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Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Inquiry into Teacher Education

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training's inquiry into Teacher Education. The University of Adelaide is supportive of the Commonwealth's commitment to ensuring that graduates of teacher education programs meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australia's schools.

Our submission contains some brief general statements relating to the University's teacher education programs followed by comments on each of the terms of reference, with reference to the programs offered by the University of Adelaide.

The University offers three programs related to the training of secondary school teachers, all of whose graduates are eligible to apply for registration as a secondary school teacher in South Australia:

- Bachelor of Teaching – an undergraduate combined degree program available in conjunction with a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Sciences, Bachelor of Economics or Bachelor of Mathematical and Computer Sciences (both degrees are completed in four years). This program was introduced in 2004;
- Bachelor of Music Education – a four year undergraduate degree program which allows students to specialise in classical or jazz performance, composition, music or music technology while conducting core studies in music teaching; and
- Graduate Diploma of Education – a one year diploma program for university graduates with majors in at least two subject areas offered in South Australian schools.

The University is guided by the basic principles that successful teaching at the secondary school level requires specialised understanding and knowledge of at least one secondary school discipline, and understanding and appreciation of how knowledge is created, and the active construction of knowledge by students and teachers working in partnership. Teaching and learning increasingly occur within environments set in diverse communities and cultures.   Teachers must therefore be aware of how those communities and cultures impact on their own teaching and on their pupils' learning.
The University believes that it is the clear articulation of the links and interconnectedness of knowledge, pedagogy and context in the delivery of teacher education programs that attract high quality enthusiastic individuals with a long-term commitment to teaching into our programs. It is important that teacher education programs expose students to pedagogical theory and practice in the classroom at an early stage of the educational process.

The graduate attributes acquired by graduates completing our programs include:

- Significant understanding of how to teach the basic domains of knowledge;
- Knowledge and understanding of the students' chosen disciplines areas;
- Capacity to integrate the particular and special concerns of families, peers and neighbourhoods into their teaching – gained from ongoing experiences in a variety of schools;
- Competence in constructing a pedagogical approach to teaching in the classroom;
- Understanding of the existing school systems and the ability to explore how the next generation of schools might most appropriately be designed;
- Cognitive skills in analysing, evaluating and synthesising information;
- Capacity for critical thinking and problem solving;
- Interpersonal and oral and written communication communication skills of a high order;
- Ability to fulfil leadership roles within the teaching profession and community at large;
- High level of self-awareness and critical judgement; and
- Commitment to ethical behaviour.

Terms of Reference

1. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses

Selection into the Graduate Diploma of Education and Bachelor of Teaching is based on academic merit, quotas for each discipline area, with performance in an audition an additional requirement for the Bachelor of Music Education.

2. Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences

Our programs attract students of extremely high academic merit. Over half of the Graduate Diploma students have Honours, Masters or Doctoral degrees. In addition, the average age of the students entering this program is over 30 years, with most of them having had richly varied experiences before entering the program.

3. Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition

The Commonwealth funded load for our teacher education programs experiences minimal fluctuation after the relative census dates, with most changes reflecting students changing from full-time to part-time status.

4. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding faculty members

The University employs a rigorous process when appointing new members of academic staff. Three new staff members have been appointed recently and key selection criteria influencing their appointment included scholarship and active participation in teaching. Similarly, the University's promotion processes at all levels of the academic structure include both teaching and research and scholarship in the mandatory categories of activity. The University also awards prizes for excellence in teaching annually, providing for individual and team-based applications, and including one prize per annum for staff members in their first five years of an academic career.

5. Examine the educational philosophy underpinning the teacher training courses (including the teaching methods used, course structure and materials, and methods for assessment and evaluation) and assess the extent to which it is informed by research

The goals of our programs are for students to pursue three major, but interacting, course streams: curriculum design and methodology, pupil-teacher interaction in the classroom, and family and cultural context of learning. Students' learning about becoming successful teachers is related to: (a) their understanding of how pupils and teachers interact and form learning partnerships in classrooms, and how those partnerships are affected by the individual characteristics of pupils and teachers, and (b) how to design curriculum and adopt appropriate teaching methodologies in varied classroom and school settings. If our students are to understand the complexity of forming learning-teaching partnerships then they need to be aware of how families, peer groups and neighbourhood contexts influence the cognitive, affective and emotional outcomes of their pupils.

