



**TEACH FOR AUSTRALIA**

**SUBMISSION TO COMMONWEALTH'S  
TEACHER EDUCATION EXPERT PANEL**

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Teach For Australia is headquartered on the land of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation. Our community of teachers, leaders, supporters and partners live and work across a great many more lands. Teach For Australia pays respect to the elders past and present, and to the emerging leaders.

# ABOUT TEACH FOR AUSTRALIA

Teach For Australia (TFA) is a not-for-profit organisation that confronts educational disadvantage. Our vision is an Australia where education gives all children greater choice for their future. Our mission is to grow a community of leaders committed to educational equity.

TFA was founded in 2009 and continues to grow purposefully and strategically, working with more and more schools across Australia. TFA's flagship initiative, the Leadership Development Program (LDP or 'the program'), is Australia's original and leading employment-based postgraduate pathway into teaching. Through the program, TFA recruits, challenges and energises high-calibre people from all walks of life to become 'Associates' – exceptional teachers and inspiring leaders for students at schools serving low socioeconomic communities (ICSEA <1000) in high demand subject areas and hard to staff locations.

The approach is simple yet profound: get great talent to choose to teach, and cultivate their moral purpose to create a collective force of teachers and leaders working to make sure Australia's education opportunities and outcomes are more equitable for children across our nation.

Over 15 years, TFA has navigated barriers to expand nationally with short term government funding and has built a program recognised for quality teaching and leadership. With bipartisan support from Commonwealth, State and Territory governments between 2010-2023, TFA has placed 1450+ Associates across 14 cohorts in 276 partner schools in seven states and territories.

We have proven our model and our mettle:

- **We're attracting great talent in high demand areas, most of whom would not have chosen to teach but for the TFA program.** TFA's 2022 Impact Report confirms almost 50% of TFA teachers are qualified to teach STEM, and more than 60% are either young professionals or mature career changers - pharmacists, lawyers, maths and science academics, engineers, accountants and more.
- **We're exclusively serving harder to staff schools and communities.** 75% of current partner schools are in regional, rural or remote communities. Almost all schools are classified disadvantaged, with an ICSEA <1000.
- **We're demonstrating that employment based pathways can scale beyond the boutique.** Even as we limit ourselves to low income, rural, regional and remote contexts, the program continues to grow. As at March 2023, TFA has our largest numbers ever in the program – over 300 in either first or second

year - drawn from nearly 2700 applications. Given the immediate and long-term need for teachers nationally, TFA is ready and committed to further growth of our flagship program.

- **We're delivering high throughput and satisfaction.** While the design of the program is an intense yet productive combination of study and applied practice, we see two year average completion rates of 92% and Alumni satisfaction rates of 88%. In our 2023 Principal survey, 92% said TFA Associates were effective at improving student academic and social outcomes, and 96% would hire another Associate in the future.
- **We're delivering high retention in teaching and contributing significantly to educational leadership overall.** Our 2023 Alumni Survey shows that 88% of Alumni are working in the education sector, contributing to TFA's vision through teaching, school leadership, social enterprise, policy, government and non-profit roles. Additionally, since 2016, TFA has designed and delivered innovative professional development programs for early career teachers already in the system, working in outer regional, rural and remote schools. These programs help to build personal leadership skills and capabilities for those schools to thrive, and have contributed to significant role promotion rates amongst those cohorts.
- **We're uniquely positioned to offer insights on the systemic ways Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and early career teacher support and development could improve.** TFA delivers value in a complex web of stakeholders with varying interests and incentives. We work at the nexus of attraction, ITE delivery, practicum support and early career development, across a federated and regulated system. We are always willing to share our observations and ideas for further system improvement.

Working for educational equity in Australia is complex and collective work. We recognise teaching and school leadership as two vital levers to improve student outcomes and opportunities later in life. Our most impactful contribution has been the expansion of pathways into the classroom, allowing more aspiring teachers to have an impact. We are committed to working with governments, education stakeholders, schools and communities across the nation to lift the status and quality of teaching.

Teach For Australia works in service of students, and our vision for an Australia where education gives every child greater choice for their future. While proud of our efforts and impact to date, we know there is so much more to do.

# INTRODUCTION

## TEACH FOR AUSTRALIA WELCOMES THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE DISCUSSION PAPER ISSUED BY THE COMMONWEALTH'S TEACHER EDUCATION EXPERT PANEL.

