



RESPONSE TO *GREAT
TEACHING, INSPIRED
LEARNING* - DISCUSSION
PAPER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Australian Catholic University (ACU) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the New South Wales (NSW) Government's discussion paper *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning*.

ACU, and its predecessor colleges, have been producing teaching graduates in NSW since 1857. ACU is a publicly funded Catholic university open to people of all faiths and no faith. Our teaching graduates work in Catholic, independent and government schools throughout Australia and around the world. They are well regarded and highly employable.

ACU shares the NSW Government's belief that NSW students deserve the best possible teachers in every classroom, in every school, and to this end is committed to ensuring that our teachers are the best in the world. We are constantly examining ways to refine our courses so that our students are well prepared for learning in the 21st century. As a leading university producing teaching graduates, ACU's submission will necessarily focus on the role of teacher education.

There are three key points that need to be made about producing great teachers for NSW schools.

The first point ACU would make is that policy makers need to focus their attention on the output of universities rather than the inputs. Too much of the debate about teacher quality focuses on ATARs (inputs) rather than teaching graduates (outputs). While ACU attracts a significant number of high ATAR students to its Faculty of Education, it does not believe that a student's ATAR is necessarily a determinant of their success at university or as a teacher. A focus on minimum ATARs as a measure of quality undervalues the role universities play in adding value to the student's knowledge and performance as a teacher.

The second point is that the demand for teaching graduates to meet workforce needs across the sectors is difficult to quantify. Recruitment, retirement and resignation of full-time staff reflect only some of the teaching workforce demand measures. There is a significant need for a flexible and available workforce, estimated to be as much as 20% of the current full-time equivalent staff numbers, across the year and locations.

The third point is that teacher education operates on a continuum. Universities have an important role to play in preparing teachers for the classroom. However, teacher education does not stop when teachers graduate from university. ACU believes in a tripartite approach to the continuum of professional learning with universities, education sectors (i.e. government, Catholic and independent) and schools sharing responsibility and ownership.

Universities are best placed to enable the pre-service teacher to develop the necessary discipline and pedagogical-discipline knowledge, and theoretical framework that will support them in their ongoing professional learning.

Schools are best placed to demonstrate the implementation of ideas and strategies introduced at university, support pre-service teachers in their teaching and provide feedback and mentoring in learning to teach.

Teachers in schools are best placed to assess whether the pre-service teacher has the appropriate personal, interpersonal and communication skills to be an effective teacher. It is at the school,

through practicum (professional experience)¹ that the pre-service teacher can learn how different schools operate to address the needs of, and interact with, the local community.

Universities cannot prepare teachers for all contexts. On-the-job training is provided by employers in other professions. Education is no different. Employers should provide a coherent and systemic induction and mentoring process which forms part of the framework for ongoing professional learning such as the NSW Institute of Teachers processes.

ACU supports the NSW Government's view that if we are to attract the very best teachers, we must find ways to make teaching a more rewarding career. ACU also welcomes the opportunity to be more heavily involved in producing a higher quality professional development experience for teachers.

This submission addresses a number of issues raised in the discussion paper, and provides background information and context around ACU's role in teacher education. The submission is set out as follows:

1. ACU and Teacher Education
2. Entry into Teacher Education Courses
3. How Does the University Ensure it Maintains its Standards
4. The Purpose and Content of University-based Teacher Education Courses
5. Practical Teaching at ACU
6. International Comparisons
7. Developing and Maintaining Professional Practice
8. Strengthening School Leadership
9. Response to Specific Ideas Raised in the Paper

ACU makes the following specific recommendations to address issues raised in the paper:

1. Teacher Education policy should focus on the quality of teaching graduates at the point of exit from university (output) rather than on student ATARs at the point of entry into university (input). Policy should recognise that a student's ATAR is not necessarily a determinant of their success at university or as a teacher.
2. Universities should maintain the flexibility to decide which students they enrol in their courses.
3. Governments should facilitate system wide support for school-based teacher educators to collaborate with university-based teacher educators to enrich pre-service teachers' experiences in schools while undertaking their practicum. Mentoring and support for pre-service teachers could be recognised as evidence towards achievement of higher levels of accreditation within the National Professional Standards framework.
4. The school/university partnership should be deregulated so that universities and schools can devise new ways for pre-service teachers to undertake practicum so that integrated learning can benefit the profession and students in schools.
5. There should be a continued commitment to National Professional Standards and national accreditation processes in teacher education and an extension of these where relevant, such as the development of a national rubric for professional experience assessment and

¹ 'Practicum' is a term used to represent a range of in-school professional experiences including internships.

authentic assessment of Graduate Professional Standards. This will enhance confidence around the quality and rigour of initial teacher education.

6. Different pathways into teacher education courses should be supported including undergraduate and masters courses.
7. There should be large-scale longitudinal studies into the effectiveness of different types of pre-service teacher education programs which would include the assessment of the effectiveness of the different partners (systems, schools and universities) in initial teacher education.

1 ACU AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Australian Catholic University (ACU) has an extensive history of providing teacher education in Australia. For more than 100 years ACU, and its predecessor colleges, have educated teachers, producing high quality graduates to teach students in Australia and around the world.

ACU was formally constituted as a university in 1991 through the amalgamation of a number of Catholic colleges of advanced education across multiple jurisdictions. ACU predecessor colleges include the Catholic College of Education (NSW), Signadou College of Education (ACT), Institute of Catholic Education (VIC), and McAuley College (QLD). In NSW specifically, ACU identifies its Australian roots back to the teacher education provided by the Good Samaritan Sisters in 1857, closely followed by the Dominican Sisters Training College, Maitland, in 1867, and the Sisters of St Joseph, North Sydney, in 1884. Saint Mary MacKillop was a co-founder of the Sisters of St Joseph, North Sydney, and ACU shares a special connection to her educational vision and values, which includes respecting the dignity of all people, teaching by example, service to the disadvantaged and capacity building in communities; and these are values we seek to instil in our teaching students.

ACU draws upon 2000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition, which summons the University as a matter of mission, to seek to produce graduates that are “highly competent in their chosen fields, ethical in their behaviour, with a developed critical habit of mind, an appreciation of the sacred in life and a commitment to serving the common good.”²

Today, ACU is one of the world’s largest English speaking Catholic universities with more than 23,000 students, including over 8,600 students and staff within its Faculty of Education across Australia. ACU operates as a multi-jurisdictional publicly funded Australian university with six campuses across three states and one territory. ACU campuses are located in North Sydney (NSW), Strathfield (NSW), Canberra (ACT), Fitzroy (Victoria), Ballarat (Victoria), and Brisbane (QLD).

ACU’s education graduates are highly regarded in the sector and achieve a significantly high rate of employment after graduation across the Catholic, public and independent school sectors.

ACU’s students appreciate that the ACU experience is different. ACU’s *Commencing Student Survey 2012* found that the top three reasons for education students choosing to come to ACU were:

1. The excellent reputation of its Education courses;
2. ACU offers the Catholic/Independent strands to prepare teachers for Catholic/Independent schools; and
3. ACU has smaller class sizes and a community feel.

ACU graduates are committed to high standards of professional excellence and are also socially responsible, highly employable and committed to active and responsive learning. An Education qualification from ACU gives access to a dynamic profession across the Catholic, government and independent school sectors, and an opportunity to guide the development of young people – from early childhood through to secondary school and beyond.

At ACU we are committed to building a specialised and well regarded research environment. The Faculty of Education’s two dedicated research centres – The Mathematics Teaching and Learning Research Centre (MTLRC) and the Centre for Creative and Authentic Leadership (CCAL) – continue to provide a solid foundation for intellectual debate, dialogue and discovery in discipline-specific research areas. The recently established Senior Proven Research Team (SPRT) consists of a team of researchers who conduct high level theorisation of core contemporary issues in early childhood

² *Australian Catholic University Mission.*

education and builds on this strength to create additional capacity building and research in the area of early childhood education.

ACU's belief in practice-based research means that we share our research knowledge with students, parents and practitioners in professional learning settings, to impact current educational practices. The Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) ranking of 'at world standard,' which ACU received in the area of Curriculum and Pedagogy, underlines our commitment to creating a robust research culture at ACU.

ACU staff are well regarded in their field and are passionate about education. They strive to provide better learning and teaching experiences for each student, and to nurture educators who can analyse, critique, question and develop existing educational theories and practices.

All ACU initial teacher education courses are fully accredited through the NSW Institute of Teachers' process. ACU's Faculty of Education is highly regarded with ACU's teaching courses providing unique and challenging opportunities for students to assist and equip them with the skills to be effective teachers in the contemporary classroom and to take on the important role of guiding the development of young people.

ACU prepares teachers to teach in schools catering for students of all ages. Currently there are 1,498 undergraduate students studying early childhood courses, 2,381 undergraduate students studying primary education, and 1,134 undergraduate students studying secondary education, at ACU.³ An additional 335 students are undertaking primary education courses and 528 students are undertaking secondary education courses at the graduate entry/postgraduate pre-service course level.⁴ In NSW specifically, at the undergraduate level at ACU, 446 students are undertaking early childhood courses, 831 students are undertaking primary education courses, and 778 students are undertaking secondary education courses; while at the postgraduate level, 213 students are undertaking primary education courses, and 283 students are undertaking secondary education courses.

ACU's role in educating teachers for the Catholic, Independent and Government School Sectors

ACU graduates teach in government, independent and Catholic schools, as well as school systems in other countries. As a Catholic university, ACU has a special relationship with the Catholic school sector. After state and territory governments, the Catholic Church is the largest provider of school education in Australia. Around the country, there are approximately 1,700 Catholic schools, employing 78,000 staff and enrolling 704,000 students (representing 20 per cent of the nation's total

³ Figures relate to 2012 ACU enrolment numbers: undergraduate early childhood courses being undertaken are the Associate Degree Early Childhood Education, Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary) and Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood); undergraduate primary education courses are the Bachelor of Education (Primary), Bachelor of Education (Primary) [4th Year Upgrade], Bachelor of Education (Primary – Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies); undergraduate secondary education courses are the Bachelor of Education (Secondary)[4th Year Upgrade], Bachelor of Education (Secondary-Indigenous Studies); Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts (Humanities); Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts (Mathematics); Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts (Technology); Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts).

⁴ Figures relate to 2012 ACU enrolment numbers: Postgraduate primary education courses being undertaken are the Bachelor of Education (Primary)[Graduate Entry], Master of Teaching (Primary)/Graduate Certificate Religious Education; and postgraduate secondary education courses are the Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary), Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary)/Graduate Certificate in Religious Education, Master of Teaching (Secondary), and the Master of Teaching (Secondary)/Graduate Certificate in Religious Education.

enrolment). In 2010 there were 583 Catholic schools in NSW, with 15,625 teachers educating 241,016 students.⁵

In 2012, 52 per cent of ACU's NSW teaching students undertook their practicum placements in Catholic schools.

ACU's Faculty of Education holds a strong commitment to its Catholic identity and mission, which is the 'cornerstone' of all its programs. In its courses, the Faculty provides students with the opportunity to engage in a wide range of unique experiences in order to build their professional identity and make a smooth transition from student to teacher. Some of these activities have included staff and student involvement in community engagement programs such as the University Community Hub, Mt Druitt, where ACU students take on roles as tutors and mentors to students at Loyola Senior High School, to provide high schools students with valuable learning support; and International experience programs in Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and East Timor where students are able to travel to remote and overseas locations to engage with local students and develop their practical teaching skills. To illustrate, ACU's international experience program in Vanuatu has provided ACU education students with the opportunity to live and teach in a diverse context, one very different to that of Australian schools, working within Vanuatu's national curriculum in planning lesson programs. This requires students to learn to adapt their lesson content and teaching strategies. ACU students, with support from ACU academic staff, have been able to observe local primary school teachers working in their classrooms, work collaboratively with these local teachers to design, plan and teach lessons in designated classrooms, create and innovate existing resources, play sport and games with students after school, and participate in community events. In addition, ACU academic staff have run workshops and conducted demonstrations to facilitate the professional development of local teachers. The collaborative nature of this program has been important in building understanding, empathy and leadership skills in ACU students.

ACU's Faculty of Education maintains ongoing partnerships with local and international stakeholders to provide capacity building teaching programs.

Innovations within the Catholic sector which could be scaled up to meet the needs of the Government school system

ACU's collaborations with the Catholic Education Offices (CEOs) allow us to be innovative in testing new ways of delivering teacher education and practical teaching. Some of these innovations might be scaled up and used across the education system as a whole.

Some of our innovations include:

Special Education Immersion Program – a partnership program with the Catholic Education Office (CEO) Sydney where a group of ACU 4th year students in the Bachelor of Education (Primary) participate in an extended immersion program in the area of special learning needs in selected schools within the Sydney diocese. Students spend two hours, four days a week (paid), working with children with special needs in the selected schools. The project supports the professional formation of pre-service teachers in the area of Special and Inclusive Education.

Using National Test Results to Improve Understanding in Mathematics – a joint initiative between ACU, the CEO Sydney and the University of Sydney, this project looks at Numeracy

⁵ Catholic Education Commission New South Wales, *2010 Annual Report*, at http://www.cecnew.catholic.edu.au/db_uploads/2010_Annual_Report.pdf

in years 7, 8 and 9 in NSW, and ways to implement sound pedagogical practices to address areas for development identified in NAPLAN tests in years 7 and 9. The initiative has focused on identifying teaching strategies collaboratively developed by the researchers and teachers to support student learning. The research conducted has involved identifying teaching strategies through interviewing teachers, lesson observations, analysing subsequent NAPLAN results and other forms of assessment.

'Partnerships in Learning (PiL): Enhancing Teacher Quality' - the project aims to enhance pre-service teacher education by providing a deeper understanding of rich and diverse school communities and the importance of school-family-community partnerships in maximising student learning outcomes. The project extends the time pre-service teachers spend in one school community over a period of two years. Thirteen pre-service teachers have been allocated to seven parish primary school communities where they are engaged in teaching and community practicum, supported by collaborative partnerships between the school community, ACU and CEOM. It is anticipated that the outcomes from this initiative will help inform future models of school university partnerships and pre-service teacher education.

Cross-Sector Innovations include:

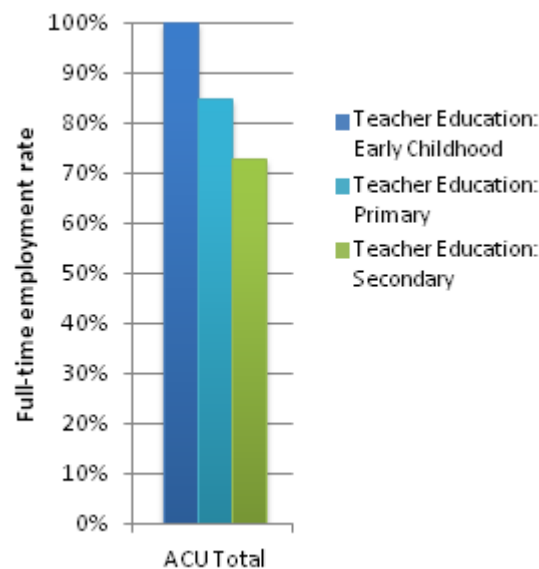
MyScience Program - the program engages pre-service secondary science teachers as Scientist Mentors as part of their teacher education programs at ACU. As Scientist Mentors, pre-service teachers are challenged to move from a directive teaching model to an enquiry learning model. They introduce younger learners to the skills of investigating scientifically, measuring, critical analysis and drawing evidence based conclusions; and support students to gain insight into the importance of posing questions, considering possibilities and testing hypotheses. Pre-service teachers are also assisted by Year 9 and 10 students - known as *MySTics* (MyScience Trainees in Classrooms) - to provide scientific guidance to younger students. Preliminary research undertaken indicates that through the program, pre-service teachers have increased confidence, interest and competence in effectively engaging and teaching primary school students in the Science and Technology key learning area, and that students' experience increased success in conducting and presenting valid and reliable scientific investigations.

