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Quality Initial Teacher Education Review Secretariat C50MA8
Department of Education, Skills and Employment
GPO Box 9880, Canberra, ACT 2601

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Dear Ms Paul AO PSM (Chair),

RE: Southern Cross University Submission - Review of Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission for consideration by the Expert Panel in the 'Quality Review of Initial Teacher Education'. I herewith respond to underlying premise of the review, namely: *1. Attracting and selecting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession; and Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers.*

1. Attracting and selecting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession

There are two broad cohorts of high-quality Initial Teacher Education (ITE) candidates; Year 12 school leavers and non-school year 12 leavers. Year 12 high-achieving candidates are motivated by three key factors, namely social justice through positive contributions to society; intellectual challenge and autonomy; and remuneration along with career prospects (Gore et al., 2015; Goss & Sonnemann, 2019).

The Grattan Institute's report 'Attracting High Achievers to Teaching' (Goss & Sonnemann, 2019) noted that "...more bright young [Australian] people would choose teaching if there was financial support while studying, better pay for top teachers, and better progression opportunities beyond traditional principal career paths" (p. 3). Findings in the report highlight that, unlike high performing systems such as Singapore and Finland, our best teachers are not provided with adequate opportunity to share their expertise or pursue innovative ideas; rather, they tend to be "confined to their own classrooms or stretched with 'add-on' instructional leadership responsibilities without adequate time, guidance, or support to improve teaching in their school" (p. 10).

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Similarly, the OECD (2012) observed: “Competitive compensation and other incentives, career prospects and diversity, and giving teachers responsibility as professionals are important parts of strategies to attract the most talented teachers to the most challenging classrooms” (p. 55). Further, Finland has moved to increase investment in the support of novice teachers with additional time to collaborate with their peers to develop curricula and assessments – and considerable autonomy (OECD TALIS, 2019). Ontario has instituted a comprehensive multi-year induction program for new teachers, which includes intensive mentoring and professional development, as well as appraisal (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In England, the Early Career Framework (2020) extending on the ‘Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy’ (DfE, 2019) extends induction and professional support for early career teachers to 2 years, with reduced workload, which is fully funded by DfE.

These broader policy settings can work in harmony with ITE. The federal government could implement signal strategies for intellectual challenge and autonomy to attract high performing ITE candidates into the teaching profession. ITE can play a strong role in offering intellectual challenge and talent mobility opportunities for teachers, including leadership pathways that focus on research translation and graduate teacher excellence.

Recommendation 1

Establish federally funded leadership fellowships for teachers (including high performing early career teachers) to enable flexible and mobile roles across teaching and initial teacher education. Key responsibilities could include practice-based research; embedding evidence-based practices in the classroom; teaching across both contexts; and playing a key role in graduate teacher excellence. Candidates could be supported to complete school-based industry PhDs for translation of research into practice.

In addition to the factors motivating high-performing school-leavers to the teaching profession outlined above, mid- and late-career changers are influenced by career stability and work-life balance in the long term, and minimal disruption to their personal lives and their capacity to earn in the career change process (Allen et al, 2019).

Master’s qualifications for teaching have become an international trend and are more highly valued than the PG Diploma, particularly for career changers (Ojala et al., 2021). In addition, master’s level degrees include a valuable research component as required within the AQF Framework, which places a strong focus on understanding, interpreting, and using data and evidence: key skills for teaching. The value of more flexible, accelerated master's programs in attracting career changers and targeting teacher shortages in particular subject areas and hard to staff schools has been shown internationally over recent years (DfE Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, 2019; Ojala et al., 2021; Podolsky et al., 2016; Worth et al., 2018).

Accelerated programs have a greater emphasis on workplace learning in schools. While workplace training is becoming increasingly in demand as a way of learning across employment sectors, a well-established body of research has highlighted several serious limitations to its effectiveness including: a variability of quality participation depending on the workplace supervisor (Billett, 2004); the reliance on observation and imitation rather than deeper cognitive engagement in reasoning and judgement (Billett & Choy, 2012); and the capacity to provide an adequate level of structured learning and conceptual development including an ability to reflect, recontextualise, and apply learning (Gegenfurtner, 2011; Aarto-Pesonen & Tynjala, 2017; Tynjala et al., 2020). The ability for workplace learning to effectively integrate the theoretical, practical, self-regulative and sociocultural knowledge required in professional learning is limited (Tynjala et al., 2020), particularly within the context of increasingly pressured workplaces (Fitzgerald, 2019; Thomson, 2020). In addition, leading educational researchers have expressed concerns that fast-track programs that place considerable weight on the school-based professional experience component can undermine the value of professional knowledge and theory gained within the university context (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Schmidt & Schneider, 2018; Zeichner, 2010; Zeichner & Bier, 2015).

