AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Working Together to Shape Teacher Education in Victoria: Discussion Paper

Submission of Australian Catholic University

23 September 2016

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australian Catholic University (ACU) welcomes the Victorian Government's discussion paper on shaping teacher education in Victoria, and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

As the largest educator of teachers in Australia, ACU shares the Victorian Government's strong interest in the provision of high quality school education. The Government has rightly identified the importance of a teaching workforce that is both well-prepared and diverse in its nature.

ACU is strongly of the view that a foundation principle of Australia's higher education system is that universities are self-accrediting institutions with full autonomy over their own admission requirements. ACU opposes any measures proposed by the Victorian Government that limits university autonomy or imposes admission requirements without the agreement of universities.

To this end, and demonstrating their desire to work with the Victorian Government, the majority of Victorian universities have developed a proposal, known as a Teacher Education Admission Index (the Index), that universities would voluntarily adopt as a minimum benchmark for entry into initial teacher education (ITE).

ACU opposes the imposition of a minimum Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) for entry into ITE. There are several flaws with such a proposal, including the disproportionate exclusion of aspiring teachers from regional, disadvantaged, lower socio-economic status (SES) and indigenous backgrounds, who receive lower ATARs on average but who, research shows, still go on to become excellent teachers. Such a proposal would also potentially render ITE courses in regional areas unviable and indeed could jeopardise the sustainability of entire regional campuses. Moreover, at a time of rising demand for teachers, artificially restricting the supply of teachers in this way would risk creating serious workforce shortages, particularly in regional areas.

ACU opposes the mandatory use of a psychometric selection tool such as the University of Melbourne's Teacher Selector. ACU instead recommends the more holistic assessment of academic ability and personal qualities offered through the Index. This aligns with the recommendations of the federal Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) and better addresses the complex question of which students are more likely to become good teachers.

ACU also opposes any move to graduate-only ITE courses. Such a proposal would require the allocation of thousands of additional postgraduate Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs). In the current fiscal environment, the prospect of the Commonwealth Government agreeing to fund these places is extremely remote.

ACU notes the importance of retaining a variety of pathways into ITE for those who do not initially meet any mandatory threshold. The satisfactory completion of a pathway course should enable a student to gain entry into an accredited ITE course and such study should be credited towards the completion of the degree course. Pathway courses that are not embedded into degree courses increase the total duration of a student's higher education study and impose an additional financial burden on students who are more likely to be from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Teaching remains a highly demanding yet relatively under-remunerated profession. In the absence of changes that make a career in teaching more attractive, any changes to teacher selection that rely on inflexible admission standards are merely likely to reduce the number of future teachers rather than raise the status of the teaching profession.

CONTEXT

Teacher quality

In recent years, there has been an increasing level of scrutiny and debate around the quality of teaching in Australian schools. This debate has been fuelled by the introduction of metrics such as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test, and it reaches an annual crescendo in media reporting of the ATARs of students entering ITE courses. These reports commonly focus on outlier or exceptional cases but they contribute to a narrative that an increasing number of teachers in Australia are academically incapable.[1]

That narrative, in turn, serves to deter academically high-achieving students who may have been considering careers in teaching. Already presented with the choice of more lucrative career paths in law, medicine or finance, these students are suddenly faced with the prospect of pursuing a career increasingly painted as the professional refuge of academic underachievers.

On 19 February 2014, in response to concerns over the status of the teaching profession, then federal Education Minister Christopher Pyne announced the establishment of an eight-member Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), chaired by ACU Vice-Chancellor Professor Greg Craven, to 'advise the Australian Government on improving teacher education'.[2]

TEMAG undertook a detailed, evidence-based assessment of the elements that make up best practice teacher education, including selection processes. TEMAG's final report was released on 13 February 2015 and its 38 recommendations were accepted almost in full by the Commonwealth Government.

TEMAG unanimously recommended universities adopt more sophisticated and transparent forms of selection that better address the complex question of who is likely to make a good teacher.

Implementation of this key recommendation was delegated to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in conjunction with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). AITSL has already produced new standards and procedures for the accreditation of ITE programs in Australia which incorporate many of TEMAG's recommendations, including on selection, and which were endorsed by State and Territory education ministers in December 2015. AITSL is now in the process of implementing this new approach.

ACU urges the Victorian Government to acknowledge the progress made at a national level and avoid imposing an additional level of regulation that conflicts with, or duplicates, this national work on ITE.

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[1] See, for example, Eryk Bagshaw and Inga Ting, 'NSW universities taking students with ATARs as low as 30,' *Sydney Morning Herald* (27 January 2016).
[2] The Hon. Christopher Pyne, 'Improved teacher education will put Students First,' Media release (19 February 2014).

TEMAG also recommended the introduction of a literacy and numeracy test that requires all ITE students to meet a standard equivalent to the top 30 per cent of Australians in both areas. This recommendation was included primarily to provide assurance to stakeholders, including parents, school principals and state governments that graduate teachers had demonstrated a high level of capability in these areas prior to taking up positions in schools. From 1 July 2016, all students undertaking an ITE course need to successfully meet the literacy and numeracy standard set by the test prior to registration, and soon, prior to graduation.

Victoria's teaching workforce needs

At the same time as scrutiny has intensified over the issue of teacher quality, Australia has entered a period in which its population of school students is booming and demand for teachers growing.

Australia has one of the fastest population growth rates in the world and the fastest among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.[3] Indeed, Australia is now in the midst of its biggest baby boom ever, larger than the original post-WWII Baby Boomer boom.[4]

According to projections by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the number of school-aged children in Australia will increase by almost 1.2 million between 2012 and 2030, an increase of over 30 per cent. Victoria's growth rate is even higher than the national average.

