

# InSights

## Outcomes of the 2015 national initial teacher education accreditation panel review

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# Outcomes of the 2015 national ITE accreditation panel review



## Introduction

A nationally consistent approach to the accreditation of initial teacher education (ITE) programs was agreed in 2011, and implemented from 2012 through the introduction of the *Accreditation of initial teacher education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures (April 2011)* (the Standards and Procedures). As part of its implementation, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) committed to conducting annual reviews of the process.

Synergistiq was engaged by AITSL to facilitate the 2015 national ITE accreditation panel review (the panel review). This is the third review, and its findings are largely consistent with previous reviews.

The panel review synthesised the perspectives put forward by stakeholders through:

- a survey of ITE providers, regulatory authorities, panel members, panel chairs and interstate panel members across all states and territories. Invitations to participate in the survey were extended by the regulatory authorities in each state and territory. The survey was open from 27 May and closed on 10 June 2015.
- a face-to-face workshop with ITE providers, panel members, panel chairs, regulatory authorities and employers conducted in Melbourne on 17 June 2015.
- eleven interviews with ITE providers, panel members, panel chairs and regulatory authorities. Invitations to participate in an interview were made based on random selection by Synergistiq.

## Action now: classroom ready teachers

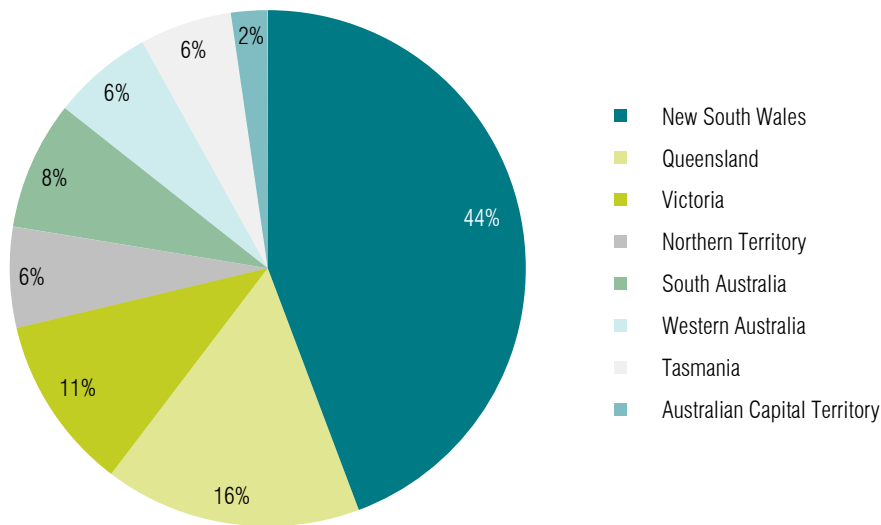
The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) was established in 2014 by the Minister for Education and Training the Hon. Christopher Pyne to provide advice on changes needed to the preparation of teachers in Australia. The work of TEMAG involved significant consultation: over 175 public submissions were received and over 30 consultations were held with key stakeholders.

The Australian Government's response to the TEMAG report, *Action now: classroom ready teachers*, describes a clear role for AITSL in enhancing the quality assurance of ITE programs in Australia. A key focus of the quality assurance process is to identify ways to significantly improve the rigour that is applied when accrediting ITE programs.

## Representation in the panel review

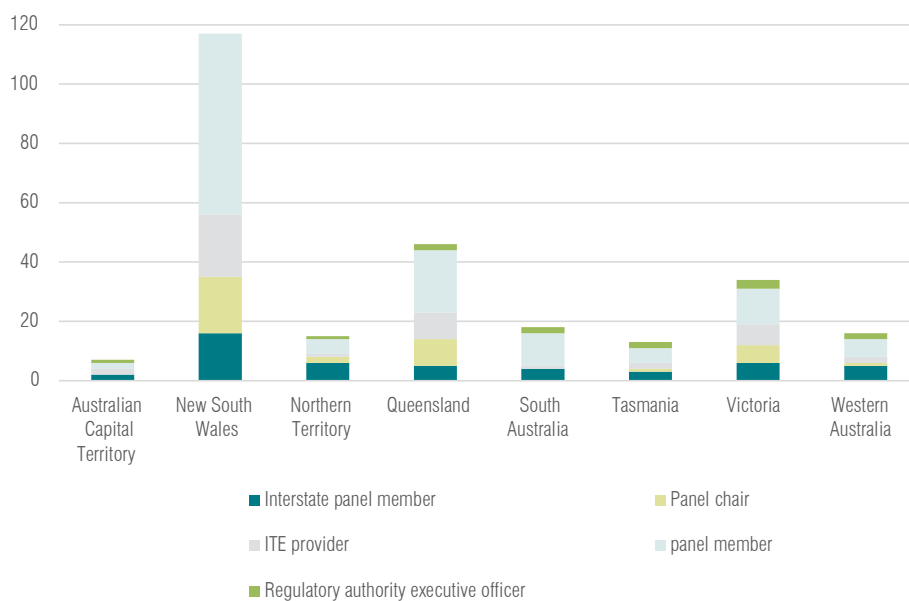
Of the 284 invitations to participate in the survey, 175 responses were received. The data suggests that the survey results reflected a range of perspectives (Figures 1 & 2), though a significant proportion of survey respondents (44%, n=77) were from New South Wales.

