

# **Australian Catholic University**

## **Submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review**

**July 2021**

# ACU submission to the Commonwealth Government’s Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

## Table of Contents

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. ATTRACTING HIGH QUALITY CANDIDATES INTO TEACHING .....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1. NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF A MINIMUM ATAR FOR ENTRY .....	4
3.2. WHAT ATTRACTS HIGH-QUALITY CANDIDATES INTO TEACHING? .....	9
3.3. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ATTRACT MORE CAREER-CHANGERS INTO TEACHING?.....	12
3.4. PSYCHOMETRIC TESTING .....	15
<b>4. ITE COMPLETIONS AND ENTRY INTO A TEACHING CAREER .....</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1. IMPROVE SELECTION .....	17
4.2. IMPROVE CAREER OPTIONS.....	18
<b>5. MATCHING SUPPLY WITH WORKFORCE NEEDS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>6. ENSURING GRADUATE TEACHERS ARE ‘CLASSROOM READY’ .....</b>	<b>20</b>
6.1. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE.....	20
6.2. TEACHING PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS (TPAs).....	22
6.3. ITE COURSE SATISFACTION AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE .....	23
6.4. PUTTING IT INTO ITE.....	24
<b>7. THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS IN SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION.....</b>	<b>26</b>
7.1. PRACTITIONERS WORKING WITH ITE .....	26
7.2. ITE WORKING WITH PRACTITIONERS.....	27
<b>ATTACHMENT A: AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY PROFILE .....</b>	<b>29</b>

## 1. Executive Summary

Australian Catholic University (ACU) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Government’s Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (the Review). As the largest provider of initial teacher education (ITE) in Australia,<sup>1</sup> ACU is well qualified to comment on the challenges and opportunities facing ITE.

While ACU offers a distinctly Catholic perspective on ITE improvement that is determined to ensure opportunities for the disadvantaged or marginalised, this inclusivity does not diminish the university’s insistence on ITE excellence to improve classroom teaching and, ultimately, student results.

Consideration of the future of ITE in Australia must take place in the context of supply and demand for teachers. While the Review’s discussion paper (the Discussion Paper) suggests there is currently no “widespread shortages of teachers across Australia”, it is clear that growing workforce demand is quickly outstripping supply and that the present, limited teacher shortages will become increasingly widespread.

As such, it is important that measures designed to improve “teacher quality” – particularly any measures that further restrict entry to ITE or to the profession – are careful not to exacerbate this growing shortage of teachers. The alternative will be to accept larger classrooms and more teachers teaching out of field, or else to import teachers from other countries, where Australia has no input into ITE standards.

The key to attracting “high quality” candidates into teaching, like any other profession that attracts “high quality” candidates (e.g. medicine, law, engineering, commerce, etc), is to improve the desirability of the profession.

The Commonwealth has limited capacity to influence the working conditions of teachers, which are influenced more directly by the states and territories and the employing school systems. ACU would nevertheless encourage the Review to highlight the centrality of working conditions in shaping the decisions of high achieving candidates to pursue a career in teaching. The high attrition rate of early-career teachers illustrates that, for many teachers, the current realities of the profession – including heavy workloads, overcrowded curriculums and a requirement to teach out of field – can prove unappealing.

At the same time, ACU sees value in a more formal, rigorous selection of applicants into ITE. To this end, ACU recommends that the literacy and numeracy test for initial teacher education (LANTITE) be positioned nationally as a requirement for entry into ITE.

ACU supports the aim of encouraging career changers to enter teaching, including a shorter transition into paid teaching for career changers who already possess a degree. In order to bridge the financial gap between their careers while studying, ACU recommends bonded scholarships for career changers with particularly strong credentials to transition into teaching.

ACU believes the most important potential change to ITE lies in achieving a better and deeper integration of ITE and classroom teaching. Strong modelling of quality teaching helps build a repertoire of good teaching practices. ACU notes that information technology is already beneficially revolutionising these experiences but warns that realistic simulations of school life can never fully replace real experiences in schools. ACU advocates further efforts to break down the barriers between school and higher education if ITE graduates are to become more “classroom ready”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education and Training, *2019 Higher Education Data Collection – Students, Special Courses*. Section 8, table 8.3

## 2. Recommendations

ACU makes the following 15 recommendations in response to the issues set out in the Discussion Paper's five sections.

### Section 1: Attracting high quality candidates into teaching

- 1 Resist the blanket imposition of a minimum ATAR for entry into ITE because it:
  - a) will exacerbate the growing teacher shortage;
  - b) does nothing to attract more high-achieving school leavers into teaching;
  - c) disproportionately excludes candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds;
  - d) conveys a negative message to all students considering enrolling in ITE;
  - e) disregards the capacity for student growth over the course of university study;
  - f) lacks an evidence base to support it; and
  - g) overlooks the reality that the majority of ITE students enter their courses through non-ATAR pathways, which should remain and be expanded.
- 2 Recognise and acknowledge that improving the working conditions of teachers will make ITE more attractive to high quality candidates.
- 3 Encourage career changers with relevant life experience but no formal qualifications to enter ITE. But for these candidates, confine recognition of prior learning (RPL) to eligibility for entry into a pathway program and assess their academic skills and personal aptitude to teach as they progress through this program.
- 4 Allow postgraduate students with formal qualifications and relevant content depth eligibility to teach after one year on a provisional basis through a Graduate Diploma, as long as they subsequently obtain their Master of Teaching before proceeding to full registration.
- 5 Introduce a bonded scholarship to incentivise high performing career changers to choose to study teaching.
- 6 Be wary of psychometric assessments of teacher suitability as they are inherently inadequate at capturing the complexity of personal suitability. However, if they are to be used, any such tools should be more robust, reliable and capable of better discriminating between candidates who are likely to become effective teachers and those who are not, while ensuring it does not further disadvantage students from non-traditional backgrounds. Like LANTITE, any such tool should be nationally consistent in scope and content.

## Section 2: ITE completions and entry into a teaching career

- 7 Mandate the LANTITE as a national prerequisite for entry into ITE, with students who fail to meet this requirement given the option of entry into bridging courses to bolster their literacy and/or numeracy capability.
- 8 Support alternate career paths for ITE students that do not lead to teacher registration, which will likely increase completion rates for those who enter ITE but find they lack classroom suitability.

## Section 3: Matching supply with workforce needs

- 9 Avoid the temptation to try to centrally plan, allocate or restrict ITE places to meet expected workforce demand, a practice that has resulted in significant miscalculations in the past. Instead, governments should collate and publicly release additional, more robust information on teacher supply and demand to aid decision making.

## Section 4: Ensuring graduate teachers are ‘classroom ready’

- 10 Incentivise existing teachers to supervise preservice teachers by counting their supervision towards professional development accreditation hours where reflection, research, and scrutiny of supervision occurs as part of a postgraduate degree.
- 11 Encourage all teachers, not just recent graduates, to complete postgraduate degrees where the supervision of preservice teachers may be a subject of study.
- 12 Introduce paid internships for final year ITE students. It will be important to clearly articulate the respective responsibilities of schools, higher education providers, and regulatory authorities in support of these students.
- 13 Develop the Teaching Performance Assessment’s (TPA’s) prestige as a capstone assessment by:
  - a) consolidating the number of TPAs to ensure they are of the same high quality;
  - b) creating an agreed methodology, coordinated by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), for the quality assurance of the consolidated TPAs that remain to ensure comparability and reliability of results; and
  - c) supporting teacher educators to use TPA data more effectively for curriculum review and program renewal.

## Section 5: The role of teachers & school leaders in supporting the next generation

- 14 Modify TEQSA requirements to make it easier for universities to employ more teachers and principals on a sessional basis than currently. This modification would better integrate ITE and classroom / school practice, leading to more practically educated students who are more “classroom ready”.
- 15 Free teachers from the excessive burden of non-core activities by delegating these activities to final year teaching students working part of their final year as paid interns.

### 3. Attracting high quality candidates into teaching

What is likely to attract “high quality” candidates to teaching is also likely to attract candidates from other backgrounds. Similarly, the factors likely to deter one group of ITE candidates are likely to deter others. Nowhere is this commonality more evident than in the imposition of a minimum Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) for entry into ITE.

