

University of Wollongong Submission to Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

The University of Wollongong welcomes the release of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. This is an important national issue which the University of Wollongong looks forward to playing a strategic role and working with key stakeholders including government, schools and community to deliver and implement major recommendations and outcomes.

With our partners, the University of Wollongong (UOW) continues to create and nurture the next generation of highly committed and well-rounded teachers who are equipped to create meaningful change across Australia and the world.

More than 2,500 students are currently enrolled in our undergraduate and postgraduate programs in teacher education, and higher degree programs up to doctoral level. These are delivered across our campus network including Wollongong, South Western and Southern Sydney, Shoalhaven, Bega, Batemans Bay and the Southern Highlands.

Our programs cover Early Years, Primary and Secondary, with specialist undergraduate degrees in Science, Mathematics, and Physical and Health Education. We offer advanced programs in Educational Leadership, TESOL, Digital Technologies for Learning, and Special Education.

UOW is consistently ranked among the best universities in Australia for teacher education. Our success in this field is demonstrated through our standings in various national and international rankings, including:

- The 2022 Australian Government's Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) ranked UOW as second in NSW for Teacher Education.
- The 2022 Good Universities Guide gave UOW five stars for Education and Training, with 88.4 per cent of graduates employed full-time within four months of finishing their studies.
- Ranked in the top 200 universities in the world for Education in the Times Higher Education and QS World University Rankings by Subject.

UOW is privileged to work with the NSW Department of Education on ground-breaking programs. We know that the quality of teaching and leadership is critical to improving student learning in schools across the state. We work closely with our colleagues in schools, our partners in the profession, across the higher education sector, and state and Commonwealth regulatory authorities to achieve excellence in initial teacher education.

UOW education degrees include carefully sequenced professional experience, with students provided the opportunity to take placements in a variety of settings, including local, rural and international options. We have placement partnership agreements with more than 300 schools in NSW, including the Illawarra, Sutherland, Campbelltown, Southern Highlands and South

Coast. UOW provide support to our students throughout their professional experience wherever they are.

UOW's School of Education develops skilled, high-quality graduates passionate about transforming lives through education. UOW is nationally recognised for innovative initial teacher education and workforce development initiatives. These include the following:

Middle Leadership Development Program: The School of Education at UOW and the University of Newcastle were selected by the NSW Department of Education to deliver a world-class professional learning program for middle leaders across NSW public schools. Our researchers worked closely with the NSW School Leadership Institute to co-design the evidence-based Middle Leadership Development Program. The program addresses the current and future needs of middle leaders and is accessible to teachers across NSW.

Aspiring Principals Leadership Program: UOW partners with the NSW School Leadership Institute to co-design and co-deliver the Aspiring Principals Leadership Program. Established in 2018, this is delivering a 12-month leadership program to seven cohorts of aspiring principals across NSW public schools.

NESA-approved professional development courses: UOW provides professional learning for primary and secondary school teachers that support educators to develop deeper understanding in priority curriculum areas and broader educational practice through access to the latest evidence and thinking. Available professional development courses include Careers Education, Chemical Analysis for the HSC, Teaching Gifted Students from Special Populations, The Use of Robotics as a Teaching Tool, and Unpacking the Stage 6 Physics Syllabus.

“Beyond the role of career adviser” pilot program: UOW, in partnership with teachers from local schools, designed, implemented and evaluated a high-school teacher professional development program to embed Career Development Learning in the school curriculum. The program supports a whole-of-school approach to effective career advice for students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds.

Pre-service teacher volunteering: Pre-Service Teaching Volunteering initiative supports students to volunteer in schools to gain valuable experience and be immersed in school culture while growing professionally. Volunteering options are available through the UOWx program at campuses in Wollongong, Batemans Bay, Bega, Shoalhaven and the Southern Highlands. UOWx provides an official record of students' co-curricular activities, alongside formal graduation documents, to showcase the skills and knowledge gained on top of their degree.

UOW has strong foundations in early childhood education and care through our Early Start initiative. Early Start brings together early childhood education and community engagement initiatives with world-leading researchers working on all aspects of child development, from cognitive development to digital learning and literacy to healthy lifestyles and social inclusion. As a key research translation space, Early Start offers unique work-integrated

learning opportunities for students and supports the largest concentration of Aboriginal Early Childhood teachers and staff in NSW.

Early Start programs funded by the CAGES Foundation: UOW's Early Start has an ongoing commitment to evidence-based professional development through innovative in-service delivery models (face-to-face, online and mentoring). Early Start's professional learning program continues to grow, with more than 3,000 participants from across Australia. Professional learning focus areas include curriculum and pedagogy, quality, and autism.

Programs are also supporting workforce development in Aboriginal services, offering mentoring and coaching to support educators who are Aboriginal to undertake educational leadership and educator qualifications.

Workforce development through The Early Start Denver Model (ESDM): This includes the Advanced Training and Certification Program for professionals who want to provide the ESDM intervention/therapy for children, and the Educator and Therapy Assistance Training Program for all those who work with children in health or education settings to support those with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Early Start is working with individuals in rural and remote Australia to increase the number of ESDM-certified therapists in these areas. The ESDM team has also recently established a partnership with Autism Queensland to deliver a program.

Early Years Toolbox and other Early Start workforce development projects: The Early Years Toolbox is a set of freely-available, playful iPad-supported activities and games that provide early childhood educators with practical information about children's progress in key areas of learning and development. Early Start is pioneering the use of the tools in contexts of high vulnerability and disadvantage, including rural and remote settings.

Other workforce development projects at Early Start include developing a website in partnership with Early Childhood Australia and Playgroup Australia to provide tools and content to support educators to engage with children and families in home environments; and publishing a paper regarding workforce issues for regional and remote communities in July 2021.

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