

Australian Catholic University

Submission to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

National Review of Teacher Registration

April 2018

Submission to AITSL's National Review of Teacher Registration

Executive Summary

Australian Catholic University (ACU) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the National Review of Teacher Registration.

The purpose of teacher registration is to ensure the quality of teaching by creating a regulatory framework ensuring the maintenance of minimum standards.

Registration guarantees that only those who are appropriately trained and deemed “fit and proper” persons are permitted to teach. This serves both important educational and child protection imperatives. It also serves to underwrite public confidence in the profession.

ACU is the largest educator of teachers in Australia and, as a result, this submission approaches the issue of teacher registration with a focus on initial teacher education (ITE) graduates and how teacher registration can better support entry into the teaching profession.

ACU makes the following recommendations:

- (i) Teachers should be registered as specialists rather than as generalists.
- (ii) Early childhood education (ECE) teachers, and vocational education and training (VET) teachers, should be registered on a nationally consistent basis.
- (iii) Pre-registration of ITE students, as recommended by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), should be consistently implemented on a national basis.
- (iv) ACU places a high priority on child protection issues and, by implication, the necessity for all registered teachers to satisfy the fit and proper person requirement.
- (v) Teachers should be required to make a commitment to engaging with pre-service teachers (mentoring, induction, performance assessment) as a component of their professional work as teachers and to maintain professional accreditation.

Responses to Consultation Questions

Question 1. How is the national teacher registration framework working across Australia?

National coordination

In its 2015 report to the federal government, TEMAG recommended the establishment of a national teaching regulation body. ACU continues to support this recommendation.

In the absence of a national regulator, ACU believes AITSL should have a stronger national coordinating function to monitor, encourage and, if possible, enforce consistent teacher registration requirements across all jurisdictions.

Currently, professional standards for teachers are generated through a national AITSL framework. These national standards have been recognised by Commonwealth and State/Territory Education Ministers through the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Education Council.

At the same time, teacher registration is managed through state and territory jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction is subject to its own legislation, which sets out state-based processes and regulations regarding teacher registration. Therefore, while there is a common view that mutual recognition of registration across jurisdictions is desirable, operationally this does not currently exist in a seamless manner, with slightly different processes occurring state by state.

As a national university, ACU finds it particularly problematic that there is not yet a consistent mutual recognition process. ACU provides ITE programs in various jurisdictions and is aware of the legitimate expectation among graduates, and teachers within the profession, that seamless mutual recognition of registration should exist.

Consistency across jurisdictions through mutual recognition would also strengthen the role of the teacher standards and bring greater coherence to expectations of the profession.

Mutual recognition would facilitate greater mobility for graduates and teachers, which has the potential to help to ameliorate areas of teacher shortages – including in regional or remote areas – by allowing teachers to move to where demand and opportunities exist.

Greater mobility could also reduce Australia's significant problem of out-of-field teaching, where teachers are required to teach subjects other than those in which they have specialised.

Further, consistency in registration requirements would guarantee to the public that professional and character requirements are of an equivalently rigorous standard across Australia. This is crucial at a time when educational and child protection imperatives are under scrutiny.

Teacher specialisation

AITSL and state and territory-based employers have recently begun to use specific titles set out in the national teaching standards to recognise advanced professional expertise in teaching. This involves the categorisation of some professional educators as Highly Accomplished or Lead (HALT) teachers.

There are currently 200 of these accredited teachers in the nation, with an aspiration expressed by the Chair of AITSL for 10,000 HALT teachers by 2020.

This recognition acknowledges a teacher's mastery of their craft, including their knowledge of a particular subject area. It also reflects a trend within the profession in Australia to move away from teachers as generalists to teachers with a specialisation as core to their professional work. At the level of teacher registration, however, such specialisations are not recognised and teachers are registered as generalists in state and territory jurisdictions.

Historically, teachers have graduated into the profession as generalists despite the incorporation of in-depth specialised studies into all contemporary teacher preparation programs, including early childhood, primary, vocational and secondary programs. ACU recommends that graduates be recognised through teacher registration, not as generalists but rather, as a teacher with a specialisation as they move from provisional to full registration.

As a leading provider of ITE, ACU has taken a decision to require all its undergraduate ITE programs – including early childhood, primary, secondary and vocational ITE – to include a specialisation at the level of minor study and/or major study. Consequently, the university is no longer graduating purely generalist teachers.

