



Code of Conduct

DRAFT
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The Board is exploring how to develop a South Australian Code that provides clear, aspirational guidance to all teachers in South Australia.

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**Teachers
Registration Board**
OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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Foreword

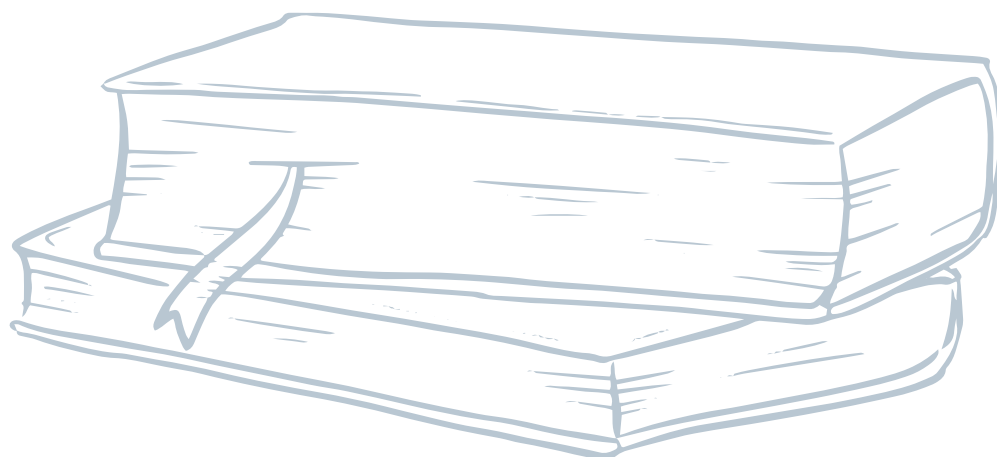
The *Teachers Registration and Standards Act* (2004) (the Act) was amended in 2021, allowing the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia (the Board) to “publish or adopt codes of conduct and professional standards (or both)” (Part 6A, section 31B).

A teacher’s professional and personal conduct reflects on the standing of the entire profession. In taking on the responsibilities of a teacher, including providing for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, teachers - like other professions of public trust - are held to a high level of accountability. This Code of Conduct (the Code) has been developed to recognise the important role that teachers play in the safety and development of children and young people, and to assist in strengthening this role in their communities.

The development of this Code has considered international best-practice frameworks, recommendations from federal committees, and a review of analogous national and international codes

used by teacher regulatory authorities. A significant period of consultation, which invited the contribution of teachers, school leaders, employers, unions, teacher organisations, and community and family members or organisations has helped to inform the content of the Code.

The Code reinforces the duties and expectations of both teachers and the Board. However, it also describes expectations of the professional conduct of teachers in their interactions with learners, families, and colleagues. It recognises that there are high community expectations placed on teachers. Teacher conduct can come under scrutiny by the community at any time, and the Code seeks to guide teachers regardless of their position, to help them safeguard their personal and professional integrity in a range of contexts, while ensuring that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people under their stewardship remains a paramount concern.



Introduction

The teaching profession is one that is held in high regard, and on which there are high community expectations. The Code of Conduct provides high level, profession-wide guidance on conduct for teachers, to ensure that these expectations are met, and that teachers can maintain pride in their profession.

The Board maintains a teacher registration system for teachers working with children and young people from birth to the end of formal schooling. The Code supports the work of the Board by making transparent the behaviour expected of teachers in South Australia. This is to assist both teachers and the Board in ensuring these expectations are met, protecting not only children and young people, but also teachers and the teaching profession.

Teachers will bring their own values, experiences, and beliefs to the profession and sites will operate within an ethos particular to that context. However, the Code outlines conduct that is expected of all teachers. It reiterates obligations contained within the Act, and national guidelines and standards including the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The Code represents what is everyday practice for most teachers. While it does not, and cannot, address every individual event, or site, it provides guidance about what is expected of the profession, and provides guidance for teachers regardless of where they are working.

Purpose of the Code

The Code has been designed to be realistic, transparent, and achievable.

