



13<sup>th</sup> May, 2005

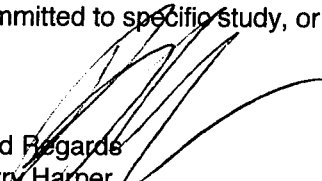
Janet Holmes  
Inquiry Secretary  
Parliament of Australia  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training  
Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 6000

Dear Janet

Please find attached a submission to the Inquiry into Teacher Recruitment and Training from the Faculty of Education of the University of Wollongong. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this application after the due date. As I have noted in the submission, my staff and I are available to appear before the Inquiry.

You have also asked specifically for information about when our students are out on practicum and when the staff and students are on holidays. Currently we have some students on professional experience throughout the year, and staff tend to take their recreational leave entitlement during December – January, so they are available throughout the year.

A time when most students are not available is the mid-June to mid-July period when students are either not committed to specific study, or are on overseas practice teaching experience.

  
Kind Regards  
Barry Harper  
Dean, Faculty of Education



***Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong***  
***Submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into  
Teacher Education***

The Faculty of Education of the University of Wollongong welcomes the opportunity to respond to the terms of reference for this national review and does so in the hope that the recommendations from the Inquiry will set the context for a deeper appreciation of the contribution the teaching profession makes to the economy of our Nation, and the key role that teacher education programs play in the preparation of teachers.

We support the general thrust of submissions to the Inquiry from the New South Wales Teacher Education Council and the Australian College of Deans of Education. The responses offered in this submission are specific to the University of Wollongong.

The Faculty of Education offers teacher preparation programs in Early Childhood, Primary, Physical and Health Education, Secondary Maths and Science Education as Bachelor of Teaching and Bachelor of Education programs as well as a Graduate Diploma in Education for graduate students. Also, at the graduate level, Masters and doctoral programs are offered in a range of specialisations as well as a raft of professional teacher development programs. Additionally, the Faculty offers an experimental preparation program, the Knowledge Building Community (KBC) program based on a problem based and practicing teacher-mentoring model, for small cohorts of students preparing to be primary teachers. The Faculty has close working relationships with local schools and school systems as well as with the NSW Department of Education and Training and has a significant staff complement of seconded teachers and sessional school based staff.

## **Term of Reference 1**

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

The entry standards for all of our programs have been consistently high, with upward pressure for the past 10 years on all UAI entry levels for undergraduate courses. Despite increased competition for places, UAI levels in the Faculty of Education have been held relatively constant for students entering from Year 12, with the cut-off for Bachelor of Teaching Primary remaining at 78 for the past five years. However, the demand for places and the increasingly competitive nature of entry, particularly from mature-aged applicants, has meant that differentiated UAI cut-off scores have been necessary since 2004, with a score of 86 for Category B applicants (non-HSC leavers) in the Bachelor of Teaching Primary program in 2005. The constancy of the Faculty's UAI entry scores also stands in contrast to entry requirements for courses in other faculties where marked increases have occurred over recent years (for example, the cut-off for B. Arts in 2005 is 81, having increased gradually over the course of the past five years from 74). In terms of the cut-off scores across the University, the Faculty's programs stand at a midpoint between the requirements of particular programs, for example, B. Science Physics at 74 and the relatively higher requirements of B. Nutrition and Dietetics at 95.

Entry to undergraduate courses in the Faculty is open to applicants with a broad range of experiences and from a diversity of backgrounds, allowing the recognition of many personal qualities that are valued within the profession. The variety of pathways that have been developed in response to increasing demands ensures a balance of younger students entering straight from high school as well as providing opportunities for mature-aged applicants who have developed a range of skills that are not necessarily open to measurement through school-based assessments. A balance of approximately 60% of younger students and 40% mature-aged students is achieved through this process.

