



School Excellence Framework

Frequently asked questions

Q1 What is the School Excellence Framework?

NSW public schools are committed to ongoing improvement in the pursuit of excellence.

The School Excellence Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future, and how to work towards achieving this. It identifies quality practice across the three key domains of education – Learning, Teaching and Leading.

It draws on evidence from national and international research and improvement processes, including the National School Improvement Tool developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research.

The School Excellence Framework focuses on those school practices that evidence shows are most directly related to continuous, school-wide improvement and better student outcomes.

Q2 What is the Framework for?

The School Excellence Framework supports NSW public schools in their pursuit of excellence.

The Framework supports school planning. Its clear description of the key elements of high quality practice supports schools as they engage their communities in the development of a shared vision, the identification of strategic priorities, and the ongoing tracking of progress towards them. In this way, the School Excellence Framework supports continuous improvement at school and system levels.

The Framework also meets one of our obligations under the National Education Reform Agreement to implement a model of school improvement that includes standards for high quality schooling.

Q3 What are the strengths of this Framework?

The School Excellence Framework is based on national and international evidence of what works to drive school and systemic improvement (see the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation's literature review: <http://cese.nsw.gov.au>).

The Framework contains clear and detailed descriptions of high quality practice across the critical elements of schooling – learning, teaching, and leading. It extends beyond students' academic performance outcomes to critical enablers like student wellbeing.

In keeping with best practice, the Framework recognises that change is driven by agency and ownership at the local level, within schools and their communities. The School Excellence Framework is fully integrated into newly streamlined planning processes for schools. Importantly, the Framework supports schools' accountability to their communities as well as to the Department.

The Framework is underpinned by tools of the highest standards. The value-added measurement methodology is cutting-edge and has been peer-reviewed by national and international experts. Its unique ability to adjust for factors outside the control of schools that impact on student achievement, makes it one of the fairest sources of information.

Q4 How will the Framework be used in school planning and reporting processes?

Schools will develop a school plan by consulting with their school communities to develop a shared vision and to identify three key strategic directions that will form the basis of the upcoming three-year planning cycle. The School Excellence Framework gives schools a clear description against which to determine improvement goals and to measure progress. It is a statement of system expectations of the quality we commit to deliver for our students and staff across all public schools in NSW.

Schools will conduct annual self-assessments of their progress towards achieving the improvement measures set out in the school plan. The School Excellence Framework will help schools make informed and consistent judgements. The product for each school will be an annual report which flows from the school plan and the self-assessment process.

Q5 When will schools start to use the Framework?

From 2015, school planning and reporting will be underpinned by the School Excellence Framework. Schools will self-assess using the Framework to inform their annual school reports and school planning process.

Q6 What is the validation process?

Each year schools will undertake a self-assessment of practice and development utilising the School Excellence Framework, to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. They will report these outcomes as part of their annual school report.

Over a five-year cycle, each school will have their self-assessments validated against the School Excellence Framework by a panel made up of a Principal School Leadership officer and a colleague principal. Schools will submit a self-assessment report providing supporting evidence and involving discussion with the panel. The product will be a report to the school to provide feedback on the validation process.

Q7 When will the five-year cycle start?

Schools will undertake their first self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework in 2015 as part of their annual self-assessment process. A first group of volunteer schools will also participate in the validation process next year as part of the further development of the approach. By 2020, all public schools in NSW will have had their self-assessments externally validated for the first time.

Q8 How does the Framework support school improvement?

The School Excellence Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future.

All schools have areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. The School Excellence Framework is designed to help them identify these and plan strategies for further improvement as part of their annual self-assessment and planning process.

If the external validation process identifies any areas for improvement, the school's Director, Public Schools NSW will work with the principal to implement appropriate strategies and, if required, a follow-up school review.

The Director, in consultation with the principal, could also seek to have the school's progress externally validated outside the scheduled five-year cycle.

Q9 Is this the same as school registration?

No. The School Excellence Framework is separate to the registration of NSW public schools by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES). School registration is about providing external assurance that public schools comply with minimum standards for operating a school, as specified under the Education Act. In contrast, the School Excellence Framework is about ongoing school development.

Q10 How will the Framework be reported to the school community?

Schools report annually to their communities in the school's annual report. This involves schools making assessments of their ongoing progress towards the strategic priorities identified in their school plan. Also included in the annual report will be the results of the school's self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework, outlining the next steps to be pursued as part of their ongoing development.

Q11 Will the Framework change over time?

Yes. As schools participate in the five-year validation cycle, this will provide the opportunity to collect contextual information and further build the evidence-base for the School Excellence Framework.

Q12 What support will be available to schools?

The Department will provide a range of support for schools as part of the annual school planning and reporting processes.

- Schools will have access to quantitative data through the Business Intelligence tool and other sources.
- An evidence guide will be developed to support schools in preparing their summary of evidence for their submission to the validation panel. Over time, a bank of examples will be developed to share good practice and promote consistency of judgement.
- Schools will also be able to seek advice and support from their Director, Public Schools NSW and their Principal, School Leadership.