

NSW Supplementary Documentation: Professional Experience in Initial Teacher Education

Please note that this 2017 edited version of the policy reflects the establishment of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), the recently revised *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (December 2015), the *Framework for High-Quality Professional Experience in NSW Schools* and incorporates related policies on overseas professional experience and minimum professional experience requirements for conditionally accredited teachers who are completing a NESA-approved program.

Introduction

This policy document describes the minimum expectations of the professional experience component of an initial teacher education program for the purposes of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) 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 NESA 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:

- Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in NSW: Policy and Procedures (October 2014)
- *A Framework for High-Quality Professional Experience in NSW Schools* (June 2014)
- Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures (December 2015)
- NSW Supplementary Documentation: Australian Graduate Teacher Standard Descriptor 2.1.1 (Subject Content Knowledge)(January 2013)
- NSW Supplementary Documentation: Elaborations in Priority Areas (October 2014)

Defining professional experience

Professional experience

The NESA *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 professional experience internship (a final placement involving program supervision rather than in-class supervision), in a school or other setting for educational purposes’.

NESA 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 teacher education student 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 trialing 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.

Professional Experience Internship

A professional experience internship is usually the final professional experience in an initial teacher education program and provides a significant period of teaching practice where the teacher education student is provided with program supervision rather than direct in-class supervision by the classroom teacher. Professional experience internships are usually covered by signed formal agreements with relevant parties on the structure and scope of the internship.

A professional experience day

NESA does not strictly quantify a day of professional experience but assumes that in terms of meeting the minimum provision of professional experience (see *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.

The role of professional experience

A well-structured professional experience program is a vital component of all initial teacher education programs. Professional experience enables teacher education students 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 teacher education students 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.

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 two year Master of Teaching, 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 teacher education students 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 teacher education students 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.

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, teacher education students 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 NESA 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 (see below), students, students with English as an additional language or dialect, 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 WHS; and
- knowledge of appropriate professional and ethical conduct.

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:

- the objectives or intended outcomes and content of the overall professional experience program;
- a description of how the professional experience program is integrated within the total initial teacher education program and how teacher education students are prepared through general teacher education units, curriculum studies units and teaching method units for each of the professional experiences;
- 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;
- advice on how the professional experience program has been negotiated by the teacher education institution in partnership with schools and other educational settings;
- a description of the roles and responsibilities of key people in the professional experience program, including the teacher education student, 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;
- advice on the expectations for the teacher education students to have appropriate class allocation, negotiated to ensure opportunities to teach all subject methods through one-to-one, small group and whole class instruction;
- advice that the teacher education institution expects the teacher education students 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;
- details of the structure and key elements of a professional experience internship, where

one is provided, including guidelines for the transition of students from being directly-supervised to program supervision, linked to a teacher education student's expanding knowledge and including a well-defined assessment process at the point of the transition. This will include the completion of a professional experience report template at a point when the teacher education student reaches the threshold point of 75% of the minimum required number of professional experience days (ie 60 of 80 or 45 of 60). In addition, confirmation of the signing of formal agreements with relevant parties on the structure and scope of the professional experience internship, where these are required, should be provided in program documentation;

- sample copies of the professional experience reports used to assess teacher education students. 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 teacher education student's skills and knowledge. The final professional experience report should reflect the requirement that teacher education students have demonstrated all of the relevant Graduate Teacher Standards; and
- an explanation of the process for providing feedback and support to the teacher education student, particularly when a teacher education student is at risk of being deemed unsatisfactory.

Minimum provision of professional experience

The structure of a professional experience program should ensure that teacher education students 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 NESAs for approval of initial teacher education programs (see the explanatory notes below) is as follows:

- - 60 days for a two year FTE graduate entry program, and
- - 80 days for a four or five year FTE undergraduate program.

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 teacher education student 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 and primary 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 NESAs on how it views that the intent of the requirements is still achieved.

This advice will be considered by the NESAs 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.

Compliance with child protection requirements

The initial teacher education program documentation should confirm compliance with the procedures for the completion by teacher education students of appropriate pre-placement legal documentation complying with the requirements of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012*.