This follows Teach For Australia's contribution to the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, released in November 2022, which articulates Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments' focus on increasing the number of people choosing to become teachers and ensuring that existing teachers remain in the profession.

Similarly, we note the Teacher Education Expert Panel's Discussion Paper has identified opportunities aimed at strengthening ITE programs and is seeking feedback in these areas:

- Strengthen the link between performance and funding of initial teacher education
- Strengthen initial teacher education programs to deliver effective classroom ready graduates
- Improve the quality of practical experience in teaching
- Improve postgraduate initial teacher education pathways for mid-career entrants

There are clear parallels between the Expert Panel's reform areas and the improvements TFA has been actively discussing with stakeholders:

1. Access to postgraduate ITE pathways
2. ITE course content and high-quality practical learning opportunities
3. ITE key performance indicators and funding

Our submission canvasses these areas, providing context, data and Teach For Australia's view on explicit policy shifts to drive improvements, with corresponding reference to the Discussion Paper's prompts. A summary table is included.

Teach For Australia greatly appreciates the opportunity to participate in this consultation and is always available to lend further insights from our experiences, should this be of further assistance to the Expert Panel.

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# SUMMARY TABLE

TFA policy and regulatory priorities	TFA policy shift recommendations	Expert Panel reform area alignment
<p><b>1. Access to postgraduate ITE pathways</b></p> <p>Broaden eligibility for post-graduate ITE courses, especially for mid-career entrants, and add additional means for high-calibre and skilled individuals to demonstrate competence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a framework for competency-based eligibility to provide ITE candidates opportunity to demonstrate subject knowledge and expertise.</li> <li>• Change the requirement for mid-career professionals to have completed a Bachelor degree from within the past 10 years to the past 15 years.</li> <li>• Develop additional ways for mid-career professionals to demonstrate currency in their major learning area (i.e. a standardised subject knowledge audit).</li> <li>• Align AITSL standards for major requirements in a recognised learning area to total credit points within a Bachelor degree rather than based on an assumed standard unit sequence, and enable inclusion of research-based units.</li> <li>• Help reduce opportunity cost for mid-career entrants by extending eligibility for Federal and State scholarships and bursaries to participants of employment-based pathways.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Area 4 -</b></p> <p><b>Improving ITE pathways for mid-career entrants</b></p>

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## 2. ITE course content and high-quality practical learning opportunities

Strengthen what is taught in ITE courses, and adjust for how it can be learned; enable practicums, school placements and post-course support for beginning teachers, acknowledging these aspects can accelerate skills and competencies for classroom practice.

- Explore opportunities to enhance ITE course content by ensuring inclusion of evidence-based practices that improve student learning, and boost classroom readiness for beginning teachers.
- Build sector consensus and trusted guidance on which evidence-based practices are preferential for particular contexts.
- Develop a comprehensive set of practice illustrations and examples to support any amendment to Accreditation Standards and Procedures.
- In addition to practicum guidelines, consider supporting schools with a brokering and support service, with focus on those with highest workforce need, ie. regional, rural and remote communities.
- Include high quality coaching support for ITE students during their practicums.
- Introduce standard practice for all new teachers to be supported with formal coaching and mentoring in their early years, and resource schools to provide this.
- Endorse ITE providers to explore development of Applied Master of Teaching courses, and assist in mitigating any current regulatory barriers.
- Develop an independent practicum assessment model, including guidelines, assessment tools and potentially an independent labour market, to enable professional practicum assessments to occur at scale and at quality.
- Consider at-scale role out of remote observation technology to enable cost effective delivery of high-quality remote practical coaching and assessment in regional, rural and remote contexts.

## Area 1 - Classroom ready, with evidence-based practices

## Area 3 - Improving practical experience

## Area 4 - Improving ITE pathways for mid-career entrants

## 3. ITE key performance indicators and funding

Increase accountability for ITE providers for quality outputs; improve transparency for aspiring applicants to assess courses before enrolment; and support scale for proven innovative ITE pathways, recognising these pathways can increase workforce supply, and are particularly appealing to mid-career entrants.

- Introduce KPIs at individual ITE program level to improve transparency of performance in the sector.
- Preference excellence funding for high-performer programs over transition funding for under-performing programs
- Foster innovation, without disadvantageous outcomes for smaller innovative non-traditional providers.

