Initial teacher education for teaching literacy

Phase 3 Report for the Review of Literacy Teaching, Training, and Practice in Government Schools

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The Peter Underwood Centre

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Abbreviations

AC: E   Australian Curriculum: English

ACARA   Australian Curriculum Assessment & Reporting Authority

AITSL   Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

ATAR   Australian Tertiary Admission Rank

AT   Assessment Task

BEd   Bachelor of Education

BeTTR   Beginning Teacher Time Release

DOE   Department of Education (also referred to as the Department)

EYLF   Early Years Learning Framework

GTPA   Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment

HPE   Health & Physical Education

HREC   Human Research Ethics Committee

ICT   Information Communication Technology

ILO   Intended Learning Outcome

ITE   Initial Teacher Education

IEP   Individual Education Plan

ITE   Initial Teacher Education

LANTITE   Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education

LAT   Limited Authority to Teach

MTeach   Master of Teaching

MyLO   My Learning Online

NACAT   Non-Academic Capability Assessment Tool

NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NARTE	Non-Academic Requirements for Teacher Entry
PASS	Peer Assisted Study Sessions
PE	Professional Experience
QTAC	Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre
TIPP	Teacher Intern Placement Program
TRB	Teachers Registration Board
UTAS	University of Tasmania
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Participant codes

A	Academic
EP_PS	Experienced practitioner, Primary School
EP_HS	Experienced practitioner, High School
BT_BE_EC	Beginning teacher, Bachelor of Education (Early childhood)
BT_BE_P	Beginning teacher, Bachelor of Education (Primary)
BT_BE_S	Beginning teacher, Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
BT_MT_P	Beginning teacher, Master of Teaching (Primary)
BT_MT_S	Beginning teacher, Master of Teaching (Secondary)
PST	Pre-service teacher

Executive Summary

This report is the fourth in a series for the *Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice in Government Schools* conducted by the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment and commissioned by the Department of Education Tasmania (hereafter also referred to as DoE or the Department). The research team is supported by a project reference group drawn from the Department.

The report presents and discusses the research findings for Phase 3, investigating the current preparedness of pre-service teachers (PSTs) to teach literacy following Initial Teacher Education (ITE) at the University of Tasmania (UTAS or the University).

The fieldwork was conducted in the second half of 2017 (interviews with beginning teachers and experienced school staff for Phase 2) and the second half of 2018 (all other data collection) and involved three data sources:

– **documentation** provided by the University—primarily unit outlines for 10 relevant units in the four-year undergraduate Bachelor of Education (BEd) and the two-year postgraduate Master of Teaching (MTeach) programs;

– **semi-structured interviews** with 59 participants—nine academics from the Faculty of Education, 11 beginning teachers, and 39 experienced classroom practitioners who participated in Phase 2 of the research; and

– **online surveys** with 70 beginning teachers and eight final year initial teacher education students.

The report outlines findings in relation to four contexts of initial teacher education (based on Adoniou, 2013), followed by overall findings in relation to perceptions of pre-service teachers' preparedness for teaching literacy, and suggestions for improvement and change. Key findings from those six sections are provided below.

Pre-service teachers' personal context

There is general agreement that pre-service teachers' personal literacy skills as well as their non-academic capabilities and dispositions for teaching are important foundations for the preparation of high-quality teachers.

Formal assessment

Since mid-2016 several formal assessments have been introduced at the University of Tasmania which are expected to improve the teaching and professional qualities exhibited by beginning teachers. These are:

1. *Non-Academic Capability Assessment Tool (NACAT)* – administered before enrolment and used since January 2017. This online assessment requires applicants to demonstrate a range of personal traits in addition to an understanding what it means to be a teacher.

2. *Internal Faculty-based literacy (and numeracy) competency test* – administered in Year 1 and compulsory since July 2016. Pre-service teachers must pass the test at a mastery level (that is, with a score of at least 80 per cent) before being permitted to undertake their first Professional Experience placement.

3. *Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE)* – **administered in the final year and compulsory since July 2016.** Pre-service teachers must pass before they are eligible to take their final Professional Experience placement. In 2017, 97 per cent of pre-service teachers at UTAS passed the literacy portion of the LANTITE, which was above the national average of 92 per cent.

4. *Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA) Tool* – **administered prior to graduation as a teacher and introduced in 2019.** As of 2019, all pre-service teachers in Australia must pass the GTPA before they can be registered to teach in their state or territory. The GTPA demands significant demonstration by pre-service teachers that they are personally and professionally ready to teach.

The minimum Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) score for entry into the BEd at the University of Tasmania is 65. However, enrolment data suggest around half of students enrol on a basis other than the ATAR. Opinions vary about the usefulness of the ATAR benchmark and of suggestions to raise the minimum score for entry into initial teacher education courses.

Literacy support for pre-service teachers

Experienced teachers expressed concerns that some pre-service teachers and beginning teachers they had encountered displayed poor levels of literacy. Some of this concern is likely to be ameliorated by the relatively recent advent of the assessments described above. Support services are available to pre-service teachers who struggle with their own personal literacy, for example as evidenced by difficulty passing the internal Faculty-based literacy competency test. Among those services are:

– online resources and courses on writing, vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation, which they can access and complete separate from and outside of their initial teacher education course; and

– university support programs and services, made available through the Student Learning facility, to help students develop academic skills—including English language skills.

Students also are supported within both the BEd and MTeach, including through the 'Academic Literacies' unit (ESH 106). However, there is limited scope within other units for providing 'catch up' literacy support to PSTs since priority must be given to the content to be covered as part of accreditation requirements for ITE courses.

University context

As an initial teacher education provider accredited by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the University of Tasmania offers two main pathways to obtaining a teaching degree:

– The BEd is completed in a minimum of four years at undergraduate level, and may be undertaken with a focus on early childhood or primary teaching or secondary teaching in the areas of health and physical education (HPE), science and mathematics, or applied learning.

– The MTeach is completed in a minimum of two years at postgraduate level, and may be undertaken with either a primary teaching focus or a secondary teaching focus.

Bachelor of Education

The BEd at the University of Tasmania comprises 32 units, of which five are particularly relevant to preparing pre-service teachers to teach literacy.

– *ESH106 Academic Literacies*

First year, compulsory for all BEd courses (Early Childhood, Primary, and Secondary); focused on academic writing and digital literacy.

– ESH112 Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice

First year, compulsory for BEd (Secondary: HPE, science and mathematics, and applied learning); focused on literacy as a general capability across the Australian Curriculum.

– *ESH110 Foundations of English*; *ESH 210 Developing Understandings of English; ESH310 Critical Approaches to English*

First; second; and third year; compulsory for BEd (Early Childhood, and Primary); focused on addressing the three strands of English as a specific learning area in the Australian Curriculum (Language, Literacy, Literature).

Master of Teaching

The MTeach at the University of Tasmania has 18 units, of which five are especially relevant to preparing pre-service teachers to teach literacy.

– EMT510 Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice

First year, compulsory for MTeach (Secondary); focused on literacy as a general capability across the Australian Curriculum.

– EMT511 Foundations of English; EMT 611 English Curriculum and Pedagogy

First and second year, compulsory for MTeach (Primary); focused on English as a specific learning area in the Australian Curriculum.

– EMT515 Approaches to English Teaching; EMT 610 Teaching, Literature, Culture

First and second year, compulsory for MTeach (Secondary: English); focused on English as a specific learning area in the Australian Curriculum.

General comments regarding content, structure, and delivery

In relation to *content*, there were concerns about the crowded curriculum in initial teacher education, which means not all topics can be covered adequately and content knowledge may be prioritised at the expense of pedagogical knowledge.

