Australian Catholic University

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

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Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

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Executive Summary

Australian Catholic University (ACU) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Commonwealth's "Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System" (the Review) which will report to all Australian Education Ministers on 31 October 2023 about the upcoming National Schools Reform Agreement (NSRA).

ACU answers questions 15 to 25 from the consultation paper's fourth chapter on "our current and future teachers," grouping these questions into four sections:

1. How to attract and retain teachers (questions 15, 16, 17, & 18)

2. How to attract and retain teachers from diverse backgrounds (questions 19 & 20)

3. How to reduce teacher workload (questions 23 & 24), and

4. How to improve information about, regulation of, and rewards for teachers (questions 21, 22, & 25).

ACU's Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education (ILSTE) and Institute for Positive Psychology and Education (IPPE) are making separate submissions on questions 26 – 34 from Chapter 5 and questions 8-12 from Chapter 3 respectively of the consultation paper.

ACU's main recommendation is for the NSRA to direct more funding to the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP) to better support our current and future teachers. Regarding Chapter 4, ACU makes twelve recommendations, specifically, that the NSRA should:

1. provide funding to implement the NTWAP designed to improve the working conditions of teachers.

2. expand, promote, and quantify the benefits of mid-career pathway programs such as Teach for Australia and Turn to Teaching, as recommended by the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP).

3. prioritise funding towards the NTWAP's "Priority Area 3 - Keeping the teachers we have".

4. provide teaching relief for early career teachers and their mentors when implementing action 14 under priority area 3, "Develop national guidelines to support early career teachers and new school leaders including mentoring and induction."

5. encourage all jurisdictions to adopt a nationally consistent code of conduct for parents as well as students that outlines expectations of behaviour, processes for complaints and consequences for breaches.

6. investigate the feasibility of adopting a New Zealand model of "no income test" for pensioners, to encourage more older teachers to return to the classroom.

7. streamline Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation processes and make it nationally consistent and less onerous, preferencing teachers that remain in challenging schools and / or teach subjects most in need.

8. foster partnerships between higher education providers and communities to "grow your own" teachers.

9. consider how mentoring and induction can improve the retention of First Nations teachers (see also recommendation 4 above).

10. encourage teacher registration authorities (TRAs) to include simulations as part of accredited professional placement requirements.

11. fund longitudinal research on the teacher workforce outside the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative.

12. consider the use of university micro-credentials to deliver HALT requirements, that articulate into higher degrees.

How to attract and retain teachers

This section responds to the following consultation paper questions:

> 15. *What change(s) would attract more students into the teaching profession?*
>
> 16. *What change(s) would support teachers to remain in the profession?*
>
> 17. *What change(s) would support qualified teachers to return to the profession?*
>
> 18. *What additional reforms are needed to ensure that the schools most in need can support and retain highly effective teachers?*

Attracting

In 2019, a Grattan Institute survey reported that "high achieving young Australians found that they perceived teaching to fall well short of the intellectual challenge and pay offered by their chosen career," and went on to say, "raising the minimum ATAR to 80 for teacher education was shown to have small effects on attracting high achievers in our survey."[1]

The Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) disagreed with the Grattan Institute's finding that pay was an important pull factor for teachers, but they nevertheless agreed that working conditions for teachers should improve: "give our teachers fewer classes and more time outside the classroom, so they can prepare lessons better and improve their teaching. And this wouldn't cost a dime, as it can be offset with slightly bigger classes."[2]

ACU does not endorse larger class sizes but agrees with both the Grattan Institute and the CIS that increasing the intellectual challenge of teaching, and changing a teacher's working conditions to allow this, is key to attracting candidates and keeping them in the profession.

The growing shortfall of teachers stems from a decline in the perceived status of the profession. Desirable professions are hard to get into because people hold them in high regard, with consequent high demand (e.g., medicine, law, dentistry, engineering, etc). This does not appear to be the case with teaching. Attracting and retaining teaching applicants is dependent on the work conditions pertaining to teaching (including trust in teachers and their intellectual challenge), as it is for any other profession.

Consequently, teacher supply will increase through pull factors, such as improving working conditions and career opportunities, rather than push factors, such as high ATARs that restrict entry into teaching courses. The former is more difficult and expensive to achieve, but at least has some relevance to increasing teacher supply and the status of the profession.

