

Applying for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher Accreditation Procedure

Information for principals, early childhood service directors and employers

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Information for principals, service directors and employers

NESA oversees the system of accreditation and recognition of teachers' professional capacity against the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers \(the Standards\)](#) which includes the requirements and processes for achieving HALT accreditation. The functions of NESA do not extend to industrial matters concerning teachers, such as the salaries or employment conditions of teachers.

This document has information on the role of principals, service directors and employers in the higher levels of accreditation application process and should be read in conjunction with the employer's internal procedures.

Principals and service directors should also read the [Principal/Service Director's Guide - HALT Accreditation](#) to help them provide the best support to HALT applicants.

What is Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher accreditation?

Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation is a voluntary national certification which recognises teaching practice aligned with [the Standards](#) at the relevant HALT career stage.

Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers are highly effective, skilled practitioners with in-depth knowledge of subject and NSW curriculum/Early Years Learning Framework content. They keep abreast of the latest developments in their fields of expertise and work collaboratively to improve not only their own practice, but the practice of their colleagues.

HALT accreditation recognises and promotes the development of collaborative practice and supports teachers to continually reflect upon and improve their practice and the practice of colleagues.

Achieving HALT accreditation requires teachers to demonstrate teaching practice at the relevant career stage, and the impact of that practice on students/children and their colleagues' practice over time.

Employers must have internal procedures for accreditation

Employers must have internal procedures for implementing NESA's requirements for HALT accreditation in their schools/services and must provide all teachers with a copy/access to all relevant procedures,

Who is covered by the internal procedures?

An employer's internal procedures for implementing NESA's requirements for HALT accreditation apply to:

- principals
- service directors, or equivalent
- casual, part-time and full-time teachers
- non-school/service based teachers
- teachers regularly working in the school/service placed by a third party (eg employment agency).

What must the procedures cover?

The employer's internal procedures must include processes to support principals/service directors to fulfil their responsibility as set out in the [NSW Teacher Accreditation Manual](#) (TA Manual) and this procedure.

HALT applicants must continue to maintain their current teacher accreditation while they are developing their HALT application. The employer's internal procedure must include [processes to support applicants' maintenance of Proficient Teacher accreditation](#).

Overview of HALT accreditation

Demonstration of practice at the higher levels

Applying for HALT accreditation involves demonstration of teaching practice aligned to the [Highly Accomplished](#) or [Lead Teacher](#) level of the Standards.

To achieve HALT accreditation, applicants must provide evidence of their practice that demonstrates 20 Standard Descriptors at Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher level, of which:

- 14 Standard Descriptors are mandated by NESAs; and
- 6 Standard Descriptors are their own choice.

Mandated Standard Descriptors

The 14 mandated Standard Descriptors are informed by evidence-based research as the most reliable indicators for assessing practice at the higher levels of the Standards. The selection of the mandated Standard Descriptors is based on a range of considerations to:

- represent the 7 Standards in proportion to its distribution across the 3 domains of teaching
- cater for the different contexts of teachers in early childhood, primary and secondary settings
- cover government priority areas for teachers.

Teachers will choose the remaining 6 Standard Descriptors that reflect their context, role and area of specialty.

A list of the mandated Standard Descriptors for the relevant career stage of HALT is available on our [website](#).

A modular approach with guided support



The HALT application process takes a modular approach which includes:

- two modules where applicants develop evidence to demonstrate their practice and impact aligned to 20 Standard Descriptors at the relevant HALT level
- a Site Visit to verify the applicant's practice
- if required, a chance to revise any Standard Descriptors not demonstrated following completion of the 2 modules.

Applicants receive guided support in each module. This includes:

- feedback from NESAs-trained HALT Assessors following assessment of their evidence
- feedback from the External Assessor following a Site Visit
- support through regular workshops offered by NESAs.

Supporting teachers to achieve HALT accreditation

Support from employers, principals and service directors is vital

Principals/service directors have several key roles and responsibilities in the HALT accreditation process for teachers in their school/service.

