

## **Frequently asked questions – Teaching and Learning Audits**

### **What is a Teaching and Learning Audit?**

Teaching and Learning Audits are conducted in every Queensland state school to provide quality feedback on how the school is performing against key standards and to inform school planning processes.

During the audit, an independent, experienced school principal visits the school to collect a range of data and information about school practices, programs and procedures.

The audit is carried out using the [Teaching and Learning Audit Instrument](#), which has eight dimensions around which the auditor will highlight commendations, affirmations and recommendations for the school.

The final report includes an executive summary and an eight-page profile which will be posted on the school's web page.

### **What is the Teaching and Learning Audit Instrument?**

Developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and based on the findings and recommendations of the [2009 Masters Report](#) and international research, the [Teaching and Learning Audit Instrument](#) outlines critical aspects of curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment.

For each of the instrument's eight dimensions, there are specific criteria to address relevant aspects of a school's operations in teaching and learning.

Each criterion is divided into outstanding, high, medium and low.

### **What is the process for a Teaching and Learning Audit?**

A suitable date for the audit is negotiated according to the school's needs and circumstances. Audits will not be conducted in the first half of Term 1 or the second half of Term 4, unless specifically requested by the school community.

Prior to the audit, the auditor will contact the school principal to discuss the process, required documents, interview timetable etc. The principal will receive an email confirming these organisational arrangements.

The auditor will review the school's website, data profile, and other documents supplied by the principal to gain an understanding of the school's context.

Three formal meetings will be held with the school principal during the audit process - the initial meeting on the morning of the first day; mid-way through the audit; and an exit meeting. Informal "check in" meetings are also

encouraged. These formal and informal meetings will ensure that the principal has the opportunity to provide input during the audit process.

Interviews will be conducted with staff, students and P&C President to establish a correlation between school strategies, practices and the [Teaching and Learning Audit Instrument](#).

The principal and auditor will be jointly responsible for the selection of interviewees to ensure full representation of all sectors of the school, as well as giving the school the opportunity to showcase their key improvement strategies.

### **What are the general principles that underpin Teaching and Learning Auditor visits?**

The following approach is taken by our Teaching and Learning Auditors:

- treat people the way you would want to be treated yourself
- look for what is good in the school
- follow the process as outlined in the training manual
- listen and be open leave your mental models at the gate
- the truth is in the instrument
- line of sight is imperative when looking for embeddedness
- triangulate the data
- give feedback in a manner that is professional
- it is an honour to visit a colleague's school
- this is about colleagues working with colleagues
- this is about school improvement.

### **How long will an audit take?**

The audit will be carried out over one to two days, depending on the size and context of the school. As a general rule of thumb, the approximate time spent at a school is:

- Bands 5 to 7 – one day
- Bands 8 and 9 – two days
- Bands 10 and 11 – four days (or two auditors for two days each)
- Schools over 1600 – four days

### **What happens after the audit?**

The auditor has 15 days to complete the audit report and provide it to the principal. Key findings will be discussed with the principal and the school's leadership team. There is also an option for staff to be addressed by the auditor.

The principal will be asked to rate their satisfaction with the audit process and provide feedback about the auditor's behaviour, communication and the extent to which the audit has helped inform school improvement processes.

In the 10 weeks following the audit the principal will post the executive summary and eight-page profile on the school's web page and work with their supervisor, the school staff, and their school community to embed the recommendations in the school's planning documents.

### **Where is the Teaching and Learning Audit report stored?**

The audit report is stored electronically at the school.

### **Who conducts a Teaching and Learning Audit?**

Teaching and Learning Audits are conducted by current, high performing principals who have undergone audit training.

They are selected by a panel of stakeholders and undergo extensive training by Education Queensland and ACER personnel.

When allocating an auditor to a school, the following criteria are used:

- Auditors are allocated to schools of a similar or smaller banding to their own substantive position.
- One or two auditors may be allocated to a school, depending on the size and context of the school.
- Special consideration will be given to the selection of auditors for P-10 and P-12 schools.
- One high-banded secondary auditor will audit all academy schools and as a part of their training will work with the previous auditor of these schools prior to auditing.
- One auditor will audit all Environmental, Outdoor, Education and Training Centres and as a part of their training will work with the previous auditor of these schools prior to auditing.
- One special education principal is allocated to complete all special school audits in Term 3 and as a part of their training will work with the previous auditor of these schools.

### **Is the Teaching and Learning Audit linked to managing unsatisfactory performance?**

A Teaching and Learning Audit is not a review of the principal or any other school staff member.

It is not linked to managing unsatisfactory performance.

There is a clear expectation that the principal will use this information to improve teaching and learning processes, practices and systems.

If necessary, regional resources will be assigned to assist schools with implementing the agreed actions.

### **How often does a school have a Teaching and Learning Audit?**

A school is audited every four years, in conjunction with their Quadrennial School Review (QSR).

An audit is also conducted in the first semester following the appointment of a new permanent principal.

### **Can a school request an audit out of their four-year planning cycle?**

Yes. Schools should complete and submit the EOI form on [OnePortal](#), requesting either a full audit or an advisory audit.

### **When would a new principal receive an audit?**

When a new principal is appointed, the school will receive a full audit or an advisory audit in the term following his/her commencement at the school.