Appendix A – Overseas Professional Experience in Initial Teacher Education Programs

National Program Standard 5.2 states:

The professional experience components of programs are relevant to a classroom environment, and:

- a) include no fewer than 80 days in undergraduate and double-degree teacher education programs and no fewer than 60 days in graduate-entry programs*
- b) consist of supervised and assessed teaching practice undertaken over a substantial and sustained period that is mostly in Australia and mostly in a recognised school setting*

Teacher education students can choose to participate in professional experience placements in educational settings in other countries. It is acknowledged that a professional experience placement in a school overseas can provide a significant professional learning opportunity. These overseas placements can provide cross-cultural understandings, knowledge of a different teaching contexts and exposure to the cultural diversity of school students and how they learn.

There are three potential categories of overseas professional experience:

1. Teacher education students travelling overseas, who wish to complete a placement in a school in another country;
2. Online teacher education students living overseas who are required to meet professional experience requirements of the NESAs accredited program;
3. Teacher education students who are participating in a university endorsed and supported overseas professional experience placement.

Where a provider is willing to support a student undertaking a placement overseas and have it counted towards the minimum professional experience requirements for program accreditation (ie 80 days in an undergraduate program or 60 days in a graduate entry program), the following guiding principles are to apply:

- An overseas placement can count towards the minimum required professional experience days but cannot be the final professional experience placement in a program as the final placement **must** be in an Australian school.
- The overseas placement will be part of a well-structured, well-designed professional experience program and is more likely should occur in the early stages of an initial teacher education program.
- At least 50 percent of the minimum professional experience requirements for program accreditation must be in an Australian school setting, including the final professional experience placement.
- The NESAs *Framework for High Quality Professional Experience in Schools* and the *Professional Experience – Common Report Template* contained in it, will provide the basis of assessment in the overseas professional experience placement.
- Supervising teachers in the overseas placement will be trained in the assessment of teacher education students completing professional experience.

Providers may support students undertaking an overseas professional experience placement that does not address the above guiding principles, but where this occurs, the placement can count for no more than 10% of the minimum professional experience requirements in the initial teacher education program, which is consistent with the professional experience policy provision of up to 10% of the minimum professional experience days in educational settings other than schools.

Appendix B – Minimum professional experience requirements for conditionally accredited teachers undertaking approved programs

A conditionally accredited teacher, undertaking a NESA-approved initial teacher education program may apply for advanced standing/recognised prior learning/exemption for prior or current teaching experience for a component of the program's professional experience requirements.

A teacher's current employment in a NSW school may represent one or more of the scheduled professional experience placements, other than the final placement. In this case, providers and schools/employers should collaboratively develop sensible, localised arrangements for the rigorous supervision, support and assessment of the teachers with a focus on ensuring their appropriate development.

Such arrangements might include negotiation of reduced teaching load, regular meetings for support, and visits to other schools to broaden experience. This would require a different level of responsibility being taken by providers akin to establishing a partnership approach with schools for the ongoing development of the Conditionally Accredited teacher through the final stages of their teacher education program.

Where an initial teacher education provider is supportive of granting a teacher education student advanced standing/ recognised prior learning/exemption for a component of the program's current professional experience requirements, on the basis of the student's prior or current teaching employment in a NSW school, a minimum of a **three week block (15 days) of professional experience** still needs to be undertaken.

This minimum three week block would represent the normal final professional experience placement where the teacher education student would be required to demonstrate the full range of Graduate Teacher Standards.

For teacher education students currently employed at a particular school, this professional experience placement needs to be **in a different school to the one they are currently employed at** and this may necessitate the teachers taking leave or not-making themselves available to teach in order to fulfil these requirements.

Providers retain the prerogative to require some applicants to undertake more than the above minimum requirements if they view this is in the best interests of the student.

A waiver of the above minimum professional experience requirements may be granted by NESA in relation to innovative program models that are strategic in nature and/or designed to address systemic, high priority teacher workforce needs and that involve, for example, employment-based arrangements or innovative approaches to professional experience.

Associated guidelines for providers

- Providers are able to grant advanced standing/recognised prior learning/exemption for one or more professional experience placements and should establish their own

procedures based on these minimum requirements.

- Procedures developed by providers should consider the amount of teaching employment undertaken, the breadth of employment across a number of schools and the types of schools, and the teacher's previous or current teaching role and position level.
- Providers are able to grant full advanced standing/recognised prior learning/exemption for some of the professional experience placements in a program but, for graduates of the program to be provisionally accredited at **least the final professional experience placement** (and the above minimum three week block therein) needs to be undertaken.
- Where providers are viewing the teacher's current employment in a NSW school as representing one or more of the scheduled professional experience placements in a program, other than the final placement, providers should establish with the school sensible, localised arrangements for the rigorous supervision, support and assessment of the teachers.