

# **Professional Development Provider Survey: New Requirements for NESA Accredited Professional Development Key Findings**

**April 2021**

## Introduction

In November 2020, the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning announced new processes for assuring the quality of professional development (PD) courses for NSW teachers.

Under the new requirements for NESA Accredited PD, all courses must meet more rigorous, evidence-based requirements and address criteria for the relevant priority area.

In March 2021, the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) conducted a survey of all providers of previously NESA Registered PD. Of the 820 providers invited, 154 responses were received.

Findings from the survey are being used to inform the development of new requirements for assessing and accrediting PD in the identified priority areas. Specifically, survey respondents' feedback is being used to:

- refine the interim principles of effective professional learning
- inform the development of criteria for identified priority areas
- develop application processes and identify which support materials and resources are going to be most beneficial to providers.

This paper presents key findings from the survey.

## Interim accreditation process

In December 2020, NESA developed a process for providers to seek accreditation of certain courses for an interim period of up to 31 July 2021. Expressions of interest for interim accreditation are being accepted for courses in the 'Delivery and assessment of NSW Curriculum/Early Years Learning Framework (as applicable)' priority area and the 'Students/children with disability' priority area.

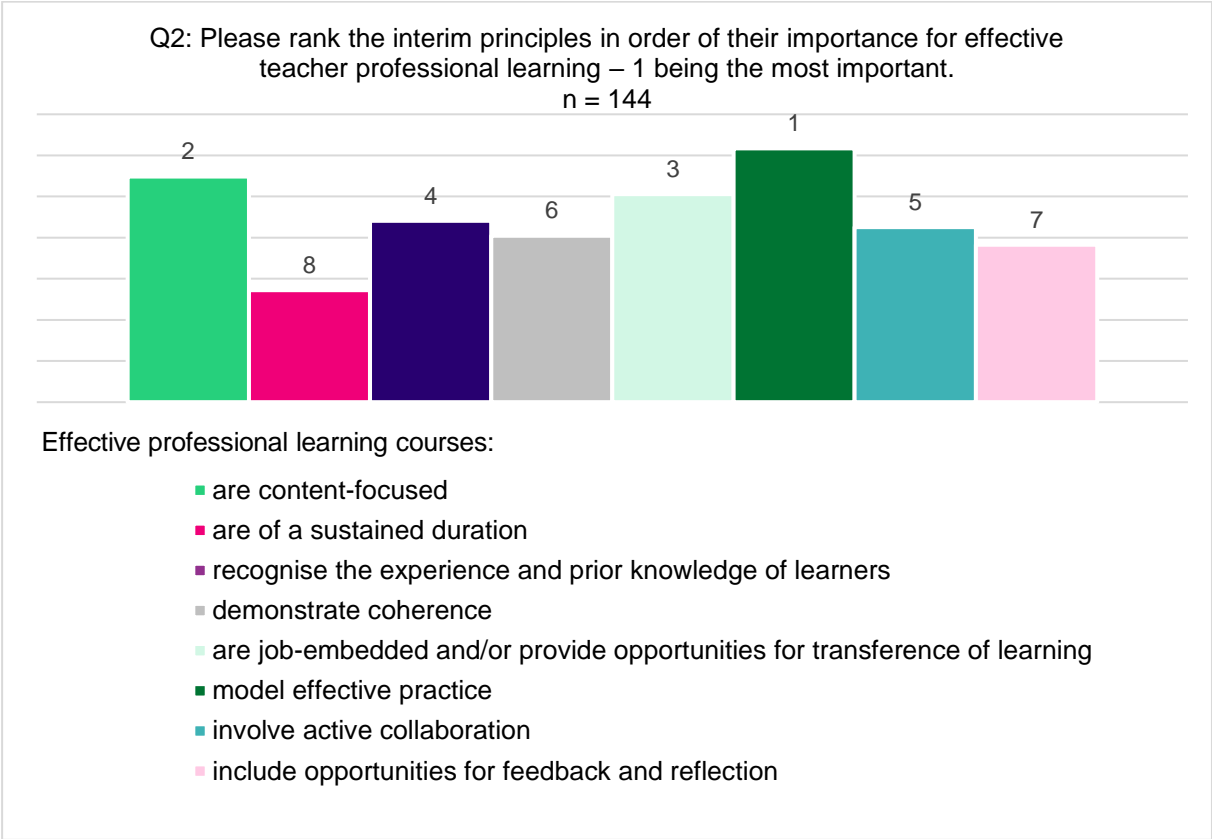
To be eligible for interim accreditation, a course must meet the interim principles of effective professional learning.