#### 3.1. Negative consequences of a minimum ATAR for entry

*A teacher shortage.*

The Discussion Paper points to the 2019 Survey of Employer Recruitment Experiences to conclude there is no “widespread shortages of teachers across Australia” except in some regional and specialist subject areas.<sup>2</sup>

However, this survey is from early 2019 (specifically, the three months to April 2019) drawing on data from 2018, and even that snapshot revealed employment outcomes for completing ITE undergraduates in 2018 were the strongest since 2008 while the number of teaching applicants per vacancy was the lowest.<sup>3</sup>

In the years since 2018, there has been a growing sense of a widening teacher shortage, one that is not confined to geographical or subject areas. In September 2020, Kevin Bates, the President of the Queensland Teachers Union, said to a Federal Senate inquiry that,

“we are facing severe shortages of teachers. .... what we've seen in the last two to three years has actually been a growth in shortages, even in general primary teachers, in early childhood teachers and in general secondary school teachers. The feature that we're most concerned about is that the shortages are no longer constrained just by geographic location or subject specialty but are now also starting to leak into general areas of teaching, which are then also specifically about location.”<sup>4</sup>

This official's concern is shared by the NSW Education Minister, Sarah Mitchell, who observed at the beginning of 2020 that, “NSW is facing the first major increase in the school-aged population since the Baby Boom of the 1950s”<sup>5</sup> and that the prospect of teacher shortages was “one of many things that sometimes keeps me awake at night”.<sup>6</sup> Queensland<sup>7</sup> and Victoria<sup>8</sup> have also expressed concerns about a growing student population and not enough teachers.

---

<sup>2</sup> Review Discussion Paper, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, “Teachers Australia, April 2019.”

<sup>4</sup> Mr Kevin Bates, Hansard, Education and Employment Legislation Committee, hearings on the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-Ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020*. 17 September 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Mitchell Media Release, “More enrolments than ever before in 2020,” 23 January 2020

<sup>6</sup> Natassia Chrysanthos, Pallavi Singhal and Fergus Hunter, “Boost incentives for rural teachers, say education sector leaders,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 21, 2020.

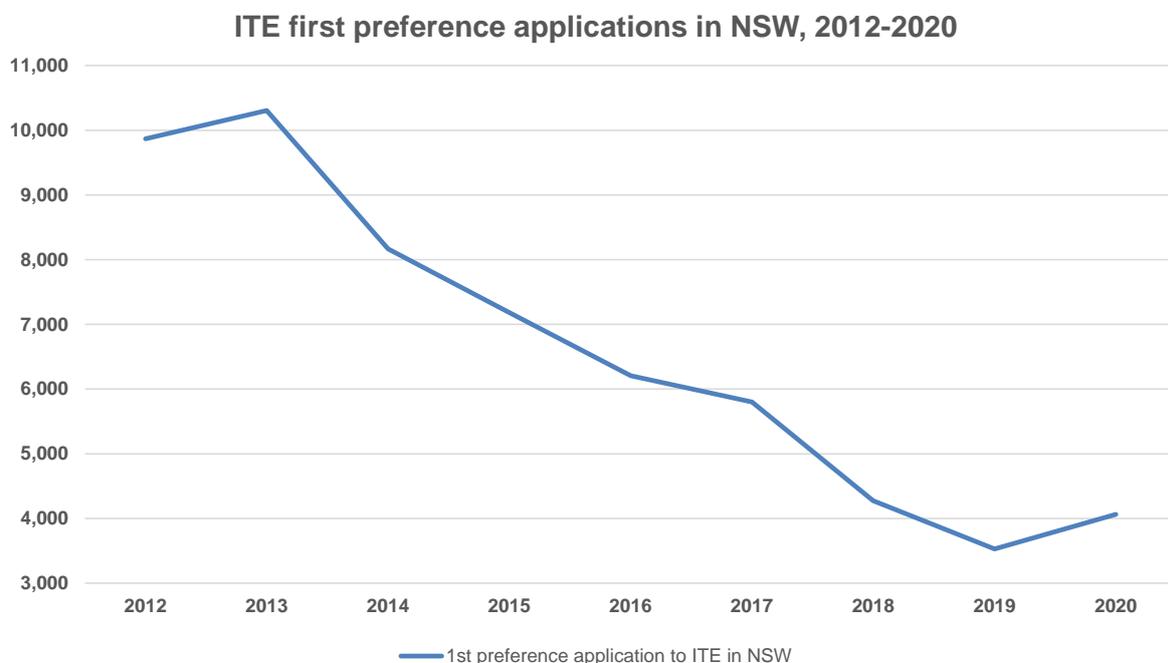
<sup>7</sup> In September 2020, the Palaszczuk Government announced a huge recruitment campaign to enlist thousands of new teachers over the next five years because some areas of QLD were struggling to meet demand. See, for example, “Thousands of teachers needed to fill significant shortage,” *Courier-Mail*, Sunday 13 September 2020

<sup>8</sup> “We will need more teachers in the coming years like never before, as we grow our school system, as we see more schools being built and as we see our population grow. We saw that last year we tipped over 1 million school students in Victoria—an incredible feat. That means we need many more teachers to meet that growth and demand.” (Tim Richardson, Labor, Mordialloc, Parliamentary speeches, 4th February 2021, *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2020 (VIC)*).

It is too soon to conclude, as the Review’s Discussion Paper does, that there is no “widespread shortages of teachers across Australia.” Anecdotal evidence suggests otherwise, with Australia’s growing number of school-aged children,<sup>9</sup> declining number of teaching graduates,<sup>10</sup> increasing rates of teacher retirement,<sup>11</sup> and very high (though under-reported) rates of attrition for early career teachers<sup>12</sup> causing the problem. A minimum ATAR for entry into ITE will exacerbate this problem and not reach its objective, which is to attract more high-achieving applicants.

*Will deter all students*

In March 2013, the New South Wales government announced its intention to raise entry standards to attract “high quality candidates” into the teaching profession with its “Great Teaching, Inspired Learning” (GTIL) framework that mandated a minimum academic requirement to begin from January 2016. Following the 2013 announcement, the number of applicants who put teaching down as their first preference (i.e., those applicants who most wanted to become a teacher), collapsed by over 60 per cent (to date) and is only now recovering from a much lower base.



Source: UAC. 1st preference applications from U/G & P/G

In November 2016, the Victorian government announced its intention to raise entry standards to attract “high quality candidates” into the teaching profession, with a mandated minimum ATAR to begin from January 2018. 2019 data from the Victorian Tertiary

<sup>9</sup> Australia has one of the fastest population growth rates in the world and the fastest among OECD countries. See Hugo, G, ‘The Demographic Facts of Ageing in Australia,’ July 2014.

<sup>10</sup> “Students graduating from ITE declined five per cent, compared with a 40 per cent increase in completions across all fields of study from 2009 to 2019.” Review Discussion Paper, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Australia has one of the oldest teaching populations in the world, with over 37 per cent of Australian teachers aged 50 years or older, one of the highest proportions in the OECD. See ACER, *Australian teachers and the learning environment: An analysis of teacher response to TALIS 2013: Final Report (2014)*.

<sup>12</sup> There is a lack of accurate data on the number of teachers leaving the profession in Australia, explored in more detail below, but a typical, recent comment: “I am one of two people of 25 who I went through my degree with who still teaches. Everyone else is bailing, they don’t want to do it” (“Everyone’s bailing’: Australian teachers speak on stress and uncertainty of increasing casual contracts”, *The Guardian*, 4 July 2021).

Admissions Centre (VTAC) revealed ITE applications, offers and enrolments collapsed following the 2016 announcement:

<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>All applications</b>	11,056	7,963	5,908	5,274	<b>-52.3%</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> preference application</b>	5,010	3,381	2,705	2,299	<b>-54.1%</b>
<b>Offers</b>	4,123	2,673	1,874	1,441	<b>-65.0%</b>
<b>Enrolments</b>	2,831	1,781	1,385	1,044	<b>-63.1%</b>

Source: VTAC analysis presented to VVCC in July 2019

VTAC concluded that, “taking the pipeline effect into account, there will be increasingly fewer graduating teachers in the coming years, commencing now. These data paint a bleak picture for future teacher numbers”.