## Area 2 - Stronger link between performance and funding



# 1. ACCESS TO POSTGRADUATE ITE PATHWAYS

## **TFA strongly supports the focus on improving postgraduate initial teacher education to expand pathways for mid-career professionals to transition into teaching.**

TFA's submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (QITE) (2021) outlined some of the barriers to entry as identified by TFA's Recruitment and Admissions teams in their work supporting and assessing almost 16,000 applications for the Leadership Development Program (p16-17). In summary, these include:

- Financial and opportunity cost of completing a two-year, full-time Master of Teaching degree
- Subject-eligibility limitations for enrolment to the Master of Teaching
- Recognition of prior professional experience
- Personal circumstance and responsibilities

We concur with similar insights offered to the Expert Panel's Discussion Paper by dandolopartners as to the characteristics of mid-career cohorts and the myriad barriers they face (pp58-59).

One of the motivating factors for the development of Australia's first employment-based ITE pathway in 2009 was to reduce these costs to individuals. Since then, there has been further innovation by some universities, supported by government-led initiatives, including the Commonwealth's High Achieving Teachers Program (HATP) in 2020. However, despite expanded course options, the current mechanism for assessing eligibility for ITE courses continues to limit highly qualified and skilled individuals from accessing these alternative pathways, by only giving standing to prior academic credentials.

In TFA's 2022 applicant pool, ~115 applications were ineligible to proceed as the teaching areas requirement for enrolling in the Master of Teaching could not be met. In recent recruitment years, an average 10-15% of applicants who met competency benchmarks on the online application were later deemed ineligible. TFA does not capture data that indicates the number of potential applicants who self-select out of the application process, but anticipates this is significant based on anecdotal recruitment experience.

Standard 3.7 of the Standards and Procedures: Accreditation of ITE program in Australia (AITSL 2022, p14) requires entrants for graduate programs to "have a discipline-specific bachelor or equivalent qualification".

This is interpreted by AITSL to mean that the candidate has studied a major in a recognised learning area. TFA frequently sees the unfortunate consequence of denying eligibility for highly experienced individuals to teach subjects, because the criteria are too narrow to capture those who:

- studied a highly technical or clinical degree (and so do not have a major in a recognised learning area), or
- have worked in other areas since completing their undergraduate degree (and so cannot demonstrate currency), or
- Do not have an undergraduate degree.

This disproportionately affects the exact people that the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan and other recent reforms seek to target: highly qualified and driven career changers.

## **Unable to demonstrate a major in a recognised learning area**

For example, aerospace engineers are not eligible to teach Mathematics because it is difficult to identify a major's worth of mathematics units in their tertiary engineering subjects. The courses that aerospace engineering students undertake are too specialised to be counted as Mathematics or even Physics courses (for example, Flight Performance and Propulsion, or Dynamics of Aerospace Vehicles, Systems and Avionics). This is somewhat counterintuitive, given the mastery of high school and university level Mathematics required to gain entry and be successful in such a course of study.

All candidates - potential teachers - who have a clinical degree, such as nurses, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, and medical radiation technicians, are ineligible to enrol in the Master of Teaching. The structure of these degrees have become highly clinical to prepare students for a career in the allied health industry. However, the consequence is that the subject loading does not meet the requirement for a major in a recognised learning area. Thus, a swathe of potential General Science, Biology, Chemistry, Health, and Mathematics teachers are excluded from entry into any postgraduate teaching course.

The AITSL standards for identifying a major are linked to the year in which the unit is studied (that is, the unit sequence), and does not count research-based units towards the major. This does not align to how

universities recognise and award degrees. A recent TFA candidate with an undergraduate degree in Applied Science and a PhD in Molecular Biology was ineligible to enrol in the Masters of Teaching because their research units in biology and the sequencing of several of their courses meant they were not eligible to be counted towards AITSL's standards of a major in a recognised learning area.

If these candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge and competency as a means of gaining approval for this as a teaching area, they could contribute toward addressing significant shortages in high demand areas.

### Unable to demonstrate currency

The requirement for teachers to have a Master's level qualification presents further complications regarding eligibility for career changers. The Australian Qualifications Framework requirements for Level 9 (i.e. Master's) courses include the requirement that all entrants to the course have either completed an undergraduate degree in a relevant discipline within the last 10 years or can demonstrate currency in that discipline through work experience. Unfortunately, the 10 year limit and complications with demonstrating currency has precluded many potential teachers from enrolling in the Master's degree, and requires a significant amount of manual work by TFA staff to determine eligibility.

