

Submission to the
Quality Initial Teacher Education Review
On behalf of the
AfGT Consortium

16 July 2021

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Executive Summary

The AfGT Consortium represents one of the elements of the 'ITE ecosystem' described in the *QITE Review Discussion Paper* (DESE, 2021b). In our detailed responses within this document, we focus mainly on the TPA-focussed questions posed in Part B of the Discussion Paper, and advance a number of overarching statements and recommendations that are summarised here.

Overarching and Detailed Recommendations

A. We recommend that TPAs should continue in all ITE programs, from Early Childhood to Secondary education, and be a robust and measurable method of assessing classroom readiness.

Recommendation 1: That TPAs be embedded within all programs of study so that TPAs provide a genuine framework for inquiry and support program quality and sustainability. They should not be a disconnected assessment task.

B. We recommend that all ITE providers should be a part of a TPA consortium to ensure consistency of benchmarking and comparability between providers.

Recommendation 2: That consortia of institutions using TPAs be continued in order to enhance and strengthen the evidence base of what constitutes teaching readiness.

Recommendation 3: That consideration should be given to reducing the number of TPAs and that institutions and schools work together in sustainable ways to enable consistency of expectations and to strengthen the evidence base of TPAs as appropriate evaluations of graduates' classroom readiness.

Recommendation 4: That all approved TPAs engage in cross-consortia moderation to ensure the ongoing validity and reliability of their TPAs.

C. We recommend that the sustainability of embedded and robust TPAs require consideration of the ongoing resourcing, both human and financial, to ensure the fidelity and rigour of the priorities of the TEMAG report.

Recommendation 5: The robust structure of larger-scale, valid TPAs models should be explored as a way to accurately assess teachers' knowledge, practice and professional engagement across career stages beyond the Graduate level.

D. We recommend that there needs to be stronger alignment and communication between national, state and territory education governance bodies.

Recommendation 6: That in addition to the initial evaluation and endorsement of TPAs, a national governance body such as AITSL be authorised to develop achievement indicators in Program Standard 1.2 to monitor TPAs’ ongoing evidence of reliability and validity of the instrument.

Recommendation 7: That annual reporting to a national governing body such as AITSL includes TPA consortia reporting on adaptations and modifications made to their TPA necessitated by extended periods of interruption.

Recommendation 8: That a national governing body such as AITSL be authorised to work with TRAs and jurisdictional Departments of Education to ensure that there are throughlines between what is approved in TPAs and what can be implemented in schools and other educational settings.

E. We recommend that TPAs must be able to judge classroom readiness across a wide variety of contexts and in ways that are inclusive of the diversity that exists across the nation.

Recommendation 9: That ITE providers are encouraged--and incentivised--for broadening, not narrowing, course entry pathways and processes and all alternative pathway programs will be assessed by a TPA.

Recommendation 10: That a national governing body such as AITSL be authorised to work with consortia with approved TPAs to seek grants from the National Priorities & Industry Linkage Fund to develop innovative approaches for partnering with providers and industry.

F. We recommend that there needs to be regular review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and that any reviews of teaching standards should be conducted in consultation with stakeholders from TPA consortia from the outset.

Recommendation 11: That a number of topics could be considered as standards in the Professional Knowledge category of APSTs and hence be reflective in TPAs as optional assessment modules. For example:

- strategies for teaching trauma-affected children,
- strategies for designing and teaching online and remotely, and
- strategies for teachers keeping up with digital transformations in learning.

Recommendation 12: That strategies for teachers engaging in professional learning to enhance their own wellbeing and self-care could be considered as a standard in the Professional Engagement category of APSTs.

Introduction

The AfGT Consortium was founded in 2017 as part of an AITSL-seed funded project to develop a teaching performance assessment (TPA). The original project was completed in 2018 and the AfGT Consortium operates now as a self-governed and self-funded body. The Assessment for Graduate Teaching (AfGT) is an instrument developed by members of the consortium, which now comprises 14 higher education providers from across four states and two territories, as shown in Figure 1.

