

A Proposal for a National System for the Accreditation of Pre-service Teacher Education

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Teaching Australia

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR TEACHING AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Teaching Australia was established as the national body for the teaching profession with funding provided by the Australian Government under the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme.

The views expressed herein are those of the Directors of Teaching Australia.

This paper sets out a proposed system for national accreditation of pre-service teacher education. It also includes a first cut of national accreditation standards, based primarily on existing state standards.

Interested persons or organisations are invited to provide their views and responses to the proposal by **30 September 2007**, to:

Teaching Australia
5 Liversidge Street
Acton ACT 0200

or by email to: accredit@teachingaustralia.edu.au.

In addition to written responses, Teaching Australia will arrange discussions with those directly involved in the accreditation system, particularly the Australian Council of Deans of Education, the Australasian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities and the Joint Project Steering Group – Pre-Service Education set up under the auspices of the Australian Education Systems Officials Committee.

A NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

Background

The benefits of national accreditation for programs preparing people for practice in their chosen profession are widely recognised. These benefits include greater public confidence in the quality of graduates from professional preparation programs and the contribution of accreditation to quality improvement in the programs themselves.

Since its establishment in 2005, Teaching Australia has been engaged in research and consultation aimed at developing a national system for the accreditation of the 400 plus programs for the professional preparation of teachers across the country.

In October 2006, Teaching Australia released a consultation paper, *Australia-wide accreditation of programs for the professional preparation of teachers*, setting out a series of propositions to focus attention on the central elements of a national accreditation system. Since that time, the propositions have been extensively discussed and debated by key groups and within the teaching profession.

In February 2007, the House of Representatives Inquiry into Teacher Education released its report, *Top of the Class*, supporting the development of a national accreditation system based on nationally agreed consistent and rigorous standards.

Teaching Australia has continued to review and revise its thinking in the light of this report and responses from key groups and individuals. The outcome of this process is the following proposal for a national accreditation system.

The proposal summarises the detail of the main elements of a national accreditation system:

- The purpose of accreditation
- Underpinning principles
- What will be accredited
- The basis for accreditation
- The nature of the accreditation decision
- The accreditation processes
- Partnership arrangements
- Governance
- Documentation

The proposed system set out in this document could be a basis for piloting national accreditation of teacher preparation programs early in 2008.

Relationship between accreditation and registration

Accreditation is concerned with the acceptability of programs leading to a teaching qualification designed to prepare entrants for the teaching profession. This assurance of the quality of teacher preparation programs therefore has a direct relationship with teacher registration, which takes account of teaching qualification, as well as other factors such as character, fitness to teach and personal criminal history.

The national accreditation system will enable teacher registration authorities to accept national accreditation as providing the assurance that a program meets the teaching qualification requirement for registration, which is in turn a pre-requisite for employment.

Purpose of accreditation

Accreditation is a mechanism for quality assurance and quality improvement. The primary function of an accreditation system for teacher education is to assure the public, including potential students, about the quality of programs preparing graduates to teach in Australian schools. The system also serves to promote quality improvement by benchmarking successful practices and sharing information.

The benefits flowing from a national accreditation system include:

- a shared understanding of the expectations of beginning teachers
- a shared understanding of quality teacher preparation programs
- shared knowledge about successful practices in the professional experience component of teacher preparation
- strengthened partnerships between universities, the profession, employers and registration authorities
- greater national and international recognition allowing greater professional mobility.

Underpinning principles

The design and operation of the accreditation system is founded on a set of principles that shape the detailed arrangements and processes. The following set of principles is based on proposals put forward originally by the Australian Council of Deans of Education in their 1998 publication, *Preparing a Profession: Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project*.

- Accreditation will be national, and will be sensitive and responsive to both national and local needs.
- Accreditation will involve major stakeholders in a collaborative system.
- Accreditation will be objective, rigorous and independent of the institution whose program is being reviewed.
- Accreditation will focus primarily on the achievement of expected outcomes rather than on detailed specification of content and inputs.
- Graduate and program standards and accreditation procedures will be subject to an on-going cycle of review.
- The system will promote and support excellence, diversity, innovation, and the dissemination of exemplary practices in initial teacher preparation.
- Accreditation will be integrated where appropriate with existing quality assurance processes (audit, accreditation and review).
- Accreditation procedures will be transparent, cost-effective, efficient and timely.