Table 1: Growth in school-aged population (5-18), 2012-30, by jurisdiction

	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	Australia
% growth	19.1%	**32.3%**	36.6%	59.1%	17.1%	1.6%	40.8%	27.8%	30.2%

Source: ABS, 3222.0 Population Projections, Australia Time Series B projections.
Notes: Percentage growth calculated from a 2012 base.

A report prepared for the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) predicts the supply of primary school teachers from Victorian ITE providers will be insufficient to meet demands up to 2020, and that the areas of shortage may open up at a secondary level, particularly in mathematics, physics and languages, as the surge in primary enrolments flows into secondary schools.[5]

[3] Hugo, G, 'The Demographic Facts of Ageing in Australia,' Appendix Q for *Aged Care Financing Authority Second Annual Report 2014,* (July 2014).
[4] See, for example: ABS, 'One for the Country: Recent Trends in Fertility,' *4102.0 - Australian Social Trends*, (December 2010); McCrindle, M., 'The Baby Bonus Generation,' McCrindle: Forecasts, Strategy, Research (May 15, 2013); & Daryl Passmore, 'Australia is in the midst of the biggest baby boom in its history,' news.com.au. (January 01, 2012).
[5] Victorian Department of Education and Training, *Victorian Teacher Supply and Demand Report 2012 and 2013* (September 2015), p. xvii.

Many Australian teachers will retire in the near future

Australia also has one of the oldest teaching populations in the world, with 37.1 per cent of Australian teachers aged 50 years and above. This proportion is higher than almost all other OECD countries – behind only Italy, Estonia, Bulgaria, Latvia and Sweden.[6]

In Victoria, 35.8 per cent of teachers in the government sector are aged 50 years and above, while 38.3 per cent of teachers in the Catholic sector are aged 50 years and above.[7] DET notes the proportion of teachers aged 55 and over has been increasing from less than 10 per cent a decade ago to just over 20 per cent of all teachers in 2013 and this ageing trend is even stronger for principals.[8]

The Productivity Commission has noted that the estimated average age of the school workforce in Australia is much higher than the rest of the workforce.[9]

This ageing trend is more pronounced for certain subjects. In particular, physics, computing and IT, mathematics and chemistry are more likely to suffer a shortage of teachers as a greater proportion of teachers in these disciplines are men who are closer to retirement. For example, three quarters of physics teachers are male and over 40 per cent of them are aged over 50, while nearly half of the men teaching mathematics are aged over 50.[10]

There are fewer students studying teaching

While demand for teachers increases, there has been a significant drop in the number of students commencing ITE in New South Wales, where the State Government imposed restrictions on admission in 2013.

According to data from the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, ITE commencements in NSW dropped by 7.7 per cent between 2014 and 2015, compared with a 4.5 per cent increase in the rest of Australia.[11] Based on current enrolment data, this decline in NSW has, in fact, accelerated in 2016.

The fall in commencements will result in a corresponding fall in the number of teachers graduating from university in 2019 and 2020. In other words, the NSW Government has engineered a potential teacher workforce crisis, whereby student enrolments in ITE are declining at a time when there are projected teacher shortages on the horizon.

ACU strongly counsels the Victorian Government against adopting any measures that could result in a similar teacher shortage in Victoria.

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[6] Freeman, Chris; O'Malley, Kate; and Eveleigh, Frances, *Australian teachers and the learning environment: An analysis of teacher response to TALIS 2013: Final Report* (2014).
[7] Victorian Department of Education and Training, above n. 5, pp. 20 & 22.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research Report, Canberra (2012), pp. 4 & 55.
[10] Weldon, P, *The Teacher Workforce in Australia: Supply, Demand and Data Issues*. Policy Insights, Issue 2. Melbourne: ACER (March 2015), p. 6.
[11] Commonwealth Department of Education and Training*, Higher Education Statistics Collection, full-year 2015 student data*.

Overseas jurisdictions have miscalculated teacher workforce needs to their detriment.

A number of overseas jurisdictions have been caught out by failing to appropriately prepare for impending teacher shortages, as there is a lag time of several years between seeking to increase the supply of teachers and having them 'classroom ready'.

For example, between 2010 and 2014, the number of people entering teacher preparation programs in the United States dropped 30 per cent nationally. Some states, such as California, suffered worse declines. In California the number of entrants into teacher education programs dropped 55 per cent from 2008 to 2012, which has led to a 6,500 teacher graduate shortage in California in the past year.[12] In England, applications fell by 12 per cent over the past year, raising fears of a serious teacher shortage.[13]

This overseas experience indicates that an under-supply of teachers leads to the acceptance of less credentialed or imported teachers to fill the gap, and higher pay for qualified applicants. This may also lead qualified Australian teachers to seek employment overseas, placing further pressure on the supply of teachers in Australia.

Graduate teachers are getting jobs

Graduate teachers in Australia already have strong employment prospects. According to the 2014 Australian Graduate Survey, over 90 percent of initial teacher education graduates who were available for employment were in either full-time jobs (around 70 per cent) or part-time jobs (around 20 per cent) and among those who were in full-time employment, around 75 per cent of them were working in schools.[14]

[12] Motoko Rich, 'Teacher Shortages Spur a Nationwide Hiring Scramble (Credentials Optional),' *New York Times*, (9 August 2015).
[13] Nick Morrison, 'Teacher training applications fall 12%,' *TES*, (28 May 2015) & Sally Weale, 'Schools spending £1.3bn on supply teachers as staff shortage intensifies,' *The Guardian* (14 December 2015).
[14] Australian Graduate Survey, Graduate Careers Australia.

