

Cambridge English

Teaching Framework

How and why the Teaching Framework was developed

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Cambridge English Teaching Qualifications have achieved wide recognition and acceptance by constantly evolving to reflect and encourage good practice in language teaching and teacher training. As part of that evolution, this framework has been developed to help explain clearly to teachers and their employers how our teaching qualifications map onto a core syllabus of competencies and how teachers are supported by our increased range of professional development opportunities.

Aim of the framework

The Cambridge English Teaching Framework has been designed to encapsulate the key knowledge and skills needed for effective teaching at a variety of levels and in different contexts. It aims to:

- help teachers to identify where they are in their professional career;
- help teachers and their employers to think about where to go next and identify developmental activities to get there.

The framework describes teacher competencies across four levels, and four aspects of teacher knowledge and skill (categories), and is a profiling grid rather than a performance assessment tool (see North 2009). It is intended to show stages of a teacher's development at any one point in time, rather than provide a description of 'a good teacher'. This approach recognises that teachers' development over time is not predictable or defined by years of experience only, and that most teachers' development will be 'jagged' (Rossner 2009:5), in that, across the categories, teachers will be at different levels at any one time. As their professional needs change, the profile will help them to identify their developmental priorities.

Rationale for the categories

The framework is underpinned by evidence from the extensive written records of teacher assessments from around the world, to which Cambridge English Language Assessment has access. These include assessors' reports of lesson observations on pre-service (*CELTA*) and in-service (*ICELT* and *Delta*) courses, as well as detailed background documents in the form of assignments (*CELTA* and *ICELT*) and portfolios of work (*ICELT* and *Delta*) which demonstrate the processes that teachers go through when planning and reflecting on their teaching. This unique resource has provided us with detailed descriptions of classroom practice at different stages of teachers' careers. Equally importantly, these assessment reports reflect the realities of teaching and learning in many different contexts, which are in turn reflected in the design of the framework. The development of the framework has also been informed by theory, in particular a wide-ranging review of current teacher education literature, as well as input by external consultants. This research-based approach has been complemented by the parallel development of an edited volume on assessment in teacher education, 'Assessing language teachers' professional skills and knowledge' in the series 'Studies in Language Testing' (Wilson and Poulter, forthcoming). The levels and categories of the framework have also been informed by a review of the

CELTA, ICALT and Delta syllabuses, which are themselves supported by a substantial body of information about their application in practice from the statistical analysis of both candidate information and examination results and the detailed annual reports by the Chief Assessors and Chief Moderators for each qualification.

The framework has four main categories, with each of these categories broken down further, making a total of 32 framework components. The framework is also organised according to four levels of teacher competency: *Foundation; Developing; Proficient; Expert*. Evidence from the assessment reports and candidate feedback to which Cambridge English Language Assessment has access shows that, despite the lack of agreement as to what constitutes the knowledge-base for language teaching (see e.g., Ellis, 2009; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Graves, 2009; Johnson, 2009), teachers themselves, along with their employers, understand the importance of enhancing their professional knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- 1. *Learning and the Learner*; Ellis (2009) and Graves (2009) emphasise the importance of knowledge of the principles of second language acquisition (SLA) and general theories of learning and of application of this knowledge to the teaching context (see also Popko, 2005).
- 2. *Language Knowledge and Awareness for Teaching*; Freeman et al. (2009) see knowledge of language and knowledge *about* language as vital to effective language teaching. Andrews (2007) and Bartels (2009) emphasise the importance of knowing about language (KAL), an important aspect of which has been shown to be teachers' knowledge of terminology for describing language (Andrews, 1997; Andrews & McNeil, 2005; Borg, 1999).
- 3. *Teaching, Learning and Assessment*
 - *Planning language learning*. Lesson planning (individual and series of lessons) is a key teaching competency, and is included in most teacher training programmes. At higher levels of teacher development, this will involve reasoning skills and decision-making during the lesson (Roberts, 1998), which are likely to be 'deliberate practice' (Tsui, 2003), as teachers develop more sophisticated routines from experience. Both Graves (2009) and Roberts (1998) also emphasise the need for teachers to understand principles of curriculum, syllabus and course planning.
 - *Using language learning resources and materials*. The importance of evaluating, selecting, adapting and using learning materials is well documented (see Tomlinson, 1998), and is included in most practical teaching guides (e.g., Ur, 1991; Harmer 2007).
 - *Managing language learning*. Classroom, or interaction management, is widely recognised as a crucial aspect of effective teaching, and is given prominence in practical teaching guides and teacher training syllabuses. Here this includes; 'creating and maintaining a constructive learning environment', 'using differentiation strategies', 'setting up and managing classroom activities' and 'correcting learner language'. Error correction is viewed as essential in language teaching (see e.g., Ellis, 1994; Lightbown & Spada, 2006).
 - *Teaching language systems*. It is widely recognised that second/foreign language learning in the classroom is enhanced by explicit attention to language systems (Batstone & Ellis, 2008; Ellis, 2006; Spada & Lightbown, 2008).
 - *Teaching language skills*. It is generally accepted that language use is best promoted by skills development, and that knowledge of language systems alone is not sufficient (Skehan, 1998; Spada & Lightbown, 2008).
 - *Assessing language learning*. 'Assessment literacy' (Stiggins, 1995), the conscious understanding of principles of assessment, as well as the necessary skills to design, mark and give feedback

