

University of South Australia



*Submission to the
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Education and
Vocational Training
Inquiry into Teacher Education*

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Executive Summary

The University of South Australia's School of Education presents this submission in the knowledge that its thorough Review of Education has produced innovative programs for Teacher Education.

The preparation and ongoing development of teachers for our schools lies at the heart of achieving Australia's goal to build a world class education system. Academic staff within Schools of Education in Australian universities, working in collaboration with their school based colleagues and academics from a wide range of disciplinary areas within the university, have been charged with the responsibility for developing and sustaining the education profession through their teaching, research and service to the education community. At the core of this task lies the imperative to develop relevant, sustainable and flexible teacher education programs that are well resourced and able to meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australia's schools.

Introduction

The University of South Australia (UniSA) welcomes the opportunity presented by the Inquiry into Teacher Education to present the philosophy and approach taken by its School of Education in developing future school educators.

Education at the University of South Australia has a long history which is traced back to the Kindergarten Training College, established in 1907 and the Teachers College established in 1927. In the 1970s these institutions became part of the Colleges of Advanced Education, and subsequently the South Australian College of Advanced Education, which in 1991 amalgamated with the South Australian Institute of Technology to form the University of South Australia. In 2001 the three schools of education at UniSA, the de Lissa Institute of Early Childhood and Family Studies and the Magill and Underdale Schools of Education, merged to form the School of Education as it exists today based on both Magill and Mawson Lakes campuses.

The University of South Australia is one of Australia's larger teacher education providers. There are over 3,300 students in the School of Education, including nearly 200 doctoral students. One of the strengths of the School lies in its diversity of sectors of education, with 34 programs covering birth to eight years, junior primary and primary, middle years of schooling, secondary, adult, community and vocational education. Education staff members also have a national and international reputation in research, particularly through the work of the Research Centre for Studies in Literacy, Policy and Learning Cultures, and the Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work. The School's total research income for 2004 was \$904,000. Much of our research is conducted in partnership with professional groups in the different education sectors, employer authorities, clusters of schools and professional associations.

In 2001 the School of Education undertook a major Review of Education *Shaping the Future: Educating Professional Educators* (Reid and O'Donoghue 2001), which looked at new approaches and programs for the preparation of educators in the 21st century, and the kinds of organisational and management structures which might support these. The Review established the need to offer a new suite of preservice teacher education programs. It also explored the nature of the educational professional of the future and concluded that the requirement was to develop educators who were able to work across established educational boundaries; integrate knowledge across traditional discipline boundaries; be aware of the broad educational context, and not just their area of 'specialisation'; adapt to and shape change; work powerfully with diversity; and were flexible/creative/politically aware/committed to goals of social justice in and through education.

Terms of Reference

In response to the terms of reference for the Inquiry into Teacher Education we advise as follows:

- 1. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.**
and
- 2. Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.**

The School manages demand through the South Australia Tertiary Admissions Committee (SATAC) and its programs vary from four year undergraduate awards (early childhood, junior primary/primary, primary and middle, middle and secondary, adult, vocational and workplace) and two year graduate entry bachelor awards. Tertiary entrance for undergraduate awards is by academic merit, usually a minimum Tertiary Entry Rank (TER) of 70, with some programs' minimum scores in the mid eighties. This commendable situation is illustrated by cut off TERs in Primary Education in 2003 at 70.8, in 2004 at 78.70, and the initial cut off for 2005 is at 75.9; in Early Childhood in 2003 cut off was at 69.10, in 2004 at 85.10, and the initial cut off for 2005 is at 74.35.

For graduate entry, grade point average of the prior degree is used and entry levels vary according to the area of specialisation and the level of demand in any year. In 2005, the grade point average varied between 5 for the Bachelor of Education (Middle and Secondary) Arts Education strand, 4.75 for the Bachelor of Education (Primary and Middle) and 4 for the Bachelor of Education (Middle and Secondary) for all strands apart from Arts Education which is considerably higher

Demand has been high for these programs as well as graduate entry to the preservice teacher education awards, with positive publicity about teacher shortage encouraging a wide range of students to apply. In 2004, demand in undergraduate education programs outstripped supply by 35% (1st preference applications: 1217, Offers: 793), and in graduate entry programs demand outstripped supply by: 29.4% (1st preference applications: 398, Offers 281).