We broadly support initiatives within MTeach programs which can attract professionals from other field by minimising disruption to their personal lives and their capacity to earn while ensuring an effective alignment between theory and practice. Integrated strategies in university-based programs overseas and in Australia are based on key principles:

- Subsidised preparation through scholarships/bursaries and employment (0.6-0.8 FTE load) (eg. as paraprofessionals or teachers) generally in 2nd year, or from 2nd half of 1st year;
- Flexible pathways, such as fast-tracking (eg. 18-month programs using intensives and trimester structures) or part time over 3-4 years while teaching;
- Flexible delivery (online and blended; weekly or intensive offerings);
- Effective mentoring in schools by designated induction mentors working closely with university supervisors;
- Connection with other ITE students within communities of practice offering opportunities for collaboration and peer support; and
- Guaranteed post-qualification employment (eg. in mutually agreed positions and schools with teacher shortages).

Recommendation 2

Maintain a master's level minimum qualification for graduate applicants and career changers to transition into the teaching profession. A master's level degree enables a strong focus on gathering, interpreting, and using evidence to improve teaching practices and student outcomes. Maintaining this qualification level is in line with international trends and demonstrates Australia's national commitment to teaching as a high-status profession.

Recommendation 3

Increase flexibility within Master of Teaching degrees so candidates can gain employment sooner. Dedicated time and support to continue university studies while beginning work as a teacher enables a continuous cycle of improvement: a strategy that prioritises a culture of ongoing learning and strengthens university-school partnerships.

In addition to attracting the high achieving year 12 and non-year 12 (mature) ITE candidates, there is equally need for a more diverse cohort of ITE candidates to better mirror the diversity of children and young people in early childhood, schools and Australian society by and large. First and foremost, we need to change public perception about the teaching profession. A national media campaign is needed to raise the status and attractiveness of teaching as a career.

Many universities have well-developed widening participation programs to attract students into higher education. Specific funding for ITE could be integrated within such programs. For example, university-school partnerships can play a strong role in attracting and retaining diverse candidates into teaching. Formalised university-school partnerships in diverse contexts are often seen as an investment in the local community and may promote minority student interest in teaching as a career (Goe & Roth, 2019). The Hub School model of university-school partnerships (Le Cornu, 2016; Lemon et al., 2018), currently funded in NSW, includes hub schools working in close partnership with a university and a network of local schools. Each hub school has an in-school Professional Experience Coordinator (PEXC) to support induction of teacher education students into the school community. Hub school networks could encompass a more diverse range of schools including rural/regional schools, specialist schools such as STEM schools, special purpose schools and hard to staff schools. These hub networks could provide opportunities to promote teaching as a profession among senior students in each community. ITE students from diverse backgrounds could be 'placed' within a supportive hub network that includes familiar contexts along with the opportunity to experience a diversity of settings for professional experience. University-school partnerships in diverse schools can enable bespoke and contextualised initiatives including some that have been trialled elsewhere and some new suggestions:

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- Enabling prospective candidates to try out teaching prior to applying (in line with the 'Discover Teaching' initiative, UK) conducted through partner schools in students' demographic;
- Use of financial incentives to attract diverse students, eg. scholarships and fee waivers, opportunities to work as paraprofessionals in schools while studying, bonuses for obtaining successful certification and bonuses for teaching in "hard to staff" schools or subject areas experiencing shortage (eg. in line with US initiative [Teacher diversity in America](#), (Brown Center on Education Policy, 2018). Underwriting the cost of teacher preparation through service scholarships and loan forgiveness in exchange for a commitment to teach in high-need schools or subject areas, typically for at least 4 years;
- Federal funding to support early identification of diverse students including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in senior school and developing wrap-around support to facilitate the pathway to a BEd (including support for LANTITE, which is a significant barrier for diverse teacher education candidates); and
- Implementing 'Grow Your Own' programs in rural/remote contexts that enable teacher education candidates from rural and remote schools to work at the school and/or early childhood centre in a paraprofessional role while studying for a BEd (or MTeach) online, with school holiday intensives. While there have been many adhoc programs, federal funding support could be directed to regional universities such as Southern Cross University to lead and drive such important rural/remote programs.