Employability of ACU Graduates

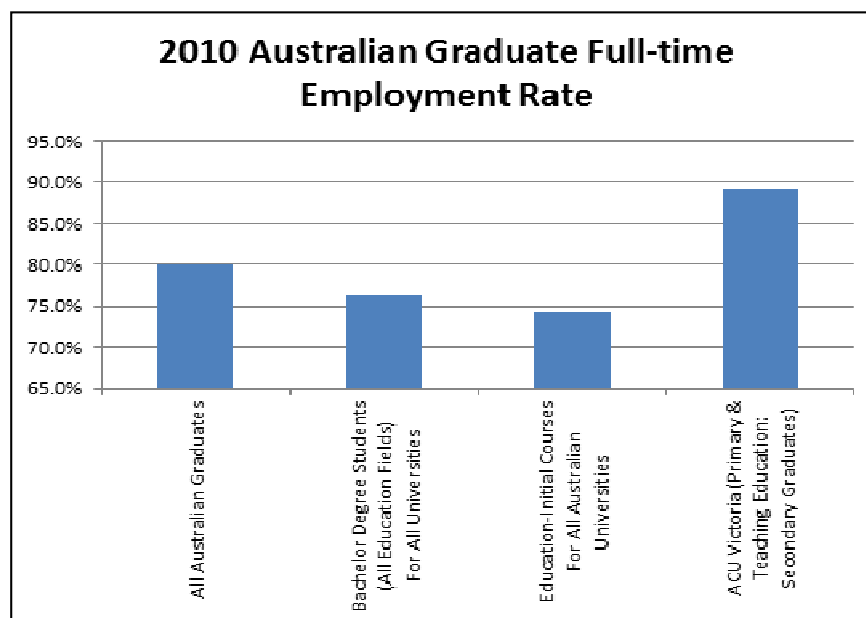
ACU teaching graduates achieve a notably high rate of employment after graduation and are highly regarded in the sector. In most states, most graduates progress to permanent employment after a period of time on a contract. Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) data for 2011 on students who completed their studies in 2010 and were available for full-time work, indicated that nationally over 85 per cent of ACU graduates were in full-time employment and a further 13 per cent were working part-time.

Australian Catholic University 2010 Graduates - Initial Teacher Education Courses⁶

2010 Graduates - FT Employment Rate



In 2011 the full-time employment rate for graduates across all Australian higher education courses was 80 per cent.⁷ The national full-time employment rate for bachelor degree graduates across all fields of education was 76.3 per cent. In relation to Education initial courses specifically, the national employment rate was 74.3 per cent. Comparatively, at ACU, the overall full-time employment rate (all jurisdictions) for Teacher Education: Early Childhood, Teacher Education: Primary, and Teacher Education: Secondary graduates (all courses) was 92 per cent. These figures indicate the comparatively high rates of employability of ACU teaching graduates.



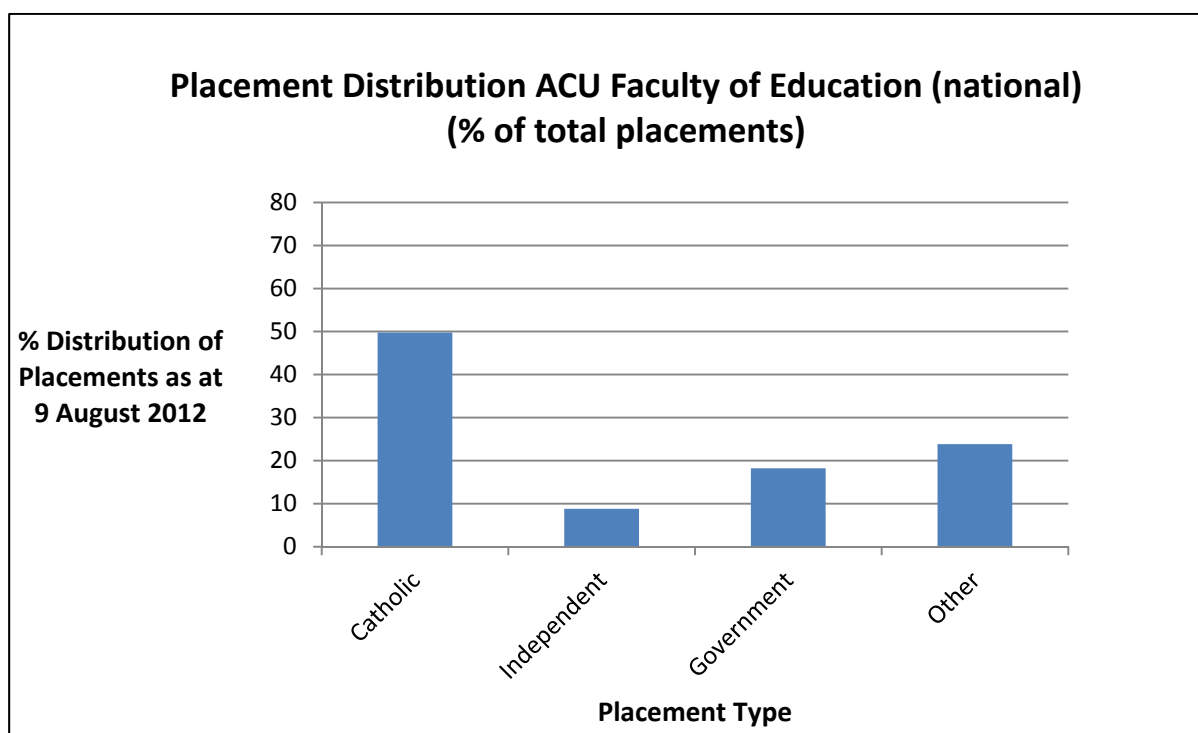
⁶ Data generated by Office of Planning and Strategic Management (OPSM), Australian Catholic University.

⁷ Graduate Careers Australia, *Graduate Destinations 2011 – a Report on the Work and Study Outcomes of Recent Higher Education Graduates* (2011); Graduates who completed all course requirements at the end of 2010.

Practicum Placements

ACU has strong relationships with schools across all sectors. There is a significant demand from schools in the sector to have ACU students undertake their teaching placement with them.

With respect to the current cohort of ACU teaching students, 7,295 placements were given to ACU students across Australia this year, including 2,958 placements in NSW. Of the ACU students who undertook (or are undertaking) practicum placements in NSW in 2012, 52 per cent are in Catholic schools, 20 per cent are in government schools, 23 per cent are in 'other' placements (this includes students in Early Childhood courses with placements in birth to 5 year environments, and community engagement placements), and 5 per cent are in independent schools.



Overview of the Sector

The *Good Universities Guide 2012* identifies 43 providers of teacher education courses in Australia. Within this group, ACU enrolls the second highest number of undergraduate teaching students (when our campuses are aggregated across Australia). In NSW, ACU currently has 2,055 undergraduate students undertaking early childhood, primary and secondary education courses.⁸ Other higher education institutions providing teacher education courses are listed below with the NSW institutions in bold.

| Institution | Total number of undergraduate education students as per <i>Good Universities Guide 2013</i> |
|--|---|
| ACPE (Australian College of Physical Education) | 578 |
| Australian Catholic University (ACU) | 4396 |

⁸ Australian Catholic University 2012 enrolment figures.

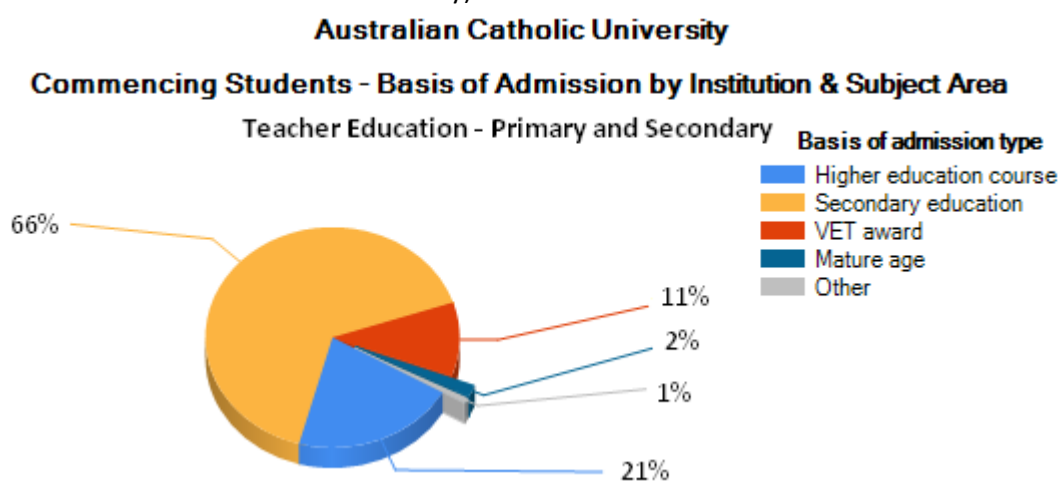
| | |
|--|-------------|
| Adelaide University | 376 |
| Australia National University | |
| Avondale College | 580 |
| University of Ballarat | 1355 |
| Bond University | |
| University of Canberra | 1173 |
| Charles Darwin University | 858 |
| Christian Heritage College | 256 |
| Central Queensland University | 1023 |
| Charles Sturt University | 4714 |
| Curtin University | 1133 |
| Deakin University | 3125 |
| Edith Cowan University | 3245 |
| Flinders University | 1583 |
| Griffith University | 2797 |
| James Cook University | 1420 |
| La Trobe University | 1351 |
| Macquarie University | 2678 |
| Melbourne Institute of Technology | |
| Monash University | 1753 |
| Murdoch University | 1498 |
| University of Newcastle | 3918 |
| North Melbourne Institute of TAFE | |
| University of Notre Dame, Australia | 1947 |
| Open Universities Australia | |
| Queensland University | 1011 |
| Queensland University of Technology | 2855 |
| RMIT | 956 |
| Southern Cross University | 1570 |
| University of the Sunshine Coast | 720 |
| The University of Sydney | 1914 |
| Tabor College | 184 |
| University of Tasmania | 1891 |
| University of New England | 2717 |
| University of South Australia | 2611 |
| University of New South Wales | 876 |
| University of Southern Queensland | 2754 |
| University of Technology, Sydney | 1058 |
| University of Western Sydney | 517 |
| Victoria University | 2227 |
| University of Wollongong | 1287 |

2 ENTRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION COURSES

The discussion paper raises the issue of current selection processes and whether NSW has the correct entry requirements for initial teacher education courses to attract the best and brightest into teaching.

ACU strongly believes that universities are best placed to determine which students are most suited to undertake their programs. It is imperative that universities retain the flexibility to devise and implement their own entry requirements for teacher education courses in order to produce high quality teaching graduates. This flexibility is also imperative as a matter of upholding university independence, the significance of which is discussed further below.

At ACU, we currently administer a range of selection methods to screen and select the best teaching candidates. Students are selected for ACU's undergraduate teaching courses from a number of pathways (about 40 per cent come from non-school pathways which includes mature entry students and students who have studied at university).



The entry requirement for students entering graduate pre-service courses (Master of Teaching) is based on Grade Point Average (GPA) from a successfully completed degree. For secondary teacher education there are also requirements imposed by the discipline which the student wishes to teach.

Undergraduate admission pathways include:

- **TAFE articulated agreements**, whereby students are awarded credit for prior study.
- **Associate degree programs** for Indigenous and Early Childhood students as a pathway for the degree program.
- **Early Achievers Program** – students receive an early offer into university based on the contributions they have made to their community.

The discussion paper identifies that while ATAR scores are very high in some teacher education institutions and have remained steady in others, some institutions admit a much larger proportion of their cohorts with ATAR scores lower than 60, with some as low as 40.

At ACU, a significant number of students – more than 50 per cent – gain admission to the undergraduate pre-service initial teacher education programs via an ATAR. In NSW, the median ATAR for students admitted to Initial Teacher Education courses at ACU is 72. In addition those seeking to undertake undergraduate primary education programs in NSW need to have attained Band 4 in two unit Mathematics and English, and there is a requirement of two unit English for secondary undergraduate programs. Those who do not meet these requirements are required to

complete additional study during their undergraduate degree. The new national accreditation standards require universities to guarantee minimum standards of literacy and numeracy on graduation.

2.1 Minimum ATARs

ACU notes the public debate around entry requirements for teacher education courses, and particularly the speculation around the correlation between ATARs and the quality of teaching graduates produced. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Greg Craven, recently gave a National Press Club Address where he outlined the shortcomings of ATARs and outlined the basis of an alternative selection regime. Professor Craven's speech appears as an Annexure to this submission.

More broadly, a few points need to be made about the role and relevance of ATARs to the debate about teacher education.

An ATAR is not a score. It does not measure knowledge, skills, aptitude or intellect. An ATAR is merely a rank representing the number of students a person performs better than in any given year in their collection of final subject assessments. An ATAR of 66 does not mean a student achieved 66/100 but rather it means that they were ranked in the top 34 per cent of students in Australia who completed their secondary schooling in a given year. But an ATAR does not measure this in any pure way. A scaling system operates so that an ATAR does not purely measure an individual student's performance in subjects they have taken, rather, other factors like the degree of difficulty of the subject chosen and the performance of the student's school overall are taken into account in determining a final ATAR rank. An ATAR also does not necessarily indicate a student's strengths in subjects of relevance to particular areas of teaching; for example, science, history, drama or music.

An ATAR also does not take into account human factors which might affect a person's capacity in high school, university and beyond. It does not measure passion, commitment, communication skills, compassion, enthusiasm, ethics or social disadvantage to name a few attributes which could help or hinder a student or a teacher succeeding in the wider world. The discussion paper defines great teachers as those who:

- Know the content of the subjects they teach and have a deep understanding of how learning happens.
- Have a rich repertoire of teaching strategies and know when to use specific strategies to optimise student learning.
- Work in highly collaborative ways, reflect on their practices and learn from others.
- Are always looking at ways they can use new data and research to become even better teachers.
- Are passionate about the subjects they teach, and use this passion to inspire a thirst for knowledge and love of learning in their students.

These characteristics of a great teacher are not readily identified through an ATAR. Furthermore, our experience is that once in university, high and low ATAR students perform similarly; and in many instances lower ATAR students perform as well, if not better than, students who entered on higher ATARs.⁹

⁹ For example see Willis, S., *Monash University: A High Quality/High Access University that Successfully Marries Excellence and Equity* (2011); James, R., Bexley, E., and Shearer, M., *Improving Selection for Tertiary Education Places in Victoria* (2009).

When ATARs are applied to university courses they merely measure supply and demand. If a university wants to increase its ATAR number it simply reduces places. Conversely if a university wants to offer more places to students in a course, its ATAR will probably reduce. However there is a practice in all universities of admitting students below the published ATAR through bonus point schemes. Bonus point schemes can be offered for many reasons. Common reasons might include compassionate grounds, assessment of ability or to address disadvantage. So a published ATAR will never give an accurate presentation of the real minimum rank to satisfy admission requirements.

Insofar as teaching is concerned, lower ATARs for teaching than say, law or medicine, primarily reflects the fact that teaching is not a highly paid career and that many teachers will reach their maximum earning capacity after fewer than ten years in the profession. In addition the number of teachers required to serve the needs of the nation is much larger than the number of doctors, hence more places are offered for teaching than medicine at university.

The focus on students at entry level presupposes that there is little 'value add' in completing a teacher education degree. Students who may enter with an ATAR score considered to be lower than that of 'high achievers' may perform extremely well in their tertiary studies and develop into effective, 'high achieving' classroom teachers and leaders. Conversely students who enter with a higher ATAR do not always succeed in a university learning environment which places more emphasis on independent learning.

ACU strongly refutes any blanket assumptions that the admission of students on lower ATARs or via alternative entry pathways results in the production of poorer quality teaching graduates. Such an assumption also effectively overlooks and undermines the core role of universities in 'value-adding' by equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills to become effective teachers - which is at the heart of higher education. Universities have a role to play in improving literacy and numeracy where shortfalls may exist. The point that we would make is that it is not how a student enters the university but how he or she leaves the university that is important.