The School of Education has consistently managed to attract students from target equity groups, particularly rural and remote students, Aboriginal, and those with disabilities, with 39% of all students registered in these categories. This is the same percentage as the University as a whole, which sees its mission as providing accessible education to those traditionally marginalised by higher education. Furthermore, the University has run a teacher education suite of programs on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands for over 20 years, one of the few providers with a consistent presence on the Lands and where the graduates remain working in their communities in remote North West South Australia.

Partly because of the range of programs and its size, the School of Education has a critical mass of staff allowing it to develop a range of expertise and scholarship needed for educating teachers. Many Education staff members are active in professional associations and groups, and the expertise of staff is constantly drawn upon by education systems, institutions and groups. In 2000, for example, Education staff at the University of South Australia, in collaboration with the Council of Educational Associations of South Australia (CEASA), won a national tender to write the Birth-Year 12 curriculum for South Australia.

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

The School places a high priority on support for first year students and has designed programs which aim to ensure high quality participation. Overall retention rate figures for the School of Education's teacher training programs are high at 91.8% (overall retention rate for all programs is 81.46%), with program retention ranging from 84.22% for the Bachelor of Early Childhood to 91.28% for the Bachelor of Education (Junior Primary and Primary) and 100% for the Bachelor of Education (Specialisation), which is well over the national average expected in funding formulae by DEST. Attrition can be attributed to several factors: some students while interested in the

profession find themselves unable to perform well in professional placements, and transfer to other programs in the university; life circumstances also intervene for a number of students, who defer or withdraw; only a small minority fail key courses and withdraw from their programs.

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

The UniSA School of Education faculty consists of experienced and well qualified staff, with a total of 85.00 EFT academic staff in 2004, 33 of whom have doctoral degrees and a further 12 staff are expected to complete their doctorate during 2005. New continuing academic staff members normally have a PhD at entrance, although a group of staff are always appointed for their contemporary professional standing and industry currency. Financial rewards in academic life are poor in relative terms, with a lecturer B at the top of the scale earning \$67,320 per annum and a senior lecturer offering leadership and program direction for a program with hundreds of students, for example, earning \$80,078 per annum at the top of the scale. It remains hard to attract people from the profession into academic work since their salaries without high qualifications are significantly higher. A principal of a medium sized primary or high school earns more than the few professors in the School. This will become a serious problem given the age profile of our School of Education, with the majority of the staff over 50 years (67 staff) and little scope under current funding approaches to attract new staff.

Staff study leave is seen as an important condition for ensuring staff professional rejuvenation. Approximately 10% of continuing academic staff members in the School of Education are approved for a semester's study leave in any one year. Most use it for visits to other institutions, for conducting research projects, for further study, or for international networking.

Many staff members are very active in research and there is a close relationship between research and leading edge course development, providing a high level of staff satisfaction, as well as high quality contemporary courses. The inter-relationship of research and consultancy work with the continuous improvement of teaching programs is an integral feature of our quality assurance, and a way of attracting new staff to join the critical mass of researchers contributing to the development of the profession.

Within the School, there are two funded education Research Centres: the Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work and the Centre for Studies in Literacy, Policy and Learning Cultures; and one recognised Research Group, the de Lissa Research Centre. In the past five years these centres and other groupings of staff have steadily improved their research performance. As a consequence, Education at the University of South Australia is rapidly winning an international research profile, and as such contributing to the School's attraction in the academic employment market.

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 Review of Education (see also Introduction) explored the nature of teaching and research in Education. In particular, it developed the concept of educator as enquirer into educational practice, arguing that this concept should lie at the heart of preservice programs. The Review recommended the development of a number of key learnings courses/modules which should be taken by all students in ways which facilitate the sharing of perspectives across programs and levels. In addition, it recommended that current research strengths in Education be consolidated and enhanced through the development of, and support for, a plan relating to research activity.

The key learnings are conceptualised under four headings: *Knowledge*—about knowledge and ways of knowing; *Teaching and Learning*—about pedagogy and learners; *Educational Contexts*—about comprehending the ways in which educational policy and practice shape and are shaped by changing social and philosophical principles and socio-cultural contexts; and *Professional Identities*—about the development of a rich, engaged and reflective professional identity. Education Studies

majors are developed by building on these key learnings in terms of the dispositions, skills, understandings, and capabilities which future educators should develop.