The interim accreditation process enables a continued, albeit limited, supply of NESA Accredited PD for teachers to access while the final application and assessment processes are being developed and refined by NESA. The process also affords PD providers the opportunity to engage with the interim principles in the context of their own courses. By 11 March 2021, over 190 providers had submitted an application for interim accreditation of a course/s and more than 840 courses had been granted interim accreditation.

## Principles of Effective Professional Learning

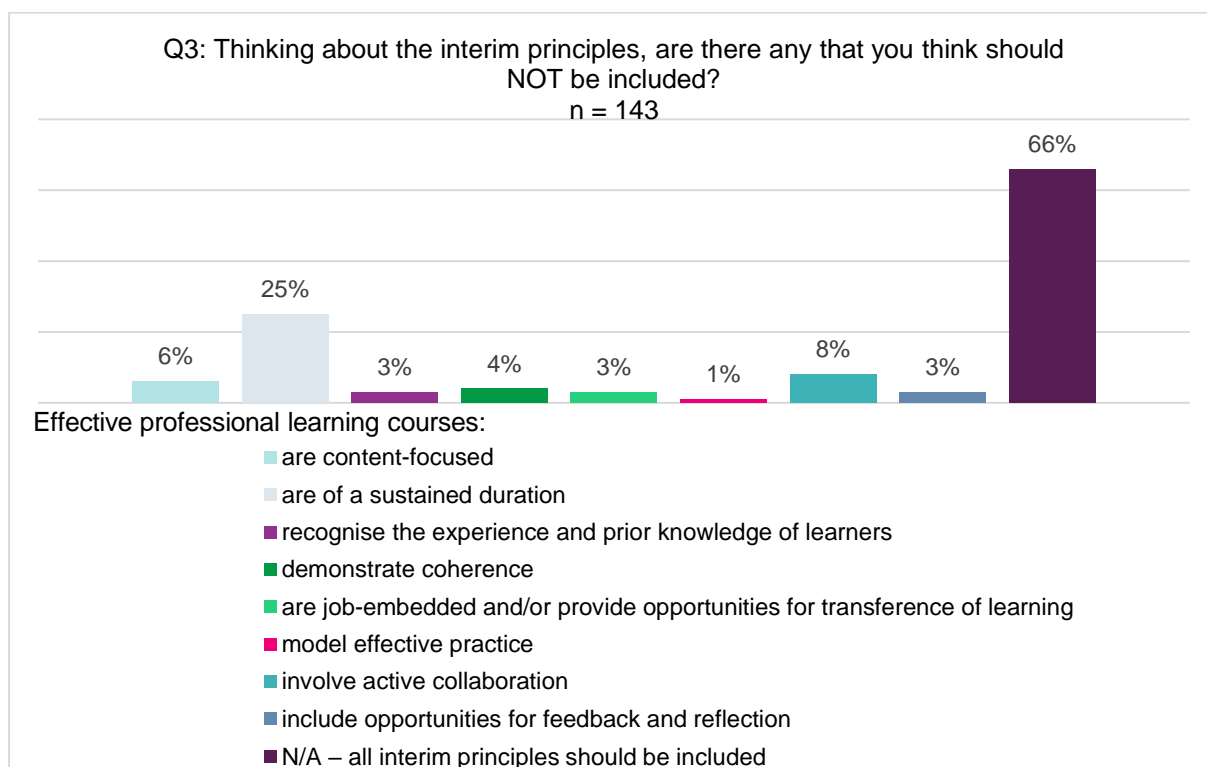
In the survey, providers were asked to rank the interim principles of effective professional learning on order of importance, 1 being the most important. Of the 8 interim principles, survey respondents consider modelling effective practice to be the most important principle of effective professional learning. 46% of respondents ranked courses needing to be of sustained duration as the least important principle.