In relation to *structure*, the sequential nature of the literacy and English units provides valuable vertical integration for the BEd (Early Childhood) and BEd (Primary) as well as the MTeach (Primary) and (Secondary: English). Linking literacy as a general capability across units in the other secondary courses was not considered as strong.

In relation to the *delivery* of course content, there were mixed views about the appropriateness of online delivery. In addition, experienced practitioners and beginning teachers expressed preference for teacher-educators who had recent classroom experience and were exemplary literacy teachers themselves.

Professional Experience context

Professional Experience (or 'practicum') is both part of the University's initial teacher education courses and, at its best, it also is a site in which pre-service teachers deepen and apply learning from coursework studies.

The relationship between coursework and practicum

As an accredited provider of initial teacher education, the University of Tasmania meets AITSL standards, including those applying to Professional Experience that supports pre-service teachers' to meet the Graduate Teacher Standards.

– BEd (Early Childhood) involves 90 days of Professional Experience: 10 days in Year 1 (child care setting), 15 days in Year 2 (child care setting), 30 days in Year 3 (Kinder) and 35 days in Year 4 (Prep–Year 2).

– BEd (Primary) and BEd (Secondary) involve 80 days of Professional Experience: 20 days in Year 2, 30 days in Year 3, and 30 days in Year 4.

– MTeach involves 60 days of Professional Experience: five days in semester 1 of Year 1, 10 days in semester 2 of Year 1, 20 days in semester 1 of Year 2, and 25 days in Semester 2 of Year 2.

Participants considered the structure of Professional Experience to work better in the MTeach than in the BEd (Primary/Secondary). The MTeach structure of one placement per semester enables unit coordinators to link their units with Professional Experience, facilitating a more immediate application of coursework to classroom. The use of a single, long Professional Experience placement in each of Years 2, 3 and 4 in the BEd (Primary/Secondary) hampers such integration.

Responsibilities of parties to the relationship

The success of the Professional Experience component of initial teacher education requires contributions from all stakeholders: pre-service teachers, the University, the Department of Education, and schools. The responsibilities of pre-service teachers, Faculty members, and school staff are clearly outlined in the University's Professional Experience guidelines. Of particular importance for successful Professional Experience are ensuring the:

– productive communication, clear expectations, mutual regard, professional respect, and recognition of the role of each party; and

– calibre of supervising teachers.

First employment context … and beyond

Teaching is one of the few professions in which graduates are expected to assume full responsibility upon entry into the profession. A national policy shift in the past two decades has placed increased pressure on beginning teachers to be 'classroom-ready' from their first day on the job.

Classroom readiness

In the absence of a clear definition of the concept of classroom readiness, the AITSL Australian Professional Standards for Teachers provide a nationally-agreed catalogue of the knowledge and skills required of beginning teachers. Consistent with the literature, most beginning teachers who participated in the research reported here described their first year of teaching as a struggle. Participants said that:

– it is unreasonable to expect new graduates to be able to deploy the full range of content and pedagogical knowledge acquired during their initial teacher education from day one in the classroom; and

– while graduation is a significant milestone for pre-service teachers, their first employment marks the start of a whole new chapter of learning and professional development.

The findings highlight two broad clusters of interacting factors that made a difference to beginning teachers' first employment learning experiences: factors relating to what new graduates *bring* to their first teaching job, and factors relating to what they *receive* from the context of their first employment.

What new graduates bring to their first teaching job

The following factors support a positive transition into first experiences of professional employment as teachers:

– having the benefit of prior exposure to classrooms that is additional to Professional Experience, through the Teacher Intern Placement Program (TIPP), or through previous employment by the Department on a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) or as a Teacher Assistant (TA);

– having a disposition of inquiry and a mindset oriented to embracing challenges; and

– proactively seeking opportunities for support.

What new graduates receive from the context of their first employment

The following factors support a positive transition to first employment:

– the Department induction course for early career teachers, delivered by the Professional Learning Institute (PLI), which was considered useful and necessary but insufficient on its own;

– high quality formal or informal mentoring for beginning teachers;

– supportive school environments, including in terms of a culture of collaboration, with senior staff actively modelling collaboration in and between schools;

- in-service learning focused on practice, such as through participation in professional learning teams (PLTs) and professional learning communities (PLCs); and

- in-school literacy expertise, especially in the form of coaching.

Overall preparedness and preparation for teaching literacy

The answer to the question of how classroom-ready University of Tasmania teaching graduates are—both in general and in relation to teaching literacy—depends on understandings of what classroom readiness means, and on who is responding to the question and from which standpoint.

Perspectives on preparedness

Preparedness is an outcome from the task of preparation; it connotes the condition of being ready. Participants held various perspectives on the preparedness of graduates from initial teacher education courses.

- University of Tasmania academics acknowledged that they were unable to teach pre-service teachers everything they needed to know and do, but overall shared the view that their graduates were as well prepared for teaching literacy as possible given the constraints of time and course requirements.

- Half of the surveyed beginning teachers felt they had a low level of preparedness. This finding is consistent with findings from a recent national survey of teaching graduates in Australia. There was a tendency among participants to conflate "confidence" with "feeling prepared".

- Many of the experienced classroom practitioners considered that beginning teachers were not fully prepared for teaching literacy. Among this cohort, emphasis on classroom readiness translated into very high expectations of new graduates by some experienced practitioners, while others expressed empathy for the pressures on beginning teachers.

Perceived strengths in new graduates' preparation for teaching literacy

Beginning teachers and academic staff pointed to the dedication and commitment of the English/literacy teaching staff in the Faculty of Education.

Beginning teachers, experienced practitioners, and academics all highlighted the strong and clear thread running throughout the initial teacher education courses about literacy as a cross-curricular responsibility.

Over 50 per cent of the respondents to the beginning teachers' survey nominated various aspects of their degrees they had found useful. Many of these comments reflected an understanding of ITE as providing a scaffolding upon which new teachers could build as they developed professionally in their careers.

Perceived weaknesses in new graduates' preparation for teaching literacy

Beginning teachers and experienced colleagues thought there was too much theory in the initial teacher education courses at the expense of developing practical knowledge and skills. In particular they expressed concern that new graduates did not know how to apply what they had learned *about* practice *to* their literacy teaching practice.

Participants identified some gaps in content knowledge. Many agreed that preparation for the teaching of reading needed more attention but other gaps tended to be named by only one or a few participants.

Given the broad scope of literacy in the Australian Curriculum, participants from all groups agreed that not all relevant content and pedagogical aspects can be covered in initial teacher education courses.

Constraints and challenges in initial teacher education for teaching literacy

– A tightened regulatory environment for providers of initial teacher education. The AITSL accreditation requirements are considered helpful as a quality assurance mechanism. However, a lack of flexibility creates risks, including that compliance may come at the expense of responsiveness to need.

– Budget and time limitations in schools, the Department, and at the University. These limitations were thought to have particularly negative impacts on the operation of Professional Experience and the provision of mentoring for beginning teachers.

Both staff in initial teacher education courses and experienced teachers were committed to supporting pre-service teachers to become high quality teachers and expressed frustration at constraints for implementing changes to improve pre-service teachers' preparedness to teach literacy.

Suggestions to improve initial teacher education for teaching literacy

The suggestions below have broad support from at least one participant group; that is, from beginning teachers, experienced teachers, or University academic staff.

Selection of pre-service teachers

– Introduce additional personal literacy "screening" of prospective pre-service teachers prior to admission.

University coursework

– Pay greater attention for explicit literacy teaching strategies in initial teacher education course content, specifically in relation to teaching comprehension and technical writing skills (spelling, punctuation and sentence construction); and for underpinning skills, such as differentiation and classroom management.

– Build on the strong focus on cross-curricular literacy in initial teacher education at the University by emphasising (1) literacy as a general capability and (2) practical skill development in relation to literacy within discipline areas other than English.

