



**Response to the Teacher Education Expert Panel *Discussion Paper*
on behalf of the School of Education, University of Tasmania**

Respondents:

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Introduction

The **University of Tasmania's School of Education** delivers a number of Australian Institute for Teaching & School Leadership (AITSL) and Australian Children's Education & Care Quality (ACECQA) accredited Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Early Years (EY) courses across the University's three campuses. Each year we graduate over 600 new teachers to work in the Australian education sector and every year we arrange 1500 school experience placements for our ITES (Initial Teacher Education Students). We partner with Department of Education, Children & Young People (DECYP), Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) and Independent Schools Tasmania (IST) to provide placement opportunities and support for supervising teachers and ITES, to provide professional development for Tasmanian educators and to undertake school and classroom-based research. Demonstrating the close working partnership we have developed, UTAS and DECYP submitted a joint response to the QITE Review.

The Teacher Education Expert Panel (the Panel, TEEP) released its Discussion Paper for consultation on March 23, 2023 for submissions by April 21. The Discussion Paper covers four reform areas drawn from the QITE Review and the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan:

- strengthen initial teacher education (ITE) programs to deliver confident, effective, classroom ready graduates
- strengthen the link between performance and funding of ITE programs
- improve the quality of practical experience in teaching
- improve postgraduate ITE programs for mid-career entrants.

This response addresses each of these areas, starting with Reform Area 3. This is the area of the sector we believe is in most need of urgent reform.

Reform Area 3: Improve the quality of practical experience in teaching

Of all the reform areas included in the Discussion Paper, practical experience is the most pressing. Le Cornu (2015) called **professional experience a 'vexing issue'**. We agree.

Tasmania is a small island state with an upper ceiling on the number of school experience places that can be made available to our ITES. We currently arrange **placements for 1500 ITE students** each year, relying on our close relationships with systems and schools to cover requirements. However, the costs of placement continue to rise. For the School of Education, the **annual cost of school experience is \$1.5 million**. The recent JRG scheme significantly reduced the fees of an ITE course ensuring that ITE providers receive reduced income, further decreasing the capacity to provide a quality experience. Universities like ours are increasingly forced to cross-subsidize Education departments to ensure that our ITES receive professional experience. Our students are also feeling the pressure: exit interviews with **attriting students identify placement as an issue**. The difficulty and expense of taking time away from paid employment, rearranging childcare and other family obligations, and the cost of travel and accommodation associated with professional experience placements are stressors and a key consideration in their decision to withdraw.

We also face significant **teacher workforce shortages in the education sector**. Tasmanian schools are increasingly reaching out to ITE students to take up short and fixed term teaching contracts to bridge the workforce gap. These pre-teachers are filling an important role in schools but they remain unqualified. These same students must attempt to continue their coursework while carrying out a demanding role. This is an unsustainable model that does not serve the interests of schools, UTAS or our ITE students.

In light of these challenges, we are working to reimagine professional experience for Tasmania. In partnership with DECYP, we plan to implement and evaluate a trial of a **sustainable internship** model for students in the final year of our ITE programs. This approach comes from a shared long-term vision of a quality teacher workforce and a thriving pipeline of graduates developed in partnership with the

Education Workforce Roundtable, a group comprised of key education stakeholders in Tasmania. The paid internship model – which will be in place for an initial pilot in 2024 - will assist to alleviate workforce shortfalls, improve the mentoring capacity of the system, encourage deep collaboration between university and school educators, and provide a purposeful oscillation between knowledge and practice in an extended and supported classroom context. In this model, high achieving final year ITES will have the opportunity to be employed as paid interns while supported to complete the final components of coursework. UTAS and DECYP will provide the initial funding support for this pilot. The Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) could support this work by enabling pilots and **trials of a number of professional experience models** and by recommending that federal and state governments provide enabling financial and regulatory support.

Reform Area 1: Strengthen initial teacher education (ITE) programs to deliver confident, effective, classroom ready graduates

Feedback to the Australian College of Deans of Education is that most ITE providers cover the core content identified by TEEP across their courses (brain and learning, effective practices, classroom management, enabling factors). While we cover the identified core content in UTAS courses, we recommend that TEEP moves to identify a set of **‘foundation studies’**.

