse, 2018; Rouse, 2019; Rouse & Obrien, 2017).
<p>vi. Actively pursues opportunities to advocate on behalf of children and the development and delivery of early childhood education by working collaboratively and effectively with appropriate groups in the broader community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand their ethical and professional responsibility to act in children’s best interest and actively pursue ways to speak up in support of opportunities for them to realise their full potential. • Spend time getting to know the leaders, elders, and key personnel from organisations in the community committed to children’s best interests and determine ways to deliver more substantial local outcomes. • When situations arise where children’s rights and best interests are undermined, they join with others to call for change, identify solutions and make an active contribution to better outcomes. • They are known as active network members, and where professional collaboration is yet to be realised, take responsibility for creating them in the best interest of children and their families.
<p>50.4(d) Play a significant role in leading and supporting programs determined by state and federal authorities.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an understanding and reflect on early childhood education and care initiatives, programs, and policy directions of state and federal authorities. Through professional networks and engagement with sector-wide communication, they pay attention to the details of these initiatives and consider ways to lead their local implementation. • Maintaining currency regarding policy, programs, and initiatives, engaging in consultation, sharing information with others, and facilitating informed decision-making. • They act as interpreters and translators of these initiatives to families and colleagues and, at times, children to be more readily understood. • In times of rapid change and significant reform, they use ethical processes to participate in respectful dialogues that offer state and federal authorities’ constructive feedback. 	

Linkages and connections

The requirement to participate in the Capability Assessment process is distinctly separate from other requirements under the law, regulations and funding Agreements or other agreed protocols.

It is worth noting, however, that the Capability Descriptors and the assessment process purposely align with, build on, and are entirely consistent with, the expectations of high-quality teaching and learning in Victoria as articulated in the following foundation documents:

- The National Law and National Regulations,
- National Quality Standard,
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework,
- Victorian Institute of Teaching
- VIT Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) standards at the proficient teacher level
- Early Years Management Framework.

The process might also reflect locally developed plans, approaches, codes of conduct, practice expectation or position descriptions.

This process could be used as an example of quality practices reflective of particular elements of the National Quality Areas:

Quality Area 4 staffing arrangements

4.2 Professionalism

Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.

4.2.1 Professional collaboration

Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills.

4.2.2 Professional standards

Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

Quality Area 7 governance and leadership

7.1 Governance

Governance supports the operation of a quality service.

7.1.2 Management systems

Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

7.1.3 Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.

7.2 Leadership

Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.

7.2.1 Continuous improvement

There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.

7.2.3 Development of professionals

Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development. (ACECQA, 2020)

The Capability Assessment process

The Capability Assessment process aims to support teachers and approved providers to effectively undertake the Capability Assessment to facilitate eligible teachers to move from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1 under the 2020 Early Childhood Enterprise Agreements.

While the Agreements do not prescribe a specific process for completing the Capability Assessment, this Guide proposes a straightforward 5 step procedure that ensures both teachers and approved providers can have confidence in the process.

It is worth restating that the process outlined in this Guide is *not* compulsory. Parties are welcome to utilise aspects of the Guide to support existing processes; for example, a teacher might use the *Capability Assessment Practice and Evidence Resource* to prepare for an existing assessment process. Likewise, the process outlined here could complement

protocols that an approved provider already has in place.

The process is reflective of the principles outlined at the beginning of this Guide. It seeks to enable completion of the Assessment with both integrity and ease of use while being mindful of the practical considerations of teaching and managing early childhood education and care services and the expectations of quality teaching.

The steps for both teachers and approved providers are outlined below, with particular consideration of advice and support required for volunteer management committees who may not have as much experience undertaking processes like this.

Approved providers, such as local governments or larger organisations, with more formalised and comprehensive human resource structures, staff performance and planning processes may incorporate these suggestions into their own approaches.

Ultimately, as outlined previously, this process should be a celebration of quality teaching practice that both parties feel well prepared to undertake. It, therefore, should be entered into by all concerned with a spirit of collegiality and positive anticipation, confident that this process is neither demanding nor stressful.

It is strongly recommended that both parties ensure the relevant Agreement (*Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020* or the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020*) are available and referenced throughout this process.

Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Tool(s) ⁶
<h2>Step 1 – Instigation</h2>			
<p>Instigation signals interest and willingness to complete the Capability Assessment process. It is also an opportunity to clarify the expectations and responsibilities of the process.</p>	<p>Teacher and/or Approved provider</p>	Week 1	TOOL-01 TOOL-07 TOOL-08
<h2>Step 2 – Commencement</h2>			
<p>The commencement step formalises the start of the process and gives teachers and approved providers the information they need to prepare for the Capability Assessment discussion (Step 4).</p>	<p>Teacher and Approved provider</p>	Week 2	The Guide TOOL-02 TOOL-03 TOOL-09
<h2>Step 3 – Preparation</h2>			
<p>The preparation step allows teachers and approved providers time and resources to ensure they understand the expectation of the process outlined in this Guide and are ready to engage in the Capability Assessment discussion (Step 4).</p>	<p>Teacher and Approved provider</p>	Weeks 3–7	The Guide TOOL-02 TOOL-03 TOOL-04
<h2>Step 4 – Discussion</h2>			
<p>The discussion step facilitates the assessment of a teacher’s practice concerning the capabilities outlined in the Agreements. In a collaborative discussion with the teacher, the approved provider seeks to gather information about how the capabilities are practiced.</p>	<p>Approved provider</p>	Week 7	TOOL-02 TOOL-03 TOOL-05 TOOL-06
<h2>Step 5 – Decision</h2>			
<p>The decision step requires the members of the approved provider Capability Assessment committee (the representative of the approved provider) to decide, following the discussion (Step 4), whether the teacher has provided sufficient evidence and practice examples to meet the capabilities.</p>	<p>Approved provider</p>	Week 8	TOOL-10 TOOL-11 TOOL-12 TOOL-13



Reflective of this Guide’s commitment to the principles of transparency and shared understanding, teachers and approved providers can access the full suite of tools. Approved providers might consider creating a shared digital file that includes the Guide and other tools for all parties to access.

⁶ Note. A detailed list of available tools can be found here: *Tools and Resources Overview*

Roles and responsibilities in the process

The Capability Assessment process, at its best, is collaborative, drawing on the skills and lived experience of both the teacher and the approved provider. As noted previously in this Guide, the nature of the Capability Assessment discussions are a combination of celebration and accountability and rely on both the teacher and approved provider participating with good faith and a spirit of continuous improvement.

Teachers and approved providers, including those approved providers who work in voluntary roles, are advised to note the expectation of participants before the commencement of the process.

Again, as has been noted previously in this Guide, while the process is not designed to be onerous, it does, however, need to be rigorous, ensuring our collective commitment to quality teaching practice has integrity,

The specific roles and responsibilities are outlined in detail in the Capability Assessment – Committee establishment tool (TOOL-01 Capability Assessment – Committee establishment). However, as a quick reference, the roles and responsibilities are as follows:

Teachers are responsible for requesting the Capability Assessment commence.

The teacher then ensures they participate in the process as outlined in the Guide, including having the necessary information to enable the approved provider to assess their capabilities.

Approved providers are responsible for managing and completing the Capability Assessment process.

The approved provider ensures that the process is fair and rigorous and that teachers and members of the Capability Assessment committee understand what is expected and that the process is completed in a timely manner.

A more detailed description of the Capability Assessment committee has been developed for the approved providers to distribute to members (TOOL-01 Capability Assessment – Committee establishment).

Forming a Capability Assessment committee

Approved providers are responsible for overseeing the completion of the Capability Assessment. The most effective way to undertake the process is by appointing a Capability Assessment committee who, on behalf of the approved provider, follow the steps outlined in the Guide and assess the teacher's capabilities.

In forming the Capability Assessment committee, approved providers might consider the following suggestions:

- Approved providers, especially community committees of management, might like to include details of the Capability Assessment committee and members' expectations in the information they distribute to prospective families and new committee members.
- As a best practice protocol, approved providers may use the material in the Guide and tools to develop terms of reference for the Capability Assessment committee.
- Committees of management who already appoint a staffing sub-committee may consider using this committee as the Capability Assessment committee.
- Members of the Capability Assessment committee can be appointed for an extended period or as a once-off process, depending on the number of staff interested in and eligible for completing the process. A more permanent arrangement may require a more formalised approach with letters of appointment for members and agreed terms of reference.
- The Capability Assessment committee is ideally made up of three people.
- If possible, select the Capability Assessment committee members who do not have a direct relationship (for example parents of children in the program) with the teacher being assessed.
- A more detailed description of the Capability Assessment committee has been developed for the approved providers to distribute to members (TOOL-01 Capability Assessment – Committee establishment).

