

Dear Expert Panel (Quality Initial Teacher Education Review)

I (Dr Judith Howard) am an Associate Professor with the Queensland University of Technology, overseeing national and international work regarding Trauma-Aware Education in Early Childhood Education and Care and Schools. My areas of expertise focus on Trauma-Aware Education and student behaviour management/support.

I have been in discussions with the CEO of AITSL (Mark Grant) and school advisors for then Federal Minister for Education's (Dan Tehan) office about the issues raised in my response below – during 2020. I believe these issues were tabled with the then Federal Minister – and as a result – the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) were surveyed to examine how their programs were addressing trauma-informed education within ITE programs. I have not been informed of the outcomes of this data collection but am hopeful that this has informed this current review.

To assure you of my credentials for contributing to this review, I will first share some of the work we are leading at QUT to support education sites and systems across Australia and beyond. I will then outline my reflections to contribute to this review.

QUT has led the development of a range of resources and education and professional development options, summarised below.

- The “National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Education”, developed in collaboration with the Australian Childhood Foundation - that are informing policy and practice throughout the country.
- A biennial “Trauma-Aware Schooling” conference for Australian educators:
<https://traumaawareschooling.com.au/>
- Initial teacher education option units for Bachelor of Education and Master of Education pre-service teachers.
 - EUB003: Managing challenging student behaviours due to complex trauma
 - EUN252: Trauma-awareness.
- Post-graduate courses in trauma-aware education
 - Graduate Certificate: <https://www.qut.edu.au/courses/graduate-certificate-in-education-trauma-aware-education>
 - Master of Education: <https://www.qut.edu.au/courses/master-of-education-trauma-aware-education-specialisation>
- A range of on-line professional development options offered nationally and internationally, including.
 - Teaching students who have suffered complex trauma (2-hour free on-line MOOC)
 - Teaching students who have suffered complex trauma (4-week on-line module)
 - Teaching Students who have suffered complex trauma (4-week on-line assessment module)
 - Trauma-Aware Education: Teaching students who have suffered complex trauma (10-week on-line microcredential)
- We continue to research and develop resources in this area to support Australian educators and education systems.

I note and agree with findings from Mayer et.al (2015) on page 20 of the discussion paper, that graduate teachers:

- feel less well prepared in classroom management and professional engagement with parents/carers and the community (especially when this work involves children and young people exhibiting chronic and/or challenging behaviour and/or mental health concerns).
- are less effective as beginning teachers in teaching culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse learners (especially those who exhibit chronic and/or challenging behaviours and/or mental health concerns).

In response, please see my reflections below regarding:

- **Part B of the Discussion Paper (Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers)**
 - **Section 4: Are graduate teachers ready for the classroom?**
 - **and the question on page 21 of the discussion paper. “Are ITE programs preparing graduates for teaching diverse student cohorts, including through cultural competency and inclusive education?”**

My response is drawing from the current [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (Teacher Standards) and is suggesting that there is a significant gap in the standards regarding key skills and knowledge pre-service teachers need to be ready for the classroom. I propose that this gap is the need for ITE programs to have a formal and informed focus on trauma-aware education and inclusive school, classroom, and student behaviour support/management.

My response is relevant for the AITSL standards (that I have summarised below), not only for graduate educators but also for educators throughout their careers. I believe it is short-sighted to only focus on standards for graduates, as we are truly trying to equip graduate educators for a career – that often will involve proficiency and leadership. Therefore, a major goal of ITE is to equip graduates for their early careers but also to enhance capacities and resilience for an ongoing career in education. Enhancing capacities for educators working with students exhibiting concerns with their behaviour and well-being, is an important part of this work.

It is becoming increasingly clear that schools and early childhood education and care services are often one of the most effective organisations/places/systems to address the quite serious outcomes for children and young people who have lived through complex trauma (abuse, neglect, violence) and other forms of trauma that can result from (e.g.) natural disasters, the pandemic, mental health concerns, etc.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that:

- if education sites and systems do not work in a trauma-informed way, the behaviours and needs of these young learners can impact not just on their own education and wellbeing outcomes, but also on those of their peers (other students), and the personal and professional wellbeing of the people working hard to educate them.
- many of the young learners who have suffered complex trauma are truly disadvantaged victims of harm who receiving child protection and/or youth justice services and/or are living in out-of-home care and are deserving of an informed and effective response from education sites and

systems – to enhance their education, well-being, and life outcomes and to avoid disengagement and disciplinary exclusion.

