



**Teaching
Council of
Aotearoa
New Zealand**

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Relief Teacher Pathways consultation

Frequently asked questions

What is the size of the problem with relief teaching? How many more relief teachers do we need?

We can't tell you how many relief teachers the sector is short of, but we can tell you that school and centre professional leaders are telling us that the shortage is acute. Ministry of Education data shows that the headcount of relief teachers in the state and state-integrated schooling workforce was at around 9570 in 2023, down from a peak of 12,272 in 2011.

Would the proposed day-to-day relief teacher's practising certificate be a lesser type of certification?

No. We anticipate that teachers will move easily between practising certificate types as they change roles, and that there will be times when someone on a day-to-day relief teacher's practising certificate will be working in a permanent teaching role and vice versa. The type of certification isn't about skills, value, or importance – it is about the steps that a teacher takes to maintain their certification.

Would I need to get a new practising certificate if I am a relief teacher and get appointed to a permanent role, or vice versa?

No. We would not expect anyone to have to apply for a new practising certificate type just because their role changes. Instead, we would expect them to seek to change certification type at the point their current practising certificate expires. This is similar to how teachers currently move between Tūturu | Full (Category One) and Pūmau | Full (Category Two) certification.

If I am working as a relief teacher, do I have to have a day-to-day relief teacher's practising certificate?

No. The aim of this practising certificate type is not to classify you as one thing or another – it is about providing an easier pathway to certification. If you would like to maintain your current practising certificate type (or want to change to a different non-relief teacher practising certificate), you can.

If I am working in a full-time permanent role, could I apply for a day-to-day relief teacher's practising certificate?

No. As an employee of a centre or school you will be able to access the full range of support that your employer provides. The existing certification processes will better meet your needs.



Would I apply for a day-to-day relief teacher's practising certificate if I am on a fixed-term, part-time contract?

Maybe. If you have been providing relief across multiple schools or centres over the period of your last practising certificate, then the answer is probably 'yes'. If you are on contract to a single school or centre – even if it is for the purpose of providing relief – then the answer might be 'no'. This is because you should have a good working relationship with a single professional leader, and that means that obtaining a new Tūturu Practising Certificate should be relatively straight-forward. We are also seeking your feedback about when relief teacher certification should be an option.

If relief teaching certification is annual, does that mean I have to seek endorsement and undergo police vetting every year?

You will need to apply for a new practising certificate each year, but some aspects of the process will remain triennial, meaning you will only need to do them every third year. That includes seeking the endorsement of a professional leader and police vetting. However, you will need to apply for the Teaching Council each year, and we would expect you to continue to use the tools we supply to help you plan your professional development and learning and help your professional leader to make their assessment when that time comes around.

I am a beginning teacher who is relief teaching, is this new practising certificate type for me?

Not at the very start of your career. We are proposing that this new practising certificate only be available to teachers who have completed their induction and mentoring, and will not be available to other teachers on Tōmua | Provisional certification. We are conscious that many beginning teachers end up relief teaching, and we intend to review how Tōmua works later this year to help better meet the needs of this group.

Why have you proposed that the relief teaching LAT only allows someone to work in a relief teaching role for 90 days?

The limit around the number of days per year that a LAT holder can work is intended to ensure that use of a LAT holder does not become a long-term solution, when the intention is to help schools and centres get through short-term crisis situations. We have suggested 90 days as the upper limit, because this would allow someone to cover the winter illness months.