THE CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT STEPS

STEP 1

Instigation

Instigation signals interest and willingness to complete the Capability Assessment process. It is also an opportunity to clarify the expectations and responsibilities of the process as a whole.

STEP 2

Commencement

The **commencement** step formalises the start of the process and gives teachers and approved providers the information they need to prepare for the Capability Assessment discussion (Step 4).

STEP 3

Preparation

The **preparation** step allows teachers and approved providers time and resources to ensure they understand the expectation of the process outlined in this Guide and are ready to engage in the Capability Assessment discussion (Step 4).

STEP 4

Discussion

The **discussion** step facilitates the assessment of a Teachers practice concerning the agreed capabilities. In a collaborative discussion with the teacher, the approved provider seeks to gather information about how the capabilities are practiced.

STEP 5

Decision

The **decision** step the approved provider decides, following the discussion (Step 4), whether the teacher has provided sufficient evidence and practice examples to meet the capabilities.

STEP 1 Instigation

Instigation signals interest and willingness to complete the Capability Assessment process.

Having established that the eligibility requirements for a teacher to progress from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1 have been met, the teacher or the approved provider can commence the Capability Assessment process.

Instigation also provides an opportunity to clarify the expectations and responsibilities of the process.

Teacher

The teacher clarifies their eligibility by familiarising themselves with requirements outlined in the *Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020* and the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020*.

The teacher communicates with the approved provider to indicate their belief that they meet the requirements and interest in completing the Capability Assessment process.



Tools

Email proforma

Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020 and the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020*

Approved providers

The approved provider clarifies their eligibility by familiarising themselves with the requirements outlined in the *Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020* and the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020*.

The approved provider communicates with the teacher to indicate that it is their belief that the employee meets the requirements and ascertains their interest in completing the Capability Assessment process.

The approved provider agrees to commence the Capability Assessment and communicates with the teacher to begin the process.

Additional advice for community committees of management

Community committees of management should consider including this process in the staffing and governance policies and ensure that there is a staff liaison and a chair of the Capability Assessment committee role in place to take responsibility for the management and completion of the process on behalf of the committee.

Community committees of management should consider appointing a lead person into this role (vice president or staff liaison, for example) who will coordinate the process on behalf of the committee.



Tools

TOOL-01 Capability Assessment – Committee establishment

TOOL-08 Capability Assessment – Email template – Instigation by approved provider



Tips

Approved providers might consider creating a suite of administration systems and resources dedicated to the Capability Assessment process, including a staff liaison email address (staffliason@xxxkindergarten.com, for example) that can keep track of correspondence and a cloud-based file to store relevant materials, including a copy of this Guide and Tools for example.

STEP 2 Commencement

The **commencement** step formalises the start of the process and gives teachers and approved providers the information they need to prepare for the Capability Assessment discussion (Step 4).

Teacher

The teacher receives correspondence from the approved provider outlining the process and time-frames and links to relevant documents (the Agreement), including this Guide.



Tools

TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE

TOOL-04 Capability Assessment – Teacher REFLECTION

Approved providers

The approved provider corresponds with the teacher outlining the process and time-frames and links to relevant documents (the Agreement), including this Guide.

The approved provider communicates with the teacher to determine the best times and place for the Capability Assessment discussion and clarify any questions about the process or expectations.

The approved provider establishes a Capability Assessment committee (ideally three people) to undertake the Capability Assessment process and provides them with the relevant resources and materials to understand expectations and processes.

The approved provider is responsible for determining the makeup of the committee that undertake the Capability Assessment.

Additional advice for community committees of management

Community committees of management should consider appointing a lead person into this role (vice president or staff liaison, for example) who will coordinate the process on behalf of the committee.

The committee of management might establish a Capability Assessment committee and appoint no more than three members from the broader committee.

This committee should consider meeting a couple of times before the discussion step to ensure they are familiar with the expectations and process and have a clear understanding of the purpose and roles in the process.