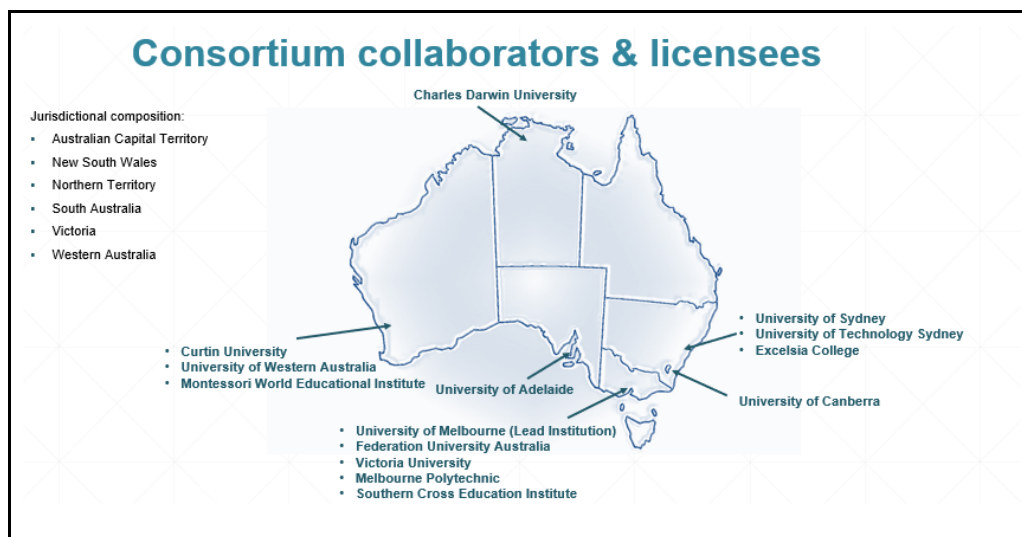


Figure 1 Distribution of AfGT Consortium collaborators and licensees

In May 2018, the Expert Advisory Group advised that the AfGT instrument designed and developed by the AfGT Consortium:

is a valid method for assessing whether a teacher’s performance meets the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the Graduate Teacher level. The panel noted that this is a very well designed and executed project, delivered at a relatively early stage of maturity. It is believed that further reliability and validity data, and analysis of cross-institutional similarities and differences will strengthen this TPA as time goes on.... The expert panel endorses the AfGT as meeting the requirements of Program Standard 1.2 at this point in time. Given the data limitations at this stage of the instrument’s development, the panel recommends that areas ‘in progress’ should be brought back to the panel for reconsideration in twelve months’ time (AITSL EAG, May 2018).

By the end of 2019, all of the courses in all the member institutions at that time had introduced the AfGT to pre-service teachers (PSTs) in their final practicum. The institutions conduct internal moderation activities and the AfGT Consortium conducts twice-yearly cross-institutional moderation activities. The consortium is able to demonstrate continued strong consensus amongst assessors on the classroom readiness of graduates and that they meet the Australian Professional Standards for

Teachers (APSTs) at the Graduate Level. Based on consortium-wide data, the analyses that have been conducted continue to substantiate the AfGT as a valid, reliable and fair teaching performance assessment instrument. At an instrument-level, the AfGT is robust and coherent, and at item-level, the AfGT demonstrates well-ordered statistical parameters with strong and reliable test information.

In addition to cross-institutional moderation, the AfGT Consortium conducts regular evaluations of the implementation of the assessment in a process of continuous improvement. Alignment of the AfGT with course requirements is a positive dimension of the AfGT, suggesting that institutions have successfully embedded the AfGT into their program designs. The level of insight and familiarity with the requirements of the AfGT --and TPAs more generally-- suggests that the instrument has transitioned from an emergent assessment to an established instrument.