on effective tests, is recognised as a vital competency, and both Coombe et al. (2009) and Harmer (2007) see it as a key component of in-service language teacher education.

- *Professional Development and Values.* Professional development is widely viewed as creating a platform for teacher learning (Harmer, 2007), and it is generally accepted that reflective skills are key in enabling teachers to evaluate their teaching and identify areas for improvement (Korthagen, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Russell, 2005). Recent work on teacher cognition (Borg, 2006) also suggests that conscious and guided reflection on teacher beliefs is an essential tool for promoting teacher learning (Richards et al., 2001). ‘Practitioner knowledge’ (Hiebert et al., 2002; Johnson, 2009) has been legitimised by the following: reflective teaching (Wallace, 1991; Farrell, 2007), action research (Burns, 2009), experimental teaching (Allwright & Hanks, 2009) and teacher research (Freeman, 1998), and is now seen as a key element of the knowledge base of teacher education (Borg, 2006; Barduhn & Johnson, 2009). A range of these different research activities has also been shown to be valuable in promoting teacher learning (Borg, 2013; Wallace, 1996). The role of a teacher in the 21st century is increasingly seen as involving the ability to work in a team and collaborate with colleagues and also to work within an institution, taking on different roles and responsibilities where necessary (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Freeman et al. 2009; Leung, 2009).

While factors such as specific qualifications obtained, training undertaken, number of hours/years of formal teaching experience, or degree of language proficiency are all important, they may not necessarily be directly related to a particular level of competence and are, therefore, not specified in the framework as such. It is acknowledged that a certain level of language proficiency is required in order to teach language effectively, however any minimum language level required of the teacher is likely to vary depending on the teaching context and language levels of the group of learners being taught. See [CEFR levels](#)¹ for guidance on language proficiency:

Levels in the framework

There is no support in the literature on teacher expertise for a *definite* number of levels or stages of teacher development; indeed, it is widely accepted that learning to teach is ongoing and there is no ‘terminal competence’ (Graves 2009). However, the four levels identified for the framework – Foundation, Developing, Proficient and Expert – map a ‘discernible developmental trajectory’ (Graves 2009) and reflect the career development of many teachers, as well as their self-assessments of their own competence. Despite the lack of consensus as to what defines different levels of teacher development (Murray, 2001; Katz & Snow, 2009), research into ‘teacher expertise’ does suggest noticeable differences between ‘novice’ and ‘expert’ teachers: with ‘novice’ being more concerned with control, while ‘experts’ have more developed routines (Tsui, 2003, 2009). Studies of ‘novice’ and ‘expert’ teachers suggest that teacher expertise involves the development of schemata/routines based on extensive experience of classrooms and learners, which ‘expert’ teachers rely on unconsciously for much of their instructional decisions (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Tsui 2003).

