



**SACE**

South African Council for Educators

*Towards Excellence in Education*

**PROFESSIONAL  
TEACHING STANDARDS**

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## ACRONYMS

CPTD MS-	Continuing Professional Teacher Development Management System
DBE ITE-	Department of Basic Education Initial Teacher Education Directorate
DHET-	Department of Higher Education and Training
ELRC-	Educator Labour Relations Council
ETDP-SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
HEIs-	Higher Education Institutions
NAPTOSA-	National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa
NAISA-	National Alliance of Independent Schools Association
NATU-	National Teachers Union
PEU-	Professional Educators Union
PTSs-	Professional Teaching Standards
SACE-	South African Council for Educators
SADTU-	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAOU-	South African Teachers Union
SAPA-	South African Principals Association
SDWG-	Standards Development Working Group
SGBs-	School Governing Bodies
SMTs-	School Management Teams



## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Professional Engagement** involves educators demonstrating caring, respect and professionalism in all their interactions with learners, colleagues, parents/carers and the community, and maintaining positive, collaborative relationships. Educators need to be sensitive to the needs of all learners and committed to ensuring their best interests are served. They reflect on their practice and expand their professional learning, both alongside colleagues and individually.

**Professional Knowledge** refers to a body of professional knowledge educators draw on to respond to the needs of their learners within their educational contexts.

**Professional Practice** involves educators acquiring and using a range of effective teaching strategies to implement well-designed learning opportunities that support learning gains for all learners.

**Constructive feedback** is based on something that learners have already done, when it is given it should encourage learners to reflect. Most importantly feedback should supply nourishment for learners' minds so that with new understandings they are able to progress in their learning.

### Characteristics of a Professional

A registered member that has an underlying professional education qualification; upholds a code of professional ethics and professional standards; accepts accountability for the professional autonomous judgments; participates in continuous professional development; and makes the annual membership fee payments.

### Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

PLCs are communities that provide the setting and necessary support for groups of classroom teachers, school managers and subject advisors to participate collectively in determining their own developmental trajectories, and to set up activities that will drive their development. (ISPFTED, p.14)



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## INTRODUCTION: PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

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

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

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

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

SACE is mandated as per their Act 31 of 2000 as amended, to set, maintain and protect ethical and professional standards for educators, by means of the functioning of the council. The Powers and duties of council — Subject to this Act and the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996), the council—(b) with regard to the promotion and development of the education and training profession— (ii) must advise the Minister on matters relating to the education and training of educators, including but not limited to —

- (aa) the minimum requirements for entry to all the levels of the profession;
- (bb) the standards of programmes of pre-service and in-service educator education;
- (cc) the requirements for promotion within the education system;
- (dd) educator professionalism;

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

The result is 10 professional teaching standards (PTSs) that outline what is expected of educators in terms of their ethical and professional teaching practices. They describe in broad terms what an educator must know and be able to do to provide quality teaching and



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learning opportunities for all learners they teach in the diverse context of South African schools.

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

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

### **PURPOSE OF THE PTSs**

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

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

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



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- viii. Guide educators to deepen and broaden their professional knowledge, skill and understanding as they gain experience.

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

### THE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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

The collaborative development process involved SACE, JET Education Services, the Zenex Foundation and representatives of all key stakeholders: five teacher unions, the ETDP-SETA, the ELRC, Faculties of Education at HEIs, SAPA, SGBs, NAISA, independent schools, provincial education departments, DBE ITE and DHET, educators, and policy researchers.

In addition to the work and meetings of the SDWG in developing the PTSs, the following consultative processes were undertaken:

- Across all nine provinces consultations were conducted from October 2017 to January 2018. These involved 382 delegates.
- Additional presentations of the PTSs were conducted as part of a Continuing Professional Teacher Development Seminar Series. These involved 1,265 SMT members in four provinces between February and March 2018.

A process of wider consultation and field testing of the PTSs will now be undertaken because it is critical that the approved PTSs are widely known and accepted by in-service educators and other key stakeholders, and that they are simple to implement.

Thus, to obtain feedback on the proposed PTSs from practicing educators and other stakeholders in all parts of the South African education system, SACE has published the PTSs



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on their website ([www.sace.org.za](http://www.sace.org.za)) for public comment. All comments received were carefully considered and used to refine and strengthen the PTSs.

## PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

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

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

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



**1. Teaching is based on an ethical commitment to the learning and wellbeing of all learners.**

- 1.1. Teachers believe in the capacity of all learners to achieve and make progress both inside and outside the classroom.
- 1.2. Teachers understand the different challenges that confront learners and their families and consider how these challenges may affect their behaviour and learning.
- 1.3. Teachers respect different aspects of learners' identities (including gender, race, language, culture, sexual orientation and dis/ability), and believe that these diversities can be a strength and resource for teaching and learning.

