



ACT GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION

Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Education Directorate

July 2021

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FOREWORD

The ACT Government welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Quality Initial Teacher Education review.

The ACT Government has a long-standing interest in developing stronger links between schools and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers to continue improving the practicum experience for ITE students. This includes high quality training for mentor teachers and the use of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in supervisory roles for ITE practicum experiences.

In this Submission, the ACT Government would like to draw particular attention to its Affiliated Schools Program, a unique collaborative partnership between the University of Canberra and the ACT Government, based around the clinical model of delivering ITE programs and the delivery of high-quality practicum experiences. The ACT would welcome the opportunity to work with the Review Panel on developing a case study of this innovative program.

The ACT Government would also be interested to hear consultation feedback from current and recently graduated ITE students to learn more about how ITE prepared them to enter the teaching profession, including strengths and opportunities for improvement. This may be an area the Review Panel can inquire for subsequent consultations. The ACT Government also strongly recommends continued close engagement with the profession on these important matters through consultation and discussion.

The ACT also recommends that the Review focus on the factors that will lead to long term improvement in ITE programs and the quality of ITE graduates, and less so on employment related initiatives or ITE program accreditation, which are generally matters for jurisdictional determination. The ACT Government considers that any recommendations for action from the review should enhance the status of teaching as a profession; encourage innovation to meet local needs; and maintain the focus on quality.

Changes to ITE entry requirements and/or ITE course requirements in pursuit of increased workforce numbers should not be at the expense of quality. The ACT Government strongly recommends that teachers must continue to be well-prepared to enter the workforce through quality ITE programs, at the same high standards of other professions.

ACT GOVERNMENT COMMENTS

Attracting high-quality candidates into ITE

The ACT Government supports continued national work to address technical barriers to attracting high-quality candidates into ITE but also strongly advocates for education systems, ITE providers and teacher accreditation authorities to maintain high professional standards for the teaching profession.

As a large employer of teaching professionals, the ACT Government is cognisant of the importance of clear and well-designed tertiary education and employment pathways to supply the workforce. Australian education systems need to succeed. There is a need to attract more people to the teaching profession nationally, but also a need to ensure those who enter the teaching profession are 'classroom ready' and able to meet the high professional standards and expectations we have for educators in Australia. Our high performing education system relies on these standards and they should not be comprised in pursuit of a highly quantum of graduates.

Lateral or mid-career entry pathways into the teaching profession have been highlighted as an area of interest for the Review Panel, noting that it may assist with increasing teacher supply. There are technical challenges to achieving this, such as integration and recognition of prior learning between industries, and articulation between vocational and higher education qualifications. However, these issues are not only a concern for tertiary education providers but are of significant interest to teacher registration authorities and employers.

Transparency and integrity are key considerations in this space. Employers rely on teacher registration authorities who equally rely on the integrity of qualifications being awarded by ITE providers. It is important that all parties in ITE uphold the same standards for ITE and their application to scholarship, teacher registration and employment.

The ACT Government strongly supports cooperative work between higher education providers, teacher registration authorities and employers to ensure that the implications of any technical change in this area, such as any offering of a truncated ITE qualification program, are transparently considered without jeopardising professional standards or the status of the profession.

Trends in ITE program completions and entry into teaching careers

Close collaboration between the ACT Government and University of Canberra through the Affiliated Schools Program offers the opportunity to investigate whether the Affiliated Schools Program has had a positive impact on ITE completion rates, graduate preparedness, and teacher recruitment/retention rates. Evidence demonstrates that real-life learning experiences, such as those provided in school-based clinics, lead to higher completion rates in education and training.

To help attract a more diverse cohort into ITE, the ACT supports the opportunity for individuals to undertake the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) before or in the early stages of commencing ITE. ITE providers can then provide wrap-around services to support students who do not meet LANTITE requirements, without excluding them from pursuing careers in education. The ACT Government recommends this as a superior approach rather than positioning LANTITE as an entry requirement to ITE.

The ACT Government sees the opportunity to sit the LANTITE before commencing or towards the beginning of ITE as a positive move towards supporting students to make informed decisions about their choice of study and future career, rather than reaching the end of a degree and being unable to pass the LANTITE. However, the ACT Government does not agree that students must

pass this in their first year of study. Such a requirement may pose an unrealistic obstacle for some students, particularly those who face some degree of disadvantage in their studies, and could create a barrier to achieving diversity in the teaching workforce.

Whether the supply of teachers entering the workforce matches areas of need

The ACT Government recognises that workforce data on teacher qualifications and specialisations is required to better support workforce planning and recruitment strategies. Consistent with other states and territories, the ACT Public School system is seeing a decrease in the availability of casual relief teachers and increasing temporary vacancies due to planned and unplanned leave.

Current and future recruitment strategies for the ACT include:

- re-advertising the casual/temporary employment register;
- inviting all registered casual/temporary relief teachers to participate in a Teacher Rating Assessment;
- national recruitment campaigns for primary/secondary and graduating teachers that also includes New Zealand;
- participation in careers expos and university visits;
- implementation of Accredited Sponsorship status for visa sponsorship or workers,
- the use of platforms such as Seek and LinkedIn; and
- conditional early offers to third-year Bachelor of Education students
- employment of ITE students as learning support assistants throughout their studies.

