

NSW submission to the Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper

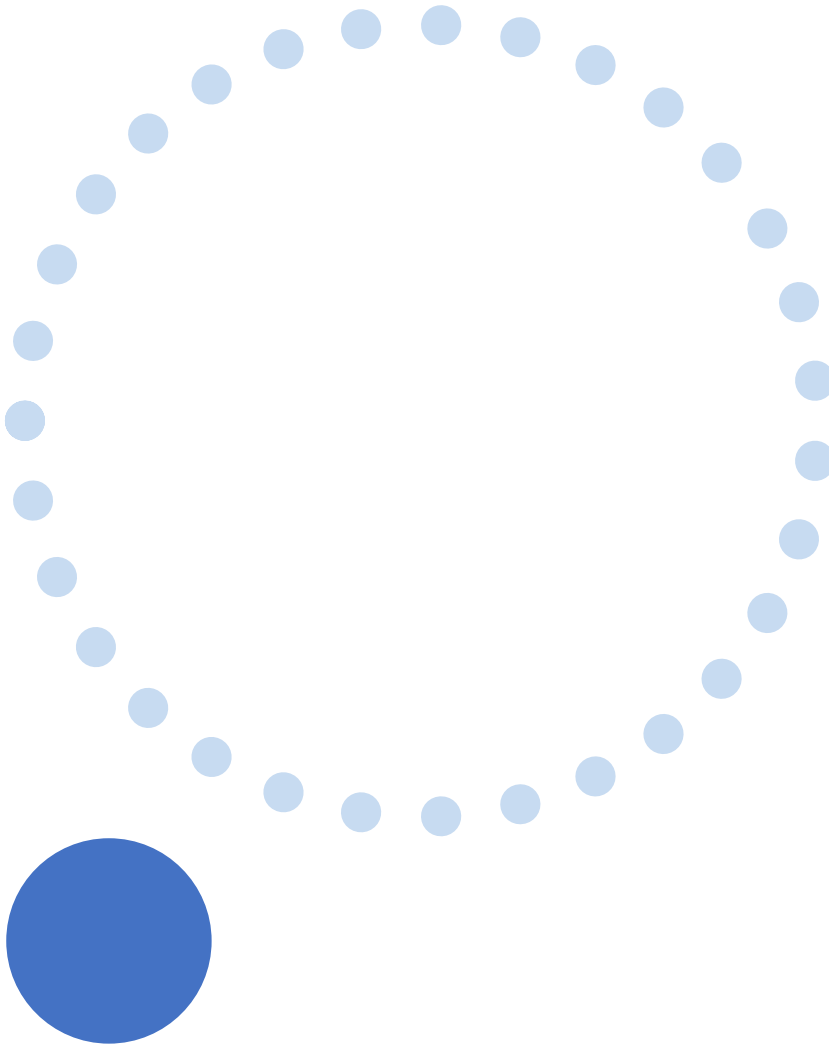
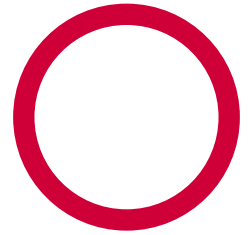


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Overview

The New South Wales Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper (the Discussion Paper) has been prepared in collaboration between the NSW Department of Education and the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

Teachers are central to our education system, and the high achievement of Australian students requires teaching graduates with an excellent foundation of knowledge and practical skill. The Teacher Education Expert Panel provides Australia with an opportunity to ensure our teaching graduates are well-equipped for the classroom, strengthen the ITE ecosystem and support and encourage more people to choose teaching as the career of choice.

The Discussion Paper reflects many of the aspects considered by the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review. In its submission to the Review, NSW emphasised the need to:

- ensure quality graduates are able to meet current and future demand for teachers
- boost the quality of ITE programs while addressing gaps and inconsistencies in teacher knowledge
- make a timely improvement of Australian Teacher Workforce Data to support teacher supply efforts
- consider the special case of the early childhood workforce, which faces significant workforce pressures.

Some of this work is progressing as part of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, which was agreed to by Education Ministers after the release of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review.

NSW agrees with the Discussion Paper's position that initial teachers will benefit from systematic, evidence-based learning. In addition to the core curricula outlined in the Discussion Paper that the Panel also consider additional learning about technology and build a deeper understanding of how to meet the needs of students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent and students with additional learning requirements.

NSW also agrees that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students will be better prepared for the classroom if they are engaged as early as possible in practical placements. In practice this will likely require changes to the way ITE courses are structured by universities. In line with the NSW Government's commitment to expand the Hub Schools Program, we support centres of excellence that host practical placements alongside a focus on more mainstream systematic partnerships across all schools.