**Figure 1: In which jurisdiction are you based? (n= 174)**



Note: some percentages might not add to 100% due to rounding

**Figure 2: Jurisdiction, by current or former role in the national accreditation process (n=175)**

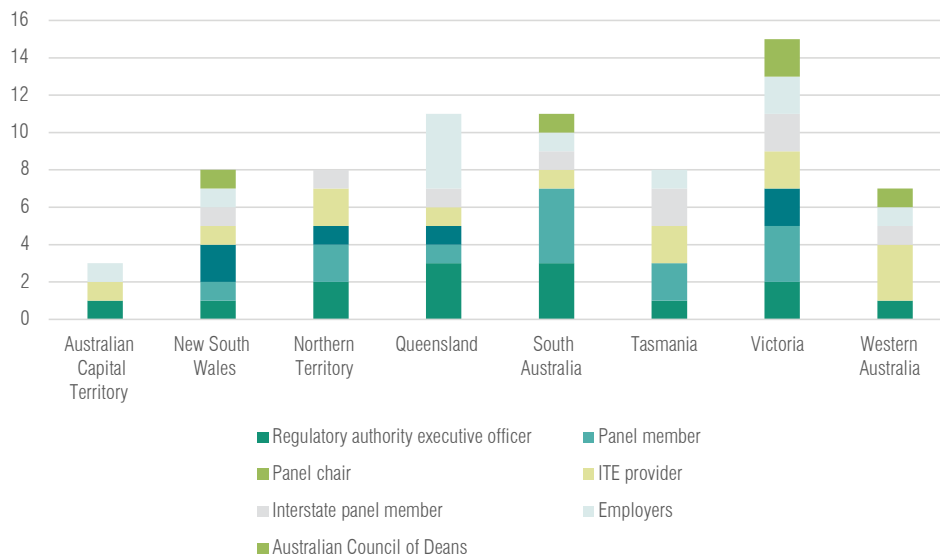


<sup>1</sup> As the survey asked respondents to identify all of the roles they may have previously played in the national accreditation process, the number of roles identified exceeded the number of survey respondents.



Attendance at the face-to-face workshop was more equally representative across jurisdictions, although, understandably given the location, there were more representatives from Victoria (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Numbers of participants who attended the workshop, by jurisdiction and stakeholder group (n=71)**



Of the 135 responses received when surveyed about the number of national accreditation panel meetings stakeholders had participated in, 33% (n=44) had participated in one panel meeting, and 20% (n=27) had participated in two meetings. Of the ITE providers surveyed, 42% (n=15) had submitted either one or two applications as part of the current process. Two ITE providers had submitted eight applications.

