



Aligning Quality Teaching Rounds with the National School Improvement Tool

This document demonstrates the alignment of Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) and the Quality Teaching Model with the nine domains of the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT) and provides related evaluation instruments for schools. It includes both a summary and detailed mapping.

The NSIT was developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research for the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2012).

QTR is a rigorously-tested low-cost approach to professional development for teachers that has been shown to improve student outcomes, the quality of teaching, teacher morale and school culture. The approach is relevant to all teachers, regardless of their position, career stage, or subject area. In this way, QTR can play a major role in whole-of-school improvement.

The Quality Teaching Model, at the centre of QTR, builds a shared understanding of good pedagogy focused on the three dimensions of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance. The Quality Teaching Model provides a tool for systematic and collaborative analysis and refinement of practice.

NOTE: QTR is designed to support professional learning and is not to be used for the purpose of performance appraisal. While there may be some value in using deidentified school-level Quality Teaching data to demonstrate improvement over time, lesson codes should only be used with the explicit consent of teachers.

Summary 2
Detailed mapping 3
Definitions 12
Resources 12
References 12

Summary of Alignment between QTR and NSIT Domains

Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) and the Quality Teaching Model draw on a rich body of research about teaching that makes a difference for student outcomes. Targets for school improvement can be underpinned by the rigorous research-based approach of QTR, which involves teachers working with a shared understanding and language for addressing quality teaching as central driver of school improvement.
QTR engages teachers in systematically collecting and analysing data from classroom observations to improve individual and collective practice. Teachers and school leaders consider a wide range of data when considering the impact of QTR over time which can be used to identify areas for professional development in the school.
QTR fosters strong collegial culture in schools, underpinned by the expectation that all students are capable of great learning and all teachers are committed to continuous, high-impact professional development. Teachers engaged in QTR systematically analyse how quality learning environments are developed and maintained to promote student learning.
QTR is an initiative with broad impact, including improvements in student academic outcomes and teacher collaboration and self-efficacy. A cost-benefit analysis conducted by Deloitte Access Economics found QTR to be a low-cost, high-impact intervention.
QTR builds collective capacity for school improvement while enhancing teacher confidence at all career stages. Professional relationships are strengthened as teachers use the shared language of the Quality Teaching Model to collaboratively observe, analyse and improve practice. Shared facilitation of Rounds means all teachers take an active leadership role in their continuous professional development.
The Quality Teaching Model provides a clear, evidence-based pedagogical framework to analyse classroom and assessment practice that is applicable in all subject areas, grades, and school contexts. Using the shared language of the Model can help to maintain consistent teaching and learning expectations across the school. Teachers can immediately apply fresh insights from QTR to their delivery of the curriculum.
QTR provides opportunities for teachers to discuss how teaching and learning activities within their classroom meet the needs and interests of their students. Analysis and discussion of observed lessons, and teaching more broadly, enables teachers to identify ways pedagogy can be enhanced to ensure challenging learning experiences for all students.
QTR engages teachers in building their capacity for quality teaching using the evidence based Quality Teaching Model and processes that have been demonstrated to impact the quality of teaching and student outcomes. QTR provides opportunities to observe, analyse and discuss a broad range of pedagogical approaches in different subjects and grades.
QTR and Quality Teaching Model enable schools to clearly communicate their vision of effective teaching and learning to community partners in ways that ensure alignment of experiences, support and resources. Partnering with the Quality Teaching Academy and Teachers and Teaching Research Centre (TTRC) provides schools with support materials and intellectual resources to build networks focused on school improvement.

Mapping to the National School Improvement Tool

The following pages elaborate how engagement with QTR and the Quality Teaching Model can support schools' improvement efforts in alignment with the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT).

Column 1 uses wording directly from the specific NSIT domain.

Column 2 provides selected domain descriptors from the NSIT that align with QTR and the Quality Teaching Model.

Column 3 explains the alignment between QTR/the Quality Teaching Model and NSIT.

1. An explicit improvement agenda

Domain

Relevant Domain Descriptors

Alignment to QTR/the Model

- The school leadership team and/or governing body have established and are driving a strona improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice and expressed in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines
- the governing body, school principal and other school leaders are united, committed to and explicit about their core objective

 to improve learning outcomes for all students in the school
- school staff are united in their commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and to address obstacles to school-wide improvement
- the school communicates clearly that it expects all students to learn successfully and has high expectations for student attendance, engagement and outcomes.