NSW recommends that the Panel examine opportunities to make the transition for mid-career entrants into universities easier and more streamlined. We support reforms that allow universities to better recognise the experience of people who are entering from other

careers. This is consistent with the Government's commitment to expand the Mid –Career Transition to Teaching program and introduce evening and weekend courses for mid-career entrants studying a Master of Teaching.

Finally, NSW supports the suggestion that we strengthen oversight and governance arrangements for universities who deliver teaching degrees. This is important for ensuring the reforms contemplated in the Discussion Paper, if adopted, are enacted effectively.

Reform area 1: strengthen ITE programs to deliver effective, classroom ready graduates

What teachers learn in their initial teacher education is critical. ITE programs would benefit from adjustment to ensure new teachers are provided with the right skills and knowledge to teach in the classroom. In addition to our detailed comments below, NSW suggests the Panel explores mechanisms to continue to evaluate the changing requirements of ITE, such as potential changes in high-demand subject areas, and what constitutes a 'classroom-ready' teacher.

Alignment with NSW initiatives

Since 2007, NESA has required NSW ITE providers deliver subject-specific content and cross-curriculum studies in literacy & numeracy, classroom management, special education, English and an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and Aboriginal Education. These are NSW-specific elements of ITE accreditation and NSW ITE providers have long-developed approaches to addressing these requirements and embedding necessary content in relevant units. In addition, NESA stipulates that all NSW ITE programs address essential teaching area-specific discipline and pedagogical practices that align with the relevant NSW syllabuses, as described in the NESA Subject Content Knowledge Requirements Policy. Under this policy, all NSW programs must have at least one dedicated unit of Special education studies and Aboriginal education studies.

1.1 Evidence-based teaching practices

NSW generally supports the core content in the Discussion Paper. We provide feedback on the proposed core content areas and offer further areas of evidence-based pedagogy.

The Panel should better distinguish the 'core content' proposed in the Discussion Paper from the existing requirements set out in the Graduate Teaching Standards (GTS). The Panel may consider providing criteria that makes these distinctions clear within the GTS.

Given that there will inevitably be new content and practices that may require inclusion in ITE curriculum, the Panel should also avoid constructing an overly rigid framework that cannot accommodate these new inclusions.

Core content areas

The focus on the brain and learning is an excellent opportunity to include trauma-informed practice (TIP) as part of ITE. TIP has its basis in brain function and would assist trainee teachers to understand what is happening in the brain for students who have experienced trauma. This is important, as the number of students impacted by trauma has increased significantly in recent years due to COVID-19, natural disasters and increases in immigration from regions of conflict. Providing trainee teachers with an understanding of what goes on in the brain and strategies to work effectively with students affected by trauma would connect well with the other aspects of this content area.

In relation to the sensitivity to 'diverse learning needs', it should also be added that there are Australian Government and State laws that make discrimination illegal. The acceptance of student diversity is therefore a legal entitlement, and ITE students should know they have a legal obligation in this regard.

Whilst the current emphasis on classroom rules and management processes is appropriate and provides a foundation for good teaching, this knowledge and instructional practices would need to be contextualised and demonstrated in different school contexts on professional experience.

Creating a classroom environment supportive of student wellbeing is a vital enabling factor to learning and seems to be largely overlooked in this paper. The paper references cognitive load, but no link is made to cognitive wellbeing. The section on managing behaviour could also emphasise the importance of supporting student wellbeing.

Evaluative thinking

Developing teachers' evaluative thinking has a positive impact on student outcomes and is aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching.

ITE courses should include evaluative thinking practices, such as how to lead and participate in collaborative inquiry cycles to embed new curriculum or pedagogy and to understand if student needs are being met. Collaborative inquiry cycles involve evaluative thinking in understanding students' learning needs, teachers' learning needs and the impact of implementing evidence-based teaching practices. These evaluative thinking practices are key to strengthened teaching practice. Research identifies that teacher inquiry cannot exist in isolation from subject disciplines, as certain teaching practices are interpreted and applied differently across subjects and vary in prominence depending on the subject.¹

¹ Ayres, P., Dinham, S., & Sawyer, W. (1999). Successful Teaching in the NSW Higher School Certificate: Summary of a Research Report for the NSW Department of Education and Training.

Technological literacy

ITE students should develop skills in the use of technology in educational settings across different subject streams. Technology and cyber-safety skills are present in all subjects and form the major components of some disciplines. Providers should consider the practices that are now ubiquitous in classrooms, such as using technology for research and efficient information dissemination.² Providers need to anticipate the changing science and technology landscape in order to equip teachers with the required skillsets.