For teachers the Code:

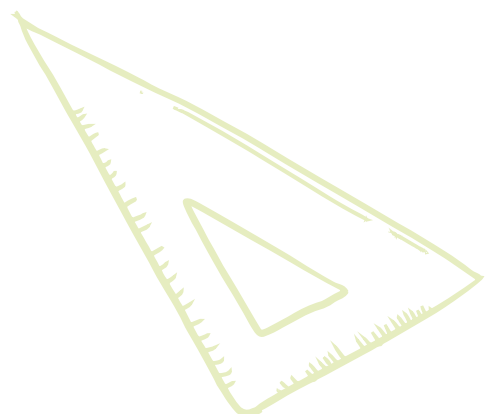
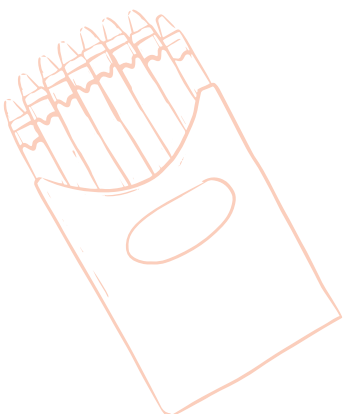
- Represents conduct expected of those in the profession.
- Allows them to feel proud of the profession that they represent, and which represents them.
- Reflects the high standing held by teachers in the community.
- Provides a consistent, transparent, profession-wide tool to reflect on circumstances faced by members of the profession, and to assist in their resolution.
- Represents a career-long resource as they move between employers.
- Provides a tool through which they can protect their professional reputations.
- Allows them to understand the expectations of both the community and the regulator.

For the community, including families, the Code:

- Illustrates the consistent standards expected of teachers regardless of their employer.
- Provides assurance as to the standards that those caring for children and young people are held.

For the Teachers Registration Board, the Code:

- Communicates clearly the conduct expected of all teachers.
- Provides a tool by which issues related to conduct can be consistently evaluated.



How to use the Code

The Code applies to all those who hold teacher registration, and to those unregistered persons holding a Special Authority to Teach (SAT) in South Australia. It can also be used as a guiding tool for pre-service teachers (PSTs), who are completing a university degree, to assist them in understanding the expectations of the profession they are preparing to enter.

The Code is not a prescriptive list and is not designed to cover every situation or scenario a teacher may experience. Instead, it is designed to provide a guiding resource, allowing those using it to reflect on behaviour or conduct, and their own judgment and actions.

All teachers are bound by requirements to protect the safety of children and young people. These requirements are implicit in the responsibilities of teachers, teacher registration and child safety legislation. While it is intended that teachers will use the Code as a resource to illuminate good conduct, there may be scenarios when moving away from the conduct described in the Code may constitute unprofessional conduct. Teachers are responsible for making themselves aware of legislative requirements related to their registration, including activities that could result in the issue of a warning, suspension, cancellation or disqualification of registration, and in limited cases, criminal prosecution. The Board may consider deviation from conduct outlined in the Code to be grounds for an allegation, or grounds to examine a teacher's suitability to teach (see Section 3 of the Act).




While the conduct described below is applicable to all registered teachers and SATs it should be noted context is important. Some elements of conduct may be magnified for those working in small communities, particularly in rural or remote areas. Teachers may be working at sites attended by their own children or family members. The Code should be read considering these factors, as context will impact on the choices a teacher makes regarding their conduct.

Teachers, particularly early career teachers, are encouraged to seek advice from mentors, or site leadership, should they have questions regarding a particular situation that relates to them.

Teachers Registration and Standards Act

The Act outlines, amongst other things, the requirements to obtain and retain teacher registration in South Australia. A number of offences are outlined in the Act which go beyond unprofessional conduct, and as such are not represented in the Code.

Teachers Registration Board Code of Ethics

The elements of conduct described in the Code are underpinned by the three values established in the Board's Code of Ethics: respect , integrity , and responsibility . These ethical values are identified in the relevant sections of the Code.

Guidelines under the Code

Examples of other guidelines that sit under the Code including the *Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics*, and the *Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people*. The Protective Practices Guidelines is a document unique to the South Australian context. It has been developed by the three sector groups - the Department for Education, the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia, and Catholic Education South Australia. It has also been endorsed as an approved guideline by the Board. The Guidelines cover all people working in education settings, not just teachers, but provides appropriate situational advice that should be read by teachers in conjunction with the Code.

The Board may add further guidelines to provide detailed guidance regarding a principle or conduct as set out in the Code. If this were to occur, the Board commits to doing so in consultation with all teachers and stakeholders.