Further, postgraduate programs at ACU are designed to develop teacher specialisations (e.g., mathematics, literacy, Catholic leadership, instructional leadership, etc.) that meet the requirements of employing authorities

ACU believes that the recognition of teacher specialisations through registration will lift the status of teaching as a profession by providing greater acknowledgement of their specialist knowledge and expertise. This would re-assure parents and the wider public that school (and early childhood) students are being educated by teachers who are both classroom generalists and content specialists.

Incorporating this into registration would also make a teacher's recognised expertise a critical aspect of their professional identity, as is the case in other professions. For example, a doctor's speciality is recognised by professional colleges and becomes a critical aspect of their professional identity, but this does not occur with teaching, to the profession's detriment. Specialisation should become accepted practice across the profession for all teachers, including:

- primary teachers, who hold a variety of specialisations;

- secondary teachers, who are content experts on graduation; and
- vocational teachers, who have trade experience as their expert knowledge base.

Question 2. Should early childhood teachers be part of a national approach to teacher registration?

Yes, early childhood education (ECE) teachers should be part of a nationally consistent approach to teacher registration.

ACU is involved in preparing teachers for ECE teaching children in the 0-5 and 0-8/12 age brackets. Over the past three decades, extensive literature has accumulated on the early years of life for children. Research findings unequivocally agree that these years are a critical period of intense learning for children which provides the foundation for later academic and social success.¹ The knowledge of care, development, and education in the early years has rapidly expanded in ECE, as has the expertise required in curriculum, assessment, and teaching, as well as child care and child development.

It is now time to acknowledge ECE teachers as embedded in a wider education profession and to recognise ECE expertise as a specialisation. Early childhood teachers, like other teachers, are involved in an intentional, planned processes of education, development and care towards achieving certain goals and objectives for children. These goals include:

- improving prior-to-school literacy and numeracy performance;
- monitoring children's development and learning, with a view to recommending their suitability for a school environment;
- identifying activities that most enhance or limit opportunities for age-appropriate child development; and
- facilitating cognitive, social, psychological and physical developmental outcomes through participation in formal or informal learning programs.

ACU believes that the importance of early childhood education for an individual's future life opportunities should be recognised through a more consistent approach to registration. While this would require the wording of the national teaching standards to be modified to adequately recognise early childhood contexts (e.g., as learning centres rather than schools), an agreed national approach to registration is justified. In particular, such a change would provide appropriate recognition of early childhood teachers' expertise in leading the physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth of the child through educational and development programs.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015. *Literature review of the impact of early childhood education and care on learning and development: working paper*. Cat. no. CWS 53. Canberra: AIHW.

Question 3. What role does teacher registration play for VET teachers in school settings?

ACU supports the registration of all teachers, which it believes helps to guarantee the maintenance of minimum standards through a clear regulatory framework.

There is a growing demand by Commonwealth and State governments for more VET teachers as VET training courses link to high-growth occupations.² This demand has placed greater pressure on universities to graduate teachers into the VET sector.

In general, ACU believes that any VET teacher who can demonstrate a specialisation in vocational education through the completion of a recognised teacher preparation program, (e.g. BEd (Technology)) should be registered as a VET teacher according to the principles outlined in the response to Question 1, above.

The consultation paper notes that VET in schools is delivered by appropriately qualified teachers (which may include trainers and assessors). Most jurisdictions provide these trainers with an authority to teach while other jurisdictions stipulate that trainers must be accompanied by a registered teacher.

VET trainers who are not currently registered as professional teachers are required to have a minimum of a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (plus recent industry experience) to teach in their field in schools or in higher education institutions. Allowing VET trainers – or tradespeople in general – to be registered as school-based teachers has the potential to compromise teacher quality standards and national consistency, while running counter to policy objectives in NSW and Victoria to lift the academic standards required for entry into the teaching profession.

ACU supports registration for VET trainers with a provisional licence to teach but submits that a comprehensive teacher preparation program should be completed as a prerequisite to full teacher registration. This VET teacher program may well be different from conventional teacher preparation programs. However, if a VET trainer is to be recognised as a registered professional teacher with a VET specialisation, they should complete such a program.