Employers play an important role in supporting principals/service directors and applicants to meet the requirements for HALT accreditation.

The responsibilities of principals/service directors and/or employers include:

- providing a supportive environment for teachers applying for HALT accreditation
- participating in initial discussions with the teacher about their intention and readiness to apply for HALT accreditation
- verifying a teacher meets the eligibility criteria in the principal/service director's NESAs online account
- verifying a teacher's individual contribution to a collaborative initiative, if applicable
- supporting applicants through a NESAs recognised program, if applicable
- accommodating Site Visits for HALT applicants and participating in a 30-minute structured interview with the External Assessor.

Provide a supportive environment

Employers and principals/service directors play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining a supportive professional environment for HALT applicants.

To create a supportive environment for HALT applicants:

- consider how organisational structures, roles and responsibilities in the school/service can support the professional growth of teachers and provide opportunities for teachers to engage in the levels of practice identified by the Standards for HALT accreditation
- read the [Principal/Service Director Guide - HALT Accreditation](#) for detailed information and advice on how you can actively support teachers to apply for HALT accreditation
- attend a NESAs [information session](#) for principals/service directors and employers on supporting HALT applicants.

Discuss readiness with the applicant

Discuss with the teacher their intention and readiness to apply for HALT accreditation and the level of accreditation appropriate for them.

Refer to the [Principal/Service Director Guide - HALT Accreditation](#) to understand the professional capabilities of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers.

When you discuss with the teacher their readiness to apply for HALT accreditation, you should:

- encourage them to reflect on their practice against the Standards for either Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher and select the appropriate level
- identify areas within the Standards where teaching practice may require further development
- encourage and support the teacher to attend a [NESA workshop](#) for HALT applicants, or complete the self-paced HALT Applicant online course on [NESA Learning](#).

Verify applicant's eligibility

Principals/service directors have a role to verify the applicant's eligibility to apply.

To be eligible to apply for HALT accreditation, applicants must be:

- an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- accredited at Proficient Teacher or above
- assessed as satisfactory in two of their most recent annual performance assessments (if applying for Highly Accomplished Teacher) or three annual performance assessments (if applying for Lead Teacher).

The teacher must open a HALT application in their [NESA online account \(eTAMS\)](#) and then complete the mandatory HALT Orientation Course. Once they have done this, you will be notified in your NESA online account (eTAMS) to verify:

- that they have discussed with you their intention to apply and
- their eligibility.

While the principal/service director's advice and support is important to the teacher throughout the application process, the principal/service director's approval is not required for a teacher to open an application. A teacher may decide to apply for HALT accreditation independent of any advice.

Casual teachers and early childhood teachers

Casual or part-time teachers who work across several schools/services will need to nominate the principal/service director of one school/service to verify their eligibility.

If there is no service director accredited at Proficient Teacher level or above in an early childhood service, [contact NESA](#) for further advice.

Verify a teacher's contribution in a collaborative initiative

For one module only, applicants who have engaged in a collaborative project or initiative may submit their evidence that is the result of working collaboratively for assessment of up to 10 nominated Standard Descriptors at the relevant level of the HALT Standards.

While principals/service directors and employers have no responsibility for assessing the collaborative evidence, they have an important role in verifying the individual applicant's contribution to the collaborative initiative or project.

Applicants working together on the same project or initiative:

- can submit the same or similar documentary evidence
- must write their own structured narrative for each set of evidence in their NESA online account (eTAMS)

- must complete the NESAs collaborative evidence template to write an individual reflective statement about the project or initiative
- must seek verification of their contribution to the initiative or project from their principal/service director, employer, or their delegate.

Refer to the [Principal/Service Director Guide - HALT Accreditation](#) for more information on how you can verify an applicant's collaborative evidence.

More information on what applicants must include when they submit collaborative evidence is available on the [NESAs website](#).

Support applicants through a NESAs recognised program

What is a NESAs recognised program?

