
**Professional standards for accomplished teaching of
languages and cultures**

Language specific annotations: Italian

Standards and annotations

In 2005 the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA) developed a set of professional standards which were published as *Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures*. These *Standards* were designed to reflect the high levels of achievement of accomplished teachers of languages.

The development of the *Standards* was part of a project funded by the then Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). As a part of this project annotations of the *Standards* were developed for Indonesian as part of a collaborative process with Indonesian teachers. The original project did not envisage the development of annotations for other languages; however, the experience of the Indonesian teachers in this project indicated that the annotations were very useful in supporting their work with the *Standards* in reflecting on their own practice.

In a second project on professional standards, which began in 2007, the AFMLTA decided that it was important to extend the number of languages for which annotations were available. This project, which was funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) developed annotations for a further six languages: Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish.

The annotations were developed through a collaborative process in which accomplished teachers from around Australia considered how the AFMLTA *Standards* applied to the teaching of these languages. The resulting annotations have many similarities and differences across languages. In developing these annotations it was felt that it was important to remain as faithful as possible to the issues and ideas raised by the participating teachers for each language rather than attempting to “level out” the annotations and develop greater consistency across languages. This means that the annotations can be seen as a particular understanding of the *Standards* as they apply to teaching a particular language at a particular moment in time. This is an especially important feature for annotations as they are not themselves standards, but rather a working through of the implications of standards. The annotations should therefore not be thought of as definitive statements about language teaching and learning, but rather as guides and starting points for teachers of particular languages in working with the *Standards*. It is expected that each teacher or group of teachers working with these annotations will develop their own personal versions of these annotations as they apply in their own teaching context.

Preface to the Italian language annotations

These annotations were prepared in consultation with accomplished teachers of Italian. They have been developed with reference to the levels of knowledge expected of an experienced and capable language teacher. This means that they do not represent a base level of knowledge or dispositions but rather are intended to guide teachers' professional learning over the course of their career. They are therefore aspirational statements of what accomplished teachers of Italian understand to be indicative of an exemplary teacher of Italian.

While the AFMLTA *Standards* apply equally to all teachers, these annotations should not be read as implying that all teachers of Italian will use their knowledge in the same ways. It must be recognised that the opportunities that individual teachers have to use and develop their professional capability as a teacher of Italian will be different.

The AFMLTA *Standards* are designed to be generic across languages and for many of the individual standards there are no specific annotations which apply only to Italian. It is the standards listed under the heading **Language and culture** which are the most relevant for the Italian-specific annotations. In those parts of the annotations which deal with knowledge of language and culture, we have used as a baseline, the knowledge that non-native speaker teachers should be expected to have to be effective teachers of Italian, recognising that native speakers and non-native speakers acquire their knowledge of the language and culture in different ways. However, it is emphasised that the annotations regarding specific knowledge of language and culture apply to all teachers independently of their language background.

In some cases, the teachers of Italian working to develop the annotations felt that there were some issues which were not strictly specific to Italian, but which they wished to highlight as important considerations for the teaching and learning of Italian. This is indicated in the text of the annotations. These annotations should not be considered to be unique to Italian or to be the only ways that the *Standards* themselves apply to Italian.

In reading the annotations for Italian, it is important to remember that Italian is spoken in many societies. This means that teachers of Italian must engage with this diversity. It is not possible for any teacher of Italian to know either through experience or education about all of these societies; however, teachers need to be aware of the diverse nature of the Italian-speaking communities in various countries.

For Italian it is important also to consider the place the language and its cultures has in Australian society as the result of immigration. In particular for Italian it is necessary to consider the nature of teachers' and learners' connections with the language and culture. Some teachers and students may speak Italian as a first language, others may be background speakers with more limited experiences of the language and culture, still others may have no prior attachment to Italian prior to learning the language through the education system. This means that the teaching and learning of Italian in Australia is complex and that teachers need to consider and respond to the diversity of learners and what they bring to their learning. The diversity of teachers is also an important feature of the teaching of Italian in Australia and it is important to recognise and value the different capabilities and experiences which this diversity of teachers brings to the profession.

