



Teach For Australia

**SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE
AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES ACCORD
INTERIM REPORT**

August 2023

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Acknowledgement of Country

Teach For Australia is headquartered on the land of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Our community of teachers, leaders, supporters and partners live and work across a great many more lands.

We pay our respects to the elders past and present of this wide land of Australia, their custodianship, their courage and their resilience.

ABOUT TEACH FOR AUSTRALIA

Teach For Australia (TFA) is a not-for-profit organisation that confronts educational disadvantage. Our vision is an Australia where education gives all children greater choice for their future. Our mission is to grow a community of leaders committed to educational equity.

TFA was founded in 2009 and continues to grow purposefully and strategically, working with more and more schools across Australia. TFA's flagship initiative, the Leadership Development Program (LDP or 'the program'), is Australia's original and leading employment-based postgraduate pathway into teaching. Through the program, TFA recruits, challenges and energises high-calibre people from all walks of life to become 'Associates' – exceptional teachers and inspiring leaders for students at schools serving low socioeconomic communities (ICSEA <1000) in high demand subject areas and hard to staff locations.

The approach is simple yet profound: get great talent to choose to teach, and cultivate their moral purpose to create a collective force of teachers and leaders working to make sure Australia's education opportunities and outcomes are more equitable for children across our nation.

Over 15 years, TFA has navigated barriers to expand nationally with short term government funding and has built a program recognised for quality teaching and leadership. With bipartisan support from Commonwealth, State and Territory governments between 2010-2023, TFA has placed 1450+ Associates across 14 cohorts in 276 partner schools in seven states and territories.

We have proven our model and our mettle:

- **We're attracting great talent in high demand areas, most of whom would not have chosen to teach but for the TFA program.** TFA's 2022 Impact Report confirms almost 50% of TFA teachers are qualified to teach STEM, and more than 60% are either young professionals or mature career changers - pharmacists, lawyers, maths and science academics, engineers, accountants and more.
- **We're exclusively serving harder to staff schools and communities.** 75% of current partner schools are in regional, rural or remote communities. Almost all schools are classified disadvantaged, with an ICSEA <1000.
- **We're demonstrating that employment based pathways can scale beyond the boutique.** Even as we limit ourselves to low income, rural, regional and remote contexts, the program continues to grow. As at March 2023, TFA has our largest numbers ever in the program – over 300 in either first or second year - drawn from nearly 2700 applications. Given the immediate and long-term need for teachers nationally, TFA is ready and committed to further growth of our flagship program.
- **We're delivering high throughput and satisfaction.** While the design of the program is an intense yet productive combination of study and applied practice, we see two year average completion rates of 90% and Alumni satisfaction rates of 88%. In our 2023 Principal survey, 92% said TFA Associates were effective at improving student academic and social outcomes, and 96% would hire another Associate in the future.
- **We're delivering high retention in teaching and contributing significantly to educational leadership overall.** Our 2023 Alumni Survey shows that 88% of Alumni are working in the education sector, contributing to TFA's vision through teaching, school leadership, social enterprise, policy, government and non-profit roles. Additionally, since 2016, TFA has designed and delivered innovative professional development programs for early career teachers already in the system, working in outer regional, rural and remote schools. These programs help to build personal leadership skills and capabilities for those schools to thrive, and have contributed to significant role promotion rates amongst those cohorts.

- **We're uniquely positioned to offer insights on the systemic ways Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and early career teacher support and development could improve.** TFA delivers value in a complex web of stakeholders with varying interests and incentives. We work at the nexus of attraction, ITE delivery, practicum support and early career development, across a federated and regulated system. We are always willing to share our observations and ideas for further system improvement.

Working for educational equity in Australia is complex and collective work. We recognise teaching and school leadership as two vital levers to improve student outcomes and opportunities later in life. Our most impactful contribution has been the expansion of pathways into the classroom, allowing more aspiring teachers to have an impact. We are committed to working with governments, education stakeholders, schools and communities across the nation to lift the status and quality of teaching.

Teach For Australia works in service of students, and our vision for an Australia where education gives every child greater choice for their future. While proud of our efforts and impact to date, we know there is so much more to do.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Universities Accord (“the Accord”) Interim Report sets a strong and timely vision for an ambitious and just reimagining of higher education in Australia. The Accord Review Panel is to be commended for specifying an overarching reform goal that highlights the importance of lifting up historically underrepresented groups: ‘*growth for skills through greater equity*’¹. Education has always been a vehicle for personal and economic transformation, and it is vital - from both an economic perspective, and a moral one - that Australians have access to an excellent education system at every level. All Australians, irrespective of their background, should have the opportunity to pursue meaningful and productive work, and the education that enables it.