In addition to cross-institutional moderation, the AfGT Consortium conducts regular evaluations of the implementation of the assessment in a process of continuous improvement. Alignment of the AfGT with course requirements is a positive dimension of the AfGT, demonstrating that institutions have successfully embedded the AfGT into their program designs. The level of insight and familiarity with the requirements of the AfGT—and TPAs more generally—that the instrument has transitioned from an emergent assessment to an established instrument.

The AfGT Consortium’s peer-reviewed research has identified that:

- International evidence revealed common aspects of TPAs worldwide: planning and preparation, observations on and evidence of teaching practice, and student work samples, from which a set of guiding principles were developed to support the development and implementation of the AfGT (Stacey et al. 2019).
- The process of completing the TPA can activate and reinforce pre-service teachers’ reflection and professional reasoning, and expands their knowledge of how their teaching improves their students’ learning (Kriewaldt et al., 2020).
- The ITE reform agenda has created shared challenges for the sector and has provided new opportunities, including professional growth and sector transformation that extends beyond changes to learning programs. Initial concerns included whether a national, one-size-fits-all approach would lead to uniformity and disadvantage diverse and unique responses and contexts (particularly of smaller institutions). The AfGT was able to be designed through strengthened collegial relationships with colleagues in different parts of the country, in institutions with different program types, delivery models and histories (McGraw et al., 2021).
- Entire programs of study are impacted by the introduction of the AfGT, including in the program design, and the introduction of a TPA has led to strong connections being made by PSTs between theory and practice. However, the preparation, support and assessment of the TPA has increased the workload of teacher educators (Keamy & Selkrig, 2021).

The AfGT Consortium represents one of the elements of the 'ITE ecosystem' described in the *QITE Review Discussion Paper* (DESE, 2021b). We recognise the complex interrelatedness of the many aspects of initial teacher education and we have a specific interest in responding to the Expert Panel's questions in relation to the benefits and costs of TPAs currently in operation, as well as reflections on the current processes and future potential of TPA endorsement processes to ensure that ITE programs continue to deliver quality outcomes.

Having developed an assessment task 'from the ground up' through the participation of ITE experts across the consortium, we therefore provide a response to questions asked in the Discussion Paper on the basis of what we have learned--both in relation to the AfGT as a Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA), as well as our functioning as a vibrant and inclusive consortium of 14 institutions. In our response we focus mainly on the TPA-focussed questions posed in Part B of the Discussion Paper, but like any ecosystem, the interrelatedness means that some of the following recommendations could apply to multiple questions posed by the Expert Panel.

We pose a number of Overarching and Detailed Recommendations, which are recommendations about the future of TPAs based on our experiences of designing and implementing the AfGT. We provide a copy of the most recent annual report to the AfGT Consortium, which is our evidence base for our recommendations. Please note that the *Assessment for Graduate Teaching Report 2020* (Keamy et al. 2020) is a CONFIDENTIAL document.

Please refer to Appendix A to see how the recommendations we have made in this document are cross-referenced with the questions posed by the QITE Review Expert Panel's Discussion Paper.

Classroom readiness of graduate teachers

A. We recommend that TPAs should continue in all ITE programs, from Early Childhood to Secondary education, and be a robust and measurable method of assessing classroom readiness.

- Research into the Educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) in the United States demonstrates the different perceptions that institutions and stakeholders have about the instrument—it is seen as either a framework for inquiry (that is, an instrument that is embedded within program content and delivery and counting as credit points) or as a compliance device (that is, using the summative assessment as an add-on hurdle requirement) (De Voto et al., 2021).

Recommendation 1: That TPAs be embedded within all programs of study so that TPAs provide a genuine framework for inquiry and support program quality and sustainability. They should not be a disconnected assessment task.

B. We recommend that all ITE providers should be a part of a TPA consortium to ensure consistency of benchmarking and comparability between providers.

- In September 2016, AITSL invited “consortia of Australian initial teacher education providers” to submit expressions of interest for the development of a TPA. The requirement for institutions to work together in the original EOI process (AITSL, 2016), has had the benefit of seeing multiple institutions working together within the AfgT Consortium to build a research evidence base.