- the neurobiological impacts of complex trauma – lead to an overactive “fight, flight and freeze” response in learners – that can result in behaviours that are confusing to educators and very difficult to manage if they are not trauma-informed and skilled.
- there is strong (scientific) evidence that unresolved impacts of complex trauma can be intergenerationally transmitted. Thus, addressing the impact of this trauma with current generations of students, can minimise the impacts for future generations – which will have significant impacts on both economic and life outcomes for individuals, families, communities, and societies.

There is now a global paradigm shift that is moving thinking and practice in education sites and systems to address the impact of the significant numbers of learners in early childhood education and care and in schools, who are living with the outcomes of complex trauma. It is timely for all universities providing ITE to align practice with this shift and for AITSL to incorporate this important area into standards at all stages of educators’ careers. This could most easily be incorporated within Section 4 of the AITSL standards but is also very relevant for Sections 1 and 6, as outlined below. I have added extra wording in red for emphasis.

1.1: Physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students

- **Graduate:** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of physical, social, and intellectual development and characteristics of students (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma) and how these may affect learning.
- **Proficient:** Use teaching strategies based on knowledge of students’ physical, social, and intellectual development and characteristics to improve student learning (including that which is a result from living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Select from a flexible and effective repertoire of teaching strategies to suit the physical, social, and intellectual development and characteristics of students (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Lead colleagues to select and develop teaching strategies to improve student learning using knowledge of the physical, social, and intellectual development and characteristics of students (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

1.3: Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds

- **Graduate:** Demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Design and implement teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Support colleagues to develop effective teaching strategies that address the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Evaluate and revise school learning and teaching programs, using expert and community knowledge and experience, to meet the needs of students with diverse

linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

1.4: Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

- **Graduate:** Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity, and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds (including those who are living with the outcomes of sometimes intergenerational and historical trauma).
- **Proficient:** Design and implement effective teaching strategies that are responsive to the local community and cultural setting, linguistic background, and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (including those who are living with the outcomes of sometimes intergenerational and historical trauma).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Provide advice and support colleagues in the implementation of effective teaching strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (including those who are living with the outcomes of sometimes intergenerational and historical trauma) using knowledge of and support from community representatives.
- **Lead:** Develop teaching programs that support equitable and ongoing participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (including those who are living with the outcomes of sometimes intergenerational and historical trauma) by engaging in collaborative relationships with community representatives and parents/carers.

1.5: Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities

- **Graduate:** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of strategies for differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Develop teaching activities that incorporate differentiated strategies to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Evaluate learning and teaching programs, using student assessment data, that are differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Lead colleagues to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching programs differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

1.6: Strategies to support full participation of students with disability

- **Graduate:** Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of legislative requirements and teaching strategies that support participation and learning of students with disability (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Design and implement teaching activities that support the participation and learning of students with disability (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma) and address relevant policy and legislative requirements.
- **Highly Accomplished:** Work with colleagues to access specialist knowledge, and relevant policy and legislation, to develop teaching programs that support the participation and learning of students with disability (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Initiate and lead the review of school policies to support the engagement and full participation of students with disability (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma) and ensure compliance with legislative and/or system policies.

4.1: Support student participation

- **Graduate:** Identify strategies to support inclusive student participation and engagement in classroom activities (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Establish and implement inclusive and positive interactions to engage and support all students in classroom activities (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Model effective practice and support colleagues to implement inclusive strategies that engage and support all students (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Demonstrate and lead by example the development of productive and inclusive learning environments across the school by reviewing inclusive strategies and exploring new approaches to engage and support all students (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

4.3: Manage challenging behaviour

- **Graduate:** Demonstrate knowledge of practical approaches to manage challenging behaviour (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Manage challenging behaviour by establishing and negotiating clear expectations with students and address discipline issues promptly, fairly, and respectfully (including those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Develop and share with colleagues a flexible repertoire of behaviour management strategies using expert knowledge and workplace experience (including that that is relevant for those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Lead and implement behaviour management initiatives to assist colleagues to broaden their range of strategies (including that that is relevant for those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

