

Program puts pressure on to learn to be teachers in just six weeks

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Can you learn to be a teacher in just six weeks? Australian National University students Emlyn Cruickshank and Lia van den Bosch think so. But they also readily agree it will be a huge challenge. They are the first two Canberrans to be accepted into the Rudd Government's Teach for Australia program.

The program, based on American and British examples, aims to put law, economics and science graduates through a six-week training course during the Christmas holidays before sending them into the classroom for two years. While the graduates will receive ongoing teaching instruction and mentoring from business partners sponsoring the scheme, they will carry an 80 per cent teaching load and will be placed in largely disadvantaged schools. After their two years are up they will receive a teaching qualification and will be free to move into careers with the business sponsors, including Boston Consulting Group, Microsoft, Freehills, Stockland and Corrs Chambers Westgarth Lawyers – or to remain in the classroom.

A trial program will run in Victoria next year before being rolled out nationally and has so far received more than 300 applications, with 25 from the ACT.

But the program has also attracted criticism – notably from the Australian Education Union, which has described it as a quick fix for the nation's teaching shortage as well as an insult to the teaching profession, which requires three-year degrees.

For more, pick up a copy of today's Canberra Times.