Like the Accord panel, TFA is motivated by the urgency of creating a larger and fairer education system. Our focus on improving the quality of school education is upstream of higher education but it is essential to realising the Accord’s vision. Indeed, the recent release of the 2023 National Assessment Program, Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) report has highlighted the precipitous decline in both student outcomes and equity across the schooling system, and the struggle many students face to becoming literate, numerate, successful lifelong learners². It is clear that any effort to increase the size and the fairness of the higher education system must have close links to strengthening school education.

Our submission sets out how TFA is working to help create a larger and fairer education system that ensures access and attainment at every level, especially for underrepresented groups, and identifies key barriers that must be overcome. These include barriers to the proposed National Skills Passport and associated measures that can help meet Australia’s future skills needs, with maximum impact on the teacher workforce shortages currently crippling disadvantaged schools.

Importantly, our submission also sets out recommendations for enhancing excellence and collaboration in tertiary initial teacher education, by defining and measuring excellence and encouraging improvements through targeted, competitive funding arrangements. TFA also believes that government funding, including the Commonwealth Grant Scheme and competitive funding programs which encourage innovation and sharing of best practice

outlined in the Accord, should be expanded to include third party providers. TFA’s very existence, as well as our impact on schools and students over the last 15 years, demonstrates that innovation and best practice in higher education sometimes occurs outside the traditional boundaries of the sector. As a third-party provider that is not housed within a university or higher education provider, TFA is subject to funding uncertainty that impedes long-term planning and growth. Access to longer-term funding historically quarantined for traditional tertiary providers, tied to specific criteria such as cohort diversity and placement in disadvantaged and hard-to-staff schools, would support innovators like TFA to continue impactful work towards equitable education.

Our submission aligns predominantly with the Interim Report’s Chapter 2: *Evolving the mission for higher education* and comprises four sections:

- 1. Creating a larger and fairer education system that ensures access and attainment, especially for underrepresented groups.** This section recommends that, to create a larger and fairer higher education system, we must also focus on strengthening school education. It describes how TFA Associates and Alumni have had a significant positive impact on the educational outcomes of the students they teach and school communities they work in.
- 2. Meeting Australia’s future skills needs, including by improving equity in participation, access, and opportunity.** In the context of current teacher shortages crippling disadvantaged and hard-to-staff schools, this section highlights structural barriers currently preventing additional talented and motivated people from becoming teachers. It provides three recommendations, including:
 - Developing a competency-based framework that facilitates the recognition of prospective teachers’ prior learning and experience and facilitates their entry into accelerated teacher training pathways.
 - Changing Masters of Teaching eligibility requirements to include a greater diversity of talent and experience, including by amending the requirement for mid-career professionals to have completed a bachelor degree from within ‘the

past 10 years to within the past 15 years.

- Introducing an Applied Masters of Teaching that reduces the opportunity cost for career changers, recognises the value of the school-based experiences of teacher candidates, and provides a more accessible pathway to teaching for those who do not have a Bachelor's Degree.

3. Committing to teaching excellence and collaboration, including by measuring excellence and encouraging improvements through targeted performance funding. This section sets out how effective teacher education can be encouraged via targeted, performance-based funding and grants to recognise innovation and encourage sharing of best practice within the sector. It recommends three key mechanisms that could improve funding flows to encourage higher performance, greater focus on disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, and more innovation:

- Adjust the Commonwealth Grant Scheme to include third party providers focused on servicing priority cohorts.
- Tie funding for initial teacher education providers to their performance against agreed criteria.
- Expand competitive funding programs that encourage innovation and sharing of best practice to include proven third-party providers.

4. Fostering international engagement and collaboration. This section endorses the Accord Interim Report's acknowledgement of the importance of global connectivity. It shares how TFA has built rich and deep partnerships with a range of regional neighbours via the Teach For All network. Through this global group, TFA explores innovative approaches to building teacher supply and combating education inequity with like-minded knowledge partners.

TFA's submission to the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) in April detailed a number of issues and recommendations specific to quality ITE provisions. Some of those are referenced briefly within this submission, so a summary table of TFA's recommendations to the TEEP is included at Appendix A.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this latest consultation. TFA is available to provide further data and insights from our experiences, should this be of assistance to the Universities Accord Expert Panel.

Melodie Potts Rosevear

Founder and CEO – Teach For Australia



SECTION 1: CREATING A LARGER AND FAIRER EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT ENSURES ACCESS AND ATTAINMENT, ESPECIALLY FOR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS.

TFA commends the Accord's focus on creating a larger and fairer higher education system by acknowledging the importance of lifting up underrepresented groups. However, this will be impossible to achieve without bolstering the workforce further upstream: at the point of schooling, to ensure that all young people have an equitable opportunity to seek higher education. Without doing so, many young Australians are filtered out before they even consider further education.

To create a larger and fairer education system, we must focus on school pathways to higher education.