4.4: Maintain student safety

- **Graduate:** Describe strategies that support students' wellbeing and safety working within school and/or system, curriculum, and legislative requirements (including that that is relevant for those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Ensure students' wellbeing and safety within school and/or system, curriculum, and legislative requirements (including that that is relevant for those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Initiate and take responsibility for implementing current school and/or system, curriculum, and legislative requirements to ensure student wellbeing and safety (including that that is relevant for those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Evaluate the effectiveness of student wellbeing policies and safe working practices using current school and/or system, curriculum and legislative requirements and assist colleagues to update their practices (including that that is relevant for those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

6.1: Identify and plan professional learning needs

- **Graduate:** Demonstrate an understanding of the role of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers in identifying professional learning needs (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and advice from colleagues to identify and plan professional learning needs (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

- **Highly Accomplished:** Analyse the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to plan personal professional development goals, support colleagues to identify and achieve personal development goals and pre-service teachers to improve classroom practice (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Use comprehensive knowledge of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to plan and lead the development of professional learning policies and programs that address the professional learning needs of colleagues and pre-service teachers (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice

- **Graduate:** Understand the relevant and appropriate sources of professional learning for teachers (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma) engage in high quality targeted opportunities to improve practice and offer quality placements for pre-service teachers where applicable.
- **Lead:** Initiate collaborative relationships to expand professional learning opportunities, engage in research, and provide quality opportunities and placements for pre-service teachers (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

6.3: Engage with colleagues and improve practice

- **Graduate:** Seek and apply constructive feedback from supervisors and teachers to improve teaching practices (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Contribute to collegial discussions and apply constructive feedback from colleagues to improve professional knowledge and practice (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Initiate and engage in professional discussions with colleagues in a range of forums to evaluate practice directed at improving professional knowledge and practice, and the educational outcomes of students (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Implement professional dialogue within the school or professional learning network(s) that is informed by feedback, analysis of current research and practice to improve the educational outcomes of students (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

6.4: Apply professional learning and improve student learning

- **Graduate:** Demonstrate an understanding of the rationale for continued professional learning and the implications for improved student learning (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Proficient:** Undertake professional learning programs designed to address identified student learning needs (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

- **Highly Accomplished:** Engage with colleagues to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher professional learning activities to address student learning needs (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).
- **Lead:** Advocate, participate in and lead strategies to support high-quality professional learning opportunities for colleagues that focus on improved student learning (including that that is relevant for teaching and supporting those who are living with the outcomes of trauma).

7.3: Engage with the parents/carers

- **Graduate:** Understand strategies for working effectively, sensitively and confidentially with parents/carers (including parents/carers of learners living with the outcomes of trauma – including those in out-of-home care).
- **Proficient:** Establish and maintain respectful collaborative relationships with parents/carers regarding their children’s learning and wellbeing (including parents/carers of learners living with the outcomes of trauma – including those in out-of-home care).
- **Highly Accomplished:** Demonstrate responsiveness in all communications with parents/carers about their children’s learning and wellbeing (including parents/carers of learners living with the outcomes of trauma – including those in out-of-home care).
- **Lead:** Identify, initiate and build on opportunities that engage parents/carers in both the progress of their children’s learning and in the educational priorities of the school (including parents/carers of learners living with the outcomes of trauma – including those in out-of-home care).

7.4: Engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities

- **Graduate:** Understand the role of external professionals and community representatives in broadening teachers’ professional knowledge and practice. (Universities and other providers can help with this)
- **Proficient:** Participate in professional and community networks and forums to broaden knowledge and improve practice (Universities and other providers can help with this)
- **Highly Accomplished:** Contribute to professional networks and associations and build productive links with the wider community to improve teaching and learning (Universities and other providers can help with this).
- **Lead:** Take a leadership role in professional and community networks and support the involvement of colleagues in external learning opportunities (Universities and other providers can help with this).

In summary, it is highly recommended that trauma-aware or trauma-informed educational practice within ITE units should become part of the core (not optional) learnings for pre-service teachers and this should be promoted to ITE providers throughout this country. It is also highly recommended that trauma-aware or trauma-informed educational practice is reflected in the AITSL standards. QUT leaders of this work are more than happy to speak with other tertiary providers or AITSL about this.

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