Professor Stephen Parker from KPMG and Mr Ian Hawke, founding Chief Executive Officer of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), agreed, writing in another context that,

“It is common for policy changes to have some unexpected perverse effects. It is less common for those effects to be the exact opposite of the intended ones. Even less often do we see a whole set of initiatives all appear to have the opposite effects. Yet this seems to be the situation with policy measures over the past decade designed to improve the quality and status of the secondary teaching profession. ... Across Australia, at a time when schooling systems are growing, particularly in the east-coast mainland states, graduation rates and commencing enrolments for secondary teachers are in decline and likely to worsen in the short term.”<sup>13</sup>

A minimum ATAR for entry into ITE deters all students, irrespective of whether they are considered “high quality” or not. It alienates rather than attracts students, as has been demonstrated in every Australian jurisdiction where this policy has been introduced.

Students from regional, disadvantaged, lower socio-economic status (SES) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds are actively excluded because there is a strong link between a student’s SES and their ATAR, particularly for ATARs above 70<sup>14</sup> (with low SES students often encompassing regional and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students). Yet all students are deterred by the idea of an academic “floor” that must be established to prevent standards falling any further. ITE candidates, irrespective of their background, are alienated by the suggestion that the teaching profession is increasingly populated by unintelligent or underperforming students that necessitates the need for a minimum ATAR.

A minimum ATAR as the sole criterion for ITE entry is ineffective (and antithetical to ACU’s mission of including disadvantaged students). It is interesting in this regard that the one east-coast mainland state that never introduced a minimum academic standard for ITE,

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Parker and Ian Hawke, “The drastic consequences of a looming teacher shortage,” *The Australian*, 30 October 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Norton, *Keep the caps off! Student access and choice in higher education*, Grattan Institute, Melbourne, (2013), pp. 11-12

Queensland, consistently enrolled a high proportion of ITE students with an ATAR above 70 compared to New South Wales and Victoria, which did.

### Proportion of ITE students with an ATAR above 70 in NSW, VIC & QLD 2014-19

	2014	2019
<b>NSW</b>	79%	64%
<b>VIC</b>	39%	63%
<b>QLD</b>	76%	81%

Source: Universities Australia data from Department of Education, Skills and Employment

In 2014, NSW had the highest proportion of ITE students with an ATAR above 70 but by 2019 that proportion had dropped significantly, despite the GTIL policy's stated aim to attract more "high quality" applicants. In 2014, Victoria had a low proportion which grew significantly by 2019 but was still below New South Wales's. Queensland, on the other hand, had a high proportion in 2014, which grew even further by 2019. One explanation for this trend is that Queensland never suggested there was something wrong with ITE that required a quality safeguard, which had the perverse yet predictable effect of undermining students' motivation to teach.

#### *Lacks a strong evidence base*

The Discussion Paper observes that undergraduate ITE students with an ATAR above 80 are significantly more likely to complete an ITE course within six years.<sup>15</sup> It is well known there is a strong correlation between university performance in general and students with ATARs above 80.<sup>16</sup> What is less well known is the university performance of students with ATARs below 80, and their later success as teachers. The answer to the first question is complex, while the answer to the second is unknown.

- ATAR correlation with completion rates

The Discussion Paper's profile of undergraduate and postgraduate students most and least likely to complete their ITE degree based on six-year completion data<sup>17</sup> is very similar to recent longitudinal research from ACU's Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education (ILSTE), which found an "ATAR plus" relationship, where it is not simply ATAR, but ATAR plus age plus entry pathway, that determines a candidate's likely completion of their ITE degree.<sup>18</sup> ILSTE's research implies that ATAR is a relevant input into considering an ITE cohort but should not be a driver for entry, because the "ATAR plus" model shows that while ATAR is relevant, it is not the only driver of success in ITE. ATAR may help identify the students needing support but is an overly blunt instrument to decide who should become a teacher.

The point here is that ATAR itself is not destiny when it comes to university success, which makes intuitive sense. In obtaining a rank order, the ATAR flattens out the inherently bell-curved shape of students' raw scores and, in so doing, exaggerates differences amongst

<sup>15</sup> Review Discussion Paper, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Gavin Moodie, 'FactCheck: does your entrance score strongly correlate with your success at university?' *The Conversation* (23 July 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Review Discussion Paper, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> ILSTE, *Quality of Initial Teacher Education Through Longitudinal Analysis of Linked Datasets. Study 1: Examining performance trajectories from admission to graduation*. Final Report, DESE, 01 June 2021.

students in the middle. There is often a greater gap in raw scores between two students who receive ATARs of 99.00 and 99.95 than between two students who receive ATARs of 55.00 and 70.00. Flattening the natural bell curve to create a percentile rank distorts the gap in academic achievement between these students in the middle with similar academic results, which is later revealed when they attend university.

The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) recommended ITE should focus on the output rather than the input, the teacher who graduates rather than their ATAR upon entry. TEMAG therefore strove for greater quality assurance over the end product of ITE because overemphasising ATAR presumes that an individual's capacity, ability and even knowledge are static and that a tertiary education provides little or no potential for development, and ignores the continued growth and maturity that occurs as an individual moves from their teens to their twenties. The research indicates there are other factors besides ATAR that determines success at university and beyond. Recognising this aligns with ACU's mission to afford equitable opportunities for all students and is relevant for this Review.

- ATAR correlation with teaching success

If the research presents a complex picture of who is most likely to complete an ITE degree, there is no research at all on the correlation between ATAR and later teaching success in the workforce. This is because the data to answer this question do not currently exist.

The Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) project coordinated by AITSL, and further research by ILSTE, will likely find answers to this question soon. But there is currently no adequate evidence base on which to rely on ATAR as a criterion for entry into ITE, much less for becoming a successful teacher.

In the absence of this evidence base, many academics in ITE suggest that numerous students who performed poorly in school end up becoming great teachers. In fact, the scant research on this topic found that the ratings of performance of pre-service teachers on placement were unrelated to their ATAR.<sup>19</sup>

- What is a “high quality” applicant?

The Review's stated aim is to build on the TEMAG reforms, which rejected a minimum ATAR. The Review also refers to AITSL's key capabilities associated with successful teaching, the first of which is “motivation to teach”.<sup>20</sup> Yet “high quality” can become a synonym for “high ATAR” when talking about ITE, even though conflating the two terms does not have a strong evidence base to support it, will undermine students' motivation to become teachers, and will lead to significant social problems, most notably a teacher shortage.<sup>21</sup>

### *Non-ATAR entry into ITE*

Most people who enter ITE do not do so based on their ATAR. Only 25% of all ITE undergraduate commencements and only 17% of all ITE commencements (including postgraduates) commenced ITE based on their ATAR.<sup>22</sup> Despite its negative effect on

---

<sup>19</sup> Wright, V. J. 'Is ATAR useful for predicting the success of Australian students in Initial Teacher Education?', *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, (2015), 40 (9).

<sup>20</sup> Review Discussion Paper, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> The Federal Education Minister made this conflation when he announced the Review's Discussion Paper; see, Alan Tudge, “Recruit, train teachers better for higher scores,” *The Australian*, 22 June 2021.

<sup>22</sup> AITSL, *Initial teacher education: Data report 2019*, December 2019.

candidates' perception of ITE, a minimum ATAR for entry into ITE would only have a very limited reach.

ACU recommends better selection of all ITE applicants, not just those who enter based on their ATAR. To that end, ACU recommends mandating the successful completion of the LANTITE as a pre-requisite for entry into ITE (which is a change of position for ACU), and strengthening psychometric testing, if it is to be used at all, so that it is more fit-for-purpose for ITE. Applying LANTITE and a more rigorous psychometric test to all ITE candidates, not just the minority who enter based on their ATAR, would be more likely to lift ITE completion rates.

**ACU recommendation 1:**

Resist the blanket imposition of a minimum ATAR for entry into ITE because it:

- a) will exacerbate the growing teacher shortage;
- b) does nothing to attract more high-achieving school leavers into teaching;
- c) disproportionately excludes candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- d) conveys a negative message to all students considering enrolling in ITE;
- e) disregards the capacity for student growth over the course of university study;
- f) lacks an evidence base to support it; and
- g) overlooks the reality that the majority of ITE students enter their courses through non-ATAR pathways, which should remain and be expanded.

### 3.2. What attracts high-quality candidates into teaching?

The Discussion Paper refers to a 2019 Grattan Institute survey 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.”<sup>23</sup>

ACU agrees with this finding, and notes the same Grattan survey also said the following:

“Raising the minimum ATAR to 80 for teacher education was shown to have small effects on attracting high achievers in our survey. But it is a cheap reform, and a way to send a signal that teaching is not just a fall-back career choice. However, there is a risk of teacher shortages in some areas or subjects unless higher ATAR requirements are accompanied by policies to encourage high achievers into teaching.”<sup>24</sup>

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.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Review Discussion Paper, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., and Nolan, J. *Attracting high achievers to teaching*. Grattan Institute. August 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Blaise Joseph and Glenn Fahey, “Teachers need more time and fewer classes, not more pay,” *Australian Financial Review*, 11 September 2019

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 high-quality candidates and keeping them in the profession.