Criteria for entry for the majority of these pathways include UAI scores or nominal UAI scores calculated for applicants who have completed recognised courses of study. The Faculty also offers a number of alternate entry programs that rest on criteria such as voluntary and work experiences that may demonstrate an interest in and commitment to teaching in addition to an applicant's academic standing. Apart from entering via UAC, direct entry is available for applicants who may have completed courses at TAFE or other institutions, for example, Diploma level courses or the Tertiary Preparation Certificate as well as tertiary study at other universities. In addition, students aged over 21 years who have completed the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) may also receive scores that enable them to gain entry. Progressive offers for entry to the Faculty are available to selected applicants who successfully meet the requirements of relevant programs of study at Wollongong University College. Woolyungah Indigenous Centre, located on the University's main campus, also provides an alternate entry program for indigenous students and this is well supported by the Faculty. Within the University, transfer from other faculties into the Faculty of Education is a possibility for students who have completed at least one year of full-time study and who meet the necessary criteria outlined above.

Progression and completion patterns indicating the success of students entering through alternative pathways supports the continuation of this practice.

The Graduate Diploma of Education (GDE) is popular with domestic students as well as international students, with the majority of overseas students coming from Canada where accreditation standards are similar to those in Australia. Entry to the GDE is extremely competitive. As far as the domestic market is concerned, preference is given to applicants who have completed undergraduate programs at the University of Wollongong and, in the current year, the popularity of the program has meant that we have been unable to offer places to applicants from other institutions. Entry requirements rest on criteria set by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) that determine eligibility for employment within that system. Students are required to complete patterns of study at the undergraduate level that meet the particular requirements for employment as primary or secondary teachers. Entry to the GDE program rests on a study pattern that fulfils the relevant DET criteria and, because of demand, cut-off levels are determined on the basis of quota restrictions and Weighted Average Means (WAMs) calculated on the final grades of the undergraduate programs of study. Two of the most popular teaching methods in this program are Primary and English/History and, in the current year, the level of entry based on WAMs was 62% and 68% respectively for these methods. Applicants with WAMs below these cut-off points were not accepted for entry. The average WAMs of students accepted for the various secondary methods were in the 75% to 85% range, reflecting the high academic standing of the students involved.

One trend that has received some attention from the media and other sources in recent years is the relatively small number of males entering the profession at the early childhood and primary levels. The Faculty's patterns of gender ratios reflects similar situations occurring in other institutions, that is, a relatively small percentage of males enter the B. Teaching Primary program (18% in 2005) and the B. Teaching Early Childhood program (2% in 2005). Conversely, the percentage of males entering the secondary Maths and Science teaching programs is much higher (47% and 60% respectively in 2005), whilst the B. Education (PE/HE) program has an almost even gender balance. These patterns are also reflected in the gender balance found in particular methods programs within the GDE.

## **Term of Reference 2**

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

About 15% of all HSC students in NSW achieve a UAI score of 90 and above, with many entering institutions that offer courses such as Medicine which traditionally have high UAI entry requirements. Within the sector, the University of Wollongong has maintained a median UAI score above the State average, with a median UAI of 79.88 in 2005 that is marginally higher than the rest of NSW. The number of high-scoring UAI students entering programs in the Faculty is increasing, with nearly 7% of the intake in 2005 comprising students with UAI scores of 90 and above. This compares favourably with the University's average intake of about 7.5% of students with UAI scores above 90.

Despite these figures, there are a number of factors that continue to work against students with high UAI scores entering teaching programs. There is evidence, for example, suggesting that students choose, often on the advice of their parents and career advisors, to 'spend' their UAI scores in courses with higher entry requirements that are perceived to be more 'prestigious'. Additionally and unfortunately, the profession is seldom promoted in the community by those working within it or by the media.