## Findings

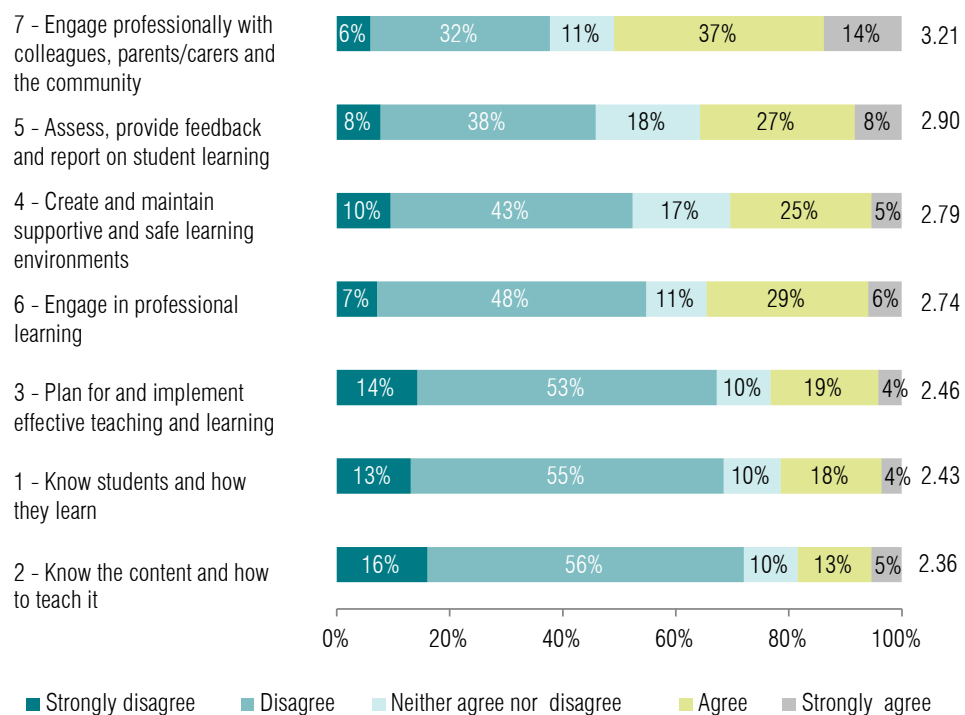
Findings from the panel review suggest that participants in the panel process see the current national accreditation process as fundamentally strong and delivering on the goal of national consistency, however they support some improvements to the process.

### Graduate career stage of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the National Program Standards

The panel review sought to establish an understanding of which of the Graduate career stage of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (Graduate teacher standards) providers have difficulty providing evidence on.

In particular, some of the standards within the Graduate career stage of the Graduate teacher standards are particularly challenging for ITE providers. Figure 4 shows responses by all survey respondents, who overall felt that Standard 7 (engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community) is the most difficult, with 51% agreeing or strongly agreeing that ITE providers generally have difficulty providing evidence for the Standard. Standard 5 (assess, provide feedback and report on student learning), Standard 4 (create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments) and Standard 6 (engage in professional learning) are also perceived as difficult with respect to providing evidence.

**Figure 4: Providers generally have difficulty in providing evidence on the Graduate Career Stage of the APST for the following: (n=168)**



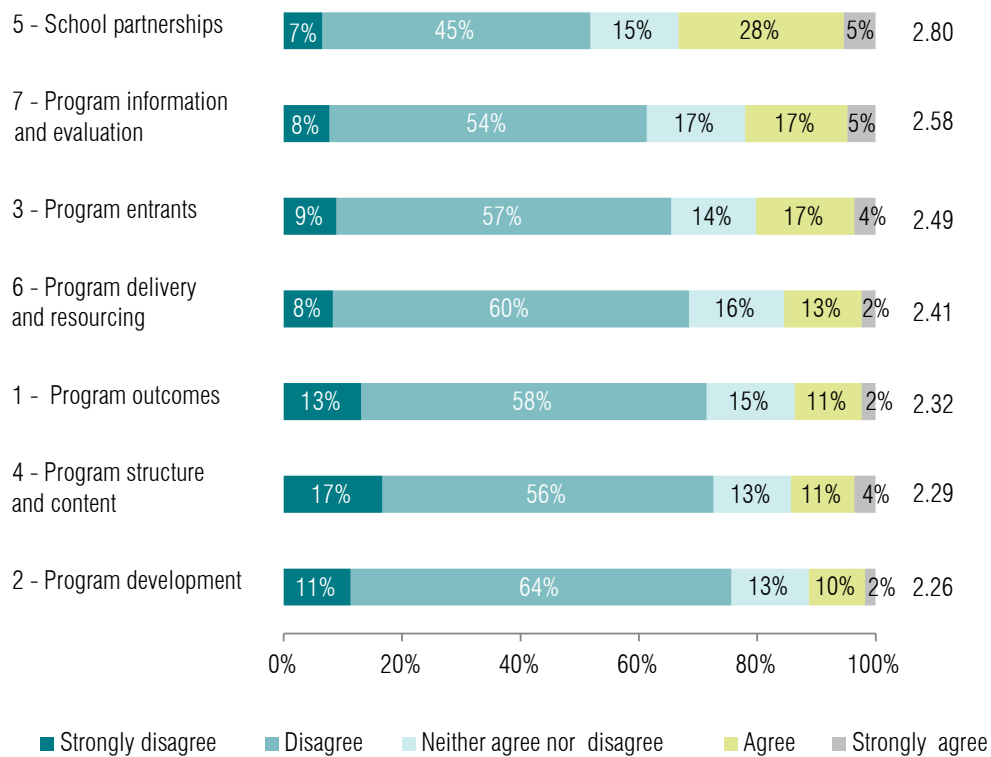
Note: some percentages might not add to 100% due to rounding