RESPONSES TO KEY QUESTIONS

AREA OF FOCUS 1

What academic capability threshold should be set for entry into ITE?

ACU supports the Teacher Education Admission Index, which was developed collaboratively by the majority of Victorian universities and which gives practical effect to the recommendations of TEMAG.

The Index provides a holistic, objective assessment of an individual's academic and non-academic qualities and allocates points for relevant attributes, experiences and capabilities, with an individual's academic performance making up a significant, but not dominant, part of the final score.

The Victorian Government should reject any proposal that involves the imposition of a minimum ATAR for entry into ITE

Relying exclusively or primarily on the ATAR is not an appropriate approach to teacher selection. In 2014, only 29 per cent of ITE students were admitted to ITE courses on the basis of their ATAR.[15] This reflects the diversity of backgrounds, life stages and experiences possessed by commencing ITE students.

Suggestions that a minimum ATAR should be a key element for entry into ITE are fundamentally flawed because:

a) any links between a student's ATAR and his or her success at university or as a teacher are very limited, bearing in mind the range of qualities demonstrated by the best educators;

b) it would disproportionately exclude students from regional, disadvantaged, low-SES or indigenous backgrounds;

c) it would do nothing to encourage students with higher ATARs to choose teaching;

d) it would reduce the teacher workforce at a time when more teachers are needed; and

e) it disregards the value of a university education and the potential for individual growth over the course of a student's higher education.

[15] In 2014, 43 per cent of undergraduate students and 29 per cent of all students commenced ITE on the basis of their secondary education and, in many of these cases, the student's ATAR was not even the primary basis on which they were admitted. See AITSL, *Initial Teacher Education: data report 2016*, pp. 18-21.

a) *Any links between a student's ATAR and his or her success at university or as a teacher are limited.*

Research indicates that while ATARs may be good predictors of university success at levels above 80, below this, in the middle tiers of achievement, their reliability declines dramatically.[16]

The correlation between entry scores and university performance has been found to be 'very strong for students with entry scores above 80, very weak to non-existent for scores between 80 and 40, and stronger but very variable for scores below 40.'[17]

This makes intuitive sense because the ATAR is a ranking not a score. In obtaining a rank order, the ATAR flattens out the inherently bell-curved shape of students' raw scores and, in so doing, exaggerates differences amongst students in the middle.

For example, in 2015, there was a greater gap in raw VCE scores between two students who received ATARs of 99.00 and 99.95 than between two students who received ATARs of 55.00 and 70.00.[18]

Few would suggest that there is a gaping difference in academic capability between a student with an ATAR of 99.95 and one with an ATAR of 99.00. Yet there are frequent suggestions that an ATAR of 55 reflects a student with significantly inferior academic capability to one with an ATAR of 70, even though their actual study scores are closer.

Flattening the natural bell curve to create a percentile rank misleadingly distorts the gap in academic achievement between students with similar academic results, and this is later revealed when students attend university.

There is also no evidence that a high ATAR has any relationship to later teaching success. To the contrary, recent research has found that ratings of performance by associate teachers on placement were, in fact, unrelated to their school performance.[19]

b) *A minimum ATAR would disproportionately exclude students from regional, disadvantaged, low-SES or indigenous backgrounds.*

There is a strong link between a student's SES and their ATAR, particularly for ATARs above 70.[20] Consequently, those most likely to be excluded from ITE as a result of a minimum ATAR will be low SES students. These are the students who have benefited most

[16] For example see Willis, S., *Monash University: A High Quality/High Access University that Successfully Marries Excellence and Equity* (2011); James, R., Bexley, E., and Shearer, M., *Improving Selection for Tertiary Education Places in Victoria* (2009).
[17] Gavin Moodie, 'FactCheck: does your entrance score strongly correlate with your success at university?' The Conversation (23 July 2013).
[18] See Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) '2015 Aggregate to ATAR Table' (11 December 2015).
[19] Wright, V. J. 'Is ATAR useful for predicting the success of Australian students in Initial Teacher Education?', *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, (2015), 40 (9).
[20] Andrew Norton, *Keep the caps off! Student access and choice in higher education*, Grattan Institute, Melbourne, (2013), pp. 11-12

from access to university under the demand driven system championed by the former federal Labor Government.[21]

In 2015/16, 73 per cent of the Victorian school leavers offered a place in ITE courses had an ATAR less than 70.[22] Imposing a minimum ATAR of 70, as some reports have suggested,[23] would not only devastate ITE enrolments across the state but could result in the termination of ITE courses in regional and low-SES areas, where school leaver enrolments are a greater proportion of overall enrolments. This would be of great social, economic and political significance to local communities, especially if it rendered some regional or satellite campuses unviable and resulted in the closure of such campuses.

Data from the Graduate Destination Survey between 2011 and 2015 shows that over 70 per cent of ITE graduates from ACU's Ballarat campus who were working in schools after graduation (and indicated their employment location) were working in regional schools.[24]

Teacher shortages already exist in regional and rural areas.[25] These shortages would be exacerbated if the rising demand for teachers was combined with a lack of local graduates due to policy changes such as the imposition of a minimum ATAR. Such a change has the potential to devastate regional students, university campuses and school communities.

c) *A minimum ATAR would do nothing to encourage students with higher ATARs to choose teaching*

A minimum ATAR will not lead to students with higher ATARs choosing teaching.

Compared with law, medicine or finance, teaching is a relatively poorly-remunerated, yet still highly demanding, profession.

