



# **National system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education programs— Proposal for consultation**

## **Consultation Report**

October 2010

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## Purpose

This paper reports the outcomes of the consultations undertaken by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) on the draft proposal for a national system for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in September 2010.

## Background

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) has designated AITSL to lead the development of national accreditation of initial teacher education programs. The proposed national system builds on considerable national work undertaken over the past few years.

It includes work undertaken in 2008 by the state and territory teacher regulatory authorities, collectively the Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (ATRA), and the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) working under the auspices of the National Accreditation of Pre-service Teacher Education Working Group of the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC). The proposals also take account of the earlier work by Teaching Australia and ACDE.

The proposed national system also takes account of more recent developments, including the development of the Australian curriculum and the emerging national education policy environment.

MCEECDYA requested that, in the framing of this first national system for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs, the standards should set high level expectations of initial teacher education on designated matters. These matters were:

- prerequisites for Mathematics and English and English language requirements
- course content requirements including secondary subject content and primary subject content; and content addressing assessment and use of assessment data
- special education, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, classroom management and ICT
- professional experience requirements
- consideration of the strengthened assessment of graduating students in core areas
- information standards.

The proposed national system has three integrated elements:

- the **graduate teacher standards** which are a career stage of the National Professional Standards for Teachers, and make explicit the knowledge, skills and attributes expected of graduates of nationally accredited initial teacher education programs
- the **program standards** which describe key features expected of high quality initial teacher education programs: the characteristics of programs that give confidence the graduate standards will be achieved
- the **accreditation process** which sets out a nationally consistent process for the accreditation of programs, including panel establishment and composition, assessment of programs by these panels, and the reporting of accreditation decisions.

## **Overview of the consultation process**

*The National system for the accreditation pre-service teacher education programs—Proposal for consultation* was published on the AITSL website on 1 September and formed the basis of a public, national consultation process conducted through September. Copies of the consultation paper were sent to over 200 stakeholders who also received an email alert advising how to access the information online.

Stakeholder responses to the draft proposal were collected through a number of consultation processes:

### **Consultation forums**

Invitational consultation forums were conducted between 8 September and 24 September, co-hosted by AITSL with the Deans of Education and the teacher regulatory authorities, in all state and territory capital cities. All 8 consultation forums were chaired by members of the AITSL Initial Teacher Education Working Group. The arrangements for the forums, including invitations and physical arrangements were made by the teacher regulatory authorities, in consultation with AITSL and local Deans of Education. Forums typically involved 3 groups of 5 to 8 participants in discussion groups that considered and provided feedback on 5 consistent questions. Scribes were provided by the jurisdictional teacher regulatory authorities. Total attendance was around 200.

### **Online survey**

An online survey, accessed through the AITSL website between 1 September and 24 September, provided structured responses to a series of questions. Fifty-four responses (responding to at least one question) were received. Many of these were partial responses—24 completed the entire survey.

### **Individual teleconference consultations**

Opportunities were provided for individual teleconference consultations with key stakeholders. Teleconference consultations were conducted with 16 separate organisations, including education departments and other school system authorities, Deans of Education (both state and national groups), education unions and professional associations. These conversations provided opportunities for stakeholders to discuss their responses and draw attention to any key concerns or areas of support, separate from the more public audiences of the consultation forums.

### **Written submissions**

Organisations and individuals were invited through the AITSL website to provide written submissions responding to the draft proposal by 24 September. Sixty-five submissions of this nature were received.

Organisations providing written submissions were contacted to ask permission to publish their response on the AITSL website. A number stated their wishes for their submissions to remain confidential.

A breakdown of submissions received is as follows:

- Catholic and independent schools sector organisations (8)
- Education unions (7)
- Government organisations including regulatory authorities (16)
- Higher education providers (including Deans of Education) (18)
- Individuals (9)
- Parent/Community organisations (4)
- Principals' organisations (3)
- Professional bodies and associations (9)

A full list of organisations and individuals who provided written submissions is provided at Appendix A.

*Note:* Some organisations and/or individuals formed part of joint submissions. Consequently the total number of organisations/individuals who provided feedback is greater than the number of submissions actually received.