Recommendation 1

That the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) provide funding to implement the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP) designed to improve the working conditions of teachers.

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[1] Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., and Nolan, J. *Attracting high achievers to teaching*. Grattan Institute. August 2019.

[2] Blaise Joseph and Glenn Fahey, "Teachers need more time and fewer classes, not more pay," *Australian Financial Review*, 11 September 2019

A shorter-term change to attract more students into the teaching profession is to support employment-based pathways as recently recommended by the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP), chaired by Professor Mark Scott.

Recommendations 12, 13, and 14 of the TEEP report suggested expanding, promoting, and quantifying the benefits of mid-career pathway programs. ACU, as university partner of Teach for Australia and the Queensland Turn to Teaching Internship Program, strongly supports these recommendations to fast-track mid-career changers' entry into the classroom so as to minimise time away from paid employment while learning. Each jurisdiction in Australia should review its legislation and policy frameworks to ensure flexible pathways into teaching are supported.

> **Recommendation 2**
>
> That the NSRA assist to expand, promote, and quantify the benefits of mid-career pathway programs such as Teach for Australia and Turn to Teaching, as recommended by the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP).

Remaining

Once in the profession, research repeatedly shows the main reason individuals leave teaching is the intense workload. For example:

- A 2018 national survey of almost 18,000 teachers by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) found that approximately one third of teachers aged under 50 intend to leave the profession before they retire, and that for nine-in-ten of those intending to leave, the main reason is the heavy workload and not being able to cope.[3]

- A 2019 Monash University report found that three-quarters of teachers did not find their workload manageable.[4]

- A 2019 survey of approximately 2,500 teachers found the main reason for intending to leave was an overwhelming workload.[5]

- A 2021 synthesis of surveys from 2016 to 2018 across five Australian states found a "near-universal intensification of teachers' work".[6]

This Australian research matches that from overseas, which finds that, while pay levels and relative professional status are contributing factors, the primary driver for teachers leaving the profession is work intensity.[7]

Moreover, meta-analyses have identified psychosocial factors to play a major role in predicting teacher attrition. For example, school climate, student-teacher relationships, effects of leadership, and job satisfaction can have an effect stronger than any structural variables, such as pay, in influencing teacher satisfaction or dissatisfaction.[8]

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[3] AITSL, *Australian Teacher Workforce Data: National Teacher Workforce Characteristics Report*, December 2021

[4] Amanda Heffernan et al, *Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching in Australia*, Monash University, November 2019.

[5] Amanda Heffernan, et al, "'I cannot sustain the workload and the emotional toll': Reasons behind Australian teachers' intentions to leave the profession," *Australian Journal of Education 2022*, Vol. 0(0) 1–14.

[6] Mihajla Gavin, et al, "Teacher Workload in Australia: National reports of intensification and its threats to democracy," in *New Perspectives on Education for Democracy*, Routledge, 2021.

[7] See, for example, U.K. House of Commons Education Committee, "Recruitment and retention of teachers," 8 February 2017.

[8] See Li, R., & Yao, M. (2022), "What promotes teachers' turnover intention? Evidence from a meta-analysis," *Educational Research Review*, 100477 & Madigan, D. J., & Kim, L. E. (2021), "Towards an understanding of teacher attrition: A meta-analysis of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers' intentions to quit," *Teaching and teacher education*, *105*, 103425.

It is the working environment of teachers that is causing them to leave. According to the National Skills Commission, the number of graduates who are trained and qualified as Primary School and Secondary School teachers in the Australian labour market should be sufficient to meet demand but is not. The Commission speculated this mismatch may be due to factors other than supply – "including but not limited to workplace conditions, remuneration and perceptions of remuneration, impacts on wellbeing and mental health, skills wastage and attrition such as loss of qualified teachers to other occupations".[9] The Commission concluded that, "if supply and demand is to be fully understood, greater insight into teacher attrition rates across the teaching lifecycle is needed".[10]

Teacher attrition will decline when working conditions improve, such as the reduction in weekly face-to-face teaching hours in Victoria from 2024, or the Commonwealth's proposed actions in the NTWAP. Both initiatives aim to provide teachers with more time to complete work such as class preparation, marking, and administrative tasks. Teachers should also be supported to access professional learning during working hours.