What will be accredited?

The accreditation system will assess and accredit both undergraduate and graduate initial teacher preparation programs. It will not accredit institutions, as providers of teacher education, or individual graduate teachers. Institutions will be encouraged to seek accreditation for a suite of teacher preparation programs concurrently.

A teacher preparation program is defined as a discrete sequence of study and professional experience, leading to the award of a qualification and providing preparation for entry to the teaching profession.

For undergraduate programs, the entire program leading to the award of a qualification and entry to the profession would be accredited.

For graduate programs, only the qualification providing entry to the profession would be accredited. The initial undergraduate qualification relied on for admission to the graduate program in general would not be accredited.

What will be the basis for accreditation?

Accreditation will be based on accreditation standards, comprising both graduate standards and program standards.

Graduate standards make explicit the professional standards expected to be achieved by graduating teachers. They describe the knowledge, skills and attributes expected of the graduates of teacher preparation programs and will be compatible with the professional standards for teachers at all career stages – beginning, competent and advanced.

Program standards describe key features expected of high quality teacher preparation programs, the characteristics of programs that give confidence the graduate standards will be achieved.

Graduate standards will be framed using the categories of:

- Professional knowledge, which includes content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of students. Professional knowledge will also include such core knowledge as high standards of personal literacy and numeracy and the capacity to teach them, an understanding of indigenous education, and a capacity to communicate effectively with families.
- Professional practice, which includes professional skills and management of student learning.
- Professional commitment, which includes values, professional learning and relationships.

Program standards will be framed using the categories of:

- Student selection
- Teaching program
- Assessment procedures
- Professional experience
- Quality assurance

National accreditation standards, building on existing standards, particularly those already developed by some registration and accreditation authorities, are attached for further consideration. This is a starting point for the development of an agreed set of rigorous national standards in collaboration with the registration and accreditation authorities, deans of education and the profession.

What will the accreditation decision be?

Under the national accreditation system, teacher preparation programs will either be accredited or not accredited.

For new programs, accreditation will be considered provisional until confirmed after a cohort of students graduate. The accreditation will be confirmed after consideration of evidence that the graduates of the program meet graduate standards.

Accreditation might be granted conditionally, if the accreditation standards are broadly met but there are issues requiring further evidence or information or needing adjustment.

Accreditation granted provisionally or conditionally will be for the purpose of program improvement or development. Graduates of such programs will be considered to have completed an accredited program.

What will the accreditation processes involve?

The national teacher education accreditation system will draw on processes that are well developed in other professions.

In brief, the main step-by-step processes involved are:

- Preliminary discussion
- Determination of eligibility
- Initial application by the institution
- Establishment of a panel to assess the program and make recommendations
- Self-assessment by the institution against accreditation standards
- Detailed application with supporting evidence in relation to the standards
- Assessment of evidence of quality by a visiting panel
- Formal accreditation decision based on the panel recommendation
- Appeal provisions

Partnership arrangements

The accreditation system will provide for partnership arrangements with individual states and territories. The arrangements put in place may vary for different states and territories. While some jurisdictions may want the national accreditation agency to manage the whole accreditation process, some jurisdictions, particularly the more populous states with a large number of teacher preparation programs, may choose to establish their own local arrangements to manage the accreditation process, for example by establishing their own visiting panels from the national pool.

All arrangements will involve assessing programs

- against national accreditation standards;
- using the national processes that provide for a common approach, including participation by members of a core national pool of trained accreditation panel members; and
- recommendations to the Accreditation Council for the accreditation decision.

How will the system be governed?

The accreditation system will be managed by an Accreditation Council, possibly titled the Australian Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (ACATE).