Moreover, unlike many professions, teachers reach their maximum earning capacity within fewer than ten years. According to the Australian Council for Educational Research, 'there is no point in lifting entry requirements for teacher education courses without ensuring that teachers' salaries and working conditions are commensurate to those of other professions competing for similar graduates'.[26] In high-performing countries such as Finland, Korea and

[21] Under the demand-driven system, the number of low SES students increased more than any other SES group. See Norton, ibid.
[22] Assoc Prof Steve Farish, Manager Research, Measurement and Reporting and Catherine Wills, Director, Victorian Tertiary Admission Centre, 'VTAC Education and Teaching Selection.'
[23] Henrietta Cook, Craig Butt**,** 'Government considers plan for teachers to make the grade,' *The Age* (18 January 2016).
[24] 2011-2015 National Australian Graduate Survey data obtained from Graduate Careers Australia.
[25] Even Education systems that claim to have a glut of teachers identify regional areas as areas of potential teacher shortage. See, for example, NSW Department of Education, *2015 Teaching Workforce Supply and Demand*, pp. 13 and 15.
[26] See Ingvarson, L., Reid, K., Buckley, S., Kleinhenz, E., Masters, G., Rowley , G. *Best Practice Teacher Education Programs and Australia's Own Programs*. (September, 2014). ACER report. Canberra: Department of Education. p. 48.

Japan, teachers spend less time in the classroom than they do in Australia, while in many OECD countries, maximum teaching salaries are higher than they are in Australia.[27]

Research shows that salaries are important influences on the attractiveness of teaching. The OECD notes that 'teachers' starting salaries relative to other non-teaching occupations and the likely growth in earnings have a huge influence over a graduate's decision to become a teacher'.[28]

Yet a teacher's maximum earning potential in Australia is lower than many comparable countries. For example, in US dollars terms, the salary at the top of the scale for primary teachers in Australia is $58,262 compared to $122,059 in Luxembourg, $80,882 in Switzerland, and $75,297 in Korea.[29]

Australian teachers also face poorer prospects in terms of salary growth than their colleagues in other OECD countries. The difference between a primary teacher's starting salary and their salary at the top of the scale in Australia is $17,636, which is below the OECD average of $20,226 and well below a difference of $53,939 in Luxembourg, $48,387 in Korea, and $33,821 in Japan.[30]

Salary growth is important to ensure a well-qualified teaching workforce. As the OECD notes, 'efforts must be made not only to recruit and select, but also to retain the most competent and qualified teachers'.[31]

High-performing students are also alienated by the suggestion – emanating primarily from sensationalist media reports, sometimes given credence by government – that the teaching profession is increasingly populated by unintelligent or underperforming students, which necessitates the need for a minimum ATAR.

d) A minimum ATAR would reduce the teacher workforce at a time when more teachers are needed

A minimum ATAR is also likely to have significant negative consequences for Victoria's teaching workforce needs (see 'Context' section above). Australia is witnessing an increasing number of school-aged children, increasing rates of retirement and fewer teaching graduates, which will lead to teacher shortages if not addressed. Imposing a minimum ATAR will inevitably limit the number of entrants to ITE, and potentially reduce the number of institutions offering ITE, which will exacerbate this potential shortage.

[27] Ingvarson, L., above n. 26, p. 52 & 56.
[28] OECD, *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, (2016) p. 411.
[29] Ibid, Table D3.6. (Web only), 'Starting/Maximum teachers' statutory salaries, based on minimum/maximum qualifications (2014)'
[30] Ibid, Table D3.1a. 'Teachers' statutory salaries, based on typical qualifications, at different points in teachers' careers (2014)'
[31] Ibid, p. 411.

e) *A minimum ATAR disregards the value of a university education and the potential for individual growth over the course of a student's higher education*

Limiting professional entry prior to entry into university presumes that an individual's capacity, ability and even knowledge are static and that a tertiary education provides little or no potential for development. It also ignores the continued growth and maturity that occurs as an individual moves from their teens to their twenties. Such a presumption is particularly inappropriate for a discipline such as teaching, which involves significant practical training during the tertiary studies.

State imposition of selection criteria may be unconstitutional

ACU believes that section 9 of the *Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency Act* 2011 (Cth) (the TEQSA Act) limits the power of state governments to make laws imposing requirements for entry into higher education courses.

Relevantly, the provision states that a higher education provider is not required to comply with a State or Territory law purporting to regulate the provision of higher education unless the State or Territory law 'regulates who may carry on an occupation'.

ACU is of the view that a law imposing minimum entry standards for entry to a higher education course primarily regulates a central aspect of higher education, rather than directly regulating entry into a profession, and would be excluded by the TEQSA Act in combination with section 109 of the Constitution.

Consequently, ACU emphasises the importance of any proposed minimum entry standards being negotiated with, and voluntarily accepted by, Victorian universities. To this end, ACU supports the further development and adoption of the Index concept proposed by Victorian universities.

What personal attributes are important for teachers? How might these be measured in the Victorian context?

Personal attributes

ACU notes the list of personal attributes identified by AITSL as desirable qualities in teachers, namely:[32]

- Motivation to teach
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills
- Willingness to learn
- Resilience

[32] AITSL, *Action Now: Selection of entrants into initial teacher education – Guidelines* (August 2015).

- Self-efficacy
- Conscientiousness
- Organisational and planning skills

ACU supports these criteria and notes that the Index specifically seeks to address them. ACU also notes that there is no reference to the AITSL criteria in the 'Victorian Suitability for Teaching Criteria' listed at Appendix 1 to the discussion paper.

There has been extensive research and contestation over the qualities that a candidate should demonstrate on entering teaching in order to become an effective teacher and there are some particular teacher attributes that research has shown to hold a strong correlation with student learning.