– Improve the connection between university coursework and literacy teaching practice in schools. Enable exemplary classroom practitioners to contribute to the delivery of initial teacher education coursework; this initiative has occurred in the past and may be worth revisiting.

Professional experience in schools

– Expand the Professional Experience component of initial teacher education courses beyond the mandated number of 80 days in the BEd and 60 days in the MTeach.

– Change the timing and structure of Professional Experience placements in the BEd in order to facilitate better integration with coursework. The clinical practice approach to the practicum was held up as a desirable if resource-intensive model.

– Ensure schools allocate high-quality teachers to supervise pre-service teachers.

– Have the Department provide mentoring and time for teachers who supervise pre-service teachers.

Induction and ongoing professional learning

– Extend and strengthen the Teacher Intern Placement Program and similar professional experience opportunities.

– Provide a comprehensive and extended induction for all new teaching graduates in the Department.

– Increase access to mentoring by exemplary teachers in schools for all beginning teachers.

– Implement a systematic approach to ongoing professional learning for all practising teachers.

The relationship between the University and the Department of Education

– Further strengthen the three-way connections among the University Faculty of Education, schools, and the Department's policy and curriculum services business units.

– Acknowledge that building collaborative partnerships takes time, will, and investment and that the dividends are considerable.

Section 1. Introduction

This report is the fourth in a series for the *Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice in Government Schools* conducted by the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment and commissioned for the Tasmanian Department of Education (hereafter also referred to as DoE or the Department). The research team is supported by a project reference group drawn from the Department.

The full three-year review involves several phases. Phase 1 consisted of two literature reviews. The report from the first literature review is entitled *Teaching Literacy: Review of Literature* (Doyle *et al*., 2017) and the second review is entitled *Initial Teacher Education for Teaching Literacy: Review of Literature* (Stewart *et al*., 2018a). Phases 2 and 3 comprised empirical research. Phase 2 was conducted in Tasmanian government schools and the report is entitled *Literacy Teaching Practice in Tasmanian Government Schools* (Stewart *et al*., 2018b). Phase 3 involved data collection from pre-service teacher education at the University of Tasmania (UTAS) and with beginning teachers employed by the Department. The findings from Phases 1 to 3 will be synthesised in the Phase 4 report and the project will culminate in a final report.

This report presents and discusses research findings for Phase 3, which has centred on investigating teacher preparation for teaching literacy. Section 1 provides the context for the research and describes the study in terms of ethics approvals and considerations, participants, data sources, and analysis. The structure of the remainder of the report is outlined at the end of this section.

1.1 Background and context

1.1.1 The brief

In March 2017, the Department contracted the Peter Underwood Centre to undertake targeted research as part of its Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice in Government Schools. The Review forms part of a state-wide agenda to improve engagement, retention, and outcomes for Tasmanian school students, and links directly to the Department's strategic policy goal that 'learners have the skills and confidence in Literacy and Numeracy to successfully participate in learning, life and work' (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2017).

The brief for Phase 3, Teacher Education for Teaching Literacy, was to investigate the preparation of pre-service teachers (PSTs) for teaching literacy. Specifically, the research in this Phase focused on initial teacher education (ITE) offerings at UTAS, and asked the research team to identify:

– areas of strength and weakness in the delivery of the skills, knowledge and practices necessary for the effective teaching of literacy; and

– possible changes to delivery, course offering, and structure of pre-service training to improve the skills and knowledge of pre-service teachers in the effective teaching of literacy.

> **The brief for Phase 3 was to investigate the preparation of pre-service teachers for teaching literacy in the initial teacher education offerings at the University of Tasmania**

> **Literacy in this project is understood as both a general capability and a learning area, based on the definitions provided by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) for the Australian Curriculum.**

1.1.2 Key definitions

Key terms used in the project are first outlined below, with specific reference to the ways in which literacy is understood. The term "initial teacher education" is then considered.

Literacy

In this research, literacy is understood in terms of the broad definitions provided by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) for the Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum defines literacy as 'the knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society' (ACARA, no date-b). ACARA further defines literacy as a general capability in these terms:

> students listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts (ACARA, no date-b).

The English learning area in the Australian Curriculum (AC: E) is distinguished from literacy as a general capability and 'is built around the three interrelated strands of language, literature and literacy' (ACARA, no date-a). Teaching and learning should balance and integrate all three strands. Together, the three strands focus on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating. Learning in English builds on concepts, skills and processes developed in earlier years, and teachers will develop and strengthen these as needed (ACARA, no date-a).

Initial teacher education

Initial teacher education, also known as pre-service teacher education, is completed prior to entering the profession of teaching (Yeigh & Lynch, 2017). There is a discernible shift internationally towards school-based initial teacher education (Adoniou, 2013) but this trend is not currently reflected in Australia. Here, as in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, initial teacher education means gaining a tertiary qualification at a university. This qualification is usually a requirement for teacher registration, which "licences" people to teach in schools (Yeigh & Lynch, 2017).

In Australia and similar jurisdictions, the undergraduate qualification is a bachelor's degree. That qualification generally comprises three to four years of university study and a fieldwork component in schools. Alternatively, entry to a postgraduate diploma or Master of Teaching program entails formal study shorter in duration than, and following completion of, a bachelor's degree in another field. In Australia, initial teacher education programs must be accredited for graduates to be eligible to register as teachers. Accreditation requires programs to demonstrate adherence to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ellis, McNicholl, & Pendry, 2012; Lynch, 2012).

During initial teacher education, pre-service teachers are required to take on an extensive array of responsibilities. They must master the content and pedagogy of the curriculum learning areas they will teach; for pre-service primary teachers that can mean working with as many as eight learning areas. Pre-service teachers must also demonstrate strong personal literacy skills. They are expected to develop the capacity to adapt and personalise learning for diverse groups of students in different classroom settings (Gonski et al., 2018). They are also increasingly responsible for supporting students' wellbeing needs, and for identifying and supporting equity and broader social justice objectives in their teaching and allied activities.

In short, initial teacher education requires preservice teachers to take on new frameworks to understand teaching and learning, and to embrace responsibilities to help all children learn. Content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge for literacy are central to such endeavours.

While the weight of evidence in this report relates to university-based initial teacher education, teacher preparation for teaching literacy is framed as a shared responsibility, that occurs across various contexts. ITE is just that, initial teacher education, and 'learning to teach literacy' is an ongoing process of professional learning, like all other aspects of a teacher's role.

Teacher preparation for teaching literacy is a shared responsibility, which occurs across various contexts.

1.2 The Phase 3 study

Phase 3 of the review is based on empirical research involving staff and students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania and teachers in Tasmanian government schools, as well as documentation from the University's initial teacher education programs.

Below, descriptions are provided for both the ethical considerations that underpin the research and the participants' characteristics. Procedures for data collection and analysis are then outlined.

1.2.1 Ethics approvals and considerations

Ethics approval for the research was granted by the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Tasmania) Network (H0017501). Approval was also required and granted by the Department's Educational Performance Research Committee (File No. 2018-51) for the survey of beginning teachers. Phase 2 interview data drawn on for this report are covered by the approvals for that Phase (UTAS H0016615 and DoE File No. 2017–23). Confirmation of consent to participate in an interview was recorded in writing. Hard copies of individual consent forms were stored securely on the Peter Underwood Centre premises and digital copies were stored on a password-protected computer on the University's secure server.

Mindful of ethical obligations, all possible precautions have been taken to preserve participants' anonymity by assigning deidentified codes to any of them who are quoted in this report. The codes used are listed at the front of the report, as part of the Glossary. To further protect people's identity in this report use is made of gender-neutral terms they/their rather than she/her or he/his. This approach is necessary given the small number of academic participants.