Recommendation 2: That consortia of institutions using TPAs be continued in order to enhance and strengthen the evidence base of what constitutes teaching readiness.

- Program Standard 1.3 Part (e) requires that TPAs “include moderation processes that support consistent decision-making against the achievement criteria” (AITSL, 2019a). Consortia-based TPAs must provide evidence of a process for cross-institutional moderation, which ensures the rigour of the moderation process. Cross-institution moderation also provides a process for the continuous improvement of the instrument, thereby strengthening the evidence that TPAs are appropriate for measuring the classroom readiness of graduates.

Additionally, questions such as the following have been posed by some mentor teachers during annual evaluations of the implementation of the AfgT: “Why are these students having to do this level of work when I'm not seeing it from other universities.... Why are my students having to do this in the classroom, [when] next door is not having to do it?” (Keamy & Selkrig, 2019). Limiting the number of TPAs and consequently, having more institutions working with a common instrument, will help to build the capacity of mentor teachers to support the PSTs in responding to the requirements of the TPA in place for them. Consortia can work in partnership with stakeholders to enhance the knowledge understandings of mentors re the TPA specifically and the APSTs generally, to enable consistency of expectation around demonstrations of the achievement of the assessed APSTs.

Recommendation 3: That consideration should be given to reducing the number of TPAs and that institutions and schools work together in sustainable ways to enable consistency of expectations and to strengthen the evidence base of TPAs as appropriate evaluations of graduates’ classroom readiness.

- There is currently no feasible means by which TPAs can be compared. Consequently, there can be no certainty about the consistency of TPAs; nor can there be certainty about the comparability of passing standards. Whereas AITSL proposed a benchmarking activity in 2020 in which it was proposed that the three earliest approved consortia-based TPAs (AfGT, GTPA and QTPA) would compare their TPAs as a preliminary activity, with a view to extend it to include all other TPAs from 2022 (personal communication from AITSL CEO to the President of the Victorian Council of Deans, October 28, 2020). This approach was abandoned in February 2021.

Recommendation 4: That all approved TPAs engage in cross-consortia moderation to ensure the ongoing validity and reliability of their TPAs.

C. We recommend that the sustainability of embedded and robust TPAs requires consideration of the ongoing resourcing, both human and financial, to ensure the fidelity and rigour of the priorities advanced by TEMAG.

- Through the continual cycle of design, implementing, testing, refining, and reporting, the underlying structure of the AfGT has proved to be robust and valid in a wide range of education contexts. We believe that this structure could be easily modified and implemented to assess teachers’ knowledge, practice, and professional engagement at all career stages within the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (i.e., at Proficient, Highly Accomplished, and Lead teacher levels). Adopting this evidenced based approach, could enable valid and reliable assessments of teaching across the full range of the APSTs. The outputs of this process could be used to assist teachers as they progress throughout their career. They could also be used to inform professional learning opportunities for teachers and to provide accurate and transparent processes for promotions and appointments across the country. They may even be able to be used to provide the basis of measuring the effectiveness of the Australian teaching workforce.

Recommendation 5: The robust structure of large-scale, valid TPAs models should be explored as a way to accurately assess teachers’ knowledge, practice and professional engagement across career stages (i.e., Proficient, Highly Accomplished, and Lead teacher levels).

D. We recommend that there needs to be stronger alignment and communication between national, state and territory education governance bodies.

- “Ensuring that the AfGT is implemented with fidelity and as designed will give confidence that the AfGT remains aligned with the requirements of Program Standard 1.2” was a statement made in the Final Assessment Report by AITSL Expert Advisory Group (July 10, 2019). The AfGT Consortium has provided to AITSL copies of summaries of its annual reports

even though there is no requirement to advise AITSL about the ongoing implementation of the instrument. If, for instance, a national governing body such as AITSL is to vouch for the ongoing appropriateness of TPAs as reliable and valid measures of graduates' readiness to teach, then there needs to be additional aspects added to the role of a national governing body such as AITSL that are clearly articulated for ITE providers.

