AITSL Teacher Professional Standards Review

Submission from the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT)

2 November 2026

As the national organisation representing gifted education in Australia, the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT) is pleased that the AITSL Teacher Professional Standards are being reviewed, for the opportunity it provides to outline and address some of the many weaknesses of the current standards, to promote enhanced teacher quality, effective teaching, optimal assessment, and effective professional learning, in a manner that is fully inclusive of diverse Australian student populations.

Upon review of the discussion paper, we are delighted that gifted students and gifted education have been given some acknowledgement and consideration. In particular, with respect to Improvement Area 1, the following statement is made: “In relation to children and young people with disability, for example, guidance materials could provide practical examples of how descriptors may be applied, including through reasonable adjustments, as well as supporting teachers to respond to the needs of gifted and talented learners, twice-exceptional learners and other forms of learner variability” (page 21).

Furthermore, with respect to Improvement Area 5, there is a comment that “research also indicates that gifted and talented children and young people may require greater challenge, complexity and opportunities for advanced learning.” (page 43).

Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that the discussion paper does not go further. Specifically, much of the focus of the discussion relating to Improvement Areas 1, 3 and 5 relating to the needs of diverse student groups has a focus on students with disability. While they certainly deserve and require support, the same level of support is needed for gifted students. As noted in the previous submission, gifted students are defined as students who possess natural abilities which place them in the top 10% of age peers (Gagné, 2009). However, if all possible domains of giftedness (i.e., the intellectual, creative, social and physical domains) are collectively considered, gifted students are estimated to comprise in excess of 30% of the Australian student population. Accordingly, we submit that our organisation represents a significant proportion of the Australian student population.

We therefore recommend the following actions:

STANDARD 1

1. **A need for a dedicated Focus Area for Gifted Students within Standard 1.** Our organisation is concerned that the educational needs of gifted students are afforded insufficient recognition within the current Standards. Specifically, the Standards contain no explicit reference to gifted students or to gifted education.

   Instead, this student population is only indirectly acknowledged through Focus Area 1.5 (Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities). This contrasts with the explicit recognition afforded to other diverse Australian student subpopulations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disability, both of which are represented by dedicated Focus Areas (1.4 and 1.6, respectively). This disparity is difficult to justify given the substantial proportion of Australian students identified as gifted, the well established evidence demonstrating their distinct educational characteristics and learning requirements, and the central role of teachers in identifying and responding to these needs. The absence of explicit reference to gifted and talented students within the Standards risks reinforcing the misconception that differentiation alone is sufficient to address their educational needs and provides limited guidance regarding the specialised knowledge and pedagogical practices required to support this population effectively.

   Accordingly, we recommend the introduction of a dedicated Focus Area within Standard 1 entitled “Strategies to Support the Full Participation of Gifted and Talented Students”. This name aligns with the existing structure and nomenclature of the Standards, including those referencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Standard 1.4) and students with disability (Standard 1.6), to promote greater coherence, consistency, and parity in the recognition of all Australian student subpopulations with distinct learning needs.

2. **Guidance materials**: We are happy to provide companion guidance materials and examples to support gifted students, as noted in the discussion paper.

STANDARD 3

Minimal to no attention has been given in the discussion paper to important issues relating to Standard 3. In particular, the following are areas of weakness in the current standards that require modification:

1. **A need for additional Focus Areas within Standard 3.** Our organisation considers that Standard 3 does not explicitly address several fundamental components of effective teaching and learning that are essential to meeting the educational needs of **all** Australian students. The inclusion of these components would strengthen the Standards by providing greater guidance on evidence-informed educational practice and ensuring greater alignment with the educational obligations of teachers across

Australian jurisdictions. Specifically, Standard 3 should incorporate specific reference to:

(a) **The assessment of student potential** to inform decisions regarding appropriate educational provision. The assessment of student potential is fundamental to effective educational planning, by enabling teachers to identify the level, pace and nature of instruction most appropriate for each learner. In many Australian jurisdictions (including New South Wales through the Education Act 1990), schools have a statutory responsibility to ensure that students are supported to achieve to their educational potential.
(b) **The appropriate pacing of instruction** that acknowledges the potential of each student
(c) **The appropriate progression of students** in their educational trajectory
(d) **The provision of appropriate support to allow all students to fulfil their educational potential**. As noted above, this provision is a legal a requirement in many states and territories of Australia, including New South Wales (through the Education Act 1990).

As such, we recommend that four new Focus Areas be established to address each of the above concerns. The following are some suggestions for Focus Area names (which are also consistent with the names of the other Focus Areas in Standard 3):

(a) Assess student potential
(b) Appropriately pace instruction
(c) Allow students to progress at an appropriate pace
(d) Support students to fulfil their educational potential

STANDARD 5

No attention has been given in the discussion paper to the need for reporting on student potential in Standard 5. As such, the following is recommended:

1. **A need for a New Focus Area on Reporting on Student Potential in Standard 5.** Standard 5 has an explicit focus on reporting on student achievement, but no attention to reporting on student potential. The assessment of student potential is imperative to not only abide by legal requirements relating to the provision of support to allow students to fulfil their educational potential, but also to inform the provision of appropriate educational provisions that are appropriately paced, and allow for the appropriate progression of all students in their education. A requirement for reporting will ensure that student potential is assessed and used to inform educational practice. As such, we recommend that a new Focus Area be created on the reporting of student potential. For consistency with the current Focus Area 5.5, we suggest that this be named as “Report on student potential”.

Please do not hesitate to contact us, should you have any questions.

References

Gagné, F. (2009). Building gifts into talents: Detailed overview of the DMGT 2.0. In B. MacFarlane, & T. Stambaugh, (Eds.), *Leading change in gifted education: The festschrift of Dr Joyce VanTassel-Baska*. Prufrock Press.