The public often associates teaching with generous school holidays. However, research finds the main reason individuals reject teaching is the intense, and at time crushing, workload:

- A 2019 Monash University report found that teacher workload is an area of serious concern for teachers that is influencing their intention to leave the profession, and forms part of the reason people would not recommend teaching as a career. The survey found that three-quarters of teachers did not find their workload manageable.<sup>26</sup>
- A 2017 study in the United Kingdom found that, while pay levels and relative professional status are contributing factors, the primary driver for teachers to leave the profession is work intensity.<sup>27</sup>
- In 2017, the Director for Education and Skills at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) who oversees the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) said the challenge for Australian education is to make teaching intellectually more attractive and less labour intensive.<sup>28</sup>

Australia has an overcrowded, content-heavy curriculum, delivered by overworked teachers on modest salaries. They work more hours than the OECD average, and have significantly more face-to-face teaching hours:

Face-to-face teaching	Australia	Finland	Difference	%
<b>Primary</b>	880	677	+203	+23%
<b>Lower secondary</b>	820	592	+228	+28%
<b>Upper secondary</b>	820	551	+269	+33%

Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance 2020*, Figure D4.2.

The work pressure on Australian teachers is likely driven by Australian students having the highest compulsory instruction time requirement in the OECD. Australian students undertake 11,000 hours of compulsory instruction time over the course of their primary and lower secondary schooling, significantly higher than the OECD average of 7,628 hours and almost double some other countries.<sup>29</sup>

To answer the question of how to attract “high-quality” candidates into the profession, the Review must glance beyond ITE into the relatively low pay and status and intense workload of Australian teachers. For example, if a Singapore-style ITE system is wanted for Australia, then the Review should at least acknowledge that Singaporean teachers,

<sup>26</sup> Amanda Heffernan et al, *Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching in Australia*, Monash University, November 2019.

<sup>27</sup> U.K. House of Commons Education Committee, “Recruitment and retention of teachers,” 8 February 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Andreas Schleicher, “Lessons to be learned from the world’s education leaders,” *The Australian*, 27 September, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> OECD, *Education at a Glance, 2020*, Figure D1.1. “Teaching hours per year of teachers, by level of education (2019)”

- spend less time teaching,
- teach far fewer students in secondary school,
- spend more time in professional development,
- are promoted while staying a classroom teacher,<sup>30</sup> and,
- are more satisfied with their salary than their Australian counterparts.<sup>31</sup>

A person's attraction to a profession is largely shaped by the work conditions that pertain to that profession. However, improving the work conditions of a mass profession like teaching is hard, complex, and expensive.

*Why are so many new teachers leaving, and whose responsibility is it?*

A metonym for Australia not honestly addressing the working conditions that teachers face is the lack of data about the attrition rates of early career teachers. A 2013 literature review on early career teachers who leave the profession in their first five years found huge variability in Australian estimates, ranging from 8 to 50 per cent.<sup>32</sup> Casual teachers are not counted (despite the increasing casualisation of the teaching workforce), nor are the statistics meaningful for early career attrition, as they report total departures as a percentage of total teachers, rather than early career departures as a percentage of early-career teachers.<sup>33</sup> If the latter statistic was available on a nationally consistent basis, the attrition rate of Australia's early-career teachers would likely be in the order of 50 per cent.<sup>34</sup>

The loss of a career is painful for the individuals involved but is a colossal waste of national talent, especially when there is a strong likelihood that "greater proportions of talented teachers than less talented teachers leave teaching."<sup>35</sup> New teachers leaving teaching also propels a teacher workforce shortage by driving demand and reducing supply.

A common business saying is that it takes months to find a customer, seconds to lose one. Yet it takes years to produce a teacher, often months to lose them, and the assumption of care in the business aphorism is missing. Greater understanding is required as to why so many new teachers leave the profession defeated and disillusioned, in what appears to be a systemic failure of care.

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 ITE graduates. Greater insight is needed on the factors that impact teachers who are leaving, and where the responsibility lies for the numbers of new teachers left burnt out and disillusioned from their experience teaching.

<sup>30</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), *International Comparative Study: The Australian Curriculum and The Singapore Curriculum*, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> OECD, *Education at a Glance*, 2020, p. 398.

<sup>32</sup> Queensland College of Teachers, *Attrition of Recent Queensland Graduate Teachers*, November 2013

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, the resignation rates described in the NSW Department of Education's *Workforce profile of the NSW teaching profession 2015*, December 2016, p.12 and p.53

<sup>34</sup> See also Pallavi Singhal, "Why up to half of all Australian teachers are quitting within five years", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Queensland College of Teachers, *Attrition of Recent Queensland Graduate Teachers*, November 2013

**ACU recommendation 2:**

Recognise and acknowledge that improving the working conditions of teachers will make ITE more attractive to high quality candidates.

### 3.3. What can be done to attract more career-changers into teaching?

Two features of the current ITE system can be changed to encourage more mid- to late-career professionals transitioning into teaching, but the changes differ depending on whether the mature applicant is tertiary qualified, or not:

- i) Inadequate recognition of prior learning (RPL) for career changers without tertiary qualifications; and
- ii) Faster progression into the teaching workforce for career changers with tertiary qualifications.

#### *Inadequate recognition of RPL for career changers without tertiary qualifications*

The RPL process to assess life experience can be very resource intensive for a university to administer and is often inadequate. However, many mid- to late-career professionals with life experience but no formal qualifications can become very good teachers, for example,

- The lab technician who wants to teach chemistry, has experience and interest in science, but no science degree.
- The bank teller who wants to teach maths or commerce, has real practical skills and is intuitively numerate, but lacks discipline expertise.
- The technical officer in the Bureau of Meteorology who wants to teach geography but does not have the relevant undergraduate degree.
- The gym instructor who wants to teach Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) but lacks a tertiary degree.

For career changers without tertiary qualifications (such as in the examples above), academic ability and personal aptitude are complex questions to answer that cannot be properly assessed through an RPL process that must be systematised and applied in a consistent manner so that it is easy to process at the university admissions level.

ACU proposes that for career changers without tertiary qualifications, RPL only be used to gauge eligibility into a postgraduate pathway program, rather than as credit towards a formal ITE qualification. Most career changers wish to complete postgraduate rather than undergraduate study which, in the case of ITE, is a Master of Teaching (M Teach). Before they are allowed to enter the M Teach, these candidates' personal aptitude and academic ability must be carefully assessed through a Graduate Certificate, which may articulate into a M Teach.<sup>36</sup> Within these strictures, ACU recommends ITE entry open more widely for career changers who want to teach but have no formal qualifications.

---

<sup>36</sup> Another reason for RPL for entry rather than credit is that entry is an internal university decision whereas credit must be justified to TEQSA, with learning outcomes mapped against the credit provided.

Implementing this recommendation requires flexibility on the part of state accreditation authorities. ACU works with four teacher accreditation bodies – in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and the Australian Capital Territory – each with slightly different requirements for entry. For example, in NSW, admission to graduate entry secondary teaching programs requires:

- a) “First teaching area – Major” is determined by six units of undergraduate study, “with no more than two units at first year level and no fewer than two units at third year level.”
- b) “Additional teaching area/s – Minor” is determined by four units of undergraduate study, with no more than two units at first year level.<sup>37</sup>

Such preconditions cannot be met by a candidate with no undergraduate degree at all. Yet the examples of the lab technician, bank teller, technical officer, and gym instructor above indicate there are suitable candidates for teaching who may not meet state accreditation authority requirements but may make for a great teacher.

Two steps are needed before postgraduate ITE entry can open more widely for career changers without formal qualifications:

- i. An agreed process for determining equivalence between life experience and undergraduate learning; and,
- ii. A willingness of teacher accreditation authorities to be more flexible in recognising these non-conventional yet legitimate pathways into postgraduate ITE study.

**ACU recommendation 3:**

Encourage career changers with relevant life experience but no formal qualifications to enter ITE. But for these candidates, confine recognition of prior learning (RPL) to eligibility for entry into a pathway program and assess their academic skills and personal aptitude to teach as they progress through this program.

