

Subject Content Knowledge Requirements for Primary Teaching Specialisations

(Policy Framework)

Purpose

The establishment of voluntary specialisations within primary initial teacher education programs is designed to support strengthened discipline knowledge and pedagogy in targeted learning areas and raise the profile of these learning areas. Specialisations enable teacher education students who have an enthusiasm for and expertise in a particular learning area to undertake a more extensive preparation in that area.

Specialisations create groups of primary teachers who are recognised as having stronger discipline and pedagogical knowledge in particular learning areas and who are agents for enriched teaching practices in schools. These teachers may instil in primary school students a greater confidence, expertise and enthusiasm in the targeted learning areas, which would continue through Years 7-10, leading to more of these students choosing these learning areas in the senior years.

Specialisations are being initially introduced in learning areas of strategic importance.

Structure of a specialisation

Primary teaching specialisations rely on the provision of units of study that are in addition to that already required for program accreditation. Programs with a more extensive set of units devoted to a particular learning area enable the teacher education provider to offer a deeper, more comprehensive preparation in the learning area. This allows teacher education students to more fully engage with, internalise and apply the knowledge in various contexts.

The requirement for a specialisation recognised by the NESA is:

- a total of at least **six units** (0.75 EFTSL) of discipline and/or discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies in an undergraduate program; or
- at least **three units** (0.375 EFTSL) of discipline and/or discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies in a graduate entry program building on at least four units (0.5 EFTSL) of discipline in the underlying bachelor degree.

Other quality strategies

The provision of specialisations could be supported by one or more of the following strategies:

- careful selection of candidates prior to and at key points during the specialisation, focussing on both academic and personal attributes including enthusiasm for the learning area. Academic attributes for undergraduate programs may include specific HSC achievement. Academic attributes for graduate entry programs may include specific content and grades (eg Grade Point Average) of the discipline units completed in the bachelor degree;
- mentor support for selected candidates including tailored assistance to gain competence in challenging discipline content;
- targeted allocation of schools for professional experience, through formal arrangements between the provider and the school/employing authority, based on the school's prior-arranged supervision and mentoring by supportive, accomplished teachers in the subject areas; and
- providing access to the support of professional teacher associations, other professional learning providers and educational researchers.

Requirements for a Mathematics Specialisation

Approved by the Minister for Education, September 2015

Currently, all nationally accredited initial teacher education programs provide at least two units of the study of **mathematics** discipline or discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies. Many undergraduate programs provide more than two units of mathematics/numeracy study.

The full suite of units offered in a **specialisation in mathematics** should:

- reflect the careful and deliberate scaffolding of mathematics discipline studies and mathematics discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies;
- equip teacher education graduates with a deep understanding of the processes specific to mathematics and relevant, emerging technologies and practices;
- support teacher education graduates to be stimulated by and gain confidence in the complex aspects of mathematics;
- develop comprehensive discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical knowledge relevant to the NSW K–6 syllabus and competence in using effective pedagogies across all stages of primary schooling focussing on:
 - the breadth, depth and sequence of learning in mathematics;
 - excellent programming skills based on a sound understanding of providing the necessary mathematical foundations for a diverse range of learners, as well as effective student assessment and diagnostic practices;
 - a comprehensive integration of ICTs and digital technologies; and
 - skills in supporting cross-curriculum integration of numeracy.
- equip graduate teachers to be competent and confident users of a range of effective teaching approaches that foster school student inquiry, innovative thinking and student confidence in conducting investigations and solving mathematical problems.

Requirements for a Science and Technology Specialisation

Approved by the Minister for Education, September 2015

Currently, all initial teacher education programs are required to include at least one unit of study in the study of science and technology discipline units or discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies. Many programs provide more than one unit of science and technology study.

The full suite of units offered in a specialisation in science and technology should:

- reflect the careful and deliberate scaffolding of science and technology discipline studies and discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies;
- equip teacher education graduates with a deep understanding of the processes specific to science and technology and relevant, emerging technologies and practices;
- support teacher education graduates to be stimulated by and gain confidence in the complex aspects of science and technology;
- develop comprehensive discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical knowledge relevant to the NSW K–6 syllabus and competence in using effective pedagogies across all stages of primary schooling focussing on:
 - the breadth, depth and sequence of learning in science and technology;
 - excellent programming skills based on a sound understanding of providing the necessary scientific and technological foundations for a diverse range of learners, as well as effective student assessment and diagnostic practices; and
 - a comprehensive integration of ICTs and digital technologies;
- equip graduate teachers to be competent and confident users of a range of effective teaching approaches that foster school student inquiry, innovative thinking and confidence in conducting investigations and solving scientific and technological problems.

Requirements for an English Specialisation

Approved by the Minister for Education, July 2019

Currently, all nationally accredited initial teacher education programs are required to provide at least two units of the study of **English/Literacy** discipline and discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies. Many undergraduate programs provide more than two units of this study.