Many passionate and driven individuals who apply to TFA's program do so based on their experience as a teacher's aide or classroom support officer. However, for those who completed their undergraduate degree more than 10 years ago, it is difficult to demonstrate currency. For example, in 2023, TFA has received an application from a physicist who is unlikely to be able to join the program because they have spent the last few years as a teacher's aide in one of TFA's partner schools. This candidate has highly relevant experience and is determined to become a teacher because of their lived experience in the very school context that they would be placed in through the program. However, they are ineligible.

A more common example is qualified engineers who have moved into managerial or executive positions in the engineering firm. If they completed their degree more than 10 years ago, it is difficult to demonstrate currency for these individuals because their experience is not considered to be close enough to the 'work' of engineering. This limitation similarly affects builders with an undergraduate degree, who have moved into business management roles.

### Do not have an undergraduate degree

The requirement for entrants to have an undergraduate degree or demonstrate currency in a 'recognised learning area' disproportionately excludes First Nations people, those from rural and regional areas, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and those with expertise in vocational subjects.

#### Recommended policy shift

**A competency-based framework to complement the existing entry requirements could address many of these issues. Such a framework could cover both general capabilities, addressing eligibility issues for those who do not have a Bachelor's degree, and subject-specific knowledge, addressing eligibility issues for those who do not have currency to teach in their desired learning area.**

Competency-based assessments already exist for other international jurisdictions. In the United States, assessments such as the Praxis exams are already used for both general capabilities and subject-specific knowledge to complement other formal qualifications. In the UK, the teaching area eligibility for Teach First candidates can be demonstrated through a 'subject knowledge audit'.

**Such changes for ITE eligibility can widen the pathway for more entrants, including more diverse teaching cohorts, and expand the pool of ITE graduates eligible to teach high-demand subjects areas.**

In the short term, TFA also sees four immediate opportunities for partially addressing eligibility barriers for mid-career changes, without requiring wholesale structural reform:

1. Change the requirement for mid-career professionals to have completed a bachelor degree from within '*the past 10 years*' to '*the past 15 years*'.
2. Develop additional ways for mid-career professionals to demonstrate currency in their major learning area (i.e. through standardised subject knowledge audit).
3. Align AITSL standards for major requirements to a specified threshold of total credit points within a Bachelor degree (not the year the unit is studied). Enable inclusion of research-based units in the total credit allocation.
4. Help further reduce the opportunity cost for aspiring mid-career ITE entrants by opening eligibility for Federal and State/Territory scholarships and bursaries to participants of employment based pathways. High cost and existing financial commitments are often cited as entry barriers by this segment.



## 2. ITE COURSE CONTENT AND HIGH-QUALITY PRACTICAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

TFA's Leadership Development Program is a bespoke offering that integrates the recruitment, ITE and initial employment of participants. As such, TFA has always had to give active attention to all parts of our teaching cohorts' journey. This is hyper-focused on their first two years - the duration of the LDP - but also extends to their careers beyond the program in line with reporting needs related to service contracts.

With a commitment to continuous improvement, TFA's cycles of internal and external evaluation inform our views on where an ITE student's experience can be adjusted in order to better prepare for the rigours and realities of classroom teaching. These views include:

- Strengthening ITE course content with evidence-based practices
- The value of practical experience and in-school coaching and mentoring
- Exploring an Applied Master of Teaching option

### 2.1 Strengthening ITE course content with evidence-based practices

**TFA supports the Discussion Paper's exploration of opportunities to enhance ITE course content by ensuring inclusion of evidence-based practices that improve student learning, and boost classroom readiness for beginning teachers.**

TFA notes that the Expert Panel engaged Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) "to identify the evidence-based practices which have the greatest impact on student learning that ITE students should learn and be able to demonstrate to inform amendments to the Accreditation Standards and Procedures". We strongly support this work, as well as continued attention in this area from the wider sector.

In canvassing TFA Alumni views in response to the Discussion Paper, specifically with regard to Reform Area 1, there was a general consensus that while inclusion of evidence-based practices is seen largely as a positive step for building foundational knowledge and skills, views were also expressed that **there is need for greater sector consensus on and guidance on which evidence-based practices are preferential for particular contexts.** It was also proposed that development of **a greater range of practice illustrations or examples would be**

**beneficial if there are amendments to Accreditation Standards and Procedures and Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs).**

The four types of core content (The brain and learning, Effective pedagogical practices, Classroom management, and Enabling factors for learning) identified by the Panel (1.2) are consistent with the learnings and experience of Teach For Australia, and have informed priority areas of learning in the Master of Teaching (Secondary) (Leading Learning) course undertaken by TFA Associates.