In moving towards the recognition of unqualified industry workers as professional teachers, the registration of VET trainers raises a number of fundamental questions, such as the recognition of prior learning, the equivalence of industry experience, and the nature and the length of the retraining required in order to gain teacher registration. These questions need to be resolved before the matter of full VET teacher registration can be finalised and teacher quality guaranteed.

However, ACU supports:

² Wyman, N., McCrindle, M., Whatmore, S., Gedge, J. & Edwards, T. (2017). *Perceptions are not reality: myths, realities & the critical role of vocational education & training in Australia*; Skilling Australia Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

- (i) the preparation of VET teachers for the schooling sector; and
- (ii) the conversion of VET trainers to professionally registered teachers through appropriate teacher development pathways.

ACU would be keen to partner with AITSL and state and territory-based registration authorities to achieve these outcomes.

Question 4. How does teacher registration support entry into the teaching profession?

The 2015 TEMAG report recommended the registration of pre-service teachers upon entry to ITE in order to contribute to the student's commitment to the profession and to enhance the reliability of wider workforce planning. Specifically, TEMAG recommended that "higher education providers pre-register all entrants to initial teacher education programs, on a nationally consistent basis".³

ACU supports this recommendation, which would occur through collaboration between higher education providers and teacher registration authorities.

Pre-registration of students already operates in other professions. For example, health students enrolled in an approved program of study are automatically registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). The stated reason for this is to protect the public's safety in much the same way that health practitioners must be registered.⁴ Given the impact teachers can have on students, this same procedure should be adopted by the teaching profession and teacher regulators.

Importantly, pre-registration would make the student feel like they are becoming part of a profession, with a commitment to broader principles such as a code of ethics, professional development, collegiality, etc. and a growing awareness of teaching as a vocation. By simply receiving the literature of registration authorities, students would become aware not only of the ethical dimensions of teaching but also the ongoing expectations for continuing professional development from day one of an ITE degree. This early familiarity would ease graduates into the induction process of becoming a teacher.

Pre-registration would also help meet national standards, such as preparing students for contemporary environments,⁵ and providing data to support local and national teacher workforce supply.⁶

The increased data that would result from pre-registration would provide:

- greater insight into the future teaching profession; and
- as the TEMAG report noted, would result in better anticipation and management of professional experience requirements, both in terms of adequate placements and suitability of locations.⁷

As with induction and mentoring, registration authorities have a role to play in positioning supervision and mentoring as an important step in a teaching career. If supervision was to

³ Recommendation 35.

⁴ "Student Registration," AHPRA website: <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Student-Registrations.aspx>

⁵ AITSL Program Standard 2.3a

⁶ AITSL Program Standard 6.1

⁷ TEMAG, (Dec 2014), *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers*, p. 53.

count either in part or whole towards the hours of professional development a teacher requires to maintain their professional accreditation, this would provide a powerful incentive to act as a supervisor.

Question 5. How can we ensure that registered teachers satisfy the fit and proper person requirement?

ACU places a high priority on child protection and the associated requirement for all registered teachers to satisfy the “fit and proper person” condition.

ACU advocates a rigorous, national approach to ensuring registered teachers satisfy the fit and proper person requirement with greater consistency across jurisdictions so as to enhance public confidence in the teaching profession. This requirement should be a high priority for AITSL and all regulatory jurisdictions across states and territories of Australia.

ACU has developed programs that are designed to meet the moral, social and political imperatives to secure the safety and wellbeing of all young people. These programs provide the opportunity for participants to develop knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues and responses to safeguarding children and young people. The programs analyse conditions and factors that facilitate or impede child-safe environments. Consequently, all ACU teaching graduates undertake the ethical and values training necessary to understand the various aspects of child protection.

ACU provides this values training to pre-service teachers but registration authorities should provide a wider awareness of child protection issues to all registered teachers. Teacher registration authorities are the appropriate vehicles to ensure a wider awareness of child protection issues amongst the teaching profession. Professional development provided by registration authorities will help ensure teachers are up to date with best practices regarding the protection of children.

Such ongoing professional development helps to underwrite public confidence in the profession’s approach to child protection issues. As a result, it is reasonable and appropriate for teachers to be required to engage in ongoing learning about child protective behaviours to maintain their accreditation.