Teacher standards which have Italian-specific annotations

Language and culture

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| <p>Accomplished languages and cultures teachers are both users and teachers of linguistic and cultural knowledge.</p> <p>They have knowledge of the language(s) and culture(s) they teach which enables them to participate readily in interactions in the language in and out of the classroom. In addition, they have a developed intercultural awareness and know how to communicate across languages and cultures.</p> <p>They are actively involved in maintaining and developing their knowledge of the language and culture they teach and seek out opportunities to use their knowledge and to keep up to date with how the language and culture are used in target language communities.</p> | <p>Accomplished teachers of Italian are able to use Italian in a range of classroom-related functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ using Italian in a principled way for regular classroom interaction (e.g. management/organisation, instruction, discussing) and creating a learning environment○ knowing the language and culture of topics relevant for the age group they are teaching○ producing sustained oral and written texts in relevant classroom genres and demonstrating the ability to model these for students○ recognising and using instances of Italian language and culture to raise awareness of more general issues of language, culture and diversity○ teaching in Italian using vocabulary, grammar and discourse structures relevant to the age and level of their learners <p>Accomplished teachers of Italian have the ability to use Italian outside classroom contexts, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ managing the needs of basic living and travelling in Italy○ engaging in casual conversation with other speakers of Italian○ participating in some formal language contexts (such as visiting a school or meeting local community members)○ making telephone calls, reading and writing e-mails and/or letters○ reading newspapers and magazines, watching television broadcasts and listening to radio programs with a general understanding. (However, in news broadcasts and current affairs, aspects such as assumed knowledge, speed of delivery, specialised vocabulary, acronyms, etc require a greater linguistic and cultural repertoire than is needed for teaching)○ reading literature and using contemporary media (e.g. magazines, internet, television, films, etc.) for enjoyment |
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| <p>They have explicit knowledge and a working understanding of the linguistic and cultural systems of the language and how these systems work in the social lives of people.</p> | <p>They have explicit knowledge of the linguistic system of Italian and demonstrate this in their teaching, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ principles of sentence structure (word order, coordination and subordination, etc.) ○ the sound system and orthographic system of Italian ○ features of the nominal system: e.g. gender, number, articles, adjectival agreement ○ features of the verb system: regular and irregular verb forms, tenses, moods, voice, sequence of tenses ○ principles of word formation (prefixes, suffixes, etc.) ○ uses of prepositions ○ features of the pronoun system: formal/informal, omission of pronouns, position of pronouns <p>They have explicit knowledge of aspects of Italian language use e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ differences between spoken and written language ○ differences between levels of formality (e.g. non-use of verb prefixes) ○ differences between colloquial and standard Italian ○ recognising the effect of context on language use and linguistic meaning ○ understanding of common Italian politeness conventions and how they may vary according to regions and age groups <p>They have awareness of some fundamental aspects of Italian values, attitudes and linguistic and cultural practices found within Italian-speaking communities:</p> |
| <p>They understand the relationship between language and culture and have an awareness and understanding of the role of language and culture in human interaction and identity. They use this knowledge to enhance their teaching.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ awareness of the dynamic nature of Italian language and society ○ awareness of the diversity of Italian language and culture in Italy and in other parts of the world ○ awareness of the importance of regional identities and regional cultures in the Italian-speaking world ○ awareness of dialects and their place and value in Italian-speaking communities, and their relationship to standard Italian ○ awareness of Italian language use in Australia and the ways in which this has been influenced by English ○ awareness of the significant differences between Italian language and culture between Australia and Italy ○ awareness of the mutual influence of Italian and Australian ways of life and related language ○ awareness of the relationship between Italian and other languages (e.g. Latin, Romance languages, English) ○ awareness of the impact of geography (place) and history (time) on contemporary Italy and Italians ○ awareness of the impact of current migration patterns within Italy and the influence of other cultures on Italian society today |

Teacher standards which are generic but which have special considerations for teaching and learning of Italian