Tools

[TOOL-01 Capability Assessment – Committee establishment](#)

[TOOL-02 Capability Assessment – Questions for the committee](#)

[TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE](#)



Tips

Approved providers might determine the process of Capability Assessment outside their expertise and consider outsourcing to external expertise to complete the process. However, approved providers should be mindful that this can add further to the complexity to the process and increase the costs involved. approved providers (especially committees of management) are strongly encouraged to use the Guide to equip themselves to complete the process. Working in collaboration with the teacher and ensuring enough time is allocated for the process will also help.

Approved providers who believe there may be several eligible teachers might consider establishing a standing Capability Assessment committee to undertake the process.

Community committees of management might identify potential members of the Capability Assessment committee as they appoint other roles at the beginning of the year.

Approved providers may identify a predictable timeline each year for the Capability Assessment so that all parties know broadly when and how the process takes place.

While there is no set time between formal notification and the Capability Assessment discussion, it is helpful to allow adequate preparation and reflection time. Therefore, it might be helpful to identify a mutually agreeable time frame, for example, within a couple of months from instigation.

STEP 3 Preparation

The **preparation** step allows teachers and approved providers time and resources to ensure they understand the expectation of the process outlined in this Guide and are ready to engage in the Capability Assessment discussion (Step 4).

Teacher

The teacher reads the Capability Assessment Guide to ensure familiarity with the process and expectations, including the relevant Tools.

At this point, it is helpful to seek clarification from the approved provider about any part of the process and expectations that seem unclear.

Using the Capability Assessment descriptors in the Guide, the teacher reflects on their understanding of these capabilities as they apply to their practice.

Teachers may find it helpful to take the necessary steps to critically reflect on their practice to think about how they demonstrate these capabilities in practice.

Teachers may also clarify and discuss the capabilities with members of their educator team or trusted colleagues to ensure they can represent their understandings at the Capability Assessment Discussion.

Using TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE, the teacher notes a response (practice, discussion point, evidence and/or examples) to each of the capabilities in preparation for the Capability Assessment discussion.



Tools

TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE

TOOL-04 Capability Assessment – Teacher REFLECTION



Tips

Teachers may find it helpful to take necessary steps to clarify and discuss the capabilities with members of their educator team or trusted colleagues to ensure they are able to represent their understandings at the Capability Assessment discussion.

Approved providers

The approved provider Capability Assessment committee members read the Guide to ensure familiarity with the process and expectations, including the relevant tools.

At this point, it is helpful to seek clarification from the approved provider about any part of the process and expectations that seem unclear.

The Capability Assessment committee uses the Capability Assessment descriptors, evidence and practice guide, and the tools to prepare for the discussion step.

It may be helpful to make notes in preparation for the Capability Assessment discussion.

Additional advice for community committees of management

It may be helpful to meet in the lead up to the Discussion to clarify shared understanding of the capabilities using the evidence and practice guide and determine how the meeting will run, for example, who will ask which questions and who will take notes.



Tools

[TOOL-02 Capability Assessment – Questions for the committee](#)

[TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE](#)

[TOOL-04 Capability Assessment – Teacher REFLECTION](#)

STEP 4 Capability Assessment discussion

The **discussion** step facilitates the assessment of a teacher’s practice concerning the agreed capabilities. In a collaborative discussion with the teacher, the approved provider seeks to gather information about how the capabilities are practiced and how the teacher meets the capability in question.

Approaching this discussion as a planned and systematic conversation about the demonstration of capabilities as well as a celebration of teaching practice ensures that the process is viewed as a positive opportunity to support quality.

Teacher

Teachers attend the meeting ready to discuss how they meet the capabilities.

Teachers may plan to use artefacts and other evidence as determined by them (see the evidence guide) to showcase or illustrate the skills, attitudes and behaviours they have used to demonstrate the capabilities.

Teachers should also come prepared to discuss their responses further, clarify their rationale and respond to questions the approved provider may have – see “TOOL-02 Capability Assessment – Questions for the committee”.

Teachers should feel free to ask questions of the approved provider about what information they need from them to assist in assessing their capabilities.



Tools

[TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE](#)

[TOOL-04 Capability Assessment – Teacher REFLECTION](#)

Approved providers

It is important to note that the Capability Assessment process does not require the Capability Assessment committee to determine a level of capability.

The Capability Assessment committee (as the representative of the approved provider) must have heard/seen the evidence from the teachers and make a judgement as to whether, in their opinion, the capability is *met* or *not met*.

