

## ACU welcomes national focus on initial teacher education programs

Australian Catholic University has welcomed the national focus on strengthening initial teacher education programs amid the release of the Australian Government’s Teacher Education Expert Panel discussion paper.

Faculty of Education and Arts Executive Dean Professor Mary Ryan said as Australia’s largest provider of teachers, ACU was committed to reforms that proved to be in the best interests of ITE students, providers, school children, and the teaching profession generally.

“Professor Mark Scott’s panel discussion paper presents us with validation of areas of current practice as well as proposals for reform that are important for ITE providers nationally to consider,” Professor Ryan said.

“We all want to ensure Australian teaching graduates have the extensive knowledge, diverse skills and comprehensive qualifications necessary to continue to provide high quality teaching and learning opportunities for their future students.”

Professor Ryan said ACU continually worked to strengthen its ITE programs including using evidence-based practices such as explicit teaching, formative assessment, and effective classroom management techniques, and ensuring a foundational knowledge of literacy, numeracy and other areas of teaching and learning.

“Additionally, we have made significant investments to build expertise and in-demand skills including recent commitments to establish the Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy (ACAL) and the Stem Centre of Education Excellence (SCEE),” she said.

Professor Ryan said the ACU-designed Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA), used by a consortium including 18 other Australian universities, was a key quality assurance measure that ensured graduates were classroom ready – a key aim of the discussion paper.

“We take the preparedness of our students to teach very seriously. Our teaching students have high retention rates, impressive course satisfaction, and strong employment outcomes,” Professor Ryan said.

“And when it comes to improving ITE retention nationally, ACU’s Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education has the analytical capability to assist ITE providers to accurately predict times their students need evidence-based interventions to help them prosper and complete their teaching degrees.”

Professor Ryan welcomed the discussion paper’s commitment to providing greater consistency and improved school placement experiences for Australian teaching students.

“ACU has long advocated for improved partnerships with schools and pathways that give teaching students early and sustained opportunities to immerse themselves in the culture of their placement school,” she said.

“We need a more systemic approach to placements, centres of excellence, strong mentors for teaching students and appropriate incentives and supports for schools to be able to facilitate this.”

Professor Ryan also welcomed the discussion paper’s focus on improving postgraduate ITE courses, reiterating ACU’s support for paid employment opportunities, flexible pathways, and compressed courses that did not sacrifice quality.

“ACU’s successful partnership with Teach for Australia and our accelerated, state-of-the-art early childhood courses offered in partnership with the Victorian Government are examples of our commitment to providing flexible, student-friendly pathways that help them to achieve their goal of entering the teaching profession,” she said.

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