*Faster progression into the workforce for career changers with tertiary qualifications*

Applicants with strong discipline knowledge and relevant life and work experience are frustrated they must complete a further two years of study and incur the up-front costs of tuition and the opportunity costs of lost wages. Yet there is fundamental knowledge and skills these students must acquire, such as knowing how to translate the subject knowledge they hold into real-world classrooms via lesson planning, etc. The challenge is getting the balance right between recognising the skills these individuals already hold, and front-ending the content they need to be “classroom ready.”

ACU argues that all postgraduate applicants should enter ITE via the M Teach, but with the option to graduate and work with provisional registration at the end of one year via a Graduate Diploma, if they have the relevant depth of content knowledge. This is a middle road between abandoning the M Teach altogether and keeping the status quo. ACU accepts a Graduate Diploma could be an entry-level qualification that positions the student for provisional registration; however, as a stand-alone qualification, it should not qualify the student for full registration. All postgraduate students, whether they have received the

<sup>37</sup> NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), “Subject Content Knowledge Requirements (Abridged): Discipline Study Requirements for Admission to NSW Graduate Entry Programs”, p. 1.

Graduate Diploma or not, must still complete the M Teach to obtain full registration. This is partly to avoid a situation where students with less content depth end up being more qualified, i.e. those who are not eligible for the Graduate Diploma eventually obtain a Master degree, whereas those who are, do not.

**ACU recommendation 4:**

Allow postgraduate students with formal qualifications and relevant content depth eligibility to teach after one year on a provisional basis through a Graduate Diploma, as long as they subsequently obtain their Master of Teaching before proceeding to full registration.

*Teach for Australia*

ACU supports accelerated pathways into teaching, evident in its partnership with Teach for Australia (TFA), with whom ACU has partnered since 2018.

ACU's Master of Teaching (Secondary) (Professional Practice) takes two years for TFA Associates to complete, which is the same time as most other Masters degrees but is, in effect, a condensed program given the cohort is mostly working full-time as teachers.

TFA students known as "Associates" normally hold a 0.8 position as a teacher in a secondary school, with full salary, teaching in areas directly related to their previous work / studies. ACU's postgraduate degree was adjusted to best support an employment-based Teacher Education program to ensure seamless integration of the program of study with professional practice, and to recognise the pressures of work and study. Aspects of the revised program are:

- "Just in time" content. An ACU and TFA lead work together to create content that supports professional practice, while also meeting accreditation requirements.
- A network of support, including ACU Regional Leads, ACU Academic Mentors, TFA Teaching and Leadership Advisers and School Mentors.
- Regular, direct observation and assessment of classroom practice, as well as tracking progress through academic requirements.
- A culture of monitoring and evaluating the program, to ensure continual improvement.

Rethinking and redesigning the practical experience offered in schools, as occurs with TFA, is needed before ACU would pursue any shortening of ITE. From ACU's perspective, greater immersion in schools for a greater period of the candidature is far more important than reducing the length of candidature.

*Grants for career changers*

Mature career changers with strong degrees and successful careers can find the costs, both direct and indirect, too difficult to bear, especially if they have a family to support. In these circumstances, direct government support in the form of a bonded scholarship may make the difference between them transitioning to teaching, or not.

Bonded teaching scholarships were prevalent from the early 20th century until the late 1960s; students held scholarships and in return signed a bond to serve in government

schools, usually for three years, wherever required.<sup>38</sup> Even at the time there were strong criticisms of this scheme, including that

- Recipients left soon after their obligatory period of service; and,
- Poorer recipients were tempted by the financial benefits as a way to access university even though they may not be suited to the profession.<sup>39</sup>

The first concern remains although the second does not, yet recent bonded scholarships in Australia designed to attract medical graduates to regional areas show that they can work, operating on the principle that the more generous the award, the more secure the bond.<sup>40</sup>

ACU's proposal is for a bonded scholarship to incentivise high performing career changers to choose to study teaching. The requirement would be that the applicant:

- a) have a high quality undergraduate degree;
- b) have relevant work experience in an area of need;
- c) work as a teacher in an Australian school for at least two years.

In return, the successful applicant would receive:

- a) all or part of their ITE related HECS-HELP debt written off after a period in the teaching workforce;
- b) a stipend to support themselves and / or their family during their ITE candidature (tiered depending on family circumstance).

The awards would be prestigious and contribute to the policy goal of improving the status, standing and desirability of the teaching profession.

#### **ACU recommendation 5:**

Introduce a bonded scholarship to incentivise high performing career changers to choose to study teaching.

### 3.4. Psychometric testing

On principle, ACU does not support the mandatory imposition of psychometric or personality testing, which offer a narrow means of assessing the presence or absence of personal attributes necessary for teaching. Such testing is likely to reject applicants who may be entirely suited and capable to being good teachers and is antithetical to the TEMAG recommendation for wholistic and sophisticated approaches to determining the presence or absence of qualities related to good teaching. However, if such testing is to be used, ACU argues it should be improved dramatically, be thoroughly validated, and made fit-for-purpose.

It is true that psychometric tests offer a standardised way of comparing candidates, free of personal bias. However, test anxiety and unfamiliarity can create a “false negative,” whereby

<sup>38</sup> Alan Barcan, “The Struggle Over Teacher Training,” 1995

<sup>39</sup> Report of the Committee on Australian Universities [Murray report], 1957.

<sup>40</sup> See the Federal Department of Health’s Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) Scheme, aiming to “provide more Australian trained doctors where there are workforce shortages, particularly in rural and remote Australia.”

a person's results do not reflect their true potential. Moreover, some applicants may study for, or even be coached on, these standardised tests to provide the "right" answers. Finally, some experts have argued that the tests themselves may disadvantage certain applicants due to cultural differences (although the evidence on this is somewhat mixed).<sup>41</sup>

For these reasons, ACU advises the Review to be wary of psychometric testing and continues to recommend looking at the breadth of a candidate's real-world experiences in combination with their academic results, as TEMAG recommended. However, if the Review is wedded to the idea of psychometric tests, then the tests currently in use must be thoroughly validated, and improved significantly, because currently they are not robust, are not sufficiently targeted to ITE to be considered fit for purpose and do not sufficiently discriminate to exclude unsuitable candidates.

Current ITE suitability tests do not adequately identify suitability between candidates. For example, in 2018, 96 per cent of applicants who completed Queensland's Non-Academic Requirement for Teacher Education (NARTE) passed this online, non-invigilated task.<sup>42</sup> A study of 950 students over three years of NARTE intakes (2018-2020) showed that,

- two thirds of participants thought the NARTE either easy or very easy to complete,
- one third received outside help to complete it (usually from their parents), and
- sixty per cent of school leavers received outside help but there was not a strong correlation between how difficult a participant found the NARTE and whether they received outside help.<sup>43</sup> This suggests one of two possibilities: either so many applicants passed that any correlation was meaningless, or significant numbers of school leavers automatically involved their parents when completing the NARTE.

Even though most participants thought NARTE was personally valuable in clarifying their motivation to teach, the extremely high success rate (96%) and relatively high rates of outside help (34%) are concerning.

Any improved test should be more robust, and common across the country and mandated nationally. Such an approach would provide a more consistent and reliable benchmark than the current system which differs between states and is often subjective, e.g. written statements from applicants.

#### **ACU recommendation 6:**

Be wary of psychometric assessments of teacher suitability as they are inherently inadequate at capturing the complexity of personal suitability. However, if they are to be used, any such tools should be more robust, reliable and capable of better discriminating between candidates who are likely to become effective teachers and those who are not, while ensuring it does not further disadvantage students from non-traditional backgrounds. Like LANTITE, any such tool should be nationally consistent in scope and content.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Adam Blanch, 'The pros and cons of psychometric testing' (21 March 2014); Cecil R. Reynolds and Lisa A. Suzuki, 'Bias in Psychological Assessment: An Empirical Review and Recommendations,' in Irving B. Weiner (Editor), *Handbook of Psychology, Volume 10, Assessment Psychology, 2nd Edition*. Wiley (2012).

