

Ms Lisa Paul, Chair Expert Panel
Quality Initial Teacher Education Review Secretariat C50MA8
Department of Education, Skills and Employment

via: ITEReview@dese.gov.au

16 July 2021

Dear Ms Paul,

Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

University of Canberra welcomes the *National Review of Quality Initial Teacher Education* and is pleased to provide input to this important review that will define the next stage of Initial Teacher Education in Australia.

The University has been the ACT's largest provider of Initial Teacher Education over the past 50 years, with graduates meeting the workforce needs for Canberra.

We have a key partnership with the ACT Education Directorate to deliver the *Affiliated Schools Program*, to build teacher capability and a skilled future teacher workforce, equipped to meet the needs and aspirations of ACT public school students into the future.

We place 1,250 students for professional experience in ACT and Capital Region Schools each year, including early childhood, primary and secondary schools across the government, catholic and independent sectors.

Attached is our submission prepared by Professor Barney Dalgarno, Executive Dean of our Faculty of Education.

The submission addresses both parts of the terms of reference:

PART A - Attracting and selecting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession; and

PART B — Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers.

Please contact Ms Fiona Sutherland [REDACTED] if you have any questions regarding our submission.

Professor Paddy Nixon
Yours sincerely,



Vice-Chancellor and President

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Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Submission from the University of Canberra

18 July 2021

University of Canberra welcomes the *National Review of Quality Initial Teacher Education* and is pleased to provide input to this important review that will define the next stage of Initial Teacher Education in Australia.

We have structured our response according to the five questions within each of the two parts of the Terms of Reference. We have also indirectly addressed many of the more fine-grained questions within the Discussion Paper.

PART A - Attracting and selecting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession

1. How can we further encourage high performing and highly motivated school leavers to enter ITE and choose teaching as a career?

- It is clear that the societal value of teachers and teaching as a profession is lower in Australia than in many countries with higher performing school systems. Negative commentary about teachers within the media and within some political circles has had a noticeable negative impact on the status and attractiveness of the profession. A large national investment is needed to address this problem, drawing on media and social media campaigns and social influencer networks
- An improvement in teacher salaries would be a strong concrete signal of the importance that we as a nation place on the teaching profession. We acknowledge that the political and economic challenges in achieving this might mean that it needs to be a long-term aspiration rather than something that can be quickly addressed.
- It is also very clear that the profession has become more challenging and stressful over the past decade or more. A comprehensive body of work to listen to and compile teacher experiences and address the underlying issues is needed. Teacher dissatisfaction acts as a deterrent to enrolment in teacher education programs and also to course completion (through teacher influence on Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) during placements).
- It is generally agreed that a key feature of the 21st century working world is that rather than having a single profession for one's entire career people are tending to have multiple quite different employment roles over their working life. High achieving school leavers might be reluctant to enrol in a degree that is seen as having only one employment pathway. Reducing the prescriptiveness of undergraduate Primary and Early Childhood undergraduate degrees, for example, could allow for outside majors or double degrees, which might be more attractive to students who want their degree to be a platform for a range of possible career opportunities.
- It is worth noting that for degrees such as Engineering, which attract high performing students, most universities offer a large number of industry and government-funded academic scholarships. At the same time, there are typically very few scholarships targeting high achieving students in Education.

2. What changes to admissions and degree requirements, including recognition of prior experience, would better attract and support suitable mid- and late-career professionals from other fields transition into the profession and become quality teachers?

