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THE PROPOSED NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (ATRA) supports the establishment of a national system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education programs and is in broad agreement with the six principles on which the national accreditation system is based, the proposed national program standards and the proposed accreditation process.

The proposed national system reflects the work previously undertaken by ATRA towards the development of a national accreditation system.

However, there are a number of significant matters that need further consideration before the implementation of a national system:

Resourcing

In addition to the resources required for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to establish, review and maintain the national system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education programs, the proposed system potentially requires additional resourcing for jurisdictional regulatory authorities, higher education providers and school systems.

Currently there is a lack of clarity in terms of resourcing and where the resourcing responsibilities will lie.

Further consultation

As acknowledged by AITSL and anticipated by ATRA, before implementation can be achieved there is a need for considerable further work to be undertaken to clarify a number of aspects of the proposed national accreditation system and to develop support materials.

As major participators in the proposed process, ATRA members expect that AITSL will continue to consult and work collaboratively with ATRA to develop supplementary materials and to ensure that the national accreditation process is achievable, successful and has meaning.
ATRA also believes that a more detailed public paper should be developed along with draft supplementary documents for consideration and comment from all key stakeholders.

**Implementation timeline**

March 2011 is an ambitious timeline by which to develop national program standards and an agreed national process, negotiate transition arrangements and complete supplementary materials.

In light of the importance of developing a national system that is rigorous, consistent and acceptable to all key stakeholders, ATRA recommends that the timeline for implementation is extended to allow adequate opportunity for considered development and for key stakeholders to be consulted.

**Nomenclature**

ATRA embraces the development of a national system as an opportunity to develop consistent nomenclature across Australia, compatible with internationally accepted nomenclature.

Consistent nomenclature would also assist in the development of agreed definitions of terms commonly used in the accreditation process.

**Additional Issues**

**ATRA members collectively highlight the following matters:**

**Standard 1: Program outcomes**

- As identified in the Paper, there needs to be further work to capture the range of qualification equivalencies that enable alternative or flexible pathways into the teaching profession.

**Standard 3: Program entry requirements**

- Entry requirements and alternative (non-year 12) entry pathways must be transparent and equitable and the implications and processes must be clearly understood. In addition, there needs to be agreed consistency around any advanced standing that may be granted for alternative entry pathways.

- Clarity is needed regarding the practical applications of the English and Mathematics entry requirements in each jurisdiction. ATRA recommends more commissioned enquiry into the implications of the “top 70th percentile” in each jurisdiction, particularly with regard to restrictions this may place on entry to pre-service teacher education programs.

- Similarly there must be clarity and consistency in relation to alternative entry pathways, including the assessment processes used to establish comparable English and Mathematics achievement on graduation.

- Possible implications for graduate entry programs in requiring English and Mathematics standards for undergraduate programs need further consideration.
Standard 4: Program structure and content

- The required discipline studies must reflect the current nature of education provision in both school-based settings and other alternative education settings. Similarly, the requirements noted in this section should not limit future innovation and development in relation to the provision of education within Australia.

- As noted in the Paper, further work is required to consider the implications for
  - VET delivery within school-based settings,
  - early childhood settings.

- Guidelines and supporting materials will be required in relation to the requirements for professional experience. Requirements should allow for a range of valid structures and arrangements. There is also a need to consider current jurisdiction priorities and approaches: for example internships, links with induction programs, links to jurisdiction based recruitment programs and scholarship programs etc.

Standard 6: Program delivery and resourcing

- Guidelines and clarity about the qualifications and expertise required of staff delivering the programs and the requirement for contemporary school teaching experience need to be developed. This is important both for providers and accreditation panels.

The proposed national accreditation process

The roles and responsibilities of the local jurisdiction and AITSL in the process need to be more clearly articulated, particularly in jurisdictions that do not have a history of accreditation. Particular issues that have risen in discussion include:

- Support for providers when preparing submissions
- Support for providers in identifying how programs can be linked to the standards and how they can show the way courses build towards the standards.

The articulated appeal process and the validity of the outcome of such an appeal needs to be more fully explored, especially in relation to jurisdiction based legislation.

In recognition of the ability to provide evidence of graduate outcomes, the process for initial accreditation of a new program (focus on inputs) should be clearly differentiated from the process required for re-accreditation of an existing program (focus on outcomes).

Further responses

Having agreed on this response, there are jurisdictional implications in implementing the proposed national system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education programs. Therefore it is anticipated that most jurisdictions will also submit a separate response to the consultation document.