<sup>42</sup> Pendergast, D., Reynolds, J., Anderson, T., Dole, S., Blayney, W., Morrell, P., Dalley-Trim, L., Murison, C. (2021). *NARTE: Perceptions of the NARTE for selection into initial teacher education in Queensland, 2018-2020*. Queensland Council of Deans of Education, Brisbane. (this information is in Appendix B of the report).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

## 4. ITE completions and entry into a teaching career

### 4.1. Improve selection

ACU recommends mandated, targeted, and better screening into ITE to improve selection and consequent completion rates. Low completion rates do appear to be an issue for ITE. The Discussion Paper finds 52 per cent of students completed their ITE qualification after six years, which roughly matches ILSTE's finding that 46 per cent of undergraduate ITE students complete in five years and 55 per cent of postgraduate ITE students complete in three years.<sup>44</sup> The Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) found a 55 per cent completion rate over six years for the broad field of education compared to 62 per cent for all fields.<sup>45</sup>

Mandating the successful completion of the LANTITE as a pre-requisite for entry and strengthening psychometric testing, if it is to be used at all, so that it is more fit-for-purpose, will likely improve completion rates.

ACU has previously made compelling arguments against LANTITE before entry, primarily to support disadvantaged students on the basis that these students should be afforded the opportunity of a university education before having to meet the LANTITE standards. However, bridging courses, offered prior to entry into ITE, can help these disadvantaged students build on their literacy and numeracy skills to pass the LANTITE.

More pertinently, the LANTITE is a quality-assurance mechanism that does nothing to make students better teachers and, on that basis alone, it should not be part of an ITE degree. Further, 90 per cent of ITE students pass the LANTITE while 10 per cent fail. Enormous time and effort are expended helping these 10 per cent of students pass the LANTITE, and this is resented by the majority of students who do not need this help.

Recent longitudinal research from ACU's ILSTE has also found that the timing and grouping of assessments are consequential for ITE outcomes, with many ITE capstone assessments – the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA), the final professional experience, and LANTITE – “back loaded” towards the end of the degree, creating sometimes insurmountable barriers for struggling students.<sup>46</sup> This is another reason for positioning one of those assessments, the LANTITE, prior to entry.

In December 2020, all Education Ministers agreed that from 2023, potential candidates for ITE will have the opportunity to sit the LANTITE prior to commencing the ITE degree. However, a stronger and more consistent position is warranted. If LANTITE is not nationally mandated as a prerequisite for ITE entry, it will become a marketing tool where the option of not having to sit it prior to entry becomes attractive to some students. ACU supports mandating the LANTITE as a pre-requisite for entry to ITE.

#### **ACU recommendation 7:**

Mandate the LANTITE as a national prerequisite for entry into ITE, with students who fail to meet this requirement given the option of entry into bridging courses to bolster their literacy and/or numeracy capability.

<sup>44</sup> ILSTE, *Quality of Initial Teacher Education Through Longitudinal Analysis of Linked Datasets. Study 1: Examining performance trajectories from admission to graduation*. Final Report, DESE, 01 June 2021.

<sup>45</sup> DESE, *Completion Rates of Higher Education Students – Cohort Analysis, 2005-2019*, table 2.

<sup>46</sup> ILSTE, *Quality of Initial Teacher Education Through Longitudinal Analysis of Linked Datasets. Study 1: Examining performance trajectories from admission to graduation*. Final Report, DESE, 01 June 2021.

#### 4.2. Improve career options

There is an argument that ITE students should be exposed to classroom practice very early in their candidature and that this “birth by fire” will increase completion rates by allowing some students to self-identify their lack of classroom suitability. This process will, in the most practical way possible, screen for suitability; however, there are practical difficulties in organising such early exposure, not least of which are registration rules in some jurisdictions (e.g. NSW) that require some applicants to complete a full year of discipline studies before they complete any pedagogical studies or practical experience. Further, to the extent that some candidates do not self-identify even with early exposure, it is vital that in-school assessors are encouraged to identify those candidates, at any stage of their studies no matter how advanced, who are not suitable for the classroom.

One way of doing this, and still increase completion rates, is to provide alternate career paths for those who enter ITE but find they lack classroom suitability. An alternative degree for students who do well in education theory but not in practice means the applicant could not be registered as a teacher, but could still work in one of many other capacities within the education sector, such as in education policy or administration, career counselling, or student advising. Completion of a Bachelor of Education Studies has the added advantage of increasing the ITE degree experience of those involved in different settings within the education sector.

**ACU recommendation 8:**

Support alternate career paths for ITE students that do not lead to teacher registration, which will likely increase completion rates for those who enter ITE but find they lack classroom suitability.

## 5. Matching supply with workforce needs

ACU emphasises there is a growing mismatch between teacher supply and demand that extends into the general teaching workforce rather than being confined to specific subjects or geographical areas. Increasing rates of retirement from an ageing teacher workforce, early career attrition rates that are far too high, and a rapidly growing school-aged population mean that demand is outstripping supply. “Education and training” is the fourth fastest growing industry in Australia and within that broad category (which includes tertiary education), school employment is growing faster because of “a larger school aged population.”<sup>47</sup> Factors constraining supply are falling ITE completion rates and waning student interest in teaching.

State governments have miscalculated teacher supply and demand. New South Wales and Victoria both imposed entry restrictions just as their school-aged populations were booming and did not recognise that the record school infrastructure they announced in their state budgets required new teachers to front them. Even Queensland, which never imposed entry restrictions, is struggling to employ enough teachers.

The Discussion Paper asks, “*should something be done to match the supply of teachers from ITE providers with the demands of jurisdictions and sectors? What would this look like?*” Government mandated caps is what it would look like, and like most command-and-control interventions into the market, it would fail. It is entirely inappropriate to restrict the supply of teachers to a jurisdiction’s estimate of demand, especially when those estimates have been so wrong in the past.

ACU supports more and better publicly available information on teaching workforce needs. There is a clear role for government in providing this information. Transparent workforce data provided by government in other fields, such as *Health Workforce Australia* (decommissioned in 2014), have been very valuable. Teacher workforce projections have never been strongly pursued in Australia,<sup>48</sup> but the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), created by all Australian education ministers in December 2020, could fulfil this function. However, any misguided attempt to control the market through a cap on ITE places should be rejected.

### **ACU recommendation 9:**

Avoid the temptation to try to centrally plan, allocate or restrict ITE places to meet expected workforce demand, a practice that has resulted in significant miscalculations in the past. Instead, governments should collate and publicly release additional, more robust information on teacher supply and demand to aid decision making.

<sup>47</sup> National Skills Commission, *Industry Employment Outlook: Five years to November 2025*.

<sup>48</sup> This is despite the worthy Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publication, *Schools Australia*, driven by individuals within the ABS where, after their retirement, the publication became rapidly attenuated. In any case, *Schools Australia* never explored workforce projections, instead sticking to obtaining nationally consistent statistics on students, staff and schools.

## 6. Ensuring graduate teachers are ‘classroom ready’

### 6.1. Professional experience

The Discussion Paper asks, “*Do the current professional experience arrangements support the preparation of ITE students for the classroom and school environment? How could these be improved?*”

Australia must address the long-standing and continuing problem of the traditional divide between the academic program of preparation and the school-based practical program. ACU believes far more student immersion in classrooms is warranted for a much longer period of candidature to make ITE students more “classroom ready.” The question is how to embed professional experience to a much deeper level within ITE.

From ACU’s perspective, it is highly beneficial for pre-service teachers to be immersed in classrooms for a much longer period of their candidature. ACU currently offers at its ACT Canberra campus an embedded, school based ITE model for the Master of Teaching (Secondary) students, in their first year of study. This school-based immersion involves each preservice teacher spending a significant portion (though not all) of their candidature at a school, where they work under supervision, and where university academics visit the school to deliver the theory component of the degree. This integrated, in-situ model involves:

- ACU delivering classes to relatively small numbers of preservice teachers at the school.
- Building the capacity of teacher educators through free ACT Teacher Quality Institute accredited mentoring professional development (PD) programs to ensure high-quality preservice teacher placement.

The model allows a greater immersion in the school environment and strengthens the relationship between theory and practice between the school and the university. Yet there are significant costs with this embedded model, such as:

- Universities are delivering instruction to a relatively small group of preservice teachers on a school site, smaller than would attend an equivalent class on a university campus, which raises staff costs for universities.
- Universities offer free PD to the supervising teachers.
- Host schools also incur costs due to the additional and generous time teachers give to mentoring preservice teachers, partly off-set by the work the preservice teacher performs and the opportunity to identify promising candidates for future employment, and the per-diem pay supervising teachers receive for their work.

Broadening the embedded model would benefit ITE students by increasing their practical experience. It is precisely because of these benefits that ACU incurs the additional costs involved, yet if conducted on a larger scale, a more sustainable model would be required.

