

Senator McKenzie has also placed the following written questions on notice, which should also reach the secretariat by **COB Thursday, 28 March 2013**:

- 1. Would you describe your engagement with schools as authentic, collaborative, useful and/or effective? Please provide reasons in your response.**

Master of Teaching Candidates undertake a school placement within the first weeks of the program. The 'Schools Program' provides continuous experience two days per week with a shared time allocation between teaching/classroom tasks and the practicum seminar/academic tasks. This is followed by a period of sustained professional practice during a two or three week placement block. Candidates find the timing and frequency of practicum placements one of the best aspects of the course, in particular citing strong agreement with aspects such as, "consistent hands on experience in placements, right from the beginning of the course" and "trying varied schools in your placement...connections with particular teachers... sharing ideas and experiences" as well as valuing the "amount of contact hours in preparation to move into full time teaching".

Survey data indicates the authentic and effective nature of the Master of Teaching university/school collaboration with responses such as "the placement and university linked in together, what you learn you put into action straight away" and "What I was doing in the classroom was quite closely linked to the course so they ran side by side."

Professional partnerships have been forged with groups of neighbourhood schools and centres, incorporating 8-10 institutions. Institutions within each group typically provide placements for 3-8 Teacher Candidates with cohorts averaging 25-30 per partnership group. There is a designated base institution within each group and this is usually the venue for the practicum seminar. Exemplary teachers are drawn from the base to be appointed as 'Teaching Fellows', employed on a 0.5 basis to ensure the coherent and consistent delivery of the practicum. A major advantage to placement of Candidates is the contextual knowledge and capacity of the Teaching Fellow to recommend a suitable match between mentor teachers and Candidates. The Teaching Fellow works closely with the 'Clinical Specialist', an academic teaching in the program and assigned to the partnership group to mentor candidates, monitor their in-school experience and deliver the practicum seminar. The program provides unprecedented support for Teacher Candidates with this reconceptualised supervisory construct. Teacher Candidate feedback is typified in independent survey responses indicating the best aspect of their course as, "the one on one feedback and support from clinical specialists and mentors, the teaching staff" and that the "teachers were approachable, helpful and highly skilled in their field of teaching".

In other school-based stakeholder surveys principals, mentor teachers, teaching fellows and clinical specialists agree that the school-university partnership is collaborative and highly effective with comments such as, "The liaison between the uni and the school is quite strong. This is much appreciated". The level of documentation and support from Clinical Specialists and Teaching Fellows to assist Student Teacher Coordinators and Mentors is evidenced in typical feedback, "As a coordinator I feel comfortable in accessing any information or having a discussion about a student when necessary". The benefits of an extended placement are recognised in that there are greater "opportunities for developing the understanding of the range of relationships - parents, leadership teams, team leaders - and exposure to how these work within schools". Similarly, "Students are able to attend the schools/levels planning day so they can see the thinking and planning that takes place helps them to see the big picture".

Knowledge transfer within the partnership model is reciprocal as Clinical Specialists work closely with schools and centres to deliver program specific professional development and schools provide access to current practice and contexts for academic staff. A number of teaching fellows and mentor

teachers have enrolled in the newly introduced 'Special Certificate in Clinical Teaching' to increase their understanding and improve mentoring practice with the added advantage of credit points towards a Master of Education.

2. Please also describe your engagement with regional schools.

In the final semester of the MTeach program Candidates may elect to participate in a rural placement experience. Candidates follow a negotiated two day placement schedule for travel to rural settings interlaced with coursework as well as a block placement experience. Candidates engage with clusters of rural schools of varying size and year levels, targeting specific curriculum areas as identified by the school/university partners. Candidates experience a range of professional and social activities and participate as members of the rural community. Candidate opinion is illustrated in feedback such as, "It has completely changed my view of what education looks like in general as I had only been in city schools. There is a real family feel and freedom in rural schools, which you don't see too often. I would like to create this in my classroom".

Opportunities for Candidates to undertake placements in rural or remote Australian contexts and also to participate in internships in international settings were presented in the elective subjects in 2012. In Education, People and Place and also the 'Negotiated Project' internship elective Teacher Candidates have experienced learning and teaching in the Arnhem and Anagnu Lands, Thailand, India, China and Japan. The internship option requires Teacher Candidates to work with teachers and students at a school in Asia. They participate in excursions to local sites of educational significance and develop and implement a co-curricular activity. Additionally, the students work as a group on a joint research project negotiated prior to travelling. The design of the project incorporates personal interests and priorities of the school. In this way, the internship is based on a principle of reciprocity benefitting both the students at the MGSE and the school in Asia. Responses from Teacher Candidates during reviews of the global teaching opportunities offered by the Master of Teaching program are collectively exemplified as, "The opportunity to teach in another country, in an unfamiliar cultural context, and with challenges presented by language differences, has boosted my confidence in my teaching ability and made me appreciate the variety of roles schools can play in society".