Recommendation 3

Prioritise funding towards the NTWAP's "Priority Area 3 - Keeping the teachers we have".

Australia has an overcrowded, content-heavy curriculum, delivered by overworked teachers on modest salaries, who work more hours than the OECD average and have significantly more face-to-face teaching hours, largely because Australian students have the highest compulsory instruction time requirement in the OECD.[11]

Stronger support for beginning teachers is key in this context. Teaching is an unusual profession in that from day one, the practitioner works alone rather than under the wings of a more experienced practitioner. There is a sink or swim mentality in teaching where new teachers simply need to be resilient enough to survive the shock of entry into the profession. This assumption was always inappropriate and wasteful but is especially so today when a booming school age population combines with imminent teacher retirements and fewer initial teacher education (ITE) graduates. New teachers need to ease into the rhythm, dynamic, and culture of a school, rather than be allocated the most challenging schools teaching the most challenging students with little or no support.[12]

Australia does not do as well as other countries in supporting new teachers. There is clear evidence that the nature, quality, and duration of induction processes for new teachers vary considerably, across and within schools. In the UK, an Early Career Framework has extended the induction period to two school years with Induction Mentor teachers receiving a time allocation to provide training and support. In Ontario, Canada, a year-long induction program for graduate teachers (with an option to extend this to a second year) exists where 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. However, in Australia in 2022, only two-thirds (59%) of early career teachers received a formal induction, a six-percentage point decrease from 2020 (65%).[13]

Better, consistent, high-quality mentoring and induction for early career teachers will reduce attrition rates and ease current teacher shortages. Without it, the profession will continue to churn through new teachers as it has in the past, which not only perpetuates shortages but constitutes a great waste of talent.

[9] National Skills Commission, *2022 Skills Priority List: Key Findings Report*, 6 October 2022.
[10] Ibid.
[11] OECD, *Education at a Glance 2020*, Figure D4.2 & Figure D1.1.
[12] For further insight, see Dicke, T., Elling, J., Schmeck, A., & Leutner, D. (2015). "Reducing reality shock: The effects of classroom management skills training on beginning teachers." *Teaching and teacher education, 48*, 1-12.
[13] AITSL, *ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard release: Teacher workforce characteristics*, 29 March 2023.

Recommendation 4

That the NSRA fund teaching relief for early career teachers and their mentors when implementing action 14 under priority area 3, "Develop national guidelines to support early career teachers and new school leaders including mentoring and induction."

Teachers are spending an increasing amount of time with parents / carers. According to an Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) survey of 38,000 teachers in 2022, the proportion of teachers spending more than ten hours a week interacting with parents has increased from:

- 1% in 2019 to 4% in 2022 for classroom teachers,

- 9% in 2021 to 24% in 2022 for middle leaders, and

- 16% in 2020 to 33% in 2022 for senior leaders.[14]

ACU's own surveys of principals finds these interactions can sometimes be negative.[15] In this context, a nationally consistent code of conduct for parents as well as students is warranted that outlines expectations of behaviour, processes for complaints and consequences for breaches. Some jurisdictions already have laws and policies in place on this issue (e.g., the community safety order scheme in Victoria based on results and recommendations from ACU's "Australian health and Wellbeing survey", and the Enclosed Lands Protection Act in NSW). National coordination would elevate the issue to seek solutions to a growing problem.

Recommendation 5

That the NSRA encourage all jurisdictions to adopt a nationally consistent code of conduct for parents as well as students that outlines expectations of behaviour, processes for complaints and consequences for breaches.

Returning

Younger teachers likely left the profession because of the intense workload. To attract them back requires changes to workload and culture mentioned above, including opportunities for intellectual challenge and career progression linked to the classroom.

Australia currently applies an income test to pensions, which is probably preventing some retired teachers from returning to the profession. In New Zealand, there is no income test on the pension, only tax paid on wages. Consequently, more older people in New Zealand work. For example, 24.1 percent of people aged 65 or over were in paid work in New Zealand in 2018,[16] compared to 13.9 percent in Australia.[17] The New Zealand model should be considered for Australia given the untapped resources that lie within the older workforce and the labour shortages affecting many industries, including teaching.