The approved provider uses the discussion agenda template to structure the meeting.

Approved providers should attend the meeting ready to listen and discuss with the teacher the ways in which they meet the capabilities – this will mean becoming familiar with the information provided in “TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE”.

Approved providers should feel free to ask the teacher questions to clarify their assessment of the capabilities.

Additional advice for community committees of management

Capability Assessment committees are encouraged to use the capability descriptors in the Guide and the examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE (TOOL-03) to assess the response to these questions.

The Capability Assessment committees should use the discussion process to clarify teacher responses.



Tools

TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE

TOOL-02 Capability Assessment – Questions for the committee

TOOL-05 Capability Assessment – Discussion AGENDA

TOOL-06 Capability Assessment – Discussion RECORD



Tips

Approved providers might consider the location of the discussion and allocate space and time free of interruptions. This may not always be possible at a service where there are limited times when children are not present, or there are no meetings rooms, for example. In this case, it might be helpful to use a community meeting room or organise to borrow space from a local business or school. It is not recommended that these discussions occur in a public venue like a café or restaurant.

STEP 5 Decision

The **decision** step requires the members of the approved provider Assessment Capability committee (the representative of the approved provider) to decide, following the discussion (Step 4), whether the teacher has provided sufficient evidence and practice examples to meet the capabilities.

Teacher

Teachers receive written notification of the result of the Capabilities Assessment.

Approved providers

Approved providers decide if the discussion (Step 4) with the teacher provided sufficient evidence and practice examples of meeting the capabilities.

The approved provider formally records this decision in the meeting minutes.

The approved provider notifies the teacher in writing of the decision no more than 7 days after the discussion.

The approved provider ensures that any necessary changes are made to the teacher's remuneration.

The process notes and the final decision should be kept confidentially in the services staff files. There is no expectation that these records must be lodged with any external organisation.

Additional advice for community committees of management

The approved provider Capability Assessment committee should report the findings of the Assessment process at the next committee meeting as part of regular staff updates.

Capability Assessment committee makes a recommendation to the approved provider for formal approval.

In some cases, this responsibility may be delegated to the Capability Assessment committee.

It is important to note that this is for reporting purposes only and not an opportunity to re-assess the teacher's capabilities.

Tools



TOOL-10 Capability Assessment – Email template – SUCCESSFUL; and

TOOL-12 Capability Assessment – Letter template – OR

TOOL-11 Capability Assessment – Email template – UNSUCCESSFUL

TOOL-13 Capability Assessment – Letter template – UNSUCCESSFUL

What happens if there is an adverse finding?

If there is an adverse finding, both parties (teachers and approved providers) are required to follow the arrangements outlined in the Agreements.

50.7 Adverse findings

- a) In the event that a teacher is determined not to meet all of the requirements of the Capability Assessment, the teacher will be notified in writing.
- b) The teacher may provide further evidence and information for consideration by the employer.
- c) A teacher may access the provisions of clause 13 – Dispute Resolution in order to have the employer's decision reviewed.
- d) If the employer's decision is overturned, the teacher shall increment to salary Level 3.1 on their prescribed incremental anniversary date.

What the process is not

As teachers and approved providers engage in the Capability Assessment, it is essential to maintain the integrity and credibility of the process by explicitly noting the types of activities that sit outside of the scope of this process.

The capability process is not:

- a performance review
- a job interview
- a disciplinary process
- a chat amongst friends
- a secret process.

It might be helpful for approved providers, as part of the preparation for the capability Assessment discussion, to ensure that participating members of the committee and the teachers are clear about the aims of the process and remain mindful of the need to contain the discussion to the purpose of the assessment discussion.

Should there be any concerns that the Capability Assessment discussion might stray beyond the aims and purpose, the approved provider or the teacher should take measures to cease the process and recommence after these issues have been resolved.

A note on ethics

Adopting an ethical approach to the Capability Assessment process is critical. Attention to the principles outlined at the beginning of this Guide maintains the process's integrity, ensuring that all participants are treated fairly and respectfully. It also upholds confidence in the process across the sector.

Key values should inform the Capability Assessment process and are worth discussing as the procedure unfolds. Those values or ethical positions might include:

- transparency
- honesty
- openness
- accountability
- communication.