Whole school engagement with Quality Teaching Rounds can help to unite staff in their commitment to working with and building an explicit school improvement agenda to improve student learning outcomes.

Rigorous research conducted by the University of Newcastle's Teachers and Teaching Research Centre demonstrates that this single initiative results in multiple, positive effects on school cultureⁱ, the quality of teachingⁱⁱ and student learning outcomesⁱⁱⁱ. Students, whose teachers participated in just one set (four days) of Quality Teaching Rounds, showed improvement in mathematics achievement by as much as 25% relative to a control group.

QTR empowers teachers across all subjects, grades and stages of their careers to improve pedagogy using the shared language of the Quality Teaching Model and tested protocols of QTR to generate focused, analytical discussions of classroom and assessment practices. Positive school culture, built through participation in QTR, helps schools in working together to remove obstacles to improvement.

At the core of QTR, the Quality Teaching Model provides conceptual clarity on what constitutes quality teaching^{IV}, with a focus on the three dimensions of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance. Working with this shared vision of quality teaching across a school contributes to improved student outcomes. For example, high expectations and student engagement are central concerns of QTR, together with broader attention to the intellectual rigour of lessons, the quality of the learning environment and the relevance of learning to students' lives.

By building a shared understanding of quality pedagogy, QTR not only focuses a school's improvement agenda, it also helps communicate that agenda effectively to parents, families, teachers and students, giving clear concepts and language for addressing teaching and learning.

2. Analysis and discussion of data

Domain

A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing. Data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement/regression over time; performances in comparison with similar schools; and, in the case of data from standardised tests. measures of growth across the years of school.

Relevant Domain Descriptors

- professional development is provided to build staff skills in analysing and interpreting data
- data are used in building a culture of self-evaluation and reflection across the school
- the school uses data to inform school-level decisions, interventions and initiatives.

Alignment to QTR/the Model

QTR does not directly engage teachers in school-wide analysis of student data. However, it engages professional learning communities in the systematic analysis and discussion of data derived from lesson observations and review of assessment items, including data on student learning, engagement, and behaviour.

Data generated through QTR also supports teachers in self-evaluation and reflection on the relationship between pedagogical practice (classroom practice and assessment practice) and student outcomes. The collaborative processes of QTR help build a culture of analysis and ongoing refinement of the school's improvement agenda.

Using the Quality Teaching Model to analyse and code classroom and assessment practice helps develop collective inquiry skills, such as gathering evidence and analysing impact.

QTR frequently produces insights about the quality of teaching and student learning in a school that can inform decisions about interventions and initiatives needed. Indeed, discussions about classroom and/or assessment practice often serve as a catalyst for identifying specific improvement initiatives. For example, teachers engaged in QTR might identify professional learning needs such as enhancing differentiation in classroom practice or embedding more higher order thinking in tasks.

Evaluation instruments (see Related Resources on page 12) together with standardised assessment and other student data can be used to provide school leaders with evidence of the impact of QTR on school and student outcomes.

3. A culture that promotes learning

Domain

Relevant Domain Descriptors

Alignment to QTR/the Model

- The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour.
- the school promotes and maintains an environment reflective of its high expectations that all students will learn successfully
- the staff of the school demonstrate an understanding of the importance of positive and caring relationships to successful learning, and work to build mutually respectful relationships across the school community
- the school appreciates and values students' varying cultural backgrounds and works to build the cultural competence of school staff.

Key premises underpinning the Quality Teaching Model and QTR are that every student is capable of successful learning and every teacher is capable of high-quality teaching.

One of the three dimensions of the Quality Teaching Model focuses on quality learning environments, recognising that positive and caring relationships with all students are foundational to their success.

The Quality Teaching Model highlights the need to consider diverse social and cultural groups when designing learning experiences. During QTR, teachers analyse and discuss ways to ensure the inclusion, engagement and full participation of students from varying social and cultural backgrounds and how to ensure classroom environments are safe, respectful, tolerant and inclusive while also promoting intellectual rigour and high expectations.

QTR helps build a strong collegial culture among teachers and school leaders through collaborative work on improving teaching and learning throughout the school. QTR protocols enable teachers to observe and analyse their colleagues' lessons in ways that build mutual trust and support. Positive and sustainable relationships among staff are enhanced, including when teachers from different grades and/or subjects and at different career stages vvi come together, all with a focus on improving the learning outcomes and wellbeing of students.

Engagement in QTR can help teachers and leaders to align school improvement goals with this initiative as well as identify other focus areas for professional development.