Survey participants were also asked about the difficulties ITE providers experience in providing evidence for the National Program Standards (Figure 5), with the majority of respondents disagreeing that there were difficulties in doing this. However, in comparison to the other standards, survey respondents reported greater difficulty in providing evidence for Standard 5 (school partnerships) and to a lesser extent, Standard 7 (program information and evaluation).

**Figure 5: Providers generally have difficulty in providing evidence for the following National Program Standards: (n=168)**



Note: some percentages might not add to 100% due to rounding

## Information to support the application process

Panel members and ITE providers both acknowledged that the process could be significantly enhanced through more guidance to support the development and assessment of applications for accreditation. Fifty three per cent (n=89) felt that this would improve or simplify the national accreditation process. Potential guidance materials included:

- guidelines to support a consistent layout and ordering of content to enable panels to more efficiently navigate applications
- instructions for additional program information that should be included to provide panels with greater context
- examples of quality applications so providers have a greater understanding of what is expected.



### Types of evidence required in an application

In addition to providing guidance on the nature, amount and style of information that should form an application, the panel review suggests the need to articulate the types of evidence required for a successful application.

The survey highlighted that panel members and ITE providers often bring different interpretations to what constitutes 'evidence.' There was also a sense that personal bias with respect to what is 'good' evidence' and what is 'less reliable' evidence creates considerable potential for confusion and negotiation over the content of applications. Seventy nine per cent (n=133) of respondents suggested that guides that provide more clarity or support on the types of evidence to be used in applications would assist in addressing these concerns. At the face-to-face workshop, stakeholders discussed at length the types of evidence that could be used to demonstrate achievement against all of the standards, and which could inform the development of guidance. Key proposals for types of evidence included:

- course and unit outlines for the program, including reference lists. In some cases, ITE providers acknowledged that this often requires difficult negotiations with program coordinators to re-write program and unit outlines
- assessment tasks that show sufficient breadth and depth in how learning will be assessed
- evidence of partnerships, including meeting minutes or Memoranda of Understanding
- evidence of consultation on program design, including 'sign off' by professional associations
- assessments of students (including literacy and numeracy tests) prior to commencing study in a ITE program
- student academic transcripts
- strategies for how the university deals with sensitive issues (e.g. supporting pre-service teachers at risk during their professional experience)
- pre-service teacher portfolios, and other school student artefacts
- case studies of school student learning and growth
- school student learning outcome data
- university staff curriculum vitae
- an overview of resources available to pre-service teachers, including information technologies.



## Further panel training

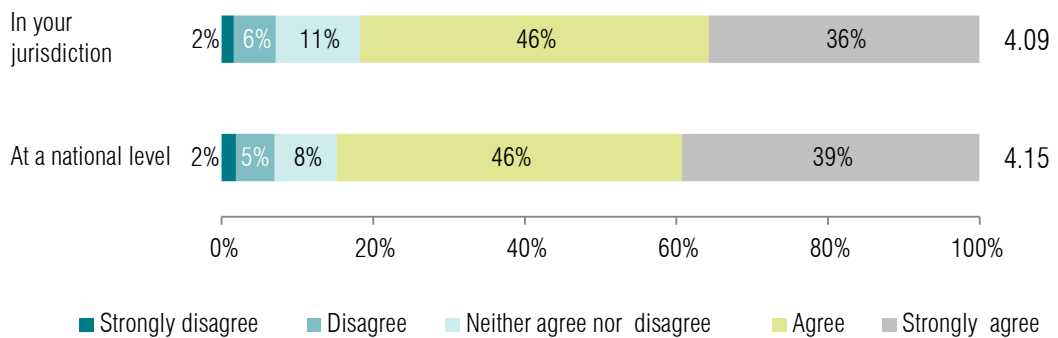
The panel review revealed that while most panel members had participated in some form of training offered by their state or territory regulatory authority, there is a view that additional panel training and support would be of value. Panel members noted that training available to date had been highly variable as a result of different resourcing strategies in each jurisdiction. Sixty nine per cent (n=116) of panel members felt it would be beneficial to have regular opportunities to build on the knowledge and skills they had gained through the panel process. Whether face-to-face or online, they suggested this could include more regular refresher courses, updates about any changes to the accreditation process and conferences or other meetings. When asked at the face-to-face workshop to elaborate on the types of content that would improve the training, stakeholders suggested:

- guidance on interpreting the National Program Standards and the Graduate teacher standards
- guidance on conflicts of interest
- training in managing personal bias
- training in interpreting necessary data
- training in the panel process, as opposed to the Standards and Procedures, to ensure panel members engage sufficiently with the reading material prior to and during assessment
- training in understanding the higher education sector
- training to prepare panellists for the re-accreditation process.