The research is clear: realising the Accord's vision of better higher education access and attainment for disadvantaged groups requires educational equity for school-aged children. At present, around one in five students does not attain a Year 12 certificate or equivalent, thereby locking them out of higher education entirely³. The research is also clear that the stratification of achievement begins much earlier, with foundational literacy and numeracy skills⁴, and only increase as students progress through formal schooling. Retention and Year 12 completion is correlated with achievement, meaning that those who are unsuccessful in schooling are less likely to pursue post-compulsory schooling. Therefore the funnel from schooling into higher education carries fewer and fewer young people as the analysis moves up in academic year level.

Furthermore, the stratification of student achievement, and therefore eligibility for higher education, occurs along predictable lines of educational disadvantage. As identified in the 2011 Gonski report⁵, students who come from poorer families, who live in rural and remote parts of Australia, those for whom English is an additional language or dialect, or who are Indigenous, experience some – and often overlapping – educational disadvantage. Student achievement indeed reflects these trends^{6,7}. As Federal Education Minister Jason Clare has highlighted, 'This [2023 NAPLAN] report makes it clear that if you are a child from a poor family, from the regions or if you are Indigenous, you are more likely to fall behind at school'⁸.

Recommendation: to create a larger and fairer higher education system, change must begin upstream in early, primary and secondary levels of formal schooling.

TFA directly targets school education, making it more equitable by strengthening the teaching workforce.

TFA has placed more than 1450 Associates to teach in more than 250 partner schools across six Australian states and territories. Three-quarters of current partner schools are in regional areas and rural and remote communities, and almost all partner schools have an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) below the national mean, thereby targeting the parts of the workforce that are in greatest need.

A range of independent internally and externally commissioned evaluations have demonstrated TFA's positive impact on student and school community educational outcomes. For example, according to our partner schools, TFA Associates and Alumni make considerable contributions to school level improvements, including improvements in:

- pedagogy,
- student pathways and retention,
- school outcomes,
- student engagement and wellbeing,
- community engagement, and
- school culture and professionalism⁹.

In a recent government evaluation of the High Achieving Teachers Program, under which TFA is currently funded, jurisdictions highlighted the quality of Associates as a great strength of our Leadership Development Program (LDP). In 2020, half of principals surveyed said that LDP participants towards the end of their first year were more or much more effective than graduate teachers against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers¹⁰.

However, there remain significant inequities in the education system, including in the number and

demographic of students who are ineligible to pursue higher education because they become disengaged from the education system further upstream. Section two examines other challenges and systemic barriers that could shift to allow TFA's work, and that of others, to be more impactful and drive change towards a larger and fairer higher education system.

TFA's impact on the educational outcomes of the young people they teach and the communities where they work is best shown through individual stories:

- Dan Yore (TFA Cohort 2013) is a former medical doctor whose subsequent work as a school teacher has been recognised with a John Monash Scholarship, Commonwealth Bank Teaching Award, and NT Secondary Teacher of the Year Award. He was featured in the Australian Financial Review in 2021 for his work at the Yirrkala Bilingual School near East Arnhem the Northern Territory:

After four years teaching in Darwin, Mr Yore moved to Yirrkala where he has worked with local educational leaders to integrate the traditional Yolngu language, knowledge and cultural practices with the mainstream Australian national curriculum taught in English.

By the end of 2021, a total of 20 students are set to have graduated, with the school producing more Year 12 finishers than the annual average of all remote schools in the Northern Territory¹¹.

- Alex Burgess-Norris (TFA Cohort 2019) is a former environmental scientist who received an Australian Council of Educational Leaders (ACEL) Early Career Teaching and Leadership award in 2022. Alex moved from Canberra to Queenstown on Tasmania's remote West Coast to take up her TFA placement. In addition to now being a lead STEM teacher at her school, Alex is also valued for her efforts with the local mountain biking community.

"Teaching is so fulfilling for such a diverse range of reasons. It's the relationships with the students, the creativity in preparing lessons, connecting the school with the wider community, opportunities to learn, the fast-paced environment – you're always on your toes – and the professional collaboration with other teachers," Alex said.

"And of course the students, who are so resilient and have taught me so much. They're always keen to give things a go and have a great attitude that we can all learn from.

"Queenstown is a small community, and everyone looks after one another. My experience here has really embodied the notion of 'it takes a village'. You're more than a teacher – you're also a coach, mentor, customer, advocate, friendly face on the street."¹²

SECTION 2: MEETING AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE SKILLS NEEDS, INCLUDING BY IMPROVING EQUITY IN PARTICIPATION, ACCESS, AND OPPORTUNITY.