In both Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants were advised that it is impossible to guarantee complete confidentiality (see Appendix A for Participant Information Sheet) because there is a risk of identification by "insiders", such as colleagues, who may recognise an individual's typical turn of phrase if quoted in this report or another publication. Therefore, as outlined above, participants were given the opportunity to check, edit, or withdraw their transcript.

Because the online survey was anonymous, participants in that part of the study could not withdraw their responses after they had submitted their completed survey. The preamble to the survey outlined the purpose of the study, clarified what participants would be asked to do, outlined the benefits and risks of participation, and explained how the results would be used. Importantly, the point was made that completion and submission of the survey would be taken as an indication of consent to participate and have responses analysed and reported upon in this research.

1.2.2 Participants

In total, there were 137 participants in this phase of the review.

Of these, most were **beginning teachers**: 11 interviews from Phase 2 and 70 surveys in Phase 3. An initial intention had been to survey a comparable number of pre-service teachers in their final year of initial teacher education. Unfortunately, despite several invitations to participate ultimately only eight pre-service teachers completed the survey. Of these, four were in their final year of a BEd degree and four were completing an MTeach degree. While the relative absence of pre-service teachers in the study is regrettable, the perspectives offered by new graduates and early career teachers are highly valuable for informing our findings.

The beginning teachers comprise two groups: new graduates (n=62; defined as having less than one year's teaching experience); and early career teachers (n=19; defined as having more than one and less than five years' teaching experience). That information is represented in Figure 1, which also shows the degrees with which these teachers entered the profession. Broadly, 53 hold a bachelor's degree, 24 a master's degree, and four hold other qualifications such as a Graduate Diploma of Teaching and Learning or a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, gained from institutions other than the University.

The study also draws on views from 40 more **experienced practitioners** who have been teaching longer than five years and who participated in Phase 2 of the research (Figure 2). These participants comprise school leaders, classroom teachers, literacy specialist teachers, a speech therapist, and a volunteer reading tutor.

Nine **academics** from the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania also participated in the study. Of those, four were in senior leadership roles, two were program directors, and three were unit coordinators/lecturers.

1.2.3 Data collection

Phase 3 is informed by data drawn from three sources:

– **documentation** provided by the University of Tasmania: unit outlines for 10 relevant subjects in the BEd and MTeach programs;

– **semi-structured interviews** with 59 participants: nine academics; 11 beginning teachers; 40 experienced practitioners; and

– **online surveys**: completed by 70 beginning teachers and eight pre-service teachers.

The reference group provided valuable input into the construction of the interview schedules and survey. In addition, support and input were provided by key staff in the Faculty of Education at a meeting held in Launceston and Hobart on 2 May 2018, to which relevant academic staff were invited.

> **The findings are based on data from University of Tasmania documentation and interviews with academics, beginning teachers, and experienced practitioners in schools; and from online surveys completed by beginning and pre-service teachers.**

Figure 1: Beginning teachers by qualification
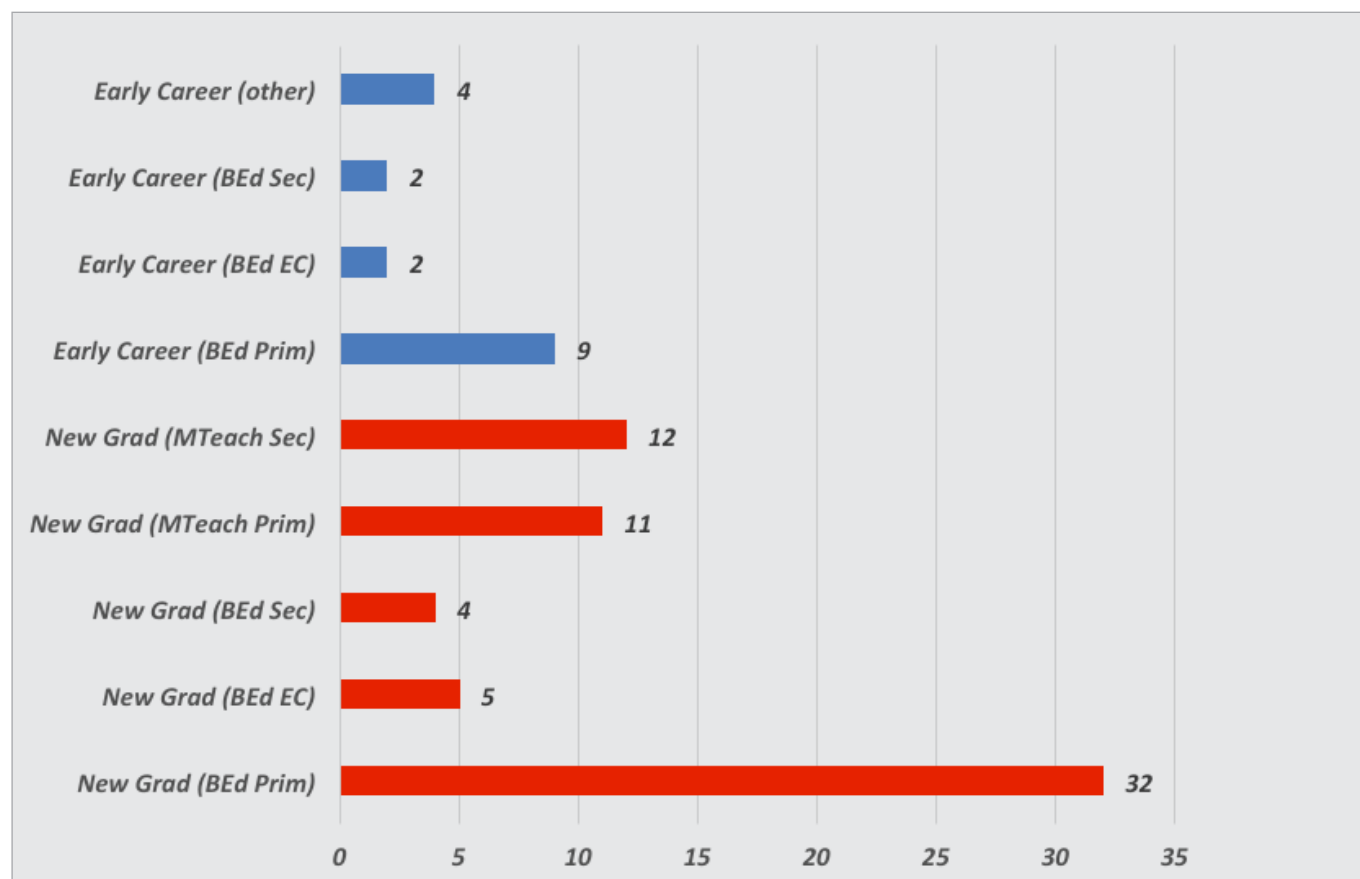
Figure 2: Experienced practitioners by role
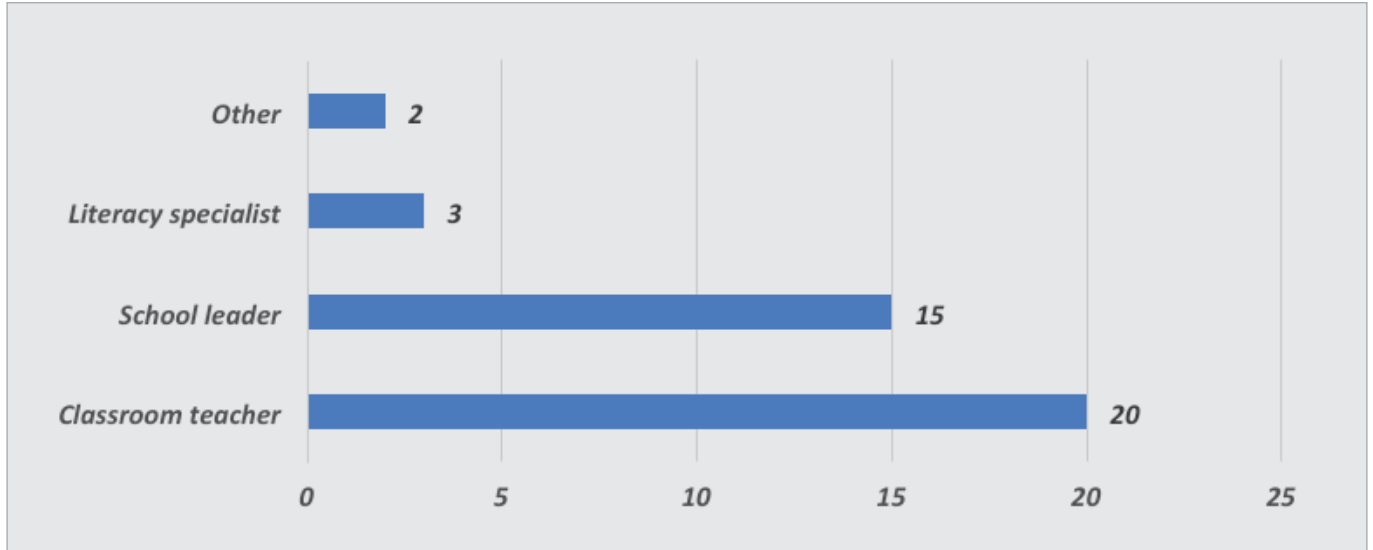
Documentation