Employer Codes



Almost all teachers will have an employer endorsed code of conduct related to their employment. The Board Code relates to the act of holding registration, and the expectations of both the Board and the profession. Employer codes are related to an individual's employment at a site, school, or within a sector. Employer codes are important tools for guiding teachers as to the expectations under their contract of employment. It is possible that a teacher may, depending on the circumstances, breach their employer's code and lose their employment, but still hold teacher registration. The purpose of the Code should not be a single reference source to determine employment disputes.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

The Code of Conduct supports the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), in particular 7.1 "Meet professional ethics and responsibilities". As such it should contribute to Initial Teacher Education programs, and be used by registered teachers as they progress from provisional registration, and throughout their teaching career.

Implementation and Review



The Code of Conduct was introduced by the Board in 2023. It will undergo regular cycles of review, to ensure that it is in-step with expectations of the profession and the community, adapts to changes in Australian society and advances in technology.

A Note about Language

South Australia registers teachers working in early childhood, primary, and secondary settings. To reflect this diversity the Code refers to learners, sites, and families. Learners reflects all those under the care of teachers, from birth to senior secondary learners. Sites reflects places where teachers work, including long day care centres, kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools, including special focus and outdoor settings. It is recognised that care is provided to children and young people by a variety of adults in contemporary Australian society. The term 'family' refers to parents, guardians, carers, grandparents, or any individual who cares for a learner at home.

The use of the term teacher in this document refers to any individual who is registered with the Board regardless of their employment, including those working outside of education. See page 11 for a full glossary of terms.

The Code of Conduct for Teachers in SA

1. Regulatory and Reporting Obligations of the Teacher



Teachers should comply with the legal requirements related to the teaching profession, including complying with mandatory reporting and registration requirements. This includes:

- Being aware that young people can be victims of psychological, physical or sexual abuse, including grooming. These actions are unacceptable and can happen inside or outside of the school community. Teachers have the responsibility to be mindful of these unacceptable possibilities, and understand and comply with all reporting requirements. **RT I RY**
- Complying with any state or federal laws, including work health and safety, and professional practice requirements. **I RT**
- Ensuring all requirements for registration, including demonstrating professional learning and professional practice have been met. **I RT**
- Responding to requests for information from the Teachers Registration Board or Registrar. **I RT**

2. Teachers, Learners and Families



The Board promotes the wellbeing of children and young people. This connects to one of the primary roles of the teacher, which is to provide safe learning environments, that support individual learner's intellectual, social, and cultural needs. Teacher conduct supports this aim through:

- Respecting the diversity of learners, by promoting an inclusive learning environment and providing appropriate learning opportunities suited to the individual. **RY RT**
- Responding to the impact on learners' wellbeing because of exposure to intolerance or prejudice. **RY I**
- Embracing opportunities to ensure learning environments are created with respect for everyone, including families, colleagues, and the community. **RY RT**
- Taking responsibility for the teaching activities that take place in their class, including understanding and adhering to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. **I RT**
- Creating environments where learners' privacy is respected, with personal discussions or information not disclosed unless the learner's safety is in jeopardy, is required by law, or the learner has given permission. **RY I RT**
- Using respectful and non-judgmental language when dealing with learners, colleagues, and family members. **RY I RT**
- Making learning spaces safe, and free from scenarios that result in embarrassment or humiliation. **RY I RT**
- Taking the cultural safety of all in their communities into consideration. **RY I RT**
- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their potential through the inclusion of their cultures, languages and communities, as appropriate. **RY I RT**

3. Teachers in the Community



Being a member of the teaching profession is a role that is respected in the community and carries with it both privileges and responsibilities. As members of the profession, teachers should ensure that they are consistently:

- Meeting the physical, emotional, and psychological requirements of being a teacher, in order to care for both their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their learners. **I** **RT**
- Making themselves aware of external agency services and support staff available, as appropriate to individual learner's needs, and accessing them when necessary. **I** **RT**
- Behaving in a manner that reflects their professional role in the learner's life, rather than as a friend or guardian. **I** **RT**
- Remaining aware of the power-imbalance that exists, and treating all learners and their families with integrity and opportunity, without favour or bias. **RY** **RT**
- Maintaining professional relationships and boundaries with learners. Sexualised interactions, including grooming of a learner by a teacher, is never acceptable. **RY** **I** **RT**
- Showing no favour to particular families, including the receiving of gifts and personal invitations, to maintain impartiality. **I**

It should be noted that teachers working in rural or remote locations, in particular, may encounter situations where their social group includes learners' families. This may require teachers to be especially aware of how their decisions outside of the education setting may impact on their reputation as a teacher. If in doubt, they should seek advice from their site's leadership.

