

Appraisal as a catalyst for improved learner outcomes:

Two years on



Introduction

The Education Council (The Council) is the professional body for teachers in New Zealand. The New Zealand teaching profession is one of the most highly regarded in the world. As a profession, teachers have set high expectations for themselves, because they care about the success and wellbeing of the children and young people they work with. As in other professions, teachers want public confidence in them and their expertise. Effective appraisal is one way of providing that assurance.

To renew or gain a full practising certificate, teachers must demonstrate they meet the professional expectations for 2016/17, described in the *Practising Teacher Criteria*. It is the responsibility of each school, kura and early learning centre to create an effective appraisal process and the responsibility of teachers and professional leaders to participate in it. Moreover, it is the right of teachers and professional leaders to engage annually in such a process - knowing they meet the *Criteria*, having access to professional learning and increasing their evaluative capability.

In collaboration with thousands of teaching professionals, the Council has developed an understanding of effective appraisal processes that balances a focus on accountability while promoting the growth, development and improved practice of teachers and leaders. Professional learning resources and workshops are provided by the Council to ensure understanding across the country, and to support effective appraisal that isn't compliance heavy. Effective appraisal processes don't require lots of evidence recording and compliance, though this is unfortunately and inappropriately the experience in some settings.¹

Supported by an effective annual appraisal process, teachers are enabled to grow, learn and meet the dynamic challenges of their role. This means understanding the expectations of their role, using evidence to ensure they know how they and their students are going, as well as making decisions about next steps for their own and their students' learning. This is their evaluative capability.

The Council has contracted the Education Review Office to provide an independent audit of appraisal across the various education settings. This audit provides an 'across the system' picture of the quality of appraisal systems and plays an important part in developing our understanding as a profession of how we are doing. It also provides the public with additional, independent assurance.

During 2016 and 2017, the Education Council worked with teachers to consider what the expectations should be of the profession for the future. The result of this collaboration is the *Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Code of Professional Responsibility*, published in July 2017. Together, these two documents promote a high quality adaptive teaching profession. Teachers will base appraisal from 2018 onwards on these expectations.

¹ "In the case of teacher inquiry, this work is really important, but it's moved from being a simple 'I tried this, and it didn't work for this reason', to a stash of documents that need to be presented and distributed to a range of people, including school leaders, boards and the Education Council." Boyle, J. <http://educationreview.co.nz/buried-in-paperwork/>

The Audit Role of the Education Review Office (ERO)

In July 2015, ERO signed a three year Service Agreement with the Education Council to carry out appraisal audits. This arrangement was designed to meet the requirements in the Education Act to ensure that appraisals that supported the issue and renewal of practising certificates achieved a “reasonable and consistent” standard. ERO audits the appraisal process for at least 10% of the practising certificates issued or renewed each year (some 4000 individual audits).

The ‘audit and moderation’ function is designed to ensure that appraisals for the issue and renewal of practising certificates reach a consistently reasonable standard.

In 2015, ERO and the Education Council agreed on a set of indicators (see appendix 2) that described the features of a ‘reasonable and consistent’ standard of appraisal as these terms were not defined in the legislation. These indicators will be reviewed during 2018 to reflect the implementation of the Standards and to incorporate current guidance from the Education Council about what satisfactory and meaningful appraisal looks like in practice.

ERO audits the individual appraisal process for the sample of teachers who have been endorsed for issue or renewal in the 12 months prior to the ERO review. In addition, the audit makes further judgments about the quality of the systems used to manage teacher performance in each institution. The individual audit process is focused on accountability, whereas the focus on performance management systems is intended to promote continuous improvement.