Recommendation 6: That in addition to the initial evaluation and endorsement of TPAs, a national governance body such as AITSL be authorised to develop achievement indicators in Program Standard 1.2 to monitor TPAs' ongoing evidence of reliability and validity of the instrument.

- The AfGT Consortium has supported—and continues to support—member institutions during periods of extended lockdown due to COVID, whilst insisting that the AfGT needed to continue to be implemented with fidelity. This meant that adaptations to evolving situations were sometimes necessary. A decision-making process was developed to assist member institutions in this process. Importantly, modifications to the AfGT were not required during extended lockdowns in 2020.

Recommendation 7: That annual reporting to a national governing body such as AITSL includes TPA consortia reporting on adaptations and modifications made to their TPA necessitated by extended periods of interruption.

- The AfGT comprises four elements that are assessed, one of them being video recordings as evidence of enacted practice. (The recordings are of PSTs teaching - not of students.) The Expert Advisory Group endorsed the instrument, however, some jurisdictional Departments of Education and/or their ethics approval bodies do not approve the use of video recording. There is also some evidence that video recording is used regularly in schools, such as in this comment made by a PST during a consortium evaluation: "I mentioned [the video recording] in the staff room one lunch time and all the teachers spoke about its value as an educator. My mentor still records himself sometimes for the same reasons that pre service students do." (Keamy & Selkrig, 2019)

Recommendation 8: That a national governing body such as AITSL be authorised to work with all national and jurisdictional governance bodies and employers to ensure that there are throughlines between what is approved in TPAs and what can be implemented in schools and other educational settings.

E. We recommend that TPAs must be able to judge classroom readiness across a wide variety of contexts and in ways that are inclusive of the diversity that exists across the nation.

- Preparing graduates for teaching diverse student cohorts is not only a matter of providing them with knowledge and skills. Part of achieving optimum preparation of teachers in order for them to cater for a range of diversities is to increase the diversity of the PST cohort. One of the ways of achieving this is to ensure that the selection of teacher candidates is more reflective of broader society than is currently the case.

Recommendation 9: That ITE providers are encouraged--and incentivised--for broadening, not narrowing, course entry pathways and processes and all alternative pathway programs will be assessed by a TPA.

- Further to increasing the diversification of PSTs brought into the profession, provider institutions are able to partner with industry through the *National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund - Job Ready Graduate Package* (DESE, 2021a). The NPILF will allocate block grants to providers to support enhanced engagement with providers and industry to produce job-ready graduates. The structure of TPAs and their measurement of readiness as referenced to the APST provides the ideal framework for measuring and evaluating effectiveness of job-readiness. This would meet the aims and parameters of the NPILF. The resourcing available could help to enable valuable innovations to practice. The scope of the NPILF is such that senior leadership in institutions are engaged and thus it would help to strengthen and fore-front important work and innovation in the ITE space.

Recommendation 10: That a national governing body such as AITSL be authorised to work with consortia with approved TPAs to seek grants from the National Priorities & Industry Linkage Fund to develop innovative approaches for partnering with providers and industry.

F. We recommend that there needs to be regular review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and that any reviews of teaching standards should be conducted in consultation with stakeholders from TPA consortia from the outset.

- Trauma arising from Victoria’s experiences in 2020, which included not only COVID-19, but also devastating bushfires, is contributing to a deterioration of the mental health and wellbeing of people in our communities. What we have seen, and continue to see, is that PSTs--and teachers in schools--are needing to make adjustments to their teaching, such as attending to the well-being of the students they are teaching. Given the predictions about the likelihood of future catastrophic environmental events as a consequence of climate change as well as learning to live with the pandemic, there is scope for some re-thinking of the fitness for purpose of the APSTs into the future.
- During extended periods of lockdown in Victoria in 2020, and at the time of writing in NSW, teachers--and PSTs on their placements in schools at these times-- needed to develop knowledge and skills of remote and flexible pedagogies (DET, 2020). Many of the responses, as Hodges et al. (2020) reported, could be classified as ‘emergency remote teaching’, which differs from the development and design of well-considered on-line and blended pedagogies (Johnson, 2021).