Recommendation 4

Fund initiatives to attract a more diverse cohort of candidates to undergraduate and postgraduate ITE programs, including a strong media campaign, early identification with bespoke routes into teaching, financial incentives, and the expansion of more diverse university-school partnerships.

Recommendation 5

Fund regional Australian universities to lead ITE-targeted programs for attracting and retaining high quality teachers in regional and remote Australia.

2. Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers

There are three key areas that require explicit focus with regard to preparing ITE students to be effective teachers. These are: increasing ITE completion rates; evidence-based practices and professional experience; and teacher professional development/learning.

Increasing ITE completion rates

ITE completion data are complex and require more nuanced analysis. First year attrition is often attributed to students entering university without a clear idea of their post-school pathway. Some attrition is a result of students not meeting university benchmarks for the appropriate qualification level. In addition, course attrition data include students who transfer from one ITE program to another, for example, from a Secondary UG program to a Primary UG program in the same institution, or who take a break and return a year or two later. All these forms of attrition could be considered healthy attrition to ensure we have the right graduates for teaching.

Bowles and Brindle's (2017) systematic review of factors impacting retention identifies the impact of 'belongingness', resilience, and organisational and time management skills. For undergraduate students, blended learning programs offer the greatest opportunity for success (AITSL, 2019), but importantly, a sense of belonging to the profession can strengthen commitment to ITE programs. ITE students are sometimes regarded as outsiders to the profession: not readily permitted to access school systems, student data or professional learning opportunities. A new category of *Transitional Accreditation* could be introduced to provide a sense of 'status' for ITE students; and include access to systems, opportunities to 'log' professional learning; paraprofessional work; and a pathway to conditional accreditation.

Recommendation 5

Create a new category of Transitional Accreditation to help retain ITE students. Teacher education students need to feel a sense of belonging to the profession on entering their degree. Transitional accreditation can provide 'status' and include the option to 'log' professional learning, access to school systems and data, along with opportunities for paraprofessional work.

Evidence-based practice and professional experience

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are adequate in providing a national framework for minimum skills and knowledge required for quality teaching. Current ITE programs in NSW, as required by accreditation, include a strong focus on effective teaching methods that are evidence-based with an emphasis on reflection and pedagogical agility (<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/deliver-ite-programs/understand-ite-program-accreditation>). This

enables graduates to be effective in a range of diverse contexts and to demonstrate, through their final TPA assessment, learning outcomes for students that they teach.

Demonstration of some standards, such as those related to classroom management and engagement with parents and community, rely on strong partnerships with schools. As highlighted in a review by Darling Hammond et al. (2017), practical experience should be grounded in system-wide support for ongoing professional learning and opportunities for collaboration; a factor highlighted in the TEMAG Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers report (2014, p. 7). Research in Australia has pointed to the quality of induction and mentor support in professional experience as crucial to ITE students' perceptions of their ability to manage classrooms, teach diverse student cohorts, and apply subject content to plan, assess and report. Quality induction and mentoring during professional experience has been shown to be more important than the number of hours of professional experience (Gray et al., 2019; Reynolds et al., 2016).

Funding is needed to help solve enduring issues such as availability of places, the quality of placements and the cost of the provision of professional experience (both to providers and employers). The change in federal funding for ITE means that professional experience in ITE is no longer funded through a separate payment, considerably reducing the overall funding per ITE place. This reduction in funding has exacerbating the issues in delivering quality professional experience placements.

Strong university-school partnerships, such as the NSW Hub School model, could be federally supported to scale-up. Hub schools could be identified as champions of graduate teacher excellence, supporting diverse networks of schools to establish a networked approach to placements, with professional experience coordinators (induction mentors) in every hub network. This kind of approach could help to alleviate some of the challenges of practical experience including difficulty in finding placements, the variance in the quality of experience across schools, and the high costs of administration and relationship maintenance (Toe et al., 2020; Yeigh & Lynch, 2017). Close partnerships supported by this kind of model have the potential to improve the quality and consistency of induction, supervision, and assessment (Green et al., 2020).