To gain insight into the content of subjects relevant to literacy, outlines of 10 units, five drawn from the BEd and five from the MTeach program were collected. Faculty of Education staff helped identify the relevant units and provided the outlines. The 10 units outlines that were analysed are:

– ESH106 Academic Literacies

– ESH110 Foundations of English

– ESH210 Developing Understandings of English

– ESH310 Critical Approaches to English

– ESH112 Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice

– EMT511 Foundations of English

– EMT611 English Curriculum and Pedagogy

– EMT510 Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice

– EMT515 Approaches to English Teaching

– EMT610 Teaching, Literature, Culture

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews with Faculty of Education staff are an important source of information to better understand the rationales for the structure and content of unit outlines, and to gain insights into the broader context within which sit these units and the BEd and MTeach programs. Sixteen staff members were invited to take part in interviews.

In August 2018, an information sheet explaining the project was sent electronically via email to potential participants, along with a letter of invitation and a consent form (see Appendix B for Consent Form). Non-respondents were invited again if no reply had been received after several weeks. Nine staff members agreed to be interviewed. The interviews took place between September and November 2018. They focused on course content, structure, and delivery, including Professional Experience and assessment of pre-service teachers' competency to teach literacy (see Appendix C for the Interview Schedule).

To augment the findings from these interviews, work in this report also draws on others that were conducted for Phase 2 (see Stewart *et al.*, 2018b). The fieldwork for that earlier phase involved participants in 28 schools across Tasmania. Although the focus was on the practices of teaching literacy in schools, several participants made comments relevant to the role of pre-service teacher education. For this report, use is made of interview data from 39 participants from Phase 2 (Figure 2).

Online surveys

Two versions of a short online survey were developed to elicit from pre-service and beginning teachers their views on how well prepared they felt they had been to teach literacy. Both versions were informed by the Department's Good Teaching Guides (Tasmanian Government Department of Education & Derewianka, 2015, 2016a, 2016b), which refer to the 'key elements of literacy' as well as to the 'ten evidence-based best practices for comprehensive literacy instruction' (Tasmanian Government Department of Education & Derewianka, 2015, p.9, adapted from Gambrelli *et al.*, 2015). The version for beginning teachers contained additional questions about their experiences of teaching literacy since graduating, but otherwise the two surveys were the same (see Appendix D for the Survey).

Pre-service teacher survey: Assistance was sought from the Faculty of Education to invite final year pre-service education students to take part in an online survey. Staff from the Faculty supported the process, providing advice on timing for the release of the survey, and enabling our access to students using MyLO (My Learning Online — the University's online learning platform for students). An announcement about the survey's purpose and availability was posted on 2 October 2018 with a link to the survey embedded in learning materials for that week, and a reminder was posted on 22 October.

From a potential pool of 372 pre-service teachers, 13 engaged with the survey, eight of whom completed it. This small sample size led to a decision not to include in this report quantitative data from the pre-service teacher survey, but qualitative comments have been included in the analysis.

Beginning teacher survey: The Department's Professional Learning Institute (PLI) helped the research team to provide a survey directly to beginning teachers. Copies

of the survey were distributed in the last workshop of the PLI's induction program for early career teachers (*Meeting the Standards*), which was held in Glenorchy, Launceston, Burnie, and Queenstown during October and November 2018. A member of the research team attended each of the four sites to introduce the project, describe the purpose of the survey; answer any questions about the project from participants; and provide a paper copy of the survey to those who preferred that method to online response.

From a potential pool of 88 participants, 70 completed the survey. The excellent response rate to this survey is attributable to the efforts of PLI staff, who provided time during workshops for the survey to be administered.

1.2.4 Data analysis

Unit outlines

A content analysis of Faculty of Education unit outlines drew on work by Krippendorff (2004). The analysis revealed how academic preparations to teach literacy in initial teacher education programs are made at the University of Tasmania. Findings from that analysis are discussed in detail in Section 3.1 below.

Interviews

All interviews were professionally transcribed, and transcripts were sent to participants to validate and "member check" (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). Participants were invited to add, change, or delete text and mark text not to be quoted in reports and publications. After approval to proceed was received from participants, transcripts were uploaded into N-Vivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software package produced by QSR International. Added to the N-Vivo project were the 39 Phase 2 transcripts that contained relevant comments and that had previously been approved by those participants using the same process as outlined above.

Each interview transcript was read several times before the iterative, back-and-forth process of qualitative data analysis began (see Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Transcripts were coded according to a set of categories partly derived from the interview questions and partly from categories suggested by our Phase 1b literature review and pieces of text were tagged accordingly (Newby, 2010). As analysis proceeded, and clear themes emerged, codes were modified, some becoming redundant and some needing to be divided further into finer sub-codes. Importantly, coding was not a 'one-off' activity, and involved 'reading and rereading, assigning and reassigning codes, placing and replacing codes, refining codes and coded data' (see Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.560). Findings from the interviews are discussed throughout sections 3 to 6.

Online survey

The online survey responses were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and cross-tabulations and qualitative assessment of any "open text" comments that were provided. This process enabled both inferences from the data and conclusions about how prepared to teach literacy beginning teachers perceived themselves to be. The results are detailed especially in Section 6.1.

1.3 Structure of the report

Sections 2 to 5 are structured to mirror the four contexts of initial teacher education presented in the literature review, *Initial Teacher Education for Teaching Literacy (*Stewart *et al.*, 2018a), and based on Adoniou's (2013) model of teacher preparation. Therefore, findings are discussed in relation to:

– pre-service teachers' personal contexts (**Section 2**);

– the university context (**Section 3**);

– the professional experience context (**Section 4**); and

– the first employment context (**Section 5**).

While contexts are discussed separately, they are interconnected, mutually reinforcing as well as sometimes contradictory, and often complementary.

Section 6 draws together the overall findings related to participants' perceptions of pre-service teachers' preparation to teach literacy.

Section 7 outlines perceived areas for improvement and emerging opportunities to enhance initial teacher education related to teaching literacy.

