

AAMT Response

A CHARTER FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION A QUESTION AND RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

This is a response in relation to a Charter for the Teaching Profession as suggested by Teaching Australia. A draft was developed by the Executive of the AAMT to prompt the thinking of and comments from members. Members then had several weeks to provide input that was used to finalise the AAMT position on the Charter. This response is the result of that process.

AAMT Preliminary note:

The AAMT is one of several national professional associations that have been involved with the development and use of professional teaching standards over the past several years. This response to a Charter is informed by that work and its proven usefulness for teachers.

1. Concept of a charter for the teaching profession

Reasons to have a charter might include giving the profession a sense of identity and common purpose, defining the nature of professional teaching, providing a touchstone for the profession and assurance to the public about values, principles and practice.

What value do you see in having a charter? What purpose/s would you see a charter serving?

AAMT Comments:

The Charter should represent the 'highest level' of expectations for, and description of, the 'profession' of teaching. It is essential to nestle more detailed descriptions of the work of teachers in the various 'specialisations' (as expressed through sets of teaching standards relevant to the various specialisations) under the umbrella that the Charter provides. (Note that this is not dissimilar to the role of the 'five principles' that underpin the professional teaching standards of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS] in the USA)

2. Audience for a charter

In the sample charter, the audience is both teachers and the wider community that they serve. What is the right balance with this dual purpose?

AAMT Comments:

In the sort of structure outlined above, the Charter will be elaborated and specified through sets of teaching standards directed at the 'professional' audience (ie teachers and other educators). Hence the AAMT believes that the 'public' audience is the key audience for the Charter. The brevity that is desirable in such a Charter will not be able to carry all the meaning.

Questions from members of the public and general audience along the lines

of “What does that mean/look like?” will be able to be answered from the examples associated with or derived from various components of sets of standards. (note that if teachers ask the same sort of question the response will be somewhat the same, except that as professional readers teachers will be able and expected to interact directly with what the standards say on a professional basis)

3. Elements of a charter

The sample charter contains three basic elements – the importance of teaching, our commitment as a profession and a distillation of our teaching role. Other charters take different approaches. Do these elements cover the ground?

AAMT Comments:

This seems like a sensible framework that will allow the Charter to fulfil its umbrella role as outlined above.

4. Length of document

The sample charter reflects a view that the charter will be most effective if it is a concise high-level statement that will stand over time. Other charters have more detail.

What is the right length?

AAMT Comments:

In our work on professional teaching standards the AAMT has found that size does matter. The sample seems to be about the right length.

5. Language

The sample charter aims to capture the complexity of teaching and to convey that complexity in simple language, with limited use of adjectives and adverbs, to a wide audience. It tries to avoid professional jargon that would make the charter an exclusive document. What should the approach be?

AAMT Comments:

The aim of accuracy in ‘simple language’ is laudable, although it will be difficult to achieve. The fact that there is a professional language that is needed to express ideas in teaching and discuss these is not something for which the profession should apologise — in fact, the existence of such dedicated language is a hallmark of a profession. Hence it is likely that at least some key ideas in the Charter will need the technical language of the profession in order to be clearly expressed.

The above refers to “professional jargon that would make the charter an exclusive document”. The deliberate use of technical language (call it jargon if you will) to exclude is poor communication; the deliberate omission of any use of technical language that takes away from meaning is also poor communication.

6. Other comments

AAMT Comments:

In its quest for generality, the sample Charter appears to avoid the issue of knowledge as a key component of what teachers need to bring to their work. Teachers at all levels have (or at least *should* have) an extensive knowledge base about what they are teaching and how the children will learn. A commitment to having and maintaining these knowledge bases would seem to be a fundamental part of what it is to be a professional teacher.

7. Please indicate your perspective/s below

Individual response:

- Current teacher
- Past teacher
- Current principal
- Past principal
- Parent
- Teacher educator

Group response:

- School
- Professional association **X**
- Union
- Parent association
- Other – please specify
- NB National association**