4. Targeted use of school resources

Domain

The school applies its resources (staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. It has schoolwide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.

Relevant Domain Descriptors

- in its use of discretionary school funds, the school gives priority to initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for students
- the school budget aligns local and system priorities.

Alignment to QTR/the Model

Getting started with QTR requires as little as engaging two teachers or leaders from a school in a two-day workshop. The QTR workshop equips these two teachers to initiate QTR in the school and lead the process as it ripples out to the entire school staff over time. Funding teacher release for participation in QTR is the only other cost to schools.

A PLC for QTR generally consists of four teachers who engage in four days of inschool Rounds. Schools can make decisions about the number of PLCs they engage each year. This could involve one or multiple PLCs per year, depending on the resources available and casual relief required.

Powerfully, this one initiative can deliver multiple positive effects for schools. Research shows that QTR:

- improves the quality of teachingⁱⁱ
- significantly increases student achievementⁱⁱⁱ
- positively affects teacher morale^{vii}
- enhances school cultureⁱ
- builds teacher confidence^v
- increases collegialityi.

Given that QTR is relevant to every grade and subject, it can be used to target student and cohort learning needs with the flexibly to embed quality teaching in accordance with school-wide policies and aspirations.

QTR is a high-impact, low-cost initiative as determined by <u>Deloitte Access Economics</u> with multiple benefits for schools.

5. An expert teaching team

Domain

Relevant Domain Descriptors

Alignment to QTR/the Model

- The school has found ways to build a school-wide, professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroombased learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.
- the leadership team has strategies in place to assist teachers to continue to develop and share deep understandings of how students learn subjects/ content, including pre-requisite skills and knowledge, common student misunderstandings and errors, learning difficulties and effective interventions
- teachers in the school are experts in the fields in which they teach, have high levels of confidence in teaching in those fields and are eager to expand their subject knowledge to learn how to improve on their current teaching practices
- the school expects all teachers to be highly committed to the continuous improvement of their own teaching and to be focused on the development of knowledge and skills required to improve student learning
- the principal and other school leaders lead and model professional learning in the school
- school leaders ensure that opportunities are created for teachers to work together and to learn from each other's practices, including through online professional communities
- the school works to ensure the continuity of a culture of collaboration and teamwork over time across cohorts of teachers.

QTR actively engages teachers in observation, analysis and discussion of pedagogy to support the development of a culture of continuous professional learning. The concepts and language of the Quality Teaching Model assist teachers to develop shared understanding of teaching practice and how to improve it across all year levels and subject areas.

Through close collaboration among teachers, QTR helps develop collective responsibility for student learning. The processes of QTR provide opportunities for all participants to take a leadership role in supporting the professional learning of their colleagues. Working together in PLCs (in person or online), teachers learn from each other's practice and insights, continuously developing their knowledge and skills to improve student learning.

Engagement in QTR not only demonstrates commitment to continuous improvement of teaching (classroom practice and assessment practice), it provides clear frameworks and processes to guide improvement efforts.

The Quality Teaching Model clarifies what quality teaching looks like and provides specific suggestions for enhancing practice. The Quality Teaching Model's holistic representation of quality teaching enables teachers from all areas of a school to collaboratively observe, analyse and discuss lessons during QTR with a clear focus on improvement.

School leaders are encouraged to be active members of QTR PLCs, even modelling the process by being the first to host a lesson observation. At the same time, QTR protocols flatten power hierarchies through turn-taking, reciprocity and active contribution to discussions using the shared language of the Quality Teaching Model.

Research has demonstrated that participation in QTR improves teachers' confidence in their teaching across all career stages, enhances their collegial relationships and enables them to pass on their teaching expertise over time and across cohorts of colleagues vi.

6. Systematic curriculum delivery

Domain

The school has a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan, within which evidencebased teaching practices are embedded, and to which assessment and reporting procedures are aligned, has been developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum or other approved curriculum and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared

with parents and families.

Relevant Domain Descriptors

- staff of the school are familiar with and work within the school's shared curriculum expectations
- the curriculum is used as a basis for ongoing staff discussions about the best ways to maximise student learning and wellbeing
- the school curriculum includes a strong focus on the development of cross-curricular skills and attributes such as literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology capability, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical behaviour and intercultural understanding
- a priority is given to constructing learning experiences that are accessible, engaging and challenging for all students, including those with particular needs
- the school places a priority on making the curriculum locally relevant and adopts a strengthsbased approach to recognising, valuing and building on students' existing knowledge and skills
- assessment processes are aligned with the curriculum and are designed to clarify learning intentions, establish where individual students are in their learning, diagnose details of student learning (eg, gaps in knowledge and understanding), and to monitor learning progress across the years of school
- professional development is provided to build staff skills in curriculum planning and development.