Recommendation 6

That the NSRA investigate the feasibility of adopting a New Zealand model of "no income test" for pensioners, to encourage more older teachers to return to the classroom.

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[14] AITSL, *Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) National Trends: Teacher Workforce* (June 2023).
[15] ACU Institute for Positive Psychology and Education (IPPE), *Australian Principal Occupational Health and Wellbeing Survey*
[16] OECD, Pensions at a Glance 2019: Country Profiles – New Zealand.
[17] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021), *Older Australians*, AIHW, Australian Government

Additional reforms for schools most in need

Additional, higher career paths envisaged in question 22 of the consultation paper will be relevant for challenging schools that need to retain highly effective teachers. Incentives are required to retain these in-demand teachers in challenging schools.

Advanced teacher and leadership roles should be more readily available to these teachers without leaving the classroom, with preference given not only to needy schools, but to teachers in needed subject areas, such as science and technology. Streamlining the HALT accreditation processes and preferencing these teachers would be positive.

> **Recommendation 7**
>
> That the NSRA fund a streamlining of HALT accreditation processes and make it nationally consistent and less onerous, preferencing teachers that remain in challenging schools and / or teach subjects most in need.

How to attract and retain teachers from diverse backgrounds

This section responds to the following consultation paper questions:

> *19. What can be done to attract a diverse group of people into the teaching profession to ensure it looks like the broader community?*

> *20. What can be done to attract more First Nations teachers? What can be done to improve the retention of First Nations teachers?*

Attracting diversity

The teaching population should match the variety of Australia's school populations, not least to provide role models that inspire children from diverse backgrounds to see teaching as a viable career.

In many communities, especially regional and remote areas, the teachers retained are from the community itself. Therefore, partnerships between higher education institutions and communities to "grow your own" teachers should be encouraged and supported. This strategy has been shown to be highly effective in several countries. Further, where the strategy has been a sustained policy focus for recruitment, especially in regional areas, graduates tend to be retained in community following graduation, reducing transience in teaching staff.

For example, ACU's involvement in such communities begins before university through programs such as the "Uni Step-Up Program" and "Aspiration Days" for senior school students including in regional areas. In addition, we offer online Bachelor of Education programs with on-site intensives for cohorts working as teacher aides or paraprofessionals in regional schools to stay in their community and become a teacher. Once at university, ACU provides a range of support to assist retention and achievement, from on-line programs to student accommodation to counselling and career support, to more intense interventions such as the "Connect2Uni Program," which is a year-long transition program for first-year students focused on their social and academic transition to university.

Scholarships designed to attract more teachers should focus on targeting diverse candidates, but even if such scholarships are unavailable to individuals, broader university support can help them succeed.

> **Recommendation 8**
>
> That the NSRA foster partnerships between higher education providers and communities to "grow your own" teachers.

Retaining diversity

Greater support is needed to attract Indigenous candidates into a teaching degree, first by seeing Indigenous teachers as role models, then supporting them to achieve program requirements such as the literacy and numeracy test for ITE (LANTITE) in different ways. Communities of Indigenous teachers and preservice teachers should be resourced to support them at university. Accurate data should be used to determine where university interventions will be most effective in helping them (such as the type provided by ACU's Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education's, ILSTE's, through its mapping of student progression).

However, once entering the profession, a key initiative to retain all teachers, including Indigenous teachers, is strong induction programs (see recommendation 4 above).

Recommendation 9

That the NSRA, in focusing on action 14 under the NTWAP (see recommendation 4 above), consider how mentoring and induction can improve the retention of all teachers, including First Nations teachers.

How to reduce teacher workload

This section responds to the following consultation paper questions:

23. Are there examples of resources, such as curriculum materials, being used to improve teacher workload or streamline their administrative tasks?

24. How should digital technology be used to support education delivery, reduce teacher workload and improve teacher effectiveness? What examples are you aware of?

<u>Resources to reduce teacher workload.</u>

Resources can be provided to support teachers' work; however, they should never be scripted lessons or off-the-shelf lesson plans. They should provide a basis for teachers to modify and adapt for their students' needs and interests. Generative AI can be utilised to reduce administrative tasks, source content and resources, and summarise student feedback into key themes to target in the next lesson. Such technology should never replace teacher judgement about the most effective pedagogies for the context, or ethical and relational practices.