This course has been co-designed with our tertiary partner, Australian Catholic University (ACU), with the aim to create teachers that are not only ready for the classroom, but also on a journey to lead educational change across the sector. As described in the 2023 Course Handbook, the learning covers:

- Theoretical foundations of learning and education
- High impact teaching practices for the classroom
- Secondary literacy
- Subject specific curriculum pedagogy and practices
- Catering for diverse learnings
- Culturally responsive teaching practices, and
- Leading system change

### 2.2 The value of practical experience and in-school coaching and mentoring

**TFA is broadly supportive of the goal of improving the quality of practical experience,** with concern for ensuring reforms in this space do not add to the administrative burden experienced by schools.

#### Integration of theory and practice

A defining feature of TFA's Leadership Development Program is the integration of theory and practice to contextualise learning and help participants accelerate their skill development in the classroom. TFA's program begins in October each year as incoming Associates enrol in their Master of Teaching (Secondary) (Leading Learning) and begin the summer semester. Over the following three months, Associates undertake intensive training in which they complete approximately one-quarter of the Master of Teaching coursework. This training is front-loaded with the foundational skills and

knowledge needed for the classroom and includes teaching practicums in schools.

Despite being a challenging course, TFA's Leadership Development Program has a significantly higher completion rate (92%) (TFA Impact Report 2022) in comparison to Bachelor of Education (48%) and traditional Master of Teaching (74%) pathways (Discussion Paper, p33). Furthermore, 96% of Principals would hire another TFA Associate. In addition to the initial rigorous, competency-based recruitment and selection model, TFA also considers the careful sequencing of theory and practice and the calibre of in-program supports as key factors influencing these consistently high statistics.

### Extensive support

TFA's experience in organising practicums and school employment placements across many years and jurisdictions has shown that the in-school experience varies significantly depending on each school's ability to provide supervision, mentoring and support. This is where another defining feature of the TFA program fills the gap to ensure success. Associates are assigned a TFA Teaching and Leadership Adviser, who provides instructional coaching in addition to support from an in-school mentor, for whom TFA provides training. A third point of support is provided by TFA's tertiary partner, ACU, in the form of an academic mentor for course work. Where possible, TFA places Associates in school or community 'hubs', recognising the peer-to-peer benefits that occur when groups are sharing a similar learning context. These extensive support structures are highly effective.

**TFA's 2023 Alumni survey indicated that the greatest contributing factors to their successful journey as teachers and learners in the program was the classroom coaching support and feedback from TFA and school mentors.**

### Considered partnerships

The partnerships that TFA brokers between schools and Associates are intentional, and designed to ensure success for the program participant and the school. As a third party, TFA has the resources and nation-wide lens to make these placement decisions for which school and departmental systems do not have administrative capacity.

Any proposed changes to practical experience requirements should take care to avoid additional resource burdens on schools already struggling with workforce shortages and administration challenges. An external brokering service for partnerships with schools may assist, and these could be developed strategically with a view to target schools with the highest need for teachers, such as those in regional and rural areas. TFA has an existing model and expertise in school partnerships which may be useful for further consideration.

### Recommended policy shift

Coaching and mentoring support is a critical element of TFA's success in creating classroom ready graduates who continue to teach and lead in schools. To increase classroom readiness and contribute to retention in the teaching profession, TFA recommends:

1. Consideration be given to models that enable high quality coaching support for ITE students during their practicums.
2. That it should be standard practice for all new teachers to be supported with formal coaching and mentoring in their early years, and schools should be appropriately resourced to provide this.

TFA also recognises the administrative burdens schools experience with practicum set ups and recommends:

3. In addition to practicum guidelines, consideration be given to a brokering and support service, with focus on supporting schools with highest workforce need, ie. regional, rural and remote communities.

### 2.3. An Applied Master of Teaching option

In consideration of ITE course options and structures that can widen the pathway for more aspiring teachers, bring competent people into classrooms sooner, and add flexibility for providers, TFA is open to the concept of an Applied Master of Teaching. This view is formed from TFA's co-delivery experience with tertiary partners alongside feedback from our program participants.