Alignment to QTR/the Model

QTR focuses on quality teaching for delivery of the Australian Curriculum and other approved curriculum. Participants from all grades and subject areas can apply their learning from engagement with the Quality Teaching Model and QTR to their delivery of the curriculum. The specific syllabuses/content addressed during QTR will vary according to the composition of each PLC (usually comprised of teachers from different parts of a school) and the lessons teachers select to share.

Analysis and discussion of the viewed lessons using the Quality Teaching Model in PLCs helps create consistent teaching and learning expectations to:

- draw attention to cross-curricular skills and attributes
- provide accessible, engaging and challenging learning experiences for all students
- ensure curriculum is connected to students' experiences and builds on existing knowledge and skills
- ensure alignment of assessment processes with learning experiences and student learning needs
- build staff skills in curriculum planning and development
- identify key concepts and explain relationships among those concepts in all learning experiences.

7. Differentiated teaching and learning

Domain

Relevant Domain Descriptors

Alignment to QTR/the Model

The school places a high priority on ensuring that, in their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including high-achieving students. Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.

- teaching practices across the school reflect the belief that, although students are at different stages in their learning and may be progressing at different rates, all students are capable of learning successfully if motivated and given appropriate learning opportunities and necessary support
- teachers work at understanding where students are in their learning – including their current knowledge, skills, learning difficulties and misunderstandings – to identify starting points for teaching
- teachers work to ensure
 that all students including
 high-achieving students –
 are appropriately engaged,
 challenged and extended by
 designing classroom activities to
 meet students' learning needs,
 levels of readiness, interests,
 aspirations and motivations.

QTR provides opportunities for teachers to engage in collaborative discussions, working from the premise that all students are capable of learning successfully when high expectations are accompanied by necessary supports.

QTR provides a systematic way for teachers to examine how they provide intellectually challenging lessons and high expectations that are pitched at the right level based on students' needs and readiness.

Teachers can also use the Quality
Teaching Assessment Practice Guide, both
independently and in collaboration with
colleagues, to structure planning, reflection,
and analysis of tasks to build capacity for
quality assessment practice.

During QTR, teachers extend their understanding of students' current needs and interests which they use to design meaningful and appropriate learning experiences. Post participation in QTR, teachers report having higher expectations of their students and feeling better able to adapt lessons to student readiness and need.

8. Effective pedagogical practices

Domain

The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods –

including explicit instruction -

to maximise student learning.

Relevant Domain Descriptors

- the school leadership team keeps abreast of research on effective teaching practices
- school leaders, including the principal, spend time working with teachers, providing feedback on teaching and, where appropriate, modelling effective teaching strategies
- school leaders actively promote a range of evidence-based teaching strategies, including;
- creating classroom and applied learning environments in which all students are engaged, challenged, feel safe to take risks and are supported to learn
- connecting new material to past learning and assisting students to see the continuity in their learning over time
- demonstrating explicitly what students are to do, discussing this with students, and then questioning and checking that learning is occurring
- promoting deep learning by emphasising underlying principles, concepts and big ideas that are developed over time
- setting high expectations for every student's progress and ambitious targets for improving classroom performances
- working to build students' beliefs in their own capacities to learn successfully and their understanding of the relationship between effort and success
- routinely evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and using these evaluations to make adjustments to practice
- school leaders provide teachers with ongoing detailed feedback on their classroom practices.

Alignment to QTR/the Model

Rigorous research has demonstrated that participation in QTR improves both the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. The Quality Teaching Model, at the core of QTR, draws on decades of evidence on highly effective teaching practice to both honour the complexity of teaching and distil the essence of good practice in ways teachers find accessible and valuable ...

The Quality Teaching Model is operationalised through the collaborative processes of QTR, which provide structured opportunities for school leaders and teachers to observe, analyse and discuss classroom and assessment practice throughout a school.

The Quality Teaching Model provides a research-based framework for teachers regardless of their approach to pedagogy (e.g. direct instruction, problem-based learning) to explicitly discuss how they:

- engage and support students to take risks in their learning
- connect previous learning experiences to in-school and out of school knowledge
- provide explicit criteria for the quality of work expected
- scaffold effective communication in their classrooms
- deepen student understanding of key underlying principles and concepts
- communicate high expectations in the classroom
- create and maintain socially supportive classroom environments.

