



Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group

Submission by The Australian Institute
for Teaching and School Leadership

May 2017

AITSL submission to the Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group* (IWG) draft implementation plan (April, 2017).

AITSL supports the Australian Government's response to the recommendations outlined in the *Higher Education Standards Panel report on Improving the Transparency of Higher Education Admissions Processes*.

Standardising the admission information requirements and processes of higher education providers is consistent with the work AITSL has been undertaking in relation to course entry transparency requirements for initial teacher education (ITE) students. These requirements are set out in the nationally agreed [Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures 2015](#), and the [Action Now: Selection of entrants into initial teacher education guidelines](#), which were both endorsed by Education Council in 2015.

The accreditation of ITE courses in Australia continues to be executed by state and territory teacher regulatory authorities. However, this accreditation takes place under a national approach with common standards and processes outlined in the Standards and Procedures.

National initial teacher education accreditation requirements

In February 2015, the Australian Government released its response to the *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* (Action Now) report from the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG). This response committed to a reform agenda for teacher education that aimed to add rigour to the system and provide a stronger evidence based for ITE in Australia.

The primary mechanism for giving effect to the *Action Now* recommendations was the strengthening of the *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (Standards and Procedures) (December, 2015). These Standards and Procedures are designed to ensure that all graduates of ITE meet the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage. This is the foundation of the accreditation process.

The Standards and Procedures require providers to collect and analyse data and evidence on the effectiveness of their courses, drawing on two distinct but related types of evidence:

- evidence of pre-service teacher performance that is evidence collected within a course which demonstrates pre-service teacher performance
- evidence of graduate outcomes that is evidence collected following course completion in relation to graduate achievement.

The Standards and Procedures include processes and structures that ensure a rigorous and nationally consistent accreditation process. AITSL plays an ongoing role with the implementation of these processes to support further improvements in ITE.

National data strategy

The *Action Now* report recommended increased use of ITE data to improve and evaluate ITE courses, and improve the availability, consistency, and quality of data on teacher supply and demand. This has led to the development of the *National Initial Teacher Education and Teacher Workforce Data Strategy* (NDS), which will be a source of nationally consistent information about the teaching workforce outcomes of ITE. The NDS will unite a suite of existing data collections, including the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) and Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching data collections into a national database. Any improvements to the accuracy, transparency and consistency of admissions data in the HEIMS at the unit record level will also improve the quality of the data.

National initial teacher education entry requirements

In response to the *Action Now* Report, the Australian Government tasked AITSL with identifying best practice in selection and developing specific criteria to assist universities in selecting students into ITE courses who have the necessary academic and non-academic capabilities. This included ensuring that all ITE providers adopt comprehensive selection processes as well as the publication of this information on their websites.

Standard 3 of the Standards and Procedures sets out the accreditation requirements for student teacher applicants to be selected on the basis of academic and non-academic capabilities and for this data to be published and updated annually on all ITE provider websites for each course intake. These requirements are:

- **Program Standard 3.1** - Providers describe and publish the rationale for their approach to program entry, the selection mechanisms used, threshold entry scores applied and any exemptions used.
- **Program Standard 3.2** - Providers apply selection criteria for all entrants, which incorporate both academic and non-academic components that are consistent with engagement with a rigorous higher education program, the requirements of the particular program and subsequent success in professional teaching practice.
- **Program Standard 3.3** - All information necessary to ensure transparent and justifiable selection processes for entry into initial teacher education courses, including student cohort data, is publicly available.

The Action Now: Selection of Entrants into initial teacher education guidelines (August, 2015) set out these requirements in more detail, which includes:

- **Academic capability** – for each selection method used: criteria; threshold entry scores; exemptions; student cohort data against these criteria, including:
 - number of applicants admitted through this mechanism
 - range of results for students admitted.

- **Non-academic capabilities** – for each selection method used: criteria; minimum entry requirements; student cohort data against these criteria, including:
 - number of applicants admitted through this mechanism
 - range of results for students admitted.
- **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 course.

As a requirement of the Standards and Procedures, all ITE providers are expected to report their admissions data (Standard 3), as well as other ITE course data annually to their jurisdictional teacher regulatory authorities to build an evidence base on what is working well within courses, and identify any issues arising and proposed course changes to respond to them.

AITSL response to the Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group

Transparency

AITSL believes that both greater transparency in the selection processes, and in the basis of admission used by ITE providers will ensure appropriate students are attracted to and selected into ITE courses. The transparency requirements outlined in the IWG draft implementation plan are largely consistent with the entry requirements set in the Standards and Procedures. However, the nationally agreed Standards and Procedures require additional information regarding ITE course entry requirements that go beyond what is being proposed in the draft plan. The AITSL requirements are at the course level and require the reporting of selection mechanisms used and required minimum entry/threshold information for all forms of entry. AITSL believes that the IWG should consider this same approach, or at a minimum ensure that accreditation requirements for particular professions are acknowledged in the final implementation plan.

Standardised information presentation

AITSL supports the standardisation of information and transparency of admissions information for prospective students, which enables them to compare course entry pathways and performance and make informed decisions about their university study.

AITSL generally supports the detail of information required in the national templates or 'information sets' at both the institutional and course level. In particular, it supports the information required for admission requirements of each course with the option to tailor these templates for use in different contexts, such as course specific information.

AITSL supports changes to the HEIMS as per the draft implementation plan. AITSL emphasises the importance of providing the improved standardised information at the unit record level (i.e. for each student) into the HEIMS. Since the *National Initial Teacher Education and Teacher Workforce Data Strategy* includes the suite of HEIMS data collections, it will benefit from more accurate, transparent and consistent unit record data on higher education admissions. This will in turn benefit government understanding of supply and demand modelling and workforce planning.

Terminology

AITSL strongly supports the adoption and use of common terms regarding admission-related concepts and definitions, including the publication of consistent information. AITSL believes it would not only assist prospective students but the sector more broadly. In particular, the adoption of revised definitions and naming conventions would be particularly useful when understanding ATAR related thresholds and reporting figures.

ATAR-related

AITSL agrees that there has been considerable confusion about how ATAR is calculated and reported. As such, AITSL believes the proposal to require providers to report this information by ATAR (excluding adjustments) and ATAR or selection rank (including adjustments) will go some way toward addressing this confusion for prospective students and their understanding about admission alternatives.

AITSL supports the reporting of all ATAR and non-ATAR application and assessment options across reporting categories for secondary entrants, particularly the requirement that the figures used must be the original unadjusted figures without the impact of bonus points or other adjustments. AITSL sees value in this same detail of information reporting across all entry pathways rather than just academic ATAR as proposed in the IWG draft implementation plan as this would allow for a complete picture of all higher education entry pathways.

Information platform

AITSL supports the development of the new higher education national admissions information platform and believes it would be helpful for prospective students to compare institutional admissions policies. In designing this platform, AITSL welcomes the opportunity to discuss how the design of the platform could be used by the sector more broadly to draw on and undertake admission data comparisons.

Concluding remarks

The Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures and the *Action Now: Selection of Entrants into initial teacher education guidelines* outline the course entry requirements (including selection mechanisms and threshold entry standards applied) that all ITE providers must meet to gain or maintain ITE course accreditation.

AITSL welcomes the work of the Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group and the release of the draft implementation plan to deliver on the Higher Education Standards Panel's report recommendations on admissions transparency.