

Selection

Action Now: Selection of entrants into initial teacher education

Guidelines

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Contents

1. Overview	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Objective	1
1.3 Purpose	1
1.4 Rationale	2
1.5 Audience	2
1.6 Application	3
2. Context	4
2.1 Diversity of providers and entrants to initial teacher education	4
2.2 Equity groups	4
2.3 Legislation	5
3. Selection Process	6
3.1 Guiding principles	6
4. Admission standards	7
4.1 Academic capability	7
4.2 Non-academic capability	8
5. Selection Protocol	10
6. Transparency	12
6.1 Rationale	12
6.2 Reporting requirements	12

1. Overview

1.1 Introduction

Quality teaching is critical to improved student outcomes, and initial teacher education sets the foundation for a high quality teaching workforce. Rigorous candidate selection procedures that maximise the likelihood those entering the profession will become effective teachers will support the quality of teaching in Australia.

1.2 Objective

In selecting entrants into their programs, it is critical that providers of initial teacher education identify and admit only those candidates who can demonstrate they have the necessary academic as well as non-academic capabilities that will enable them to successfully graduate as classroom ready teachers from a rigorous initial teacher education program.

1.3 Purpose

Selection into initial teacher education in Australia takes place within the context of a national approach to accreditation of initial teacher education programs, the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*, developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and applied by state and territory teacher regulatory authorities. All initial teacher education providers obtain and maintain accreditation for each program offered at their institution.

To gain and maintain national accreditation, the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* require that providers of initial teacher education must demonstrate as part of their applications for accreditation stage one that their program has an evidence-based selection process and minimum entry requirements in place that are consistent with the program standards below. At stage two of accreditation, providers must provide evidence about the impact of the selection mechanisms and minimum entry requirements they have used.

The Standards and Procedures state that:

- providers set both academic and non-academic criteria for the selection of entrants to initial teacher education programs
- providers describe in detail the rationale for their approach, the selection mechanisms utilised, threshold entry applied and any exemptions used
- all information necessary to ensure transparent and justifiable selection processes for entry into initial teacher education programs, including student cohort data, is published.*

*Note that this is proposed wording for the Standards and Procedures based on these guidelines, and does not reflect the current Standards and Procedures. Final wording is subject to Ministerial endorsement. It is anticipated that further standards relating to entry into programs (e.g. students' IELTS levels) will be included in the revised Standards and Procedures.

These guidelines provide further information and guidance for providers in meeting these program standards, and accreditation panels in assessing applications. The document outlines the key factors for providers of accredited initial teacher education programs in Australia to take into account when developing and implementing selection processes and determining entry requirements for their programs. They also outline reporting requirements.

1.4 Rationale

Success as a teacher stems broadly from success in a teacher education course as well as high quality induction and support in the first two years of teaching. While recognising the significant development of an individual during the program, these guidelines are based on a broad understanding from the research that there is a positive correlation between the presence of particular academic and non-academic capabilities that can be identified at selection, with future success in the teacher education program and subsequently in the teaching profession. Research also suggests a combination of selection mechanisms increases validity and accuracy.

Where selection processes and entry requirements are sophisticated and transparent and their impact measured, a strengthened evidence base identifying which measures are most effective in predicting success both in teacher education and teaching itself can be built. Public confidence that those entering initial teacher education programs are those best suited to the teaching profession will increase as a consequence.

1.5 Audience

These guidelines are for:

- providers of initial teacher education seeking to meet and report on the entry and selection requirements of the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures (Accreditation Standards)*
- teacher education candidates seeking an understanding of the expectations for entry to initial teacher education programs
- schools and employers seeking assurance that the selection methods used maximise the chance of selecting those most likely to develop into classroom-ready graduates
- regulatory authorities and panels assessing accreditation applications from providers of initial teacher education
- members of the general public seeking assurance that those admitted to teacher education programs are transparently and rigorously assessed as having the necessary academic and non-academic capabilities that demonstrate suitability for teaching.

1.6 Application

The entry requirements defined in the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* apply to all entrants to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, including but not limited to entry granted on the basis of:

- completion of secondary education
- tertiary entrance score
- prior achievement in a higher education course or VET award course
- mature age entry
- prior professional qualification or experience.

2. Context

2.1 Diversity of providers and entrants to initial teacher education

Selection takes place in very different contexts across Australia, and while graduates of all initial teacher education programs are required to meet the Graduate career stage of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, institutions may have different priorities and goals in terms of the types of programs they offer and the types of students they want to attract.

Selection is a complex exercise, with no single selection process able to be uniformly applied by every initial teacher education provider in diverse contexts across Australia, nor any one mechanism alone able to accurately predict future success in a teacher education course. These guidelines recognise this complexity by providing flexible but nationally consistent selection guidelines that ensure all candidates are subject to a rigorous selection process which provides an evidence-based determination of their suitability.

2.2 Equity groups

It is expected that for a large majority of initial teacher education students, providers will be able to draw upon mainstream sources of evidence to obtain sufficient information about an applicant's academic capability. However, these guidelines also support selection practices and entry pathways that facilitate entry to initial teacher education for students from equity groups whose academic capability cannot accurately be determined from common or conventional measures of prior academic achievement such as a tertiary entrance score.

