



YEARS 9 to 12 COURSE DEVELOPMENT – Critical Friends

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I. Critical Friends

I.1 Purpose of the paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide guidelines on the Critical Friend approach as part of the *Years 9 to 12 Learning Course Development Procedure*.

This paper complements the *Years 9 to 12 Course Development Procedure and Guidelines*.

I.2 Definition of a Critical Friend

The **Critical Friend** approach is one that has been adopted primarily within teacher professional development and assessment practices as a form of structured peer support, and highlights the importance of a collaborative and dialogical approach to feedback (or feed-forward) that is based on trust and dialogue.

In terms of the Years 9 to 12 course development process a Critical Friend can be defined as "a trusted colleague within the teaching profession who questions and challenges, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a course in its development."

(Adapted from: Costa, A & Kallick, B, 1993, Through the Lens of a Critical Friend. Educational Leadership)

I.3 Role of the Critical Friend in relation to Years 9 to 12 Course Development

The *critical friend's process* is inclusive, may at times require confidentiality, and is developed through respectful, professional relationships and reflective practice.

The role of a Critical Friend is to extend, question thinking and to offer alternatives and support the work of Curriculum Leaders (CL) in the course development process.

A Critical Friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the CL or Learning Area Group (LAG) is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work. During the course development process Critical Friends provide independent advice via confidential discussions to the Curriculum Leader on the key directions and changes to the course under consideration/development.

In the context of a major review/development Critical Friends will be asked about the adherence of the proposed course to the curriculum principles, standards, assessment principles and specified course accreditation requirements.

Critical Friends will/can also provide comments on the accuracy, clarity and coherence of content of the proposed course of learning in the context of its development.

A Critical Friend is not required to provide any formal written reports and has no specific involvement with the Learning Area Group.

I.4 Difference between a member of a Learning Area Group and a Critical Friend

In terms of the course development process the role of the LAG is overarching and supports the CL to ratify decisions at key points throughout the development cycle of a course.

The role of a Critical Friend is about assisting ongoing improvement and arriving at a quality outcome. It is essentially a role of support and challenge as the course is written.

Both groups provide checks and balances to ensure that the course developed is robust and of high quality.

To ensure clarity of purpose and avoid role conflict ideally there should not be overlap in terms of membership in these groups. In the event that a person is appointed as both a member of the LAG and as Critical Friend to ensure transparency:

- Identification of dual roles must be communicated to LAG members in the interest of procedural fairness in relation decision making.

Both the roles of the Learning Area Group and Critical Friend process require all members to adhere to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and uphold the Code of Professional Ethics for the Teaching Profession in Tasmania. <http://bit.ly/1q1SF3f> <http://bit.ly/2aOqUcS>

The work of both groups requires confidentiality. Refer to Learning Area Group [Terms of Reference](#) for more detail.

1.5 Appointment Process

Expressions of Interest will be sought from school, and non-school based Critical Friends such as representatives from TasTAFE, University of Tasmania and industry.

Critical Friends, where possible, will reflect a diversity of sector, region and organisation type, to be considered within each course and tranche.

There are recommended to be no more than three school-based Critical Friends for a course and up to two non-school based Critical Friends.

Expressions of Interest process and selection criteria:

Years 9 to 12 Learning will seek expressions of interest for Years 9 to 12 Learning Critical Friends through publication on the Years 11 and 12 website and associated communications.

Process:

- EOIs collected and reviewed by Years 9 to 12 Learning
- Each EOI will be reviewed on the evidence provided against the selection criteria, and against other EOIs received
- **For school-based Critical Friends EOIs:** a set of recommendations will be submitted to the LTA for endorsement
- **For non-school-based Critical Friends EOIs:** a set of recommendations will be submitted to the Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Working Group for endorsement
- If approved/endorsed, Critical Friends will be advised via formal letter of agreement
- All successful and unsuccessful applicants will be advised of the outcome at the same time

Critical Friends may be invited to take part in the process through direct nomination by the Curriculum Leader, if insufficient or unsuitable expressions of interest are received.

Selection Criteria:

To enable consideration of a broad range of perspectives Critical Friends engaged in any given year of course development are, where possible, drawn from each of the three sectors, DoE, Independent and Catholic schools and all regions of the state.

A critical friend may be a practising or recently retired teacher and/or an academic or other expert in the field.

Critical Friends are selected on the basis of their contemporary expertise and experience in the study or related disciplines including:

School Based:

- High-level knowledge and interest in the relevant learning area and/or specific course of learning
- Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of contemporary education practices related to the learning area discipline in Years 9 to 12.
- Current teacher registration and WWVP and Police Check

Non-school based:

- High level knowledge and expertise in the relevant learning area in Years 9 to 12 or post-year 12 education and/or how it applies in business or industry
- Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of contemporary practices related to the learning area discipline in Years 9 to 12 and/or Higher Education and/or Industry

Timeframe

The role of a Critical Friend will exist for the duration of the specified course during its development.

1.6 Payment

Generally there will be no remuneration. Relief for teachers for extended work and tasks may be provided where there is an agreed need. Video conference meetings will reduce the need for extended travel, and travel costs, where required, will be covered within reason according to DoE policies and guidelines.

Links to Other Useful Information

[TASC Senior secondary accreditation framework](#) and other associated course accreditation information is available from the TASC website <https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/providers/accreditation/>

See also the Department of Education, Tasmania procedures and course development support material.

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