- The introduction of a Master of Teaching as the minimum qualification for graduate entry Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) has had a positive impact on the quality of graduates and has ensured that graduate teacher standards are met. Consequently, reverting back to a shorter qualification, such as a Graduate Diploma of Education, would be a retrograde step.
- However, it is clear that a two-year delay before commencing their new career can be a disincentive for some. Particularly for graduate entry Secondary PSTs, alternative pathways that provide paid employment as a teacher prior to graduation need to be considered.
- Importantly, however, a one size fits all model would be inappropriate. Rather, within broad parameters, universities, employers and Teacher Registration Authorities (TRAs) should have the opportunity to negotiate models and pathways that work in their jurisdictions.
- Our view is that a Master of Secondary Teaching student needs a minimum of one year of fulltime study before they should be given paid employment in a role where they have responsibility for classes as a teacher. Such employment should be time limited and contingent on completion of the remainder of their Master of Secondary Teaching degree and appropriate mentoring and support during this period will be essential. The notion of employment earlier than this in a learning support rather than teaching role would also be quite acceptable from our point of view.
- In weighing up the quality implications of early employment pathways for graduate entry Secondary PSTs, it is important to consider their trajectory towards meeting the Proficient standard rather than just focussing on the fact that they would be teaching prior to achieving Graduate standard. During the one to two years in which a teacher is employed as a teacher and completes the final part of their Master of Teaching degree, the opportunities for connecting theory to practice and for reflecting in and on practice will have a very positive impact on their teaching capabilities. Such teachers may well achieve Proficient standard very shortly after graduation and achieve Highly Accomplished standard well before a peer who undertook a more conventional graduate entry pathway.

3. How can we increase ITE completion rates so that quality ITE students graduate and pursue careers as quality teachers?

- Acknowledging the data provided in the Discussion Paper illustrating a recent downturn in completion rates, it is worth noting that this may in fact demonstrate the positive impacts of the TEMAG reforms on the degree of rigor and challenge in contemporary ITE degrees.
- It is also important to note that there will always be students who are academically very capable but find the practice of teaching overly challenging due to the emotional expectations or complex classroom organisation challenges. For these students a decision not to pursue a teaching degree is an appropriate choice.

- Dispositional assessment tools may prove helpful in identifying students not suited to teaching but they will never be as reliable as a year of study including a placement in determining a students' suitability or in allowing appropriate self-selection decisions. Over reliance on these instruments will inevitably result in some potentially good teachers being excluded from the opportunity to commence study.

4. What more can be done to address issues with workforce supply in some subject areas (particularly mathematics) and schools?

- It is very clear that the market for graduates with certain specialist skills and aptitudes is very competitive. There will always be a shortage of teachers in some subject specialisations while the salary levels lag behind what they could earn in other industries.
- There will always be some passionate and selfless people who will give up a successful career as an engineer, actuary, or lawyer (for example) and take a substantial pay cut to become a teacher, but there will never be enough of these people to fulfil the nation's need for specialist teachers.
- Serious consideration needs to be given to determining rates of pay according to supply and demand rather than continuing to take a one size fits all approach.
- Addressing the shortage of teachers within rural and remote areas may also require consideration of supply and demand driven salary structures.

5. How can we attract a more diverse cohort into ITE so that teachers better mirror the diversity in school students and society?

- Australian schools have more diverse student populations than many of the countries which outperform us on tests such as PISA. A strength of our system has been our ability to cater for these students with an appropriately balanced focus on equity and overall achievement. In order to cater well for student diversity, it is critical that our teaching workforce is drawn from similarly diverse backgrounds.
- Attempts to raise the standard of entry for ITE programs may have had a side effect of discriminating against students from disadvantaged academic backgrounds.
- The unique cultural capital and social capabilities of teachers from indigenous, English as a second language, low socio-economic status, and rural backgrounds, for example, need to be acknowledged as strengths and given status within ITE application criteria and graduate teacher employment.
- Many of these students have the potential to be successful teachers if well supported through their degrees. However, where the entry criteria focus only on their prior academic achievement and do not take into account the other strengths that they bring, there is a risk that many of these students are excluded from ITE programs.
- A greater number of scholarships for students from these backgrounds is also likely to have a positive impact.

PART B – Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers

6. What more can we do to ensure that ITE curriculum is evidence based and all future teachers are equipped to implement evidence-based teaching practices?