For example, two lists compiled in very different time periods from very different age groups who were asked to identify the qualities that defined a good teacher – Year 2 children in the 1940s and undergraduate and graduate students in the 21st century – illustrate the durability of certain attributes (see Table 2).

Table 2: Attributes of quality teachers

Compiled from 12,000 Year 2 children:	*Compiled from >1,000 higher education students:*
1. Cooperative, democratic attitude 2. Kindliness and consideration for the individual 3. Patience 4. Wide interests 5. Personal appearance and pleasing manner 6. Fairness and impartiality 7. Sense of humour 8. Good disposition and consistent behaviour 9. Interest in pupils' problems 10. Flexibility 11. Use of recognition and praise 12. Unusual proficiency in teaching a particular subject (Witty, 1947)	1. Came to class prepared 2. Maintained positive attitudes about teaching and about students 3. Held high expectations for all students 4. Showed creativity in teaching the class 5. Treated and graded students fairly 6. Displayed a personal, approachable touch with students 7. Cultivated a sense of belonging in the classroom 8. Dealt with student problems compassionately 9. Had a sense of humour and did not take everything seriously 10. Respected students and did not deliberately embarrass them 11. Were forgiving and did not hold grudges 12. Admitted mistakes (Walker, 2008)

Source: Bahr, Nan and Mellor, Suzanne, "Building quality in teaching and teacher education" (2016), pp. 60 & 62.

These different students commenting 60 years apart identified many of the same qualities, particularly kindness and care for students. AITSL's criteria capture these qualities, including

the need for teachers to be social, warm and empathetic (which AITSL indicates as showing 'strong interpersonal skills').

AITSL's list of attributes should be incorporated into any proposal for uniform admission requirements. While these attributes are specifically referred to in the Index, they are complex to measure and work is ongoing to establish how they may best be demonstrated by applicants. ACU submits that such attributes would not be able to be adequately reflected in a psychometric test, let alone an ATAR.

How to measure personal attributes

The objective of any prescribed tool should be to give weight to activities and experiences that specifically demonstrate the qualities sought in future teachers. This is what the Index is designed to do.

ACU does not support the mandatory imposition of psychometric or personality testing, which offer narrow means of assessing the presence or absence of personal attributes necessary for teaching. In ACU's view, a test is likely to reject applicants who may be entirely suited and capable to being good teachers.

ACU would strongly oppose any proposal to impose certain proprietary tools, such as the University of Melbourne's Teacher Selector tool, on all universities.

Appendix 1 to the Victorian Government's discussion paper refers repeatedly to 'Victorian Suitability for Teaching Criteria' for measuring 'suitability' for entry into ITE but no detail is provided as to what form such criteria would take or how they would be assessed.

ACU is concerned that the 'Victorian Suitability for Teaching Criteria' may be designed to mandate a version of the University of Melbourne's Teacher Selector tool. Such a tool is unsatisfactory because it is used for graduate entry only, selecting students into the University of Melbourne's Master of Teaching.

More broadly, it is inappropriate to use a single measure such as a psychometric test to assess the presence or absence of attributes needed for teaching. It is true that psychometric tests offer a standardised way of comparing candidates free of personal bias. However, test anxiety and unfamiliarity can create a 'false negative', whereby a person's results do not reflect their true potential. Moreover, some experts have argued that the tests themselves may disadvantage certain applicants due to cultural differences.[33]

[33] See, for example: Williams, R. 'Danger: Testing and dehumanizing Black children,' *Clinical Child Psychology Newsletter, 9 (1)*, (1970), pp. 5–6; Adam Blanch, 'The pros and cons of psychometric testing' (21 March 2014); Cecil R. Reynolds and Lisa A. Suzuki, 'Bias in Psychological Assessment: An Empirical Review and Recommendations,' in Irving B. Weiner (Editor), *Handbook of Psychology, Volume 10, Assessment Psychology, 2nd Edition*. Wiley (2012).

Further, some applicants may study for, or even be coached on, these standardised tests so as to provide the 'right' answers. It has been said that 'faking personality tests is so widespread and so easy to accomplish that it is surprising that results are taken seriously'.[34]

The testing of suitability through psychometric tests, as hinted at in Appendix 1 to the discussion paper, is antithetical to the TEMAG recommendation for holistic and sophisticated approaches to determining the presence or absence of qualities related to good teaching. By contrast, the Index rejects a singular methodology used in isolation and instead looks to a breadth of a student's real-world experiences in combination with their academic results.

Future Prospects

Graduate-only entry into education

ACU opposes graduate-only entry into teacher education primarily because the number of Commonwealth-subsidised postgraduate places is extremely limited and manifestly inadequate to meet existing demand or future workforce needs.

Postgraduate courses are not subject to 'demand-driven' funding, meaning Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) are rationed by the Commonwealth Government and allocated on a historically-fixed basis.

Any move to graduate-only ITE courses would require the allocation of thousands of additional postgraduate CSPs. In the current fiscal environment, there is no genuine prospect of the Commonwealth Government agreeing to fund these places.

In the absence of additional postgraduate CSPs, the majority of students undertaking postgraduate ITE would do so on a full fee paying basis, piling large postgraduate debts on top of their existing undergraduate HECS-HELP debts. This would put a career as a teacher further out of reach of students from lower SES or disadvantaged students and further reduce the desirability of teaching as a career for high-performing students who have a breadth of options.

ACU believes that its students who undertake existing four-year undergraduate ITE courses – the same length as an undergraduate degree in Law – graduate from ACU with the level of pedagogical skill and training necessary to commence work as a teacher.