## Focus questions

The following five focus questions formed the basis for the consultation forums and the online survey:

- The appropriateness of the proposed principles for a national system for the accreditation of pre–service teacher education programs
- When considering the inter-related nature of the proposed national graduate teacher standards and the program standards, any critically important area in the preparation of teachers that requires further attention by these standards
- Suggestions for any strengthening of the proposed accreditation processes and issues that require further consideration and elaboration
- Taking account of MCEECDYA’s decision for a distributed national approach to the accreditation of pre–service teacher education programs, comments on the allocation, inclusiveness or suitability of the proposed roles and responsibilities
- Any particularly significant matters that may require further consideration of the proposed implementation timeline.

## Data analysis

Data from the four modes of consultation were collated, summarised and analysed according to the focus questions. Issues, concerns and comments outside these questions were also included in the analysis and informed the themes identified in this report.

Major themes were consistent across the methods and the range of stakeholder groups, indicating that the consultation process was effective in capturing key concerns. It had been intended that the data be analysed according to different categories of respondents and sources—responses from universities, feedback from the forums, and so on. However, it became clear that the themes were consistent across categories and it would not be helpful to differentiate the responses in this way.

Overall there was strong support for the development of a national system for accreditation of initial teacher education programs. Only 4 responses—2 submissions and 2 online—were recorded as disagreeing with the proposal. The general feedback is reflected in the results for Question 4 of the online survey (see Appendix B) where 54 of 61 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that *... the proposed principles for a national system for the accreditation of pre–service teacher education programs are appropriate.*

Issues addressed in responses tended to focus on the detail of implementation and on specific elements of the proposal. The major themes are distinguished from other issues by the level of response, i.e. by the proportion of responses referencing a specific issue. Major themes are cited many times in the responses. Additional themes are those referenced by 15% or more of the responses. Instances where only one or two comments are made are not generally included in the analysis, unless the reference is directly related to the major themes.

## Major themes

Six key themes were consistently raised by respondents in forums, teleconferences, written submissions and as additional comments on the online survey:

- concerns about and risks associated with the tight timeline for implementation of the national system
- strong support for extending the system to include early childhood education and Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- implications of the length of graduate programs
- entry requirements, namely the expectation that students will have achieved in Year 12 at or above the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile in both Mathematics and English as a prerequisite for primary teaching and in English for secondary teaching
- discipline content requirements
- ensuring appropriate expertise and training for the panels.

Responses to the focus questions provide more detail about the implications of these themes for the proposed national accreditation system.

## Additional themes

Additional themes raised by respondents several times throughout the consultation process are:

- a need to ensure entry requirements do not restrict national policy promoting of socially inclusive access to higher education
- the need to build in a process for reviewing/evaluating the accreditation system itself
- the implications of supporting teacher education students admitted through alternative entry to achieve the English/Mathematics entry requirements
- the need to involve a range of key stakeholders and include expert input in the development of supplementary accreditation materials
- expectations of and training and support for teachers providing mentoring and supervision in professional experience components of programs
- implications for the preparation of teachers for the middle years of schooling
- the implications for the preparation of teachers teaching in areas not yet covered by the Australian curriculum, such as early childhood and VET teachers
- the need for a comprehensive glossary or dictionary of terminology
- resourcing implications
- the need for a visionary preamble to the proposal
- the desirability of moving towards accreditation more focused on program outcomes and less on inputs
- kinds of evidence of graduate success in achieving the standards.

## Focus questions

### **Question 1: The appropriateness of the proposed principles for a national system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education programs.**

There was strong consensus supporting a national system. Some concern was expressed about implementation by jurisdictions rather than through a centralised national system, arguing that a nationally implemented system would create consistent expectations which in turn would improve public perception of teaching as a profession.

The small number who disagreed with the proposal did not disapprove of a national system *per se*. However, they highlighted specific gaps they considered major issues, including: the danger of standardisation and lack of diversity, and insufficient reference to social inclusion, difference and Indigenous views.

There were several responses querying the function and extent of partnerships as well as differing interpretations of this term. Some suggested that partnerships mean strengthening internal school community with parents, teachers and students. Others noted that smaller sectors ought to have the same opportunities for partnership as larger organisations. Partnerships also extend beyond the education sector to include agencies and broader community stakeholders. Most of the comments around partnerships emphasised that these are reciprocal and that schools, systems and providers all shared responsibility for developing quality teaching.

This range of responses indicates that some further work may be needed around definition and scope of partnerships.

