

ACDE

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF
DEANS OF EDUCATION INC.

Education, the Foundation of a Nation

Sent by email: cgs@deewr.gov.au

16 December 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for giving the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) the opportunity to respond to the consultation paper on Arrangements for Commonwealth supported postgraduate student places. This is a subject of paramount importance to the discipline of teacher education at a time of evolving accreditation requirements.

The ACDE represents 39 higher education institutions and this submission is informed by a consultation process with all its members. Out of this process emerged three key principles for consideration with the discipline of Education.

ACDE is committed to working with Government and Higher Education Institutions to implement a CSP allocation that will strengthen the Teaching Profession.



Professor Toni Downes
President of the Australian Council of Deans of Education

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A submission by the Australian Council of Deans of Education to the Consultation on Postgraduate Places

Executive Summary

The consultation on Commonwealth supported postgraduate places comes at a critical juncture for the discipline of education. The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) in April 2011 finalised a twenty-year period of discussion and negotiation with the decision to implement National Program Standards (NPS) that are nationally recognised as defining the qualification for teacher registration. As part of this historic agreement, all 39 ACDE member institutions supported the requirement that graduate entry programs should be, at a minimum, the equivalent of two years of full time study.

ACDE has consulted with its member institutions, and has received a wide range of responses to the discussion points raised by the consultation on Postgraduate Places paper. This range of views reflects the diversity, strength, and capacity of the Faculties and Schools of Education across Australia to engage with a dynamic education policy environment. No one option put forward in the paper garners universal support. There was, however, complete agreement that any recalibration of Commonwealth supported postgraduate places in the short to medium term must ensure Faculties and Schools of Education are in a position to:

1. Deliver the new National Program Standards endorsed by MCEECDYA in April 2011, including a critical shift from one to two year graduate programs, while maintaining the quantum of new teacher graduates to meet predicted workforce needs;
2. Exercise flexibility and judgement to adjust course profiles and load between graduate and undergraduate programs to:
 - a. meet local workforce needs within the context of national priorities;
 - b. graduate a diversity of professional entry teaching staff to build the expertise, capacity, and quality of the teacher workforce
3. Avoid perverse and unintended outcomes, particularly :
 - a. Loss of CSPs to other disciplines within an institutional decision-making process
 - b. The establishment of a two-tier system of Pre-service Teacher Education

These three principles are discussed in the preceding parts of this submission.

The critical issues for Faculties and Schools of Education are that they must have:

- capacity to increase their overall load to facilitate a shift from one to two years full time study for graduate entry in Initial Teacher Education Programs (ITE);
- maintain the number of graduates for the teaching workforce, and;
- provide professional development opportunities for teachers to undertake postgraduate studies.

1. Delivering the MCECDYA endorsed National Program Standards and maintaining the quantum of new teacher graduates to meet predicted workforce needs

Teaching, along with nursing, is considered a profession of national significance. The discipline of education contributes greatly to the economic, social, and cultural context of Australian society. It does more than any other field of academic endeavour to shape, maintain, transform and empower its members and provide choices and options for members of the community.

On 15 April 2011 the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs endorsed a national approach to the accreditation of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs. The National Program Standards (NPS) include a requirement that graduate entry programs should be at a minimum the equivalent of two years of full time study.

The delivery of the new National Program Standards is fundamental to the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) broader education agenda including the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians and the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality.

Moving to two year postgraduate teacher education programs

While some institutions already offer two year postgraduate programs, many will need to introduce two year programs at AQF level 8 and 9 in order to meet the new ITE Program standards. This will have resource implications for the development of new courses that are distinct from undergraduate programs at AQF level 7. Nationally, this will require a significant increase in the number of places at postgraduate level in order to sustain graduate teacher numbers to meet predicted workforce demands during the period of transition from one to two year programs. In some jurisdictions, such as Western Australia and Queensland, it will necessitate a doubling of postgraduate places.

If institutions that need to move from one to two year programs are limited to their current CSP loads there is a real prospect that their graduate numbers will be halved. Table 1 shows the number of FTE postgraduate teacher education students required in response to both the graduate entry requirements and increased workforce demands for the period 2012 - 2016.