First Nations peoples

In line with the Discussion Paper, the NSW Productivity Commission has highlighted the need for more research on what best practice teaching means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.³ NSW notes the AITSL website resources devoted to this but sees their advisory status as insufficient to establish a consistent nationwide benchmark of high-quality provision in this area. NSW suggests the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) could undertake this research, in tandem with proven strategies to be identified in current ITE programs.

As examples of best practice teaching in this area, we suggest the Panel consider the work NSW Department of Education is doing around EAL/D teaching for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. This includes:

- **The EAL/D Hub:** A nationally recognised Professional Learning (PL) course for teachers. The Hub is now accredited PL and teachers can claim 25 hours towards their NESA accreditation.
- **Aboriginal Ways of Using English:** A 1 hour PL resource which raises awareness about Aboriginal English and other Aboriginal Ways of using English in the NSW context.
- **Deadly Dialects:** A PL resource which focusses on teaching P-2 students who use Aboriginal English as their main home dialect in NSW.
- **The Capability Framework:** Teaching Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners- a nationally devised framework aligned with the APSTs to build the capability of teachers to better meet the language learning needs of students who are acquiring Standard Australian English as an additional language or dialect. Its use in NSW has been highly recommended since 2013 but it is not mandated.

The Department has also provided advice as to how to embed Aboriginal EAL/D into the K-2 curriculum reform process.

² Dzakpasu, P. E., & Adom, D. (2017). Impact assessment of information and communication technologies on lesson delivery and students' performance in selected tertiary institutions in Ghana. *Journal of Computer Sciences and Applications*, 5(1), 29-41.

³ New South Wales Productivity Commission (2021), White Paper, Sydney NSW, p. 68. Available at: <https://www.productivity.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-04/Productivity-Commission-White-Paper-2021.pdf>

NSW is concerned that references to Aboriginal education, cultural responsiveness and diversity under an umbrella of ‘enabling factors’ diminishes the individual and distinctive importance of each of these cross-curricula areas. The NSW Aboriginal Education policy places Aboriginal education at the centre of our commitments and recognises the sophisticated competencies it requires.⁴ NSW recommends that the panel develop a more thorough framework that captures how these competencies can be fostered through ITE.

Further enabling factors

In addition to the enabling factors mentioned in the Discussion Paper, NSW recommends the Panel consider students with complex learning needs and the crucial role a positive sense of belonging has in enabling learning.

NSW proposes that ITE providers teach about how teachers can support specialist staff working with students with complex learning needs, in addition to students with disability as raised in the Discussion Paper. Such a focus should draw on the emerging and innovative evidence base that seeks to extend learning progressions and accompanying pedagogical support to encompass such learners.

1.2 Amending Accreditation Standards and Procedures

The proposed core ITE content can be generally referred to in the current Standards and Procedures (S&P) and supported by a separate, more detailed document that provides the research base, additional elaboration and suggested approaches to implementation. A review of the S&P, ITE Accreditation Guidelines and other supporting research documents is needed to clearly establish the linkages between them, to clearly identify what is policy and what is advice, and to identify the benchmarks for meeting particular standards.

Indicators of the content of core curriculum might be included within a revised Program Standard 1 of the Standards and Procedures, perhaps using a format akin to the Elaborations found within the Australian Curriculum (see the 7-10 History Curriculum as an example). This would enable such content to be described in its own right, free of particular unit prescriptions. Program Standard 4, which mandates numbers of curriculum units, would require a governing statement that the core curriculum requirements were to be integrated into each of these units.

NSW also supports the evolution of Teaching Performance Assessments (TPA) in line with changes in evidence-based practices. NSW sees TPAs as a key method for assessing the

⁴ NSW Department of Education, 2022, Aboriginal Education. Available at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2008-0385>

capability of final year pre-service teachers. However, the various TPAs endorsed nationally were designed in a way that allowed related tools and processes to vary. The multiple TPAs operating in NSW schools creates complexity for teachers and schools supporting ITE students from different providers. We would support greater consistency in the TPA tools and templates and the Standard Descriptors being assessed through TPAs across all providers.

1.3 Curriculum specific content

Each of the proposed core ITE content areas would need to be contextualised in different program formats (Bachelor of Education, Master of Teaching) and program types (early childhood, primary, secondary). Much of the essential ITE core content might be best embedded and distributed within existing units (for example, curriculum method units). 'Brain and knowledge' and 'learning and neuromyths' can be treated generically to master the conceptual structure but would then need to be embedded in relevant curriculum studies and method units. Similarly, effective pedagogical practices are best located in curriculum-specific units.

If establishing a minimum quantum of core curriculum studies (for instance, EFTSL) is considered, NSW would urge against mandating specific units of study for each of these core curriculum studies, and instead propose a set proportion of a program be devoted to them. Consideration would need to be given to determining the appropriate proportion for different program formats and types. However, NSW advises some caution with this approach. It is important that we avoid this becoming an arbitrary proportion, which would restrict the ways core content might be designed and undermine the amount of time available for other important content.