A recurrent theme was the emphasis on flexibility and innovation. Like partnerships, this term had various interpretations ranging from delivery of teacher education programs to supporting evidence, flexible program content and accommodation of jurisdictional needs and differences.

Issues raised about the nature and extent of research (issues included budget and resources, responsibility and accountability, quality assurance, scope of evidence based practice) were balanced by a number of responses applauding the explicit inclusion of research and evidence in the proposal.

### **Question 2: When considering the inter-related nature of the proposed national graduate teacher standards and the program standards, any critically important area in the preparation of teachers that requires further attention by these standards.**

This question elicited the strongest response of all the questions. There was general support for setting high entry requirements and thus raising the standard of initial teachers. Some respondents argued that the focus should be on programs that are of consistent quality, comparable across jurisdictions, and provide teachers with measurable skills and knowledge about discipline areas, classroom management and with high levels of Mathematics and English capability rather than on the entrants to programs. Some suggested that the standards reproduce existing shortcomings.

Concern was expressed by a number of respondents about the impact the standards may have on equity and inclusion.

A small number of responses argued that there is inadequate provision for non-academic elements critical to teaching success. Whilst students are to demonstrate an aptitude for and commitment to teaching, the program standards do not articulate how classroom behaviour management, relationships with children, professional practice, engagement with school life and student wellbeing will be delivered and/or measured.

While there was strong support for consistent, inter-related teacher and program standards, participants in most of the consultation forums considered the wording too vague. They suggested it does not provide specific definition or explanation of the substance of key elements in the program standards. There was substantial concern and requests for clarification about the program entry requirements, structure and content across the standards, in particular:

- the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile expectation. (This issue elicited a range of robust responses and was regarded as a complex issue requiring substantial further work around equivalence.)
- equivalent qualifications
- level of supervision and number of practicum days
- discipline studies and expected amounts of content
- the balance between school-based and theoretical components
- English level competence (expectations and comparison between local and international students; concerns about an IELTS 7.5; queries regarding equity for students from a low SES environment; impact on Indigenous students).

A number of respondents queried how elements like ‘demonstrated aptitude for and commitment to teaching’, comparisons across the variations of English and Mathematics and across jurisdictions could be accurately measured.

Several respondents expressed concern about the focus on inputs rather than outcomes. On a related issue there was some concern about too much emphasis in the graduate standards on students ‘knowing’ rather than ‘doing’.

### **Question 3: Suggestions for any strengthening of the proposed accreditation processes and issues that require further consideration and elaboration.**

Overall there was strong support for the suggestion that current jurisdiction accredited status be fully recognised until the expiry date.

There was substantial concern about resourcing the proposed processes and a strong recommendation that this is the responsibility of either AITSL or a national budget allocation. The main costing concerns were:

- establishing panels
- training of panel members
- travel for interstate panel members
- training of school mentors
- practicum visits.

Several responses focused on what was seen as inadequate attention in the proposal to ‘specialised’ areas. These were identified as Indigenous education (in relation both to content requirement within programs and in understanding the special needs in curriculum/pedagogy), gifted children, children with special needs. Respondents were concerned that the standards do not clearly articulate processes to ensure that these areas are integral to all programs.

There was also concern about resourcing and timelines for providers to meet the requirements outlined in the proposal. These respondents expressed a need for clearer definition of the ‘substantial changes’ that may require re-accreditation of existing programs.

A few responses expressed disappointment that the proposal does not include sufficient detail about working with parents and paraprofessionals or studies in student wellbeing and health.

In general, there was a call for elaboration of the substance and detail of the standards, including clear guidelines around provider documentation, evidence guides and training materials.

Most responses suggested that appeal panels should include teacher educator representation. There was little support for a legal professional being required to chair appeal panels, with a majority of respondents arguing that an experienced and respected teacher educator should fill this role.

A small number of responses strongly disagreed with the proposal that graduate program be two years in length and argued that length of program does not guarantee its quality.

Several respondents misunderstood the proposal to require that two year programs be reduced to 18 months. Related to this was a concern that dictating length of programs would inhibit innovative and flexible delivery, affecting quality. Respondents also noted a need for measures to assess programs in practice, not solely through documentation, as part of the quality assurance process.

Other responses to this question contained similar feedback and concerns to those highlighted in Focus Question 2.