Table 1: Forecasted number of postgraduate teacher education students in Australia

| Year | Postgraduate teacher education students (FTE) |
|------|---|
| 2011 | 12,229 (actual) |
| 2012 | 12,968 |
| 2013 | 13,028 |
| 2014 | 13,671 |
| 2015 | 15,126 |
| 2016 | 15,382 |

Source: Australian Council of Deans of Education

Meeting workforce requirements

Meeting teacher workforce requirements is a two-sided issue: ensuring the teaching workforce has the skills and competencies to meet the high demands of the profession; and that sufficient numbers of teachers are entering the workforce.

The contemporary education environment necessitates a supply of high quality teachers to respond to increased parental and community expectations, greater reporting and consultative requirements, technological innovation, and changes in pedagogical understanding. Additionally, teachers must be skilled to respond to a more diverse student population, including higher representation of students from identified groups such as those from low socio-economic backgrounds, rural and isolated locations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, and those with languages other than English. Teachers are required to meet the needs of students with special learning needs, including disabilities, learning difficulties and behaviour issues. They are also working with newly arrived immigrants and refugees and many students experiencing profound poverty and alienation.

These challenges require a high quality teaching workforce and a culture of continuous professional development in ways not previously experienced. Furthermore, these challenges require a diverse teaching workforce, with individual and collective capabilities, to meet the complex needs of families and communities, such as those:

- of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
- of Indigenous, migrant, refugee, and low SES backgrounds, and;
- Located in urban, regional, rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

Managing national workforce needs requires a range of programs and partnerships to address chronic and enduring as well as temporary or unexpected shortages of particular types of teachers in particular locations. The Government's Skill Shortage list 2010-2011, includes Secondary School teachers in Maths and Science (particularly for senior levels) and for some Languages Other Than English (LOTE), Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) teachers and Special Needs teachers. These shortages are more pronounced in regional rural, and low socio economic areas of Australia and critical in many remote Indigenous Communities.

It has proved difficult in the past to successfully anticipate the demand for teachers in Australia due to high turnover in the profession. Therefore, in addition to the Skills Shortage List and the Skilled Occupation List, there is scope to consider the data that will flow from the Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Study so that the mix of Initial Teacher Education Program are appropriately targeted and funded.

DEEWR'S own forecasts are that the total number of Australian school students will increase by around 26 per cent (or about 900,000 students) from 2010–2022. To maintain education quality, the increase in numbers of teachers graduating must be of a similar proportion.

In order for teacher education institutions to work collaboratively at the local and national level with communities, employers and jurisdictions, they need to be able to include CSP funded postgraduate entry places as a key component of their course profile. Capping at current levels, or reducing the number of, Commonwealth supported postgraduate initial teacher education places between 2012 and 2015 would significantly reduce the capacity of the nation, as well as jurisdictions and local communities, to supply the quality and quantity of teachers needed for an internationally competitive school education system.

Teacher education institutions use CSP postgraduate programs in three main ways that support the national and local workforce needs.

1. As preservice programs – such that graduates of arts, science and other relevant undergraduate degrees can become a registered school teacher. This is the predominant pathway for secondary teachers and an increasingly popular choice for graduates seeking to become primary teachers, particularly career-changing graduates.
2. As post-service specialist qualifications – such that existing teachers can take specialist training in Special Education, English as a Second Language or Teacher Librarianship, as examples. This training is generally a requirement of employers for permanent positions in these specialist fields.
3. As additional employment qualifications – such that existing teachers can take further study to change/expand their teaching areas. This generally refers to primary teachers seeking to become secondary teachers or early childhood teachers, and or generalist teachers seeking additional study to become qualified to teach the senior secondary years in particular subject areas.

The Australian Council of Deans of Education argue that all of the above types of Postgraduate programs need to remain CPS funded, and that during the sector-wide transition to two-year postgraduate preservice teacher education programs, the additional places required to maintain current numbers of graduates need to be fully funded by the Commonwealth by means of provision of uncapped or increased CSPs during the period of transition.

2. Ensuring institutional flexibility to respond to local and national needs

A major strength of the current system is that institutions are able to exercise flexibility and judgement to adjust course profiles and load between graduate and undergraduate programs to meet local and national needs. Institutions use this flexibility to engage in partnerships with local employers (governmental and non-governmental) to address particular areas of shortages that may be specific to geography and teaching area. For example, some institutions choose to have a diversity of pathways into and through mathematics and science teacher education programs to maximise the number of graduates. These might include traditional integrated undergraduate or double degrees for school leavers, industry entry undergraduate degrees for professionals who may need to undertake additional subject studies to supplement previous studies (e.g. accountants or engineers), and graduate entry postgraduate programs. The capacity to shift load between these programs on an annual basis to maximise admissions in any particular year enables the institution to best meet the ongoing demand in their local and in the national workforce.

