

This is a joint initiative of the Australian
and the NSW Governments

Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality

Centres for Excellence in NSW Government Schools Guidelines



Contents

1. Background
2. Role/purpose of a Centre for Excellence
3. Selection Process
4. Additional Resources
5. School and University Partnerships
6. Support for other schools in the Centre for Excellence cluster
7. Travel between schools where required
8. Professional Learning and Development
9. Reporting and Evaluation
10. Frequently Asked Questions
11. Contacts

1. Background

Centres for Excellence are a mandatory facilitation reform under the *Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality*.

The Centres for Excellence initiative will concentrate resources which already exist in some NSW Government schools (university partnerships, mentoring, initial teacher education professional experience placements) in combination with new resources available under the National Partnership, such as Highly Accomplished Teachers and paraprofessionals.

50 Centres for Excellence will be created in NSW, of these 35 will be created in NSW Government schools. The 50 Centres for Excellence, using a 'hub and spoke' model will extend participation to approximately 150 - 200 schools.

Centres for Excellence will commence operation in 2010. They will be implemented in two tranches, initially in 2010 and then in 2011. Centres for Excellence operate over a two year period.

2. Role/purpose of a Centre for Excellence

Centres for Excellence will be school sites for demonstrating, developing and sharing high quality teaching leading to improved outcomes for students.

This will be achieved by:

- promoting and demonstrating quality teaching through classroom and school wide practice in improving student learning outcomes
- providing quality supervision, mentoring and support to early career teachers
- providing ongoing professional development aligned to teaching standards
- assisting more experienced teachers to achieve voluntary accreditation at Professional Accomplishment and/or Professional Leadership
- providing quality supervision, mentoring and support to initial teacher education students
- demonstrating and developing strengthened linkages between initial teacher education programs and transition to teaching and teacher induction
- working with other schools in the Centre for Excellence cluster to strengthen the quality of teaching to improve student learning outcomes
- forming part of the statewide cross sectoral team focused on teacher quality initiatives in NSW.

The 50 Centre for Excellence schools will work in a 'hub and spoke' model with a number of Centre for Excellence schools to form each Centre for Excellence cluster.

3. Selection Process

NSW Government schools will be identified and invited to participate based on specific criteria including:

- Regional Director recommendation
- comparative socioeconomic status and performance
- existing relationships with universities
- Aboriginal enrolment
- connected classroom and connected learning technologies
- school size.

The initiative will be clearly documented in the school plan together with other National Partnership initiatives.

4. Additional Resources

The Centre for Excellence 'hub' schools will receive additional resources for the two year period of operation including:

- a Highly Accomplished Teacher. This position will be a temporary two year appointment to the school through an advertised school based selection process. For details on the recruitment, support and management of this position please refer to the [Highly Accomplished Teachers Guidelines](#).
- a paraprofessional. This position will be a temporary appointment to the school through an advertised school based selection process. For details on the recruitment, support and management of this position please refer to the [Paraprofessionals Guidelines](#).
- an additional allocation of \$50,000 per annum. This allocation will support induction, professional learning, school/university partnerships, travel where required and working with schools in the Centre for Excellence cluster.

Schools in the Centre for Excellence cluster will support the cluster's achievements through a contribution of resources to be discussed between these principals and the School Education Director.

5. School and University Partnerships

The partnership with the university will be expected to better support professional experience placements and professional development of staff through reciprocal school/university arrangements. As stated in the school plan, these will be negotiated at the school level between the school and the university but will be subject to a statewide framework, which covers matters including improved models of professional experience (practicum) placements and supervision; support for internships; reciprocal opportunities for professional development and shared teaching arrangements.

6. Support for other schools in the Centre for Excellence cluster

Operating through the 'hub and spoke' model, the Centre for Excellence cluster will work to achieve quality teaching practices leading to improved student learning outcomes. The principal of the 'hub' school will determine, following consultation with cluster schools, the level of support to be provided to the cluster schools.

While the operation between the Centre for Excellence 'hub' school and the cluster schools will be negotiated at the local level, it will be premised on achieving targets specified in each school's plan related to the demonstration of quality teaching practices; improved student learning outcomes; improved professional experience placements and support for quality professional learning and development.

Schools will implement a range of supportive operational arrangements to maximise support for quality teaching practices and minimise travel between schools. Some examples of school operations to support professional learning and development on quality teaching practices and improved student learning outcomes (including focused data analysis) are:

- shared school development days
- shared professional learning and development sessions for targeted groups across schools such as executives/teachers/teacher teams
- shared professional learning and development facilitated through online/connected learning delivery.

Travel between schools by the Highly Accomplished Teacher and, in some circumstances the paraprofessional, should be minimised as much as possible (where this needs to occur refer to **Section 7 on Travel between schools where required**).

While the Centre for Excellence 'hub' school will have a budget from which travel can be drawn, this will need to be carefully managed as the budget needs to cover a range of other matters such as professional development and school/university partnerships. While Centre for Excellence cluster schools can contribute funding to support such travel, the effectiveness of both the Highly Accomplished Teacher and the paraprofessional will be affected where they are required to be spread too thinly.

Note: Where schools in the Centre for Excellence have other National Partnership funding, for example schools in the *National Partnership on Low Socioeconomic Status School Communities*, this can be used to support the above processes.

7. Travel between schools where required

The Highly Accomplished Teacher, or in some circumstances the paraprofessional, may need to travel between the 'hub' school and 'cluster' schools.

Travel must be approved by the principal of the 'hub' school.

Where such travel is approved, the appropriate motor vehicle guidelines will apply.

8. Professional Learning and Development

A consolidated effort to refine and improve quality teaching practices for improved student learning outcomes supported by targeted professional learning and development is a major focus of the Centre for Excellence.

As stated previously the Centre for Excellence cluster schools will be expected to contribute resources to support this shared focus.

9. Reporting and Evaluation

Reporting and evaluation is a cornerstone of the National Partnership Agreements. Further advice is being developed regarding reporting and evaluation and will be provided as soon as it is available.

10. Frequently Asked Questions

A series of Frequently Asked Questions is being developed. These will be added to as required.

11. Contacts

For Region Specific Information

Please refer to your Regional Director or School Education Director

For Systemic Information

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