**Question 4: Taking account of MCEECDYA’s decision for a distributed national approach to the accreditation of pre–service teacher education programs, comments on the allocation, inclusiveness or suitability of the proposed roles and responsibilities.**

Almost all responses to this question sought clarification about how roles and responsibilities would be allocated, what resources would be made available and how these would be allocated, and cautioned that a nationally consistent approach, whilst strongly endorsed in principle, must not impose additional requirements on existing programs and ought to work collaboratively with existing jurisdictional registration processes.

Resourcing and funding were two concerns noted in a number of responses.

A small number of responses queried how the system would work in practice for those providers who operated in more than one state or territory. A suggestion was made about pooling resources.

A few comments were made about nomination of personnel to panels. Suggestions included that nomination be by MCEECDYA and AITSL.

A number of responses sought further clarification about the required detail of applications for accreditation and expressed a need for consultation in determining these guidelines.

There was some concern that jurisdictional registration authorities not become branches or offices of AITSL.

**Question 5: Any particularly significant matters that may require further consideration of the proposed implementation timeline.**

Reponses to this focus question largely underscored specific comments made to earlier focus questions. The key themes in Question 5 were around:

- concern about the timeline for implementation
- knowledge of pedagogies, especially ICT, and a plea for future-thinking ICT to be part of every program
- consideration for mature aged career change students and the requirement that they undertake a further two years of study
- length of graduate programs
- timely provision and quality of the implementation support materials
- encouragement of transparent and thorough consultation with all stakeholders at each stage of the process

- greater detail about how the process will be implemented
- including early childhood and VET preparation programs in the system as soon as possible
- the additional resource burdens and workload the accreditation system will impose on providers, employers and teachers in its rollout phase
- transition issues for current accreditation systems, existing programs, and the process for re-accreditation.

Respondents suggested that the appeals process needs further clarification, consultation and discussion to determine whether the proposed process is the appropriate solution.

### **Question 6: Any further comments or feedback about the proposal.**

This focus question was not included in the national consultation forums but was included as an option on the online survey. Nineteen people answered this focus question and their comments are reflected below where those points have not already been discussed. The points below also include any additional comments noted in the written submissions.

A small number of respondents commented on the language in the proposal, noting that some areas were ambiguous, misleading or obscure and led to questions of interpretation and application of these sections. They suggested that some of the terminology is outmoded and should be amended to reflect contemporary notions of teachers' work. Examples of these suggestions include:

- 'practising' rather than 'registered' teacher
- 'practicum'/'supervised practice teaching' and 'school visits'
- 'middle schooling'
- 'contemporary school experience.'

Some suggested including a glossary of key terms to provide consistency.

There was considerable interest in a phasing in of the new national system and strong suggestion that each stage of the accreditation process should include consultation and discussion.

A number of responses applauded a national approach to accreditation and the organisation of the three integrated elements.

## **Conclusion**

Participants in the consultation process through national forums, written submissions, teleconferences and the online survey strongly supported the introduction of a national accreditation system.

Feedback was received from a representative breadth of stakeholders, ranging from individuals to jurisdictional registration authorities, employers, professional bodies, education providers and teacher unions. The key themes noted in this report reflect a consistent set of issues expressed in the feedback across these groups and will inform the redrafting of the proposal.

The responses offered many detailed suggestions for elaboration and clarification of specific aspects of the standards, reflecting a range of viewpoints. These additional observations will also be considered in the re-drafting of the proposal.

Overall more than 350 individuals or groups participated in the consultation process.

AITSL is grateful to respondents for their input to the consultation process of this important work for the teaching profession.