Of course some students with a high ATAR do choose teaching and succeed at university but there are simply not enough students with a high ATAR to fill the demand for teachers. There is an expectation that Australian schools will face a large influx of students over the next eight years. The Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations forecasts an additional 670,000 school student enrolments over the next eight years.¹⁰ Therefore, the focus should be on maximising opportunities to support and enrol capable students, and turning them into high quality teachers. The limitations and impact of enforcing minimum ATARs is well recognised by the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE). Professor Brenda Cherednichenko, President, ACDE, notes that ATARs also reflect social advantage and parental education, and that it is very difficult to predict ability to be a teacher based simply on an ATAR result.¹¹ Professor Sue Willis, former President of the ACDE, flags that teacher shortages in 'hard to staff' areas are likely to ensue from the introduction of minimum entry requirements.¹²

One of the goals of the Australian higher education system is to increase participation and access for students who do not appear in the upper ranges of ranked final year secondary school results. It is

¹⁰ Ferrari, J, 'Schools to chalk up massive growth,' *The Australian* (23 August 2012).

¹¹ Trouson, A, 'Uni bid to lift bar for teaching,' *The Australian*, 27 October 2012, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/uni-bid-to-lift-bar-for-teaching/story-e6frgcjx-1226504241172>.

¹² 'Raising minimum entry scores could worsen teacher shortages', *Oz Teacher Forum*, Retrieved 22 August, 2012, http://ozteacher.com.au/html/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=34:raising-minimum-entry-scores-could-worsen-teacher-shortages&catid=1:news&Itemid=69

therefore important to assess capacity rather than ranking.¹³ American studies have shown that when students with a low university entry score are provided with an appropriately supportive transitional program and environment, retention rates and academic performance can be comparable with those of the mainstream student body.¹⁴ In Australia, efforts to ease and support students into the social milieu of academic study and into the discourse of academic writing facilitate student retention and success.¹⁵

The successes of the Step Up Into Teaching (SUIT) program developed by ACU in collaboration with two Catholic Education Offices in Sydney is a useful example of how reducing rather than increasing ATAR reliance can produce better performing university students. SUIT targets students who might otherwise not consider undertaking higher education, including those from low SES backgrounds. The program follows students in their final year of secondary school into their first year of higher education. SUIT aims to 'increase the university aspirations of students from low socio-economic groups' and specifically encourages them to pursue teacher education degrees.¹⁶ School students undertake two modules, 'Contexts for Learning and Development' and 'Introduction to ICT'. Classes are conducted both at a local school and at the university campus. The modules develop students' skills and knowledge in ICT and broaden their knowledge of developmental psychology in the context of teaching and learning. Students who successfully complete the program may be eligible for bonus points, scholarships and entry via the ACU Early Achievers' program. The success of SUIT students is significant. Data collected to compare the results of SUIT students with the first year university cohort revealed that the proportion of SUIT students who achieved High Distinction, Distinction or Credit results was noticeably higher than the University average.¹⁷

2.2 Should a Masters Degree or Higher be a Prerequisite to Teaching?

The discussion paper identifies that high performing education systems set minimum university entrance levels for education degrees, and reflects on measures adopted in high performing systems; including the requirement, in Finland, that all classroom teachers must have undertaken a masters degree in teaching.

It would be simplistic to conclude that the solution to teacher quality is to insist that all teachers attain a higher level of academic qualification. As elaborated further in this submission, the minimum requirements set in other high performing education systems must be understood within their particular contexts, and their effectiveness is best evaluated having regard to the overarching education system and policies in place in the relevant country. In the case of Finland, the minimum masters degree requirement operates within a matrix of complementary policies relating to lifelong learning and human capital investment. To conclude that the Finnish education system is better just because teachers have a masters degree would be misleading and inaccurate. The Finnish system is discussed in further detail later in this submission.

¹³ Palmer, N., Bexley, E., & James, R., 2007, *Selection and Participation in Higher Education: University selection in support of student success and diversity of participation*, Prepared for the Group of 8. Retrieved 22 August 2012.

http://www.go8.edu.au/_documents/go8-policy-analysis/2011/selection_and_participation_in_higher_education.pdf

¹⁴ (Levy, S. & Murray, J., (2006). 'Broadening educational access and participation: The successes of a regional equity and access programs'. *The International Journal of Learning*, vol.12, Issue 7).

¹⁵ Cited in Lynch, B., & Werth, S., 2007, 'Students with low entry scores succeed at university', *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, Vol. 3., No. 3, pp. 14.-22. Retrieved 22 August 2012.

http://eprints.usq.edu.au/3696/2/Lynch_Werth_IJPL_2007_PV.pdf

¹⁶ Tanti, M, and Labone, E, 'Step Up Into Teaching: Increasing the engagement and academic self-efficacy of school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds' *The Journal of Catholic School Studies* 83 (2011), at 66.

¹⁷ Tanti, M, and Labone, E, 'Step Up Into Teaching: Increasing the engagement and academic self-efficacy of school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds' *The Journal of Catholic School Studies* 83 (2011), at 71.

In NSW, while ACU supports existing teachers undertaking in-service masters, the economic reality is that such a course of action is unlikely unless there is government funding for postgraduate teaching places. As the Commonwealth currently caps the number of entry-to-profession (pre-service education) postgraduate places it will support, if State governments want more teachers to undertake masters degrees they may need to offer them financial support.

A 2010 survey of primary and secondary teachers in Australian schools revealed that the most common entry-level qualification for teachers in Australia is a bachelor degree in Education. The 2010 survey also identified that 7.1 per cent of teachers in primary schools and 11.1 per cent of teachers in secondary schools held a masters degree in Education; 0.6 per cent of teachers across both primary and secondary schools held a doctoral degree in Education. A further 5.6 per cent of teachers held masters degrees and 1 per cent of teachers held doctoral degrees in fields other than Education.¹⁸

2.3 University Independence

ACU believes that the best way to encourage innovation and excellence and maintain the independence of universities is to continue to allow individual institutions the flexibility to admit students to its courses under systems and criteria that the individual institution determines. Some institutions may have an ATAR+ system which may include interviews, aptitude tests, portfolios of work or other matters. Any entry system must be adequately resourced, transparent and be able to deal with the volume of students likely to apply.

Rather than over emphasising selection and entry requirements the emphasis should be on ensuring graduates meet the desired graduate professional entry standards by the conclusion of the course. ACU supports collaborative approaches recommended by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership and the NSW Institute of Teachers which proposes that universities and the teaching profession collaborate to develop a clear articulation of what it means to achieve the national professional standards. As in other professions, principals, as employers, can view a graduate's academic transcript to see how well they have performed. In addition, graduate teachers can present a report on their professional experiences and a portfolio of their work which the principal can assess in addition to their transcript. Principals therefore, are provided with quite a lot of information in order to assess prospective teachers.

2.4 Encouraging More Top Students to Become Teachers

The discussion paper reports that in NSW, education was the least popular course for students with ATAR scores of 90 or above in 2012. At ACU, many of our teaching students have achieved ATARs of 90+. However, more broadly, there are a number of factors which may be contributing to why more top students may not be choosing teaching as a career.

Career Choice: Today career choices, particularly for women, are much wider than in previous generations and consequently other areas are often seen as being more attractive than teaching. The challenges of teaching in the modern school environment, with rising incidents of student violence and serious misbehaviour, may also be serving as a disincentive to choose a career in teaching.¹⁹

¹⁸ McKenzie, P, Rowley, G, et al, *Staff in Australia's Schools 2010: Main Report on the Survey* (2011)

¹⁹ For example see Domjen, B, 'Schools won't dob in kids,' *Sunday Telegraph* (4 November 2012).

Salary, Reward and Progression: Teachers generally reach the top of their potential earning scale within ten years of commencing teaching. Consequently, there is little ability to reward high performing teachers and this acts as a disincentive for many to undertake teaching or remain in the profession. If the NSW Government wants to attract teaching students with the maximum range of options available to them, it must pay its teachers more and reward teaching excellence with financial performance bonuses. Beyond salary, it is often hard to reward good teachers by fast tracking their career progression where teachers can demonstrate achievement against professional standards. Similarly teachers are not rewarded for undertaking further postgraduate study, nor are there sufficient alternative career promotion pathways such as master teacher, school leadership, curriculum leader/expert which can be used as a way of recognising performance.

Professional Development and Status of the Profession: Governments and schools need to consider complementary measures such as ways of promoting the profession as a career choice, addressing teacher workloads, providing better quality mentoring and induction programs for new teachers with the support of master teachers to address the high attrition rate of early career teachers.²⁰

Overall, in an Australian context, ensuring that more top students become teachers and supporting the retention of high quality teachers in the profession requires:

- Greater focus on pay, conditions, promotion and progression so that ‘high achieving’ teachers feel valued and liberated to teach rather than overworked, underpaid and overwhelmed by bureaucracy and industrial issues;
- Recognition of the importance of different pathways of entry into teacher education and ensuring that these pathways are maintained and continue to be desirable and effective. This involves recognition that ‘high achievers’ are not necessarily those who have obtained high ATARs, but are those who possess the capacity and desire to learn and be educated as effective teachers;
- Greater support for a culture of continuing professional learning where credentialed learning has an important place and is financially rewarded;
- More attention needs to be given at the point of graduation, more so than at the point of entry into university. Since professional standards for graduate teachers have been developed in NSW, teacher educators have been able to use the elements and standards to judge teacher quality and determine entry into the profession.

2.5 Encouraging More Diversity in Our Teachers

The discussion paper seeks comment on how we can encourage more diversity in our teachers, for instance, how to encourage more Indigenous Australians and Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds into the teaching profession.

²⁰ See the following for a discussion of the growing international trend for high attrition rates for early career teachers: *Mass Exodus of Teachers* (NPD); *Teacher Beat: Teacher turnover affects all students’ achievement, study indicates*; *The High Cost of Teacher Turnover (National Commission of Teaching and America’s Future, 2007)*; *Eight Questions on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: What does the research say?* (Education Commission and States, 2005); Dr Phillip Riley from Monash University is conducting a five-year study into the attrition rate of early career teachers. His research suggests that 40-50% of new teachers leave the profession within five years.

At ACU we are committed to facilitating and supporting the development of a diverse range of teachers, to teach in a diverse range of schools, across a diverse range of communities in NSW. As an example, ACU's 'Away From Base' Indigenous Teacher Education Programs specifically support and prepare our Indigenous students to teach in their communities. Through these mixed mode programs, ACU Indigenous students undertaking the Bachelor of Education (Primary) (Indigenous Studies) or the Associate Degree in Indigenous Studies are able to attend four to six on-campus residential weeks a year for intensive study as well as use distance education materials in their own communities. The courses are underpinned by a strong belief in the interconnectedness of culture, spirituality and learning, responsive to Indigenous cultural and community knowledge. Teaching students gain confidence and the benefits of a collaborative approach to student learning – they undertake an integrated program of study and programs are tailored to the students' backgrounds. Through these programs, ACU has been proactive in ensuring that our Indigenous students are well prepared and able to teach back into their communities. They are provided with the necessary support and practical skills to serve as great teachers.

The issues identified above in relation to areas which need to be addressed if we are to attract more top achievers to teaching are also relevant to encouraging greater diversity in our teachers. If we want to facilitate a more diverse range of teachers, such as encouraging more career change professionals and mature age entrants to take up teaching, issues such as teacher salary and progression, professional learning opportunities, teacher support and the challenges faced by teachers in the contemporary teaching environment, need to be addressed.

2.6 Demand and Supply: Should We Limit the Number of Places in Teacher Education Courses?

ACU strongly opposes limiting places in teacher education courses. The discussion paper identifies that initial teacher education providers produce approximately 5,500 graduate teachers each year, and that the NSW Department of Education and Communities employs 300-500 new graduates in permanent positions annually. However, some crucial facts are omitted. The discussion paper omits the significant number of teachers employed in the Catholic and Independent schools systems. It fails to acknowledge that the NSW Department of Education and Communities has a significantly casualised workforce and consequently overlooks the large number of new teachers who go into casual teaching positions which may actually be full-time - the Department has no less than the equivalent of 10,000 full-time teachers employed as casuals, who annually deliver around 2,000,000 days of teaching. Nor does it acknowledge that around fifty per cent of the Department's teachers have been employed in the last five years. Furthermore, the high full-time employment rates of ACU teaching graduates (80 per cent) - the largest education faculty in NSW - indicates that there is a high demand for teaching graduates.

The discussion paper also fails to acknowledge three systemic leakages of teachers: shortly after entry into the profession, when raising a family, and to access superannuation. These major leakages require that there are available additional teachers to fill vacancies.

The NSW Department of Education and Community's figures on the employment of teaching graduates also fail to acknowledge that many teaching graduates go on to work interstate or overseas. Foreign recruiters have been known to search for and employ our teachers. The employment of teaching graduates who choose to pursue other careers should also not be ignored, as teaching skills are highly transferrable to other career paths and professions and these graduates go on to make equally positive contributions to state and national productivity.

Limiting places in teacher education will severely affect the diversity of our teaching pool. If we want high quality teachers, then we must allow principals and school systems the maximum choice of teachers. A larger pool of available teachers provides greater choice for principals and schools. Limiting the pool of available teachers would only limit choice and should not be taken to equate to more high quality teachers. Thus, a large teaching pool is necessary to meet the existing high demand for teachers; to allow for the major leakages of teachers, as identified above; and significantly, it is necessary for diversity: *different* schools require *different* teachers with *different* skills and personalities to suit *different* communities.

3 HOW DOES THE UNIVERSITY ENSURE IT MAINTAINS ITS STANDARDS

Maintaining the standard and quality of ACU's degrees is very important to the University both for its intrinsic place as a leading Australian educational institution and because it has responsibilities to its key stakeholders including the professional and regulatory bodies and educational systems that assess its work and employ its graduates.

ACU is a self-accrediting institution and is required to meet higher education threshold standards set by TESQA. These standards relate to qualifications, teaching and learning, information and research. To serve this purpose data about our graduates, units and courses, resources and services are collected and analysed regularly. The data set includes: student evaluations of the unit offered and the teaching provided, student satisfaction surveys, library and IT surveys. The University also conducts surveys on commencement and graduation from ACU.

ACU education courses are further quality assured through external national and state teacher accreditation processes. All teacher education courses must demonstrate how they meet national and NSW Institute of Teachers program standards and demonstrate how candidates will meet the professional standards for graduating teachers. All teacher education courses must be re-accredited every five years and national and state accrediting bodies must be notified of any major changes within the five year cycle.

Internally, as a matter of university policy and in accordance with university procedures, all courses are reviewed on a five year cycle. Results of the cyclical review must be reported to Academic Board. With the Course Director as chair, the review panel includes the Associate Dean Learning and Teaching, other directors, course coordinators, external stakeholders, academics from other universities and other faculties, current students, graduates of the course and members of external accrediting agencies where appropriate.

Further, the National Course Implementation Committee (NCIC) monitors the implementation and evaluation of the course by students and other key stakeholders. The NCIC is responsible for:

- ensuring accreditation is secured and maintained for each jurisdiction;
- ensuring assessment moderation of units;
- evaluation of each year of the course and course units;
- obtaining feedback from key stakeholders;
- liaising with other relevant Faculties regarding the implementation of the course; and
- advising Faculty Board of any recommendations for change, within the external accreditation process.

Units are evaluated every semester and the aggregated results are forwarded to the NCIC for action as appropriate. Feedback from staff in schools participating in the Professional Experience Program is also used for the ongoing monitoring and reviewing of the course to ensure that the course reflects current practice in a 21st century learning environment.

4 THE PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF UNIVERSITY BASED TEACHER EDUCATION COURSES

Universities have an important role to play in preparing teachers for the classroom. However, education of teachers does not stop when they graduate from university. ACU believes in a tripartite approach to the continuum of professional learning with universities, education systems (i.e. government, Catholic and independent) and schools sharing responsibility and ownership. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and the NSW Institute of Teachers is developing a shared understanding across the sector of what can be expected of an effective beginner teacher and what the university and the school's broader responsibilities for that teacher are.

Universities are best placed to enable the pre-service teacher to develop the necessary discipline knowledge, discipline-pedagogical knowledge and theoretical framework that will support them in their ongoing professional learning.

Schools are best placed to demonstrate the implementation of ideas and strategies introduced at university, support pre-service teachers in their teaching and provide feedback and mentoring in learning to teach.

Teachers in schools are also best placed to assess whether the pre-service teacher has the appropriate personal, interpersonal and communicative skills to be an effective teacher. It is at the school (through practicum) that the pre-service teacher can learn how different schools operate to address the needs of and interact with the local community.