The Accord's focus on meeting Australia's future skills needs is timely for the education sector. While schools in disadvantaged areas, and especially in regional and remote areas, have always had a harder time recruiting teachers than their more advantaged counterparts, the current workforce supply problems are nothing short of crippling. Structural barriers to prospective Associates entering or returning to higher education have frustrated TFA's efforts to recruit high-quality candidates who are otherwise eager to teach students in hard-to-staff locations, blocking an important pipeline into the classroom.

Current teacher shortages are crippling schools in disadvantaged areas.

Australia continues to navigate an unprecedented teacher supply and retention challenge. As forecast by the 2022 Teacher Workforce Shortages Issues Paper, 'demand for secondary teachers will exceed the supply of new graduate teachers by around 4,100 between 2021 to 2025'¹³. Growing student enrolments, declining ITE enrolments and an ageing teacher workforce are noted among the key drivers.

Of additional concern are completion rates for traditional ITE courses. Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) workforce data shows only 51% of undergraduates complete mainstream Bachelor courses, while 78% complete traditional postgraduate courses¹⁴. This leakage also contributes to shortages. As identified by the TEEP Report, 'A one percentage point uplift in ITE retention rates would result in nearly three hundred more teaching graduates a year, while a 10-percentage point uplift would result in nearly three thousand additional graduates'¹⁵.

The current teacher shortages will continue to have a disproportionate impact on the least advantaged schools unless prospective candidates are given targeted support to work there. Already, some of Australia's least advantaged schools are in crisis because of the system-wide teacher supply problems. For one example, many disadvantaged schools now rely on "permanent" casual relief teachers: a rotating schedule of supply teachers in front of classes for whom a suitably qualified teacher cannot be found.

The impact of these arrangements is damaging for students and teachers alike. Students are far less likely to have a coherent, high-quality learning experience led by a teacher who is expert in the relevant subject area, and teachers working at the school are forced to take on the additional workload involved with preparing lessons for these classes, in addition to their own classes.

Teacher supply problems at disadvantaged schools will impact teacher retention, further exacerbating these problems. Indeed, Australian teachers experienced unprecedented levels of stress through the Covid-19 pandemic that is being exacerbated by workforce supply problems: a 2023 report from the Black Dog Institute 'found almost half of 4000 teachers surveyed were considering leaving the profession within the next 12 months, an increase of 14% from a similar survey in 2021. Of concern, 76% said they had teacher shortages in their schools presently and 70% reported unmanageable workloads'¹⁶. It is critical that reforms to higher education consider ways to meet Australia's most urgent skills needs, including the need for more teachers.

Structural barriers associated with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs and the Australian Qualifications Framework are preventing the teacher workforce from benefiting from improving equity in participation, access, and opportunity.

The Accord highlights that 'the changing nature of the workforce will mean that we can expect increased participation and attainment from older age cohorts as they upskill, reskill, or even gain their first qualification'¹⁷. Demonstrably, the Australian teacher workforce would hugely benefit from an influx of prospective teachers from older age cohorts. However, there are significant structural barriers related to the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs and Australian Qualifications Framework to the teaching profession benefitting from this import cohort of prospective teachers.

As an example, in TFA's 2022 applicant pool around 115 quality applications were ineligible to proceed because the teaching area requirements for enrolling in the Master of Teaching could not be met. In recent recruitment years, an average of 10-15% of applicants who met competency benchmarks on the online application were later deemed ineligible. TFA does not capture data that indicates the number of potential applicants who self-select out of the application process but anticipates this is significant based on anecdotal recruitment experience.

TFA has identified three major structural barriers that prevent the Australian teacher workforce from benefiting from the older age cohort highlighted by the Accord:

- ***Unable to demonstrate a major in a recognised learning area***
- ***Unable to demonstrate currency***
- ***Do not have an undergraduate degree***

Unable to demonstrate a major in a recognised learning area.

Prospective career changers who have studied a highly technical or clinical degrees are unable to meet the requirements to enroll in a Master of Teaching and therefore cannot become teachers. For example, the aerospace engineers who apply to the TFA Leadership Development Program are not eligible to teach mathematics because the subjects they have taken at university are too specialised to be counted as “Mathematics” or even “Physics” courses required to satisfy the entry requirements to the Master of Teaching.

Prospective teachers with clinical degrees, such as physiotherapists, speech pathologists, and medical radiation technicians, are similarly ineligible to enroll in the Master of Teaching. The structure of these degrees have become highly clinical to prepare students for a career in the allied health industry, and the subjects they study do not meet the requirements to count as “Science”, “Biology”, “Chemistry”, or even “Health” subjects. For example, a recent TFA candidate with an undergraduate degree in Applied Science and a PhD in Molecular Biology was ineligible to enroll in the Master of Teaching because their research units in biology and the sequencing of their courses failed to meet AITSL requirements for a major in a recognised learning area.

Unable to demonstrate currency.