- Graduate teachers need to be aware that some teaching strategies in general have been found to be more effective and they need capabilities in applying the leading evidence-based strategies within their area of specialisation. However, it is important that teacher educators do not adopt an overly narrow definition of what counts as evidence or an overly simplistic view of the applicability of these leading strategies in all contexts. It is important that graduate teachers are equipped with a range of strategies, are capable of digesting claims about evidence, and most importantly are able to evaluate and refine the approaches that work for their students in their context.
- Naming specific pedagogical strategies within ITE program standards would make these documents large, unwieldy, overly prescriptive and quickly out of date. A better approach would be to require providers to demonstrate that contemporary research evidence underpins all aspects of their teacher education curriculum as part of course accreditation processes.
- One of the challenges for graduate and experienced teachers in adopting evidence-based practice is the chasm between academic research outputs on the one hand and teacher professional learning and curriculum resources on the other. There is a critical need for a national clearinghouse of educational research, responsible for reviewing the existing research on programs, products, practices, and policies in education and for translating into professional learning and teaching resources. Such a clearinghouse needs to be apolitical in its operation, drawing on the expertise of experienced teachers, school leaders, curriculum consultants, researchers and teacher educators. We are very supportive of the work already underway towards this goal through the Australian Educational Research Organisation.

7. What more can ITE providers and employers do to ensure ITE students are getting the practical experience they need before they start their teaching careers?

- The quality of PST placement experience is an absolutely critical contributor to their classroom readiness as a graduate. High quality placements require strong partnerships between ITE providers and schools and strong commitments from mentor teachers. A critical role in this partnership is the School Professional Experience Coordinator (or equivalent). Unfortunately, such roles are often insufficiently resourced in terms of workload and insufficiently valued within the school. Commonwealth funding for these roles as part of the Commonwealth's contribution to Initial Teacher Education could make a noticeable difference.

- Although teaching placements are critical, engagement with schools over and above the prescribed number of placement days is also important. At the University of Canberra, we use an in-school clinical model in our 44 curriculum method subjects/units across our undergraduate and graduate entry early childhood, primary and secondary programs. The following are the features of this model:
 - All classes in these units are held within one of the 25 schools within our Affiliated Schools Partnership;
 - The first hour of each week's session is facilitated by the academic within a school classroom (without school students present), focussing on pedagogical approaches or techniques within the designated curriculum area;
 - During the second hour, PSTs deliver prepared mini lessons within the designated curriculum area to small groups of school students with oversight and support from both the classroom teacher and the academic;
 - In the third hour, back in the original classroom (without school students present), PSTs undertake reflective activities with the academic and often the teacher providing guidance.

8. How can Teaching Performance Assessment arrangements be strengthened to ensure graduate teachers are well-prepared for the classroom?

- We are strongly supportive of externally moderated assessment of the capabilities of graduates through the TPA. The TPA provides a much more reliable way to ensure the quality of graduate teachers than assessing them on their aptitudes early in their study or before they commence their study.
- We are a member of the AfGT Consortium and believe that through this collaboration we have been able to implement a TPA that lives up to the promise. Through the continual cycle of designing, implementing, testing and refining, the AfGT has proved to be a robust and valid tool for measuring graduate teacher capabilities.
- In addition to providing us with a reliable indication of the classroom readiness of our PSTs, the process of compiling material for the TPA provides PSTs with important foundational capabilities in systematic reflection and compilation of evidence on their practice, which will prepare them well for demonstrating Proficient and Highly Accomplished standing later in their career.
- We believe that there are significant advantages to the consistency of graduate teacher quality nationally from development and delivery of TPAs through consortia rather than individual institutions. Consequently, we believe that consideration should be given to reducing the number of TPAs. Consistent with this we also recommend that all approved TPAs engage in cross-consortia moderation to ensure the ongoing validity and reliability of their TPAs.