## Panel composition

The survey participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the accreditation process supports consistency of panel decisions; 82% (n=103) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that panel decisions were consistent within each jurisdiction and 85% (n=134) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the process supported consistency at a national level (Figure 6).

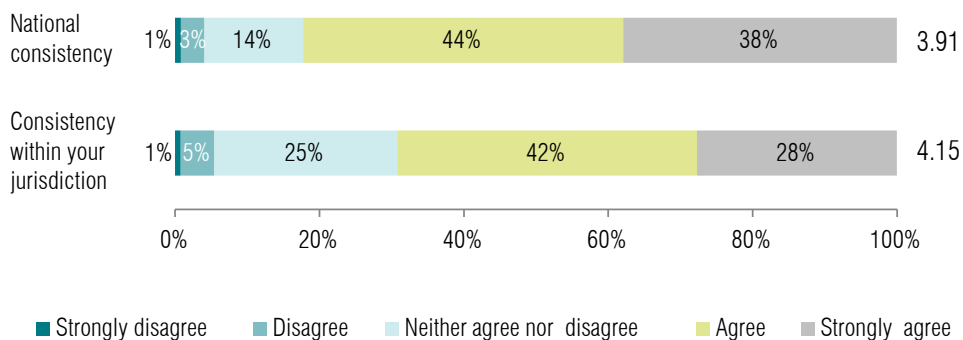
**Figure 6: The accreditation process supports consistency of decision-making, all respondents: (n=158)**



Note: some percentages might not add to 100% due to rounding

To an extent, this perspective may be informed by attitudes towards interstate panel members, who were seen on the whole as making a positive contribution to panel deliberations (Figure 7). The majority of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that an interstate panel member's contribution to a panel's deliberations enhanced national consistency (82%, n=102) and consistency within their own jurisdiction (70%, n=90).

**Figure 7: Interstate panel members' contribution to the panel's deliberations and/or decisions has enhanced, all respondents: (n=130)**



Note: some percentages might not add to 100% due to rounding



Overall, 69% (n=92) of participants in the panel review were supportive of the current composition of panels. Most stakeholders indicated the current composition of the panel was adequate to ensure the best mix of participants with the expertise to effectively assess applications. Only 8% (n=10) indicated additional expertise was required and only 5% (n=7) indicated that more interstate panel members were required.

## Centralised coordination of panels

At the face-to-face workshop, some stakeholders suggested a more centralised approach to accreditation could enhance the consistency of the process. In such an arrangement, stakeholders suggested panels would continue to be facilitated in each state or territory, but the process could be coordinated centrally. The potential role of AITSL in this work was highlighted often. It was suggested that a more centralised approach would allow for nationally consistent processes and panel training. When asked to elaborate on this idea, stakeholders spoke of existing panel arrangements being enhanced by a 'central pool' of panellists to undertake the task of participating in panels on a full-time basis.

## Conclusion

The 2015 panel review suggests that while the national accreditation process is still relatively new in its implementation, it is largely supported and valued by the stakeholders consulted. Many stakeholders regard national consistency as an important policy goal and one that the current national accreditation process delivers.

Overall, stakeholders regard the current national process for accrediting ITE programs as fundamentally strong, however the panel review identified areas for potential improvement. As highlighted, key outcomes of the 2015 panel review include:

- Clearer guidelines would assist panel members and ITE providers to better utilise their existing skills and knowledge.
- There is a need for clear and consistent advice about the types of evidence ITE providers should provide so the burden for panel members to assess applications for program accreditation is reduced.
- Continued support with training to prepare panel members for the assessment process would be useful. A flexible training 'refresher' that offers more consistent content and that offers panel members the opportunity to participate in 'mock' scenarios was suggested as a way to achieve this.
- The current composition of accreditation panels is considered to reflect the breadth of perspectives, knowledge and expertise required.
- A more centralised approach to accreditation may enhance the consistency of the national accreditation process.



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