### **Term of Reference 3**

#### ***Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition***

The Faculty's low attrition rate across all programs attests to the high level of encouragement given to students as much as it confirms their commitment to study and to the profession. Over the past five years, attrition rates for undergraduate students within the Faculty have ranged from 9.7% to 11.2%. For students entering in 2004 and continuing into 2005 attrition rate of 9.7% has been recorded comparing favourably with attrition rates in other faculties where the range is between 12% to 14% for the same period. A similar situation exists within the GDE program where, again, competition for places reflects the applicants' interest and commitment to teaching.

Whilst attrition rates in our programs are very low, there is general acknowledgement that some attrition is necessary and, in fact, healthy. Students choose teaching as a profession for a variety of reasons and, with early experience in the field; some discover that the choice has not been an appropriate one for them. This discovery is likely to occur regardless of the selection processes used for entry and will only become apparent through direct experience in the classroom

### **Term of Reference 4**

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

The staffing of professional preparation programs, such as teacher education, in universities is problematic. Academics in education faculties need to not only have an academic profile but also a professional profile. In order to achieve the latter, they must spend a significant amount of time as a teacher. This means that, when we recruit, the pool of possible applicants is already well paid, but does not have the academic standing commensurate with their professional pay scale. For example, an applicant with a new doctorate and seven to eight years of teaching experience will be receiving a school-based salary equivalent to the top of the senior lecturer scale, yet in terms of academic profile, would only be judged to be working academically at a lecturer or associate lecturer level. Even if we offer an attraction allowance, promotion will be delayed until a strong research record is established. Additionally, most education faculties maintain a significant seconded and in-school sessional staff of experienced and outstanding teachers to ensure current teaching practice is continually linked to classroom practice and to illustrate this element in our teaching programs. The disadvantage is that research output for the faculty is constrained

because these staff do not have the expertise, or the time, to add to the research output of a faculty and yet are adding vital and essential expertise to the teaching program.

#### **Term of Reference 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 Faculty of Education has well-articulated educational philosophies and theoretical frameworks underpinning all teaching programs and individual subjects. The staff has significant research expertise and experience and constantly use research outcomes to inform the constant review and redevelopment processes across and within programs and subjects.

#### **Term of Reference 6**

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

The Faculty of Education works closely with all other faculties across the University. All undergraduate education students study a sequence of two subjects that must be taken out of the Faculty and students from other faculties have opportunities to take subjects offered within the Faculty of Education as core electives. The Faculty offers two teaching programs jointly with the Faculty of Science (Bachelor of Science Education) and the Faculty of Informatics (Bachelor of Mathematics Education) and works collaboratively with the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences to offer teacher-retraining programs such as the Post Graduate Diploma in Psychology for training Counsellors for Schools.

#### **Term of Reference 7**

*Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:*

- *teach literacy and numeracy;*
- *teach vocational education courses;*
- *effectively manage classrooms;*
- *successfully use information technology;*
- *deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;*
- *deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;*
- *achieve accreditation; and*
- *deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.*

We are meeting the expectations of the profession in terms of providing grounding in essential teaching expertise in literacy, numeracy, all NSW curricula, classroom

management, special education and use of information technology. In addition, a range of opportunities for students to gain experience with community groups is provided through subjects that require their involvement at various levels. We address the mandatory requirements for employment in the NSW Department of Education and Training as well as graduate attributes declared by the University. Additionally, we are now working with the NSW Institute of Teachers to ensure the prescribed standards set by the Institute are met across all of our teaching programs. We are also cognisant of the limitations of teacher preparation and focus on preparation of our students for their initial teaching experiences. We recognise that we cannot prepare students for all possible teaching circumstances nor for their longer career experiences and that employers have a significant responsibility in this regard. We do address the longer-term goals and skills through professional development programs in schools as well as through our graduate offerings for practising teachers.

### **Term of Reference 8**

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

Critics who fail to engage with teacher preparation programs themselves unfortunately fuel the common criticism that teacher preparation programs do not reflect classroom practice and are out of touch. The Faculty of Education maintains 14% of our staffing profile as full time short term seconded appointments of experienced and expert practicing teachers. In addition, we employ a further 39 part time sessional master teachers resulting in 31% of our teaching staff profile made up either of practicing teachers or recently practicing teachers.