This provision is particularly intended to support providers who choose to target equity groups as part of their mission, such as those providers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In order to support these students to undertake university-level study, providers are able to tailor their selection methods to draw upon alternative evidence-based indicators of demonstrated academic capability to determine suitability for entry to an initial teacher education course. These alternative selection methods are still required to adhere to the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* in relation to selection, including reporting of selection mechanisms, cohort data and entry criteria.

Providers also demonstrate that they have the appropriate pathways and/or support mechanisms in place to facilitate the progress of these students to achieve the required graduate outcomes including the requirement that all graduates' levels of personal literacy and numeracy be broadly equivalent to those of the top 30 per cent of the population.

It is expected that each provider will use the same measures of non-academic capability for all applicants to their particular programs.

2.3 Legislation

All higher education providers must be registered by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) which evaluates provider performance against the Provider Course Accreditation Standards set out in the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011.¹ Most providers of initial teacher education are self-accrediting institutions under the TEQSA act, with the autonomy to accredit their own courses as higher education awards.

Section 3 of the Provider Course Accreditation Standard requires that an institution's admissions criteria are appropriate. Specifically Section 3.1 requires that the admission criteria:

- are appropriate for the Qualification Standards level of the course of study and required learning outcomes
- take account of external benchmarks
- ensure that students have adequate prior knowledge and skills to undertake the course of study successfully.

Higher education providers are also subject to jurisdictional legislative requirements governing the operation of their institutions and programs, which may encompass the accreditation of initial teacher education programs.

The TEQSA legislation also states that providers are not exempt from complying with jurisdictional legislation that regulates who may undertake a particular occupation, such as teaching.

¹ Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (2013), *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*, Australian Government, Canberra

3. Selection Process

3.1 Guiding principles

In order for providers to select the candidates most likely to succeed in an initial teacher education program, the following principles guide the development and implementation of selection processes:

1. Selection processes assess both the academic and non-academic capabilities of candidates.

2. Providers use evidence-based selection methods relevant to their context to gather information and assess the academic and non-academic capabilities of candidates.

3. Providers are transparent in the selection methods and minimum entry requirements chosen, including the evidence base supporting the choice.

4. Admission standards

Entrant selection criteria

Entrants demonstrate that they have the academic as well as the non-academic capabilities to develop the skills required to meet the Graduate career stage of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at program completion.

States and territories may also have additional or specific entrant selection criteria or requirements that providers need to consider as part of their entry and selection processes.

4.1 Academic capability

Research indicates that a teacher's academic capability, particularly cognitive ability and verbal reasoning skills, correlates positively with student achievement. Providers use evidence-based selection methods and set minimum program entry requirements to determine whether entrants possess suitable academic capability.

Entrants have the academic capability to undertake and be successful in a rigorous course of study, evidenced by prior academic achievement and/or other valid indicators that demonstrate relevant academic capability.

Indicators of academic capability could include:

- demonstrated academic ability at year 12 (e.g. tertiary entrance score, academic achievement in required subject disciplines)
- successful prior studies at university, a vocational education provider or other tertiary education provider that demonstrates relevant academic ability (e.g. prior study scores, average grade results in partially or fully completed qualifications)
- successful completion of appropriate prior professional qualifications
- performance in a range of tasks or activities that demonstrate academic capability to meet the intellectual requirements of the course of study (e.g. assessment centre, writing tasks, literacy and numeracy tests)
- performance on validated measures of cognitive and verbal ability undertaken as part of the selection process.

The accreditation process will consider not only the indicators chosen, but also the entry requirements set by the provider.

4.2 Non-academic capability

Research indicates a range of attributes and motivations are common to effective teachers. Providers use evidence-based selection methods and set minimum program entry requirements to determine whether candidates possess these attributes and motivations.

The key capabilities associated with successful teaching identified in the research are:

- motivation to teach²
- strong interpersonal and communication skills³
- willingness to learn⁴
- resilience⁵
- self-efficacy⁶
- conscientiousness⁷
- organisational and planning skills.⁸

Providers consider a combination of these capabilities in selecting entrants, and provide evidence to justify the focus on particular capabilities, and the approach taken to assessing them.