Furthermore, programs such as the Southern Cross University school-university partnership program could be further scaled up where ITE candidates, university academics, teachers and children and young people work in context (in school/ECE settings) in preparing ITE candidates. At SCU all ITE science education curriculum and pedagogy subjects are delivered in schools. Our approach is research-led embedded in professional experience, revealing highly effective preparation of ITE candidates in science education (Cutter-Mackenzie & Fulton, 2014).

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Recommendation 6

Provide targeted funding to ITE providers to strengthen and scale-up effective university-school partnership practices.

Can ITE providers play a stronger role in ongoing professional development and support of teachers?

Consistent with the NSW Council of Deans of Education, SCU supports strengthening the support and PD provided to early career teachers in schools, including casual teachers. In the UK: Early Career Framework (ECF) initiative, the induction period was extended to two school years with Induction Mentor teachers receiving a time allocation. Early career teachers undergoing induction are now entitled to a two-year training and support program based on the ECF and funded by the Federal Government. In Ontario, the province provides a year-long induction program for graduate teachers (with an option to extend this to a second year). All new teachers are given a reduced teaching load and assigned a mentor who is an experienced teacher, who also has a reduced teaching load. New teachers also take part in professional development designed to orient and support them throughout the year.

Clear guidance is needed for jurisdictions to differentiate the expectations of *graduate* and *proficient* teacher. Broadly, the emphasis for Graduate Teachers is on the demonstration of knowledge and understanding, and use of teaching strategies, whereas for Proficient Teachers, it is on planning, design, implementation, and application. The need for consistent, high quality in-school professional support to reach and maintain Proficient standards is an issue requiring urgent attention.

The increasing complexity of teaching diverse groups means that predetermined technical skills and passed-down experiential knowledge may be insufficient for the kinds of complex problem-solving that is required for most contemporary teaching contexts (Willegems, Consuegra, Struyven, & Engels, 2017).

Effective teacher professional learning is fundamental for the ongoing support and motivation of teachers (Cosner, Leslie & Shyjka, 2019). Key design features include contextual relevance, active learning (O'Meara, Whiting & Steele-Maley, 2015) an iterative approach over a longer duration (Desimone, 2009), and based on a theory of action (Kennedy, 2016). Strong university-school partnerships can enable collaborative practice-based research and ongoing evidence-based professional learning to address real issues in classrooms and school communities.

Darling Hammond (2017) emphasises in her review of education systems globally, that strong and coherent education *systems* and school improvement initiatives (such as in Ontario and Finland) are grounded in evidence-based practices throughout classrooms and schools, systematic induction and mentoring for novice teachers, and highly developed, school-embedded systems of professional learning as a collective rather than individual effort. She warns that in the context of teacher shortages “placing too strong an emphasis on recruitment without concomitant attention on professional development and retention could result in a continual churn within the teaching profession” (p. 294).

ITE faculties within university-school partnerships can and already do play an important role in this vision of professional learning that is school-embedded, makes frequent use of peer observation and coaching, and develops professional conversations to identify problems and improve practice. The hub network is an effective structure for networking and sharing professional learning, but there are many other ways in which ITE providers already partner with schools to support professional learning. In Ontario for example, school improvement has centred on capacity building through increasing the use of research across Ontario schools (Darling-Hammond, 2017). The Federally funded Ontario Focused Intervention Programme (OFIP) (2018) focusses on professional learning through collaborative inquiry and sharing of current research knowledge within schools as well as networking across groups of schools.

Recommendation 7

In close partnership with universities introduce consistent, well-supported induction programs for new teachers (including casual teachers), with induction mentors, and research-based professional learning programs for all teachers.

I thank the Hon Alan Tudge MP, Minister for Education and Youth, and the Expert Review Panel for the opportunity to comment on these critical matters in ensuring the highest quality of initial teacher education in Australia. I would welcome further opportunities to discuss these matters with the Expert Review Panel.

Sincerely,

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