

New South Wales Council of Deans of Education (NSWCDE)
Proposal for COVID-19 Professional Experience Provisions
6 April 2020 (Endorsed by NESAs)

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented challenge to ITE providers, regulatory authorities and employers. We will need to respond proactively to the implications for the preparation of teachers and the graduate workforce.

NSWCDE anticipates the pipeline of newly qualified teachers will be severely impacted for at least the coming six months due to the disruption of professional experience placements. Flow-on effects are likely to be felt for the next 1-2 years.

This paper outlines a broad framework which forms the basis for individual Initial Teacher Education providers to formulate specific continuity plans for their ITE programs.

The aim of this framework is to:

- ensure the pipeline of new graduates for employers;
- ensure that employers who work with Pre-service Teachers (PSTs) are afforded opportunity to develop placement provisions that acknowledge the current circumstances and allow PSTs to 'add value' to their core work of supporting the learning of children and young people in their care;
- ensure that PSTs completing their qualifications have access to high quality placements in a timely fashion and in a way that is equitable for all students;
- ensure that the core principles for high quality professional experience placements are upheld in any modifications that are made to programs.

Core Principles

The framework being proposed is underpinned by a number of key principles.

1. We affirm the importance of professional experience placements in schools and early learning centres as central activity of any initial teacher education program;
2. We affirm the value of a well-structured professional experience programs that
 - a. Provide sustained engagement over time to allow PSTs to demonstrate they can meet and maintain the standards;
 - b. Involve a number of different experiences that provide developmental opportunities for PSTs to develop, consolidate and demonstrate their knowledge, skills and capabilities in readiness to transition to Graduate Teacher status in the profession
 - c. Provide a culminating experience which allows PSTs to demonstrate their readiness to transition to Graduate Teacher status in the profession in the form of a Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) that is integrated to the Initial Teacher Education Program;
3. We affirm the value of professional experience in education settings other than classrooms in schools and early learning centres for the contribution they can afford to the development of the knowledge, skills and capabilities of Graduate Teachers;
4. We affirm the value of work-integrated learning opportunities such as internships and paid employment of PSTs as part of a Professional Experience Program.

Professional Experience 2020

Our immediate priority for revised professional experience provisions for final year PSTs who are expecting to graduate in 2020.

With conditional accreditation available for students in their final year in NSW, it is already permissible for students to be employed while finalising their degree requirements. One way of enhancing the pathway of PSTs to graduation is to integrate this employment into professional experience programs. This approach would enable Pre-service teachers to complete degree requirements while working as a teacher. However, the current 'conflict of interest' rule means that placements cannot occur in a PST's place of employment.

Proposed Temporary Provisions for discussion with NESAs, ACECQA, the NSWDoE and the Catholic and Independent Sectors

1. For the cohort completing their final placement in 2020
Professional experience guidelines be adjusted to permit PSTs to undertake their placements and TPA in schools/centres in which they work with conditional accreditation. The TPA can be undertaken in a place of work given that it is a valid and reliable instrument that is marked independently by universities rather than by school personnel thereby mitigating conflict of interest risks. In addition, up to 50% of final placement days be permitted under the alternative schooling arrangements in response to COVID-19 (eg. online learning, learning from home). This provision would enable PSTs to both support schools and develop new capacities in alternative learning environments. Appropriate activities include redesigning programs and assessments, creating new digital resources and supporting activities, providing differentiation and individualised support, and communicating with parents and the school community.
2. For cohorts completing earlier placements in 2020
At least 25% of placement days during a program (excluding the final placement) be permitted in alternative schooling arrangements or other new contexts introduced post-pandemic (eg. intensive catch-up classes, additional personalised student support). This provision should be ongoing as needed to prevent a backlog of placement requirements for PSTs in earlier years of their program.
3. ITE providers will develop revised program continuity plans specific to their contexts and submit them for approval to regulatory authorities. These will include restructured professional experience programs and revisions to specific subjects (including possible restructuring of programs to accommodate changes). All changes will also be subject to institutional approval processes as required for each provider.

In order to enact these provisions, we require a collaborative agreement between NESAs, ACECQA and all major employers. A communications program detailing the implementation of temporary provisions will need to be developed by regulatory authorities and employers to schools, centres and individual teachers.

The temporary provisions will be reviewed by stakeholder representatives at least quarterly or as necessary on the basis of major developments in the pandemic.

Addendum to Proposal for COVID-19 Professional Experience Provisions
27 April 2020

Professional experience placements will be adapted for the blend of face-to-face and alternative schooling arrangements (eg. online learning, learning from home), and adhere to the following principles:

1. ITE providers will observe existing protocols when communicating with schools to seek confirmation of placements from schools/centres willing to accommodate students in 2020.
2. ITE providers will explain that placements will only be sought where there is capacity to provide supervision and mentoring to avoid unnecessary additional burden on schools/centres.
3. ITE providers will support PSTs with resources for online and remote learning in preparation for these placements.
4. All existing protocols to ensure the protection of children and data will be maintained. PSTs will attend placements on school premises where ITE provider arrangements permit and where schools/centres can accommodate attendance. Otherwise, PSTs will work remotely, connecting virtually with mentor teachers and teaching teams, and undertaking suitable activities with support and supervision from teachers, learning support assistants and parents.
5. ITE providers will provide support for placements to be flexibly tailored to the situation and needs of each school/centre. A specific plan will be developed at the commencements of each placement and be agreed in writing, subject to review and adjustment as needed (for example, the temporary closure of a school, the need for self-isolation, the full resumption of face to face classes).
6. ITE providers will make provisions for enhanced communication between the ITE provider and the school/centre.
7. PSTs will engage in the work teachers are doing in their placement school/centre. This includes undertaking planning as they would when teaching an exclusively 'face-to-face' class, but with appropriate adaptations made for delivery and assessment. Consistent with existing practice, they will be mentored by an experienced mentor teacher, and supported by the in-school coordinator and tertiary supervisor.
8. PSTs will observe the policies and procedures in their workplace as usual. This includes all new provisions in place for Covid-19 such as hand hygiene, social distancing and protocols for online/remote learning.
9. Assessment of the PSTs will continue to be through the final PEX report prepared by the mentor teacher and the TPA administered by the ITE provider as an independent assessment against the standards.