3. What action are you taking to ensure that primary and secondary teachers have literacy and numeracy skills that meet with community and employer expectations?

The Master of Teaching (Early Childhood/Early Years, and Primary Streams) is designed to equip Teacher Candidates to be teachers of literacy and numeracy. In both streams, Teacher Candidates undertake specialist subjects to ensure that they are able to teach literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. It is worth noting that In the Master of Teaching (Primary) graduates are prepared to teach across the primary years in all curriculum areas, but are given additional specialist knowledge in literacy and numeracy education.

In the first semester of the MTeach Secondary stream course, particular attention is paid to literacy and numeracy across the curriculum; literacy is addressed in the core subject Language and Teaching, and like subject specific numeracy, is also addressed in the first semester Learning Area subjects. For example, in Business Studies 1 (EDUC90431) Teacher Candidates' disciplinary knowledge and skills are widened by an understanding of the role that "literacy, numeracy and language play within business related subjects" and in Drama 1 (EDUC90435) "literacy and numeracy learning through drama pedagogy is explored", through "the investigation of multi-modal texts and the manipulation of space, time and form".

In addition to this, all streams in the Master of Teaching, Teacher Candidates are supported to build on their personal literacy and numeracy skills as graduate students. Staff in the Master of Teaching works closely with an Education Academic Skills Adviser to support our Teacher Candidates' literacy skills through a suite of targeted strategies including an academic skills orientation workshop; a diagnostic review of a sample of all Teacher Candidate's' writing to identify those who may benefit from further support; and the delivery of targeted workshops available to students in all streams.

Additionally, MGSE is developing a teacher selection tool -Teacher Selector – under the terms of contract with DEWR as part of the Teach Next initiative. This has been trialled with the DEECD and with MGSE candidates in 2013. This tool is meant to augment ATAR and GPA entry requirements as is based on known predictors of teacher success. The instrument contains items for literacy and numeracy and it is intended to strengthen these components in 2014, in part to address the AITSL program standard that teacher candidates be drawn from the top 30% of the Australian population in respect of literacy and numeracy (see 5 below).

4. Please respond to the Productivity Commission's conclusion that extending the pre-teacher training program to two years should not be mandated, especially given the costs, uncertain benefits, and the impact on supply. [Cited in AMSI, Submission 11, p. 13]

Most teachers in Australia are still four year trained in BEd degrees. An increasing proportion are however graduate trained. Two year programs have approximately half the cost of four year programs (although graduates of two year programs will have usually completed five years tertiary study overall). With the requirements increasingly mandated by AITSL, ATRA members, employers and the respective curricula, it has become increasingly difficult if not impossible to 'squeeze' all this into one year of training. However extending a program to two years, whilst easing the pressure, does not in itself guarantee a higher standard of preparation. This is why it is necessary to measure the impact of each individual program. MGSE is strongly in favour of both graduate entry to teaching and that this needs to comprise two years of masters level – rather than bachelor level - study.

Data from graduate and alumni surveys and course evaluations clearly indicate a much higher level of perceived efficacy of the Master of Teaching at MGSE over our previous and other programs.

A survey of MGSE alumni in 2012 found that over 70% of MGSE teaching graduates had completed the Master of Teaching, with 80% of those who exited with the Post Grad Dip (18 months equivalent study) intending to complete their Masters. Clearly, MGSE teacher candidates see the need for more than 12 months equivalent training. Despite the fact that some universities still offer one year graduate programs, MGSE has had no problem attracting high quality candidates – the number of first preferences has risen every year since the introduction of the degree in 2008 – to fill all places available, with the Grade Point Average needed to be accepted now at around distinction level across all three streams of early childhood, primary and secondary.

5. The committee heard from the previous witness that mathematics is not required as a pre-requisite for many primary teaching courses, even though most primary school teachers will teach mathematics. Can you comment on whether you believe that senior high school mathematics should be a pre-requisite subject? [AMSI, Submission 11, p. 14]

It is true that in some jurisdictions the completion of a year 12 course in mathematics is required for entry to primary teaching. This is not the case in Victoria. Primary teachers need to be competent, confident teachers of maths/numeracy because research shows the importance of a strong foundation in primary mathematics and a positive attitude towards maths, for success in secondary mathematics. It is for this reason that MGSE is increasing the numeracy component in its Teacher Selector Instrument developed for DEEWR as part of the Teach Next program. We are also exploring

the notion of a primary teaching specialisation in maths (and science) to enable candidates with a suitable background of knowledge to undergo greater depth of study to enable them to work alongside generalist primary teachers.

