

# Teacher Registration in the ACT

## ISSUES PAPER No 1 - Teacher Education

### Introduction

This paper is one of a series that has been prepared to inform and encourage consultation and discussion on the need for and the possible elements of a teacher registration system for teachers in all education systems in the ACT.

The key document in the consultation process is *Teacher Registration in the ACT: Community Consultation Paper*, released on 14 May 2007. That paper sets out the background to the ACT Government's decision to investigate the issue of teacher registration, describes the purposes of a teacher registration system, canvasses the possible role and function of such a system in the ACT and sets out a process for consultation with stakeholders.

This paper addresses the specific issue of **teacher education**. Its purpose is to provide information and to encourage discussion around the issue of teacher education, including the relationship between a teacher registration body (the body) and teacher educators, and how the body might accredit teacher education courses. It does not necessarily represent the views of the ACT Department of Education and Training (DET) or of any other stakeholder involved in the consultation process. The Teacher Registration Project Reference Group has approved the circulation of this paper on that basis.

### Background

One of the core functions of a registration system is to ensure and certify that new teachers have the necessary profession qualifications and skills. As the consultation paper points out, it is important "to align professional entry-level requirements to teach in ACT schools with teacher education courses conducted by tertiary education institutions."

This means that the body would need to establish some form of quality assurance system in relation to those institutions that supply its teachers.

### The Present Situation

#### *The Size and Source of Teacher Recruitment*

It may be useful, in any discussion of teacher accreditation roles for an ACT body, to have some idea of the size and source of teacher recruitment in the jurisdiction.

Approximately 1200 applications were received for the 2007 Classroom Teacher recruitment round for ACT Government schools:

- 36% of applicants were from the University of Canberra (UC);
- 7% were from Charles Sturt University, which has several campuses in NSW;
- 6% were from the Australian Catholic University Sigandou Campus (ACU-S);
- 39% were from other Australian teacher education providers;
- 12% were from overseas.

The high number of outside applicants reflects at least in part a deliberate campaign over the last few years to improve selection fields by a vigorous recruitment campaign right across Australia.

Recruitment undertaken by the Catholic Education Office for 2007 provided the following break-down of graduates to vacancies:

- 60 % were from Australian Catholic University;
- 33 % from University of Canberra;
- 4 % from Charles Sturt University; and
- 3 % from other institutions

The Independent system in the ACT is comprised of individual schools with varying access to resources and with specific recruitment strategies that may be influenced by their particular education philosophies. They tend to advertise broadly to attract staff from teacher education institutions from across Australia. The Independent system



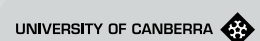
Education and Training



Association of Independent Schools  
of the ACT Incorporated



Australian Catholic University  
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



also attracts a significant level of experienced teachers and teaching leaders as well as graduates.

### **The Assessment of Qualifications**

All ACT education systems require the same basic qualifications in applicants for classroom teacher positions. They must have four-year teacher training qualifications – e.g. Bachelor of Education or Bachelor degree and Diploma and Diploma of Education. These qualifications can come from any teacher educational institution, including overseas institutions, subject to the requirements of the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition.

Qualified government system applicants are assessed against selection criteria that include academic competence, an ability to understand and manage an inclusive learning environment, an understanding of student monitoring, assessment and reporting processes and a capacity to contribute to the broader life of the school.

Qualified applicants to the Catholic system are assessed against selection criteria that emphasise:

- support for the Christian philosophy, character and educational policies of Archdiocesan catholic schools;
- satisfactory personal and professional qualifications; and
- skills in pedagogy and an understanding of current educational theory and practice

Individual Independent schools have their own selection criteria for qualified teachers that include academic capability but which may also focus on an understanding of the school's educational philosophies and an ability also to contribute to non-academic co-curricular activities in sport and the arts.

### **Quality Controls for Teacher Educators**

Australian teacher education institutions, like all other Australian tertiary institutions, have their own independent quality control systems. The teacher education courses at the University of Canberra (UC), for example, are monitored through:

- a reference group of stakeholders, including industry, employer and community representatives, which advises on the overall purpose and direction of teacher education courses;
- a periodic review by independent experts of the quality and standards of each teacher education course; and
- UC education courses have also been approved by the ACT DET Qualifications Committee and the NSW DET Teacher Quality Assurance Process (TQAP). This also provides another detailed level of scrutiny.

DET also liaises with the two ACT based teacher-training institutions – UC and ACU-S - to provide feedback on each recruitment process and the performance of applicants from these institutions.

### **Quality Assurance System Models**

Any system needs to be compatible with the particular characteristics of teacher recruitment in the ACT. These include:

- a small jurisdiction in terms of both numbers and area;
- an already close and cooperative relationship with the few local institutions that provide the bulk of teachers; and
- the need also to retain the flexibility to recruit teachers from other parts of Australia and overseas to meet particular skills requirements.

