

ACU welcomes release of Teacher Education Expert Panel report

Australian Catholic University (ACU) acknowledges the value of the Federal Government's continued focus on the performance, quality, and success of initial teacher education (ITE) programs amid the release of the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) report.

"This report speaks to the importance of ensuring we have robust, effective, and accountable ITE programs across all providers," ACU Executive Dean of Education and Arts Professor Mary Ryan said.

"As Australia's largest trainer of teachers, we know the teaching profession is too important for anything less."

Professor Ryan welcomed the report's focus on four core content learning areas for ITE students – the brain and learning, effective pedagogical practices, classroom management, and responsive teaching – as reflected in ACU's evidence-based teaching programs.

"Preservice teachers need to know how diverse students learn and how to meet their needs, have the deep knowledge and practical skillset to teach, support and assess them, and have the confidence to create and maintain learning-rich, safe, culturally responsive and engaging classroom environments – something our ITE students learn in real and simulated environments," she said.

"But teachers are lifelong learners, which is why we provide professional learning and micro-credentials in key areas including phonics, reading, and STEM, and have made significant investments in research and evidence-based instruction through our new Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy and, in future, our STEM Centre of Education Excellence."

Professor Ryan said the report's ITE quality indicators of selection, retention, the preparedness of beginning teachers, and transition to employment had merit in assessing the health and integrity of the system.

"ACU supports the establishment of an independent ITE quality assurance board and the public reporting of indicators to increase transparency and consistency across the system. These indicators will be useful for the sector to ensure a strong and effective ITE system," she said.

But Professor Ryan urged caution in using a "six-year dropout rate" as an indicator of the quality of an ITE program given students were taking longer to finish their degrees due to factors including family responsibilities, difficulties attending mandatory school placements, and cost of living pressures.

"We are seeing more ITE students study part-time. A four-year degree can take eight or more years to complete. That doesn't mean they've left the system; it means they need more support to finish earlier," she said.

Professor Ryan said it was also important to recognise current indicators of sector best practice and preservice teacher quality such as the ACU-designed Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment, which is moderated against 18 Australian universities to assure classroom readiness.

"Our graduates cannot teach until they pass this rigorous assessment," she said.

Professor Ryan welcomed the report's commitment to system-wide improvements to school placement programs, and to working with ITE providers to develop, expand, and promote mid-career teaching programs.

"It's good to see a national approach to the forward-thinking measures being used by some ITE providers including ACU to boost the pipeline of teachers in the system, and we look forward to increased support and greater consistency across all jurisdictions," she said.

“We have long called for a more systemic approach to school placements, incentives for teacher mentors and supports for schools to be able to facilitate this. Pre-service teachers do need more time in the classroom.

“We also welcome the commitment to flexible pathways to improve ITE options for mid-career entrants, such as ACU’s internship programs, paraprofessional classroom roles, earn and learn pathways through Teach for Australia, and our accelerated early childhood courses offered in partnership with the Victorian Government.”

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