The notion of ‘foundation studies’ that all ITE students engage with at their various institutions would ensure coverage of identified core knowledge within the existing program and teaching standards (especially Program Standard 4.2). An approach such as this would ensure that required content is covered and reported on, but would allow each institution to design delivery to suit specific student cohorts and program architectures.

Retention of early career teachers, induction, their experience of mentoring in schools, whether or not they are required to teach out of area, the preparedness and capacity of their students to conform to classroom expectations are all outside the reach of ITE operating alone. ITE providers graduate students who meet required graduate teacher standards and have successfully completed a number of school experience placements. Greater attention to, and funding to strengthen relationships between ITE providers, regulatory bodies, and schools could greatly enhance the transition of ITE graduates from classroom ready, to proficiency, and help to retain graduates within the teaching workforce. In Tasmania the Education Workforce Roundtable is actively working to create a **pipeline from admission to ITE through induction to full teacher registration**. The result is a willingness to work across institutional boundaries with this shared purpose as a goal.

ITES demonstrate their **classroom readiness** against the Australian Graduate Teacher Standards by successfully completing a TPA. UTAS is part of the ACU led GTPA consortium. This significant classroom-based assessment is designed specifically to demonstrate classroom readiness in relation to the Australian Graduate Teacher Standards. The GTPA assessment is moderated nationally by trained assessors and acts as a fine-grained insight into quality and readiness. Each university has already invested heavily in the use and moderation of the TPA.

Classroom management. The latest Australian based research reveals that **62.2% of Australians aged 16 and over experienced maltreatment** while they were children (Scott & Mathews 2023). Furthermore, the evidence clearly tells us that learning – and socio-cognitive development - is deeply impacted by adverse childhood experiences and maltreatment (Norman & Byambaa 2012). Our programs at UTAS therefore now explicitly incorporate an awareness of the impact of complex trauma on the capacity for learning and the behaviour of students in classrooms, and how to work to develop whole school as well as classroom-based approaches to optimize opportunities for learning and belonging. The School and University have committed financial resources and staffing to developing an evidence base that focuses on the **impacts of maltreatment and trauma in classrooms** – on learning, on behaviour, on wellbeing. We recommend that explicit acknowledgement of the impact of adverse experiences and trauma very often have a generational footprint and that all ITE programs incorporate practical skills and awareness in their programs as part of their foundational studies.

Reform Area 2: Strengthen the link between performance and funding of ITE programs

No other professional courses (nursing, law, medicine, architecture) are placed in the position where government funding is linked to **performance indicators**. However, ITE programs already regularly evidence their performance against a range of criteria that could be brought together in accessible dashboards. While in general we support the collection of consistent national data, the measures suggested in the Discussion Paper are not fully effective measures of quality. Measures such as selection data and retention at various points do not reflect the quality of the ITE program or emerging practices. The use of ATAR to judge the quality of incoming students, for example, is not a strong indicator of success while at university. UTAS has moved away from ATAR to a **School Recommendation** system. Other institutions are following this lead. The Western Australian *First Year Graduate Survey Report and Principal Perceptions of First Year Graduates Survey Report* is a sector leader for **assessing transition** into the workforce. The Panel might consider how this could be scaled to the national level to provide systematic data collection. A nationally consistent measure of learning gain would be another to consider. Diversity of community and student cohort makes direct comparisons across institutions impossible. Capturing **learning gain** for these diverse cohorts would be a useful metric.

Transition funding is crucial to the development and ongoing support for national level data collection and approaches to demonstrating quality. The sector cannot carry the financial burden of an additional regulatory requirement.

Reform Area 4: Improve postgraduate ITE programs for mid-career entrants

ITE providers around the nation offer a range of **flexible, graduate entry programs**. **Accelerated** courses for postgraduate entry into teaching are already widely available alongside various internship models. The **balance between quality and duration needs** to be tested in a range of postgraduate ITE models along with the rigorous analysis of collected data. **Pilot funding for partnerships** between key stakeholders to support these trials needs to be made available.

References

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