As we plan learning-teaching experiences for our students, and as they in turn plan experiences for their own pupils in classrooms, we need to explore the changing nature of the teacher's role. It is no longer appropriate to consider teachers as authority figures who actively disseminate knowledge to relatively passive pupils. Instead, teachers may be considered to be partners in a learning process in which they help to orchestrate complex learning environments and engage pupils in instructional activities. From such engagement it is considered that pupils will construct their own understanding of the material being explored.

The learning-teaching model is meant to reflect a continuous and meaningful interaction between theoretical and practical concerns related to teaching.   Students begin their interaction with schools at an early stage of their programs. In the first semester of the Graduate Diploma, students commence a five-week practicum in which they are introduced to the challenges of constructing partnerships with pupils.   In the second semester, the students undertake a further five-week practicum in a second secondary school. During both practice experiences the students are monitored and evaluated by University and school-based supervisors.

Increasingly, it is our intention to integrate the contribution of school-based supervisors more intimately into the activities of the University's School of Education. One proposal being explored is the development of a professional certificate for teaching supervision. Such an integration forms part of our plan to enrich our associations with each of the school systems.   From interactions with principals, we have identified the education of indigenous students, teaching in rural and regional secondary schools, and enterprise education as areas for future development. It is likely that we will pursue these areas by fostering links with teachers who have special expertise with such issues.

6. **Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines**
All of the students in the Graduate Diploma of Education are graduates and thus have associations with their academic disciplines. In the Bachelor of Teaching combined degree program, structures are in place to maximise interactions between faculties.

7. **Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:**
   i. **Teach literacy and numeracy;**
   ii. **Teach vocational education courses;**
   iii. **Effectively manage classrooms;**
   iv. **Successfully use information technology;**
   v. **Deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;**
   vi. **Deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;**
   vii. **Achieve accreditation; and**
   viii. **Deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups, and other related government departments**
In addition to their areas of specialisation, students must complete units in teaching practice and curriculum methodology. Education studies courses involve units in: educational psychology; curriculum frameworks and perspectives; culture, education and society; and issues in Australian schools. More information about all of our programs related to teacher education is available at:
http://www.adelaide.edu.au/professions/education/programs/
Throughout the programs the resources of the three South Australian school systems are used to examine, for example: behaviour management and bullying in schools; the use of technology in schools; and, special issues that are of particular concern to schools. As part of the program, students meet senior members of the teaching profession to examine current and future directions of teaching/learning in South Australian schools.

8. Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers

Teachers play a prominent role in the delivery of our teacher education programs. Curriculum and methodology in subjects such as English, information and communication technology, geography, business studies, physics, biology, music, accounting, psychology, chemistry, English as a second language, and economics are all presented by teachers. In addition, teachers and personnel from the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services are involved in integral aspects of our programs including behaviour management processes and the preparation of international students for South Australian classrooms.

9. Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training

The University is not involved in the preparation of primary school teachers. However, one of the features of our Bachelor of Teaching degree is to provide students with experiences in a primary school during their first year.

10. Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce

The University has offered postgraduate coursework and research programs in education for many years at Masters and Doctoral level. In addition, the University has recently developed postgraduate coursework programs in science, mathematics and information and communication technology for the ongoing professional development of teachers in these areas.

11. Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.

Funding for the teaching practicum in the current higher education funding environment is always a challenge. At present, resources allow our students to be in schools for about half their program. If it was considered desirable that they should be in schools for longer periods, then further funding would be required.

I hope these comments are of value. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR PENNY BOUMELHA
<u>Acting Vice-Chancellor and President</u>