



DOCUMENT 6

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION - PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy document describes the minimum expectations of the professional experience component of an initial teacher education program for the purposes of Institute of Teachers' approval of that program as meeting the Graduate Teacher Standards. It is expected that many teacher education institutions will develop professional experience programs that exceed these minimum expectations.

The policy is aimed at assisting teacher education institutions to develop or review their initial teacher education programs for submission to the NSW Institute of Teachers for approval. Program documentation will be considered in terms of whether available information on the professional experience component satisfies the requirements of this policy.

The document should be read in conjunction with the following existing policies relating to initial teacher education:

- *Policy and Procedures for the Approval of Initial Teacher Education Programs* (June 2006)
- *Supplementary Documentation – Mandatory Areas of Study* (May 2007)
- *Supplementary Documentation – Graduate Teacher Standards 1.1.1 – 1.1.3 Subject Content Requirements* (October 2007)

2. DEFINING PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Professional experience

The Institute's *Policy and Procedures for the Approval of Initial Teacher Education Programs* describes professional experience, for the purposes of the approval of initial teacher education programs, as 'teaching practice, practicum (one of a number of supervised practical teaching experiences) and internship (a final teaching practice without in-class supervision), in a school or other setting for educational purposes'.

The Institute acknowledges that structured observations of good teaching practice form an essential aspect of a professional experience program as they provide opportunities for vicarious learning and modelling of effective practice.

Professional experience in schools

Professional experience in schools must be the central activity of any initial teacher education professional experience program.

Other settings for educational purposes

Professional experience in educational settings other than schools may provide a valuable contribution to a professional experience program and may be particularly relevant in certain teaching areas. The rationale for using settings other than schools would relate to the nature of the initial teacher education program or the teaching area/s the pre-service teacher is undertaking (eg industrial technology, science, agricultural science, primary).

Appropriate settings other than schools may include, but are not limited to, sport and recreation centres, homework centres, museums and galleries, early childhood centres, disability services centres and industry. The focus of experiences in these settings would still be on observing good teaching practice, student behaviour and learning, working with individual students or groups of students, and possibly trialling teaching approaches or collaboratively teaching.

Supervised professional experience

Supervised professional experience occurs where a classroom teacher has full duty of care of the students concerned.

Internship

An internship is usually the final professional experience in an initial teacher education program and provides a significant period of teaching practice where the pre-service teacher does not necessarily have direct in-class supervision by the classroom teacher. Internships are usually covered by signed formal agreements with relevant parties on the structure and scope of the internship.

A professional experience day

The Institute does not strictly quantify a day of professional experience but assumes that in terms of meeting the minimum provision of professional experience (see 7. *Minimum provision of professional experience*) that a full day of professional experience comprises a significant proportion of a school day. Whilst distinct half days of professional experience can be accumulated to full days, short term visits or single lesson observations in schools would not be counted as a full day of professional experience.

3. THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

A well-structured professional experience program is a vital component of all initial teacher education programs. Professional experience enables pre-service teachers to develop and refine their knowledge and understanding of students and how they learn, and their knowledge and skill of teaching with a focus on enhancing student learning.

It also provides an opportunity for pre-service teachers to demonstrate a capacity to meet those Graduate Teacher Standards that relate to professional practice in the classroom and for this to be observed and assessed. Importantly, a number of the Graduate Teacher Standards are uniquely demonstrated during professional experience.

4. STRUCTURE OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

Teacher education institutions will need to justify in their program documentation their approach to the nature and structure of a professional experience program. The particular format and duration of the initial teacher education program (eg a one year Graduate Diploma of Education, a four year Bachelor of Education or a combined degree program) will affect the structure of the professional experience program and the number and variety of different experiences included within it.

Nevertheless, it is expected that a professional experience program involves a number of different experiences that provide developmental opportunities for pre-service teachers to consolidate, refine and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of students and how they learn, their knowledge of the curriculum and their knowledge and skill of teaching as described by the Graduate Teacher Standards.

The final professional experience should provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers to consolidate their knowledge of teaching and learning, to demonstrate their capacity to undertake the duties of a teacher and to be assessed as demonstrating all of the relevant Graduate Teacher Standards.

5. A QUALITY PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

A quality initial teacher education program should include a program of professional experience that is integrated with all other aspects of the teacher education program. A range of general education units, curriculum studies and/or teaching method units undertaken prior to professional experiences should help to provide preparation for the expected outcomes to be achieved during a particular experience.

Whilst each professional experience would have its particular focus or expected outcomes,

pre-service teachers ultimately would be expected to have had opportunity to develop required knowledge, understanding and/or skills prior to and in conjunction with particular and relevant experiences, including as a minimum, the following:

- knowledge and understanding of the Graduate Teacher Standards;
- knowledge and understanding of the rationale, structure and content of current NSW Board of Studies syllabuses relevant to their teaching area/s;
- knowledge and skills in designing, delivering and reflecting on single lessons and coherent units of work;
- knowledge and skills in developing a range of valid and relevant student assessment tasks;
- understanding of approaches to analysing sample student outcomes data to identify student strengths and areas for development in order to inform lesson preparation;
- knowledge and skills in using a variety of teaching and learning strategies and approaches including explicit instruction, collaborative learning strategies, approaches to student grouping and the use of information and communication technologies;
- knowledge of curriculum, teaching and assessment approaches required to address the needs of all students and in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with special education needs, students from a non-English speaking background, and students with challenging behaviours;
- knowledge of classroom behaviour management techniques
- understanding of the role that parents and caregivers play in effective teaching and learning and approaches to effective parent/caregiver/teacher interviews;
- knowledge and understanding of mandatory policies including child protection and OH&S; and
- knowledge of appropriate professional and ethical conduct.