The role and responsibilities of the Accreditation Council will be to:

- Make recommendations about accreditation policy
- Establish and document accreditation procedures
- Establish accreditation arrangements with each of the teacher registration and accreditation authorities
- Make accreditation decisions
- Maintain a register of accredited programs
- Establish appropriate appeal procedures
- Report publicly on the outcomes of accreditation
- Publish and maintain a register of accredited programs
- Disseminate information and guidance on quality teacher education
- Provide advice about matters such as specific requirements relating to the accreditation of teacher education for specific stages of schooling and specialist areas
- Provide advice about approaches to recognising high quality through accreditation
- Establish and maintain effective liaison with relevant bodies

The Council will have 15 members – a Chair and 14 members with specific expertise and experience drawn from the profession and relevant stakeholders.

The Chair will be appointed by the Board of Teaching Australia following consultation with the Deans of Education and the state and territory registration and accreditation authorities.

Other members of the Council will be appointed on the nomination of relevant bodies and associations, as follows:

- 2 x teacher registration and accreditation authorities
- 3 x universities or other institutions preparing teachers
- 3 x teachers
- 2 x principals
- 2 x employers of teachers
- 1 x Teaching Australia representative
- 1 x parent associations

The Council will be established as a standing committee of Teaching Australia with terms of reference and delegated powers under its constitution. Teaching Australia will provide the secretariat for the Council, and will be responsible for the funding of accreditation processes that are undertaken nationally.

The Council will meet three times a year, or as required.

Documentation

The accreditation system will be supported by a documented Accreditation Management System. The components of the documentation will include:

Overview of the accreditation system: provides the basis for the system and outlines how it operates.

Accreditation standards: provides details of the accreditation standards, comprising both graduate standards and program standards, against which programs will be assessed.

The accreditation process: an overview: outlines the steps involved for institutions in achieving accredited status for programs.

Information for universities and other providers: includes information about eligibility, how to submit a detailed application, the process of self assessment, the visiting panel process and the appeals process.

Information for panels: details the composition, selection, responsibilities and operation of visiting accreditation panels and their members, including composition, selection, training, responsibilities, process, making recommendations, reporting and secretariat support.

Partnership arrangements: describes the arrangements agreed to by the Accreditation Council with state and territory teacher registration and accreditation authorities for the accreditation of programs.

The Accreditation Council: composition and operation: describes the functions and the operation of the Accreditation Council.

Appeals/dispute resolution: outlines the details of the appeals process and the process for dispute resolution.

Transitional arrangements: sets out arrangements for transition to national accreditation of existing teacher preparation programs.

Glossary: lists the terms used in the accreditation system and their meaning.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

PART I: Graduate standards

The purpose of graduate standards is to indicate the knowledge, skills and dispositions that should be developed through a teacher preparation program and observed in a newly graduated teacher. Graduate standards specify what graduate teachers should know and be able to do upon completion of their pre-service education. While the standards are not intended as a checklist of competencies to be marked off, they will provide guidance on the expected outcomes of initial teacher preparation programs.

Organising categories

The organising categories represent the critical elements of what is expected of a graduate teacher. The categories of professional standards for graduate teachers are:

1. Professional knowledge
2. Professional practice
3. Professional commitment

Capabilities

Capabilities are the discrete elements of the knowledge, skills and dispositions expected of teacher education graduates. They are both practical and aspirational in the sense that they encapsulate what graduate teachers should know and how they intend to practise. The capabilities for teaching graduates are:

1. Professional knowledge

Teaching graduates should...

- a) Have a high level of literacy and numeracy
- b) Know the content of subjects they teach
- c) Know how students learn and how to teach them effectively
- d) Know their students

2. Professional practice

Teaching graduates should...

- a) Plan for effective learning
- b) Assess and report for effective learning
- c) Create and maintain productive learning environments

3. Professional commitment

Teaching graduates should...