The requirement for teachers to have a Master's

level qualification presents further complications regarding eligibility for career changers. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) requirements for Level 9 (i.e. Master's) courses include the requirement that all entrants to the course have either completed an undergraduate degree in a relevant discipline within the last 10 years or can demonstrate currency in that discipline through work experience. Unfortunately, the 10-year limit and complications with demonstrating currency has precluded many potential teachers from enrolling in the Master's degree.

For example, qualified engineers with recent experience as managers or executives struggle to demonstrate currency if they completed their degree more than 10 years ago. This limitation similarly affects builders with undergraduate degrees who have moved into business management roles. In 2023, TFA will likely be forced to reject an application from a physicist who has spent the last few years working as a teacher's aide in a disadvantaged school because it has been more than 10 years since they finished their degree, and their school experience does not help them to demonstrate currency under the current guidelines.

Do not have an undergraduate degree.

TFA commends the Accord for highlighting the potential of older cohorts of workers yet to gain their first tertiary qualification. However, TFA believes it is important to highlight that the teacher workforce is currently unable to benefit from this segment of the skilled workforce who are passionate about combating educational inequity and are keen to become teachers, because they are currently ineligible for admission to a Master of Teaching.

The requirements for all entrants to the Master of Teaching to hold an undergraduate degree or demonstrate currency in a ‘recognised learning area’ disproportionately excludes First Nations people, including those already working and having tremendous impact in schools, those people from rural and regional area, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and those with expertise in vocational subjects.

TFA has a proven approach for effective and rapid “upskilling” of high-calibre teacher candidates. Overcoming key structural barriers would enhance the impact employment-based ITE pathways can deliver for the education system.

TFA has a proven approach for effectively and rapidly

upskilling high-calibre, equity-focused teacher candidates and connecting them with employment contracts in disadvantaged and hard-to-staff schools all over Australia, especially in regional and remote contexts. TFA's program has already proven:

- Teaching is an attractive career option for high-performing university graduates, despite claims to the contrary.
- Employment-based pathways are well-suited to career changers who want to become teachers.
- Candidates can be effectively supported to lead classes from their first year when given quality coaching, mentoring and school support.
- Employment-based pathways to teaching are cost effective, able to produce high-quality teachers, and scalable.

However, a small number of structural barriers associated with AITSL guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs and the AQF continue to limit TFA's ability to support otherwise ideal career change candidate who are motivated to become teachers.

TFA commends the Accord's focus on a National Skills Passport as a vehicle to facilitate more Australians, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, to pursue higher education and meet workforce needs including as teachers in schools. A National Skills Passport that 'allows people to have their full range of qualification, micro credentials, prior learning, workplace experience and general capabilities recognised across the education and training system and the workforce market' (p. 64) would add significant value to the Australian economy and society.

Recommendations: TFA has identified three key policy interventions that may overcome identified barriers and realise this vision in so far as it applies to teacher education and the teacher workforce. These include:

- **Develop a competency-based framework**
- **Change eligibility requirements for ITE support greater diversity of talent and experience.**
- **Introduce an Applied Master of Teaching**

Each of these recommended interventions is described briefly below.

• **Developing a competency-based framework**

A competency-based framework to complement existing Master of Teaching entry requirements could overcome barriers to entry including prospective candidates' inability to demonstrate a major in a recognised learning area or demonstrate currency, and could also allow those without a Bachelor's Degree to demonstrate their aptitude and expertise in key areas. A competency-based framework could cover both general capabilities and subject-specific knowledge.

There is precedent for competency frameworks and aligned assessments designed to recognise prospective teachers' prior learning and experience and facilitate their entry into accelerated teacher training pathways. For example, Praxis exams in the United States are used to assess prospective teachers' general capabilities and subject-specific knowledge to formally complement their existing higher education qualifications. In the United Kingdom, Teach First candidates can demonstrate teaching area eligibility through a 'subject knowledge audit', an assessment of their content knowledge related to the subject area they aspire to teach in schools.

This kind of policy intervention would help the National Skills Passport become a reality and have impact on the teacher supply problems crippling disadvantaged schools by allowing the aerospace engineers who apply to our program, for example, alongside the First Nations teacher's aides with a wealth of experience to offer students, to qualify to complete a Master of Teaching and work as a teacher.

• **Change eligibility requirements for ITE support greater diversity of talent and experience**

Most urgently, Australian governments should consider amending the recency requirement for entry to a Master of Teaching. For example, extending the requirement for mid-career professionals to have completed a Bachelor's degree from within 'the past 10 years' to within the past 15 years would have a significant impact on the teacher supply pipeline.