9. How can leading teachers, principals and schools play a greater role in supporting the development of ITE students?

- Regular engagement between ITE providers and teachers and school leaders is critical in ensuring that ITE programs are fit for purpose in preparing graduate teachers for contemporary classrooms. However, such engagement is dependent on strong school-university partnerships which require a deep and ongoing commitment from each partner.
- At the University of Canberra, we have a long-standing relationship with the ACT Education Directorate, which has culminated in our Affiliated Schools Partnership, which involves 25 Primary, Secondary and Senior Secondary schools. This partnership which commenced in 2019, encompasses:
 - Regular engagement between Faculty executive and school system leaders on problems of mutual importance, such as COVID-19 responses, ITE course design and delivery, PST placement design and support, teacher professional learning, research and program evaluation and school education strategy;
 - An in-school clinical model of teacher education (currently delivered in 44 subjects/units within nine ITE programs);
 - Academic staff allocated to school liaison roles (five staff with five schools each) collaborating with School Professional Experience Coordinators in support for high quality Professional Experience placements and in coordination of school-based clinical units;
 - Professional learning for school-based mentors supporting PSTs on placement;
 - Capacity development for teachers as researchers through mentorship by experienced educational researchers (currently involving 50 teachers from 10 schools);
 - Master classes on contemporary topics at the nexus of research and practice (four delivered per year to teachers drawn from the 25 schools);
 - A Master of Education program with a curriculum and intensive delivery model tailored to the learning needs of Capital Region teachers (with 30 scholarships per year); and
 - A large program of collaborative research (eight current projects involving collaborations between UC educational researchers and teachers across 20 schools, focussing on research problems aligned to the ACT Future of Education Strategy).
- Commonwealth support for the establishment and maintenance of these kinds of partnerships would be an important enabler of greater engagement of teachers and school leaders within ITE programs.

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

- Our collective expertise in advanced pedagogical and school leadership practice and our ongoing engagement in applied educational research, positions ITE providers to play a major role in the ongoing professional development of teachers.
- The ideal scenario would be for a significant portion of the teacher Professional Learning (PL) required for ongoing registration to be co-designed and collaboratively delivered by teacher educators, experienced

teachers and school leaders. Such PL would be supported by resources extracted from Master of Education units, resources emerging from applied educational research, and resources developed by education department curriculum and pedagogy specialists.

- At the University of Canberra, we are implementing a micro credential framework whereby modules extracted from our Master of Education units will be delivered as PL offerings to teachers and whereby PL programs, designed for cohorts of teachers will be able to be credited into our PG programs. Once this framework is in place, we will be able to work with our school system partners to scale up our ongoing contributions to teacher PL.
- A key component of the ecosystem required for at scale contributions by ITE providers to teacher PL is the accreditation of PL programs by TRAs. A greater degree of commonality across jurisdictions around the parameters for approval by TRAs of PL offerings would support the greater engagement of ITE providers in the provision of PL for teachers.

We'd like to conclude with two final points. Firstly, Initial Teacher Education providers have experienced their greatest ever period of change over the past 6 years, following the release of the TEMAG recommendations. The first cohort of graduates, who experienced all of these changes, have been employed within our school systems only this year. The pipeline of these TEMAG graduates into our school systems will occur over decades and their measurable impact on national student achievement will not be seen for quite a few years.

Secondly, feedback from our ACT employers suggests that this cohort of graduates have been outstanding, illustrating the positive impact of these reforms. This will build on the high existing levels of employer satisfaction illustrated by the national figures provided in the Discussion Paper. Given this growing evidence of Australian graduate teacher quality we would recommend that the panel review some of the international studies that compare teacher capabilities across countries to help test the assumption that Australia's negative trajectory in PISA scores is due to inadequate teachers or teaching. The following well cited article provides an example of such a study exploring the cognitive skills of teachers from 30 countries, finding, for example, that Australian teachers were ranked third on cognitive skills relating to literacy:

Hanushek, E. A., Piopiunik, M., & Wiederhold, S. (2019). The value of smarter teachers: International evidence on teacher cognitive skills and student performance. *Journal of Human Resources*, 54(4), 857899.

We'd like to thank the panel for the opportunity to provide input into this review and we look forward to the opportunity for further engagement during the implementation phase of this important body of work.

Kind regards,



Professor Barney Dalgarno,
Executive Dean, Faculty of Education
University of Canberra

