

Implementation Guidelines for Accreditation Policy

GAINING ACCREDITATION

In accordance with the requirements of the policy, teachers in Victorian Catholic schools are expected to gain accreditation within five years of obtaining ongoing employment. To facilitate this, they must apply to the diocesan education office in Ballarat, Melbourne, Sale or Sandhurst (as appropriate to where they work or intend to work).

In mid-2020, a new platform enabling online applications will be launched. Individual teachers and schools will be able to submit and review all applications for accreditation via this platform. Schools will be notified in advance of the launch and, until such time, teachers should continue to apply by submitting the relevant form with a copy of their current Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration card for either level of accreditation, as follows:

- 1) Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School (Form A, requiring a professional learning record endorsed by the principal or Religious Education leader)
- 2) Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School (Form B, requiring a tertiary academic transcript or record from an alternative approved course and its assessment, e.g. courses delivered by diocesan education offices).

Applications for accreditation from individual teachers are administered by the respective diocesan education offices. Certification of this accreditation is granted by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV).

1) Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School

Registered teachers may be accredited to teach in a Catholic school when they have completed 25 hours of professional learning within five years of commencing employment, balanced across the areas of:

- the aims and objectives of the Catholic school
- faith development
- Catholic identity, culture and tradition (including prayer, liturgy, scripture and Catholic social teaching).

The professional learning hours can be completed in a variety of ways, including in service training, diocesan and regional seminars, and formal courses as approved by the relevant diocese. These may be undertaken in an online, mixed-mode or face-to-face environment. Any professional learning undertaken more than ten years before the time of application is not admissible.

An ongoing record of professional learning (with evidence such as certificates) should be maintained by the teacher. Evidence is attested at a school level by the principal or Religious Education leader.

Application process to gain Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School

An application form can be obtained from each diocesan education office or its website. When submitting Form A, a copy of the teacher's current VIT registration card and an endorsed professional learning record (provided on completion of the designated hours) should be included. This learning must demonstrate a balance across the required areas.

2) Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School

Registered teachers may be accredited to teach Religious Education or lead in a Catholic school when they have successfully completed formal, assessed study in Religious Education, Theology or Catholic Leadership within five years of commencing employment. (Note that a qualification in Catholic Leadership must include four units of Religious Education or Theology, with all courses approved by agreement of the diocesan heads of Religious Education.) Formal assessed courses will be recognised retrospectively for up to ten years.

At the discretion of the diocesan heads of Religious Education, registered teachers may also be accredited to teach Religious Education or lead in a Catholic school when alternative evidence of eligibility is demonstrated (for example, non-typical pathways).

Application process to gain Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School

An application form can be obtained from each diocesan education office or its website. When submitting Form B, a copy of the teacher's current VIT registration card and an official tertiary academic transcript or record from an alternative approved course and its assessment (e.g. courses delivered by diocesan education offices) should be included.

Application process to gain Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School

An application form can be obtained from each diocesan education office or its website. When submitting Form B, a copy of the teacher's current VIT registration card and an official tertiary academic transcript or record from an alternative approved course and its assessment (e.g. courses delivered by diocesan education offices) should be included.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR ACCREDITATION

Across the Victorian dioceses, there is a reciprocity of Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School and Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School. Certificates of accreditation issued in Australian dioceses outside Victoria may be accepted as recognition of accreditation, but will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the relevant diocese.

MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

In accordance with the requirements of the policy, teachers in Victorian Catholic schools are expected to maintain accreditation in each five-year period following the initial gaining of accreditation.

For teachers or leaders returning from periods of extended leave (i.e. more than 12 months), the maintenance period commences from the year of their return to work. Where leave is taken for periods of 12 months or less, the maintenance period remains unchanged.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

According to the policy:

- Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School requires 25 hours of professional learning in each five-year period
- Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School requires 50 hours of professional learning in each five-year period.

APPLICATION PROCESS TO MAINTAIN ACCREDITATION

An application form can be obtained from each diocesan education office or its website. When submitting the approved form, a copy of the teacher's current VIT registration card and an endorsed professional learning record (provided on completion of the designated hours) should be included. This learning must demonstrate a balance across the required areas.