**2. Teachers collaborate with others to support teaching, learning and their professional development.**

- 2.1. Teachers conduct themselves in ways that earn the respect of those in their communities and uphold the dignity of the teaching profession.
- 2.2. Teachers understand that the wellbeing of learners and the support of their learning requires communication and collaboration between teachers, parents, caregivers, other professionals, and the community.
- 2.3. Teachers are responsible for their ongoing personal, academic and professional growth through reflection, study, reading, and research.
- 2.4. Teachers participate in endorsed continuing professional teacher development activities/programmes organised by their subject associations, professional learning communities (PLCs), higher education institutions, teacher unions and private providers.
- 2.5. Teachers provide supportive environments for the induction and mentoring of colleagues who are new to their school, as well as for pre-service and newly-qualified teachers.
- 2.6. Teachers actively involve themselves in educational debates, curriculum development initiatives, and educational issues that affect them.



**3. Teachers support social justice and the redress of inequalities within their educational institutions and society more broadly.**

- 3.1. Teachers are committed to ensuring that learners are given the support they need for inclusive access to learning opportunities.
- 3.2. Teachers have a responsibility to identify and challenge policies and practices that discriminate against, marginalise or exclude learners.

**4. Teaching requires that well-managed and safe learning environments are created and maintained within reason.**

- 4.1. Teachers are in class and teaching during scheduled teaching time.
- 4.2. Teachers establish class routines to make the most of the available teaching and learning time.
- 4.3. Teachers use fair and consistently-applied rules to promote respectful behaviour in their working environments.

**5. Teaching is fundamentally connected to teachers' understanding of the subject/s they teach.**

- 5.1. Teachers understand the subject/s they teach as bodies of knowledge in which important concepts are connected to one another.
- 5.2. Teachers understand how learners process and present information in the subject/s they teach.
- 5.3. Teachers understand how subject knowledge can be applied to interpret and address real-world issues.
- 5.4. Teachers keep themselves informed of new developments and research in their subject/s.



**6. Teachers make thoughtful choices about their teaching that lead to learning goals for all learners.**

- 6.1. Teachers consider how learners develop and learn when choosing teaching and learning strategies.
- 6.2. Teachers seek to understand how theoretical concepts and evidence-based research can inform the choices they make in their classroom practices.
- 6.3. Teachers can account for the design, delivery and assessment of lessons to themselves, their colleagues and to other stakeholders.
- 6.4. Teachers improve their teaching by reflecting on what has worked and what has not worked in the learning experiences they have created.

**7. Teachers understand that language plays an important role in teaching and learning.**

- 7.1. Teachers create opportunities for learners to develop their vocabulary, their command of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), and to develop their reading and writing skills in the lessons they teach.
- 7.2. Teachers draw on other languages, when necessary, to enhance learners' understanding of the important concepts in their lessons.
- 7.3. Teachers enable learners to understand and use the specialist terminology and language of their subject/s.
- 7.4. Teachers provide learners with ongoing opportunities to read, interpret, and respond to different kinds of written, graphical and visual texts.
- 7.5. Teachers recognise that all learners need to acquire and hone foundational skills in language and numeracy, and that there is a strong interrelationship between language and numeracy.

**8. Teachers are able to plan coherent sequences of learning experiences.**

- 8.1. Teachers use the national curriculum to identify what learners are required to know and do.
- 8.2. Teachers use the national curriculum and knowledge of their subject/s to understand how important ideas and skills are built up across different years of learning.
- 8.3. Teachers base their planning on what learners know and understand in order to design coherent units of lessons with meaningful learning activities and assessments.

### 9. Teachers understand how their teaching methodologies are effectively applied.

- 9.1. Teachers explain content knowledge to learners in ways that are understandable and accurate.
- 9.2. Teachers devise tasks that give learners opportunities to consolidate new knowledge learnt and to practise skills.
- 9.3. Teachers learn to anticipate what learners will find difficult to understand and develop effective ways to address common misunderstandings.
- 9.4. Teachers find, develop or modify carefully chosen physical, graphic, digital and text-based resources to enhance learning.
- 9.5. Teachers engage their learners to stimulate their curiosity about a subject and motivate them to learn more.

### 10. Teaching involves monitoring and assessing learning.

- 10.1. Teachers use assessment tasks that give learners opportunities to show what they have learnt, and what they can do with that knowledge.
- 10.2. Teachers provide learners with constructive feedback that helps them understand how they can improve their learning.
- 10.3. Teachers analyse learner contributions, their questions and their errors as important data that shows what the learners do and do not yet understand to inform future planning.
- 10.4. Teachers keep accurate records of assessments that track learner achievement and can report to stakeholders on the progress of learners.



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