## **Appendix A: Submissions received**

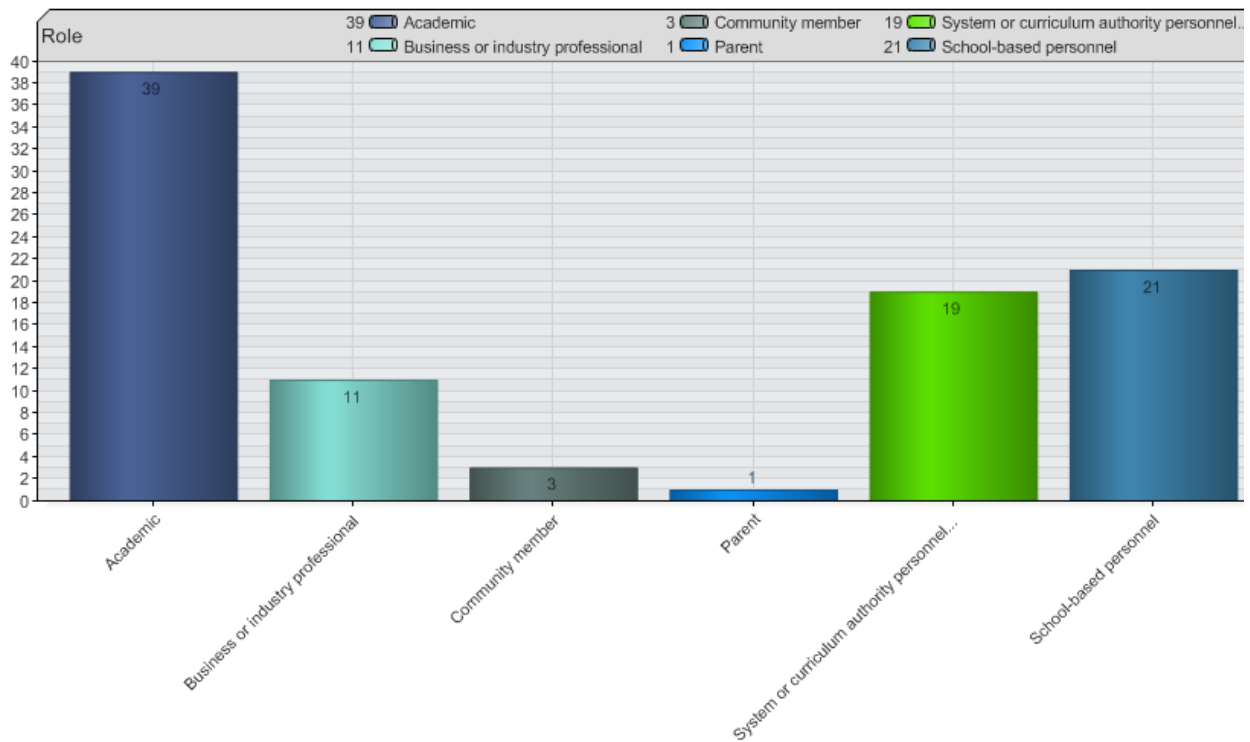
Associated Christian Schools  
Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities Inc  
Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers  
Australian Catholic University, Faculty of Education  
Australian Council for Computers in Education  
Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation  
Australian Council of Deans of Education  
Australian Education Union  
Australian Education Union SA  
Australian Education Union Victoria  
Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI)  
Australian Parents Council  
Australian Secondary Principals Association  
Australian Sports Commission  
Catholic Education Commission of Victoria  
Catholic Education Office, Sydney  
Catholic Education South Australia  
Catholic Secondary Principals Australia  
Charles Sturt University, Faculty of Education  
Coltheart, de Lemos, Hempenstall, Meyer, Nickels, Wheldall, (joint submission)  
Confidential  
Deakin University, Faculty of Arts and Education  
Department of Education Aboriginal Education Western Australia  
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development VIC  
Department of Education and Training QLD  
Department of Education and Training, ACT  
Department of Education and Training, NSW  
Department of Education WA  
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations  
Edith Cowan University, School of Education  
Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales  
Gail Rienstra, QLD  
Griffith University, Faculty of Education  
History Teachers Association of Australia  
Hunter Institute of Mental Health, NSW  
Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA)  
Independent Schools Council of Australia  
James Cook University of North Queensland  
Jo Padgham, ACT DET Principal and ALEA National Vice President  
La Trobe University, Faculty of Education  
Monash University Faculty of Education  
National Association of Field Experience Administrators  
National Catholic Education Commission

NSW Institute of Teachers  
NSW Secondary Principals Council  
Teacher Education Council NSW  
NSW Teachers Federation  
Primary English Teaching Association  
Queensland Catholic Education Commission  
Queensland College of Teachers  
Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens' Associations  
Queensland Teachers' Union  
Rika Mason, Tabor Victoria  
South Australian Association of School Parents Clubs Inc  
State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia Inc  
Tasmanian Polytechnic  
Teachers Registration Board of South Australia  
Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory  
University of Melbourne, Graduate School of Education  
University of New England, School of Education  
University of Notre Dame  
University of South Australia, School of Education  
University of Tasmania, Faculty of Education  
Victorian Independent Education Union  
Victorian Institute of Teaching

