

Promising Practices

New Accreditation for Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Australia

Country category: Australia

Teacher education pathway category(ies): Ensuring quality delivery of ITE programmes

Stakeholder category(ies): policy maker; researcher

Date of publication: May 2018



The OECD Review Team – Hannah von Ahlefeld (OECD), Michael Day (University of Roehampton), Kjetil Helgeland (OECD), Ee Ling Low (Nanyang Technological University), Rob McIntosh (consultant) and Emily Rainey (University of Pittsburgh) – identified a number of “promising practices” in each country. These practices may not be widespread or representative, but seen in the context of other challenges, they represent a strength or opportunity to improve the country’s initial teacher preparation system – and for other countries to learn from them.

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgement of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org.

Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d’exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.

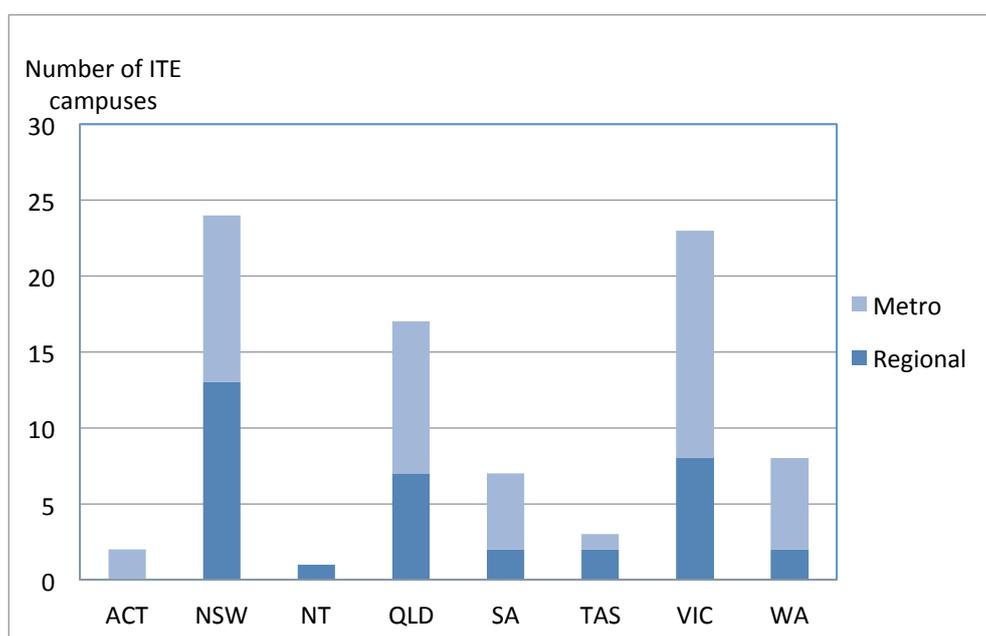
Promising Practice 7.

New Accreditation for Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Australia

Context

In 2014, there were over 450 initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in Australia delivered by 48 teacher education institutions. In 2017, there were 373 accredited ITE programmes provided by 48 teacher education institutions in 85 rural and urban locations across Australia (Table 1) (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2017^[1]).

Figure 1. Location of initial teacher education programs in Australia's states and territories, by type of campus (2017)



Source: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2017^[1]), *Initial Teacher Education: Data Report 2017*, AITSL, Melbourne, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/ite-data-report-2017>.

In Australia, teacher education institutions must comply with regulations and standards at two levels: first, as part of a broader quality assurance system that applies to all higher education institutions and second, as part of a nationally consistent accreditation system specific to ITE programmes. These two levels encompass a range of quality assurance

activities, such as programme reaccreditation, annual reporting, audits and internal quality processes (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2016^[2]).

In 2011, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (ATRA), developed the first standards and procedures for accreditation of ITE programmes. Using this model, from 2013, ITE providers submitted to the relevant state or territory authority an application for accreditation of ITE programmes based on programme outlines and information to demonstrate how the proposed programmes met the relevant accreditation standards, including how teacher candidates would achieve the stage of “Graduate” of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. This application was then assessed by a panel, some modifications were made to the proposed programme and a recommendation provided to the relevant authority as to whether to accredit the ITE programme or not. Generally in the past, few applications were not approved.

However, there remained concern about the variability of ITE programme quality, which risked undermining the quality of teaching. In addition, due to transition arrangements, there was a risk that the changes introduced in the 2013 standards and procedures would take too long to have an impact on the quality of programmes.

In 2015, the Teacher Educational Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), in its review on initial teacher preparation in Australia, recommended an “overhauled national accreditation process for ITE programmes administered by a national regulator and full programme accreditation contingent upon robust evidence of successful graduate outcomes against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers” (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership and University of Melbourne, 2016^[3]). It found that applications for accreditation did not require rigorous assessment of evidence to support programme design and the outcomes expected of graduates and noted that stakeholders called for greater rigour, transparency and consistency in the accreditation process action (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015^[3]; Teacher Educational Ministerial Advisory Group, 2015^[4])

How do the new accreditation arrangements work?

Following the response of the Australian government to TEMAG’s recommendations, in 2015, education ministers in Australia’s eight states and territories agreed to new accreditation standards for initial teacher education (ITE) programmes (Australian Government, 2015^[5]). The elements of the new arrangements are set out in the standards and procedures document issued in December 2015 (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015^[3]). The new standards and procedures are designed to ensure that all graduates of ITE programmes meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the Graduate career stage. This is the foundation of the accreditation process (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016^[6]). The Graduate Teacher Standards, the Programme Standards and the Accreditation Procedures comprise the accreditation system that all states and territories must adopt.