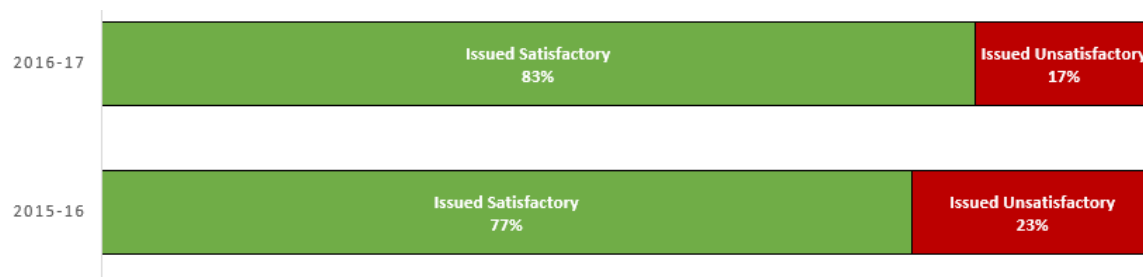
What ERO found in the 2016-17 year

There was a small but steadily improving trend evident during the second year in the quality of appraisal that supported the endorsements made by professional leaders for the issue and renewal of practising certificates. In the 2016-17 year, the percentage of issues of a Full Practising Certificate that were judged as based on a satisfactory process increased from 77% to 83% overall. Satisfactory renewals of practising certificates improved from 65% to 74%. The consistently higher rate of satisfactory issues than renewals is similar to ERO’s findings in the first year. The requirements for a clear programme of support and documented evidence of practice for provisionally certificated teachers are well understood in the sector.

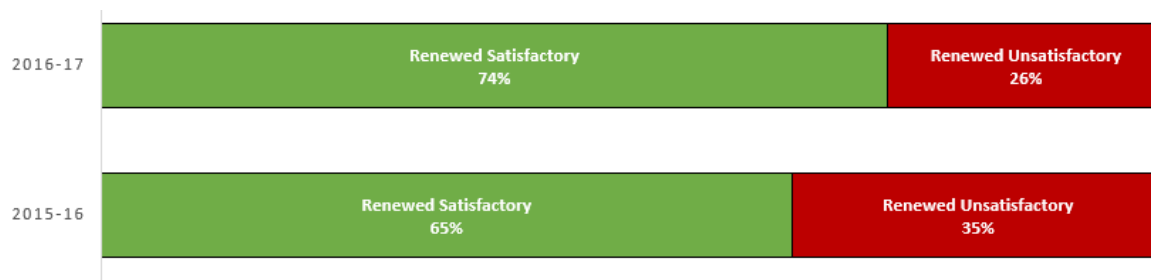
As was the case in the first year, many schools and services had revised and improved their overall appraisal systems either just prior to ERO’s audit or in the year leading up to it. Therefore, where a teacher may not have had evidence of regular appraisal (incorporating the practising teacher criteria during all the previous three years), the current cycle was more likely to be both compliant with requirements and more meaningfully focused on improving teaching. This meant that both the Education Review Office and the Education Council could have confidence that future endorsements would be more soundly based on reliable evidence. The audit process itself has been a useful incentive to promote improved practice.

Trends over two years of the audits

Issues: This shows the proportion of issues audited that were based on a satisfactory appraisal process



Renewals: This shows the proportion of renewals audited that were based on a satisfactory appraisal process



Management of appraisal

ERO found that there was a steady improvement in the quality and consistency of appraisal systems in schools and services. In 72% of the institutions reviewed, professional leaders were achieving a reasonable and consistent standard overall. While most of the institutions had developed compliant systems, there was variability in the extent to which some individual teachers engaged in the process and met organisational expectations.

Were the endorsements for practising certificates based on meaningful appraisal?		
	Always, or usually	Sometimes, or never
2016-17	72%	28%
2015-16	73%	27%

Did the appraisals by professional leaders in this school/service for the issue and renewal of practising certificates achieve a reasonable and consistent standard?		
	Yes	No
2016-17	72%	28%
2015-16	68%	32%

ERO's data continues to show that most professional leaders are taking their responsibilities seriously when it comes to monitoring the quality and completion of appraisals and endorsing teachers' applications for issue and renewal. While there has been a decline in the percentage of schools and services with clear links to the criteria in policy and procedures, there has been a rise in the number of institutions where the standard of appraisals was considered 'reasonable and consistent'.

The following characteristics were evident in effective appraisal systems:

- A focus was on **improving** teaching practice – developmental and ongoing
- Teachers took **responsibility** for curating their evidence of practice
- Evidence of effectiveness was focused on **outcomes for learners**
- Appraisal was **aligned** with other processes: teaching as inquiry, strategic planning, target students, PLD – **coherence** across the institution
- Evidence of practice was related to the actual **role** of the teacher
- The process was **manageable** and an integral part of everyday practice
- There was a **shared commitment** to professional discussions and constructive feedback
- Endorsement by the professional leader was based on documented assurance that the teacher had been appraised using, and continued to meet, the **practising teacher criteria**.

Improvement Focus

The audit process takes place in the context of a regular external evaluation of the school or service. Professional discussions between the review team and the professional leaders in the institution focus on how they can improve the appraisal process so that it provides better support for continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and therefore, outcomes for students.