Language pedagogy

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| <p>Accomplished teachers have a developed understanding of the language learning process. Their understanding comes from their formal and informal learning about teaching and learning and also from their own experiences of being a language learner and user, either of the language they teach or of another language.</p> <p>They have knowledge of current developments in language learning and teaching research and develop their knowledge further by engaging in professional learning, professional reading and/or research.</p> <p>They use their knowledge of language and culture in order to promote learning in ways which are appropriate for learners in context and which cater for the diversity of abilities among their students, using authentic language and resources.</p> <p>They create a culture of learning in their classrooms which fosters interest in languages and cultures and encourages learners to accept responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>They have at their disposal a range of methodologies for languages and cultures teaching and in their practice select from these in a principled way, taking into consideration the learners, the learning context, curriculum goals, and the aspect of language being taught. These choices are made at both the overall level of planning and in teaching in the classroom.</p> <p>They have a view of curriculum in which planning, teaching, resourcing, assessing, evaluating and renewing are done coherently according to a principled approach to languages and cultures teaching. Accomplished teaching is reflected by an ability to explain the choices being made in planning and teaching.</p> <p>Their approach to assessment examines understanding, learning, and performance, and uses assessment to foster learning as well as to evaluate learning. They know and use a range of assessment approaches and select assessment tasks which are appropriate to the purposes of the assessment and use the assessment for effective feedback and reporting.</p> <p>They are informed and critical users of technology in language teaching and use technology both to support learning and as a basis for learning to communicate using technologies.</p> | <p>These standards are generic to all languages. However, there appear to be some issues particularly relevant to Italian.</p> <p>Accomplished teachers of Italian:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ construct and reflect on links between languages and cultures recognising that students have differing relationships with Italian language and culture○ provide a balance between written and spoken language use and productive and receptive capabilities○ teach Italian in ways which are sensitive to learners' knowledge of Italian dialects and working with this knowledge in constructive ways○ use resources to expose students to contemporary Italy○ select materials which introduce students to a broad range of perspectives on Italian cultures (e.g. North, South, insider, outsider, diaspora)○ recognise what is missing in the ways textbooks present Italian (e.g. focus on formal registers and written language forms) and providing material to enrich students' exposure to and familiarity with a range of Italian usages |
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Ethics and responsibility

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| <p>Accomplished languages and cultures teachers take responsibility for the teaching and learning relationship and for social and cultural relationships in their teaching.</p> <p>They have a developed knowledge of their current groups of students, and strategies at their disposal to get to know new groups each term.</p> <p>They establish trust between teacher and learners which fosters an empathetic view of self and others.</p> <p>They know and reflect on their own values and ideological positions and demonstrate respect for the different values of learners, communities and cultures.</p> <p>They seek to enable students to understand issues from multiple perspectives so that they can make their own choices and judgments.</p> | <p>These standards are generic to all languages. However, there appear to be some issues particularly relevant to Italian:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ sensitivity to the Italian presence in Australia as it is experienced in teachers' communities and classrooms○ commitment to valuing the knowledge that background-speaker and non-background speakers bring to their learning of Italian |
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Professional relationships

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| <p>Accomplished languages and cultures teachers are part of a professional educational community and they establish professional relationships with other languages and cultures teachers, with teachers in other disciplines, with students, with parents and with school communities.</p> <p>They contribute to the profession in a range of ways which work to develop a culture of professionalism.</p> <p>Professional relationships are manifested by links to and collaboration with other teachers in their schools and in the wider educational community and accomplished teachers actively network with other languages and cultures teachers informally and through professional associations.</p> <p>They actively participate in mentoring more junior teachers.</p> <p>They undertake leadership in language-related areas locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.</p> | <p>These standards are generic. However in Italian teaching and learning, professional relationships with community organisations are an important part of the networks of teachers of Italian.</p> |
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Advocacy

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| <p>Accomplished languages and cultures teachers are advocates for language learning, intercultural communication and intercultural sensitivity, linguistic and cultural diversity.</p> <p>They are advocates for languages both with and for students, schools and communities and engage with wider community to promote languages.</p> | <p>These standards are generic. However, in the context of Italian teachers may also need to advocate for recognition of the contribution of Italian migration to Australia in other curriculum areas.</p> |
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Teacher standards which are generic and have no language specific annotations for teaching and learning of Italian

Educational theory and practice

Accomplished languages and cultures teachers have knowledge of child/learner development appropriate to the level at which they teach and apply this knowledge in all aspects of their teaching.