**Figure 1: Ranking interim principles of effective professional learning**



Survey respondents were also asked to consider whether any of the interim principles should not be included. As shown in figure 2, 66% of respondents indicated that all of the interim principles should be included. Consistent with responses to question 2, where a course being of a sustained duration was considered the least important principle, 25% of respondents indicated that this principle should not be included in the final set of principles of effective professional learning.

**Figure 2: Ranking interim principles of effective professional learning**



When providing reasons for identifying specific principles that should not be included (question 4), the most common themes arising related to the following principles:

**Sustained duration:**

- PD does not need to be of a sustained duration in order to be effective and high-quality, particularly for courses focused on acquiring knowledge.
- Many teachers value point-of-need short courses and can be trusted to apply their professional judgement in determining that a short course meets their individual needs.
- The required duration would depend on the experience of the teacher. Experienced teachers may only need a point-of-need short course to refresh/top up information/skills, while early career teachers may need something more in-depth over time. The principles need to allow for both.
- Longer courses require a bigger time commitment from already time-poor teachers, including in relation to post-course activities and reflection. Long courses also take teachers out of the classroom for longer.
- Longer courses are more expensive for teachers and may not be feasible for providers who deliver free courses.

**Content-focused:**

- Too much focus on content raises questions about how to accommodate general capabilities or knowledge/skills that aren't specific to a subject/curriculum area. Skills-based PD may have little 'content'.
- Need to develop pedagogy/practice or teachers will struggle to apply their learning to their class. Some believe pedagogy is more important than content.

**Involve active collaboration:**

- Effective PD can be independent and self-reflective. Some aspects of teaching don't involve collaboration.

- Active collaboration is not always possible or relevant with online learning.
- In small schools, or where there is only one teacher in a subject area, active collaboration is not always easy or possible.

There were limited comments on the number of principles. Some providers suggested that there are too many principles and that requiring a course to meet all 8 principles would be a lot of work for providers and would not necessarily guarantee that the PD is effective.

In addition to feedback on whether any of the interim principles should not be included, respondents were asked to identify any principles they felt should be included. It should be noted that only the interim principles were published and available to providers at the time of the survey and the criteria for each priority area are under development. A number of suggestions for new principles will be addressed in the criteria for the relevant priority area. The two most common examples of this were that the principles should:

- require courses to be evidence-based and/or have evidence that they positively impact student learning outcomes; and
- include particular course content, such as general pedagogy and student wellbeing.

Some less common themes in the suggestions for additional principles were that PD courses:

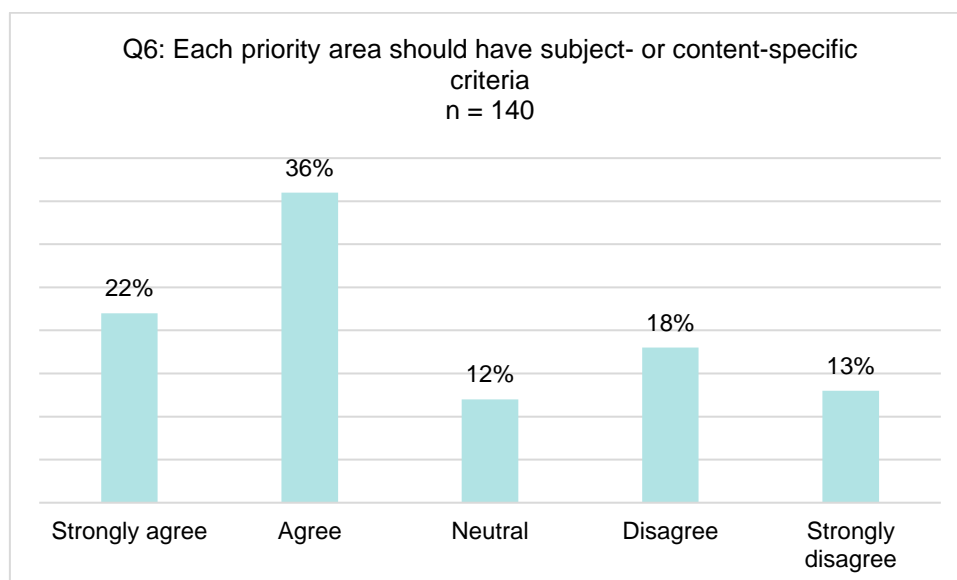
- need to be specific to the context of teachers/schools; and
- need to support sustainable change in teachers' practice.