Section 8 concludes the report with a brief recapitulation of the key messages from the research findings.

> **"the journey into teaching begins before teacher preparation commences"**
>
> (Adoniou, 2013, p.51).

Section 2. Pre-service teachers' personal context

As noted in the project's Phase 1b literature review (Stewart *et al.*, 2018a), pre-service teachers enter initial teacher education programs not as "blank slates" but with their own diverse personal literacy levels as well as views about and capacities for teaching literacy. These levels of literacy and attendant views have often been informed by their own experiences of literacy learning at school (Yeigh & Lynch, 2017). Indeed, as Adoniou (2013, p.51) observes 'the journey into teaching begins before teacher preparation commences'.

This section reports on findings related to the complex array of influences that pre-service teachers bring from their personal context to their initial teacher education. Pre-service teachers' personal literacy levels are considered, including their existing knowledge about literacy. Next, findings about their non-academic capabilities and dispositions for teaching literacy are presented.

2.1 Personal literacy levels

Pre-service teachers' personal literacy skills and attributes are important considerations in preparing them to be high quality teachers: on this, there is general agreement (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), 2014). However, as noted, pre-service teachers bring to their initial teacher education varying levels of proficiency in literacy. Opinion is divided about how best to address this variation.

Many questions infuse current debates. For example, what is good enough in terms of pre-service teachers' personal literacy capacities? Should expectations differ according to subject area and/or level of schooling to be taught? If pre-service teachers have limited literacy skills on entry, can those be sufficiently remediated before they graduate? Is it the responsibility of teacher educators to provide this remediation? Are entry requirements for initial teacher education appropriate? And perhaps most contentiously of all, as one of our participants asked, is a 'decline in [school students'] literacy skills … correlated with the literacy skills of the preservice teachers? I don't know' (A9). Below, participant views responding to such questions are described and assessed.

2.1.1 Literacy levels among pre-service teachers at the University of Tasmania

At the University of Tasmania, pre-service teachers' personal literacy levels are assessed in two formal tests during their initial teacher education:

– Faculty-based literacy and numeracy competency tests administered early in the course prior to their first Professional Experience placement; and

– the external Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE), administered later in the course prior to their final Professional Experience placement.

Below, reference is made to findings about the higher-profile LANTITE and then about the internal assessment.

LANTITE

LANTITE is a national test, introduced as part of standard 3.5 the AITSL *Accreditation Standards and Procedures*, which stipulates that 'Entrants to initial teacher education will possess levels of personal literacy and numeracy broadly equivalent to the top 30 per cent of the population' (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018, Standard 3.5). The test was designed to assess 'those aspects of initial teacher education students' personal literacy and numeracy skills that can be measured through an online assessment tool', and is intended to 'assist higher education providers, teacher employers and the general public to have increased confidence in the skills of graduating teachers'.[1]

At the University of Tasmania, the implementation of the test is explained to pre-service teachers as follows:

> From the first of July 2016, all Initial Teacher Education students beginning an Initial Teacher Education Course are required to complete the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) (National) prior to undertaking their final Professional Experience placement. To prepare students for LANTITE, the School of Education made the Faculty-based Literacy and Numeracy Competency Tests compulsory for all students studying a Bachelor of Education (including Early Childhood, Primary, Health and Physical Education and Applied Learning) and Master of Teaching (including Primary and Secondary) course (ESH112_UO).

This statement appears in the outline for the BEd unit 'Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice' (ESH112). It also appears in an MTeach unit of the same name (EMT510). The literacy requirements for pre-service teachers are also specified in outlines for the MTeach unit 'Foundations of English' (EMT511) and in the BEd unit 'Academic Literacies' (ESH106). Unit content, structure, and delivery are discussed in detail in Section 3.1. Here, they are referred to principally as the backdrop against which are presented findings about personal literacy levels among pre-service teachers at the University of Tasmania.

In 2017 (the most recent year for which data were available at the time of writing), 97 per cent of the University's pre-service teachers passed the literacy portion of the LANTITE, which was above the national average of 92 per cent.[2] Some participants referred to limitations in the LANTITE—for example, highlighting that 'you can't always assess people in one form. So, an assessment might not necessarily reflect their true ability' (A9). Nevertheless, there was general agreement that LANTITE usefully gauges a minimum standard of literacy among pre-service teachers that educators seem to value. In relation to the test's administration, one participant described how 'we don't know if they've done it by themselves or if they've done it with someone watching and helping them' (A9).

Participants agreed that the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) usefully gauges a minimum standard of literacy among pre-service teachers.

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1 https://teacheredtest.acer.edu.au/
2 http://www.utas.edu.au/education/news/news-items/2018/april/tasmanian-student-teachers-top-national-literacy-and-numeracy-tests

> In the first year of their degree, all pre-service teacher education students at the University of Tasmania have to pass the internal Literacy and Numeracy Competency Tests with a score of at least 80 per cent before they are permitted to undertake their first professional experience placement.

Internal assessment

It is worth noting that higher education providers have discretion about when they require pre-service teachers to sit the LANTITE, with some requiring prospective pre-service teachers to do so as part of course entry requirements. Such is not the case at the University of Tasmania, where instead an internal test is used early in the course.

The *Literacy and Numeracy Competency Tests* are housed separately from other initial teacher education unit content as a unit on the university's online learning platform (MyLO). The tests have been compulsory for all BEd and MTeach students since 2015 and pre-service teachers are automatically enrolled in this unit.

In the first semester of first year, all students in every education degree take the internal *Literacy and Numeracy Competency Tests*. They have to pass the test at a level of mastery (that is, with score of at least 80 per cent) before they are permitted to undertake their first Professional Experience placement (see section 4). A staff member in the Faculty explained the test as follows:

> We've attached it to a pathway through their Professional Experience, rather than through the literacy units because it's slightly different—I mean, obviously, they're linked, but it's slightly different … This is a far more pragmatic test: grammar, spelling, comprehension etcetera (A2).

In other words, the test is oriented to examining pre-service teachers' personal literacy skills rather than to teaching of literacy. This same participant said: 'The majority would pass first go. Now, when I say majority, [I mean about] 80 per cent' (A2). We return to consider what happens with those who do not pass the test in section 2.1.2.

Noting that 'some of the students are really worried about [taking the test]' an academic also observed that 'quite a few of them comment [afterwards that] … they found it was comforting to do it because they're not as bad as they thought they were' (A8). Students who do not pass 'first go' can take the test again, until they pass. One academic noted that some colleagues do not think pre-service teachers should be allowed to 'practise [doing the test] as much as they like' (A8). In contrast, this participant argued strongly against that view, emphasising that the tests should be seen as low stakes:

> they quite like practising, and we know if it's a real test, and they're worried about it, they're likely to not do so well … Some of my best [graduating] teachers have been students who found it hard … They can put themselves in the shoes of children who find it hard (A8).

That observation raises questions about how to understand the relationship between pre-service teachers' levels of personal literacy at the start of an initial teacher education course and their capacities to become high-quality teachers after they have graduated. Engaged in thinking about such questions, Honan *et al.* (2013, p.48) suggest that many studies on literacy capabilities among pre-service primary teachers are based on a 'discourse of deficit' constituting both pre-service and beginning teachers as lacking competencies fundamental to the work of teaching. In response, Honan and her colleagues caution against a too-ready acceptance of such diagnoses and emphasise both the need to have expansive ideas about literacy and the importance of embracing multiliteracies. They also refer to work by Louden (2008), which established that there is little in the way of empirical data

effectively separating out those diverse factors influencing literacy development in initial teacher education programs despite the production of over 100 reviews over a 40-year period.