6. EVIDENCE OF A QUALITY PROGRAM

Program documentation should include a rationale for the institution's approach to professional experience and an explanation of how professional experience is structured, administered, supported, monitored and assessed. The institution's Professional Experience Handbook may form the main element of this documentation.

This program documentation would need to include:

- 6.1 the objectives or intended outcomes and content of the overall professional experience program;
- 6.2 a description of how the professional experience program is integrated within the total initial teacher education program and how preservice teachers are prepared through general teacher education units, curriculum studies units and teaching method units for each of the professional experiences;
- 6.3 a description of the Graduate Teacher Standards and other institution-specific requirements (where relevant) that are to be demonstrated during each of the professional experiences;
- 6.4 advice on how the professional experience program has been negotiated by the teacher education institution in partnership with schools and other educational settings (if applicable);
- 6.5 a description of the roles and responsibilities of key people in the professional experience program, including the pre-service teacher, staff in schools (and other educational settings if applicable) and staff of the teacher education institution, prior to and during each professional experience with respect to placement, supervision, assessment, feedback and regular reporting;

- 6.6 advice on the expectations for the pre-service teachers to have appropriate class allocation, negotiated to ensure opportunities to teach all subject methods through one-to-one, small group and whole class instruction;
- 6.7 advice that the teacher education institution expects the pre-service teachers to take advantage of every opportunity to engage in the full life of the school, such as student sport, playground supervision, faculty/grade/stage meetings and whole-school activities and functions, as required;
- 6.8 details of the structure and key elements of an internship, where one is provided, including guidelines for the transition of students from being directly-supervised to not having direct in-class supervision, linked to a pre-service teacher's expanding knowledge and including a well-defined assessment process at the point of the transition. In addition, confirmation of the signing of formal agreements with relevant parties on the structure and scope of the internship, where these are required, should be provided in program documentation;
- 6.9 sample copies of the professional experience reports used to assess pre-service teachers. All professional experience reports must be based on or reflect the Graduate Teacher Standards (but may also include other institution-specific criteria) and should reflect a developmental approach to the assessment of the pre-service teacher's skills and knowledge. The final professional experience report should reflect the requirement that pre-service teachers have demonstrated all of the relevant Graduate Teacher Standards; and
- 6.10 an explanation of the process for providing feedback and support to the pre-service teacher, particularly when a pre-service teacher is at risk of being deemed unsatisfactory.

7. MINIMUM PROVISION OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The structure of a professional experience program should ensure that pre-service teachers have valid opportunities to observe good teaching practice and to develop and refine their own teaching approaches, knowledge and skills. A professional experience program should be based on providing experience in a variety of settings and access to a diversity of students. This should include at least two schools.

The minimum total number of days of professional experience set by the Institute for approval of initial teacher education programs* is as follows:

- 45 days for a one year full time equivalent (FTE) graduate entry program
- 50 days for an 18 month FTE graduate entry program
- 60 days for a two year FTE graduate entry program, and
- 80 days for a four or five year FTE undergraduate program.

* See the explanatory notes below.

As described in Section 2 of this document, structured observations of good teaching practice and professional experience in settings other than schools may be included in a professional experience program and be counted towards the total number of days of professional experience within an initial teacher education program.

However, where the above minimum number of days of professional experience is provided:

- 90% or more of the days must be in schools with no more than 10% of the days being in educational settings other than schools (if applicable); and
- 80% or more of the days in schools must involve the pre-service teacher in the direct act of teaching a group or class of students with no more than 20% of the days being structured observation days only.

Note 1.

A four or five year combined or double degree program that provides approximately two years of discipline studies provided by a Faculty or School other than Education and two years of teacher education studies (eg a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching, or Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Education) where the program is a single award with a single exit-point, is viewed as the equivalent of a four or five year undergraduate program for the purposes of the minimum number of professional experience days.

Note 2.

Early childhood initial teacher education programs are required to provide no less than 50% of the minimum required days of professional experience, as outlined above, within a K-6 school setting. The balance of professional experience may be in a prior-to-school early childhood setting. Example: a four year early childhood degree that involves 110 days of professional experience would need to provide no less than 40 of these days in a K-6 school setting (that being 50% of 80 days).

Note 3.

An initial teacher education program that involves an articulation with an accredited VET program (eg TAFE or other RTO program) that results in an advanced standing arrangement of no less than 2 years into a four year undergraduate program and that leads to graduates being eligible for a four year degree award, is viewed as the equivalent of a two year graduate entry program for the purposes of the minimum number of professional experience days.

Where a teacher education institution develops an initial teacher education program that involves an innovative and alternative model of professional experience in order to address a particular teacher employer or curriculum need, and that professional experience program does **not** comply with the above Minimum Provision of Professional Experience, the institution is required to provide advice to the Institute on how it views that the intent of the requirements is still achieved.

This advice will be considered by the Institute's Initial Teacher Education Committee (ITEC) in respect to whether this innovative and alternate model of professional experience will still lead to high quality teacher education graduates.

8. COMPLIANCE WITH CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

The initial teacher education program documentation should confirm compliance with the procedures for the completion by pre-service teachers of appropriate pre-placement legal documentation.

This includes a *Prohibited Employment Declaration* prior to the first school experience and a *Consent to Employment Screening (Working with Children Check)* prior to an internship placement.