<u>Digital technology to improve teacher effectiveness.</u>

Digital technologies can help expose pre-service teachers to classroom and school scenarios so they can practice in a safe, low-stakes environment. Simulation software and virtual reality can be a unique and effective method to support pre-service teacher development in areas like classroom management, engaging with parents, providing feedback to students, and reflection on teaching practice.[18]

ACU is using virtual reality to expose pre-service teachers to various pedagogies, including the skills they need to manage classrooms effectively. For example, simulation software can allow students to practice managing challenging behaviours without putting either the student or pre-service teachers at risk. This can lead to improved confidence and competence when dealing with real classroom situations. Simulations and virtual reality can also provide pre-service teachers with exposure to a diverse range of contexts and situations, which they may not otherwise encounter during their practicum. This can help to broaden their perspectives and better prepare them for a range of challenges they may face in their future teaching careers.

ACU's use of SimSchool and virtual reality headsets are also used to familiarise students with the wide range of early childhood experiences they may encounter. ACU is also exploring the use of Simlab to enable students to practice their engagement with parents at parent-teacher interviews. The continued exploration and integration of technology into ITE will be essential to help pre-service teachers further develop their skills and strategies.

TRAs have only recently started to consider the question of whether simulation can count *in place of* rather than *on top of* existing placement requirements early in the program. Differences are already appearing across jurisdictions, with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) endorsing some proportion of simulation as a substitute for physical placements particularly in the early years of ITE candidature, while the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) does not.

> **Recommendation 10**
>
> That the NSRA encourage teacher registration authorities (TRAs) to include simulations as part of accredited professional placement requirements.

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[18] ACU's Professor Chris Londsdale has also recently submitted an ARC Discovery Project application entitled, "Byte-size feedback: Using AI to improve teacher-talk and student engagement".

How to improve information about, regulation of, and rewards for teachers

This section responds to the following consultation paper questions:

21. What reforms could enable the existing teacher workforce to be deployed more effectively?

22. How can teacher career pathways, such as master teachers and instructional specialists, be improved to attract and retain teachers? How should this interact with HALT certification and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?

25. Are there benefits for the teaching profession in moving to a national registration system? If so, what are they?

More effective deployment

ACU has long experience of state governments miscalculating teacher supply and demand by restricting teacher education places that later flow through to more "out of field" teachers and ultimately, wider teacher workforce shortages. More publicly available and accurate information on teaching workforce needs may prevent this problem occurring in the future and aid in the more effective deployment of teachers.

The lack of comparable data on teacher supply and demand projections (or for that matter, the academic and personal characteristics that make for successful and unsuccessful teachers) is being addressed by Australia's Education Ministers through the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative. Yet the ATWD is taking time to reach its full potential. The ATWD also does not include important psychosocial variables that are crucial for predictions of workforce wellbeing, success, and retention.

There is a clear role for government to provide better teacher workforce projections and fund data-rich longitudinal studies in attraction, progression, and retention of teachers. These longitudinal studies have not been strongly pursued in Australia but should be. For example, ACU's Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education (ILSTE) is an interdisciplinary, national research institute already engaged in teacher workforce studies. ILSTE is well placed to provide the type of rich, longitudinal workforce data on the teaching profession that Australia needs, with collaborations and data-sharing arrangements with a significant number of higher education institutions and regulatory authorities engaged in ITE. Additionally, ACU's Institute for Positive Psychology and Educational (IPPE) has a demonstrated successful track record of conducting the largest, longstanding data collection of Australian School Leader Health and Wellbeing that has impacted policy. IPPE's research is co-designed with major stakeholders (principal associations) and end-users (principals) and has been applied to a variety of teacher education contexts.

> **Recommendation 11: Support longitudinal studies of the teacher workforce**
>
> That the NSRA fund longitudinal research into the teacher workforce outside the ATWD initiative.

Career pathways

As mentioned in recommendation 7 above, advanced teacher and leadership roles should be more readily available to Australian teachers without leaving the classroom. Compared to their Australian counterparts, Singaporean teachers, for example, can be promoted while staying a classroom teacher,[19] and are also more satisfied with their career and salary.[20]

Australia's Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation is a step in the right direction, but HALT teachers make up less than one percent of the teaching workforce, and there are also no parameters around how they should be used effectively in schools to mentor pre-service and early career teachers.