In recent years there has been significant change to the provision of initial teacher education in Australia. Howell and Sawers (2019, p.114) demonstrate in a review of debates about pre-service teacher literacy levels and the effectiveness of literacy teaching in Australian schools:

> The accreditation pathway for pre-service teacher programs has been revised and the rigor around this process has been carefully redeveloped into a more detailed and scaffolded process … These changes [are informed by] a … set of beliefs regarding the literacy skills and abilities of practising teachers … [and] public concern about pre-service teacher literacy … The evidence for these beliefs and statements is at best sketchy and largely anecdotal, yet the debate has continued and resulted in a highly critical discourse.

Perceptions

On both external and internal measures pre-service teachers at the University of Tasmania appear to be performing relatively well in the literacy stakes. In this research, however, participant views varied, with some expressing concerns about the personal literacy skills of some prospective teachers. As an academic usefully pointed out: 'the ones who are bad tend to stick out [so] you tend to focus on those, which might be a bit unfair' (A3). Moreover, these 'bad ones' may have preceded the compulsory introduction of the internal test and LANTITE two to three years before our data collection.

Participants who were less concerned expressed the view that most of the students who performed poorly probably left before they got to the final year. One participant attributed the failure rate among first year pre-service teachers as largely due to poor literacy skills:

> There's quite a large percentage of students who don't pass in first year, and it's basically because their literacy skills are so poor. So, by the time they get to me [in third or fourth year], the students who struggled the most are the ones who have dropped out (A6).

Another academic confirmed that 'there are more people struggling with their literacy skills in the first year than there are in the final year', noting that 'what we see at the end of the course is dramatically different [from] what we see at the start' (A5).

Even with such attrition, some participants continued to have concerns. An example given by both an academic and an experienced practitioner was in relation to written reports for parents, where, for some students, 'I wouldn't be confident that they could recognise where they were spelling things incorrectly' (A3) and, for some graduates, the reports are 'grammatically at a very low level' (EP37_PS).

Another academic in the Faculty of Education noted that pre-service teacher literacy levels at the University 'have been a concern for us for a number of years' (A9), and observed that students themselves also 'were quite concerned about their own skills, in terms of whether they're feeling equipped to help [school] students who are struggling' (A9).

> **Although pre-service teachers at the University of Tasmania perform relatively well on both external and internal literacy tests, some participants expressed concerns about the personal literacy skills of some prospective teachers.**

> **Internal assessment can work as a diagnostic tool. Students who struggle are referred to online literacy support resources as well as university support services.**

Some academic staff noted that the personal literacy skills among MTeach students were 'higher than the Bachelor of Education students' (A9). Other participants were, however, less inclined to make distinctions between the overall literacy levels exhibited by BEd and MTeach pre-service teachers.

2.1.2 Strategies to support pre-service teachers' personal literacy levels

At the University of Tasmania, the internal tests described above help staff identify areas for improvement in the personal literacy skills exhibited by individual pre-service teachers. As alluded to above, one result of the tests could be that those who do not pass end up leaving the degree altogether as they realise they may not have the requisite skills to successfully become a teacher: 'Of the 20 per cent [who do not pass], we've got [several] probably who aren't even in teacher education for the right reasons. And so, in a way, it's a kind of way of weeding them out' (A2).

However, the University also offers proactive responses to support and remediate pre-service teachers' personal literacy skills using two specific approaches:

– remediation for pre-service teachers who fail the internal faculty-based literacy and numeracy test; and

– support within BEd and MTeach units, including in the 'Academic Literacies' unit (ESH106).

Academic Literacies (ESH106) is an integral and compulsory part of the BEd degree and is meant to prepare pre-service teachers for academic success at the start of their university studies. On the understanding that MTeach students will already have the requisite academic literacy skills, the unit is not part of their degree.

Below are outlined a range of findings in relation to remediation support for those pre-service teachers who fail the internal literacy competency test at the University. Thereafter, discussion turns to more closely consider ESH106 Academic Literacies and the ways in which it supports pre-service teachers' personal literacy needs.

Remediation

Academic staff recognised that there are some pre-service teachers whose literacy skills are insufficient for teaching. The internal assessment can work, in effect, as a diagnostic tool. As one academic explained:

> We say, "Have a go at it. See where you sit". We get them to do it … [as soon as] they come in. And then if they fail [they receive a letter online that states] if you failed this test, rather than going and sitting it again [straight away] … here are a whole pile of links. Here are some courses you can do … So, if they went really badly, there are some foundation units that the university runs in numeracy and literacy that they can go and do (A2).

Students who are having difficulty passing the Faculty Literacy Competency test are strongly advised to complete the units "Using Words Effectively", "Clauses, Phrases and Sentences" and "Punctuation" in the Pearson online resource My Writing Lab[3].

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3   https://www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com/au/

They are also directed to other literacy support resources, including the Purdue Online Writing Lab[4], key grammar and punctuation texts, and interactive grammar and vocabulary tests to gain practice[5].

In addition, the University provides several student support programs and resources through its Student Learning service[6]. Student advisers offer learning consultations and workshops to help students develop academic skills, including English language skills. Peer assisted study sessions (PASS) in specific units is led by students who have demonstrated success in those units. Student learning drop-in sessions are an academic development service provided by student learning mentors.

In relation to the outcomes of remediation, one participant concluded by saying that 'You do have your wins. Some straighten up and fly right, but we do lose quite a few too' (A8). It also seems that not all students were (or remembered being) directed to university support services. One beginning teacher commented in our survey:

> I feel that [the] University concentrated on what you learnt at school in your own years but if you had gaps, they weren't addressed. So, if your teacher in your past years let you down, isn't that preparing you to let other students down? (BT64_BE_P).

On the whole, academic staff were pleased with the University's offerings because students with low literacy levels need support but 'there's only so much we can do in our program' (A6). This participant argued that 'I don't think it [remediation] should be at the expense of our units. We get so few units already, and we're already packing so much in' (A6). Another agreed and phrased advice to students thus:

> Look, you've got to catch up somehow, but it can't be part of your degree. We haven't got room. But there are these courses you can do (A2).

While all the academics interviewed expressed the view that they wanted all pre-service teachers to succeed, several noted that 'there's a limit to the extent to which we can support and coach someone through a process to develop those basic literacy competencies' (A5).

Support within BEd and MTeach units

Despite the comments above, support is also provided within the initial teacher education courses at the University of Tasmania. In the BEd, a key method to provide literacy support to all newly enrolled pre-service teachers is through the unit ESH106 Academic Literacies. In ESH106, pre-service teachers are invited to reflect on their own literacies in the light of the academic literacy requirements necessary for their study and their new role as pre-service teachers, acknowledging that:

> a teacher's literacy, their own literacy, is so important to teaching in classrooms [that] unless they feel confident and comfortable and love literacy, then they're not going to manage to be successful teachers (A8).

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4   https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html
5   https://www.cambridge.org/
6   http://www.utas.edu.au/students/learning

The first assessment task in that unit asks pre-service teachers to reflect on literacies past, present, and future:

> They look at the definition of literacies … [how literacy is about] multi-literacies. Digital literacies are part of that. They talk about their early experiences. They talk about their challenges as a pre-service teacher in … being asked to do these tests, and [about] how they went [and] … how they felt about them. And then they talk about strategies for the future (A8).

Such self-reflection activities are widely used in initial teacher education. They are based on a long history of advocacy for the role of reflection in professional learning, as established by Dewey (1933) and Schön (1987). Such activities help students connect previous experiences to their views on their future role as educators, especially where teacher educators are not prescriptive about how such reflection takes place (Shoffner, 2008). Certainly, too, there is evidence of the utility of self-managed and reflexive learning and personal growth practices based on what Penn-Edwards et al. (2016) call a personalised pedagogy of self.