Governments should also consider directing AITSL to update its *Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia* to recognise research-based units in the allocation of credit towards eligibility for Master of Teaching majors. This small change would allow the PhD in Molecular Biology applicant, cited above, and others like them, to be eligible to enrol in the Master of Teaching. Further, aligning the AITSL standards for major

requirements to a specified threshold of total credit points within a bachelor degree (not the year the unit is studied) would have a material impact on the number of exceptional TFA applicants who are eligible to complete our program and work in disadvantaged schools, including in regional and remote areas.

- **Introduce an Applied Master of Teaching**

The move away from the former one-year graduate diploma model and the introduction of the two-year Master of Teaching models has altered the teacher supply pipeline. For example, a 2023 NSW Productivity Commission report found

'...the implementation of the two-year master's is a disincentive for mid-career professionals looking to become teachers. It has cost the NSW community around \$3 billion in lost welfare over the past seven years. These costs comprise loss of teacher earnings, additional student debt for teachers, and loss of lifetime income for students. Had ITE remained as a one-year graduate diploma, we could expect more than 9,000 additional ITE completions over the 2013 to 2022 period'¹⁸.

TFA's Leadership Development Program effectively reduces opportunity cost by allowing participants to earn a salary as a teacher while they complete their Master's degree. Yet even our model requires teacher candidates to spend significant time studying to earn their Master's degree over 2.25 years, while also teaching 300-plus days.

An Applied Master of Teaching would allow teachers in training to spend more time focused on the practical requirements of their job, while also providing a more accessible entry pathway for those who do not have a Bachelor's degree. An Applied Master of Teaching model could:

- Require candidates to complete a minimum of 300 days teaching in schools (significantly greater than the professional experience currently required by current AITSL standard 5.2.a)
- Assess a greater proportion of teacher learning through professional experience assessments, including classroom observations and written planning and reflection.
- Provide greater recognition of prior learning and experience by utilising competency-based frameworks and assessments, facilitating entry for those with considerable professional skills and expertise but no formal higher education qualification.

In these ways, an Applied Master of Teaching would both overcome the disincentives to career-changers identified by the NSW Productivity Commission and align with the Accord's vision of supporting underrepresented groups to access higher education.



SECTION 3: COMMITTING TO TEACHING EXCELLENCE AND COLLABORATION, INCLUDING BY MEASURING EXCELLENCE AND ENCOURAGING IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH TARGETED COMPETITIVE FUNDING.

TFA welcomes the Accord's focus on encouraging and rewarding effective learning and teaching in higher education, and on promoting collaboration and shared best practice. We agree that new approaches to encouraging effective practice through targeted, performance-based funding are essential, especially to ensure the continued impact of innovative actors like TFA on the priority cohorts identified in the Accord.

As an innovative provider of employment-based pathways to teaching, TFA is disadvantaged by current funding models.

The Accord calls for a reimagining of Australian higher education to drive socio-economic transformation for people from all sectors of the economy. This noble vision for society risks becoming hamstrung, however, by a historical aversion to innovation and suspicion towards true reimagining of education policy and practice.

TFA pioneered the first employment-based pathway to teaching in Australia, and we remain the standard-bearer as evidenced by our frequent and exhaustive evaluations. Further, the TFA program is the only employment-based pathway exclusively serving disadvantaged communities, with a mission fully aligned with the one set out in the Accord.

TFA has historically been funded via both government and philanthropic contributions that, while certainly welcome and deeply impactful, have been brief and contestable. The continual short cycles of seeking and securing funding creates uncertainty which precludes long-term planning and growth. Other employment-based pathways to teaching, housed in universities, have access to Commonwealth Supported Places and can share overheads within their institutions, meaning they are not subject to the same funding pressure.

In recognition of TFA's demonstrated success accelerating high-quality candidates into teaching, the 2021 *Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review* recommended 'securing long-term funding for Teach For Australia'¹⁹.

Initial teacher education should be subject to funding based on performance, including the value it produces for priority cohorts.

TFA believes that funding for teacher training should both be more competitively allocated and include weighting for providers that place teachers in disadvantaged and hard-to-staff regional and remote locations. Funding should encourage innovation in teacher training, so that providers have incentives for continuous improvement to meet the needs of young people and their communities.

Recommendations: There are three key mechanisms that could improve funding flows to encourage higher performance, greater focus on disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, and more innovation:

- **Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding tied to servicing priority cohorts and expanded to include third-party providers**
- **Performance-based funding for initial teacher education providers**
- **Expansion of competitive funding programs that encourage innovation and sharing of best practice to include third-party providers**

Each of these mechanisms is described briefly below.

- **Adjust the Commonwealth Grant Scheme to include third-party providers focused on servicing priority cohorts.**

Although TFA increases the number of people undertaking Master of Teaching qualifications and is focused on diversity and on serving disadvantaged and hard-to-staff communities, it is not eligible for funding via the Commonwealth Grant Scheme

because it is not a Higher Education Provider.