Universities cannot prepare teachers for all contexts. Employers in other professions provide on-the-job training and teaching is no different. Employers need to provide a coherent and systemic induction and mentoring process which forms part of the framework for ongoing professional learning. ACU would welcome the opportunity to be more involved in this phase of professional learning.

The structure of ACU's early childhood, primary and secondary teacher education degrees are set out in Annexure A. In order to provide a better understanding of the content, a set of subject descriptions for one of the courses is set out at Annexure B. The content of such courses are largely mandated by professional bodies, school sectors and external accreditation requirements set down by the NSW Institute of Teachers. As a national university ACU's education courses also have to comply with similar bodies in other jurisdictions in which the university operates. Common to all undergraduate pre-service degree programs are:

- Discipline-based studies – e.g. maths, science;
- Pedagogic content knowledge – knowledge about how to shape discipline content and use appropriate strategies to help others learn;
- Child and adolescent development – characteristics of different stages of human development and the different aspects of development such as physical, mental, linguistical, social, emotional, spiritual and the implications for teaching in a safe supportive environment;
- Theoretical and practical studies of teaching, learning and assessment - nature of learning, how we learn, different types of learning, stages of learning and the implications for teaching and classroom management;
- Practicum placements where pre-service teachers become familiar with schools and classrooms and develop their teaching skills; and

- Research projects based around school and classroom issues.

Teacher education programs must include an appropriate balance between content knowledge and teaching method knowledge. Research by Darling-Hammond and others²¹ points to the fact that being in possession of the content knowledge of a discipline in and of itself is not sufficient to be able to teach it so that it results in learning for others. It is the knowledge of how to teach for learning that makes for the most successful outcomes for learners. Methods of teaching and the content to be taught need to be treated interdependently in teacher education courses so that method knowledge is contextualised and linked to specific ways of knowing and realms of meaning as bound up with the discipline area and content concerned.

ACU's education courses therefore, are based on the research evidence about quality teacher education and effective learning in schools. Representatives from the profession contribute to course development and review, and feedback is sought from stakeholders. We are confident that we prepare teachers of quality through our pre-service and postgraduate courses that deepen discipline-based and pedagogic content knowledge, develop an understanding of the theory-practice nexus as informed by a growing research and evidence base, foster reflective practice, and the capacity to discern those aspects of teaching that impact most on student learning outcomes. A key aim of pre-service courses is for the pre-service teacher to develop the theoretical framework for teaching and learning that will sustain their ongoing professional learning.

The interrelationship between discipline knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, applied teaching, reflection and research in these degree programs helps to build the kind of quality teachers described by John Hattie in his study of factors which contribute to effective teaching.²² Quality teachers, as rated by students, are those who:

- Challenge;
- Have high expectations;²³
- Encourage the study of their subject;
- Value surface and deep aspects of their subject; and
- Develop respectful teacher-student relationships (strong positive effects on student learning include empathy; warmth; encouraging higher order thinking).

As with other providers ACU courses meet external requirements. However, we are distinctive in our priorities and focuses. We infuse our programs with a Catholic perspective emphasising the development of the whole person to achieve their full potential and contribute to society. It also means that we stress the dignity of the human person and the importance of respect for the individual. Hence we prioritise the importance of effective relationships in teaching: teacher and students, teacher and teachers, teacher and parents, students and students. We want our pre-service teachers to understand themselves, grow personally and professionally, and to understand the communities they will work in. We achieve this in a number of ways through both course and university experiences, including through the core curriculum and the community engagement experiences. In the community engagement experiences students immerse themselves in alternative settings resulting in richer learning about different communities and enriched

²¹ Darling-Hammond and Bransford, *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (2005).

²² Hattie, J., *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement* (2009).

²³ Cf. *Save our Schools, Fighting for Equity in Education: A study published by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation in NSW suggests that students from High Socio-Economic status (SES) backgrounds in Australia are more likely have high expectations placed on their learning than students from Low SES). This finding is consistent with OECD report on supporting disadvantaged students, 2012, that often there are lower academic expectations for disadvantaged schools and students).*

understanding of diversity and respect for others. This program is highly regarded by external stakeholders.

ACU early childhood and primary courses are also distinctive in the priority they place on discipline knowledge for key curriculum areas such as literacy, mathematics and science and technology. In these courses all students undertake two units focusing on discipline/content knowledge and for literacy and mathematics education there are two units focusing on pedagogy and one for science and technology education.

ACU's education courses seek to prepare teachers for the more difficult challenges in the classroom such as teaching disengaged youth; dealing with diversity of school populations; meeting the needs of students with learning needs and ESL; education of students with physical, intellectual and emotional disabilities; supporting students from complex and diverse family contexts; competing with the enticements of social media and online forms of communication and ways of increasing teacher effectiveness in enabling a diverse group of students to learn ever more complex knowledge and skills.

ACU also prepares teachers for 21st century learning in several ways:

- Embedding technology within the curriculum;
- Developing pre-service teachers' use of digital technologies;
- Providing experience in schools where contemporary learning spaces and personalised learning are central;
- Highlighting teaching approaches which facilitate creative, meta-cognitive and higher order thinking;
- Fostering engagement with a range of local, national and global communities through various forms of communication;
- Balancing formative and summative approaches to assessing student learning;
- Building pre-service teachers' understanding of the multiple forms of literacy necessary for contemporary knowledge building, creation and communication; and
- Fostering understanding of the general capabilities necessary for success in an increasingly complex world: personal and social competence, ethical decision making and intercultural understanding.

To the extent that there is criticism of university education courses much of it underestimates the complexity of increasingly diverse educational environments in which teachers find themselves. Many assumptions are made about the role of teacher education courses in preparing teachers for the classroom. Many of these assumptions do not reflect the quality of teacher education courses or their ability to prepare students for 21st century learning. A recent national survey of 1,400 graduate teachers in their first year of teaching, found that 73 per cent would recommend their teaching program to someone else.²⁴ The results also indicate that graduate teachers feel less well prepared by their teacher education programs in the following areas:

- Teaching to linguistic diversity in the classroom;
- Communicating with parents and carers and working with the school's local community; and
- Supporting students with a disability.

²⁴ Mayer et al, *Investigating the Effectiveness of Teacher Education for Early Career Teachers in Diverse Settings: A longitudinal study* (2011-2014 ARC linkage grant research project). Deakin University with Victorian Department of Education (DEECD), Queensland Department of Education and Training (QDET), Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), Queensland College of Teachers (QCT), Griffith University. Canberra: Australian Research Council.; Mayer et al., 2012-2013). *Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Main Study*. Deakin University. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Such areas are challenging – some can best be developed at the local level, some are more complex and require further study and exploration. ACU includes all these elements within its NSW teacher education degrees.

5 PRACTICAL TEACHING AT ACU

ACU recognises that practical teaching is fundamental to teacher education. Reflective of this imperative, practical experience in schools begins in the first year of primary and early childhood education programs at ACU, and in the second year for BT/BA (Secondary) programs. Undergraduate pre-service teachers undertake 80 days minimum experience in schools. ACU's postgraduate students undertake 60 days for two year programs and 45 days for one-year programs.²⁵ This level of practicum conforms with requirements for teacher registration for teacher education programs offered in NSW.

In 2012, ACU teaching students secured 7,295 placements around Australia, including 2,958 placements in NSW, in a wide range of teaching environments across Catholic, government and independent schools.

ACU's Faculty of Education has established key institutional partnerships with the Catholic Education Offices and other organisations in NSW to facilitate practical teaching experiences for ACU Education students. ACU and its partner institutions recognise the significance of the practicum in consolidating and extending novice teachers' pedagogic content knowledge. Practicum placements further students' understanding of the theory-practice nexus as informed by a growing research and evidence base, foster reflective practice, and equip students with the capacity to discern those aspects of teaching that impact most on student learning outcomes.²⁶

ACU has developed a number of innovative practical teaching initiatives to ensure that we produce high quality graduates who will become great teachers. These initiatives include:

- **Teaching and Learning Consortium (TLC):** This initiative assists students to link theory learnt in the classroom with practical teaching. ACU second year Bachelor of Education (Primary) students participate in the Teaching and Learning Consortium and Instructional Rounds in their second semester, after completing their first four week block of professional experience. In the Instructional Rounds, students visit three schools in three weeks that have been identified as pedagogically innovative. Students visit the selected school and listen to a presentation by the school principal who explains the school's innovation and the rationale behind it. As part of the initiative, students also gain the opportunity to work across a whole primary school for six weekly visit days assisting teachers, teaching science lessons, and gaining a sense of the whole school.
- **Professional Experience Online Preparation Modules:** ACU's team of Professional Experience Coordinators are preparing a set of three online modules to assist students to prepare for their practicum placements. Students enrolled in all Professional Experience units will be required to view the modules and complete an online quiz. The modules address key areas covering professional standards and expectations, legal responsibilities, and managing relationships.
- In 2012, a formal evaluation of one model of practicum at ACU - the **Learning in the School Community Pilot Project**²⁷ - found that a partnership established between ACU, the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) and 14 Catholic primary schools provided pre-service

²⁵ One-year programs will be phased out nationally by 2015.

²⁶ See Darling-Hammond, L., 2006, *Powerful Teacher Education: Lessons from exemplary programs*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

²⁷ Hamston, J., & Hassim, E., 2012, *Learning in the School Community: Multiple stakeholder evaluation of the B. Ed (primary) multimodal pilot project*, Commissioned by the ACU and CEOM.

teachers in the first and second years of their course with a significant apprenticeship into the profession. The Learning in the School Project enables pre-service teachers to combine learning and teaching roles in real school contexts, for extended periods of time during their course. A key aspect of the Project is the notion of 'community practice' and integrating on-campus and in-school learning experiences. The evaluation of the Project found that the intensive practicum model (two days per week in schools) with features similar to that of the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP), provided pre-service teachers with an opportunity to develop the range of capacities identified as necessary for pre-service teachers.²⁸ These included:

- Reflective practice;
- Strategic decision-making;
- An understanding of the processes of learning and development, including language acquisition and development;
- Use of a wide repertoire of teaching strategies to enable diverse learners to master challenging content;
- An orientation towards social justice;
- Content-specific pedagogical knowledge;
- Knowledge of how to cater for students with special needs;
- Knowledge of how to enact curriculum for formative and summative assessments; and
- Skills for constructing and managing a purposeful classroom.

The evaluation also found that, in line with the ACU's Catholic mission, the Learning in the School Community practicum partnership program placed much emphasis on issues of social justice and student wellbeing. It encouraged pre-service teachers to develop strong and caring relationships with their students and members of the school community (a factor identified as having a strong effect on student achievement).²⁹ ACU's Education Faculty is considering recommendations from this report and implications for expanding this model across its courses. Intensive practical experience in partnership schools is highly valued by ACU but it is dependent on the commitment of the systems and the schools.

ACU is constantly looking at ways to enhance the theory-practice nexus and deepen pre-service teachers' experiences. Aspects for development include: micro-teaching with analysis and reflective teaching, videotaped role play with de-briefing and use of technology to connect pre-service teachers to master teachers classrooms; these are argued to yield larger effects on pre-service teachers' learning.

²⁸ As identified in research of the Stanford program and other intensive practicum programs by Darling-Hammond, L., Newton, X., & Chung Wei, R., 'Evaluating teacher education outcomes: a study of the Stanford Teacher Education Programme' *Journal of Education for Teaching*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2010), at 369-388.

²⁹ Hatti, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. London: Routledge.

6 INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

ACU welcomes comparisons with international counterparts as valuable lessons can be gained from benchmarking programs in other countries. However, we caution against judging simplistically what happens in the NSW context against programs in countries such as Finland, Singapore and Korea given the vastly different education systems, contextual settings and approaches taken to teacher education. Quality teaching is a worldwide agenda with many systems making judgements based on PISA scores, but there are many contextual factors to student achievement that need to be taken into account and there is much more to be gained from education than what PISA assesses.

The key differences between these systems and Australia are that Finland, Singapore and Korea are largely, but not wholly, homogenous cultural and linguistic groups. They do not face the challenges of dealing with a federal system where the States and the Commonwealth have joint responsibilities for education. It is also significant that Australia's population is roughly four times the size of Finland and Singapore, and comes with the challenges of supporting the educational growth of a diverse population with a wide range of needs. In Asia, teaching has also traditionally been didactic. In many of these countries, as well as Australia, students in schools compete for grades and are assisted through a burgeoning industry of private tuition to pass exams.³⁰ Significantly, under these teaching systems teachers spend fewer hours teaching classes and more hours providing one on one feedback to students and meeting families to collaboratively diagnose classroom problems and solutions.

There are however, some ideas developed in countries which perform strongly in PISA tests which could be adapted to Australia. In some of the high performing countries greater discretion about curriculum and assessment is left to teachers and schools. In Singapore, Finland, and Korea, the teaching profession is better paid and better resourced. In Singapore and Finland teaching students are paid to study and there are many incentives to attract mid-career professionals into teaching. In all three countries a rigorous selection process is conducted at the end of teacher education degrees. Teacher education has a focus on effective leadership, teacher professionalisation, mentoring processes and the application of standards. In Singapore and Finland there are systems of advanced accreditation for mid-career teachers rather than just initial registration systems. Most teachers hold a masters degree in both their content area and in education. Model schools are used for clinical practice – within these, pre-service teachers participate in problem-solving groups with a focus on planning, action, and evaluation.

The main point to be made in comparing teacher training and student outcomes in different countries is that any element or feature of a given international system must be understood holistically within the context of the broader education system of that country, and by weighing relevant outcomes. Attributing the success of a country's education system to one or two key isolated features risks the development of misinformed and ineffective policy. For instance, the modern South Korean education system has emerged as part of a Korean national project and strong determination to build a world class country. Traditionally, many opportunities in South Korea are dependent on high school and college results (including marriage and job prospects) and consequently parents invest a significant amount of money in education e.g. private tutoring and school fees. Teachers are hired by the South Korean Ministry of Education. While the Ministry has built a strong and highly qualified teaching force, teaching remains highly regulated which

³⁰ In critique of the report published by the Grattan Institute, *Catching Up: learning from the best schools in East Asia*, February 17, 2012) that advocates East Asian schools are a good model for Australia to follow to improve student results, an Asia Development Bank report, titled *Shadow Education*, suggests that high participation in private tutoring in East Asian countries is behind their education success and that this phenomenon is "shadow education." Retrieved 24 August, 2012 <http://www.saveourschools.com.au/national-issues/downsides-to-east-asian-education-success>

reportedly makes it a difficult option for those wishing to undertake part-time teaching; such as mid-career professionals with industry experience.³¹ Notably, in South Korea teaching also attracts a high social status, job stability, high salary and good working conditions. More broadly, while South Korea has certainly built up one of the most highly educated and skilled workforces, and ranks highly in its PISA assessments, the system continues to be highly test driven.³² The number of hours spent by students undertaking study, on average, is higher than in most other OECD countries. The broader social effects are of relevance as many South Korean middle and high school students consider running away from home or committing suicide because of the pressure to perform at high levels in school – signalling the negative social effects that can result from a high pressure education system.³³

Finland provides a contrasting illustration to the South Korean education system, with different contextual considerations. The current Finnish education system is the product of a series of extensive, gradual, and complementary reforms, which commenced from, at least, the 1970s. It is not the result of isolated changes such as the enforcement of minimum entry requirements and masters degrees for teachers. The current system, and teacher training within it, is a radically different model based on a balanced curriculum and professionalisation - rather than testing - which continues to be developed and progressed.³⁴ While teachers are encouraged to assess their students regularly, and guidelines for assessment are provided in the national core curriculum, the focus is quite different to that currently taken in Australia. The only formal national test in Finland is the university matriculation exam, which consists of a set of four open-ended exams, based on problem-solving skills rather than subject mastery.³⁵ Currently, there is also support for student self-assessment, so that students may understand their progress and help to design their own learning activities. Most students who go on to university take the matriculation exam (however it is not necessarily required for graduation from upper secondary school or university admission); some universities admit students based on other standards. All students have a legislated right to be allowed to proceed to the next level of education provided they have completed the previous level. In addition to the significant amount of autonomy afforded to Finnish teachers, Finnish schools also provide a suite of services to support student wellbeing, in addition to an education – this includes a daily hot meal, psychological counselling, and health and dental services. Another notable feature of the Finnish system is that in the early years of school, Finnish students often stay together in a class with the same teacher for several years. This enables the teacher to follow the development of students as they progress through the grades, and thus students are able to learn in a ‘family-like’ environment.