Teachers will be notified when their period of accreditation is about to expire. In extenuating circumstances, they may apply to the relevant diocesan education office for an extension to the maintenance period. Each diocese will assess applications, keep records and inform teachers through official correspondence.

To maintain the standards required by the policy, dioceses will:

- audit schools on a regular basis
- maintain a database of teachers whose accreditation is current
- liaise with principals to enact the policy.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING APPROVAL

Applications for approval of school-based or external professional learning, for the purpose of accreditation, are administered by the respective dioceses according to the requirements of the policy and agreement of the diocesan heads of Religious Education.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When will the new policy come into effect?

The policy will come into effect in January 2020.

Why have we moved to a single accreditation policy?

The move to a single policy simplifies the CECV approach to accreditation, and enables all teachers and leaders to understand the principles that underpin accreditation in Catholic education in Victoria.

Why are there gaining and maintaining requirements in the new policy?

All professionals are expected to keep up to date with matters related to their profession. This policy will ensure that teachers and leaders are supported in their ongoing development of knowledge, skills and aptitudes to enable authentic witness in Catholic schools.

Why are leaders included in the policy?

Leaders are included in the policy because of their role as the key leaders of faith and Religious Education in their schools, and in recognition of the support for formation they require throughout their professional life.

What is the definition of 'leaders' in this policy?

In this policy, leaders refers to principals, deputy principals, and leaders of Religious Education and Catholic identity.

What if I aspire to the positions of leadership referred to in this policy?

Aspirants to these leadership positions should pursue Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School as a prerequisite to applying for such positions.

I'm a fixed-term teacher. Do I need to be accredited?

Accreditation is not an expectation of employment for fixed-term teachers. However, fixed-term employees are welcome to participate in accreditation pathways. This would also support such teachers' applications for ongoing employment.

I'm an ongoing part-time teacher. Do I need to be accredited?

As an ongoing part-time employee, you are expected to meet the accreditation requirements in accordance with the policy.

I was exempt under the previous policy. What does the new policy mean for me?

All teachers and leaders, regardless of how they gained accreditation, are expected to maintain accreditation as described in the policy.

Do I need the full five years to complete the maintenance requirement?

Although most teachers will take five years to complete the maintenance requirement, depending on the opportunities accessed, some teachers may complete it before the five-year period ends. Teachers will be notified at the end of a maintenance period that they have successfully met the requirements.

Who is responsible for recording professional learning activities to demonstrate maintaining accreditation?

Teachers will be responsible for keeping an ongoing record of professional learning opportunities across the maintenance period, utilising diocesan or school-specific processes.

What happens if I don't maintain my accreditation?

If you don't maintain your accreditation, your status will be listed as 'Accreditation Pending'. Note that accreditation is an essential requirement when applying for leadership positions and some sponsored study.

How will my diocese support me to become accredited and to maintain my accreditation?

A variety of approved pathways and opportunities will be offered to ensure you are able to gain and maintain accreditation. These might include diocesan-sponsored events, credentialed learning opportunities through tertiary institutions, school-based activities, and online study or modules.

Who will pay for this?

Each diocese has made provision of at least one pathway for participants to gain accreditation to teach Religious Education or lead without incurring a financial cost. For those seeking to gain Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School or maintain either level of accreditation, sponsorship will depend on whether the professional learning attended is provided internally or externally. Contact your diocesan education office to explore options for your particular circumstances.

What's the role of my school in my accreditation?

Your school and diocesan education office will partner with you in gaining and maintaining accreditation. Your school will provide you with advice and guidance in relation to pathways to gain accreditation and will assist you with time, resources and support to maintain your accreditation. Your principal or Religious Education leader will attest that you have met the accreditation maintenance requirement by endorsing your professional learning record.

Who do I contact if I have any questions about this policy?

Your principal, Religious Education leader or diocesan education office can answer questions related to this policy.