NSW proposes that the current specification of curriculum units in Program Standard 4 remain, with the proposed strengthening in Maths/numeracy by requiring 4 units of Maths/numeracy in undergraduate primary programs, and 3 units in graduate entry primary programs. This would bring Maths/numeracy into line with recent EMM-endorsed requirements for English/Literacy. NSW proposes that the Panel recommend this to ministers.

There may also be an opportunity to integrate curriculum-specific literacy and numeracy content into ITE, ensuring graduates have a strong understanding of how student learning progresses in literacy and numeracy, and how to intervene and accelerate that learning.

It remains important that ITE courses retain significant content related to teaching as a subject discipline, as this positions students as emergent professionals, with high-level critical thinking capabilities appropriate to their decision-making responsibilities in their classrooms. ITE curriculum should also prepare students for delivering in-demand subjects, such as developing the appropriate skillset for Technological and Applied

Studies (TAS) subjects. Providers need to anticipate the changing science and technology landscape in order to equip teachers with the required skillsets.

1.4 Ensuring consistent, robust delivery of evidence-based teaching practices

The Discussion Paper suggests implementing a level of national oversight to ensure all jurisdictions are consistent with content and accreditation. This is a major reform that should be cautiously examined.

NSW recognises potential issues with establishing a new national regulatory body. Teacher Regulatory Authorities (TRAs) have the legislative authority to accredit programs and apply jurisdictional Government policy mandates. National consistency is already supported through a range of current practices, including national training of accreditation staff and panellists (teachers, principals, teacher educators), an AITSL nominated panellist from another jurisdiction on every panel, cross-jurisdictional TRA and national moderation activities, and sharing of problem areas in Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (ATRA) working groups.

Consistency is not evident where the ITE accreditation standard itself is unclear or imprecise, open to interpretation or lacks a benchmark. It is similarly not evident in areas where there is no clarity about a standard, such as with teaching EAL/D learners, and where a TRA applies requirements that have a jurisdictional Government mandate.

Any national ITE accrediting authority may reduce the impact of states and territories to apply additional standards to meet local needs and lead to a decrease in the NSW profession's familiarity with and participation in the assurance of quality ITE in NSW. This would be at odds with Reform Area 3's goal of improving the practical experience in teaching and the continued thrust to build sustainable partnerships between local employers and ITE providers brokered by a local TRA. Participation in local ITE accreditation processes allows school authorities, teachers and principals to engage in more depth with teacher preparation.

The suggested national quality assurance oversight body (non-regulatory) may ensure consistency of interpretation and clarify aspects of the accreditation standards for regulatory authorities. However, such a body may also complicate the current national architecture, which is already confusing to teachers and schools. The legislative implications for such a move, along with the impact of breaking of the connection between the ITE program accreditation and teacher registration processes would be highly undesirable. Such a body would be inconsistent with the responsibilities and prerogatives

of jurisdictions in school education, particularly of the jurisdictional public education systems.

An alternative approach is to establish a schedule of distinct areas of ITE for national review and agreed national expert committees (bespoke to the issue under review and to operate for the life of the review) that prepares analysis of research in the area, examines program approaches, perhaps convenes a national forum on the issue that showcases best practices, and prepares a public report with advice to individual institutions. Such a process could be arranged through the collaborative effort of AITSL, ATRA and AERO.

This might be supported by further developing the Stage 1 and Stage 2 program accreditation system introduced from 2015. Currently, data from providers addressing the impact of their programs is barely utilised in overseeing program quality or achieving national consistency against performance benchmarks. An opportunity exists now for key elements of ITE provision to be included across the nation for reporting on by providers through the Stage 1 commitments to outcomes/impact measures annual reporting on them and the end of cycle consolidated report. TRAs, AERO and AITSL might convene appropriate processes to further a national line of sight on the results of these processes.

Overall, NSW agrees that it is worthwhile to take steps to ensure national consistency but does not support a move to a single national regulator

Reform area 2: strengthen the link between performance and funding of initial teacher education

The higher education sector has undergone significant change in recent years. Changes to higher education funding represent a complex problem, and NSW advises a nuanced and cautious approach. Specifically, NSW is concerned as to whether linking performance to funding will inevitably lead to more funding for well-funded institutions that already have the capacity to increase performance, while disadvantaging low-resourced universities.

2.1 ITE performance measures

NSW considers there is an opportunity to improve the performance measures identified in the Discussion Paper.