- a) Develop a capacity for reflective practice
- b) Engage in professional development
- c) Become members of a professional community

Descriptors

Descriptors provide an elaboration of each capability in terms of the observable practices expected of all teachers when they graduate from programs of initial teacher preparation. When the graduate standards are applied to specific programs, a degree of differentiation will occur in the interpretation of these descriptors, especially for programs that focus on defined stages of schooling or specialisations (for example, early childhood, middle schooling and the like). Nevertheless, the descriptors below depict the knowledge, skills and dispositions of recently graduated teachers.

Standards for graduate teachers

I Professional knowledge

Teaching graduates should...

Have a high level of literacy and numeracy:

- appreciate the critical role of language and literacy skills, including multiliteracies, for participation in society
- demonstrate excellence in verbal and written communication
- understand key concepts in mathematics and the relationships between them
- are competent and confident in numerical computations

Know the content of subjects they teach:

- know the subject matter that they plan to teach
- be able to explain important principles and concepts relating to their subject
- demonstrate their knowledge through inquiry, critical analysis and synthesis of subject matter

Know how students learn and how to teach them effectively:

- know a range of strategies for literacy and numeracy acquisition, including the development of oral language, vocabulary, grammar, reading fluency, comprehension and the literacies of new technologies
- know how to use diagnostic tools to identify and assess the development of literacy and numeracy skills
- demonstrate a thorough understanding of the pedagogies relevant to their discipline
- know how to use pedagogical knowledge and appropriate resources (including information and communication technologies) to engage students in learning
- know how to encourage higher order thinking and critical inquiry
- understand potential barriers to student learning and know how to address them
- appreciate the importance of understanding Indigenous cultural norms and practices
- know how to communicate effectively with students about learning and learning goals
- know a range of teaching strategies to cater for different learning needs and know how to use assessment to support learning

Standards for graduate teachers *continued...*

Know their students:

- understand how the skills, interests and prior experiences of students influence learning
- possess pedagogical skills for classroom management
- demonstrate empathy and positive regard for students
- regard all students as capable of learning and demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to equity in their teaching practices
- know how to build productive relationships with students and their families
- understand child and adolescent development
- understand students' different approaches to learning
- acknowledge the status of Indigenous Australians as the original custodians and inhabitants of Australia and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' culture
- know strategies for teaching students with specific educational needs, such as: students with special educational needs, non-English speaking background students, and students with challenging behaviours

2 Professional practice

Teaching graduates should...

Plan for effective learning:

- use their professional knowledge to identify clear, challenging and achievable learning goals for students as individuals and groups
- design and implement learning opportunities that promote higher order thinking and critical inquiry
- plan and implement coherent lesson sequences to engage students and support the achievement of learning outcomes
- use a range of appropriate resources (including information and communications technologies) to support student learning
- create engaging learning environments for different types of learners
- listen to and learn from the Indigenous community
- design and implement learning opportunities that are socially just and inclusive
- take into account the school, family and community contexts in which they work when designing learning programs
- take into account the skills, interests and prior experience of students when designing learning programs

Assess and report for effective learning:

- use a range of strategies to assess the achievement of learning outcomes
- understand the links between learning outcomes and assessment strategies
- give effective and timely oral and written feedback to students
- keep accurate and reliable records to monitor progress
- understand the principles and practices of reporting to parents and guardians
- use assessment results to reflect on past practice and to inform further planning of teaching and learning

Standards for graduate teachers *continued...*

Create and maintain productive learning environments:

- establish clear expectations of behaviour for a safe learning environment for all students
- communicate effectively with students about learning and learning goals
- use a range of strategies to develop rapport with students while maintaining an appropriate professional relationship with them
- model exemplary behaviour for co-operative learning and positive interactions with others
- establish a climate where learning is valued and students' ideas are respected
- use a range of strategies to establish an inclusive learning environment where all students are challenged to explore ideas and develop skills
- respect and seek to understand Indigenous cultural norms and practices
- work cooperatively with colleagues and other professionals who share responsibility for the learning and welfare of students
- understand the specific requirements for maintaining student safety in schools

3 Professional commitment

Teaching graduates should...