### **When is an audit carried out at a new school?**

A new or re-opened school will receive a full audit in the second semester of the year following its opening for operation and an advisory audit in Term 4 of the first year of operation.

### **When requesting an audit outside of the four-year cycle, who decides if a full audit or an advisory audit is undertaken?**

A panel of stakeholders, chaired by the Assistant Director-General of State School Implementation, will consider all requests. This decision is based on the length of time since the last Teaching and Learning Audit; any individual school circumstances that should be considered; advice from the relevant Assistant Regional Director (School Performance); performance data of the school; and the reasons given for requesting an audit.

The panel also decides if a school will receive an advisory audit or a full audit following the appointment of a new permanent principal.

### **How often can a school request an audit?**

A school cannot have any more than one audit in any 12-month period.

## **Who can request an audit?**

An audit must be requested by the principal.

## **What is an advisory audit?**

An advisory audit is requested by the school and is approved by a panel of stakeholders and chaired by the Assistant Director-General of State Schooling Implementation. In this audit, the school gets an opportunity to define the breadth and depth of the audit, in consultation with their staff and community.

An advisory audit is an opportunity for principals to:

- gain an improved understanding of the audit instrument and the indicators that make up each of the eight dimensions
- obtain feedback on their progress since the last audit
- obtain feedback on the progress the school is making in one particular dimension, eg. use of data.
- obtain feedback on the progress the school is making in their priority area, eg. reading (this can be done across all eight dimensions).

An advisory audit is usually shorter than a full audit and the scope and breadth needs to be negotiated prior to the auditor arriving. It should also be negotiated with school staff.

An executive summary based upon the scope and depth of the advisory audit will be developed and given to the principal for use in their school planning processes. This summary must be shared with the principal's supervisor, the school staff and the school community.

## **What does the school receive at the end of a Teaching and Learning Audit?**

Schools will receive an executive summary and an eight-page profile, which must be posted on the school's web page.

The executive summary highlights the key commendations, recommendations and affirmations. This allows the auditor to identify the areas that have improved since the previous audit, practices that should be commended and key issues for the school to consider in future planning processes.

The profile identifies the school's ratings against specific criteria within each of the eight dimensions.

Schools will not be given an overall rating or an overall rating in each dimension.

## **How are auditors trained?**

Auditor training is conducted over three phases.

## **Phase 1 (five days)**

Auditors-in-training are exposed to:

- current research underpinning highly effective leadership and teaching and learning practices
- development of skills of interviewing utilising effective question and listening techniques
- development of an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Teaching and Learning Audit Instrument
- the behaviours required to successfully conduct an audit
- successful tools and information used by experienced auditors to promote the consistent approach to auditing
- key Education Queensland officers to provide current knowledge and understanding of the strategic direction e.g. C2C, data profile sheets
- a real life practice of the initial audit interview. This is conducted at a negotiated school of a previous auditor. It is overseen by the trainers. This promotes consistency of practice.

## **Phase 2 (two weeks)**

To develop a consistent process of auditing, a range of situations are provided to enable training auditors to work with experienced auditors in real school situations. This group auditing process occurs over two weeks and is followed by an intensive moderation process on the 10<sup>th</sup> day.

Over this two week period, principals training to be auditors work in groups under the tutelage of an experienced auditor to ensure all processes that were discussed at the training program are embedded and are consistent across all auditors.

The moderation process ensures that there is consistency of judgement when developing a school profile and executive summary.

## **Phase 3**

To ensure that the audit process is consistently delivered across the schools, an extensive moderation process occurs. This involves auditors:

- collaboratively evaluating audit findings. All auditors meet formally twice a term to work together to discuss and challenge practices and findings of audits. This process enables auditors to reflect on their processes and skills of auditing. The use of the Teaching and Learning Audit Instrument is extensively discussed.
- informally reflecting on their processes and skills by working with other auditors. Schedules are developed to ensure that auditors have the opportunity to collaboratively work with a number of different auditors to complete school audits during a term.
- working with the Capability and Leadership Development Officer to refine and further develop their skills. This officer works in schools with

auditors to monitor consistency of process and is also available to assist with any auditor or principal during an audit process.

- being provided with principal feedback responses that they complete at the end of the audit process. This information is used by the Assistant Director-General, State Schooling Implementation and Capability and Leadership Development Officer to provide feedback to auditors.

### **How are the audits moderated and consistency achieved?**

A key part of the training for each auditor is to develop a thorough understanding of each dimension and the indicators within each dimension.

Also, as a part of the training, auditors are taught how to gather information and make judgements.

To ensure consistency of judgment the following processes are undertaken:

1. Before an auditor begins auditing they undergo two weeks of group audits under the supervision of an experienced auditor. During these two weeks the auditor, under close supervision, has the opportunity to practice their skills and undergo cross marking and moderation to ensure consistency of judgement.
2. A two-day end of term moderation process where audits are scrutinised.
3. The Assistant Director-General of State Schooling Implementation conducts a close analysis of feedback following the audit, to ensure that schools are satisfied and are finding the audit process useful.
4. An ex-senior auditor will accompany each auditor from time to time to supervise processes, quality assure all practices and check consistency of judgement.
5. It is expected that auditors reflect with each other within and between audits to check judgements.
6. The executive summary is proofread by a trained writer to ensure messages are clear and consistent with identified indicators within each dimension.