The School has developed four shared courses for all our preservice teacher education programs, as a way to ensure that students engage in broad debates about the field of education, learning about different parts of the sector than their own focus for future employment, and about how education links to issues in the broader society.

In *Language and Multi-literacies*, first year students are introduced to the wide range of literacies required for good citizens in our society, and the ways in which teachers themselves need to be broadly literate and able to support all students in the development of a range of literacies, including IT, numeracy, various literary genres, and a capacity to interpret a range of sources of information and representation.

In *Social Contexts of Education*, students explore the inter-relationship of education with other institutions in society, the role of work, different social groups and their engagement in education, and practices which support a higher level of successful participation in education for groups who may not perform well in different sectors. A strong emphasis in this course is Aboriginal education and 'what works' in teaching for success.

In *Ethics and Critical Inquiry*, students engage with critical thinking and the ethics of their professional obligation. They look at ethical inquiry and reasoning; what it means to educate: thinking and evaluating critically; interrogating knowledge and truth claims; recognition of bias, prejudice, falsehoods and indoctrination; advocacy and defence of educational intention.

In *Professional Community, Identity and Social Justice*, students explore the new professional demands of education, understanding how their work is related to others', the role of government and policy, parents and community groups in relation to teachers' professional learning.

Through scaffolding on concepts from these shared courses, all programs can draw upon some common issues across the sectors, learning to work with one another and engaging with the broader philosophical, ethical and professional questions of our time.

All programs, and all courses within these programs, use a range of teaching methods for learning environments in on campus classes, working within a variety of practicum sites, learning on-line, and for innovative external materials. Course structures and materials have been redesigned to accommodate this wide range of student learning environments, with a particular focus around the on-line component. Assessment is directly relevant to the content and methodology, with various forms being used across each course. Student evaluation is both systemic and personal, with the former carrying a range of models to ensure confidentiality and ease of collation across courses and programs.

Our educational philosophy is highly practice based and operates at the pragmatic end of the spectrum informed by research. Our key point will be to develop the premise that theory informs our practice. The philosophy is to produce teachers who are inquiring competent individuals who can not only cope with the classroom at the point of graduation but who have the capacity and resources to grow as educators over their lifetime in teaching. There is need for balance between skills needed in the short term and the capacity to develop over the long term. There is a view that, to some degree, undergraduate courses need to be able to lead to postgraduate and research degrees in the future.

6. Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines

The School of Education enrolls a large number of students and approximately one third of their time is spent with other faculties. Of the 3300 students in education programs, the School teaches approximately 2300 EFT. The School has a double degree with Science, and with Human Movement and Health Studies and a new award which works closely with TAFE and other faculties

to produce well rounded teachers for secondary design and technology classrooms. A range of other double degrees are in preparation, including with Aboriginal/Australian Studies, and one with Languages Education. All undergraduate students at UniSA have to take courses known as BUGE (Broadening Undergraduate Education). In education, undergraduates also are required to take a BUGE in Aboriginal Studies, providing an important background in general knowledge of Australian society. This is complemented by a required course with strong emphasis on Aboriginal education noted above (Social Contexts of Education). A number of other discipline areas also provide service teaching for Education, and provide the content specialist knowledge required, for example in Languages, Mathematics, Health and Wellbeing.

The School of Education has almost 30 different programs, including offshore offerings in Singapore, the Philippines, and PNG. Our offshore teaching and consultancy work has a pivotal role in contributing to internationalisation of curriculum for all our students.

7. Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:

- i. Teach literacy and numeracy**—one shared course for all students on language and multi-literacies; specialist and upgrade input electives available in early childhood and primary education, in addition to direct courses on the curriculum areas of literacy and numeracy. The University's Learning Connection offers specific assistance to student teachers whose own skills and academic performance might need particular improvement.
- ii. Teach vocational education courses**—program specialists in adult, vocational and workplace learning work closely with middle and secondary program staff to offer a course in vocational learning in schools as a learning area. The students in the middle and secondary programs can also access elective courses in adult and vocational educational methodology and curriculum development as part of their studies. Students in all of the teacher education programs undertake shared core courses that expose them to the full range of educational contexts and issues from early childhood through to post-compulsory education, which includes vocational learning contexts.
- iii. Effectively manage classrooms**—aside from being a specialist course in its own right, strategies for effective classroom management are integrated into all curriculum areas and specialist studies in learning, in middle years/ adolescent learning, in the primary middle and middle/secondary programs.
- iv. Successfully use information technology**—Information and communication technologies (ICT) are integrated now into all areas of the teacher education curriculum, plus specific studies in all primary teaching and specialist capacities in secondary. UniSA prides itself on its use of online assistance for students, including administration with all students necessarily becoming ICT literate in order to participate in the life of the university community.
- v. & vi. Deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families and deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities**—In the early childhood programs, all students have a learning focus on children with special needs, and participate in courses in conceptual and social development of children, family issues and advocacy for children. In primary education, there is a required course on students with special needs, covering students with disabilities, and students with learning and behavioural difficulties. In primary/middle programs, there are specialist courses dealing with student welfare, child development, adolescent learners, health and wellbeing. In graduate entry, middle and secondary, these needs are met by components of the courses Reflective Practice, Middle Schooling for the Middle Years and Approaches to Teaching. All teacher education students also are required to complete the Mandated Notification Training Program and the First Aid for Centres and Schools course prior to undertaking practical teaching experiences in professional placements.
- vii. Achieve accreditation**—In South Australia the Teacher Registration Board examines all programs prior to the University's finalisation of accreditation processes. The Board's

interactions have been an important contribution to consistency in the state, and their standards for promotion of quality teaching professional preparation are high. The Head of School works closely with the Chair of the Board, there is academic membership on the Board, and the University maintains close administrative links to ensure that graduate results are transferred seamlessly in readiness for registration and employment. The Tertiary Entrance Program Guide indicates whether programs are approved for graduating students to be eligible for registration.

viii. **Deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments**—the courses Professional Community and Identity and Social Justice provide for all students of all programs a broad framing of the policies, politics and frameworks specific to the sector being studied. Parent issues are raised in a range of courses including special needs, child advocacy, literacy development, etc.

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

There are multiple ways in which community and professional stakeholders have opportunities to contribute to the design and evaluation of preservice teacher education, as well as its conduct.

For example, the external five year review brought together a wide range of stakeholders including teachers, employer authorities, registration authorities, professional associations to review all operations of the school and recommend future directions. The review shaped the five year directions of program development, future planning and liaison, and facilitated professional conversations around teacher education in a process that took one year for the first phase, followed by working parties that identified key learnings for student teachers (see the key learnings of Knowledge, Teaching and Learning, Educational Contexts and Professional Identities as discussed in the response to ToR 5).

In all preservice education programs students spend a significant length of time in schools and educational settings. The length of practicums in the programs ranges from 70 to 100 days during which time students work closely with mentor teachers in schools and other educational settings.

There is an external Education Advisory Committee which meets twice yearly to advise the school on key issues relevant to teacher education at all levels, with representation from schools, pre-school, TAFE and community sectors, and is chaired by the eminent educationalist Anne Morrow (Chair, SA TAFE Board).

In South Australia, the Deans of Education meet regularly with employer authorities in relation to both preservice and inservice teacher education. The Teacher Education Liaison Committee meets quarterly and attends to matters of supply and demand, emerging issues, negotiation of changes of direction in recruitment, as well as professional development issues and professional pathways for use of upgrade training for credit towards postgraduate qualifications. A subcommittee of this teacher education liaison committee brings together school representatives with university representatives in order to plan and negotiate access to professional placements for practicum. This group has also dealt with issues of police checks for student teachers.

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

UniSA is active in promoting significant overlap between the traditional separation of education into Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary. A program model specifically designed for this purpose has been developed and is being implemented as of 2005 (see Figure 2 below).

In particular, we note the importance of:

- i) An integrated approach to early childhood education spanning birth to eight years, and the institutional dimensions of childcare, kindergarten, pre-school and the junior years of primary schooling. We believe this approach, also recognised by the Teachers' Registration Board of South Australia as suitable for registration as a teacher, ensures that graduates are prepared for the range of different settings in which early childhood education can and does occur.
- ii) An emphasis on middle schooling, despite the absence of many actual 'middle schools' in Australia. In our programs we not only have a separate Junior Primary and Primary award but also a Primary and Middle Schooling award, which covers the years 3-10 of schooling. We have also added a significant dimension of middle schooling to our main secondary award (Middle and Secondary) to ensure that graduates are aware of the particular demands of adolescents and the crucial years of learning they represent.