The emphasis of the Stage 2 accreditation phase is that ITE providers can supply evidence of impact (on student learning). Any assessment of the 'performance' of an ITE degree has to identify the quality and effectiveness of its graduates in schools and over time, given the vagaries of school-level contexts and support. A more sophisticated, coordinated and longitudinal approach to collecting qualitative data over time, cognisant of the school contexts that graduates are employed in, is required to measure the quality of ITE programs more appropriately. Such a data project would need to be collaboratively driven by AITSL, TRAs and employers.

In addition, each of the identified performance measures is likely to produce data that is misleading. For example, high employment data may relate to teacher shortages rather than the calibre of graduates. NESAs already collect data annually from NSW ITE providers to contribute to a national data collection. The data collected is quantitative rather than qualitative and does not go to the heart of the national interest in confirming the quality of ITE programs.

Retention

Retention is a potentially challenging indicator to tie to university funding. There will always be student attrition during a degree, particularly if students discover that a course is not right for them. The publication of retention data may incentivise providers to put more effort into selecting the 'right students' and may limit students' choice to try various degrees. However, a lack of demand may lead providers to accept any and all eligible applicants.

Rural and remote students typically have lower retention rates, but we need to attract this cohort into teaching. There is a danger that universities that serve rural and remote cohorts will be disadvantaged by lower funding, leading to even less of a capacity to attract rural and remote ITE students.

Classroom readiness

The Discussion Paper suggests that classroom readiness be measured in part through surveying student satisfaction with their ITE program. However, the use of student satisfaction metrics does not necessarily reflect course quality. For example, an analysis of postgraduate student experience surveys finds that student characteristics are more determinative of satisfaction than institutional factors.⁵ NSW suggests that the critical and methodological literature on such surveys be carefully considered when exploring this reform.

NSW is also considering further opportunities to gain feedback from schools on the classroom readiness of graduates. While NSW can consider existing mechanisms to seek this feedback, there may be a national organisation, such as AITSL, who could gather and coordinate feedback in collaboration with TRAs and approved authorities.

2.2 Public reporting

The proposed reforms will require timelier and improved Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) data that covers ITE and early career teachers. The Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) Graduate Outcomes Survey captures information on graduate perceptions of preparedness. There is an opportunity to overlay QILT responses with the ATWD to see if there is any correlation between the Graduate Outcomes Survey and the Employer Satisfaction Survey. This would create more robust evidence base for informing future interventions. However, the prospect of the ATWD contributing to this agenda should be referred to the ATWD Governance Committee, who can identify what additional data may be able to be collected, correlated and reported.

2.3 Public transparency

NSW agrees that public funding should come with greater transparency. The nuances of higher education funding should be considered as part of this process. For example, NSW should receive the appropriate share of the Commonwealth Supported Places for its ITE students in certain specialisations, demographics, and geographic areas, and the Australian Government should provide appropriate funding for courses that require

⁵ Muijs, D. and Bokhove, C. (2017), Postgraduate student satisfaction: A multilevel analysis of PTES data. *British Educational Research Journal*. 43: 904-930. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3294>

infrastructure, such as design and technical courses. There is also a need for greater transparency within ITE providers as to how they allocate Australian Government funding. Anecdotal information from ITE providers suggests that the education faculty only receives a fraction of the Australian Government funding for each individual student.

While these nuances should be made more transparent, there is a good argument to be made that certain performance outcomes should not be revealed so as to ‘name and shame’ an institution. The Discussion Paper acknowledges that while high performance could improve a provider, poor performance could damage a provider’s reputation. However, a provider’s performance may be linked to its pre-existing lack of resources when compared to wealthier and more established institutions. This approach would therefore enhance the reputation of already prestigious universities and damage that of universities that are comparatively less prestigious and may require more support to develop a better service. In general, the indicators listed are quite inelastic with regard to the capacity of ITE providers to respond to, and are therefore poor levers for driving change. The Panel should also consider the impact that comes with certain providers serving particular cohorts, such as the rural and remote workforce.

2.4 Transition funding to support performance improvement

Of the three funding reform options presented in the Discussion Paper, NSW believes that transition funding appears to be the best option to avoid rewarding universities that are already well resourced while also not providing sufficient funding to universities in need of more resourcing. Specific Australian Government funding is required to support the strengthening of ITE programs and the transition of particular ITE providers to the expected new, more rigorous set of ITE accreditation requirements in a short timeframe.

Transition funding should be targeted towards areas of identified need for improvement, based on the best available evidence of what works (nationally and at a state level), and in consultation with the relevant jurisdiction authorities (such as the NSW Department of Education and NESAs) to avoid duplication, maximise impact, and ensure delivery in line with local context. There is currently no such stream of funding for program improvement in the Australian Government agreements with ITE providers. It may be better designed and administered at the state level.