To clarify a shared understanding regarding an ethical approach, teachers and approved providers might consider these questions:

- Have we entered into the process in good faith and with a commitment to success and outcomes for children?
- Do I have a conflict of interest, i.e., do I have a relationship with any of the parties involved in the process that would mean I cannot remain impartial and consider the discussion on its merits?
- Are there any issues that would prevent me/us from completing the process in an open, transparent, and considered manner?
- How can we ensure the process is supportive, fair and treats everyone with respect?

Conclusion

This Guide is ultimately about outcomes for young children. When teachers are supported to articulate the quality of their teaching practice and are remunerated accordingly, early childhood education and care are enhanced.

The process has been designed to support the teachers and approved providers undertaking the Capability Assessment process, specified in the *Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020* and the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020*, in a way that is neither too demanding nor overly time-consuming but maintains a high level of accountability.

The information and resources in this Guide have been designed for funded kindergarten providers and educators who use the above Agreements. The process aims to streamline and enhance engagement in the Capability Assessment and does not change the requirements in the Agreements. The Guide hopes that it makes it more straightforward for all parties to apply the process in their context.

It is anticipated that the process will evolve and strengthen over the life of the Agreement as teachers and approved providers work together to enhance quality teaching.

Appendix

Tools overview

The following tools are provided to support approved providers and teachers to complete the Capability Assessment process.

They are also available on the Website in WORD and PDF format to allow for ease of use and modification as required.

Step	Tools
Step 1 Instigation	<p>TOOL-01 Capability Assessment – Committee establishment</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-07 Capability Assessment – Email template – instigation by teacher (Email from teacher to the approved provider to commence the process)</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-08 Capability Assessment – Email template – Instigation by approved provider (Email from the approved provider to the teacher to commence the process)</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-09 Capability Assessment – Email template – Discussion invitation (Confirmation email to signal the start, and outline, of the process)</p>
Step 2 Commencement	<p>The Guide (this document)</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-02 Capability Assessment – Questions for the committee</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE</p>
Step 3 Preparation	<p>The Guide (this document)</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-02 Capability Assessment – Questions for the committee</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-03 Capability Assessment – Examples of PRACTICE and EVIDENCE</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-04 Capability Assessment – Teacher REFLECTION</p>
Step 4 Discussion	<p>TOOL-05 Capability Assessment – Discussion AGENDA</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-06 Capability Assessment – Discussion RECORD</p>
Step 5 Decision	<p>TOOL-10 Capability Assessment – Email template – SUCCESSFUL</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-11 Capability Assessment – Email template – UNSUCCESSFUL</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-12 Capability Assessment – Letter template – SUCCESSFUL</p> <hr/> <p>TOOL-13 Capability Assessment – Letter template – UNSUCCESSFUL</p>

Glossary of terms

Approved provider	The approved provider is legally responsible for the operation of an early childhood education and care service, including employment of educators and compliance with the components of the National Law (Section) and National Regulations (Regulation).
Capability Assessment	<p>The capabilities have been developed to articulate the expected practices required from a teacher to progress from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1 in the teacher career structure in the <i>Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020</i> and the <i>Early Education Employees Agreement 2020</i>.</p> <p>Teachers who satisfy the eligibility requirements are required to participate in a Capability Assessment process based on the following criteria articulated as the roles and responsibilities and professional standards of a Level 3 teacher contained in the industrial Agreements.</p>
EEEEA	<i>Early Education Employees Agreement 2020</i> www.fwc.gov.au/ae511947
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
Teacher (Early Childhood Teacher or ECT)	Early Childhood Teacher (Teacher) means an employee engaged as such who is required to hold a teaching qualification approved by ACECQA for the purposes of the National Law, and published in accordance with Regulation 137(1)(a) of the National Regulations and who has current registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
Validation from 1 February 2022	<p>50.2 Validation Teacher progression from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1 – from 1 February 2022</p> <p>a) From 1 February 2022, the arrangements in clause 50.3 to 50.8 will apply with respect to the progression of teachers from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1 in the teacher career structure.</p>
VECTEA	<i>Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020</i> www.fwc.gov.au/ae511155
VEYLDF	<p>The <i>Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework</i> (VEYLDF) supports all professionals who work with children aged 0-8. It includes a range of discipline-specific guidelines and practice resources.</p> <p>https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/veyldf.aspx</p>

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