Both of these emphases have emerged from close cooperation between employer and professional bodies and also represent building on national and international research directions, including those of key researchers in our School of Education

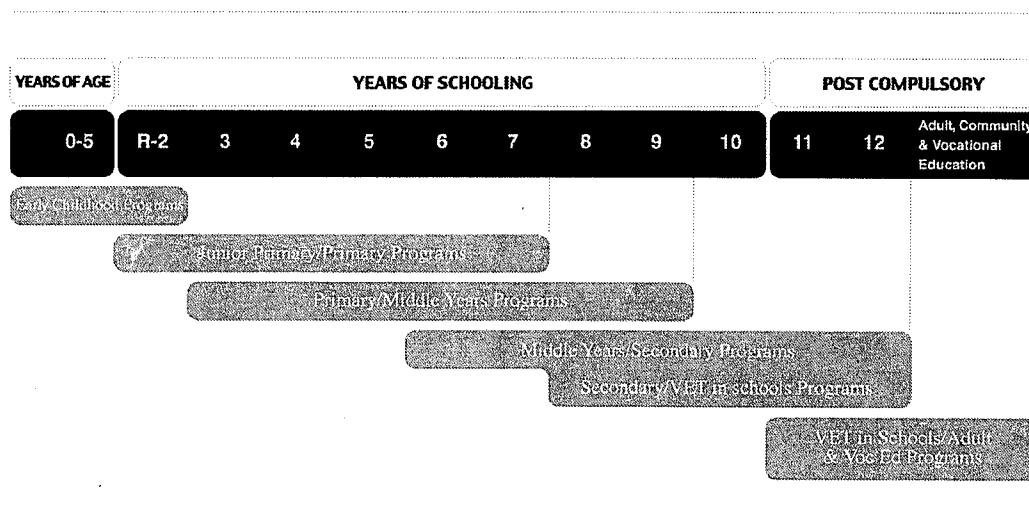


Figure 2. Program Model

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

The University of South Australia, like most education faculties in Australia, has experienced a significant downturn in enrolment in postgraduate studies since the 1980s, largely attributable to three factors: the introduction of fees, the increased working hours of teachers which militate against allocating time for work-related study, and the ageing teaching force, many of whom have already engaged in further study at some stage in their careers. We see this as needing several key external responses: 1) systematic investment by employer authorities and other means of ensuring sponsorship of further study and 2) attracting incoming members to the teaching profession and 3) ensuring contemporary teaching professional development is directly related to key issues nominated by the profession. At UniSA, we have been active in relating current research and development work by staff to partnership work with schools. This forms the basis of attracting staff in schools to further study, emphasising practitioner inquiry in their own classrooms on

current issues. This has been recognised by employers who have sponsored several cohorts into Graduate Certificates on IT and Literacy, Thinking Scientifically and Mathematically and Community Capacity Building.

Our Masters coursework program allows either for a more general approach depending on teacher interest or for specialisation in particular strands (adult education, early childhood, educational computing, languages education, literacy and language education, TESOL). We have close relations with two other Australian universities in co-developing courses especially in the area of literacy education, one of our research strengths. Also we have attracted interest from North America with a significant number of Canadian students enrolling in literacy education subjects seen as leading edge through their connection to current research.

The professional pathways model of partnership between professional associations, employer bodies and the three universities in South Australia is a useful model which could be taken up more widely elsewhere. In this model, those offering professional development opportunities that involve a significant amount of time and effort (eg through the AGQTP Program) apply to have their program recognised through a professional pathway reference committee and recognition of this work is guaranteed by all participating universities for level 5 (graduate certificate and Masters level) courses.

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

The university provides approximately 50% of its Commonwealth supported and HECS repayment funding directly to the Divisions, using the other 50% for infrastructure such as student administration, library, distance and external education, human resource development, finance, marketing, property and administration. Within Divisions, additional resources are also provided such as business development management services including international development, academic and student services including student one-stop centres for information and records, support for approval processes for new programs, program evaluation and review, finance administrative services, research and teaching support, and induction. The School of Education receives approximately 36.5% of the CSP and HECS repayments from which it covers salaries and operating expenses, practicum payments to schools, and program, research and consultancy administrative support.