The main areas **schools** were working on were:

- sharpening the focus on students at risk of not achieving
- providing more purposeful observations of practice and more useful feedback/feed forward
- deepening the quality of goal setting and self-reflection
- refining and strengthening 'teaching as inquiry'
- considering how to strengthen teachers' cultural competencies.

Professional leaders were aware of in-school variation regarding how well the appraisal process was completed and how it contributes to improving practice. They identified some system and organisational issues that they wanted to work on, including:

- more guidance for appraisers and teachers about what constitutes evidence and how to use the Criteria as the basis for curation of evidence of practice
- professional development for appraisers on how to get the most out of observations, improve feedback/forward, provide critical feedback and encourage deeper reflections on practice
- moving from a focus on compliance to a focus on continual improvement
- using a summary form for the end of each annual appraisal cycle so that the appraiser could attest that the teacher continued to meet the criteria – retained in school records

- clarifying accountability and assurance in the process – from the appraiser to the professional leader who endorses the application
- improving quality control so that all teachers have access to ‘meaningful’ appraisal – system level checks and balances to ensure consistency
- ensuring that the process is manageable
- regularly revising and updating school documents that related to appraisal and performance management so that they reflect the latest Education Council requirements, terminology and current school practices.

Professional leaders in **early learning services** had similar concerns and plans to make the appraisal process more meaningful and improvement-focused. They wanted to ensure that appraisal had a positive impact on practice by:

- improving the quality of feedback and feed forward based on more formalised, targeted observations of teaching practice
- improving the quality of the professional conversations that take place during the appraisal cycle so that these promote ongoing improvements in practice, more thoughtful self-reflection and sharper goal setting
- considering how to document the reflections and feedback so that they can be used as evidence of practice
- broadening the range of evidence teachers use to show their professional growth (and exemplify the Criteria)
- considering the impact of professional learning on their practice – reflection showing shifts in practice to improve outcomes for children
- moving to a more evaluative approach (outcomes) rather than descriptive (inputs)
- more emphasis on bicultural practice/cultural competencies.

They were also aware of the need to improve their own systems and processes for appraisal by:

- using a summary document for signing off the end of the annual cycle
- making sure their system meets requirements: incorporating all the Criteria, annual cycle, documented record of process
- managing transition to electronic records for efficiency and portability while keeping it manageable for teachers
- making the procedures and guidelines clear for teachers and easily available so everyone knows what their own responsibility is in the appraisal process
- revising policy and procedures regularly to ensure that they keep up with changing expectations and terminology, and also reflect the centre’s current practice
- documenting the process that sits behind the endorsement by the professional leader, especially if that person is not also the appraiser- improving accountability and assurance.

Looking ahead

Our Code Our Standards has been crafted by teachers, leaders and teaching experts to articulate the expectations and aspirations of the teaching profession. The Code sets out the high standards for ethical behaviour that are expected of every teacher, while the Standards describe the expectations of effective teaching practice. Together they set out what it is and what it means to be a teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Standards are applicable for every teacher who holds a Practising Certificate, regardless of their role or teaching context.

From the beginning of 2018, teachers and professional leaders will be using the Standards for the Teaching Profession instead of the Practising Teacher Criteria as part of their appraisal process.

The Education Council offers the following advice to schools and services about the transition to the Standards.

In some cases, for teachers whose practising certificates are up for renewal in the first half of 2018, professional leaders and principals will be endorsing these teachers for certification using the new Standards even though their appraisal was based on the Practising Teacher Criteria. For the purposes of this transition, if the professional leader or principal believes the teacher has met the Practising Teacher Criteria in the first year of the Standards being introduced, then the teacher should be deemed to have also met the new Standards.

When the ERO team carries out its appraisal audit, the review officer will be looking at evidence of appraisal that supports the endorsement for issue or renewal of a practising certificate in the twelve months prior to the ERO review. This evidence will be based on the Practising Teacher Criteria rather than the Standards initially.

However, ERO will also be interested in how schools and services have revised their processes and documents to reflect the implementation of the Code and Standards in 2018. The Education Council has developed a range of resources on its website (www.educationcouncil.org.nz) to support schools and services to revise and develop their appraisal processes, for example: a Quality Practices Template. The Alignment Matrix indicates how schools and services integrate the Standards into their existing appraisal system, based on the Practising Teacher Criteria.

The Education Council are hosting professional learning programmes across the country in 2018 to support the implementation of the Standards for the Teaching Profession Ngā Paerewa mō te Umanga Whakaakoranga and Code of Professional Responsibility Ngā Tikanga Matatika.