Develop a capacity for reflective practice:

- reflect on their strengths, preferences and needs as a learner and identify priorities for professional development
- reflect on and evaluate their professional knowledge and practice
- seek and use feedback from others to improve their professional practice

Engage in professional development:

- demonstrate a capacity for evidence-based professional practice
- engage in both individual and collegial forms of professional learning
- be committed to participating in communities of learning
- know how to learn and apply new knowledge to address new challenges or changing circumstances
- understand the structures and skills that underpin collegial practice
- explore professional concepts and issues through research, discussion and debate

Become members of a professional community:

- demonstrate a capacity to work collaboratively
- build productive professional relationships with colleagues
- practice and uphold the principle of teamwork in an educational context
- be prepared to enter the consultative, collaborative and critical relationships embedded in communities of practice
- understand the legal and ethical dimensions of teaching and the nature of a teacher's professional commitment to students

PART 2: Program standards

Program standards provide a measure of the capacity of the institution to operate teacher preparation programs and to support student learning. They are based on assumptions about the inputs necessary for effective learning in teacher preparation programs, based on existing practice and informed by evidence.

Organising Categories

Organising categories represent the critical areas of teacher preparation programs for effective teaching and learning. The five organising categories for teacher preparation programs are:

1. Student selection
2. Teaching program
3. Assessment processes
4. Professional experience
5. Quality assurance

Descriptors

Descriptors identify the observable practices expected of teacher education institutions when delivering an effective teacher education program.

Standards for teacher preparation programs

1 Student selection

The institution will apply clear selection criteria for applicants that:

- provide for equitable access
- promote diversity within the profession
- facilitates the selection of students who have the aptitude and disposition to undertake teacher preparation

2 Teaching program

The teaching program will:

- be delivered by appropriately qualified staff
- demonstrate best practice in research and tertiary-level teaching
- use multiple sources of data for continuous program improvement
- be delivered in adequate facilities with ample resources to support student learning
- have a budget adequate to support the delivery of quality learning experiences for students both on site and in schools
- deliver sufficient content knowledge, within the context of a focused liberal education, to enable graduates to meet the Graduate Standards
- deliver sufficient professional knowledge about schooling, schools, human development and pedagogy, to enable graduates to meet the Graduate Standards
- provide students with the diagnostic tools to identify and assess the development of literacy and numeracy skills
- develop the knowledge and skills needed to function as a capable and caring professional in an educational setting
- demonstrate best practice in integrating learning technologies with teaching and learning

Standards for teacher preparation programs *continued...*

3 Assessment processes

The institution will have assessment procedures that:

- are rigorous, fair and transparent
- are regularly moderated, evaluated and improved
- assess student performance in multiple contexts and in different ways
- monitor the students' progress towards achievement of Graduate Standards
- ensure that students who do not perform satisfactorily in all units of study, including the professional experience component, do not pass the program

4 Professional experience

The institution will offer professional experiences for students:

- of sufficient length, diversity and depth to enable graduates to meet the Graduate Standards
- that enable students to apply and reflect on their content, professional and pedagogical knowledge, skills and dispositions in a variety of settings
- that are aligned with clear and progressive stages for the development of the acquired knowledge, skills and dispositions of beginning teachers as defined in the Graduate standards
- where student performance is assessed against clear statements of purposes, roles and expectations
- based on an authentic collaborative partnership between the institution-based staff and members of the teaching profession working in schools
- that provide access to the expertise of knowledgeable and skilled teachers within schools
- that offer students access to mentors and other forms of professional support
- that are regularly evaluated and improved through collaborative processes

5 Quality assurance

The institution will develop the quality of its teacher education programs through:

- maintaining its status as a legal, solvent educational institution
- adequate resourcing of all aspects of the program
- monitoring, evaluating and modifying curriculum, delivery and assessment on a regular basis
- being responsive to the legitimate concerns and requirements of the profession;
- supporting the professional development of program staff both on-site and in schools
- consulting with stakeholders such as employers and the profession on a regular basis
- transparent and equitable recruitment practices
- workload policies and practices that enable staff to engage in professional activities, including teaching, scholarship, assessment and advisory roles, and work in schools