Current regulatory requirements to complete a Master of Teaching or a Bachelor of Education present a significant 'opportunity cost' as candidates are not able to earn a salary during this time. In line with anecdotal evidence consistently provided to TFA via our recruitment and admissions teams, the QITE Review recognised that this disproportionately affects career changers, who must weigh up forfeiting the opportunity to earn a higher salary, and who are more likely to have additional financial and family responsibilities (p33).

There are currently ITE providers offering accelerated pathways for the Master of Teaching, with a view to reducing this opportunity cost. The Discussion Paper (4.3.3) has recognised the intensity of accelerated approaches and that they are not suitable for all ITE entrants. TFA's employment-based pathway goes one step further by providing a dual track, where participants have immediate teaching experience and earn a salary while completing their Master's degree. Yet even with TFA's program there is a significant study requirement as participants are earning a Master's in 2.25 years, whilst teaching 300-plus days over 2 years.

It is TFA's position that there is an opportunity to rethink study requirements through **development of an Applied Master of Teaching**. This reconfigured course could require candidates to complete a minimum of 300 days in school (significantly greater than the professional experience currently required by current AITSL Standard 5.2.a) and **assess a greater proportion of learning through professional experience assessments**. In such an Applied course, candidates could demonstrate their skills and knowledge in the classroom and be assessed on this observed practice plus reflection, with streamlined requirements for written assessments. As the Discussion Paper explores (4.2 and 4.3), the re-balancing of the course workload is likely to increase the appeal and suitability of employment-based pathways to a broader set of mid-career cohorts.

An Applied Master of Teaching may also provide a more accessible entry pathway for those who do not have a Bachelor's degree. As an Applied Master's, there could be greater flexibility for entrance criteria using Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience. If this were coupled with the competency-based frameworks

discussed above, it could become a new option for overcoming current eligibility barriers, increasing the supply of classroom-trained teachers, and boosting diversity within the teaching profession.

Any shift to a greater proportion of learning through professional experience assessments must also ensure quality standards are maintained. As recognised in the Discussion Paper (p49) there is a diversity in the standards, process and approach to practicum assessment across the ITE sector. An independent practicum assessment model, including guidelines, assessment tools and potentially an independent labour market could enable professional practicum assessments to occur at scale and at quality.

TFA recognises the additional cost of practicum assessments and coaching. One further opportunity may be the introduction of remote observation technology into schools, with appropriate privacy parameters in place. This could help boost delivery of high-quality and cost effective remote practical coaching and assessment, particularly for schools in outer regional and remote communities.

#### Recommended policy shift

TFA sees three key steps the Commonwealth can take to create the authorising environment that enables innovation for more practical-based ITE pathways:

1. Endorse ITE providers to explore development of Applied Master of Teaching courses, and assist in mitigating any current regulatory barriers.
2. Develop an independent practicum assessment model, including guidelines, assessment tools and potentially an independent labour market, to enable professional practicum assessments to occur at scale and at quality.
3. Consider at-scale role out of remote observation technology to enable cost effective delivery of high-quality remote practical coaching and assessment in regional, rural and remote contexts.

# 3. ITE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND FUNDING

## 3.1 Performance measures for ITE

As identified in the Discussion Paper's Reform Area 2, strengthening the link between performance and funding is a means of ensuring continuous improvement by ITE providers.

TFA operates with one of the highest degrees of transparency in the sector, having undergone multiple program-level evaluations over the last 15 years. For example, TFA is required to report regularly to multiple stakeholders about its progress against key performance criteria including, but not limited to:

- Completion rates
- Principal satisfaction
- Associate satisfaction
- Diversity of Associate cohorts
- Retention beyond the program (into a third year of teaching)
- Placement targets in key priority areas such as regional and rural schools
- Cohort size
- STEM targets

TFA has always welcomed the opportunity to report against these criteria, both as an opportunity to demonstrate its efforts as well as a way for the organisation to demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement. TFA uses data to regularly reflect on performance to date and adjusts our program design and delivery activity in response. As a result, TFA has successfully increased the diversity of Associates, continues to demonstrate a very high completion rate and Principal and Associate satisfaction rates, as well as placing teachers in areas of very high demand.

**Teach For Australia therefore sees merit in introducing Key Performance Indicators to all programs run by ITE providers in the sector. To provide true transparency this must be done at an individual program level, not provider.** Performance criteria would encourage all providers to focus on actions they can take to improve the quality of the ITE pipeline, including ensuring higher completion rates and a higher proportion of graduates joining the profession (AITSL Pipeline Report 2020).