## Priority Area Criteria

To ensure that teachers' mandatory PD meets agreed standards, individual courses in the priority areas must meet specific criteria published by NESAs. To support development of the criteria, feedback was sought on what providers would find most useful when designing and/or reviewing their existing course offerings in a priority area/s.

Almost 60% of providers either agree or strongly agree that subject- or content-specific criteria should apply to each priority area.

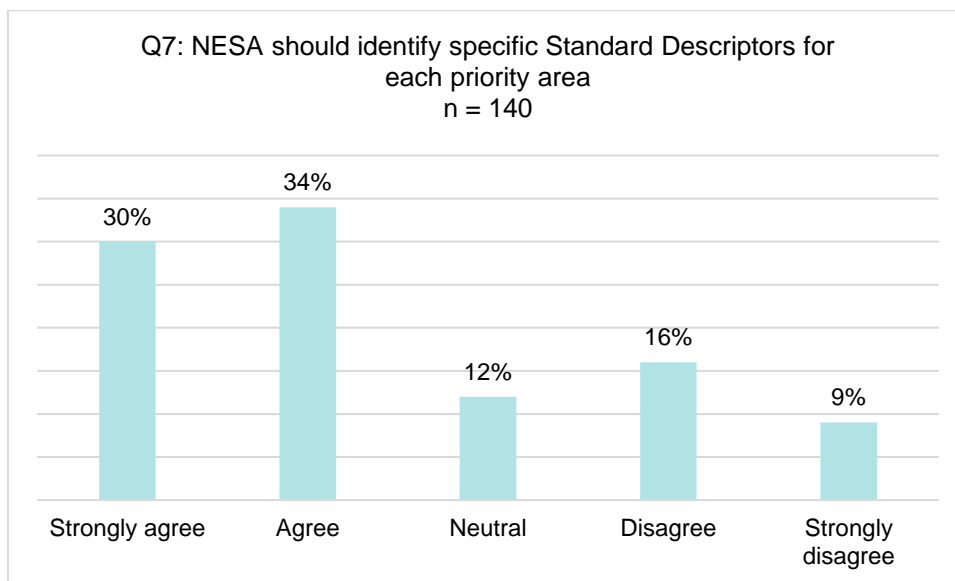
**Figure 3: Subject-/content-specific criteria**



While responses to question 7 indicate that only 64% of providers either agree or strongly

agree that NESAs should specify the Standard Descriptors relevant to each priority area, qualitative data captured in response to questions on supporting implementation suggest that overall support for this approach may be stronger than indicated by the responses to question 7.

**Figure 4: Specifying Standard Descriptors for each priority area**



## Supporting Implementation

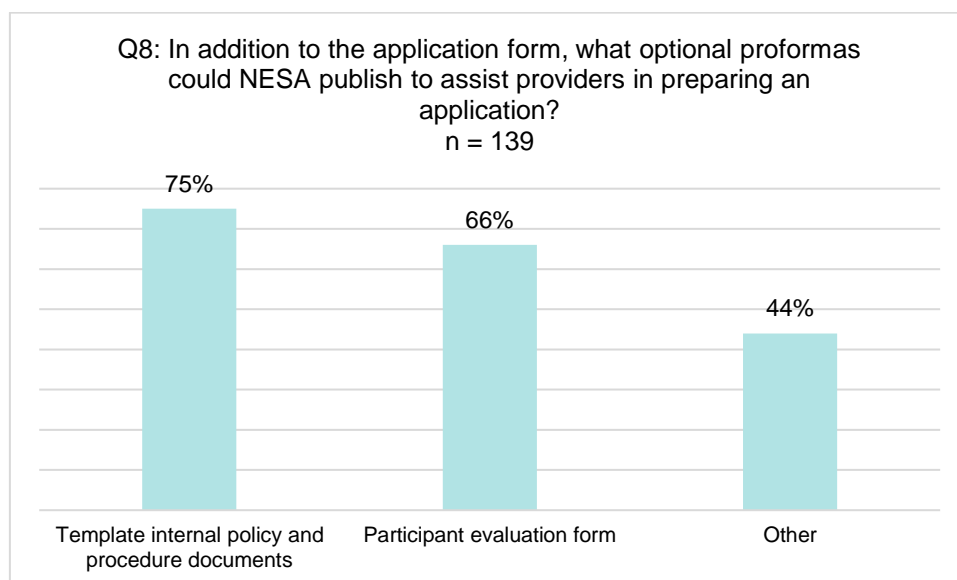
Providers' feedback was sought in relation to what support and engagement opportunities they would value as NESAs implement the new requirements.