Graduate entry programs, because of their shorter duration than integrated (4 year) and double degree (5 year) undergraduate programs, are generally the most effective way to address temporary or unexpected shortages in particular areas of expertise. Additionally, with less overall impact from pipeline effects of increasing/decreasing commencing load, institutions are better placed to continually adjust intakes into these graduate programs to meet changing workforce needs.

Graduate a diversity of professional entry teaching staff to build the expertise, capacity, and quality of the collective workforce

Graduating beginning teachers with minimum specified capabilities is a key requirement of all accredited teacher education programs in Australia. However, the overall quality and capability of the national teaching workforce also requires a mix of backgrounds, expertise and prior experiences to meet the diverse needs of employers and communities across Australia. Institutions need to graduate diverse cohorts including

graduates from underrepresented cultural and linguistic backgrounds, graduates with particular expertise and capability to be the next generation of educational leaders, as well as those with the expertise, capability and commitment to work in rural, remote and Indigenous communities across Australia. No one pathway or program is best suited to prepare the diverse workforce required.

Postgraduate preservice programs do make a special contribution to the mix of pathways and programs required to build the expertise, capacity and quality of the collective workforce. In addition to the professional capabilities that all graduates from accredited programs bring to their early years of teaching, graduates from AQF 8 and 9 programs bring additional academic capabilities that position them well for continuous professional learning and educational leadership. Furthermore, the AQF 9 requirement for research capability provides additional collective capability for the workforce to embrace innovation, change and a culture of improvement. It is worth noting that some countries that are ranked highly on international benchmarks in overseas testing are typified by a teaching workforce with a high level of qualification as an entry level. For example, in Finland (which consistently tops international comparisons rankings) a Masters level qualification is the base level qualification.

In the consultation paper, teacher conversion qualifications are used as an example of the difficulty in distinguishing initial entry level qualifications from courses that provide professional development. While maintaining teacher supply in a range of areas is of high importance, so is improving the quality of the profession, and increasing the pool of teachers within it. Developing a teaching workforce which can meet the evolving demands of the profession is as an ongoing issue of national significance.

This issue has new importance with the introduction of professional standards for teachers and school leaders. These professional standards have a set of sequenced levels of attaining professional status from the level of graduate, to proficient, highly accomplished and, ultimately, to leading teachers. The differentiation of standards and the ability for teachers to be involved in a process of continuous improvement will, in part, be dependent on access to postgraduate professional courses and scholarship around issues of teaching and learning. It is anticipated that tasks and assessment undertaken in postgraduate research will be an important part of the evidence guides for teachers to achieve progression through the professional level. The availability of programs at level 8 and 9 for the existing teaching workforce is critical in maintain a high quality teaching workforce.

3. Avoid negative unintended outcomes

Faculties and Schools of Education operate in a sector-wide policy environment that facilitates competition and collaboration around pathways and programs to meet the national teaching workforce needs. ACDE has identified two areas where there is a serious risk of unintended consequences that could arise from reforming the current model of allocating CSPs.

1. Loss of CSPs to other disciplines within an institutional decision-making process

As well as operating in a broad discipline policy environment, Faculties and Schools of Education also operate within internal institutional environments. There is an emerging trend at the institutional level to allocate CSPs from the centre, rather than at Faculty level. In institutions that have already adopted this approach there has been a reduction in the number of teacher education postgraduate places as the overall load is reallocated around other priority areas and clusters which attract higher funding per student. A key challenge is to ensure an appropriate balance between national priorities and market forces at the institutional level.

2. The establishment of a two-tier system of Pre-service Teacher Education

Any changes to the current allocation model for postgraduate CSPs must not further entrench historical advantages and disadvantages between institutions, nor establish new divides in course and graduate status. This moment carries further consequence given the imminent moves towards two year postgraduate teacher education programs which will make it more difficult for some institutions to limit current postgraduate student numbers. This could unintentionally fragment the sector and, in some institutions, create an environment of instability where the absence of postgraduate places and shifts in the mix of places diminishes the capacity and viability of Education Faculties and schools.

Over recent years ACDE has demonstrated the capacity to work across and between institutions to deliver on national priorities in spite of the two tier system which has emerged with regard to postgraduate allocations. ACDE strongly supports the opportunity afforded by this current consultation process to extend any flexibility in a fair and equitable manner.