² Barber, M. & Mourshed, M. (2007), *How the World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out on Top*, McKinsey and Company, United States

Watt, H. & Richardson, P. (2008), Motivations, perceptions and aspirations concerning teaching as a career for different types of beginning teachers, *Learning and Instruction*, 18(5), pp. 408-428;

Richardson, P. & Watt, H. (2006), Who chooses teaching and why? Profiling characteristics and motivations across three Australian universities, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 34(1), pp. 27-56;

Thomson, M., Turner, J. & Nietfeld, J. (2012), A typological approach to investigate the teaching career decision: Motivations and beliefs about teaching of prospective teacher candidates, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28(3), pp. 324-335;

Panesar, S. (2010), Voices from the field: Perspectives of first-year teachers on the disconnect between teacher preparation programs and the realities of the classroom, *Research in Higher Education Journal*, vol. 8, pp. 1-19

³ Barber & Mourshed (2007)

⁴ Barber & Mourshed (2007)

⁵ Howard, S. and Johnson, B. (2004), Resilient teachers: Resisting stress and burnout, *Social Psychology of Education*, 7(4), pp. 399-420;

Parkinson, M. (2009), *TDA QTS Interview Diagnostic Tool: Research Report*, UK Department of Education

⁶ Rockoff, J., Jacob, B., Kane, T. & Staiger, D. (2011), Can You Recognize an Effective Teacher When You Recruit One?, *Education Finance and Policy*, 6(1), pp. 43-74

⁷ Rockoff et al. (2011)

Bastian, K. (2013), Do Teachers' Non-Cognitive Skills and Traits Predict Effectiveness and Evaluation Ratings?, paper presented at Association for Education, Finance and Policy conference, March, New Orleans, US

⁸ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (published 2015), *Selection into initial teacher education: Annotated Bibliography*, AITSL, Melbourne;

Indicators of non-academic capability could include:

- performance on a specifically designed and validated assessment of teaching aptitude and/or other capabilities utilised as part of the selection process
- work and life experiences that have required demonstrations of the capabilities listed above
- expression of applicants' understanding and motivations about the program to which they are applying.

The accreditation process will consider not only the indicators chosen, but also the entry requirements set by the provider.

5. Selection Protocol

Design of a rigorous selection process

This protocol describes the parameters within which accredited initial teacher education programs develop and report on their selection process, standards, methods and outcomes.

Phase one:

Design and justify a rigorous selection process

Objective: Develop, define and justify entry criteria and minimum program entry requirements with reference to the **Admission Standards** (refer Section 4).

Recommended steps:

- » Define the characteristics of the target candidate group for the initial teacher education program being offered.
- » Develop entry criteria and minimum acceptable requirements for program entry accordingly, taking into account the requirements of the Accreditation Standards, including the requirement that graduates have personal literacy and numeracy skills broadly equivalent to the top 30 per cent of the population.
- » Select and/or develop appropriate mechanisms and methods to measure and assess entry criteria and requirements.
- » Ensure chosen mechanisms have had their validity established through research and evidence.

Phase two:

Assess applicants

Objective: Gather information and assess applicants' academic and non-academic capabilities using the selection process and minimum entry requirements identified in phase one.

Recommended steps:

- » Use evidence-based methods and mechanisms to gather information to assess applicants' academic and non-academic capabilities.

Phase three:

Select applicants

Objective: Rate candidate suitability based on program entry requirements identified in phase one and suitability information gathered through phase two and select applicants accordingly.

Recommended steps:

- » Make offers only to applicants assessed as suitable for the program against the entry requirements identified in phase one, using the evidence about candidates collected in phase two.

Phase four:

Evaluate efficacy and report on mechanisms and outcomes

Objective: Collect data to validate the effectiveness of the selection process and inform improvements to selection mechanisms and entry requirements, as well as to enable public and transparent reporting of selection practices.

Recommended steps:

- » Collect ongoing data to track, validate and link the use of selected entry requirements and selection process to entrants' performance in the initial teacher education program, retention/attrition rates, employment outcomes and employer satisfaction.
- » Analyse data to inform continuous improvement in selection practices.
- » Report on data as detailed in Section 6, and within accreditation processes.

6. Transparency

6.1 Rationale

Greater transparency in the selection processes and basis of admission used by initial teacher education providers to select those entering teacher education programs can lift the calibre of entrants attracted to these programs, the quality of those entering the teaching profession, and public confidence in initial teacher education. It also contributes to building a strengthened evidence base linking the identification of academic and non-academic capabilities at selection with future success in initial teacher education.

Aspiring teachers and the broader community will benefit from greater transparency of selection information, enabling them to clearly understand program requirements and what is needed to successfully enter the teaching profession.

6.2 Reporting requirements

All information necessary to ensure transparent and justifiable selection processes and basis of admission for entry into initial teacher education programs is published, including:



1. Academic capability of all entrants

Selection method(s) used

For each method:

- Criteria applied
- Threshold entry scores
- Any exemptions used
- Data per student cohort against these criteria, including:
 - » Number of applicants admitted through this selection mechanism
 - » Range of results for students admitted

2. Non-academic capabilities of all entrants

Selection method(s) used

For each method:

- Criteria applied
- Minimum entry requirements
- Data per student cohort against these criteria, including:
 - » Number of applicants admitted through this selection mechanism
 - » Range of results for students admitted

3. Effectiveness

Once selection mechanisms are in place, providers will report on their effectiveness, using measures such as student retention and student success data in relation to each entry cohort within each program.

The data identified above will be published and updated annually for each program intake[†]. This data collection will be consistent with the principles of necessity, risk and proportionality outlined in the TEQSA Act.

[†]Upon the adoption of the guidelines, AITSL will develop a guide to different types of data sets to illustrate the level of specificity and detail that is appropriate.



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