Initiatives to support the attraction and retention of beginning teachers include implementation of early offers of appointment to third year Bachelor of Education students commencing in 2021 and consideration of future actions towards better supports for the transition of beginning teachers from university into the teaching profession/employment. These supports include reduced teaching hours, targeted professional learning and a week-long induction program prior to commencement, and the provision of a new educator support panel of experienced teachers. These supports provide both feedback and guidance on practice to new educators but also relational and emotional supports.

Whether graduate teachers are ready for the classroom

The ACT has a suite of supports for beginning teachers as outlined in the ACTPS Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement. These supports are promoted in any graduate recruitment campaigns undertaken by the ACT. Our approach recognises that the first years of teaching are a crucial part of the professional journey of quality teachers.

Additionally, the Affiliated Schools Program is a unique opportunity to provide ITE students with authentic, in-school experiences to prepare them for the classroom. School-based clinics give ITE

students practical experiences in our schools, with support from an on-site tutor and teaching opportunities with small groups of students.

The ACT Government would be interested to hear consultation feedback from current and recently graduated ITE students to learn more about how ITE prepared them to enter the teaching profession, including strengths and opportunities for improvement. This may be an area the Review Panel can inquire for subsequent consultations.

The role of teachers and school leaders in supporting the next generation of teachers

As part of a pre-service teacher placement program, the ACT has renewed a deed with the University of Canberra for the placement of pre-service teachers into schools to provide practical experience for students within all ACT public schools.

Through their involvement in the Affiliated Schools Program, participating ACT Public Schools (30% of ACT Public Schools) continue to demonstrate a commitment to initial teacher education through school-based clinics and professional placements, in close partnership with the University of Canberra.

In 2015, the reward and recognition process for teachers who achieve certification at the national Australian Standards of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) career stages was established. The Teaching Staff Agreement recognises and financially awards Certified Teachers with additional salary increment or equivalent allowance for one year. HALT teachers work closely to provide guidance and support to both early career teachers and pre-service teachers whilst on placement in their schools.

Affiliated Schools Program

The Affiliated Schools Program (the Program) is a collaborative partnership between the University of Canberra and the ACT Government, based around the clinical model of ITE programs and the delivery of high-quality practicum experiences.

The Program aims to:

- enhance pre-service teacher education;
- facilitate research between the University of Canberra and participating Affiliated Schools; and
- support in-service teachers through postgraduate studies, professional learning and resources.

There are currently 26 schools across the ACT Education Directorate engaged in the Affiliated Schools Partnership. Each of these schools has appointed a School Learning Coordinator, who plays a key role in supporting ITE students. The role of the School Learning Coordinator is to:

- provide leadership in the integration and development of pedagogical research into the aspects of the school's strategic plan and system priorities.
- be an active, positive and productive member of the Affiliated Schools Program and work collaboratively with all stakeholders including staff of the University of Canberra.
- demonstrate an active interest in building teacher capability and a commitment to pre-service teacher training.
- lead the school-based education clinics program, professional placements for preservice teachers and other school-based components of the Program in partnership with the University of Canberra.
- work collaboratively with the University of Canberra and other schools to improve pedagogical practice and student learning outcomes through teacher development, school and university led research, professional learning and professional placements for preservice teachers.

As part of the Program, school based pre-service teacher education clinics give ITE students authentic in-school, evidenced based learning opportunities. The clinics also give ITE students practical experience in our schools before they start their teaching careers. Accompanied by a University of Canberra tutor, groups of pre-service teachers attend one of our Affiliated Schools for a 3-hour block once a week, for seven weeks and work in small groups to plan for, implement and reflect on authentic teaching and learning. All ITE programs have a range of clinic programs throughout their degree program.

Semester 1 2021 feedback from pre-service teachers participating in clinics indicates a positive lift in teaching confidence, an improvement in their ability to prepare targeted lessons and an overall enhanced confidence in teaching practice. Feedback from schools hosting clinics indicates they have been a highly positive experience, with benefits to teaching staff and a desire to host more school-based clinics in the future.

In addition to school-based clinics practicum placements are essential for the learning and development of our future teaching workforce. These placements are not limited to Affiliated Schools. Classroom teachers across the ACT Education Directorate are encouraged to consider their capacity to host a pre-service teacher.

Practicum placements and the Program clinics also allow our leading teachers, principals and schools to play a greater role in supporting the development of ITE students. Feedback from the teachers and schools that host the clinics indicates a positive impact not just on ITE students but also classroom teachers and their students.

The Directorate's relationship with the University of Canberra as an ITE has also strengthened the ongoing professional development and support of teachers. The Directorate offers up to 30 scholarships for teachers and school leaders to undertake a Master of Education at the university through the Capital Region Scholarships Program. In addition, university staff work collaboratively

with schools to support them with professional development and learning opportunities which are tailored to meet the needs of schools and students.

The Affiliated Schools Research Program supports collaborative research projects between University of Canberra researchers and ACT teachers and school leaders. The projects support teachers to develop research skills and participate in ongoing professional learning. Academics from the University of Canberra mentor school-based teams in action research project. The research program also provides significant research grants to UC academics to undertake research in topics that related to the strategic direction of ACT Education and collaborate with ACT Public Schools.

The Program is a national leading and unique collaboration that is demonstrating an impact on the quality and confidence of ITE students, in-service teachers and school leaders.



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