The extended periods of lockdown also highlighted the digital transformation that is occurring in student learning, and therefore, there will be increased expectations upon teachers to be able to keep pace with this phenomenon.

Recommendation 11: That a number of topics could be considered as standards in the Professional Knowledge category of APSTs and hence be reflective in TPAs as optional assessment modules. For example:

- strategies for teaching trauma-affected children,
 - strategies for designing and teaching online and remotely, and
 - strategies for teachers keeping up with digital transformations in learning.
- The wellbeing of school students is important, as is the wellbeing and self-care of their teachers.

Recommendation 12: That strategies for teachers engaging in professional learning to enhance their own wellbeing and self-care could be considered as a standard in the Professional Engagement category of APSTs.

Appendix A. Responding to the Discussion Paper

PART B. Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers

4. Are graduate teachers ready for the classroom?

- Are the **Australian Professional Standards for Teachers** (Teacher Standards) fit for purpose in identifying the key skills and knowledge pre-service teachers need to be ready for the classroom? Do the Teacher Standards adequately reflect the role of teachers in supporting pre-service and graduate teachers? See: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards> for more information.

Recommendation 11: That a number of topics could be considered as standards in the Professional Knowledge category of APSTs and hence be reflective in TPAs as optional assessment modules. For example:

- strategies for teaching trauma-affected children,
- strategies for designing and teaching online and remotely, and
- strategies for teachers keeping up with digital transformations in learning.

Recommendation 12: That strategies for teachers engaging in professional learning to enhance their own wellbeing and self-care could be considered as a standard in the Professional Engagement category of APSTs.

- Are ITE programs preparing graduates for teaching diverse student cohorts, including through cultural competency and inclusive education?

Recommendation 9: That ITE providers are encouraged--and incentivised--for broadening, not narrowing, course entry pathways and processes and all alternative pathway programs will be assessed by a TPA.

Recommendation 10: That a national governing body such as AITSL be authorised to work with consortia with approved TPAs to seek grants from the National Priorities & Industry Linkage Fund to develop innovative approaches for partnering with providers and industry.

- What are the benefits and costs of the number of TPAs in operation?

Recommendation 1: That TPAs be embedded within all programs of study so that TPAs provide a genuine framework for inquiry and support program quality and sustainability. They should not be a disconnected assessment task.

Recommendation 2: That consortia of institutions using TPAs be continued in order to enhance and strengthen the evidence base of what constitutes teaching readiness.

Recommendation 3: That consideration should be given to reducing the number of TPAs and that institutions and schools work together in sustainable ways to enable consistency of expectations and to strengthen the evidence base of TPAs as appropriate evaluations of graduates' classroom readiness.

Recommendation 4: That all approved TPAs engage in cross-consortia moderation to ensure the ongoing validity and reliability of their TPAs.

Recommendation 5: The robust structure of large-scale, valid TPAs models should be explored as a way to accurately assess teachers’ knowledge, practice and professional engagement across career stages (i.e., Proficient, Highly Accomplished, and Lead teacher levels).

- How could the TPA endorsement process be improved? Are the current arrangements leading to quality outcomes?

Recommendation 6: That in addition to the initial evaluation and endorsement of TPAs, a national governance body such as AITSL be authorised to develop achievement indicators in Program Standard 1.2 to monitor TPAs’ ongoing evidence of reliability and validity of the instrument.

Recommendation 7: That annual reporting to a national governing body such as AITSL includes TPA consortia reporting on adaptations and modifications made to their TPA necessitated by extended periods of interruption.

Recommendation 8: That a national governing body such as AITSL be authorised to work with all national and jurisdictional governance bodies and employers to ensure that there are throughlines between what is approved in TPAs and what can be implemented in schools and other educational settings.

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