2.5 Excellence pool for higher quality programs

A system based on rewarding performance for ITE providers, unless highly sophisticated and nuanced, risks rewarding already well-resourced institutions. This may lead to a lack

of support for certain student cohorts at specific institutions. For example, regional institutions enrol much higher numbers of equity group students than the Group of 8 universities. However, regional institutions do not have the resources that Group of 8 universities have to increase performance, meaning they may lose out on performance rewards and hence be unable to serve their equity cohorts.

Similarly, reward funding tied to poorly configured performance measures is likely to reward ITE providers who inherently attract high-performing applicants into ITE degrees rather than rewarding providers who have a broader capture, who demonstrate individual improvement, or whose entrants are from disadvantaged groups who are nurtured to meet all accreditation requirements.

Reward funding also risks universities treating ITE students as a competitive market and their high impact programs as competitive intellectual property. This is unlikely to lift the whole system performance for ITE and may create perverse incentives for providers that do not translate into stronger outcomes for ITE students and new teachers.

Instead, consideration should be given to seed funding to ITE providers who offer or wish to offer resource-intensive areas of ITE such as technological & applied studies and science that are suffering teacher education recruitment issues. Incentivising and funding collaboration and communities of practice, led by high quality ITE providers, is more likely to lead to system impact.

While acknowledging the limitations of making funding contingent on performance, in line with the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, NSW supports the exploration of a commissioning approach to further support ITE providers to expand their course offerings.

Reform area 3: improving the quality of practical experience in teaching

There are opportunities for innovation in the delivery of practical experience placements and learning from successful initiatives adopted in states and territories, and applying these nationally, supported by greater centralised support. such as centres of excellence. The NSW Government's commitment to expand the Professional Experience Hub program and the Victorian development of MOUs between all universities, the Department of Education and the Institute for Teaching, are examples of approaches that could be considered nationally.

Alignment with NSW initiatives

Professional experience is a critical aspect of ITE and provides an opportunity for universities and schools to work together to share knowledge, expertise and passion for teaching in order to prepare future teachers. The NSW Department of Education works closely with NESA, the NSW Council of Deans of Education (NSWCDE), the NSW Teachers Federation and principal stakeholders on professional experience arrangements. Close liaison with the NSWCDE, which represents universities that have different course structures and implementation models, allows for responsive policy and practice.

The Professional Experience Hub School Program supports schools to lead best practice professional experience and is discussed in detail below.

General points of concern

In addition to the detailed commentary below, NSW raises the following general concerns with regard to centralising the management of practical placements, the payment of ITE students, and supervising teacher labour.

The issue of centralising support for placements is complex. NSW notes the mention of the costs associated with professional experience at section 3.5.2 of the Discussion Paper. Increased support from the department is best placed into schools through provision of a professional experience coordination and mentoring role. However, providers should continue to manage and resource the placement of their students. We are aware of pressure from the ITE providers to transfer the management of professional experience to schools and systems. It is preferable for providers to continue to manage an integrated ITE program with professional experience as a key component.

Finally, NSW urges the panel to consider how increased practical placements will impact the workload of supervising teachers and professional experience coordinators in schools.

3.1 System level agreements

The Panel may consider NESA's Professional Experience Framework and Policy, which provides the basis for effective arrangements between ITE providers and employing sectors and schools. NSW has formal Professional Experience Agreements (PEAs) in place with NSW and ACT ITE providers. The intent of Professional Experience Agreements is to develop a more consistent and coordinated approach between ITE providers and NSW public schools for placing pre-service teachers for professional experience. They establish the roles and responsibilities of the department and each ITE provider in NSW to ensure consistent, quality professional experience placements. PEAs match schools and ITE providers. PEAs commenced in 2016 and are undertaken for a 3-year period. The current agreements are in place for 2022-2024. PEAs also identify the Professional Experience Hub schools which focus on delivery of high-quality professional experience.

A broad national definition of professional experience needs to be established that encompasses a range of practical experiences, opportunities for observation and the use of technologies, that is founded in a focus on ITE students developing their knowledge, skills and capabilities over time, and that is subject to a rigorous assessment of capabilities as measured by the graduate level standards.

The establishment of closer and stronger arrangements between ITE providers and schools in NSW is facilitated by the Conditional accreditation (known nationally as registration) provisions of the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* (NSW). Consideration should be given to systematically embedding conditionally accredited (registered) employment within the concept of ITE while upholding the public benefits of a university-based four-year undergraduate teaching degree or two-year Master of Teaching (while supporting redesigns and compressed delivery in shorter timeframes as is emerging across the field). NESA, together with the department and stakeholders, developed Principles for the Employment of Conditionally Accredited (registered) Teachers that provide a basis for strengthening arrangements for the employment of conditionally accredited final year ITE students. The employment of conditionally accredited final year ITE students, who receive targeted support and mentoring and perhaps have a reduced teaching load, provides an opportunity to enhance the professional practice and preparation of future graduates. Noting these examples, the Panel should consider the idea of systematically embedding conditionally registered employment within ITE while upholding the benefits of the undergraduate and Masters degrees.