## Appendix B: Online survey data summary

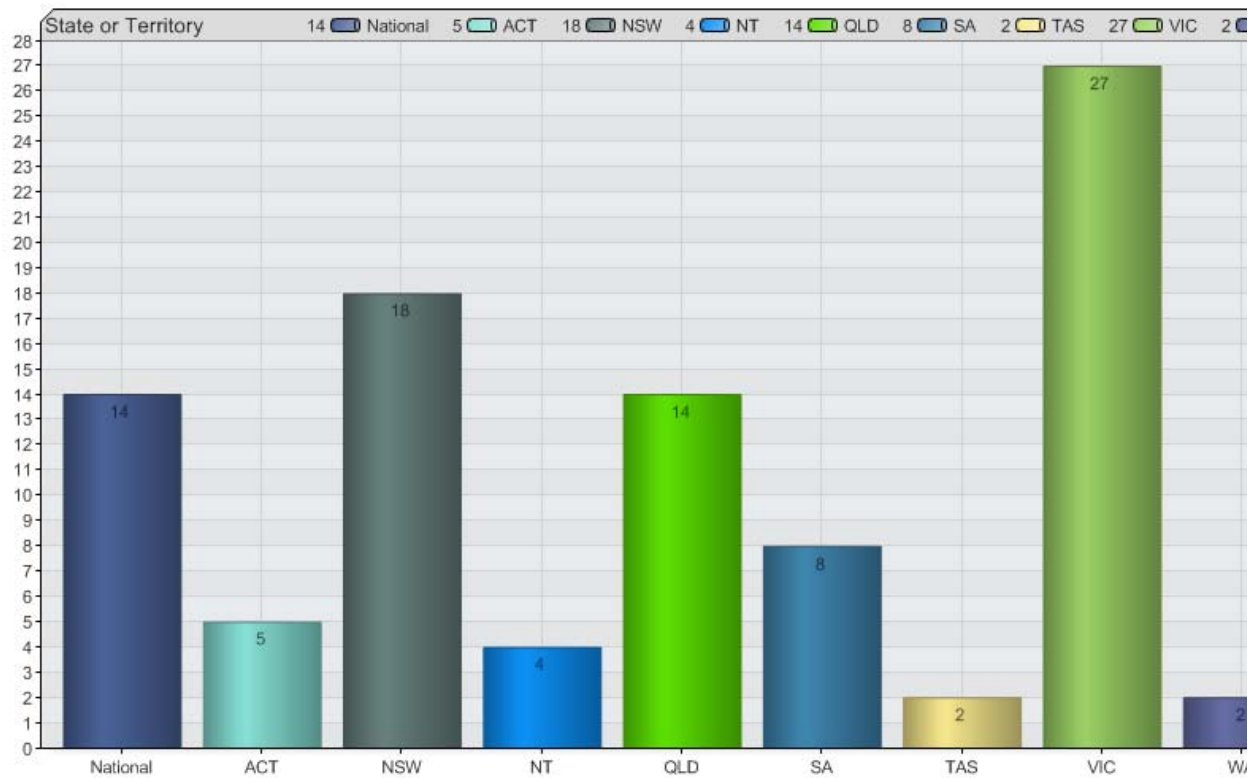
### Role

Role	Responses	Percent
Academic:	39	41.49%
Business or industry professional:	11	11.7%
Community member:	3	3.19%
Parent:	1	1.06%
System or curriculum authority personnel:	19	20.21%
School-based personnel:	21	22.34%
Total responded to this question:	94	100%
Total who skipped this question:	0	0%
Total:	94	100%









## State or Territory

	Responses	Percent
National:	14	14.89%
ACT:	5	5.32%
NSW:	18	19.15%
NT:	4	4.26%
QLD:	14	14.89%
SA:	8	8.51%
TAS:	2	2.13%
VIC:	27	28.72%
WA:	2	2.13%
Total responded to this question:	94	100%
Total who skipped this question:	0	0%
Total:	94	100%



**The proposed principles for a national system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education programs are appropriate.**

	Responses	Percent
Strongly agree: 	20	32.79%
Agree: 	34	55.74%
Disagree: 	4	6.56%
Strongly disagree: 	3	4.92%
Additional comments:  	15	24.59%
Total responded to this question:		61 64.89%
Total who skipped this question:		33 35.11%
Total:		94 100%