³¹ Centre on International Education Benchmarking, ‘South Korea – Teacher and Principal Quality’ at <http://www.ncee.org/programs-affiliates/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/south-korea-overview/south-korea-teacher-and-principal-quality/>

³² E.g. see Cha, E, ‘The Truth Behind Students’ Suicide,’ *Human Rights Monitor - South Korea* (10 September 2012) <http://www.humanrightskorea.org/2012/the-truth-behind-students-suicide/>; ‘South Korea (Republic of Korea),’ *School Accountability Framework Review: National and International Perspectives and Approaches Research Papers* (2006), <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/accountability/docs/south%20korea.pdf>.

³³ ‘Korean Children Unhappiest in OECD Despite Material Wealth’ *The Chosunilbo* (5 November 2012) at http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/05/07/2012050700775.html; Centre on International Education Benchmarking, ‘South Korea’ at <http://www.ncee.org/programs-affiliates/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/south-korea-overview/>

³⁴ Abrams, S., ‘The Children Must Play: What the United States Could Learn from Finland About Education Reform’ *The New Republic* (28 January 2011).

³⁵ Centre on International Education Benchmarking, ‘Finland - Teacher and Principal Quality,’ <http://www.ncee.org/programs-affiliates/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/finland-overview/finland-teacher-and-principal-quality/>

To adopt a Finnish or Korean model of education without acknowledging the cultural underpinnings that go with it risks a backlash from parents, schools and teachers. Although, there are some ideas which may translate to Australia.

ACU is already able to incorporate some of the positive features of high performing international systems in its programs. ACU's teacher education programs foster inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking. Education students learn through their academic studies and their practical experience in schools to become expert diagnosticians of student learning. ACU students undertake intensive models (at least two days per week in schools with some full weeks in attendance) with highly experienced mentor teachers and a reflective orientation to teacher education.

ACU education students are taught to think about how students learn with a focus on a cycle of planning, implementation and reflection/evaluation and an exposure to the range of intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs of young children and adolescents.

ACU's postgraduate courses focus on, and contribute to, teacher professionalisation and effective school leadership (such as curriculum leadership, school leadership, and leadership in education for marginalised groups).

7 DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The discussion paper raises the issue of developing professional practice and the importance of maintaining quality professional learning, which leads to improved teaching practice and improved student outcomes. ACU shares the NSW Government's view that the professional learning teachers undertake should be relevant and world class; and that just as we want our students to be lifelong learners, the same applies to our teachers. ACU believes that professional development is part of the continuum of teacher education from pre-service teacher education through induction to ongoing professional development programs. ACU can play an expanded role in providing excellent professional development programs.

ACU's Faculty of Education provides professional development programs in NSW schools. We currently provide the following development opportunities for teachers and their leaders:

- ACU School of Education NSW is a NSW Institute of Teachers endorsed provider for professional learning for Professional Competence
- ACU has a Master of Educational Leadership focused on producing top class educational leaders and we are renowned internationally for research within educational leadership.
- ACU has a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (with specialisations) delivered by means of blended learning over one semester, including three intensive weekend workshops.
- ACU has a Graduate Certificate in Education Law which equips educators with the knowledge and skills needed to deal effectively with legal issues and to develop educational policy within a legal framework.
- ACU has a *Grammar for 21st Century Literacy* workshop program. These workshops are delivered over six days per year. They provide teachers with the knowledge to improve the quality of their students writing skills.
- ACU holds an annual Primary Teachers Mathematics Conference and Annual Secondary Teachers Mathematics Conference – Both these conferences attract around 200-250 participants each year.
- ACU in Victoria has six partnership programs with hubs of schools that have been identified as having a Performance & Development Culture. Our pre-service teaching students are placed within these hubs alongside established teachers who want to enhance their own teaching further, while supporting the next generation of new graduates.
- Ongoing Professional Development Workshops, locally, nationally and internationally, at least twice a year in each of the following discipline areas:
 - Literacy
 - Numeracy
 - Science
 - Creative arts
 - History / Humanities

ACU believes that we can improve our professional development programs for teachers by involving ACU's cross-faculty Department of Executive Education which delivers world-class professional development programs to a range of executives in a number of fields and disciplines. ACU Executive Education can complement existing content-based programs to provide a more holistic development framework that recognises the complex operating environments (legal, budgetary, etc) that school leaders and teachers face.

ACU Executive Education can make a significant impact on improving the quality of school professional development by adapting programs developed elsewhere in the private sector that encourage teachers to consider emerging societal trends that will affect the lives of their students.

Leadership development programs can be provided in areas such as motivation, management, leadership, innovation, finance/budget management. Quality professional development can increase teacher retention by providing a framework to objectively identify 'talent' to be supported, create an objective process for teacher evaluation and drive cultural change that will ultimately impact student outcomes.

ACU's Faculty of Education is working with ACU Executive Education to explore how the University might further enhance its professional development offerings.

8 STRENGTHENING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

An issue raised in the discussion paper is the identification and skilling of leaders who are able to promote teaching excellence in their schools. ACU and its predecessor colleges have engaged in postgraduate teaching and research in educational leadership for over 30 years.

The Master of Educational Leadership degree is currently being offered in every Australian State except WA, as well as New Zealand and Mauritius. In NSW, as elsewhere, the practice has been that Catholic Education Offices sponsor cohorts of students and ACU staff to travel to the diocese to teach the program in intensive mode, making appropriate adjustments for local contexts. Participants also study in on-line and web-enhanced modes. This practice has been highly valued by employers. Participants in the program include both those in senior positions and those aspiring to leadership. Graduates currently hold some of the most senior positions in leadership in Catholic education across Australia and internationally. ACU delivers this master's degree using a positively evaluated model which shapes cohort programs to employer needs and delivers for individual systems. Such programs are best shaped by drawing on local research, and ACU has been able to integrate the findings of its own research programs and that of its higher degree students in areas such as leading for learning, the ethical bases for leadership and alternative models of leadership.

The new Master of Educational System Leadership degree commenced in 2012 with a cohort of nineteen, from Catholic Education systems from every state in Australia. It focuses on the specific capabilities required by leaders in systems which have been identified, in consultation with systems, and by access to the best current research. It exposes participants to current research and scholarship as well as input from system leaders in education and other fields from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Scotland and England. It builds connections among participants across systems and encourages collaborative and futures oriented approaches to learning.

The discussion paper refers to practices of some of the world's best performing education systems. A systemic focus to education provision requires high level skills and understandings for those in system leadership, but formal avenues for developing these skills and understandings are limited in Australia at present. To the best of our knowledge, the national Master of Educational System Leadership offered by ACU is the only such program of its kind in this country. It has been able to bring together best practice research such as that identified in the discussion paper, and the theoretical insights of new work in emerging, creative and adaptive systems. Moreover, an awareness of the role of systems in improving student outcomes and school performance is informing the work of a number of our Faculty's doctoral students.

For the last seven years, the Centre for Creative and Authentic Leadership has been engaged in a project called *Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners*. This project, which has largely been conducted in NSW, combines elements of significant research as well as school based improvement processes, school improvement and teacher and leader learning. Firstly, the research dimensions of the project have been developed in collaboration with schools and systems, so that the questions about leading and learning respond to real needs. Secondly, rather than a simplistic recourse to concepts like "improvement" or "excellence," schools are challenged to explore core values and notions of authentic learning and apply these to their practices as a basis for deciding on actions that are called for. Thirdly, the processes in which participants engage are informed by best-practice literature, and based on developing a culture of evidence. This feeds into the knowledge base of the project which has been fed into later iterations. There is also a significant body of publications which has emerged from this work.

ACU would encourage further support and expansion of this program, to help encourage other education leaders to be involved in research projects that assist them to focus on teaching and learning priorities, to enhance student learning outcomes.

To strengthen leadership capacity in schools and school systems a comprehensive and coherent leadership learning framework should be developed. The framework should cover aspiring leaders, curriculum leaders, school executive leaders and leaders in systems. Teacher/Leaders need to be introduced to different leadership pathways with support from mentors and coaches being provided to back up the theoretical framework. As we have said elsewhere in this submission education needs to be viewed as a continuum of which university is only one part. Schools and school systems also need to play their part in leadership development.

9 RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC IDEAS RAISED IN THE PAPER

ACU believes Australian teacher preparation is high quality. It is developed with the profession and assured through the course accreditation processes. These processes however, can always be strengthened. ACU offers the following feedback on a number of the ideas raised in the discussion paper.

As a matter of principle, ACU welcomes moves to a national school curriculum, national professional standards for teachers, and a nationally consistent accreditation system providing those standards are appropriate and ensure a quality education system. ACU also supports greater flexibility for graduate teachers to work across the years of schooling so long as they have appropriate knowledge and education to teach in the relevant area.

What knowledge and skills will our children need to thrive in the 21st century?

ACU affirms the goals identified in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, endorsed by all Australian Education Ministers in 2008. It is important that our schools promote equity and excellence, and that our students become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

Our students must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to navigate through the complexities of the 21st century. Given the speed at which technology and society is changing, and the vast quantity of information available, which is constantly being updated and only increasing, it is important that our students are taught relevant content.

ACU believes that the development of critical thinking skills is necessary for students to thrive in the modern environment. Students must possess the knowledge and skills to sift through large amounts of information, critically analyse, and discern its significance. Students must know how to use technology. They must have strong basic skills, including literacy and numeracy skills, in order to advance and be competitive. They must also have a global awareness of society.

What makes a teacher inspiring? What should students and parents expect from teachers?

As discussed earlier in this submission, there are a number of qualities that make a teacher inspiring. Teachers must know the content of the subjects they teach, but to be inspiring they must also have passion, commitment, understand learning, good communication and interpersonal skills, enthusiasm, and the ability to relate to their students.

In turn, students expect teachers to engage them; inspire them to want to learn and excel; and to respect and treat them as individuals. Parents expect to see their children learning new skills and progressing, eager to learn from their teachers and enthusiastic about school. Parents also want teachers who respect what they know about their children.

Should there be more teachers with Masters degrees or higher?

ACU offers excellent pre-service masters degree programs. Catering for the growing demands of the early childhood, primary and secondary sectors remains a challenge, and the University is committed to responding to the needs of the community and the profession. The recent capping of postgraduate numbers will limit growth at this level. If governments wish to see more teachers with masters degrees then they will need to provide more Commonwealth Supported Places for pre-

service teacher education programs. Perhaps the State Governments might like to offer “State Government Supported Places” to augment the number of teachers undertaking postgraduate study.

ACU also offers in-service masters degree programs for teachers who want to further their knowledge after a few years in the classroom. ACU would like to see more experienced teachers undertaking higher degree study, especially in high demand areas such as special needs education. Strong in-service masters programs are essential to produce the sort of adaptable and experienced teaching workforce Australia needs.

It is not possible to cover all aspects of a complex teaching environment in any pre-service degree. Teachers and prospective leaders need to be supported and rewarded for further study which should be seen as a significant part of the professional learning continuum.

Should we limit the number of places in teacher education courses?

As discussed earlier in this submission, ACU strongly opposes limiting places in teacher education courses. Proper workforce planning needs to be informed by a range of factors: the significant number of teachers who undertake casual teaching in NSW schools; teachers employed in the Catholic and Independent schools systems; the three major systemic leakages of teachers: shortly after entry into the profession, when raising a family, and to access superannuation; the high full-time employment rates of teachers; teachers who go on to work interstate or overseas; and graduates who go on to utilise their teaching skills in other career paths. Limiting course places in teacher education will severely affect the diversity of the teaching pool and limit employer choice in selecting the best teacher for a given school and community.

Do programs like Teach for Australia provide a sustainable model for pre-service teacher education?

Programs such as Teach for Australia are only intended for a small group of people. Unfortunately in other countries where programs like Teach for Australia have been tried they do not have the desired effect of having more ‘high achieving’ students become teachers. In fact the international evidence suggests that Teach for Australia and other similar ‘weak’ teacher preparation programs have high attrition rates.³⁶ The evidence of the effectiveness of this program in Australia is inconclusive, but essentially undertrained people are going out to ‘hard to staff’ schools. Effective teachers know the content they are teaching but that knowledge is only part of the task. Effective teaching is not just an exercise in public speaking. It is about understanding how students learn and how best to communicate ideas to a broad range of students with a broad range of capabilities.

What could we do to improve the practical component of initial teacher education? For instance, should there be a special role in a school for a highly skilled teacher to supervise the practicum?

ACU would support the NSW Department initiating a special role in schools for a highly skilled teacher to supervise the practicum. We would be particularly interested in a stronger collaborative approach to teacher education and improving the practical component.

³⁶ Darling-Hammond, L., 2006, ‘Constructing 21st century teacher education,’ *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 57, at 1-15.

Should we limit the number of practicum placements to areas of workforce need? For instance, should a greater proportion of practicum placements be in rural and remote locations and in metropolitan areas of need?

ACU is not in favour of limiting the number of practicum placements; rather, we support greater flexibility in the practicum requirements. We consider that practicum requirements must allow for a broader understanding and recognition of the holistic practical teaching that is necessary to produce great teachers. A great teacher needs to understand not only the class and school, but also the community and other external factors which influence and inform learning. They require a broader practical learning base which extends beyond the classroom environment.

We also note that any discussion around placement requirements should not be focused on rigid requirements such as the number of days to be undertaken but should be focused on quality. This involves focusing on how to develop and support placement learning experiences (e.g. understanding the role of teachers, key teaching strategies, and ensuring that schools have the resources, space and time to support pre-service teachers' learning).

ACU is very supportive of pre-service teachers undertaking placements in rural areas and other areas of need, however we note that assistance will be necessary to support students who undertake such placements. As most students undertake part-time work and many support themselves financially (e.g. pay rent and work to cover living expenses etc), the relevant logistical and practical issues will need to be addressed to facilitate these placements and support these students.

Should we develop more explicit requirements for a range of specialisations in teaching besides the current subject specialisations (such as special education)? Could this be integrated into pre-service courses or should it be a set of more explicit postgraduate qualifications?

ACU would support the articulation of areas of specialisation within existing undergraduate and postgraduate degrees that would support general preparation of a beginning teacher, while providing specialist preparation to meet areas of emerging needs such as special education.

What exit assessments might be desirable to ensure the quality of teaching graduates?

ACU would support a collaborative approach with the profession to develop authentic exit assessments to evaluate teaching graduates and ensure that they are consistently of a high quality. Exit assessments must address previously agreed professional standards. Capstone professional experience units, which require students to demonstrate evidence that standards have been achieved, form an important component of such assessment.

How can we strengthen induction and early career mentoring support for beginning teachers in schools?

ACU is interested in working collaboratively to investigate and develop initiatives to strengthen induction and early career mentoring support for beginning teachers in schools. The Teacher Induction Scheme adopted in Scotland is a model which has gained international recognition and is worth investigating. The Scheme provides a programme for newly qualified Scottish trained teachers. New teachers are guaranteed the offer of a one-year teaching post in a Scottish local authority, and are allocated to one of five local authorities of their choosing. Teachers on the programme have a maximum class commitment time equal to 82% to that of a full-time teacher,

allowing additional time to be devoted to their professional development. All inductees have access to the services of an experienced teacher as a mentor.³⁷

ACU notes that many new teachers begin their careers undertaking casual teaching. In devising and strengthening induction and early career mentoring support for beginning teachers it will be important to ensure that teachers in casual work receive equal support to that received by their colleagues in permanent positions in given schools. Where casual teachers do not have a regular school(s) in which they teach, this may require particular logistical planning in order to ensure that they do not miss out on mentoring and other professional support to achieve Professional Competence.

Should we require teacher education staff in universities to have recent and relevant teaching experience in schools? Should we look at other arrangements that allow teacher educators and teachers in schools to work across and within universities and schools?

