

ISQ Response to the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Quality Review Discussion Paper



About Queensland Independent Schools

Community confidence in the independent schooling sector remains strong with more than 130,481 students enrolled in 223 independent schools across Queensland. These schools educate approximately 15 percent of the state's total school-age population and about 20 percent of all secondary students.

The strength of the independent schooling sector lies in the rich mix of education choices and opportunities Queensland independent schools provide families. Independent schools are as diverse as the students and parents who make up their close-knit communities. Of Queensland's 228 member schools: 215 educate children with disability; 104 cater for students for whom English is a second language or dialect; 214 enrol Indigenous students of which 9 are majority Indigenous schools with 80% of the student population identifying as being from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, 84 offer international education programs; 36 provide boarding services; and 16 cater specifically for students who have disengaged from mainstream education.

Common to all independent schools is their commitment to strong student outcomes, high standards of behaviour, and the welfare and wellbeing of students.

Over the past 10 years, enrolments at Queensland independent schools have increased by 21 percent. This growth is a clear indication that parents value an independent education and are prepared to invest their after-tax incomes in their child's schooling.

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) is the peak body representing Queensland's independent schooling sector. Independent Schools Queensland represents the interests of its member schools, fosters choice in education and protects the autonomy of independent schools. ISQ is a not-for-profit organisation and membership to ISQ is voluntary.

Executive Summary of ISQ Response to ITE Quality Review Discussion Paper

Introduction

In 2018, 3,638 parents with children at 115 independent schools participated in ISQ's 'What Parents Want' survey. The top 5 reasons why parents choose independent schools included:

1. Preparation for student to fulfil potential in later life
2. The high quality of teachers
3. School seemed right for child's individual needs
4. Good discipline
5. Teaching methods/philosophy

All these are directly or indirectly related to the quality of teaching. ISQ welcomes the Australian Government's interest in supporting the continued development of classroom-ready teachers through quality initial teacher education.

Executive Summary

ISQ recognises that ITE providers are responsible for preparing teachers able to demonstrate the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs) at the Graduate Career Stage and that from induction, employers are responsible for supporting teachers to become Proficient.

Independent school leaders expect that Graduate Career Stage teachers are motivated by working with children, families, and their community to achieve educational outcomes for young people. Graduate teachers should be practiced and skilled at working alongside colleagues to plan, teach, assess, and evaluate their impact on student progress. Schools expect a workforce that is intellectually agile and adaptable, willing and able to meet the needs of diverse learners in various contexts.

Attracting outstanding candidates to the teaching profession is boosted when currently practising quality teachers are able to present themselves as role models to potential future teachers. This can be achieved by recognising and leveraging teaching excellence and the impact of high-performing teachers, such as through the nationally certified Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (HALTs) staff body. Parents/carers do value teachers, with COVID's educational impact largely enhancing this community sentiment even further. Additionally, by diversifying school leadership, and highlighting that diversity, a greater pool of potential ITE candidates can be targeted. It is the practitioners themselves, particularly for young people still in school, that are often best positioned to demonstrate the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Any efforts to lift the appeal of a career in teaching must actively engage the existing teaching body (both classroom teachers and school leadership), and enhance their stories with evidence and research about what makes for effective teaching. Furthermore, teachers and leaders should be equipped to describe the benefits of teaching, the diverse career pathways associated with education, and the impact of school leaders. Esteeming teachers today attracts the teachers of tomorrow.

ISQ supports activities and assessment that ensure initial teacher education candidates have adequate literacy and numeracy skills, and for primary and middle years teachers to have ample opportunity to skilfully engage with all key learning areas of the Australian Curriculum. ISQ seeks greater opportunities for senior secondary teacher candidates to partner more deeply in related industries and content disciplines learning.

ISQ supports the Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) but also supports greater consistency of this, and all professional experience assessment processes, to ease the burden on schools and to enable greater workforce mobility.

ISQ challenges the necessity of 'Masters only' pathways into teaching. Particularly for career-changing candidates. ISQ seeks more pathways into teaching for career-changing, highly academic or industry specialised candidates. Flexible pipeline strategies are essential to avoid the teacher shortages which forces employers to use Graduate teachers to teach out-of-field subjects/learning areas and take on administrative/leadership activities that they are not yet equipped for. Schools should be subsidised along with ITE providers to develop earn-as-you-learn programs, establish final-university-year temporary contracts, and scholarships to support the living expenses of diverse teacher candidates during employment transitions.

ISQ seeks greater flexibility from ITE providers in ensuring preparedness for commencing in a school context. Firstly, there should be an expectation that ITE providers work in close partnership with all local schools, and that selected schools from all sectors are jointly funded with ITE partners to deliver portions of initial teacher education. Secondly, the erosion of supervised and unsupervised capstone experiences, particularly internships – which can have a positive impact on classroom readiness – should be reversed. Internships should be funded through an ITE-employer partnership to better enable high-quality candidates to engage in sustained professional practice in school.

Three independent schools have already expressed interest in operating as ITE providers in STEM, Philosophical Inquiry, and inclusive pedagogies. Schools are prepared and interested in working in partnership with government and existing ITE providers to develop more sustained school based professional experiences.

Finally, it is expected that contemporary and high-quality research underpins the decision-making about the current and future design of ITE programs. ITE providers, government and employers should be willing to review evidence that supports the effectiveness of multiple pathways into teaching and establish evaluative research to guide the design of flexible pathways.

The following responses to Part A and B questions were gathered through the ISQs regional Workforce Solutions Network (WSN), our 86 Certified HALTS and other school principals, who were selected because of current engagement with ISQ in programs focused on quality teaching.