Widespread engagement in QTR builds a shared understanding of effective pedagogy that supports teachers and leaders in providing detailed feedback on classroom practice as well as evidence of achievement towards school improvement agendas.

Importantly, QTR PLCs provide powerful opportunities to build the capacity of all members to refine teaching practice and identify the impact of such changes on student learning.

9. School-community partnerships

Domain

The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual and/or physical resources not available within the school. All partners are committed to the common purposes and goals of partnership activities. Procedures are in place to ensure effective

communications and to

monitor and evaluate the

intended impacts of the

school's partnerships.

Relevant Domain Descriptors

- the school identifies potential community partners on the basis of their capacity to contribute to improved student achievement and/or wellbeing
- adequate resources are committed to ensure the effectiveness and success of partnerships the school collects evidence to evaluate whether partnerships are having their intended impact in improving outcomes for students.

Alignment to QTR/the Model

Schools can employ QTR and the Quality Teaching Model to build collective understanding with key stakeholders about teaching that makes a difference for students, namely the three dimensions of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance. This assists teachers and school leaders to clearly communicate their vision of effective teaching and learning to community partners and ensure alignment of experiences, support and resources.

Families who understand *how* the school is working to enhance student learning and wellbeing through delivery of the Quality Teaching Model and participation in QTR can feel more informed about decisions made by teachers and school leaders and understand their own role in ensuring the learning needs of their child/ren are met.

Local businesses, community organisations and education and training providers who understand the core principles of the Quality Teaching Model can more readily engage in discussions with school leaders and teachers to articulate how partnership activities can contribute to student learning.

The non-profit, for-purpose <u>Quality Teaching</u> <u>Academy</u> can work in partnership to support effective implementation of QTR and the Quality Teaching Model to enhance teaching and student learning.

Definitions

The Quality Teaching Model (the Model) - A model of pedagogy applicable across all subjects and grades.

Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) - A collaborative approach to professional development for teachers.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) - Teachers engaged in Quality Teaching Rounds, usually in groups of 4.

The Quality Teaching Academy – Provides resources, professional development, and other support for QTR and the Model, see www.qtacademy.edu.au

Related Resources

The following resources can be used when planning and evaluating school improvement:

- 1. Quality Teaching Academy website. This comprehensive website provides:
 - Research summaries on the positive effects of QTR for teachers and students
 - Mapping of QTR with the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (see appendix)
 - Resources for QTR implementation and evaluation
 - Access to professional development opportunities

2. QTR and School Excellence This document maps QTR to the NSW Department of Education School Excellence Framework. While the application is to NSW improvement documents, the information can readily be applied in other jurisdictions.

References

- ¹ Gore J, Rosser B, 'Beyond content-focused professional development: powerful professional learning through genuine learning communities across grades and subjects', *Professional Development in Education*, (2020) [C1]
- Gore J, Lloyd A, Smith M, Bowe J, Ellis H, Lubans D, 'Effects of professional development on the quality of teaching: Results from a randomised controlled trial of Quality Teaching Rounds', Teaching and Teacher Education, 68 99-113 (2017) [C1]
- ⁱⁱⁱ Gore J, Miller A, Fray L, Harris J, Prieto-Rodriguez E, 'Improving student achievement through professional development: Results from a randomised controlled trial of Quality Teaching Rounds', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 101 (2021) [C1]
- [™] Gore JM, 'The quest for better teaching', Oxford Review of Education, 47 45-60 (2021) [C1]
- ^v Gore JM, Bowe JM, 'Interrupting attrition? Re-shaping the transition from preservice to inservice teaching through Quality Teaching Rounds', *International Journal of Educational Research*, 73 77-88 (2015) [C1]
- ^{vi} Gore J, Rickards B, 'Rejuvenating experienced teachers through Quality Teaching Rounds professional development', *Journal of Educational Change*, 22 335-354 (2020) [C1]
- wi Gore, J.M. (2020). Why isn't this empowering: the discursive positioning of teachers in efforts to improve teaching. In Brown, A. and Wisby, E. (eds.) *Knowledge, policy and practice in education and the struggle for social justice: essays inspired by the work of Geoff Whitty.* pp. 199–216. London: UCL Press.
- Gore JM, 'The quest for better teaching', Oxford Review of Education, 47 45-60 (2021) [C1]