A priority for teacher educators at ACU is to have research informed teaching. ACU's teacher education staff achieve this through maintaining familiarity with current research, and through their collaborative research in schools with respect to school and system priorities. ACU teaching staff are recognised for the currency of their teaching, most recently two of our teaching staff were awarded citations for innovative teaching in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the creative arts. Additionally, our staff maintain connections with schools and their priorities through subject specific professional associations and offering professional development activities. To strengthen this connection ACU's Faculty of Education has initiated a strategic approach to increase the number of staff who join us through a secondment arrangement. ACU wishes to employ more practicing teachers for a two year secondment to contribute to course and unit development and teaching in key areas. Increased support from school systems and schools is important to facilitate the wider implementation of this strategy as a means of enriching the pre-service teachers' experience at university, and deepening the relationship between theory and practice. The school teacher's professional learning will also be enhanced.

ACU would welcome the Department's support to develop arrangements to have teachers with recent school experience seconded to ACU to contribute to our teaching programs for a period of time (e.g. for a two year period).

Should there be better pathways to teaching for people who have already established themselves in other careers?

ACU believes that there should be more flexibility around accelerated programs for those coming in to teaching from established careers. This already occurs at some level with education students having the option of undertaking a masters degree (in a shorter period of time than an undergraduate degree) and the possibility of receiving advanced standing for subject units already studied.

What role should principals play as employers of university teaching graduates?

To strengthen the quality of the teaching profession, principals could be supported more effectively to build in greater accountability for graduate teachers seeking employment. Principals have a choice about how rigorous they wish to be in regard to selecting graduate teachers. ACU considers that more could be asked of graduate teachers in the selection process. University teacher educators could also be involved in collaborating with principals in determining a more evidence-based

³⁷ The Scottish Government, 'Teacher Training' at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/Teaching/ITE>

approach to selection of staff. This is particularly important in light of the National Professional Standards for Teachers. As discussed elsewhere, principals can assess the quality of teaching graduates on the basis of their transcripts, professional experience reports and portfolios. Additionally ACU proposes to host an annual event for principals so that the university can better gauge how our graduates are faring in the marketplace.

Should there be targeted 're-entry' short courses that provide expert updating on recent curriculum and teaching practices and requirements for teachers who are returning after a long period of time away from teaching?

ACU supports the development of targeted 're-entry' short courses to update teachers returning to work after a long period of time away from teaching with expert updating on recent curriculum, teaching practices, and requirements. ACU would be willing to contribute to such courses, including with their development. ACU's Faculty of Education currently offers such a program in Queensland.

10 ANNEXURES

Annexure A Education Program Maps ACU NSW

Annexure B Sample of ACU Education Degree Subject Descriptors for B Ed (Primary) - NSW

Annexure C Address to the National Press Club on teacher quality and selection, by Professor Greg Craven, Vice-Chancellor, Australian Catholic University (ACU), 3 October 2012

ANNEXURE A – EDUCATION PROGRAM MAPS (ACU)

Program Maps

Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education– Strathfield

Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood) – Strathfield

Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary) – Strathfield

| Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary) | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| Bachelor of Teaching(Early Childhood) | | | | | | | |
| Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education | | | | | | | |
| Semester 1 | Semester 2 | Semester 3 | Semester 4 | Semester 5 | Semester 6 | Semester 7 | Semester 8 |
| EDFD167 Contexts for Learning and Development | EDFD166 Early Childhood Education 2 – The Ecology of Childhood | EDCU202 Early Childhood Education 4 – Building Curriculum Connections and Continuities | EDFD314 Early Childhood Education 5 – Early Childhood Leadership | EDTS260 Teaching and Learning: Preparing for Contexts of the Field | EDFD260 Teaching and Managing Learning Environments | EDAB161 Indigenous Cultures and Peoples | EDFD462 Transition to the Profession |
| EDCU101 Early Childhood Education 1 – Early Childhood Pedagogy and Curriculum | EDFD267 Early Childhood Education 3 – Partnerships for Learning | EDFD261 Creating Inclusive, Safe and Supportive Schools | EDAC225 Family Studies and Disability | EDAC314 Positive Behaviour Approaches | EDPH162 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education 2 | EDFD468 Catering for Diversity in the Classroom | EDMA360 Mathematics: Learning and Teaching 2 |
| EDPH366 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education | EDAR368 Creative Arts Education 1 | EDLA264 Literacy Education 1 | EDSS322 Studies of Society and its Environment | EDMA262 Mathematics: Learning and Teaching 1 | EDST261 Science and Technology Education | EDRE161 Religious Education 1 or Elective | EDRE162 Religious Education 2 or Elective |
| EDLA168 Children's Literature for Literacy | EDLA167 Linguistics for Literacy | EDST167 Science and Technology for Primary Teaching 1 | EDMA163 Exploring Mathematics 1 | EDMA369 Exploring Mathematics 2 | EDST264 Science and Technology for Primary Teachers 2 | EDLA369 Literacy Education 2 | EDAR424 Creative Arts Education 2 Visual Arts or EDMU416 Creative Arts Education 2 Music or EDDR403 Creative Arts Education 2 Dance and Drama |
| EDFX111 Professional Experience Early Childhood 1 | EDFX112 Professional Experience Early Childhood 1 | EDFX215 Professional Experience Early Childhood 2 | EDFX217 Professional Experience Early Childhood 2 EDFX267 Community Engagement Program | EDFX314 Professional Experience Early Childhood 3 | | EDFX413 Professional Experience 4 | |

Bachelor of Education (Primary) – Strathfield, New South Wales

Total Credit Points - 320

| Year 1 | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| Semester 1 | EDFD127 Contexts for Learning and Development [Includes ICT (1)] | EDLA108 Children's Literature for Literacy | EDST107 Science and Technology for Early Childhood and Primary Teachers 1 | THBS100 Introduction to the Bible or THEO162 Introducing the Scriptures or PHIL102 Theories of Human Nature | EDFX110 Professional Experience Primary 1 |
| Semester 2 | EDFD133 Understanding Learning | EDLA107 Linguistics for Literacy | EDMA103 Exploring Mathematics 1 | THCT100 What Christian Believe or THEO163 Introducing Theology or PHIL100 Introduction to Philosophical Enquiry or PHIL104 Introduction to Ethics | |
| Year 2 | | | | | |
| Semester 1 | EDFD229 Teaching and Learning: Preparing for the Contexts of the Field [Includes ICT (2)] | EDMA202 Mathematics: Learning and Teaching 1 | EDLA204 Literacy Education 1 | THEOLOGY ELECTIVE or ELECTIVE | EDFX216 Professional Experience Primary 2 |
| Semester 2 | EDFD220 Teaching and Managing Learning Environments | EDST204 Science and Technology for Early Childhood and Primary Teachers 2 | EDAB111 Indigenous Cultures and Peoples | EDPH306 Personal Development Health and Physical Education 1 | |
| Year 3 | | | | | |
| Semester 1 | EDFD221 Creating Inclusive, Safe and Supportive Schools | EDMA309 Exploring Mathematics 2 | EDAR308 Creative Arts Education 1 | EDRE101 Religious Education 1 or ELECTIVE | EDFX310 Professional Experience Primary 3 |
| Semester 2 | EDLA309 Literacy Education 2 | EDPH307 Personal Development Health and Physical Education 2 | EDMA310 Mathematics: Learning and Teaching 2 | ELECTIVE | EDFX207 Community Engagement Program |
| Year 4 | | | | | |
| Semester 1 | EDFD452 Transition into the Profession [Includes ICT (3)] | EDST201 Science and Technology Education | EDSS428 Connecting Society and Environment: Curriculum for Learning | ELECTIVE | EDFX416 Professional Transition |
| Semester 2 | EDFD457 Action Research as a Reflective Practice | EDFD447 Diversity in the Classroom | EDAR424 Visual Arts Education or EDMU416 Music Education or EDDR403 Dance/Drama Education | EDRE102 Religious Education 2 or ELECTIVE | |

Program Map
Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts (Secondary)

Total credit points 320cp.

| | Strand | Arts | Education Studies | Curriculum | Professional Experience |
|--------|------------|--|--|--|--|
| Year 1 | Semester 1 | Major Minor 1 Minor 2 or Elective | EDFD177 Contexts for learning and development | | |
| | Semester 2 | Major Minor 1 Minor 2 or Elective | EDFD173 Understanding learning | | |
| Year 2 | Semester 1 | Major Minor 1 Minor 2 or Elective | | EDFD270 Teaching and Managing Learning Environments | EDFX214 Professional Experience Secondary 2 (0 cp) |
| | Semester 2 | Major Minor 1 Minor 2 or Elective | EDFD271 Creating inclusive, safe and supportive schools | | EDFX277 Community Engagement Program (0 cp) |
| Year 3 | Semester 1 | Major Major | | Major Curriculum and Teaching 1 Minor Curriculum and Teaching 1 | EDFX311 Professional Experience Secondary 3 (0 cp) |
| | Semester 2 | Major Major | | Major Curriculum and Teaching 2 Minor Curriculum and Teaching 2 | |
| Year 4 | Semester 1 | | EDAB111 Indigenous Cultures & Peoples EDFD447 Diversity in the Classroom EDFD307 Educational Assessment | EDFD454 Curriculum Literacies | |
| | Semester 2 | | EDFD212 Professional Ethics in Education EDFD472 Transition to the Profession | | EDFX409 Internship (20cp) |

Attach, as Attachment 1.3j, a chart/map of the program sequence by semester with core and elective units and exit points where relevant.

Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) and Master of Teaching (Secondary)

| Master of Teaching (Secondary) (160 cp) | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) (100 cp) | | | | |
| | Year 1 | | Year 2 | |
| | Semester 1 | Semester 2 | Semester 1 | Semester 2 |
| Education Studies | EDFD446 Development and Learning 10 cp | EDFD453 Social and Cultural Contexts of Education 10 cp | EDFD663 Issues in the Profession: Working across the Curriculum 10 cp | Education Elective 10 cp |
| | EDFD589 Effective Teaching and Professional Practice 10 cp | EDFD527 Diversity in the Inclusive Classroom 10 cp | EDFD604 Managing Challenging Behaviour 10 cp | |
| Curriculum & Teaching Studies | First teaching subject C&T 1 10 cp | First teaching subject C&T 2 10 cp | | |
| | Second (or double) teaching subject C&T 1 10 cp | Second (or double) teaching subject C&T 2 10 cp | | |
| Research | | | EDFD658 Interpreting and Designing Research 10 cp | EDFD617 Research Project 20 cp |
| Professional Experience | EDFX511 Graduate Professional Practice Secondary 1 10 cp | EDFX512 Graduate Professional Practice Secondary 2 10 cp | | |

Master of Teaching (Primary) – Strathfield (Total credit point 160cp)

Students wishing to teach in Catholic Schools must enrol concurrently in the Graduate Certificate in Religious Education

| Master of Teaching (Primary) | | | | | | GradCertRE |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| Year 1 | | | | | | |
| Semester 1 | EDFD529 Effective Teaching and Professional Practice | EDLA518 Language and Literacy Education 1 | EDMA504 Mathematics Curriculum 1 | EDAR504 Creative Arts Curriculum | EDFX506 Graduate Professional Experience Primary 1 | THEO502 * Biblical Studies |
| Semester 2 | EDFD528 Social and Cultural Contexts of Development and Learning | EDPH500 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Curriculum | EDSS503 Human Society and its Environment/Studies of Society and Environment Curriculum | EDST512 Science and Technology Education | EDFX507 Graduate Professional Experience Primary 2 | THEO558 * Foundations of Christian Faith |
| Year 2 | | | | | | |
| Semester 1 | EDFD527 Diversity in the Inclusive Classroom | EDFD657 Transition to the Profession: Integrated Curriculum Programming | EDFD668 Interpreting and Designing Educational Research | EDFD604 Managing Challenging Behaviour | EDFX509 Graduate Professional Experience Primary 3 | EDRE515 * Principles of Religious Education |
| Semester 2 | EDCU607 Project | EDLA519 Language and Literacy Education 2 | EDMA505 Mathematics Curriculum 2 | Elective EDAC611 Designing and Implementing Child Abuse Prevention Programs or EDFD648 Engaging Learners in the Early Years or EDLA612 Assessment and Curriculum Designs in TESOL or EDLA615 Literacy in the Early Years | | EDRE516 * Religious Education Curriculum |

*Units in Graduate Certificate in Religious Education

ANNEXURE B – SAMPLE OF ACU EDUCATION DEGREE SUBJECT DESCRIPTORS FOR BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (PRIMARY) – ACU NSW (STRATHFIELD)

Core Units

| Unit Name and Brief Description |
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| Year 1 |
| <p>Contexts for Learning and Development [Includes ICT (1)]</p> <p>The role of schools, families, childcare and communities in the childhood development and education process, nature of different types of schooling including a focus on the mission, role and the nature of Catholic education.</p> |
| <p>Children’s Literature for Literacy</p> <p>Recognising that children’s literature is an essential part of literacy education, the unit introduces pre-service teachers to the corpus of children’s literature that encompasses the variety of literary genres, including Indigenous literature. Teaching students deepen their knowledge of children’s literature, learn about contexts and strategies for responding to, thinking about and critiquing children’s literature, and develop critical habits of mind.</p> |
| <p>Science and Technology for Early Childhood and Primary Teachers 1</p> <p>Students acquire the background knowledge and skills necessary to be an effective primary school and/or early childhood teacher in science and technology. The unit enables students to develop a deeper understanding of the place of science and technology in creating a sustainable society, and prepares the groundwork to examine relevant content contained within the various school and early childhood curricula.</p> |
| <p>Professional Experience Primary 1</p> <p>Teaching students gain an insight into the teaching profession, including as observer, active participant, and classroom assistant, and identify different strategies and learning styles.</p> |
| <p>Understanding Learning</p> <p>The unit covers theories of how children learn including implications for teaching strategies and curriculum design to respond to the way children learn and how technology can assist the learning process.</p> |
| <p>Linguistics for Literacy</p> <p>The unit provides a basis for an understanding of the nature and development of language. Pre-service teachers will undertake an in-depth study of the structure of language. Theories of first and additional language learning from early childhood (0–5 years) are examined to facilitate understanding preschool language development and the interdependence of language and emergent literacy.</p> |

Exploring Mathematics 1

This unit uses a problem solving approach and an emphasis on deep learning and deep knowledge of important mathematical content needed for teaching. There is a particular emphasis on pre-service teachers diagnosing their own understanding of these areas and engaging in practices, discussions and their own research to broaden and deepen their understanding.

Year 2**Teaching and Learning: Preparing for the Contexts of the Field [includes ICT (2)]**

The unit assists pre-service teachers to develop and apply a critical understanding of a variety of social and cultural contexts, including addressing issues of disadvantage. Pre-service teachers prepare for their first teaching experience by engaging with lesson planning procedures, and are introduced to ways of selecting and implementing appropriate teaching, learning and assessment strategies to address these contexts.

Mathematics: Learning and Teaching 1

The unit discusses and investigates current directions in mathematics education. Emphasis is placed on an approach to learning and teaching mathematics that recognises the role of technology, and identifying children's current mathematical understanding.

Literacy Education 1

The unit focuses on the literacy development of children in the preschool and early years of schooling. The teaching of reading and writing and how children learn to read and write is developed through knowledge of relevant processes and structures, as well as through a range of pedagogical approaches. The notion of teaching and learning being socially embedded is introduced, together with recognition of the complex contexts of teaching practice and curriculum design.

Professional Experience Primary 2

The unit enables pre-service teachers to become immersed in the life of the school program through participation in a combination of full-day professional experiences and a block practicum. It develops and extends pre-service teachers teaching, learning and management strategies working, initially with small groups, to activities at the whole class level at the latter stages of placement, and also provides opportunities for integration between education and professional studies undertaken at the University, and the school-based professional learning experiences.

Teaching and Managing Learning Environments

The unit addresses the complexities of teacher performance, classroom management strategies, curriculum planning processes, teaching strategies and social contexts that inform the learning environment. The implementation of communication and interpersonal skills is addressed within various early childhood settings, school, classroom and community contexts.

Science and Technology for Early Childhood and Primary Teachers 2

The unit develops pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills in becoming effective primary school and/or early childhood teachers in science and technology. The unit engages pre-service teachers with the themes of matter and energy with a particular focus on a range of concepts that are relevant to various primary school and early childhood curricula such as earth and space, life and living, ecosystems and biodiversity, matter and materials and energy and change.