[34] Robert Spillane, 'Why workplaces must resist the cult of personality testing,' *The Conversation* (28 February 2012).

AREA OF FOCUS 2

Is there a case for greater quality assurance of bridging courses and pathways into ITE in Victoria?

The adequacy of bridging and pathway courses should be determined by reference to the standard of the accredited ITE courses for which they prepare students.

AITSL's new *Standards and Procedures for the Accreditation of ITE Programs*, which were endorsed by all Australian Education Ministers in December 2015, have a 'relentless focus on rigour'[35] and require information to be provided on 'aggregated assessment and outcomes data linked to individuals and / or cohorts of interest, including selection cohorts'.[36]

AITSL's new standards and procedures require data to be provided on:

- students' progress through and completion of a course;
- attainment of the Graduate Teacher Standards;
- success in the national literacy and numeracy test;
- employment and registration outcomes; and
- evidence of course quality and improvement, including impact on student performance.

The cohort data collected by AITSL will combine with the new literacy and numeracy standards that must be met by all graduating ITE students.

The requirement to aggregate this data according to entry pathways means that evidence of the success and suitability of various pathways will become available and will be scrutinised as part of the quality assurance that occurs through the new national processes. The data will illustrate whether students coming into ITE through bridging and pathways courses tend to lag behind their direct entry colleagues.

Even at the present time, applicants who have completed VET qualifications compete equally on the basis of academic merit when applying for ITE courses at ACU through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC). An individual's performance in a bridging course is assessed against other applicants who may, for example, be seeking entry from secondary education. Each applicant's performance in various courses and pathways is assessed against specific pre-requisites to determine eligibility for ITE entry.

Taking these considerations into account, ACU does not believe that additional regulation is required for bridging courses and pathways. Adding new data collection, quality assurance or regulatory requirements would be unduly burdensome on ITE providers, particularly where existing selection mechanisms operate effectively.

[35] AITSL, 'Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures' (December 2015), p. 3.
[36] Ibid, Program Standard 6.3 c, p. 18.

Is there a case for more pathways into ITE courses? What should the key features be?

Various pathways into ITE are needed to ensure diversity amongst the teaching population and ensure candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds have the opportunity to pursue a career in teaching.

ACU strongly advocates the maintenance of clear alternative pathways into ITE. The proposed Index is designed for school leavers entering undergraduate ITE courses and would exist alongside other pathways that non-school leavers use to gain entry into ITE. Such pathways are essential for people who have come to teaching in different ways and at different stages of life.

Alternative pathways should also be embedded into ITE programs, allowing credit from successful completion to be counted towards the ITE course. Such pathways increase diversity in the teaching population and ensure that disadvantage is not a barrier to entry. These pathways would be subject to internal quality assurance mechanisms and require TEQSA approval.

The minimum duration of higher education study to become a teacher is already four years as an undergraduate qualification and five years through a Master's program, which is a considerable investment considering students will enter a relatively under-renumerated profession. Non-recognition of prior learning would increase the time, effort and resources demanded of often disadvantaged students to complete their ITE.

42 per cent of graduate teachers identify themselves as the first in their family to gain a tertiary qualification.[37] It would be advantageous for this percentage to increase because student learning can be enhanced where the profile of the teaching workforce reflects in some way the diversity of the school student population. One of the more effective responses for decreasing educational disadvantage among various cultural groups is to find ways for learners from that group to see and be taught by culturally diverse teachers and particularly teachers with a similar cultural background. More disadvantaged students need to become teachers, which will only occur if pathways provide credit towards ITE qualifications.

How can flexible pathways attract career-changers and address key areas of need such as disadvantaged and rural settings?

One way to attract good teachers to rural or geographically disadvantaged areas is to encourage the preparation of teachers who come from these areas. The dislocation associated with relocating from their own communities, the associated costs of living and a lack of existing support networks are all significant distractors for ITE students from disadvantaged and rural contexts. More flexible pathways should be created and maintained

[37] Diane Mayer et al., 'Longitudinal Teacher Education and Workforce Study' (LTEWS), Final report (November 2013).

to ensure a diverse range of students are able to enrol and succeed in ITE.

Future Prospects

ACU supports the greater use of internships and school partnerships to expand employment-based pathways.

For example, ACU has worked with the Catholic Education Office Melbourne to establish a learning community with the Sydenham cluster of Catholic schools in Melbourne's west. The aim of this collaboration is to move elements of teacher preparation and professional development for practising teachers into an educational learning community, rather than being based primarily in a university classroom. This successful approach could provide a model for employment-based pathways.

AREA OF FOCUS 3

How can teacher education courses respond to future demands in classrooms and society; e.g., building teacher expertise in digital technology, entrepreneurial skills, collaboration?

It is entirely appropriate that ITE continues to respond suitably to social change. For example, it is now a requirement that all ITE programs integrate information communication technology (ICT) and, if they do not, they will not be accredited.

AITSL has incorporated this social responsiveness into its new standards and procedures for the accreditation of ITE programs, which demand that programs take account of 'the perspectives of stakeholders such as employers, professional teacher bodies, practising teachers, educational researchers and relevant cultural and community experts'.[38]

ACU's School of Education has established a National Advisory Board to ensure that this standard is addressed.

It is impossible, however, to entirely 'future proof' ITE courses. Instead, the continuing professional development of teachers needs to be seen as an integral part of teacher professional identity. Once this occurs, social acknowledgement will follow that the expertise of teachers is sufficient and indeed critical to the development of appropriate responses to legitimate stakeholder concerns.

What should be common elements in a graduate's final 'capstone' teacher performance assessment?