The current AITSL requirement that all teacher candidates be drawn from the 'top 30% of the population' in numeracy and literacy, either on entry to, or exit from teacher education programs, is too vague and open to interpretation to be useful.

In respect of making mathematics compulsory, this too is vague. What maths courses are acceptable, and what level of achievement is necessary within these courses, needs consideration before a blanket requirement is introduced. Perhaps the introduction of a clearer national curriculum in Years 11-12 maths will assist but at present, there is wide variation across the various jurisdictions in what constitutes senior secondary mathematics.

6. How much of an impact do infrastructure deficiencies have on the ability of teachers to teach? Can you provide any examples?

In terms of general facilities and education resources there is enormous variation from school to school and system to system across Australia. Resources in themselves do not guarantee greater educational outcomes but they certainly assist teachers to improve their performance. In the area of ICT the disparity is perhaps even greater despite the digital educational revolution rollouts of laptops in some years of schooling. In some well-resourced schools it is now commonplace for students to have access to an iPad or similar whilst in other schools the level of technology available is minimal. Many teachers also work in demountable or temporary classrooms where extremes of weather are experienced.

There is also no doubt that both students and teachers react positively to a more favourable physical working environment and that this contributes to an overall positive school culture. Work needs to be done to level out some of the disparities in resourcing that are currently experienced across the educational sector. The Gonski review outcomes will be of importance here.

Quantifying the impact of infrastructure deficiencies on the ability of teachers to teach is difficult. However, it is clear that there is an impact. Some of the areas which do impact, and which could perhaps be improved include:

- resourcing for ancillary staff who support teachers, such as psychologists, IT support
- decentralization of some specialist staff and services to the classroom, such as librarians and libraries
- building management and maintenance, such as air conditioning
- planning for professional learning, including time allocation related to capacity for teachers to implement new learning
- availability of resources for teaching and learning, especially in respect of the roll-out of the national curriculum.

7. In your submission you have discussed the importance of measuring student growth – specifically, that each student should gain a year's growth for a year's input. How can this be measured? Could NAPLAN be adjusted to measure this? Surely teachers should be equipped to measure this at the end of the school year? [Submission 20, p. 4]

Yes, NAPLAN currently has value-added measures of growth and there are plans to provide further information on growth. The Visible Learning work (based on 250+m students) has identified the average effect-size for growth ($d=.40$) and an analysis of NAPLAN shows that the average growth per

year across Australia is also exactly $d=.40$. Thus, it is possible to know what a year's growth for a year's input looks like – more detail and reports relating to this concept are very much needed. NAPLAN has limitations (i.e., only Years 3,5,7,9; held in May; not tied to curriculum areas/subjects, especially in secondary) and needs augmentation with other measures.

Yes, teachers can be and indeed need to be equipped to measure this growth – augmented with national comparisons to ensure there is a common understanding about progress across the nation. We cannot afford for different teachers, different schools to make differential decisions – there must be common conception about what progress means in various curricula domains.

The committee has also placed the following written question on notice, which should reach the secretariat by **COB Thursday, 28 March 2013**:

- 8. The committee has heard that a large proportion of teachers in their first years of teaching work as casuals or on fixed-term contracts. One cause of this was said to be the need to hold positions for those on maternity or other leave. Do you consider this to be the predominant cause of the widespread use of casuals and contracts? Are there other causes that you can elaborate on?**

MGSE data from the 2012 alumni survey showed that around 78% of our graduates are currently teaching. Of those, 66% were teaching full time, 20% were on contract and 10% were employed as casual teachers. Over 72% are teaching in state schools, 17% in independent schools and 11% in Catholic schools. However other universities and authorities report that 30-40% of beginning teachers in Victorian schools – especially state schools – are on some form of fixed contract, with a similar proportion working as casual teachers, another example of the variation that occurs between universities.

Anecdotally, the need to hold positions open for those on some form of leave – for up to seven years in some cases – seems to be a cause of this situation. However other causes are the over-supply of teachers in some areas such as primary and secondary humanities, and the fact that beginning teachers are 'cheaper', often more mobile, trying to become established, and thus their use enables principals a degree of flexibility in staffing their schools. It should be noted however, that the relative proportion of beginning teachers on contract varies widely according to custom in the various jurisdictions. The situation in Victorian government schools appears to have been exacerbated by a decision of the then Kennett government to put more beginning teachers on contracts. It should also be noted that teaching casually and on contract is an acknowledged way for principals to 'try before they buy' and that many teachers seem to obtain a full time position via this route.

Reference

McLean Davies, L.; Anderson, M.; Deans, J.; Dinham, S.; Griffin, P.; Kameniar, B.; Page, J.; Reid, C.; Rickards, F.; Tayler, C. and Tyler, D. (2013). 'Masterly Preparation: Clinical practice in a graduate pre-service teacher education program', *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 39(1), pp. 93-106.