They engage with current theories of education, general principles of teaching and learning, and classroom management. They keep up to date with developments in the field of education through professional learning and professional reading.

They are aware of the culture of schooling in the contexts in which they teach. They actively engage with education policies, and curriculum frameworks. They are able to locate languages within a wider educational context, creating connections with other curriculum areas and with extracurricular activities.

Active engagement with wider context

Languages and cultures teaching is fundamentally about relationships to wider contexts and the ability to connect the local to the global.

Accomplished languages and cultures teachers actively engage with the social, political, economic, and technological climate of the times.

They are able to connect with a wider sphere of understanding of how languages and language learning relate to wider global realities.

They are aware of the impact of languages and cultures on the local and global context and on how people understand their place in the world.

They foster learners' active engagement with such broader issues and prepare their students to become knowledgeable and responsible adult participants in the global community.

Personal characteristics

Accomplished languages and cultures teachers are passionate about languages and cultures and about teaching.

They have a commitment to their own continuing professional and personal learning.

They connect and engage with their learners and inspire students and others.

They have a belief in their students as emerging bilinguals/multilinguals developing the knowledge and awareness they need to become effective intercultural communicators.

They adopt a critical stance on their own work and to themselves as mediators of languages and cultures, which they demonstrate through reflection, questioning, inquiry and/or research into their practices, values and beliefs.

Program standards

Effective languages and cultures programs rely on the availability of effective teachers. However, while teachers are central to promoting students' learning, the work of teachers is affected by the conditions in which they work and these conditions in turn affect the quality of teaching possible in a particular setting. The AFMLTA believes that quality teaching results from a collective responsibility for quality languages and cultures programs from teachers, administrators and school communities. Program standards are therefore central to a description of teaching standards.

Effective languages and cultures programs are actively valued within the school culture. Languages and cultures teaching and learning are valued explicitly in schools' statements and implicitly in the schools' planning, timetabling and resourcing for languages. Schools actively acknowledge and foster connections between languages and other curriculum areas.

Effective languages and cultures programs focus on progression in language learning both during the year and across years. They acknowledge learners' movement through the program and ensure that prior knowledge is maintained and developed. They recognise that language learning is a life-long process and needs sustained learning during schooling.

Effective languages and cultures programs have timetabling for languages and cultures which allocates adequate time to languages to enable effective and sustained language learning, recognising that achievement in language learning is dependent on time on task. Effective timetabling also gives attention to the frequency and regularity of language lessons.

Effective languages and cultures programs are adequately staffed to ensure that language learning can be allocated adequate curriculum time and language class sizes can be limited. Ideally there should be more than one teacher of a language in a school. Staffing models using itinerant teachers have a direct impact on program quality as they prevent teachers from forming effective professional relations with students, other teachers and the wider school community, and prevent teachers from teaching as effectively as they could in more stable and better supported work environments.

Effective languages and cultures programs are characterised by the allocation of dedicated space which is suitable for languages and cultures teaching and learning.

Effective languages and cultures programs have budgets which ensure appropriate access to resources for languages and cultures teaching and learning, including print-based and multimedia materials, reference books such as dictionaries, and information technology and library resources.

Effective languages and cultures programs recognise the practical and performance-based nature of language learning and the need for class sizes which are appropriate for facilitating language learning as a practical and intensive form of learning. The creation of language class groups should also take into consideration the learning histories of students, their previous experiences of language learning and their background.

Effective languages and cultures programs recognise that students transferring between schools and schooling systems arrive with differing levels of knowledge of and exposure to the languages and cultures taught in the school and have strategies to facilitate transitions and enhance learning.

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