AITSL's new accreditation standards and procedures have already specified common elements in a graduate's final 'capstone' teacher performance assessment.

AITSL's Program Standard 1.3 states:

> *Program design and assessment processes require pre-service teachers to have successfully completed a final-year teaching performance assessment prior to graduation that is shown to:*
>
> *a) be a reflection of classroom teaching practice including the elements of planning, teaching, assessing and reflecting*
> *b) be a valid assessment that clearly assesses the content of the Graduate Teacher Standards*
> *c) have clear, measurable and justifiable achievement criteria that discriminate between meeting and not meeting the Graduate Teacher Standards*
> *d) be a reliable assessment in which there are appropriate processes in place for ensuring consistent scoring between assessors*

[38] AITSL, above n. 35, Standard 2.2 (b), p. 11.

e) *include moderation processes that support consistent decision-making against the achievement criteria.*

Significant work has gone into devising and now operationalising this national 'capstone' assessment. For example, ACU has invested in the development of a national graduate teacher performance assessment tool and currently has five common assessment tasks being developed across professional experience programs.

ACU supports this national process, and recommends its adoption by the Victorian government.

How can partnerships operate from a shared understanding of effective teaching, and become self-sustaining?

AITSL's new standards and procedures have also created a national framework for achieving sustainable partnership models and better feedback loops between schools, graduates and ITE providers. For example, Program Standard 5.1 requires that:

> *Formal partnerships, agreed in writing, are developed and used by providers and schools/sites/systems to facilitate the delivery of programs, particularly professional experience for pre-service teachers. Formal partnerships exist for every professional experience school/site and clearly specify components of placements and planned experiences, identified roles and responsibilities for both parties and responsible contacts for day-to-day administration of the arrangement.*

Program Standard 5.5 also demands communication channels be established between the ITE provider and school and that professional learning opportunities are targeted for supervising teachers.

ACU endorses this national approach and commends it to the Victorian government.

More generally, effective school–university partnerships demonstrate a number of characteristics, such as:

- a shared conceptual understanding;
- mutuality in roles and relationships;
- sound operational strategies; and
- evaluation of both the partnership and its outcomes.

The Victorian Department of Education and Training's investment in Teaching Academies of Professional Practice is a positive example of such a mutually beneficial partnership which warrants further support.

How can information about ITE provision in Victoria be used to improve quality?

Greater levels of cross-institutional collaboration could be encouraged through the development of shared responses to a number of AITSL's new standards and procedures. Issues such as entry selection processes, preparation for the national literacy and numeracy test, teacher performance assessment, and a common final reporting structure for professional experience could be developed as collaborative projects.

There is also the potential for improvement in the connection between teacher education in universities and teacher education and practice in schools. Teacher education should become more of a collective responsibility between universities, schools, and education systems, which will require greater collaboration to clarify what each is uniquely positioned to offer teacher education over time.

Future Prospects

Research demonstrates that teacher preparation could benefit from a common in-course practicum assessment tool. Judgements about pre-service teachers made by supervising teachers have been found to be highly idiosyncratic, with only a weak correlation between supervising teacher judgements and other measures of a pre-service teacher's performance.[39]

The final professional experience report framework developed in Queensland has proven to be a useful device in supporting more consistent pre-service teacher development towards classroom readiness. ACU would support the development of a similar, common reporting framework that was negotiated across stakeholders in order to facilitate more consistent and reliable judgements being made by supervising teachers in school contexts.

[39] Fiona Ell & Mavis Haigh, 'Getting beyond "gut feeling": understanding how mentors judge readiness to teach,' *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 43:2, (2015), pp. 143-155.

AREA OF FOCUS 4

What can we learn from what is currently working well in induction and mentoring, and what is not?

Research emphasises the importance of modelling and mentoring to later teaching success.[40] ACU supports enhanced modelling of good practice and peer observation of classes, including it being embedded throughout the teaching life-cycle.

One of the major barriers to enhancing teacher retention and effectiveness is the narrow range of pedagogical practices that teachers observe throughout their career.

Superior approaches exist in overseas jurisdictions. In Shanghai, for example, all teachers have mentors, while new teachers have several mentors who observe and give feedback on their classes.[41] In many high performing East Asian countries, teachers regularly observe each other's classes, providing instant feedback to improve each student's learning.[42]

In contrast, registered teachers in Australia can spend their entire careers never having observed, or having their own teaching observed by, another teacher. A clearer focus should be applied to teacher mentoring and institutionalising the practice of peer auditing and feedback across the system.

The proliferation of expert teachers located in schools and universities is often talked about in Australia but rarely implemented in practice. The result is that there is often no co-ordinated or consistent approach to teacher mentoring, or consistent or systematic training of the skills needed to be a good mentor. There has been a formal recognition of mentoring through AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Australian Professional Standards for Principals, and National Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers, which is a good first step.[43] But more needs to be done.

ACU has launched an ACU Mentoring Hub, which enhances the mentoring practices and understandings of teachers, education leaders, and other education stakeholders. The Hub has developed in response to the needs of the education community and involves a 12 hour face-to-face or online course. Its main purpose is to build an informed and sustainable community of practice committed to utilising effective mentoring in educational contexts.

These contexts encompass educators engaged in mentoring in schools, early learning centres or higher education settings. The relationships established during these engagements set foundations for building professional learning communities, share innovation and research and continuously build professional knowledge about what drives improvement in teacher education.

[40] Newberry, M., Gallant A., & Riley P (Eds.), *Emotion in Schools* (2013).
[41] Jensen, B. et al., *Catching up: learning from the best school systems in East Asia.* Grattan Institute. (2012).
[42] ibid.
[43] See http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers/standards/list

How can we ensure that a teacher's early work experience sets up a positive and future-focused career outlook?