These models would be best enabled by comprehensive system-level agreements and dedicated funding to support more effective and sustainable school-provider partnerships.

3.2 Centres of excellence

A key outcome of the Professional Experience Agreements is the Professional Experience Hub program. Professional Experience Hubs are a centre of excellence for professional experience. They implement high quality professional placement practice. In collaboration with a higher education partner, Hubs provide consistent high quality professional experiences for pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and ITE providers. They lead school-based research that informs innovation in professional experience and share knowledge and support a network of schools to build their expertise in professional experience. Hub schools advocate for professional experience being a shared responsibility for preparing future teachers that benefits teachers, schools and the system as a whole.

There are currently 20 primary and secondary Hub school centres of excellence in NSW, including networks of Hub schools in Broken Hill and Queanbeyan, and a school for specific purposes leading a networked Hub program. The program evaluation indicates that NSW's Hub schools do support high quality professional experience⁶ and academic research identifies their benefits.⁷ Attempts should be made to expand the successful processes established in these centres of excellence to other schools.

Impediments to delivering further centres of excellence include the capacity of universities to resource numerous school relationships, the cost of resource support, and the capacity of some schools to take up the program. The NSW Government's 'teacher pathways' commitment aims at addressing these promises by expanding the Hub Schools program. NSW welcomes further work on how to remedy resourcing issues associated with practical placements.

3.3 National frameworks

NSW agrees that standardised and consistent documentation for professional experience across providers would help reduce school workload. Increased clarity about the timing of placements would also help school planning. Practical placements should begin as soon as possible in a course, preferably in the first year. This provides a strong grounding for students and also helps them identify if they are not suited to teaching.

⁶ Rooftop Social (2021) Qualitative Evaluation of the NSW Profession (sic) Experience Hub School Program, Final Report. July 2021. Prepared for NSW Department of Education by Murray Campbell and Dr Duncan Rintoul

⁷ Winslade, M.; Loughland, T.; Eady, M. J.: *Work-Integrated Learning Case Studies in Teacher Education. Epistemic Reflexivity.* Springer, Singapore, 2023

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) has a detailed [Professional Experience Framework](#) that has guidance on practical experience that may beneficially inform national frameworks. The implementation of consistent practice across ITE providers could be given further attention by NESA.

Effective partnerships exist largely because of the professional commitment of principals and teachers in schools. The challenge is to ensure the sustainability of such partnerships, and this can only be done by dedicated resourcing and the recognition of the important coordination and liaison roles that some teachers undertake.

3.4 Student support during placements

Currently schools provide support to ITE students through supervising teachers. Further support could come from opportunities for employment as a Student Learning Support Officer (SLSO) or paraprofessional in a school concurrent with the early stages of a teacher education course.

Under the department's intensive literacy and numeracy tuition program, ITE students in their 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of a degree are employed to deliver small group literacy and/or numeracy tuition under the supervision and mentorship of a teacher. In this program, ITE students can be employed under the classifications of Educator (Non-teacher), School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs) and educational paraprofessionals. In these roles they can be engaged to deliver small group tuition before, after and during school hours. Small group tuition environments are particularly effective for teacher training. Further consideration could be given to include this employment in their practical experience and / or degree, building on the relationships and connections already established.

As part of the Grow Your Own Teacher Training program, NSW is piloting a program to support SLSOs to train as teachers within NSW public schools. As this program evolves it could act as evidence for the benefit of combining SLSO experience with teacher skillsets. The Support for Rural Beginners program could also provide a model for connecting newcomers to regional and rural schools. This program is aimed at early career teachers in their first 5 years as a teacher who have moved to an eligible rural, remote or regional school within the last 6 months. Teachers are given support to help connect to the community, including a one-off support payment for community engagement, being partnered with an orientation buddy (who is a colleague who is established in the community and can help the new teacher settle into the local area), and connected to a local peer support group, with other new regional, rural and remote teachers.

NSW could also expand an existing program, the Welcome Experience, to further support ITE students. The Welcome Experience is currently being piloted in eight locations across NSW and is budgeted to expand its service locations in 2024 with budget allocated through to 2026. The Welcome Experience is a personalised service for public sector workers to assist them with the 'life stuff' outside of the employment framework, to

welcome workers and their families into their new regional communities. Run by the Department of Regional NSW, this is a place-based model that can be leveraged to assist the NSW Department of Education to support students during placements, allowing their practical experience to be extended beyond the classroom. The Welcome Experience could also support schools during these placements by taking care of the student teachers during their placement by connecting them to community and social elements of the destination where they are placed.