ISQ thanks Hon Alan Tudge MP, the Expert Panel, and the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, for giving ISQ the opportunity to provide feedback and would be pleased to offer any further assistance where requested.

Part A

Attracting and selecting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession

1. The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) are in a good position as a national body to advocate for and drive positive campaigns about the nation building impact of the teaching profession. Teacher excellence and impact in a broad context should be the focus of this. Attracting high-performing school leavers would benefit from school staff (including as guidance counsellors and teachers) doing more 'selling' of the teaching profession to potential candidates. A quality review into teacher attraction should consider the role of the profession in esteeming itself. Additionally, a review into teacher attraction should recognise complex communities, work intensification and decreasing autonomy are not attractive to unprepared teachers with unrealistic expectations. Innovation and excellence is unlikely to thrive where the challenges of teaching outweigh the benefits, both in reality and in terms of the national discourse.
2. The loss of income for career-changing professionals entering ITE programs is a significant barrier to diversifying and deepening the expertise in the workforce. Consideration should be given to the development of alternate pathways into the teaching profession through the provision of academic and financial support to candidates and schools, for longer and more sustained periods, while completing their ITE studies.
3. The completion rates for ITE programs are directly linked to the degree to which students feel the course is relevant, practical, and conducive to adequately preparing them for the realities of being a first-year teacher. The esteem of the profession is linked to this idea, as teachers that can conceptualise a fulfilling career path and feel part of a valued profession are more likely to stay the course. Programs need to be practical, focused on developing wide range of teaching strategies for diverse students. ITE programs that enable candidates to understand: the real context of teaching, their influence and impact, the right use of evidence, and the impact of excellent teaching, stand a better chance of engaging and retain high quality candidates. Enabling teachers to identify and understand their impact on students and colleagues should underpin all aspects of ITE programs. School leaders, masterful teachers/HALTs, and people of diversity should be supported to work directly with ITE providers to highlight excellence and to engage and retain candidates.
4. ISQ acknowledges that there are difficult-to-staff subjects including specialised mathematics and science, agricultural studies, design and technologies, and some languages. The WSN recently discussed the benefits of utilising industry experts in schools and the need to apply for Permission to Teach (PTT) to enable these individuals to deliver parts of the curriculum. This regional network of school leaders also reflected on the impact of COVID on skilled migration. The use of programs such as Teach for Australia have been considered by some ISQ member schools. Pipeline flexibility in partnership with regional universities and other ITE providers will be essential to meeting that shortage.

5. School leadership teams that visibly represent the diversity of their students are in a strong position to attract a more diverse cohort into ITE, particularly within their communities. Therefore, the provision of leadership pathway options and opportunities and for existing teachers (that reflect the diversity of the student cohort) could be part of the strategy to attract a more diverse teacher cohort into ITE programs.

Part B

Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers

6. ISQ are supportive of Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) and AITSL in taking a lead role in ensuring ITE programs are robust and evidence based. These organisations are positioned to provide a nationally consistent framework and guidance to ITE providers about valid evidence-based teaching practices. These organisations should also be tasked with reviewing and evaluating alternative pathway programs. While a focus on evidence-based ITE curriculum and teaching practice is welcome, there has been discussion about the significance of ITE graduates entering the profession with a sound understanding the learning process for students underpinned by principles of [neuroscience](#), child development, and cultural diversity. If ‘how students learn’ is well understood by early career teachers, and they perceive that they have a range of teaching strategies to target the learning needs of students, they will be more confident graduates and more prepared to meet the needs of complex and diverse students.
7. ISQ supports ‘internship’ opportunities that do not require the provision of full-time supervision of the pre-service teacher. The onus of providing full-time supervision for close-to-graduating pre-service teachers puts considerable pressure on schools and reduces the ‘classroom-ready’ preparation of final year students, particularly for mid-career changers. It is a misrepresentation that this cannot be done safely. The final ITE professional experience should enable the ITE pre-graduate a ‘real world’ experience of teaching without full-time, in-class supervision while still having access to the support of the ITE provider. Schools as well as ITE providers should be subsidised to pay for unsupervised interns to make this option more attractive to high quality teacher candidates.
8. ISQ supports the implementation of the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) as outlined in *Action Now, Classroom Ready Teachers* - Report of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG). The benefits of the TPA could be further strengthened with enhanced collaboration with schools to ensure a consistent understanding of the purpose and benefits of the TPA. Schools seek greater consistency regarding the assessment of professional experiences to reduce the burden schools to ‘translate’ the course intent of school based professional experiences.

9. ISQ supports the alignment of this review with the [Alice Springs Declaration](#), particularly that leaders at all levels in all learning environments across the profession play a critical role in supporting and fostering quality teaching and learning (p.11). HALTs must explicitly evidence their work with pre-service teachers as part of gaining (AITSL) HALT certification for Standard 6.1 (Identify and Plan Professional Learning Needs) and Standard 6.2 (Engage in Professional Learning and Improve Practice). While opportunities to evidence this is mainly school-based (through pre-service teachers' professional experience), there is scope for HALTs to share their knowledge and expertise with a broader range of ITE candidates through on-going and reciprocal school-university partnerships.

10. Evidence suggests that teachers who feel supported in their first few years of teaching are more likely to be retained in the profession. ISQ supports any initiative that focuses on the provision support and consistent approach to robust induction of early career teachers in schools. Closer working partnerships between schools and ITE providers are essential to strengthening preparedness of ITE graduates. Employers need to take responsibility for induction, and should be supported to do so. Furthermore, ITE providers could assist Graduate teachers by assisting them to be more aware of what kinds of induction activities they can ask for, and engage in.