A central point to emerge from recent teacher cognition research is that teachers’ thinking and behaviour are guided by a set of personal, practical, systematic, dynamic and often unconscious beliefs (Borg 2006). This suggests that ‘the process of learning to teach is not a linear accrual of various aspects of teaching, but rather a gradual process of proceduralising aspects of formal and experiential knowledge, gained from teacher education and classroom experience and mediated by beliefs and contextual constraints’ (Phipps 2010:23). In this framework, the four levels represent bands of increasing competence, which can be characterised by a gradual increase in understanding, applied with more and

¹ www.cambridgeenglish.org/cefr

more sophistication, using a wider range of techniques across a more complex range of situations and contexts. A detailed teacher profile has been developed to exemplify each of the levels across each of the four categories and 32 components of the framework.

Relation to existing frameworks

During the past 10 years a number of continuing professional development (CPD) frameworks have been developed in both general education and language education. The first stage in the development of this framework was a literature review of existing CPD frameworks in the field. These serve a range of different purposes and are used by teachers, teacher educators, managers and accreditation bodies. There are also various sets of performance standards used in language education, such as the TESOL/NCATE Standards (TESOL, 2002), but these are not discussed here. The following four frameworks are used in general education:

- *Professional Standards for Teachers (PST)*, Dept. for Education, UK. This framework, used for inspection and performance management purposes in the primary/secondary sector, no longer refers to different levels (Department for Education, 2013).
- *Competency Framework for Teachers (CFT)*, Dept. of Education & Skills, Western Australia. This aims to describe dimensions of effective teaching as 'a reference point for professional reflection, discussion and action' (Department of Education and Skills, 2004: iii), although it is also used for performance management purposes, and distinguishes between three different 'phases' of teachers' career development.
- *Framework for Teaching, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)*, USA. This 'identifies those aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning' (Danielson, 2011), is organised according to four levels of teacher competence, and is intended to be used for self-assessment and reflection by teachers.
- *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)*, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Australia. This is 'a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality' (APST, 2011), is organised according to four levels and is also intended to be used for self-reflection purposes.

The following five frameworks were specifically designed for language education:

- *CAELA Framework for Professional Development*, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC. This was produced in 2010 to help 'improve the provision of teacher education programmes and facilitate learner progress through a systematic, coherent, and sustainable professional development effort' (Center for Adult English Language Acquisition, 2010:6). There is no reference to different levels of teacher competence.
- *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)*, USA. This framework was developed for all subjects including 'English as a New Language', which targets 'early adolescence through young adulthood', namely ages 11-18 (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2010). It is used mainly for inspection purposes, but also includes space for teachers to conduct their own reflection prior to inspection, and does not distinguish between different levels of teacher competence.
- *BALEAP Competency Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes*, UK. This was designed in 2008 in order to: 'support the professional development of EAP teachers within institutions; accredit individual teacher portfolios as evidence of professional achievement; EAP teacher recruitment; course design for teacher training in EAP; and course accreditation for

teacher training in EAP' (BALEAP, 2008:2). There are no levels of teacher competency, but it is underpinned by a theoretical background (see Alexander, 2010).

- *British Council CPD Framework for Teachers of English, UK*. This has been developed in order to help teachers to plan their own career development and choose the most appropriate professional development activities to suit their needs (British Council, 2011), and outlines a series of teacher competencies across six distinct levels. Further background rationale is provided (British Council, 2012), which attempts to define the different levels, and provide guidance to teachers in how best to define their own level.
- *EAQUALS Profiling Grid for Language Teachers, UK*. The European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS) Profiling Grid is intended to be used prior to inspections and accreditation visits to enable managers within an organisation to profile their teachers (Rossner, 2009). The grid outlines a range of descriptors for teachers, according to six levels of teacher development (Teacher Profiling Grid, 2013). The development of the framework has clearly been informed by theory (see North & Mateva, 2005; North, 2009), and is by far the most elaborate and comprehensive of all the frameworks reviewed here.

Guide for users

An important feature of this Cambridge English Teaching Framework is the provision of guidance to teachers in how to self-assess their CPD needs and how to improve their own competencies by selecting appropriate CPD activities. Self-assessment is an important element of professional development (Freeman et al., 2009; Katz & Snow, 2009), so it is important to provide guidance and training to intended users of the framework in how to use it for their own professional development. This guidance will be provided initially by a questionnaire, which teachers will be able to complete online, in order to establish their current level of competencies with regard to this framework.

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