Indigenous Cultures and Peoples

Pre-service teachers gain a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories and the role of Indigenous studies within the Australian educational context. The unit focus is on the diversity of Indigenous Australia with particular emphasis on the cultures and history of the region in which it is being taught. Major themes include contemporary cultures and issues, the contributions of Indigenous people in the making of Australia, traditional cultures and histories, and contemporary Indigenous perspectives in education.

Personal Development Health and Physical Education 1

The unit examines curriculum and practice in Physical, Sport and Health Education. An understanding of curricula both local and national which is specific to Catholic, State and Independent schools provides the focus of the unit. The unit outlines the importance of Personal Development Education in the pre-school and primary school settings highlighting the health and wellbeing of students.

Year 3

Creating Inclusive, Safe and Supportive Schools

Takes a social justice and equity view of schooling where the needs of all are respected and addressed. The unit develops pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills to meet relevant professional requirements, communication and interpersonal skills in working with students, parents and colleagues through a spirit of service and care of children within childhood settings, school classroom and community contexts.

Exploring Mathematics 2

The unit identifies that a strong understanding of mathematics is a major asset to an individual seeking to participate fully and meaningfully in an increasingly technological society. The unit adopts a problem solving approach, places an emphasis on 'real world' applications of mathematics, and deepens understanding of important mathematical content knowledge needed for teaching; a particular focus is on rational number (fractions, decimals, percentages), proportional reasoning, probability and statistics, and algebraic thinking and reasoning.

Creative Arts Education 1

Introductory experiences in the areas of Visual Arts, Music, Dance, Drama and Media Education (where applicable) develop the pre-service teachers' foundational knowledge and understandings of the distinctive nature of subject disciplines. Pre-service teachers will develop a critical appreciation of the unique contributions the arts make to society and to learning, and how these contributions can be engaged with and interpreted in the classroom. Pedagogical principles, theoretical components, and practice within the disciplines are examined and applied in the design and implementation of classroom practices in school settings.

Professional Experience Primary 3

The unit extends pre-service teachers' understanding of the complexity of the teaching and learning process in regard to individual differences, cultural diversity, and context. Through placements, including remote, rural and international settings, pre-service teachers are able to engage in professional learning experiences that provide opportunities for the development of new knowledge and skills, deeper cultural awareness, and professional identity. Pre-service teachers take responsibility for planning and implementing whole class learning experiences and participate in other school activities.

Literacy Education 2

The unit focuses on the learning and teaching of speaking, listening, writing, reading and viewing appropriate to the later years of primary school. Pre-service teachers extend their study of a range of relevant literature appropriate to Years 3-6 and examine ways of using literature for planning and integrating literacy across their classroom teaching. Emphasis is placed on learning how to support children to become effective, analytical and critical writers and readers of a variety of text types for different purposes. Understanding of assessment-related issues and the purposes, characteristics, and limitations of various types of assessments is developed.

Personal Development Health and Physical Education 2

The unit focuses on examining curriculum theories, practice and related issues, and addresses how to integrate health and physical education into other curriculum areas. Pre-service teachers develop a 'best practice' approach utilising existing programs to provide a comprehensive and quality program for their students through exposure to existing health and physical education programs (local and national).

Mathematics: Learning and Teaching 2

Pre-service teachers consider issues and strategies in planning, implementing and monitoring learning experiences for pupils in early childhood and primary mathematics, with an underpinning concern for justice and the dignity of all. Pre-service teachers explore the structure and content of the mathematics curriculum with reference to relevant national, state or territory documents. They investigate the findings of reported research into relevant mathematics education issues, and discuss implications for the classroom. The teaching of rational number, algebra, chance and data forms the content basis of the unit.

Community Engagement Program

Pre-service students undertake a placement in a community agency, where they contribute to the functions of that agency and enhance the development of their understanding of the contextual factors that impact on the way in which people live their lives. The program is premised on an understanding that learning is enhanced through exposure to a variety of other individuals and contexts, particularly those that present different forms of knowledge, experiences, and attitudes. The unit assists pre-service teachers to understand and value diversity in its many forms and to cater for diversity more effectively.

Year 4

Transition into the Profession [Includes ICT (3)]

Focuses on broader professional issues around joining the teaching workforce, including refining personal professional framework and e-portfolio, reviewing the nature and expectation of specific work contexts. The unit content consists of three elements: research into the context/system within which students will practise; the provision of an opportunity to make a critical study of curriculum and to apply that knowledge within their preferred teaching contexts; and assembling a digital portfolio that applies critically reflective understandings derived throughout the course, and their personal vision for teaching to the schooling context in which they wish to work.

Science and Technology Education

The unit is designed to develop pre-service teachers' understanding of teaching science and technology in the primary school and early childhood settings. Content includes further development of the pre-service teacher's own knowledge and skills in science and technology, as well as the skills needed to plan learning experiences for children.

Connecting Society and Environment: Curriculum for Learning

The unit examines the patterns of interaction amongst humanity in various socio-cultural, political and environmental settings throughout time. The focus is on pre-service teachers as educators who will prepare society's future adults to be critical thinkers functioning effectively within a rapidly changing society. Emphasis is placed on particular strategies and techniques such as inquiry learning and the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) both in the effective teaching of Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) and humanities, and in daily living in accordance with the various state and territory curriculum documents.

Professional Transition

This school-based professional experience facilitates induction into the profession. Pre-service teachers undertake an internship or casual teaching arrangement which is supported through a mentoring program in their coursework. This practicum focuses on the identification of the professional role of the teacher as one of reflector, thinker, learner and investigator within a particular classroom context and as an integral member of a school community. The unit allows principals, school coordinators, associate teachers and pre-service teachers to work collaboratively with the University to assess, challenge, develop and extend the abilities of pre-service teachers. It also provides opportunities for school-based study and the development of closer links between theoretical considerations and the teaching and learning experiences encountered in schools.

Action Research as a Reflective Practice

The unit focuses on action research and reflective practice, and the practical implementation of reflective processes through field-based research where pre-service teachers will face several teaching problems or issues. It encourages pre-service teachers to develop an understanding of themselves as teacher-researchers through reflection on findings from their research. The unit emphasises the development of self-regulatory strategies that provide a scaffold for continued use of reflective practices and use of evidence to inform this teaching.

Diversity in the Classroom

The unit focuses on strategies to address the needs of a diverse range of students with a special focus on Indigenous students, students with special educational needs, students from language backgrounds other than English, students with challenging behaviours, and gifted and talented students.

Visual Arts Education

Pre-service teachers elect to engage in an in-depth study of Visual Arts curriculum and teaching to examine the field of Visual Arts in an educative and societal context. The unit aims to increase students' knowledge, skills and appreciation of the role of Visual Arts practitioners through the provision of practical studio and appreciation experiences. Pre-service teachers develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between pedagogical principles, theoretical components and practice within Visual Arts education as a discipline and how this informs the research, design and implementation of authentic creative arts practices in school settings.

OR

Music Education

Engages pre-services teachers in an in depth study of Music curriculum and teaching to examine the field of Music in an educative and societal context. The unit aims to increase knowledge, skills and appreciation of the role of Music practitioners through the provision of practical performance and appreciation experiences. It assists pre-service teachers to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between pedagogical principles, theoretical components and practice within Music education and how this informs the research, design and implementation of authentic creative arts practices in school settings.

OR

Dance/Drama Education

Pre-service teachers elect to engage in an in depth study of Drama and Dance curriculum and teaching in an educative and societal context. The unit content encourages an understanding and appreciation of the practices and conventions of Drama and Dance education as applied to the primary classroom. The unit enables pre-service teachers to understand the relationships between pedagogical principles, theoretical components and practice within the Drama and Dance disciplines and how this informs the research, design and implementation of authentic creative arts practices in school settings.

Elective Units**Unit Name and Brief Description****Year 1****Introduction to the Bible**

The unit provides an introduction to the religious literature of Ancient Israel and first-century Christianity. It also involves a study of selected biblical texts, such as Genesis, Exodus and the Gospel of Mark, and extra-biblical texts.

OR

Introducing the Scriptures

The unit engages students in an introductory exploration of the Bible within its historical and cultural contexts. The principles and processes of Catholic biblical interpretation and provides a foundation for understanding the Scriptures in the life of the Church.

OR

Theories of Human Nature

Students learn about the work of various philosophers on the subject of human nature and personhood. The unit includes consideration of issues such as: mind and body, reason and passion, freedom and determinism, individual and community, meaning and value, history and culture, personal identity, and human fulfilment.

What Christians Believe

Students critically examine those beliefs that are central to the Christian faith, including beliefs about Jesus as the Christ and the significance of his life, death, and resurrection; the implications of faith in Jesus Christ for belief in God; creation; human personhood; sin; salvation; the church; and the eschaton. Students consider these beliefs from varying theological perspectives, with a view to the history of doctrinal development, and in light of theoretical and cultural issues.

OR

Introducing Theology

Students reflect on the human search for meaning and purpose. Within that context they examine some of the major beliefs of the Christian faith, particularly as those beliefs have been articulated in Catholic tradition.

OR

Introduction to Philosophical Enquiry

Students learn about central topics in philosophy through the close study of one or two influential texts in the discipline. In keeping with the text(s) chosen, the unit addresses topics such as: certainty and knowledge, the self; perception and intellectual knowledge; truth and error; identity through time; the nature of physical things; the relationship between body and soul; knowledge of the future; freedom; the grounds of duty; ethics and nature; the nature of meaning and reference; objectivity and subjectivity; happiness and the good life; the grounds of political obligation; arguments for the existence of God; relations between God and the world.

OR

Introduction to Ethics

The unit explores some of the fundamental questions in moral philosophy. Topics discussed may include: the nature of moral responsibility; the possibility of moral knowledge; theories of ethics such as utilitarian, deontological, natural law, Socratic, feminist, and virtue approaches; Eastern moral perspectives such as Buddhism and Hinduism; and practical moral issues such as justice, killing, punishment, sexual behaviour, the treatment of animals, genetic manipulation and research, international and intercultural relations, and the use of the environment.

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| Year Two |
| THEOLOGY ELECTIVE |
| OR |
| ELECTIVE |
| Year Three |
| Religious Education 1 The unit recognises that the Catholic school system in Australia is and has always been a critical and integral element of the Catholic Church in Australia; and that as Australian society becomes increasingly diverse and pluralist, the place of religion within society must be acknowledged and appreciated (and in particular the Catholic Church). The unit provides an introduction to Religious Education in Catholic primary school settings, with a focus on religious education in the early years of schooling. It identifies that when considering effective religious education pedagogy in early years' settings, learning and teaching need to be informed by contemporary early childhood theory and practice, as well as the spiritual and religious development of young children. |
| OR |
| ELECTIVE |
| ELECTIVE |
| Year Four |
| ELECTIVE |
| Religious Education 2 The unit focuses on religious education in the middle and senior years of primary schooling. It has specific emphases on students' understanding and awareness of the Catholic tradition including the role and place of sacraments and scripture as well as religion's place in Australia's multi-cultural and multi-faith society. It identifies that when considering effective pedagogy in the middle and senior primary religion classroom settings, teaching and learning need to be informed by contemporary theory and practice that reflect an understanding of the ways in which students in these primary years have developed. |
| OR |
| ELECTIVE |

ANNEXURE C – ADDRESS ON TEACHER QUALITY AND SELECTION TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BY PROFESSOR GREG CRAVEN, VICE-CHANCELLOR, AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, 3 OCTOBER 2012

PICKING WINNERS AND AVOIDING MUG PUNTERS: QUALITY AND SELECTION IN AUSTRALIA'S UNIVERSITIES

ADDRESS BY GREG CRAVEN TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

Mug punters and the bad news of education

It has been unkindly suggested that I begin this speech by noting that it is the first time that a Vice-Chancellor has addressed a room in Canberra without asking for money. However, this would not be accurate. As Vice-Chancellor of a Catholic University, there will be a collection after questions. As this is a journalistic occasion, proceeds will comprise a record low.

Speaking of journalists, normally, they can be relied upon to pick serious issues to report: chainsaw massacres; the state of undress of Kate Middleton; and the adolescent psychology of Tony Abbott. Lately, however, there has been a troubling shift in standards of relevance.

Improbably, education has become news, and better still, bad news. One cannot open a paper without trawling up some educational controversy. Whether it is the ramifications of Gonski; enraged cardinals thrashing State education ministers over school-funding cuts; or allegations the average teacher has literacy levels that would shame a Neanderthal, education is out there.

Astonishingly, this national testiness defies compelling evidence to the contrary. Australia's schools are not collapsing, despite minute shifts in NAPLAN scores that no-one understands anyway. Most parents seem to think their children's teachers work reasonably effectively, and at least are more competent pedagogues than they are disciplinarians. We have a world class university system, with the statistical sprinkling of top one-hundred institutions, and graduates highly sought in employment. Satisfyingly, the expansion of universities over the past two years has brought Australia to the verge of reaching OECD standards for the proportion of citizens holding a university degree. The Prime Minister even seems to have won some sort of UN Gong in world education from Ban Ki-moon which would have left her predecessors H V Evatt and K M Rudd green with envy.

Compared to worries around the resources boom, the rise of China, climate change and the inexplicable failure of Carlton to make the finals, this all seems fairly propitious.

But for some reason, education is in the proverbial gun. Instead of basking in the reality that we finally send students to university in numbers comparable to our competitors, we agonise about whether they are up to it. Rather than being pleased we have enough teachers to reduce class sizes once rivalling football match attendances, we sneer at the supposed Year 12 scores of student teachers. We wonder aloud how these people get into universities, while hoping the only copy of our own year 12 results was cremated with Mum.

Most strikingly, these attacks on university education and teacher quality are led by the very State governments responsible for the teaching profession. In New South Wales, education minister Adrian Piccoli is the Savonarola of new teachers, castigating them for everything from weak Year 12 results to an inability to spell, and probably bad haircuts. He and like-minded colleagues thunder at universities for admitting these troglodytes and demand “higher standards”.³⁸ Education Quality now rivals Law ‘n Order as the most intellectually bankrupt policy debate in Australia: if every problem of crime can be solved by massive prison sentences, so schools will be perfect if only we raise the ATARs of entrant teachers.

The obvious difficulty with this is that it is the States themselves who run the schools; set the standards for teachers; employ them, determine their pay rates, approve work practices and arrange promotions. Laying sole blame upon universities for the quality of teaching involves a sidestep that would do credit to an All Blacks half-back or a used car salesman faced with an uncongenial warranty.

So what is going on? Can it really be the case that our teacher workforce is so bad, and responsibility rests not on those who run the system but those who merely supply it?

Picking winners – selection into universities

Apart from money, four things matter to universities: research; teaching; staff and students. When it comes to students, what matters is having enough and keeping them. Good teaching, beer and sleazy social life help.

You would think that selecting students would be a prime focus for universities. After all, they spend millions on picking the right staff, doing the right research and improving their teaching. Students define the character of a university, and selection defines the character of the student body. Surely, universities must have invested a lot in methods to select their students.

Moreover, student selection into universities ultimately determines the life course of millions of the most talented Australians, ensuring along the way that Howard’s Battlers and Gillard’s Working Families get a fair crack at advancement. Beyond this, it strongly influences national productivity by setting the operational composition of vital professional groups, ensuring that engineers are raucous, doctors insensitive, lawyers unethical, and so forth.

But selection always has been the shabby back porch of Australian universities in terms of investment and focus, and it is not hard to see why. In the Year 12 school rankings – whether termed ATARs or whatever - both universities and governments have the perfect excuse not to worry. Just read the numbers, and problem solved; an objective, authoritative, numerical solution, and best of all, one for which universities have neither to pay nor take responsibility. In the immortal words of the Emperor Napoleon, nice work if you can get it.

This was reasonable in the 1920s, when the year twelve exams actually were specifically designed for university selection of a tiny minority of people. But today, when they have become a general

³⁸ The Minister’s discussion paper is: New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, *Great Teachers, Inspired Learning – Discussion Paper* (2012).

purpose certification of education, they have the fitness for purpose, as sole determiner of university entry, of an egg beater in a bush fire.

The ATAR itself is a term more used than understood. It sounds like some improbable life form out of science fiction, like an AVATAR, or an intelligent Collingwood supporter. In fact, it not even a school “mark” as aging parents would understand it, let alone a direct reflection of intelligence, like being born Victorian. Rather, the Australian Tertiary Admission *Rank* is just that: your percentile rank achieved at the end of Year 12, actually calculated on the number of students who entered Year 7.