This Faculty has a long history of working closely with our local and state stakeholders as well as schools and school staff, not only locally, but across the state and internationally. The Faculty draws on advice from our schools and their staff through various advisory committees as well as through professional preparation committees and local principal groups. Research within the Faculty is predominantly focused on school learning and a large majority of the Faculty staff are working directly with schools on a broad range of competitively funded as well as unfunded projects. Much of this work is focused on improving teaching processes and improving student learning through such programs as the Quality Teaching Program in NSW.

The role of schools and school staff is central in our professional experience programs where teachers supervise and mentor our students using a variety of models. Of particular note is our movement away from supervisory models to the range of mentoring models the Faculty is implementing in collaboration with schools, not only for our undergraduate students, but also for our recent graduates. For example, the innovative Knowledge Building Community (KBC) teacher preparation model we have implemented for a small cohort in the Bachelor of Teaching and the Diploma of Education programs uses a problem based school experience advanced mentoring model, which has proven to be extremely successful. This type of program focuses on the quality of student professional experience and challenges the often argued, but simplistic view, that increased professional experience days will necessarily increase student teaching expertise.

### **Term of Reference 9**

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

We support the ACDE and TEC submissions on this issue.

### **Term of Reference 10**

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

Enrolments of practising teachers and school leaders in postgraduate degrees have fallen markedly since the mid-1990s because of the introduction of fees. There is no financial encouragement or recognition by educational employers of a higher degree in education. Fees and lack of financial reward act as a double disincentive to teachers' on going professional learning.

It is likely that the introduction of accreditation through the NSW Institute of Teachers will act as stimulus and recognition for teachers' professional learning in this state, although the questions of financial support and reward remain. It is also likely and desirable that teachers' professional learning will be facilitated and provided by consortia (employers, professional associations, universities) through short and longer courses which will articulate with both formal university degrees and Institute accreditation. There is some evidence that short in-service courses, particularly those that have no assessment component or tangible output, are ineffective. On the other hand, action-research projects such as those currently funded under the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program appear to have met immediate positive responses with teachers and schools and seem the way forward.

The Faculty of Education has a strong research profile and a record of providing pre-service and in-service teacher education, which is highly regarded by the teaching profession. Faculty staff are heavily involved in teacher professional learning and have a high level presence in schools and educational systems. The Faculty has a high priority on continuing to work closely with teachers and schools through research, consultancy and the provision of high quality programs. Worthy of mention is the Australian Centre for Educational Leadership located within the Faculty that has established a national and international reputation through its postgraduate programs, annual conference, workshops, consultancy and research in educational leadership. A long-term aim of the Centre is to act as a facilitator for national and international collaboration in educational leadership and to this end; the Centre is keen to build relationships with the new National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership.

### **Term of Reference 11**

*Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations*

The University of Wollongong funds faculties through an open, equitable and transparent budgeting process based on a number of factors related to the costs necessary to run faculties. Funding for the Faculty of Education is under threat from a

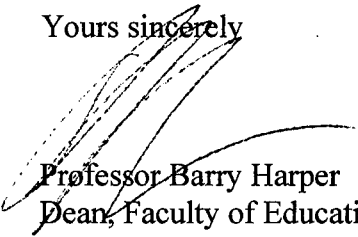


number of sources, the most obvious is from the lack of indexation of funding to the University. An impending risk to funding is the proposed increased payment to teachers for supervising professional school experience. The proposed increases will result in significantly increased costs to the Faculty. An additional risk has resulted from the pegging of HECS for Education students. This process of maintaining HECS at current levels means funding for our students will lose parity with all other degrees.

### **Conclusion**

Staff of the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong are willing to be called upon to elaborate on any of the issues raised in this submission and we are committed to supporting the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Professor Barry Harper  
Dean, Faculty of Education