A key focus of the new standards is on the assessment of the impact of the programmes. This is intended to be evidenced in two ways: evidence that is collected from within a programme in relation to a pre-service teacher’s performance, and evidence of graduate outcomes, that is, evidence that is collected following completion of a programme in

relation to the achievements of a programme's graduates. Eight principles inform the design of the new standards and procedures:

- Impact
- Evidence-based
- Rigour
- Continuous improvement
- Flexibility, diversity and innovation
- Partnerships
- Transparency
- Research

The accreditation system comprises two accreditation stages and also incorporates annual reporting.

- **Accreditation stage one** applies to new programmes and requires that providers submitting new programmes must demonstrate how the proposed programme is evidenced against the programme standards, map where in the programme the Graduate Teacher Standards are taught, practised and assessed, and provide a plan for demonstrating impact.
- **Accreditation stage two** is for existing programmes. The focus is on the provider's interpretation of the evidence they have collected on programme impact. This evidence is specifically in relation to the pre-service and graduate teacher outcome measures described at the commencement of the accreditation period, in the plan for demonstrating impact. Programmes are required to achieve accreditation stage two following a period determined at the time of accreditation stage one, not exceeding five years.

Accredited programmes are to report annually to their authority on:

- data as identified in the plan for demonstrating impact
- changes to the programme
- nationally required data to contribute to national and/or jurisdictional collections
- additional data/information requested by the accrediting authority.

The Programme Standards set out specific requirements with respect to:

- programme outcomes
- programme development, design and delivery
- programme entry
- programme structure and content
- professional experience
- programme evaluation, reporting and improvement

A key element of evidence of impact in relation to a teacher candidates' performance is the requirement for providers to include within their programmes assessment of classroom teaching performance across a sequence of lessons that reflects the range of teaching practice. All teacher candidates must undertake and reach the required standard on this assessment to graduate.

As in the past, panels will continue to review applications for accreditation. However every panel member and chair is required to undertake national training – and to complete a national refresher training every two years. This training is designed to equip panellists to make assessments against the standards, including evidence in relation to

demonstration of programme impact and the Graduate standard. Each panel is required to have a member from outside the accrediting jurisdiction to promote national consistency in decision making (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016^[6]).

Why is this an opportunity?

The OECD team in its review of Australia from 22-26 May 2017 noted the opportunities that new accreditation standards and procedures provide regarding:

- *Raising the overall quality of individual programmes.* At the heart of the new standards is a focus on outcomes for graduates and, ultimately, on the impact of graduate practice on students in schools. The onus on providers to collect evidence as to how their programmes are delivering in these areas should improve the transparency of the quality of individual programmes and, over time, provide richer data for building understanding of the effectiveness of individual programmes and the characteristics of high quality ITP. The new processes and the training offered to accreditation panel members should also ensure greater consistency in decisions on accreditation of individual programmes.
- *Strengthening specific aspects of all programmes.* The new requirements will help to address particular areas of concern that have been signalled with respect to ITE generally, including inadequate thresholds for decisions about entry to ITE programmes and the uneven quality of professional experience within programmes. The new standards send a strong signal as to what is expected to change in these areas.
- *Buy-in from stakeholders.* The new standards and procedures are generally accepted by both regulatory bodies and providers and both parties are focused on giving effect to them.

How could they be improved?

There are a number of areas where further improvement could be made or some caution is required:

- *Over-reliance on emergent performance information.* While the generation of additional information on programme quality is a good development, the development of valid measures of quality is not a simple task. In the short term, care will need to be taken to avoid misleading or superficial claims about the quality of particular programmes before the reliability of particular measures, including the methods used for the Teacher Practice Assessment, has been fully assessed. Keeping a focus on a range of indicators will assist in this.
- *Constraints on innovation.* One of the principles underlying the new accreditation standards is to foster flexibility and innovation, and a focus on impact rather than inputs or programme design should support this. But the latter will remain easier to assess, particularly in the short term, and the capability in programme accreditation processes to assess impact will need to be monitored to avoid too much reliance on what is deemed “acceptable” in terms of the inputs or design of a program.
- *Growing models of good practice.* To gain benefit from the standards it will be important to not only require models of good practice in areas such as professional experience, but actively encourage it. Quality relationships between providers and schools, including strong feedback mechanisms, currently appear to

be the exception rather than the norm and the ability of schools to support the professional learning of pre-service and novice teachers is uneven. Building an understanding of good practice in these areas, including through sharing information on examples of excellent practice, will help ensure the new accreditation guidelines achieve their goal of stronger initial teacher preparation.

For more information

- Australian Council for Educational Research (2016), *Country Background Report. OECD Initial Teacher Preparation Study. Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. [2]
- Australian Government (2015), *Australian Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers – Australian Government Response*, Australian Government, Canberra, <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/australian-government-response-action-now-classroom-ready-teachers-report>. [5]
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2017), *Initial Teacher Education: Data Report 2017*, AITSL, Melbourne, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/ite-data-report-2017>. [1]
- AITSL (2016), *Guidelines for the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia*, AITSL, Melbourne, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/initial-teacher-education-resources/guidance-for-the-accreditation-of-initial-teacher-education-in-australia.pdf>. [6]
- AITSL (2015), *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*, AITSL, Melbourne, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/initial-teacher-education-resources/accreditation-of-ite-programs-in-australia.pdf>. [3]
- Teacher Educational Ministerial Advisory Group (2015), *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers*, Department of Education and Training, Canberra, <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/action-now-classroom-ready-teachers-report>. [4]