NSW also sees further opportunities to draw on the support of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (HALT). HALTs and HALT applicants are well-placed to mentor ITE students undertaking professional experience placements and to support early career teachers. Current initiatives to increase the number of accredited HALTs can only improve capacity for schools to support ITE students with practical experience requirements.

3.5 Role of schools in supporting practical experience

Active participation in professional experience is a school commitment that needs resourcing. Inclusion of a part time coordination role with teacher relief for professional experience and mentoring for pre-service and early career teachers would act as incentives to schools to support practical placements and would strongly support growth of quality professional teachers. In general, specific funding needs to be provided to schools to support them to take on a more coordinated approach to liaising with ITE providers and supporting and mentoring ITE students.

Reform area 4: improve postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants

Challenges associated with studying teaching (such as course length and recognition of prior learning and experience) are often cited as barriers to people considering moving into teaching from another profession. NSW agrees that it would be beneficial to change ITE program structures to better recognise the prior learning and experience of mid-career entrants. NSW has found that graduates often do not get the financial assistance they need and that mid-career entrants show a great deal of attrition due to their limited capacity to change university, the demands of a paraprofessional schedule, and the inability to earn a full wage. Therefore, NSW agrees with the Discussion Paper's recommendation that new financial incentives for this cohort are explored. The opportunity to explore early employment in schools, such as through educational paraprofessional roles and conditionally accredited (registered) teachers, could be utilised more widely to bring ITE students into the education workplace and increase early exposure to the classroom.

Alignment with NSW initiatives

NESA has brought ITE providers, employers and principals' groups together to identify effective practices and innovative ITE program designs that support mid-career changers. NESA supports innovation in applying its regulatory responsibility for accrediting ITE programs promoting flexible approaches to professional experience and encouraging employment-based ITE arrangements based on Conditional Accreditation (registration).

The need to test alternative pathways for mid-career entrants aligns with the Government's commitments to enhancing the Mid-Career Transition to Teaching program and expand Master of Teaching delivery on weeknights and weekends to support mid-career transitioners.

General points of concern

NSW flags teacher workload and ITE student income as persistent points of concern. As with increased practical placements, NSW urges the Panel to consider how the early integration of mid-career entrants into classrooms will impact the workload of supervising teachers, given that paraprofessionals must be supervised at all times.

For mid-career entrants, it's particularly important to address the drop of income while they study. Offering ITE students paid employment is one solution to this problem. However, any offer of employment would need to consider industrial implications and role within the classroom and broader school environment. This work is also being considered as part of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.

4.1 Better pathways for mid-career entrants

Balancing the current study workload with classroom employment is proving to be a challenge for many participants in NSW's Mid-Career Transition to Teaching program. A work-integrated focus would benefit these students. Ideally, students would teach in classrooms during their studies, in addition to undertaking Professional Experience (PEX).

The ITE program models being developed to support the employment of conditionally accredited final year ITE students mentioned above immediately facilitate an effective pathway for career-changers without establishing disparity in the qualifications of teachers. Such programs for career-changers can be supported by competitive employer selection for para-professional employment as a prelude to conditionally accredited employment at the start of the final year of studies.

The Panel should support redesign of the Master of Teachers. New models for this degree could include teaching after an initial year of academic study and professional experience placements, three semesters per year to advance the student to earlier employment, and work integrated programs that include simultaneous study with part-time employment. It is in fact the creative redesign of the Master of Teaching (already used in the NEXUS and other programs) that provides the way forward for better work-integrated learning and much earlier employment. This addresses lessening of barriers, and assists with the shortage challenges, without undermining the professional qualification.

We do not see a case for returning to a one-year ITE program such as a Graduate Diploma of Education as a way of shortening the time spent out of the workforce, as it is not academically and professionally proportionate with the complexity and status of teaching.

4.2 Increasing flexibility

NSW's Mid-Career Transition to Teaching program has produced various insights relevant to the need for increased flexibility in ITE delivery to mid-career entrants. Mid-career students would benefit from introducing flexible program delivery with a part time or variable study load. They would also benefit from increased choice of higher education partners due to variable program requirements. Mid-Career participants found it helpful that they continue receiving employment payments while undertaking PEX.

NSW suggests the development of a national framework for assessing the success of mid-career programs, as a well as a means of sharing lessons learned in the design of mid-career programs across institutions and jurisdictions and the models of system and local support provided. This would build a practical and conceptual evidence base for effective mid-career change program design.