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

I am a beginning teacher from a secular university or TAFE gaining accreditation.

Sally is a graduate from La Trobe University without a Religious Education specialisation. She has been employed in an ongoing capacity as a Year 4 teacher at St Martin in the Fields School. From the second year, her pathway to accreditation would begin by undertaking a fully funded, diocesan-approved two-year course supported by the Catholic Education Office. Sally should complete this study within five years of gaining employment.

I am a beginning teacher with an approved Religious Education specialisation gaining and maintaining accreditation.

Tom is a graduate from ACU employed in an ongoing capacity at Holy Innocents Primary School as a Foundation teacher. He successfully completed the Religious Education specialisation as part of his undergraduate studies. Tom will need to apply for Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School by submitting the relevant form with a copy of his VIT registration card and academic transcript to his diocesan education office. His maintenance period will commence after gaining his accreditation to teach RE or lead in a Catholic School.

I am a subject-specific teacher not teaching Religious Education seeking to gain accreditation.

Jenny is a Humanities teacher at Catholic College, Shepparton, seeking to gain Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School. In consultation with her Director of Mission, she will formulate a 25-hour professional learning plan incorporating approved professional learning days, online modules and a twilight retreat in line with the policy. Once completed, Jenny can apply for accreditation through her diocesan education office.

I am currently an accredited teacher and seeking to maintain my accreditation.

Ben is a teacher at Spirit of God Primary School who is currently accredited to teach Religious Education in a Catholic school and seeking to maintain this accreditation. Within five years, he will undertake a variety of approved professional learning opportunities to be selected from a suite offered by his school, diocesan agencies and other external providers. During this period, Ben will complete and record 50 hours of approved professional learning.

I am a leader moving from a government or independent school to a leadership role in a Catholic school.

Mi Lee has been teaching at her local government school and is now employed as deputy principal at St Irenaeus' School in Bonbeach. According to the policy, she will need to gain Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School. Her pathway to accreditation could begin by undertaking a fully funded, diocesan-approved two-year course; however, as a leader, Mi Lee chose to pursue credentialed study at a master's level supported by sponsorship of the Catholic Education Office and school. She completed this study in two years and submitted her application for accreditation, including a copy of her VIT registration card and academic transcript, to her diocesan education office.

I am a member of the school leadership team or have a designated position of leadership.

Tatiana is on the leadership team at St Hedwig's Catholic College in Inverloch. She is currently accredited to teach in a Catholic school and would like to become a deputy principal or principal in the future. After talking to her principal and diocesan staff, Tatiana has decided to enrol in the diocesan-approved pathway to gain accreditation to teach Religious Education or lead. She will complete the course in two years' time.

I am a deputy principal of a Catholic school wishing to gain accreditation.

Peter has been appointed deputy principal at St Pius IX Secondary College having taught in Catholic schools for 20 years. He is seeking Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School by undertaking a Master of Educational Leadership. Peter has chosen ACU as a tertiary provider because its degree includes four units of Religious Education or Theology as required by the policy.

I am a principal of a Catholic school.

Sandra is the principal of St James XXIII Primary School. She currently holds Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School and is seeking to maintain this. Sandra is undertaking her Master of Leadership through ACU and has chosen to complete a unit of Theology or Religious Education to meet the requirements. When she completes her master's degree, in future five-year periods, Sandra may organise diocesan-approved professional learning days in areas such as liturgy, scripture or Catholic Social Teaching which she participates in alongside her staff.

I am returning from family or other extended leave.

Anne is returning from an extended period of family leave. She was previously accredited to teach Religious Education, but her accreditation has lapsed due to being on leave for seven years. In order to meet the maintenance requirement, Anne will be expected to undertake 50 hours of professional learning within five years of resuming work.

I am returning from 12 months' leave without pay.

Chi has been overseas for 12 months and is returning to work. He will be expected to complete 50 hours of professional learning (including any previously completed hours) within the original five-year maintenance period. If Chi had been away for more than 12 months, on return he would begin a new five-year maintenance period excluding any previously completed hours.