In addition to preparing graduates in terms of the discipline, curriculum and pedagogical studies of the *Subject Content Knowledge Requirements* in English, a NESA-recognised **specialisation in English** should:

- provide comprehensive English discipline and curriculum knowledge based on the *NSW English K-6 Syllabus* and its focus on speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing across all stages of primary schooling with an emphasis on:
 - flexible and effective programming which reflects the breadth, depth and recursive nature of learning in English
 - effective student assessment and diagnostic practices embedded in teaching and learning
 - expanded knowledge and understanding of reading acquisition and development and a range of evidence-based models for reading instruction including, but not limited to, approaches to develop reading for a range of purposes, fluency, text comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, phonemic awareness and phonics
 - expanded knowledge and understanding of writing acquisition and development and a range of evidence-based models for the explicit and systematic teaching of writing including, but not limited to, approaches to develop writing for a range of purposes and texts, the processes of writing, handwriting, grammar, spelling and punctuation
 - the use of digital technologies as teaching and learning tools.
- provide initial teacher education students with an expanded knowledge and understanding of literary and non-literary texts, multimodal communication and metalanguage appropriate to English teaching
- equip graduates for teaching English to a diverse range of learners through developing:
 - a deep knowledge of how cultural and linguistic diversity and students' first language development impact on student learning
 - a strong understanding of the complexity of English learning and
 - the skills required to cater for individual learning needs.
- provide opportunities to develop a deeper preparation in the pedagogy of cross-curriculum integration of English and literacy skills
- provide a focus on how the teaching and learning of English is influenced by current research and emerging trends
- provide opportunities for teacher education students to develop and demonstrate their own effective teaching practice in English through professional experience placements.

Requirements for a Language Specialisation

Approved by the Minister for Education, July 2016

A primary language specialisation should not diminish the existing preparation of primary graduates to effectively teach across the primary key learning areas. These graduates are first and foremost primary teachers, whose proficiency in a language and skills in teaching that language provides an opportunity for primary school students to learn that language through both dedicated and integrated language learning opportunities.

Essential components

Undergraduate programs

A language specialisation in an undergraduate primary initial teacher education program should include at least **six units**¹ (0.75 EFTSL) of study of a languageⁱ comprising:

- at least **four units** of post-introductory level language discipline study;
- at least **one unit** of general languages curriculum and pedagogical studies;
- at least **one unit** of language-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies; and
- a school-based professional experience placementⁱⁱ

(The unit of general languages curriculum and pedagogical studies and unit of language-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies can be addressed through integrated studies.)

Graduate entry programs

A language specialisation in a graduate entry primary initial teacher education program should include at least three units (0.375 EFTSL) of study of a language comprising:

- at least **one unit** of general languages curriculum and pedagogical studies;
- at least **one unit** of language-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies; and
- a school-based professional experience placement (can count as one unit).

(The unit of general languages curriculum and pedagogical studies and unit of language-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies can be addressed through integrated studies.)

The basic entry requirement would be a recognised bachelor degree and any relevant postgraduate study which contains at least **four units** of post-introductory level language discipline study.

Combination of qualifications

The requirements of a language specialisation can be met through a separate qualification (eg Diploma of Languages) that includes the essential components of a specialisation above.

The separate qualification can be undertaken prior to, concurrently with, or after completing the teacher education qualification. The essential components above can be addressed solely in the separate qualification or through the combination of programs.

¹ While the minimum duration of an undergraduate program is 4 years (4.0 EFTSL) and a graduate entry program is two year (2.0 EFTSL) it may be necessary to extend the duration of a program to accommodate the required units for a specialisation. Alternatively, the actual number of units devoted to a specialisation in a language could be reduced where admission requirements are based on applicants possessing specific prior training, skills and experience in the language concerned, and where that language expertise is demonstrated through a NESA-approved language proficiency assessment.

Accommodating prior training, skills and expertise

Many applicants for a language specialisation possess specific prior training, skills and expertise including specific achievement in the language at the HSC, prior university or TAFE/VET study and/or in-country or background-speaking experience.

This can be formally acknowledged by providers in their design of language specialisations, by setting specific prior training, skills and expertise requirements for admission that are in lieu of some or all of the four units of post-introductory level language discipline study generally required. This has the effect of reducing the number of units to be devoted to the specialisation.

Providers would need to confirm that the specific prior training, skills and expertise that an applicant possesses has led to a level of language proficiency comparable to that obtained by completing four units of post-introductory level language discipline study. This would be through providers directing these applicants to demonstrate their language proficiency through an appropriate language proficiency assessmentⁱⁱⁱ.

A specialisation can include one or more units of post-introductory level language discipline study to accommodate applicants who don't demonstrate the minimum required language proficiency.

ⁱ Primary language specialisations are provided in a range of priority languages identified by employing authorities. Further work will be undertaken to encompass Aboriginal languages and English as an Additional Language or Dialect within these requirements.

ⁱⁱ Opportunities for teacher education students to demonstrate their language-specific pedagogical knowledge and skills on professional experience are essential. Strategies must be adopted by the provider to ensure an appropriate and well supported placement. This should include the targeted allocation of teacher education students either to schools where existing arrangements are in place for learning of a specific language or to schools which are supportive and interested in developing such arrangements. If necessary, the provider should be prepared to offer mentoring and assessment of the teacher education students by tertiary supervisors.

ⁱⁱⁱ Language proficiency assessments designed or utilised by providers will need to be approved by NESAs.