The problems of the ATAR as an omni-competent tool for university selection are so legion that no-one but a politician – and certainly no Vice-Chancellor - could fail to know them. No-one denies a Year 12 score is a useful guide to intelligence and aptitude. But to treat it as the final intellectual judgement of God defies reality.

For a start, the thing that correlates most strongly with an ATAR is not subsequent success at university but socio-economic status. Study after study suggests that if your parents are jobless and you live in Campbelltown, your ATAR statistically declines accordingly.³⁹ Studies are yet to link low socio-economic status with stupidity.

Similar studies show that while ATARS are reasonably good predictors of success at high levels above eighty, as soon as you move below this into the middle tiers of achievement - from about fifty-five on, where most of the action is in terms of expanding university participation - their reliability declines dramatically.⁴⁰ So trying to impose life choices on the difference between sixty-five and seventy-three is a little like selecting students on hair colour or football team allegiance, but less fun.

Worse, the usefulness of the ATAR declines still further once students have been at university for a year. Predictably, a year’s equal access to good university teaching is calculated to iron out quite a lot of ATAR difference, together with the disparities in opportunity or maturity that produced it. This hardly is surprising, but it does point to a fundamental truth: what really matters is the quality of a student once they have completed their university degree, not when they enter it.

All this is quite apart from the realities that an ATAR cannot adequately reflect negative influences like disadvantage, disruption or remoteness; nor can it measure (except accidentally) positive qualities like ethics, vocation or dedication. In terms both of self-actualisation and national contribution, the ATAR can harness neither the abilities of a deserving object of disadvantage, nor those of the less appealing, under-achieving seventeen-year-old football menace who nevertheless will be a public asset at twenty-two, given nurture and attention.

These inherent limitations of the ATAR are profoundly reinforced by the utter lack of transparency of published course cut-offs purportedly based on them. Put simply, university cut-offs are as easy to rig as a bush picnic race meeting.

Students and parents, who see cut-offs as a proxy for course quality, would be astonished by this claim. After all, does not a cut-off at an ATAR of 70 guarantee that at least the vast majority of entrants achieved that rank? It does not. While many universities genuinely set cut-offs reflecting

³⁹ See e.g. James, R., Bexley, E., and Shearer, M., *Improving Selection for Tertiary Education Places in Victoria* (2009).

⁴⁰ See e.g. Willis, S., *Monash University: A High Quality/High Access University that Successfully Marries Excellence and Equity* (2011) - Monash University.

the lowest score normally required for entry, others apply wall-paper mathematics that would have impressed Bernie Madoff to give that impression, while employing a variety of stratagems – going well beyond valid bonuses for disadvantage or special characteristics - to ensure that a large majority of students in a course never approach its cut-off. Gullible ministers nod at such courses, while frowning on those with “lower” genuine entry scores. The issue is not whether the students in question are acceptable, but whether their selection was open and transparent.

So welcome to the ATAR as it really is, the alleged decline of which is the source of so much angst in the education “quality” debate. Undoubtedly, it is a seriously useful set of numbers guiding university selection. It also is partial, socially insensitive, inherently weak in the middle and lower ranges, blunt, incapable of assimilating relevant factors that are not purely educational, limited as a means of promoting equity and productivity, a classic input rather than an output measure, a waning asset over a student career and almost infinitely manipulable. Other than that, it is perfect.

So the real issue with the ATAR is not its “decline”, but its limitations. It is hard to imagine an overall selection system that did not have something like the ATAR as a vital working part, but the challenge is to devise other elements compensating for its entrenched weaknesses. This is why a majority of entrants to Australian university courses already come in on something more than an ATAR. From the University of Melbourne’s bold postgraduate entry model to the equity schemes of the regional universities through the portfolios required of students at other institutions, universities have had to think innovatively about selection and around the ATAR. This is a good, not a bad thing.

Selecting teachers – backing a loser

Anxiety over the quality of students selected into university, particularly aspiring teachers, is nothing new. Over the past decade, various qangos and ministers have vied to rescue the teaching profession from itself.

Recently federal politicians of all stripes have been calling for teachers to be allowed into their degrees only if they come in the top thirty per cent of students for literacy or numeracy. That might be a plausible goal except for the fact that students take their last literacy and numeracy tests in year nine, some three years before they would be undertaking a university degree. Perhaps this could be combined with toddler aptitude assessments.

But for once the uber-regulators are not to be found here in Canberra: rather they dwell in the States. Outbreaks have been sporadically strong in Queensland and Victoria, but the undisputed leader is now New South Wales, with the release of its discussion paper *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning*. Indeed, concern over entrant teacher quality is so prevalent it now is being examined by the multi-ministerial Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC).

The NSW paper, with its neo-Maoist slogan title, is the classic of its genre. It canvasses every conceivable barrier to entering teaching, from stipulating secondary school programmes, to narrowly prescribed university curricula, required skill sets, and separate entry and exit tests for university education degrees. Remarkably, given the challenges discussed here, the paper evinces a touching faith in higher ATAR scores as a panacea for new teacher quality. It gives no specific figure, but the magic number around the traps seems to be seventy.

The paper's argument around a minimum teaching ATAR is made in a very particular context. It maintains the uncapping of university places has produced exploding student numbers, with many entrants going into teaching, with inadequate ATARs. Moreover, the paper asserts that as there already is a gross over-supply of teachers in New South Wales rivalling only the number of politicians in Australia as a whole, ATARs (and other requirements) logically could be increased without any shortfall in supply.

There are more troubling questions here than presented by Tony Abbott appearing publicly in lacy lingerie. Starting with the attraction of high-ATAR students as teachers, the most basic understanding of employment markets includes knowing that the higher the ATAR, the wider the career choice. Inexplicably, many students choose highly paid over low salary jobs. State governments have themselves ensured teaching is poorly paid compared to jobs typically pulling astral ATARs, such as law and medicine. Without better salaries, teacher entrants in the nineties are an endangered species, and governments whose financial policies ensure this should blush before complaining.

Worse, the focus on entry ranks ignores the single most important quality in any teacher. This is not genius, which is nice, but unnecessary. It is not subject mastery, which is what you get at university. It is the personality type that cares about people, likes them, wants to teach them and wants them to learn. The cleverest person with the best ATAR and the deepest subject knowledge will be a rotten teacher without this. The inspiring teachers the State education ministers want us to remember were precisely these "teachers by vocation", and we treasure their character, not their Year 12 results. This is the quality we should try to test, rather than trawling simplistically for higher ATARs. We want Mr Chipps, not the nerds from *The Big Bang Theory*.

This is why so many universities are experimenting with alternative entry schemes for teaching students. From the "Teach for Australia" programme, where recent graduates in other disciplines commence new careers as teachers, to schemes which value prior life experience, to my own university's "Early Achievers' Program" which promotes students with a demonstrable record of community engagement, all focus on bringing dedicated teachers into Australian classrooms, rather than teenagers with a number. Where do these schemes fit in a minimum ATAR regime?

The real question of teacher quality is not how people enter education courses, but how they leave them. The whole point of an education degree is not to *take* but to *make* a teacher. Trying to determine who should be a teacher on the basis of adolescent school marks rather than practical and theoretical training received during their course is like selecting the Australian cricket team on school batting averages while ignoring Sheffield Shield innings.

The flat reality is that a minimum ATAR of around seventy would disproportionately exclude students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who we in turn rely upon to teach back into their own communities. It would decimate the cadre of Indigenous teachers. It would render virtually every education faculty within regional universities economically unviable, critically undermining the supply of teachers into those regions. It would stall education as a traditional entry point for first-in family students.

Of course, if you believe in a glut of teachers, perhaps none of this matters. But taking the New South Wales Discussion Paper as the paradigm, it is - ironically - weak on maths. The only real figure

is that around 5,500 aspiring teachers are produced annually, while only 500 are “permanently” employed in the public system.⁴¹

Inexplicably, the paper omits some crucial further facts: that its calculations do not include teachers employed in the Catholic and Independent schools systems; that behind the word “permanent” lurks the reality the New South Wales Department itself deliberately has casualised its workforce, so new teachers overwhelmingly go into “casual positions” that actually may be full-time; that the Department consequently has no less than the equivalent of 10,000 full-time teachers employed as casuals, who annually deliver around 2,000,000 days of teaching; that around fifty per cent of the Department’s teachers have been employed in the last five years, odd if no-one is being hired; that there are three major systemic leakages of teachers (shortly after entry, when raising a family and to access superannuation); and that real full-time employment rates as teachers among my own graduates – the largest education faculty in the State – is eighty per cent, with ninety-five per cent of the remainder in other full or part time employment or study. Journalists feel free to weep. In fact, nothing in the paper indicates it is informed by real workforce planning, or even serious astrological insight.

So what is the politics behind this paper-thin façade? It seems to go like this. To genuinely improve the quality of teachers, salaries would need to be increased. But the States generally are cutting education budgets, and have no intention of spending any more of their own money on teachers. Indeed, one obsession in New South Wales seems to be actually reducing investment in teacher training by limiting the availability of practicum places. So the increased investment option is out.

An alternative would be to confront industrial and work practices in schools that do not reward high achievement and protect low performance by teachers. This is the approach that might be expected of a Liberal Government, and is followed in Victoria. There are cautious hints along these lines elsewhere, but not many. School reform would involve confronting the unions and expending political capital. So the reform option is out.

Instead, some States have hit upon an approach that minimises all three of investment, political courage, and outcomes. If the state of the teaching profession can be blamed on universities, problem solved. The States do not fund universities: they are the Commonwealth’s problem. In fact, the States typically take more out in payroll tax than they put into the entire system. By pointing the finger at universities, they transfer political and fiscal responsibility to Commonwealth Education Minister, Chris Evans, while avoiding any nasty fights with the unions. In fact, the States stand to make money if they stall teacher production, both because it will pay for fewer training practicums, and ultimately there will be fewer teachers in the classroom. The fact that class sizes inevitably will rise rapidly seems not to bother anyone.

This is an approach that incidentally buys into a whole range of extraneous problems. Taking the most obvious, the central components of being an independent, self-accrediting university – a status bitterly fought for in the recent debate over the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) – is the right of to choose what is taught and researched, and who is hired and enrolled. No self-respecting institution will accept dictation over who it accepts into one of its courses,

⁴¹ New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning – Discussion Paper* (2012), 4.

particularly on the basis of an obviously flawed policy, which in principle could be extended to any one or all of a university's programmes.

At the same time, the regulatory coherence offered by the TEQSA regime will be fatally undermined if States like New South Wales – self-excluded from a role in tertiary regulation by chronic lack of commitment and funding over decades – now seek to duplicate regulatory regimes in every area of particular interest. This not only would create a degree of administrative chaos unrivalled since John Hewson tried to explain the application of the GST to an iced cake, but involve the Commonwealth paying and accepting political responsibility for higher education, while States mandated course content and workforce development. There incidentally must be grave constitutional doubt over the capacity of the States to do any such thing, given a raft of Commonwealth higher education legislation (including the TEQSA legislation) covers the field of university quality.

What the notably successful Catholic and independent sectors must think of being dictated to by a struggling State education apparatus, while it cheerfully cuts their funding, may only be imagined.

Mind you, every cloud has a silver lining. What other professions are so nationally vital that they should require a minimum ATAR? Surely not Vice-Chancellors, but journalists are vital to democracy, and what about politicians who actually run the country? Perhaps pre-selection should be reserved for those with ATARs over ninety? Or possibly candidates should merely be required by law to declare their school results to an appalled public? Or maybe journalists could escape scrutiny themselves merely by a little investigation of the background educational performance of our politicians, especially those keen on minimum ATARs for others.

Selecting for quality

Neither universities nor governments ever have faced the true complexities of selection, not only for teachers, but generally. On the one hand, the ATAR and its equivalents have provided a convenient bolt hole. On the other, any university adopting more complex criteria would face loss of market share through students preferring a simple ATAR-based application to State admission authorities. Institutionally, more sophisticated processes would be challenging and expensive, rather like marrying Kim Kardashian.

If the current impoverished debate shows anything, it is that the time has come to address the real complexities of selection.

At the macro policy level, we should begin by embracing the complexities involved. Selection ideally should be “trigonometric”, assessing quality from converging but different perspectives. It should be diverse: different courses may require different approaches. On overall quality, it is capacity at graduation, not entry, which matters most and there is no reason Australia should have fewer university graduates than comparable countries. Finally, good selection is vital to both personal achievement and national productivity.⁴²

Instrumentally, former Macquarie University Vice-Chancellor, Steven Schwartz has set out operating criteria for an effective selection regime. It should be transparent; select students best able to complete their course; based on reliable and valid instruments; minimise barriers to entry; and be

⁴² See Craven, G., ‘When Elitism Rules the Real Elite is Lost in the Shuffle,’ *Australian*, 8 August 2012.

supported by professional structures and practices.⁴³ At present, we have a system answering these criteria at best variably. This is not the fault of the ATAR as such. It is our fault for having placed disproportionate weight upon a single, specialised measure of selection. The question is, what is the practical alternative?

The start, as stated, is to accept the issue is serious and complex, and design accordingly, eschewing simplistic, populist “solutions”. A good beginning would be a nationally coordinated system for University application, allowing students to apply through a single portal, rather than diverse State admission centres. This would encourage consistency, transparency and best practice.

The central challenge, though, is encouraging universities to adopt increasingly sophisticated measures of selection, adapted to the needs of students, courses and – ultimately – the nation. This is difficult, so long as a raw ATAR remains the simple default option for students to obtain university entry. Nor is there the option of imposing some new, universal norm of selection, given the self-accrediting, independent status of universities.

The answer seems to lie in our increasing understanding of higher education standards. As indicated, it is not an impossible task to formulate a broad matrix against which selection processes can be tested. Synthesizing qualities already mentioned, selection processes should, so far as practicable, be multi-stranded; adapted to courses and students; maximise opportunity; be transparent; assess ability to complete; be based on reliable instruments; professionally applied; and operate in the national interest. Were Australia to possess an adequately autonomous statutory body in the nature of a Universities Commission, it would be a manageable task for such a body to assess bands of University course selection processes against such criteria.

The practical effect almost certainly would be the development of diverse selection systems for different courses, with innovation and competition between institutions to devise their own best mechanisms. These might include use of the ATAR, internal school results, weighting of results in particular subject areas, aptitude tests, application of bonuses reflecting disadvantage or other relevant circumstances, past study, interviews, portfolios, personal statements of achievement, special entry tests and a ban on baseball caps worn backwards. Universities would make these arrangements publicly available in a selection policy statement, which incidentally would shine useful light into such sludgy barrels as real ATAR cut-offs, median course ATAR scores, bonuses and so forth. The otherwise inevitable “rush to the bottom” towards a minimalist selection system would be precluded by the process of external assessment against standards, while university independence would be assured by their latitude of those standards.

Realistically, course selection probably would resolve into three broad categories. Areas of purer academic study, such as arts and science, might be adequately assessed by ATAR alone, though subject weighting and bonuses could be applied. Other areas, which involve the development of professional as well as academic capacities inevitably would become “ATAR plus”, employing ATARs together with measures like portfolios and possibly interviews. Many professions would fall into this category, including teaching and – as at present – medicine. Finally, there would be genuine

⁴³ Schwartz, S. (Chair) – Admissions to Higher Education Review Group (U.K.), *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice* (2004).

“alternative entry” courses, in which an ATAR score might or might not figure prominently, with such courses as performing and visual arts being possibilities.

There would be challenges in implementing such a scheme. Critically, comprehensiveness would need to be modified by capacity: personally interviewing 8,000 applicants for a course would defeat most universities, and imaginative proxies would need to be developed. Similarly, the current legislative evolution of TEQSA has not yet arrived at quite the level of autonomy and institutional alignment that would guarantee independence of selection by universities within a broad standards matrix: somewhat different institutional arrangements would be required.

But these difficulties are not insuperable. Moreover, it is imperative that they be resolved if we are to maximise the opportunities of Australians, and avoid the type of sterile debate currently developing around “quality”. After all, it is not as if we presently enjoy a selection system that is the result of careful design for purpose. In the words of Ireland’s greatest philosopher “If I were going to Dublin, I wouldn’t be starting from here”.