NESAs recognised programs are professional learning programs that are approved by NESAs to support teachers to fully demonstrate Standard Descriptors at the Highly Accomplished level.

HALT applicants can complete a NESAs recognised program and be verified for successfully demonstrating between 6 and 10 Standard Descriptors at the Highly Accomplished level.

What qualifies for a NESAs recognised program?

Applications for recognition of professional development programs are made directly to NESAs and must:

- be developed by or in partnership with employers, a school/early childhood service and/or sector/system
- support teachers to fully demonstrate 6 – 10 nominated Standard Descriptors at the Highly Accomplished Teacher level
- provide explicit opportunities for participants to contribute to their colleagues' learning to improve practice and improve student outcomes
- include a NESAs trained program manager to verify participants' demonstration of the nominated Standard Descriptors.

How does participating in a NESAs recognised program benefit HALT applicants?

Supporting teachers through a NESAs recognised program provides applicants with the opportunity to:

- develop and demonstrate their practice and impact aligned with the Highly Accomplished Standards
- streamline their application and expedite their achievement of HALT accreditation as it removes the need for participants to duplicate evidence for their application.

How to apply for a NESAs recognised program

Applications for approval of a NESAs recognised program should be made directly to NESAs.

More information on the specific requirements for a NESAs recognised program and how to submit an application is on the website.

Once approved, NESAs recognised programs will be listed on the [NESAs website](#). Applicants must contact their employers/schools/services/organisations directly for access to these programs.

Accommodate and participate in a Site Visit

Purpose of a Site Visit

The Site Visit provides an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate nominated Standard Descriptors through teaching and, where relevant, non-teaching sessions.

The Site Visit process

Following the completion of Module 1, a HALT applicant must request and complete a Site Visit at their school/service where they have taught for a sustained period.

A Site Visit can be either completed onsite or through a recorded observation. The requirements for both options are the same.

NESA will organise an External Assessor to conduct the Site Visit. The External Assessor is trained by NESA to provide an independent, objective review of the applicant's teaching practice against the Standards at the nominated career stage.

During the Site Visit, the External Assessor:

- observes three sessions of practice, two of which must be of the applicant teaching students/children. All the sessions must occur on the same day.
- has a professional discussion with the applicant to provide feedback on the observation of their practice aligned to the nominated Standard Descriptors
- conducts a structured interview of up to 30 minutes with the applicant's principal/service director.

Principal/service director's role in a Site Visit

The role of the principal/service director for the Site Visit includes:

- supporting the teacher's plan for their Site Visit and schedule for the day
- participating in a 30-minute structured interview with the External Assessor during the Site Visit
- providing evaluative comments about the applicant's performance and practice against the Standards to the External Assessor.

How should principals/service directors prepare for the structured interview?

Principals/service directors should review the [interview questions](#) to prepare for the discussion.

In the case of a recorded observation, the External Assessor will contact the principal/service director to arrange a suitable time within 48 hours of the External Assessor's review of the Recorded Observation to complete the interview.

Following the Site Visit, the External Assessor will provide the applicant with a Site Visit report, which includes a summary of the structured interview with the principal/service director.

NESA makes the accreditation decision

NESA will make the accreditation decision based on:

- assessment of the applicant's evidence modules, as documented in the HALT Module Report(s);
- demonstration of nominated Standard Descriptors, as verified by the program manager of a NESA recognised program (if applicable);

- the External Assessor's Site Visit Report.

The accreditation decision is made by NESAs within 28 days of the teacher submitting their second module (or within 28 days of their revisions, if applicable).

If the teacher's application is successful, the teacher and the employer will be notified of the accreditation decision.

If NESAs accredits the teacher at Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher, NESAs will issue a certificate to them and they will start their first maintenance period.

Recognition and support

We encourage you to recognise and share the teacher's achievement of HALT accreditation within your school/service to cultivate a culture of quality teaching and professional excellence.