It is commonly acknowledged that the period immediately after the completion of ITE is a particularly difficult one for early career teachers (ECTs). Yet current workforce planning practices across the country, especially the casualisation of employment, are increasingly leaving these early career teachers without stable employment.

These current workforce trends:

a) minimise opportunities for genuine induction and mentoring that go beyond the practicalities of where the photocopier is located;

b) do not allow newly-qualified teachers to properly establish themselves in a school or local community; and

c) cause difficulties for new teachers seeking access to financial services, such as car and home loans.

While there is a national requirement for a consistent approach to an initial period of registration that should ostensibly provide mentoring and induction for early career teachers, the reality for many teachers is that the support for learning and development they receive throughout their ITE courses comes to an abrupt halt once they graduate. The current employment practices in Australian schools are having significant consequences on the initiation into, and subsequent retention of, graduates in the profession.

Innovation can occur in the employment of ECTs. For example, teaching is an unusual profession in that, from day one, the practitioner works alone rather than under the guidance of a more experienced practitioner and is 100 per cent responsible for what occurs in the classroom.

ACU advocates employment processes that allow graduates to ease into these responsibilities under the guidance of a mentor whilst not suffering any adverse financial consequences from a more gradual entry process.

Further, a positive and future-focused career outlook is not just about mentoring but also about workplace conditions. Positive workplace conditions are essential for beginning teachers to develop and thrive. An unrealistically demanding workload, a lack of support or isolation from one's peers can compromise teachers' opportunity to teach effectively and, thus, succeed with students. As a result, satisfaction decreases, possibly leading to teacher attrition or mobility.

However, the opposite can also occur. The 'Studying the Effectiveness of Teacher Education' project demonstrated that, when schools develop and maintain support systems for beginning teachers that include serious mentoring and induction that are oriented on improving teachers' practice, teachers are more likely to stay in their school and are less likely to move to other schools or leave teaching.[44]

[44] Diane Mayer et al, 'Studying the Effectiveness of Teacher Education' (SETE), Final Report, Deakin University (November 2015).

Future Prospects

More consideration should be given to better models to support casual teachers. The Victorian Institute of Teachers (VIT) has a role to play in providing better mentoring support to ITE graduates in casual employment.

For example, ACU Mentoring modules provide support to ECTs through a community of practice model. VIT could discuss such models with ITE providers, consolidating and co-ordinating the best approaches to support ECTs, particularly those in casual employment.

If schools, universities and the VIT work together in good faith and are responsive to context, they will be able to provide better support for teacher development.

APPENDIX 1: AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY PROFILE

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is a publicly funded Catholic university, open to people of all faiths and of none and with teaching, learning and research inspired by 2,000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition. ACU operates as a multi-jurisdictional university with seven campuses across four states and one territory. ACU campuses are located in North Sydney (NSW), Strathfield (NSW), Canberra (ACT), Melbourne (Victoria), Ballarat (Victoria), Brisbane (QLD) and Adelaide (SA).

ACU is the largest Catholic university in the English speaking world. Today, ACU has over 30,000 students and 2,000 staff.[45]

ACU graduates demonstrate high standards of professional excellence and are also socially responsible, highly employable and committed to active and responsive learning. ACU graduates are highly sought after by employers, with a 93 per cent employment rate.[46]

ACU has built its reputation in the areas of Health and Education and is a major producer of nursing and teaching graduates in Australia. ACU educates the largest number of undergraduate nursing and teaching students in Australia,[47] serving to meet significant workforce needs in these areas. Under the demand driven system, ACU has sought to focus and build on these strengths.

Since 2014 ACU has had four faculties: Health Services; Education and Arts; Law and Business; and Theology and Philosophy. The consolidation of the previous six faculties has created a more efficient and competitive structure focused on the needs of industry and employment partners. ACU is also moving towards the adoption of a shared services model where suitable, to improve efficiencies, internal processes and better allocate resources.

ACU is committed to targeted and quality research. ACU's strategic plan focuses on areas that align with ACU's mission and reflect most of its learning and teaching: Education; Health and Wellbeing; Theology and Philosophy; and Social Justice and the Common Good. To underpin its plan for research intensification, ACU has appointed high profile leaders to assume the directorships, and work with high calibre members, in seven research institutes.[48]

In the last three years the quality of ACU's research has improved dramatically. In the 2015 Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) assessment ACU received high scores in the fields of research identified as strategic priorities and in which it has concentrated investment in order to achieve the highest levels of excellence. These include selected areas of Health, as well as Education, Psychology, Theology, and Philosophy.

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[45] As at July 2016. Student numbers refer to headcount figures while staff numbers refer to full-time equivalent (FTE).
[46] Based on those available for full-time employment, results from the *Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) 2015.*
[47] Department of Education and Training, *2014 Higher Education Data Collection – Students, Special Courses* (31 July 2015).
[48] Australian Catholic University, *ACU Research* <http://www.acu.edu.au/research/research_institutes_and_programs >.

ACU’s research in Psychology, Human Movement and Sports Science, Nursing, Public Health and Health Services is rated in the top category under ERA of being “well above world standard”.

ACU’s research in Specialist Studies in Education, Philosophy and Religion and Religious Studies is in the next ERA category as being above world standard.

While ACU’s research in Education**,** Studies in Human Society, Law and Legal Studies, History and Archaeology**,** Education Systems, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Business and Management, Political Science, Sociology, Law, Applied Ethics and Historical Studies is at world standard