The Commonwealth Grant Scheme provides critical funding to subsidise the costs of a range of Universities and Higher Education Providers to further national priorities, including increasing the number of persons undertaking Education courses of study. In 2023 and 2024, the Commonwealth Grant Scheme is also focused on increasing the number of persons from under-represented backgrounds undertaking Education courses.

By allocating a fraction of the \$800 million directed to Universities and Higher Education Providers to train teachers and support those from under-represented backgrounds to third-party providers such as TFA, the government would guarantee a broader pipeline of teachers and impact for disadvantaged students. A 5-year funding agreement under Commonwealth Grant Scheme, subject to criteria such as cohort diversity and placement in disadvantaged and hard-to-staff schools, would support TFA to continue its mission-aligned work. TFA could also satisfy criteria relating to funding transparency and could demonstrate that funds received from government sources result in true additionality to the teacher workforce.

- **Performance-based funding for initial teacher education providers**

TFA made several recommendations to the TEEP to develop performance measures for Initial Teacher Education and tie funding to performance against these measures. (These are included as Appendix A)

TFA operates with one of the highest degrees of transparency in the sector, having undergone multiple program-level evaluations over the last 15 years. For example, TFA is required to report regularly to multiple stakeholders about its progress against key performance criteria including, but not limited to:

- Completion rates
- Principal satisfaction
- Associate satisfaction
- Diversity of Associate cohorts
- Retention beyond the program (into a third year of teaching)
- Placement targets in key priority areas such as regional and rural schools
- Cohort size
- STEM targets

TFA has always welcomed the opportunity to

report against these criteria, both as an opportunity to demonstrate our impact and a way for the organisation to practice our commitment to continuous improvement. TFA uses data to regularly reflect on performance and adjust our program design and delivery activity in response. As a result, TFA has successfully increased the diversity of Associates, continues to demonstrate a very high completion rate and Principal and Associate satisfaction rate, as well as placing teachers in areas of very high demand.

TFA therefore sees merit in introducing Key Performance Indicators to all programs run by initial teacher education providers in the sector. True transparency requires this to be done at an individual program level, rather than a provider level. Performance criteria would encourage all providers to focus on actions they can take to improve the quality of the ITE pipeline, including ensuring higher completion rates and a higher proportion of graduates joining the profession²⁰.

Transparent reporting against key performance indicators is a necessary but not sufficient step to drive improved performance across the sector. Rigorously administered performance funding is required to provide additional incentives to providers.

Performance-based funding for initial teacher education providers could occur via a prescribed places mechanism, as with medicine, or as an alternative pool to fund excellence across the sector. TFA is circumspect about the possibility of transition funding to uplift poor performance, due to the potential opportunity cost of funding under-performing ITE providers versus redirecting funding to support high performers to grow. For example, TFA currently has the largest numbers ever in our program - over 300 in either first or second year - and is seeking to significantly grow its cohort size in the next 3 years.

- **Expand competitive funding programs that encourage innovation and sharing of best practice to include third-party providers**

TFA agrees that governments should offer seed funding to encourage innovation and best practice in areas of national priority and commends the Accord's focus on competitive funding programs being offered across multiple institutions to encourage sharing of best practice. However, best practice in the Accord's priority areas sometimes occurs outside of the traditional boundaries of the higher education sector.

TFA encourages the Accord panel to consider expanding the eligibility of the proposed competitive

funding program to include third-party providers in priority areas. TFA has a history of transparency around its operations and impact that has informed the development of a raft of subsequent employment-based pathways to teaching. Access to competitive funding programs like this would support our continued work, expand our reach, and facilitate further sharing of best practice.



SECTION 4: FOSTERING INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

TFA agrees with the Accord Interim Report that global connectivity is an important driver for education system improvement. While there are strong elements of contextual influence which make each educational system unique, there are many opportunities for international collaboration and learning from other contexts.

TFA frequently engages with other organisations in the Teach For All network as a mechanism for ensuring continuous improvement and leveraging learnings from other systems and programs. For example, currently TFA is partnering with Teach For All to refine its selection competencies. Although TFA's competency based recruitment and selection of candidates to its flagship program is already at the frontier in the Australian ITE landscape, the cross-jurisdictional collaboration is an opportunity for continuous development and learning from other contexts.

While each Teach For partner organisation is somewhat limited by the structural barriers within its own educational context, the international engagement often sheds light on innovations that may indeed shift those barriers. Longer running programs like Teach First UK also provide an example of what is possible with effective scaling of reach and impact. Teach First UK occupies an essential place in the UK teacher training sector, and is one of the country's largest graduate employers, playing a critical role in making teaching a more attractive pathway for graduates of universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. A recent National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) quasi-experimental study that found 'GCSE attainment in secondary school departments that recruited a Teach First trainee was statistically significantly higher than in similar departments in comparison schools'²¹. TFA is on the path towards such significant impact, and continues to look towards examples of partner organisations addressing and shifting the barriers their own educational systems as a model for sustained impact.