The teacher will now begin to maintain accreditation at Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher. You will need to provide:

- continued access to opportunities for the teacher to participate in professional activities aligned with their level of accreditation
- opportunities for the teacher to make significant contributions to the professional learning of other teachers and colleagues in the school/service.

Refer to the [Maintaining HALT Accreditation Procedures for Principals, Service Directors and Employers](#) for more information on your role and responsibility to support a teacher maintaining HALT accreditation.

Quality assurance of accreditation decisions

NESAs has quality assurance processes in place to ensure HALT accreditation assessments and decisions are rigorous, valid and nationally credible. These include:

- monitoring the assessment of HALT modules on an ongoing basis as HALT Assessors and External Assessors complete them
- addressing any identified issues by providing relevant feedback and training to HALT Assessors and/or External Assessors to ensure the assessments of HALT applications are valid, reliable and are consistent with the Standards at the higher levels
- submitting evidence developed by HALT applicants for national moderation as requested by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in line with the national Framework for the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers
- implementing quality assurance processes with NESAs recognised program providers to assure the programs are aligned with the HALT Standards. For instance, NESAs may request individual examples of the evidence that has been developed to determine how impact is evaluated. NESAs will also verify if the program coherence is aligned with the program application and will provide feedback on any areas for development
- collecting summary data on assessment and accreditation decisions to evaluate, review and improve the accreditation processes, and providing such data to AITSL if requested.

‘What if’ scenarios for principals/service directors/employers

What if I think the teacher is not a suitable HALT applicant?

Discuss areas for professional development and encourage the teacher to reflect on their practice against the HALT Standard Descriptors. Provide opportunities for the teacher to develop their practice and collaborate with colleagues.

Your advice and support is important to the teacher throughout the application process.

However, opening a HALT application does not require a principal/service director’s approval. A teacher may decide to apply for HALT accreditation independent of any advice.

What if I am a principal/service director applying for HALT?

You should contact NESA for advice on who is appropriate to complete the following:

- verification of your eligibility as an applicant
- interview with the External Assessor during the Site Visit.

What if I cannot verify the applicant’s contribution to the collaborative initiative?

If you are not the most appropriate person to verify the applicant’s contribution, you can delegate the responsibility to another appropriate teacher who is accredited at Proficient Teacher or above.

If you do not agree with the applicant’s reflective statement, discuss with the teacher to make necessary changes to the statement and/or their evidence before they submit the evidence.

What if my availability changes on the day of the Site Visit?

You must contact NESA at HALenquiry@nesa.nsw.edu.au as soon as practical to make alternative arrangements for your interview. You will need to provide contact details and alternative times to be sent to the External Assessor so that they can contact you by phone. Please note that the alternative interview time needs to be within 48 hours of the day of the Site Visit.

What if the teacher is unsuccessful at achieving Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher accreditation?

We encourage you to be supportive of the teacher and to discuss with them:

- career path planning and direction
- their qualities, and the advice provided by the HALT Assessors in the module reports
- future accreditation and professional opportunities.

The teacher will remain at their current accredited level. They will need to continue to meet the relevant maintenance requirements and timeframes, with the knowledge they may reapply for HALT accreditation at any time.

The teacher may decide to apply to NESA for an [internal review](#) of a decision to not accredit them.

If they are not satisfied with the outcome of the internal review, they can apply to NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) for a review of NESAs decision to not accredit them.

Additional Resources

Guides

[Principal/Service Director Guide - HALT Accreditation](#)

This document has information on the role of principals and service directors in the higher levels of accreditation application process.

[Site Visit Guide – Applicants](#)

This guide outlines planning, preparing and running a Site Visit to meet the requirements for Highly Accomplished Teacher or Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation.

[Site Visit Guide – External Assessors](#)

This document has information on the role and responsibilities of an External Assessor in the higher levels of accreditation application process.

Fillable forms

[Site Visit – recorded observation schedule template](#)

[Site Visit – on site observation schedule template](#)

[Site Visit session plan template](#)

[Site Visit professional discussion notes template](#)

Other

[Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#)

NSW Education Standards Authority

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