## 3.2 Performance and transition funding

While Teach For Australia views public transparency as necessary and important, given the amount of public funds invested in ITE and the current lack of information on course quality available to help ITE students compare and choose courses, **we do not believe transparency alone will drive a sufficient step change in performances. ITE providers must act on their data and adopt continuous improvement.** This is where rigorously administered performance funding may help provide additional incentives.

Performance funding could occur via a prescribed places mechanism, as with medicine, or as an alternative pool to fund excellence. When designing performance and funding mechanisms, while we acknowledge the need to solve for the majority of the sector made up of traditional ITE providers, the Commonwealth should seek to do so without disadvantageous outcomes for smaller innovative non-traditional providers.

TFA is circumspect of the use of transition funding to uplift poor performance due to the potential opportunity cost of funding under-performing ITE providers versus re-directing funding to support high performers to grow. Instead, **funding could be redirected to support high performing providers to grow and attract more career changers to the sector.** For example, Teach For Australia currently has the largest numbers ever in our program – over 300 in either first or second year - and is seeking to significantly grow its cohort size in the next 3 years. To ensure proven non-traditional pathways like TFA can sustain and scale, the QITE Review's 2021 Report recommended long term funding for TFA, noting '*employment based pathways, particularly TFA, have a proven record of attracting, selecting and supporting the preparation of high-quality teachers.*' (p33).

**TFA also notes that employment-based programs are a cost effective way for the Commonwealth to attract career changers to teaching.** We agree with the Panel (section 4.4.3) that alternate pathways may appear to have higher costs at surface level, however when full consideration is given to all costs and benefits to the Commonwealth (including reduced

dependence of government support to study and taxation implications of immediate employment) employment-based pathways are cost competitive with traditional teaching pathways. In 2021 PwC compared the cost to the Commonwealth of producing a qualified teacher across different ITE pathways. PwC found that on current data, TFA was a more cost-effective way for the Commonwealth to produce a 'teacher who teaches' than the average traditional Bachelor or Master's ITE pathway. Alongside the initial cost to the Commonwealth of each ITE pathway, this analysis factored in other costs and benefits arising from course completion/non-completion and employment rates during in and post-qualification. This analysis is available as an appendix to TFA's submission to the QITE Review.

Furthermore, when the entirety of services provided is considered, TFA's cost is even more competitive when compared to tertiary providers. Unlike traditional pathways, TFA's program provides an integrated set of services essential to attract additionality, rigorously select, train and support carefully selected people over a 2.5-3 year period to become teachers in low SES communities.

**By targeting financial support for smaller providers to grow, the Commonwealth can further improve the cost effectiveness of these proven innovative programs through scale.**

### Policy shift recommended

1. **Increase program-level transparency -** TFA sees benefits of transparency on our performance culture, and believes **all ITE programs should be treated similarly**. To provide true transparency this must be done at individual ITE program level.
2. **Support growth of strong performers -** TFA strongly supports the creation of a 'growth in excellence' funding pool for high quality ITE programs as a means of enabling strong performers to grow in volume. **TFA encourages governments to give preference to excellence funding for high-performers over transition funding for underperforming programs** and providers.
3. **Foster innovation - Governments should continue to foster and fund innovation in the sector.** When designing sector-wide performance and funding mechanisms, the Commonwealth should seek to do so without causing disadvantage to smaller, more innovative or non-traditional providers.

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[https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/atwd/reports/new-pipeline-report/2020\\_aitsl-atwd\\_pipelinerreport.pdf](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/atwd/reports/new-pipeline-report/2020_aitsl-atwd_pipelinerreport.pdf)

Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (2021)

<https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/next-steps-report-quality-initial-teacher-education-review>

TFA submission to the QITE Review (inc. PwC cost-comparison analysis)

<https://teachforaustralia.org/tfa-response-to-quality-ite-review-report/>

TFA Leadership Development Program: Handbook - Master of Teaching (Secondary) (Leading Learning)

<https://www.acu.edu.au/handbook/handbook-2023/course/master-of-teaching-secondary-leading-learning>

Teach For Australia - Impact Report 2022

<https://teachforaustralia.org/our-impact-2022/>

## Additional data sources

Teach For Australia 2023 Alumni Survey

Teach For Australia 2023 Principals Survey



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