TFA has particularly strong reciprocal relationship with a range of similar organisations in the Asia Pacific region, both supporting their respective innovative models for teacher training and support and learning from their work. Our partners in the Asia Pacific include Ako Mātātupu Teach First New Zealand, Teach For Malaysia, Teach for the Philippines, Teach for Vietnam, Teach For Cambodia, and Teach For Thailand. We also maintain close relationships with other teacher training organisations in the region. For example, TFA has acted as a referee for some partners to receive aid funding in support of their missions to improve equity for students in their local contexts; we have supported the Teach For Malaysia recruitment process; and in 2022 TFA hosted a delegation of teacher educators from a range of Indonesian universities to share TFA's approach to teacher education and learn from theirs.

At the level of individuals, TFA facilitates connections between our Associates and Alumni and their counterparts in other Teach For All programs, to encourage collaboration and sharing of best practice. Relationships between programs in the Teach For All network are reciprocal in nature, and provide Alumni with inspiration and innovations to take back home to their own classrooms, schools, and broader systems to continue working towards educational equity.

At all levels, these relationships serve to connect TFA staff and participants in our teaching programs to a like-minded network of education providers and equity champions. Sharing our experiences and learnings and being open to those of our network partners helps drive TFA to continuously improve and expand the impact we can have for the students who remain at the heart of TFA's vision and mission.

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APPENDIX A - TFA'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE TEACHER EDUCATION EXPERT PANEL

TFA policy and regulatory priorities	TFA policy shift recommendations	Expert Panel reform area alignment
<p>1. Access to postgraduate ITE pathways</p> <p>Broaden eligibility for post-graduate ITE courses, especially for mid-career entrants, and add additional means for high-calibre and skilled individuals to demonstrate competence.</p>	<p>Develop a framework for competency-based eligibility to provide ITE candidates opportunity to demonstrate subject knowledge and expertise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the requirement for mid-career professionals to have completed a Bachelor degree from within the past 10 years to the past 15 years. • Develop additional ways for mid-career professionals to demonstrate currency in their major learning area (i.e. a standardised subject knowledge audit). • Align AITSL standards for major requirements in a recognised learning area to total credit points within a Bachelor degree rather than based on an assumed standard unit sequence, and enable inclusion of research-based units. • Help reduce opportunity cost for mid-career entrants by extending eligibility for Federal and State scholarships and bursaries top articipants of employment-based pathways. 	<p>Area 4 - Improving ITE pathways for mid-career entrants</p>

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<p>2. ITE course content and high-quality practical learning opportunities</p> <p>Strengthen what is taught in ITE courses, and adjust for how it can be learned; enable practicums, school placements and post-course support for beginning teachers, acknowledging these aspects can accelerate skills and competencies for classroom practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to enhance ITE course content by ensuring inclusion of evidence-based practices that improve student learning, and boost classroom readiness for beginning teachers. • Build sector consensus and trusted guidance on which evidence-based practices are preferential for particular contexts. • Develop a comprehensive set of practice illustrations and examples to support any amendment to Accreditation Standards and Procedures. • In addition to practicum guidelines, consider supporting schools with a brokering and support service, with focus on those with highest workforce need, ie. regional, rural and remote communities. • Include high quality coaching support for ITE students during their practicums. • Introduce standard practice for all new teachers to be supported with formal coaching and mentoring in their early years, and resource schools to provide this. • Endorse ITE providers to explore development of Applied Master of Teaching courses, and assist in mitigating any current regulatory barriers. • Develop an independent practicum assessment model, including guidelines, assessment tools and potentially an independent labour market, to enable professional practicum assessments to occur at scale and at quality. • Consider at-scale role out of remote observation technology to enable cost effective delivery of high-quality remote practical coaching and assessment in regional, rural and remote contexts. 	<p>Area 1 - Classroom ready, with evidenced-based practices</p> <p>Area 3 - Improving practical experience</p> <p>Area 4 - Improving ITE pathways for mid-career entrants</p>
<p>3. ITE key performance indicators and funding</p> <p>Increase accountability for ITE providers for quality outputs; improve transparency for aspiring applicants to assess courses before enrolment; and support scale for proven innovative ITE pathways, recognising these pathways can increase workforce supply, and are particularly appealing to mid-career entrants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce KPIs at individual ITE program level to improve transparency of performance in the sector. • Preference excellence funding for high-performer programs over transition funding for under-performing programs • Foster innovation, without disadvantageous outcomes for smaller innovative non-traditional providers. 	<p>Area 2 - Stronger link between performance and funding</p>

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