The teacher registration bodies in every other jurisdiction in Australia have or are putting into place some form of quality assurance system for its teacher educators. These tend to reflect the specific characteristics of teacher training and recruitment in the jurisdiction, including the size of the teacher intake and the number of institutions that supply teachers.

### **A Highly Structured System**

Some jurisdictions, including Queensland and Victoria, formally review and approve all teacher education courses in the jurisdiction. The Victorian Institute of Teachers is required, under its enabling legislation, to “approve teacher education courses that will lead to qualifications or competencies in teaching that satisfy the requirements for registration as a teacher”. This role is undertaken by the Accreditation Committee of the Institute, using evaluation guidelines that currently cover:

- the entry standards for selection to teacher education courses: the subjects that applicants must have taken in year 12 or equivalent and the minimum grades they achieved;
- the subject content of teacher education courses;
- the expected skills and attributes of course graduates; and
- the expected levels of practical classroom teaching covered in each teacher education course.

These accreditation arrangements include detailed processes for collaboration with teacher education institutions. The Queensland College of Teachers, for example, has a two-phased acceptance process:

- phase 1 acceptance process occurs when an institution seeks and obtains approval from the college that will recognise the program for teacher registration purposes
- phase 2 acceptance process occurs around the time the first cohort of students is graduating and involves a comprehensive review of the operation of the program, including consultation with stakeholders.

### **Liaison and Cooperation**

The Northern Territory (NT) registration body provides an example of a less formally structured system. There is no formal course accreditation of teacher education courses. Rather, the body's legislation requires it to “liaise with institutions providing teacher education courses in relation to standards and relevance of those programs to the teaching profession in the Territory”.

The NT registration body does, however, have a policy responsibility to inform the NT Minister that courses are suitable for the educational needs of the Territory.

It therefore works very closely with the Charles Darwin University and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education on an ongoing basis. Under this arrangement:

- the University periodically reviews new and ongoing courses against the body's own Standards for Professional Practice for Teaching; and
- the body's representatives advise and assist the University in undertaking these reviews, reporting to the Minister on their outcomes.

A highly structured system along the lines of the Queensland and Victorian models could help ensure that the accreditation process retains a level of objectivity and rigour, although both jurisdictions stress the importance of maintaining a close and cooperative ongoing relationship with teacher educators.

On the other hand, it is likely to be resource intensive, and may be more suited to a larger jurisdiction where there are a large number of teacher educational institutions and where an ongoing dialogue and exchange of ideas with teacher educators is harder to maintain. A less formal and more cooperative arrangement along the lines of the NT model may be more appropriate to a smaller jurisdiction, but there would need to be systems in place to ensure that the objectivity and independence of both the Body and the educational institution are not compromised.

## Professional Standards

The registration bodies in many Australian jurisdictions have developed or are in the process of developing professional standards for teacher graduates, either as a stand alone document or as part of a broader set of professional standards for classroom teachers, to assist both in the development and accreditation of teacher education courses. The Queensland body, for example, has previously set through its predecessor and through its recently developed set of standards the following core standards "to be used by those involved in the process of designing, reviewing and implementing teacher education programs":

- graduates will possess and be able to apply professional and disciplinary knowledge bases;
- graduates will possess and be able to apply a range of literacies relevant to their professional roles;
- graduates will exhibit the skills to create supportive and intellectually challenging learning environments to engage all learners;
- graduates will understand and participate in relationships that characterise ethical professional practice within and beyond learning communities; and
- graduates will be committed to reflective practice and ongoing professional renewal.

The NSW Institute of Teachers takes a slightly different approach in that it takes seven core elements of professional teaching:

- teachers know their subject/content and how to teach that content to their students;
- teachers know their students and how students learn;
- teachers plan, assess and report for effective learning;

- teachers communicate effectively with their students;
- teachers create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments through the use of classroom management skills teachers continually improve their professional knowledge and practice; and
- teachers are actively engaged members of their profession and the wider community.

and the body then identifies specific aspects of these elements that are able to be identified identified in teachers at various stages of their professional lives. Under the first element, for example. graduates are expected to be able, among other things, to:

Design and implement lesson sequences using knowledge of the NSW syllabus documents or other curriculum requirements of the Education Act.

There is also work underway to bring professional standards into a uniform Australian framework. The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) issued *A National Framework for Professional Standards for Teachers* in November 2003. The Framework has been developed in response to what MCEETYA sees as "the challenges of producing, educating and training a truly "Australian" teacher"". Its aims include identifying the basic knowledge, understanding, skills and values that all Australian teachers should hold, ensuring a consistent quality of education in all Australian jurisdictions and responding to the increasing cross jurisdiction mobility of teachers, students and parents. The Framework is based on four career dimensions beginning with "graduate". All jurisdictions were required to align their entry-level selection requirements to the national framework by the end of 2006.