Streamlining HALT accreditation processes, making it nationally consistent and less onerous (including reducing the price), and providing clearer career pathways and expectations after accreditation, would be a good first step (see recommendation 7 above). If HALT teachers are to be one of the cogs upon which a professional learning culture turns, then their expertise should be appropriately recognised by offering them release time to support inexperienced teachers.

To further increase the value of HALT accreditation, the various HALT requirements could be delivered through university micro-credentials that can articulate into higher degrees such as master's and doctoral qualifications, which would offer another incentive for good teachers to take this step.

Recommendation 12

That the NSRA consider the use of university micro-credentials to deliver HALT requirements, that articulate into higher degrees.

National registration

ACU strongly supports a national teacher registration system with consistent standards.

For example, on 7 July 2023, the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) observed that a national teacher registration system would:

- ensure national consistency and rigour in the accreditation process.

- simplify the accreditation process for providers, particularly those operating across several jurisdictions.

- ensure any future developments can be implemented in a timely manner.

- drive continuous improvement and quality assurance.

- allow a risk-based regulatory approach to be implemented over time.

- enable the collection of national data to support workforce planning.

However, TEEP said there were large practical difficulties, such as:

- substantial regulatory and legislative change, as all TRAs have been established through legislation in their respective jurisdictions.

- significant financial outlay.

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[19] Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), *International Comparative Study: The Australian Curriculum and The Singapore Curriculum*, 2018.
[20] OECD, *Education at a Glance, 2020*, p. 398.

- could lead to a 'one size fits all' approach that may be less responsive to local contexts.

ACU continues to see inconsistencies in registration requirements leading to significant problems. For example, the need for national registration can be seen in the various "provisional authority to teach" approaches across TRAs. ACU is aware of ITE students in their second year being given this authority to teach (which is not permissible) and with limited support from the employing school. This impacts the students subject to these under-prepared teachers, but it also compromises the pre-service teacher's own development. A national registration system would limit these abuses which, as a multi-jurisdiction provider of ITE, ACU sees too often.

Appendix A: Australian Catholic University Profile

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is a publicly funded Catholic university, open to people of all faiths and of none and with teaching, learning and research inspired by 2,000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition.

ACU operates as a multi-jurisdictional university with seven campuses across three states and one territory. Campuses are located in North Sydney, Strathfield, Blacktown, Canberra, Melbourne, Ballarat, and Brisbane. ACU also has a campus in Rome, Italy.

ACU is the largest Catholic university in the English-speaking world, with over 33,000 students and 2,300 staff.[21]

ACU graduates demonstrate high standards of professional excellence and are also socially responsible, highly employable and committed to active and responsive learning. ACU is the number one university in the country when it comes to graduate employment outcomes three years after graduation, with a 95.5 per cent employment rate.[22]

ACU has built its reputation in the areas of Health and Education, educating the largest number of undergraduate nursing and teaching students in Australia[23] and serving a significant workforce need in these areas. Under the demand driven system, ACU sought to focus and build on these strengths.

ACU has four faculties: Health Services; Education and Arts; Law and Business; and Theology and Philosophy.

As part of its commitment to educational excellence, ACU is committed to targeted and quality research. ACU's strategic plan focuses on research areas that align with ACU's mission and reflect most of its learning and teaching: Education; Health and Wellbeing; Theology and Philosophy; and Social Justice and the Common Good. To underpin its plan for research intensification, ACU has appointed high profile leaders to assume the directorships, and work with high calibre members, in six research institutes.[24]

In recent years, the public standing of ACU's research has improved dramatically. The last Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) assessment (in 2018) awarded ACU particularly high ratings in the fields of research identified as strategic priorities and in which investment has been especially concentrated. For example, ACU more than doubled the total number of top scores of 5 (well above world standard) in the 2018 ERA.

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[21] Student numbers refer to headcount and staff numbers refer to full-time equivalent (FTE).
[22] QILT (August 2020), 2020 Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal (GOS-L).
[23] Department of Education and Training, *2021 Higher Education Data Collection – Students, Special Courses*. Section 8, table 8.3.
[24] Australian Catholic University, Research and Enterprise, https://www.acu.edu.au/research-and-enterprise.