A pre-condition for any wider roll-out of an embedded ITE model is incentivising more teachers to mentor preservice teachers. This could occur by:

- Counting the mentoring of preservice teachers towards PD accreditation hours required by teacher registration authorities if teachers study and investigate best

practice supervision, and possibly trial and evaluate new models of supervision, as part of a postgraduate degree.

- Encourage teachers to complete postgraduate degrees where the focus of study may be better mentoring of preservice teachers.
- Recognise that all teachers, and not just recent graduates, benefit from completing postgraduate degrees, and continual learning and research.

Another consideration of the embedded model is meeting the TEQSA requirements for teachers / lecturers of pre-service teachers to have an AQF qualification that is one level higher than the level they are teaching (e.g., AQF 7 is a bachelor's degree and lecturers need at least an AQF 8 Graduate Certificate / Diploma or AQF 9 Masters to meet the requirements). In other words, a broadening of professional experience for pre-service teachers requires more existing teachers possessing postgraduate qualifications.

The most important learner in any classroom is the teacher and instilling a culture of professional learning around supervision would be positive. This could include research on what constitutes best practice supervision and experimenting with methods of supervision as part of a postgraduate coursework project.

**ACU recommendation 10:**

Incentivise existing teachers to supervise preservice teachers by counting their supervision towards professional development accreditation hours where reflection, research, and scrutiny of supervision occurs as part of a postgraduate degree.

**ACU recommendation 11:**

Encourage all teachers, not just recent graduates, to complete postgraduate degrees where the supervision of preservice teachers may be a subject of study.

The Discussion Paper asks, "*How can professional experience be delivered in a more efficient way for school systems and higher education providers?*"

One way is to institutionalise an immersive model in the latter stages of an ITE degree by creating paid internships for final year teaching students, where the fourth year of an undergraduate Bachelor of Education, or second year of a postgraduate Master of Teaching Program, is conducted entirely within a school.

- University academics would continue to visit the school to deliver theory, and work in consultation with supervising teachers on assessment and progress, and Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) funding would remain with the university. This is a resource intensive mode for universities despite students being off site, because of the diseconomies of scale from university staff visiting smaller groups of students.
- A greater use of final year teaching students working most of their final year as paid interns would allow more time for teachers to focus on their core teaching and learning activities. For example, an "Associate Teacher" could:

- assist teachers to plan and modify targeted interventions and personalise teaching and learning activities for students.
- help with other programs and activities (e.g. homework clubs, co-curricular, learning and data management systems, etc).

Schools will likely resist an internship model because they resent being responsible for under-developed teachers who may have behavioural management problems in class and who need significant support and mentoring. As discussed further below, this is a difficult problem with no easy answers. However, the benefits are great, and the problems are not insurmountable. ACU recommends greater incentives for existing teachers to mentor pre-service teachers, and clearer articulation of roles and responsibilities to achieve this goal.

#### **ACU recommendation 12:**

Introduce paid internships for final year ITE students. It will be important to clearly articulate the respective responsibilities of schools, higher education providers, and regulatory authorities in support of these students.

### 6.2. Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs)

ACU's ILSTE, which developed the Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA), will make their own submission to this Review but briefly, ACU observes the following:

- **The introduction of TPAs has the potential for the most significant reform of ITE, with outcomes of the TEMAG review yet to be realised.** TPAs are considered by many to be the “jewel in the crown” of TEMAG’s reforms because of the positive change they have wrought over a wide area, including greater awareness within ITE of how evidence can be used to improve student outcomes.
- **Strong TPAs work better than average TPAs.** The GTPA is used by approximately half of Australia’s universities. With this coverage the instrument has developed an extensive evidence base. The GTPA is a valuable resource in Australia that can be mined through longitudinal studies to establish graduate readiness for entering the workforce and tracking the application of the standard over time.
- **Fewer TPAs make for stronger TPAs: all TPAs should be held to the same high quality performance standards and evidence requirements.** TPAs are difficult to design, validate and implement across contexts. Calibration training and cross-institutional moderation of the scoring outcomes are essential to avoid a two-tiered teacher education system in Australia. Yet we have not addressed the critical issue of how to quality assure different TPAs. Australia should have confidence that, prior to graduation, a teacher has met the same high-performance expectations as the teacher in the next classroom, even though they have graduated from different HEIs.
- **A small number of strong TPAs will improve the prestige of TPAs.** Rationalising and consolidating TPAs will familiarise schools and their personnel to the tasks required and better support preservice teachers in placement contexts. Brand recognition will be higher when there are fewer TPAs on offer, especially when those are publicly recognised to be reliable and effective.

- **A comparable standard is needed across TPAs.** There is currently no published methodology for achieving a comparable standard across TPAs. This threatens the quality assurance of graduates that is the main benefit TPAs provide. There is a need for a national methodology for benchmarking TPAs.
- **ITE providers can better use TPA data for continual improvement.** TPAs can generate data useful for informing authentic curriculum review and program renewal. TPAs can be more than summative assessment; their formative potential in improving teacher education programs has been underutilised to date.

#### **ACU recommendation 13:**

Develop the TPA's prestige as a capstone assessment by:

- a) consolidating the number of TPAs to ensure they are of the same high quality;
- b) creating an agreed methodology, coordinated by AITSL, for the quality assurance of the consolidated TPAs that remain to ensure comparability and reliability of results; and,
- c) supporting teacher educators to use TPA data more effectively for curriculum review and program renewal.

### 6.3. ITE course satisfaction and evidence-based practice

#### *Course satisfaction*

ACU is the top public university in Australia for employer satisfaction with its graduates.<sup>49</sup> However, across the board, ITE graduates want more professional experience during their candidature, and more training in behaviour management. School principals rate classroom management as “the number one challenge for new teachers,” with only a third of principals believing new teachers are “well prepared for managing classrooms.”<sup>50</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that classroom management is a key skill in teaching that is missed by newly graduated teachers.<sup>51</sup>

New teachers want more training in challenging behaviours because schools are part of the disciplinary apparatus of society. The shock that new teachers often feel when they start teaching – which is never felt by a beginning nurse, doctor, engineer, lawyer, journalist, or accountant, but perhaps by a new police officer, prison warder, psychiatrist or mental health nurse – is that they must judiciously exercise discipline, and sometimes impose punishment, over others. Some people are better at doing this than others, which is partly why so many teachers leave the profession early in their career; however, this is not to say that good teachers are born, not made. All beginning teachers, no matter their natural affinity for teaching, are challenged, at least initially, by the discipline and control aspects of the job.

<sup>49</sup> Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT), *2020 Employer Satisfaction Survey*, Figure 7.

<sup>50</sup> Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., and Griffiths, K. (2017). *Engaging students: creating classrooms that improve learning*. Grattan Institute

<sup>51</sup> A typical comment: "I think preparation for how to deal with really challenging students was theory-based but it would have been nice to see really exaggerated examples of challenging behaviour ... At university I don't think I had enough training in that area." (Malcolm Brown and Kim Arlington, "Teaching becomes a master class," *SMH*, June 18, 2012). A 2010 review of Queensland ITE courses found that many universities allocated only a few hours to behaviour management in the entire course (qtd in Goss, P et al, see above, footnote 50).

Better skills in behaviour management through more real-world experience in classrooms, or via simulated scenarios, would improve ITE course satisfaction because it would give students what they want. This is not to say ITE content is not already about classroom management but is so indirectly, such as introducing students to the paradigm of personalised learning and identifying and adapting to different learning styles. Catering to the diverse needs in any given classroom is what ITE often teaches, for if one student is not engaged in learning for any reason, it can lead to disruption. The Pareto principle, where roughly 80 per cent of consequences flow from 20 per cent of the causes, operates very strongly in schools, where the “vital few” play an outsized role in class disruption. While the needs of every individual inform much ITE content, behaviour management in real-world settings could be made more prominent and explicit. ACU offers this as an insight rather than a formal recommendation.

### *Evidence-based practice*

Another issue raised by the Discussion Paper is evidence-based ITE curriculum and whether future teachers are being equipped with evidence-based practices. ACU does not make a formal recommendation except to say that the TPA, and in particular ACU’s GTPA, is inculcating evidence-based practices amongst pre-service teachers and more broadly in ITE program development.