Here are some of the resources already available on the Education Council website:

- [Putting together your evidence folder or portfolio](#)
- [Introducing the Code and Standards](#)
- [Narrative of Standards for the Teaching Profession](#)

Guidance on Appraisal from the Education Council

The appraisal process exists to affirm and develop a high standard of teaching in New Zealand. Effective appraisal systems using the *Standards for the Teaching Profession* help teachers learn, grow and achieve the best outcomes for learners.

The appraisal component diagrams represent this process as an annual cycle. While the contents of the cycle may vary slightly depending on their role and setting, there is generally consistency across the major components:

1. A **performance review and appraisal** stage at the beginning of the process
2. **Goals and inquiry** determine the learning and development focus for the cycle.
3. **Evidence curated, collaborative sense making** and **appraisal discussion** are the learning and development actions required as the work progresses. It includes the evidence that informs practice and decision making, and the rich conversations that are central to appraisal.
4. The annual **summary report**, which marks the end of the cycle.



Some of the stages in the diagram are tasks to be completed while others are about ongoing engagement. All stages are interactive and dynamic and will be in action in daily work, formal and informal conversations, group meetings and interactions with colleagues in classrooms and professional learning groups and opportunities.

What's changed now if you have a Kāhui Ako role?

The Council website provides guidance and resources for teachers and professional leaders in across school roles.

What ERO has found about effective appraisal

In December 2016, ERO published a report on the first year of audits conducted as part of the agreement with the Education Council.

[Appraisal as a catalyst for improved learner outcomes – one year on](#)

In 2014, ERO published a series of reports about appraisal. You can read these on ERO's website: www.ero.govt.nz

1. [Supporting school improvement through effective teacher appraisal](#)
2. [Supporting school improvement through effective principal appraisal](#)
3. [Improving quality – employment responsibilities in kindergartens and education and care services](#)
4. [Student Safety in Schools: Recruiting and Managing Staff](#)

Resources and information about appraisal can also be found on the websites of NZSTA, PPTA, NZEI and the Ministry of Education.

Recommendations

ERO and the Education Council recommend that school and service leaders:

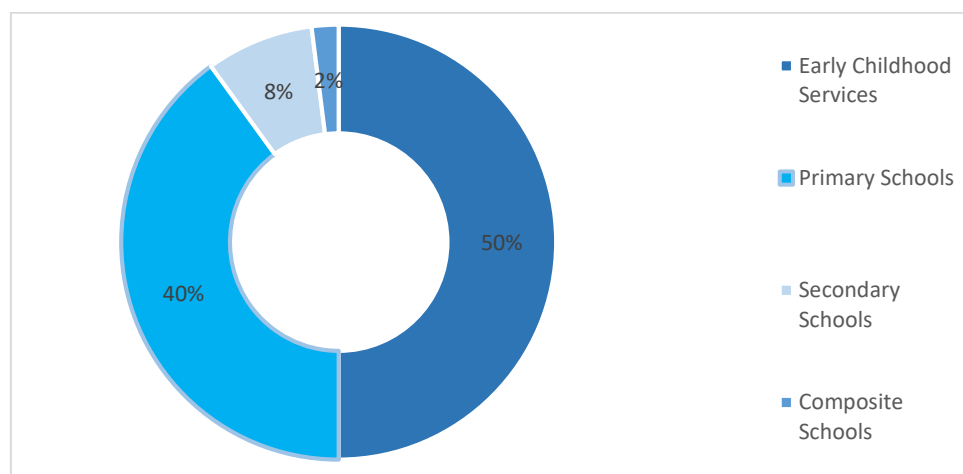
- make time to discuss and reflect on the new Code and Standards and the way in which they might be used to further develop aspects of teachers' knowledge and practice
- research the current requirements for appraisal using the Education Council website
- seek professional learning, if required, using the Education Council website resources or applying for workshop opportunities with the Education Council
- review your institution's appraisal processes, guidelines and documents and update them to reflect the 2018 requirements
- implement an effective appraisal system that enhances understandings about practice and leads to better teaching and better learning outcomes for children and young people
- retain a clear record of appraisal to support applications for the issue and renewal of practising certificates.

Appendix 1: Summary of audit data for 2016-17

The audit sample - Where did the audits come from?