The Framework is discussed in more detail in the Discussion Paper No 2, Professional Standards. For the purposes of this paper, it should be noted:

- that the Framework has been endorsed in principle by all jurisdictions;
- as a first step in its implementation, will be used to nationally align teacher recruitment standards; and
- the NSW and QLD graduate standards are based on the Framework.

There will be an expectation, therefore, that the development of any standards related to teacher graduates will reflect the framework. But it is also important to remember that the Framework simply provides an overall matrix that gives individual jurisdictions a degree of flexibility in how they will implement it in detail.

The overall issue of professional standards is canvassed more generally in the Discussion Paper No 2, *Professional Standards*. That paper points out that there are already selection, development and performance management systems in place, in at least the ACT government system, that arguably have the same practical effects as formal professional standards and that the main case for the development of a more formal set of professional standards by a teacher registration body is to provide a commitment to stakeholders to a uniform set of standards and professional ethics across the jurisdiction that describe the

abilities and attributes that ACT teachers in all sectors need to attain.

It is important to note, however that clear professional standards are particularly crucial at entry level, since they set the benchmark for the quality of teachers who are recruited in the jurisdiction. Whatever model of teacher educator quality assurance the ACT might wish to adopt, there would seem to be a case for the development of some form of comprehensive professional standards for teacher graduates that could be used both to assist educators in developing courses and provide the basis for assessment for course accreditation or other endorsement.

### Monitoring of Accreditation

The accreditation or endorsement of teacher education courses is normally subject to ongoing review. In the jurisdictions that focus on formal accreditation, this typically involves:

- an evaluation of the performance of the first set of graduates after their first year of practical teaching;
- an annual report by the teacher educational institute to the registration body. This would normally include any changes to the content of the program as well as responding to any issues raised by the body; and
- a finite time limit for the accreditation of any course. In Queensland, acceptance remains in force for no longer than four years after the first group of students graduates from the program.

As indicated above, quality control programs in smaller jurisdictions such as the NT programs tend to monitor courses through ongoing collaboration with teacher educators rather than through a formal program involving periodic reviews. The NT registration body, for example, normally requires courses to be resubmitted for approval by the Minister every three to four years.

Models for monitoring and reviewing course accreditation need to be considered in the context of the broader discussion about what systems might best suit a smaller and more compact jurisdiction like the ACT. Structured systems requiring frequent formal review and re-accreditation of courses, such as those operating in Victoria and Queensland, may reassure stakeholders about the ongoing quality of courses but may be excessive in a smaller and more compact jurisdiction where there is already an ongoing effective and cooperative relationship with teacher educators.

It is also important to recognise the work being undertaken in this area. A national system for teacher education accreditation has become a matter of increasing prominence as evidenced by the development of a national framework by two separate bodies.

The Australasian Forum for Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities (AFTRAA) - with membership from the respective registration or accreditation body of each state and territory jurisdiction - has widely consulted on its

*Framework for the National Recognition of Approved Pre-service Teacher Education Programs.* On the other hand, Teaching Australia has put forward a proposal through its consultation paper *Australia-wide accreditation of programs for the professional preparation of teachers.*

The Australian Council of Deans of Education, which is the peak body for deans of education in Australian higher education institutions, which is a key stakeholder in this process, has expressed its support for having a national body for program accreditation.

To reinforce the thrust of these developments, the Parliament of Australia's House of Representatives the Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training tabled its report on the inquiry into Teacher Education entitled *Top of the Class* in February 2007. In essence, the report has recommended that Teaching Australia and the state and territory registration and accreditation bodies work towards a national system of accreditation, with the former having an oversighting role.

### Teachers trained outside the ACT

Registration bodies do not normally accredit teacher education institutions outside their own jurisdiction, and tend to have a separate process for assessing the qualifications of outside applicants. NSW, for example, accepts the accreditation or approval processes in place in other jurisdictions.

The ACT appears to be unusual in that 58% of its applicants and 38% of its recruits come from outside the jurisdiction. While it would be impractical to accredit all teacher educators that might provide applicants to the ACT, there may be a case for fairly robust mutual recognition arrangements. This is discussed in Issues Paper No 5.

### Issues

Key issues in considering the need for and the shape of a teacher educator accreditation system for the ACT include:

- the need to ensure that a quality assurance process is, and is perceived to be, objective, independent; and relevant to the education needs of the ACT;
- monitoring the work of the Teaching Australia and the Australasian Forum for Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities (AFTRAA) with the development of a national system of accreditation for pre-service teacher education programs;
- the need to take into account the particular nature of the ACT as an educational jurisdiction: small, compact and with an already close working relationship between teacher employers and teacher educators;
- the need to recognise the professional independence of teacher education institutions in developing their own curriculum and assessment methods; and
- the need to balance any local requirements with an accreditation system that is flexible enough to be able to accommodate the recruitment of high quality teachers from across Australia and outside its general practice.