#### 6.4. Putting IT into ITE

Developments in information technology (IT) necessitate changes in ITE delivery, to the benefit of ITE students. While online education is not new, what is new is the improved quality of the online experience and the fact that the audience is cultured to that approach. Future technological developments, such as virtual reality, will make these online offerings even more compelling.

It is inevitable that technology will form a bigger part of the learning experience that occurs in both schools and universities, where IT is used not simply for the passive online distribution of education content but rather the development of an active community of connected students. This has particular relevance for ITE, where an awareness and experience of different pedagogical practices is key to improvement.

One of the major barriers to enhancing teacher effectiveness is the narrow range of pedagogical practices that teachers observe throughout their career, as pre-service, beginning, and even as experienced teachers. This does not occur in other countries. In Shanghai, for example, all teachers have mentors, while new teachers have several mentors who observe and give feedback on their classes.<sup>52</sup> In many high performing East Asian countries, teachers regularly observe each other’s classes, providing instant feedback to improve each student’s learning.<sup>53</sup> Yet registered teachers in Australia can spend their entire career never having observed, or having their own teaching observed, by another teacher. ITE can be in the vanguard of opening teaching practice to observation and making this a natural part of professional life, and IT has an important role to play in this cultural change.

For example, students require sufficient opportunities to practice pedagogies in simulated conditions before and after they take up placements in schools, including better and deeper training in behaviour management. All ITE students must build a repertoire of good teaching practices, including students who may be placed in schools with teachers who are not

---

<sup>52</sup> Jensen, B. et al., *Catching up: learning from the best school systems in East Asia*. Grattan Institute. (2012).

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*.

necessarily capable of modelling expert practices. Greater use of IT, including simulated classroom laboratories, can equip students with a bank of teaching practices and the knowledge of when best to use them (e.g., direct instruction, enquiry methods, etc). Strong modelling of quality teaching can be facilitated through better use of IT.

## 7. The role of teachers and school leaders in supporting the next generation.

### 7.1. Practitioners working with ITE

The Discussion Paper says that the most obvious way school leaders and teachers engage in ITE programs is through their participation in the professional experience undertaken by ITE students (p. 21). ACU agrees, and argues this role can be expanded by:

- counting teachers' supervision of preservice teachers towards professional development accreditation hours if reflection, research, and scrutiny of supervision occurs as part of a postgraduate degree (**ACU recommendation 10**) and,
- encouraging the completion of more postgraduate degrees where the supervision of preservice teachers is a subject of study (**ACU recommendation 11**).

The Discussion Paper notes that under the Accreditation Standards, teachers who have achieved “Highly Accomplished” or “Lead Teacher” (HALT) status, who make up less than one percent of the teaching workforce, do not have a specific role in supporting ITE students. ACU agrees this is an oversight that can be rectified by modifying the Standards, but argues a wider impact lies in using incentives more broadly to motivate more teachers to supervise preservice teachers.

School leaders and teachers can play a bigger role in ITE as staff members. In April 2021, Minister Tudge said, “I would also love to see a bigger role for the best teachers, principals and schools in training the next generation of teachers – just as we see in professions such as medicine.”<sup>54</sup> ACU employs a large number of sessional staff who have recently worked in schools, often as leading teachers or principals, who add greatly to ACU’s education units. However, ACU cannot employ more because the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) finds problematic a too high ratio of sessional staff to full time staff (ACU is currently in the “amber” section). However, sessional employment is often needed because the salary of principals or lead teachers would drop significantly if they were offered an on-going or contract position. The co-location of expert teachers in universities is often talked about in theory but rarely implemented in practice. Changing the regulatory environment to make it easier would be a good first step.

#### **ACU recommendation 14:**

Modify TEQSA requirements to make it easier for universities to employ more teachers and principals on a sessional basis than currently. This modification would better integrate ITE and classroom / school practice, leading to more practically educated students who are more “classroom ready”.

Another way to better integrate schools and teachers into ITE, which ACU does not formally recommend but notes with approval, is to involve them in a professional experience report moderation process. Moderation of TPA results needs to be improved, but moderation of the final professional experience report does not occur at all. A standard setting process for

<sup>54</sup> Tudge, Alan, “Lifting Australia’s school performance: Lessons from abroad,” 27 April 2021.

these reports would improve their validity and reliability, and also involve teachers in the construction of an ITE assessment where their professional judgement is valued.

## 7.2. ITE working with practitioners

### *Professional development*

The Discussion Paper asks, “*How can ITE providers best support teachers in their ongoing professional learning?*” and “*Should ITE providers continue to support the development of newly graduated teachers? What would this look like?*”

ACU does not make a recommendation on either question because:

- ACU is of the view that PD of this type works best when it arises organically in the context of a pre-existing, strong partnership with the teacher’s school and when it plays to a university’s strengths (e.g. ACU is expert at teaching literacy).
- The answer to the second question is complex.

Universities are resourced to support preservice teachers; however, beyond employment, support is provided by their employers and accreditation agencies. This is not to say universities do not want to provide more support, nor is it to say beginning teachers do not seek it; in fact, many beginning teachers yearn for it. Working alone, often overwhelmed, many beginning teachers long for connection with their alma mater, which unfortunately, universities are not resourced to provide.

A reconfiguration of the final years of ITE, where preservice teachers work as part-time paid interns in schools (**ACU recommendation 12**), could form part of a wider “settlement” between universities, employers, and accrediting authorities where ITE support could extend beyond employment at the school gate. However, there are serious barriers to the intern model that require careful negotiation, including the following:

- Teacher accreditation authorities have quality control concerns about releasing unprepared teachers on students, just as health accreditation authorities would be concerned about an under-qualified nurse or doctor incorrectly treating patients.
- Schools are concerned about carrying the burden of a neophyte teacher who needs extensive support, where monitoring their progress disproportionately falls on the school.
- Universities are concerned ITE students will not be mentored at all, and instead be used as a form of cheap labour.

Greater use of incentives, and better articulation of roles and responsibilities, are tools that will help the Review scale the formidable barriers that separate schools and universities, to improve classroom teaching and, ultimately, student results. The conflicting concerns of stakeholders are not insurmountable, but it is only through their resolution that ITE providers can reconceptualise the support they provide to newly graduated teachers.

### *Teacher workloads*

The Discussion Paper asks, “*How could teacher and school leader workloads be made more manageable to allow them to provide more support to pre-service and newly graduated teachers?*”

Teacher workload is the question candidates often ask, and fail to answer, when considering a career as a teacher. At the beginning of this submission, ACU emphasised that teacher workload intensity shapes the ITE decision in the first place. Now, at the end of this submission, ACU suggests ways to relieve this workload, even if only in a partial way.

**ACU recommendation 12** suggests teachers can be freed from the excessive burden of non-core activities through the delegation of non-core tasks to final year ITE students working part of their final year as paid interns. This would allow teachers to spend more of their time doing what they do best: teach. Interns could assist teachers to plan and modify targeted interventions and personalise teaching and learning activities for students and could take classes and make assessments under supervision. The benefits to teachers would be great, as it would to ITE students through a more gradual transition into the profession.

**ACU recommendation 15:**

Free teachers from the excessive burden of non-core activities by delegating these activities to final year teaching students working part of their final year as paid interns.

## Attachment 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 eight campuses across four states and one territory. Campuses are located in North Sydney, Strathfield, Blacktown, Canberra, Melbourne, Ballarat, Brisbane and Adelaide. ACU also has a campus in Rome, Italy.

ACU is the largest Catholic university in the English-speaking world. Last year, in 2020, ACU had over 33,000 students and 2,300 staff.<sup>55</sup>

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.<sup>56</sup>

ACU has built its reputation in the areas of Health and Education, educating the largest number of undergraduate nursing and teaching students in Australia<sup>57</sup> and serving a significant workforce need in these areas. Under the demand driven system, ACU sought to focus and build on these strengths.

Since 2014, ACU has had 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.<sup>58</sup>

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. In health sciences, ACU did not receive a single score below 5 while in education, ACU is one of only four universities in Australia to achieve a top score of 5 in the 4-digit fields of research. ACU's rapidly growing reputation in research is in line with its steady expansion.

---

<sup>55</sup> ACU Annual Report 2020.

<sup>56</sup> QILT (August 2020), *2020 Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal (GOS-L)*

<sup>57</sup> Department of Education and Training, *2019 Higher Education Data Collection – Students, Special Courses*. Section 8, table 8.3

<sup>58</sup> Australian Catholic University, *ACU Research*, [acu.edu.au/research](http://acu.edu.au/research)