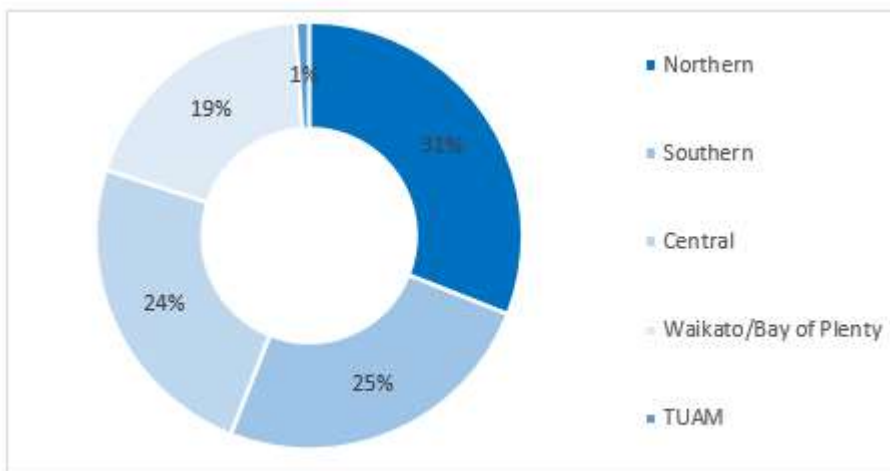
School/Service Type	2015-16	2016-17
Secondary (Year 9-15)	1072	863
Contributing	558	821
Education and Care	654	820
Full Primary	564	673
Intermediate	115	270
Secondary (Year 7-15)	278	260
Kindergarten	171	106
Composite (Year 1-15)	301	80
Special School	82	59
Home-based	9	33
Special Audit	0	21
Playcentre	0	1
Hospital-based	6	0
Composite (Year 1-10)	3	0
Restricted Composite (Year 7-10)	3	0
Correspondence School	180	0
Secondary (Year 7-10)	6	0
School/service Type	2015-16	2016-17
Early Childhood Services	416	421
Primary Schools	296	342
Secondary Schools	82	64
Composite Schools	47	18
Total	841	845

Proportion of schools and services represented in the data during 2016-17



Location of Audits

Region	2015-16	2016-17
Northern	237	258
Southern	211	212
Central	236	204
Waikato/Bay of Plenty	138	162
Te Uepū ā-Motu	19	9
Total	841	845



Appendix 2: Indicators of Good Practice: Appraisal and endorsement for issue/renewal of practising certificates

<p>1. Individual teacher level <i>Are the endorsements in the sample audited (those endorsed in the previous 12 months) based on “meaningful” appraisal?</i></p>
<p>[Appraisal evidence linked to PTCs/Standards]</p> <p>Personalised appraisal process</p> <p>Targeted observation of teaching and links between teaching practices and student/ākonga learning</p> <p>Appraisal includes reflection about practice and outcomes for learners</p> <p>Teaching as Inquiry</p> <p>Range of robust information used, including perspectives of students/ākonga and parents</p> <p>High quality feedback about teaching practice and next steps provided</p> <p>Appraisal goals linked to ākonga learning/outcomes/wellbeing and the school’s/service’s strategic goals</p> <p>Appraisal goals are specific and can be verified by objective measures or indicators</p> <p>Appraisal identifies support and PLD needed</p> <p>Opportunities for data-based discussion between teachers and leaders about student/ākonga learning and its relationship to teaching</p> <p>Endorsement of leaders’ performance based on appropriate appraisal using PTCs/Standards</p>
<p>2. System level <i>Do the appraisals by professional leaders in this school or early childhood service for all categories of certification achieve a “reasonable and consistent” standard overall?</i></p>
<p>Senior leader responsible for both completion and quality of appraisals</p> <p>Senior leader who makes final endorsement decision is assured of the quality and breadth of appraisal process and evidence</p> <p>Processes are well documented to support the teacher’s application for the practising certificate</p> <p>Clear comprehensive procedures guide appraisal practice, including using the PTCs/Standards. These might include, for example, developing worthwhile and specific goals, indicators, robust evidence including achievement information, classroom observations, self-appraisal and the final report</p> <p>Effective processes are used for induction and mentoring of teachers to be recommended for the issue of a full practising certificate and for those working towards full certification</p> <p>Templates and observation schedules provide guidance about goals, process, evidence, observation of teaching</p> <p>Time is allocated for goal setting, appraisal observations and discussions</p> <p>PLD on effective appraisal processes and evidence, using PTC, providing constructive feedback, and coaching, promoting consistent understanding of expectations for teaching</p> <p>Board is assured about teacher status - certification/endorsement and completion of appraisal</p> <p>Endorsement and appraisal procedures and practices reviewed and improved regularly</p>