- Being responsive to reasonable requests and concerns of family members. **I** **RT**
- Being respectful of the cultural and social backgrounds of families and tailoring communication in a way that allows the best opportunity for their involvement in a learner's education. **RY** **RT**

Teachers are often seen as leaders or role models in the community. Guidance given in the Code is provided so that teachers may consider situational context within understood professional boundaries. This does not mean that teachers cannot have personal lives or opinions, and they are not expected to be infallible. However, teachers should consider the way they present themselves to the public as a member of the profession, to ensure they do not harm their own reputation, and so as not to bring the teaching profession into disrepute.

Online

It is recognised that online tools can be a powerful educational resource when used appropriately. Some social media platforms, such as LinkedIn require teachers to have a public profile as part of the profession. Others allow teachers to share resources. While using such platforms teachers should be aware of how they represent the profession. Teachers should take extra consideration as to how they represent themselves through personal social media accounts, including but not limited to sites such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, and how this may reflect on them as a professional. This includes:

- Representing the profession and their employer with respect online. RY I RT
- Considering carrying out personal online activity anonymously, judiciously, and/or using strong settings to protect their own privacy. Teachers must be aware that regardless of steps taken to protect their privacy, online material can be found by anyone in the community, and offensive content or material that reflects poorly on the teaching community should not be posted, as this may reflect on professional conduct. RT I
- Being aware of learners' privacy and not posting the image or name of a learner on an employment-related social media account without the appropriate permissions. RY I RT
- Considering their professional integrity by moderating how they interact with members of their educational community through social media. I

In Public

- When in public, recognising that personal behaviour may be considered by the wider community as a reflection on themselves and the teaching profession. I RT
- Accepting that teachers will sometimes share social spaces with their learners and families, and employing judgement about how and when this occurs, to protect their own integrity and professional boundaries. I RT

4. Teachers and their Colleagues



Teachers carry out different roles in educational contexts, from early career teachers to leadership roles and employers. Some teachers do not work at educational sites at all. Regardless of their place of employment, teachers are part of a group of professionals, which includes appropriate conduct towards peers and colleagues, including:

- Always treating colleagues with courtesy and respect. RY I RT
- Taking a collaborative approach to resources and teaching practices to support colleagues, especially early career teachers. RY I RT
- Appropriately sharing knowledge about learners' individual approaches to their education. I RT
- Recognising that bullying and harassment can take a variety of forms, and may represent unprofessional conduct. RY I RT
- Discussing professional differences constructively. RY I RT
- Recognising that teachers are viewed as a professional group in the wider community, and that the conduct of individuals can impact on the profession as a whole. I RT

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

AITSL:	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.
APST:	Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
Colleague:	Teachers' colleagues include other teachers, employers, school leadership, SSOs, ancillary health care providers such as speech therapists or social workers, or any profession a teacher interacts with as part of their work.
Cultural Safety:	An environment where spiritual, social and linguistic identities are acknowledged and respected, and where meaning and experience can be shared free from denial.
ECA:	Early Childhood Australia.
Family:	Anyone who cares for children and young people in home-based settings, including parents, grandparents, foster-parents, and other carers.
ITE:	Initial Teacher Education. Higher education providers deliver accredited ITE programs to pre-service teachers.
Learner:	Anyone who attends a site to receive education, in particular children and young people.
PST:	Pre-service teacher. Someone who is completing an ITE course with the aim of becoming a registered teacher.
SAT:	Special Authority to Teach. The Teachers Registration Board may, on application by a person who is not a registered teacher, in its discretion, grant the applicant a special authority to teach for a period and subject to conditions specified by the Board. SATs are approved to teach in particular locations, to teach particular subject specialisations, or to allow them to teach while they are completing an ITE qualification. SATs are considered in the same way as registered teachers in the Code.
Site:	Anywhere that teaching occurs, including long day care centres, kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools.
Teacher:	Any individual who holds registration with the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia.
The Code:	The Teacher Registration Board of South Australia Code of Conduct.



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