Providers were asked to consider the requirements listed below when responding to question 8.

Providers need to submit evidence of the following:

1. course presenters have relevant qualifications and/or experience
2. NESAs PD provider survey - New Requirements for NESAs Accredited PD – February 2021
3. policies and/or procedures to provide quality assurance, including continuous improvement and evaluation of courses
4. evidence of recent delivery of PD to teachers that demonstrates a positive impact on teacher practice and/or student learning
5. current, accurate and secure administrative and record management systems
6. appropriate and ethical strategies for marketing and advertising PD products and delivery of services
7. current insurance cover to conduct PD activities
8. where a partnership exists, a written agreement in place noting that the provider is responsible for maintaining the accreditation criteria.

**Figure 5: Proformas required**



The most commonly cited examples of other templates that respondents would find useful in developing their application include:

- examples of successful applications
- application checklist
- participant evaluation form that providers can tailor to their needs
- session plan/course design form and presenter's notes.

There was overwhelming interest in information sessions, with 96% of respondents agreeing that NESA should run sessions for providers on the new requirements (question 9). Many Suggestions and feedback relating to information sessions and support for providers was captured in free-text responses to questions 8, 10 and 12. Overall, and in addition to the application proformas, respondents would value online or video training sessions as well as published guidelines and advice on meeting the application requirements of Section 4.1 of the new Policy. 13 respondents also expressed interest in receiving individualised support and feedback from NESA as they develop applications.

In addition to publishing application templates and delivering information sessions, NESA is working collaboratively with key stakeholders to establish processes for assessing the quality of courses. When asked if they would be interested in participating in NESA's benchmarking/assessment moderation activities to inform development of the application and assessment processes, 68% providers answered yes.

Of the 154 respondents, 96 provided additional feedback at the end of the survey. General themes from the responses have been summarised below. Themes that were raised in 2 or more responses include:

- The sudden cancellation of NESA Registered PD had a negative financial impact on providers and devalued teachers and the PD that providers offer (12 respondents).
- Leadership courses should be NESA Accredited not Elective PD (12 respondents).
- Accredited PD should include courses delivered by museums (8 respondents).
- Providers are supportive of the new Policy, principles and requirements (8 respondents).
- More resources relating to the principles of effective professional learning, the priority area criteria and the application process should be developed (5 respondents).

- Early Childhood Teachers require special consideration with regard to duration and content (4 respondents).
- Providers who were previously endorsed to deliver NESAs Registered PD should be Authorised Providers under the Policy with authority to accredit their own courses, and all previously NESAs Registered PD should be transferred as NESAs Accredited PD (4 respondents).
- A timeline and implementation details should be published (4 respondents).
- The four identified priority areas are too narrow (3 respondents).
- Regional schools need access to quality, contextually appropriate and free PD delivered in-person (2 respondents).
- Additional priority areas should be added. Suggestions included: teacher well-being and child protection and legislative requirements, specific pedagogy, indigenous education, eating disorders, IT and ICT (2 respondents).
- The application process should be simplified and NESAs should open applications now as the delay in accepting applications is causing confusion (2 respondents).
- Comments regarding interim accreditation requirements (2 respondents).

## Next steps

Findings from the survey, together with feedback provided during consultation with key stakeholders, is being used to refine the principles of effective professional learning and develop criteria, application and assessment processes and resources to support providers to apply for accreditation of courses as NESAs Accredited PD.

When the principles, criteria and application processes have been established, NESAs will deliver information sessions on the new requirements for providers. Support materials and resources will be developed and published on the NESAs website. System development of the electronic Teacher Accreditation Management System (eTAMS) is also underway to support the new process.

NESAs aims to implement new processes for applying for accreditation of NESAs Accredited PD in the second half of 2021.