As well as providing support to pre-service teachers by helping them to reflect on practice, formal course content is intended to scaffold their learning, but it is left to 'each individual unit coordinator … to [decide] how much [literacy] support they provide … and we all work differently [from] each other' (A8). Reflecting a commitment to tackling the challenges posed by some pre-service teachers' struggles with literacy, one academic argued:

> I think that as educators ourselves and knowing that these [pre-service] teachers are going to go into schools … [and] regardless of whether it's our role or not, we have to do something. If that's what the situation is, then that's what it is. So, we need to take control and do something there (A9).

Another academic recognised that: 'We have to pack a lot in the first year … because many students come to university without knowing simple things like adjectives, verbs' (A6).

2.1.3 Pre-enrolment support and entry requirements

In the research reported here, there is widespread agreement among academics and teachers that pre-service teachers need to have sound literacy skills before they enter schools as qualified teachers. Both literacy and learning support prior to enrolment in an initial teacher education course and admission requirements were noted by participants.

Literacy and learning support prior to enrolment

Several participants noted the challenges faced in addressing low levels of personal literacy among some pre-service teachers once they are enrolled in initial teacher education courses. Putting it bluntly, one academic argued that 'Our job here is helping you to become a teacher. … if you don't have literacy skills, thank you, you should not be in this program' (A4). There was widespread support for the administration of an entry level literacy test before enrolment in the degrees (see section 7.1).

> **Participants noted the challenges faced in addressing low levels of personal literacy among some pre-service teachers once they are enrolled in initial teacher education courses. There was widespread support for the administration of an entry level literacy test *before* enrolment in the degrees.**

At present, the university offers a suite of learning support programs, including ones for literacy, which students undertake in tandem with their degrees (see above). The university also offers pre-degree and bridging courses (Table 1).

Table 1: University of Tasmania pre-degree and bridging courses

Program	Basic Aims	
University Preparation Program[7]	– flexibly delivered enabling program to provide adult learners with academic learning skills and the confidence and personal skills to do well in studies – successful completion enables students to meet general admission requirements for undergraduate degree courses	– provides an opportunity for students to establish, revise, and upgrade skills relevant to higher education study
Murina (Aboriginal Enabling) Program[8]	– a bridging program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students aged 18 years and over	– to support these students to gain skills, confidence, and knowledge to succeed at undergraduate study – embedded in a strong pakana cultural framework – rigorous focus on academic, research, and study skills
UniStart Program[9]	– an academic transition program designed for all commencing undergraduate students, and postgraduate students returning to study are welcome to attend – designed to equip students with skills such as critical thinking, critical reading, and academic writing	– offered on campus and via distance over multiple periods – provides opportunities to improve skills in: using the University library; navigating the online environment; acclimatising to university; presentation skills; oral communication; and formal writing
Diploma of University Studies[10]	– designed as an alternative entry pathway to university study – students study units which provide the skills and knowledge related to their intended degree and are given support to maximise chances of success	– an alternative entrance program for bachelor level study and not a stand-alone qualification with career outcomes – completion provides achievement at introductory level in two units
In addition:		
Associate Degree (Education Support)[11]	– two-year course to provide an educational qualification for Teacher Aides/School Support Officers/Home Schooling parents	– graduates will be sought after in education careers other than teaching – graduates will be sought after in the industry training sector, and will be suited to communication-based jobs, public relations and other sectors emphasising problem-solving and communication

Source: Adapted near verbatim from http://www.utas.edu.au/courses/study-areas/pathway-programs and sub-pages.

Note: English as a Second Language and Foundation Studies programs for international students are not included here.

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7 http://www.utas.edu.au/courses/university-college/courses/e0d-university-preparation-program
8 http://www.utas.edu.au/courses/acad/courses/w0d-murina-aboriginal-enabling-program
9 http://www.utas.edu.au/courses/acad/courses/x0a-unistart-program
10 http://www.utas.edu.au/courses/university-college/courses/21a-diploma-of-university-studies
11 http://www.utas.edu.au/courses/cale/courses/42a-associate-degree-education-support

Academic entry requirements

Related to the idea that the University of Tasmania should introduce an entry test for students wanting to enrol in initial teacher education courses is a more general debate about ATAR scores for entry to teaching degrees and the extent to which students' given scores predict their academic performance at university.

For some Faculty of Education staff, stipulating relatively low ATAR scores for entry into initial teacher education courses could ensure that enough pre-service teachers enrol, both to underwrite the viability of those courses and to meet the needs of the education workforce.[12] Voicing a commonly expressed sense of ambivalence, one academic admitted to having 'flip-flopped a lot on this one because there's a practical [challenge] of attracting sufficient [numbers of] teachers versus sending out students who we don't think have got a realistic chance of getting there' (A7).

Reflecting current and wider debates about the value of ATAR,[13] opinion was divided among participants about whether it should be harder for prospective teachers to be accepted into an education degree program at the University (also see section 7.1). The TEMAG (2014, p.xviii) refers to 'diverse views regarding selection of initial teacher education students'.

For comparison, in Table 2 are listed the ATAR scores for the University of Sydney, La Trobe University and Curtin University, each of which has a particular reputation and mandate, and all of which have scores higher than that expected at the University.

Table 2: ATAR score required for entry into ITE courses at several universities

Course	University	ATAR score required of school leavers*			
	University of Tasmania	University of Sydney	La Trobe University	Curtin University
Associate Degree (Education Support)	40			
Bachelor of Adult and Applied Learning	65			
Bachelor of Arts (Education minor)	65			
Bachelor of Education (Applied Learning)	Cert III			
Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)	65	77		70
Bachelor of Early Childhood and Primary Education			73.4	
Bachelor of Education (Health and Physical Education)	65	A+C (80)		
Bachelor of Education (Primary)	65	A+C (85)	70	70
Bachelor of Education (Secondary)			72	70
Bachelor of Education (Science and Mathematics)	65	A+C (80)		
Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Humanities and Social Sciences) and BA		A+C (80)		
Bachelor of Education (Secondary Education: Mathematics) and BSc		A+C (80)		

Source: Relevant university webpages.

* At the University of Tasmania, alternative pathways include Diploma of University Studies and University Preparation Program (Table 1). All states except Queensland expect an ATAR score. (See https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-18/students-lowest-atar-scores-teaching-degree-offers-secret-report/10200666)

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12 http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/1055005/Insight-Two.pdf
13 See for example: https://theconversation.com/should-we-scrap-the-atar-what-are-the-alternative-options-experts-comment-55501)

Enrolment data suggest around half of students enrol into the BEd on a basis other than the ATAR, such as mature age special entry, a VET award, or via prior enrolment in a different university course; the ATAR is not used for postgraduate degrees such as the MTeach.

Among participants, those who advocated for higher entry level scores to education courses were unwavering in this view, as evident from the following comments:

> Well, entry-level scores have gone up recently this year … but I'd still like to see them be as high as [the University of] Melbourne (A4).

> I don't know if I'm allowed to say this, but I do think the entrance scores need to be higher. Sorry, but I do. If you're going to teach literacy in your first year out, you have to be literate (EP1_PS).

The assumptions embedded in these views are worth further consideration. For example, Diamond and O'Brien-Malone (2018, p.110) have recently reported on their work examining the relationships between and among ATAR performance, pathways to university entry, and subsequent performance in first year studies. They have found that 'outstanding performance is largely confined to students entering university from secondary school (Year 12 entry), rather than from an institution for technical and further education (TAFE)'. At the same time, however, 'for any given ATAR, the risk of failure is higher amongst Year 12 entry students than among TAFE entry students'. Outlining a range of complex ramifications from their findings, especially for educational policy, the authors emphasise the point that the relationship between performance and ATAR scores is not a simple one.

The caution shown by Diamond and O'Brien-Malone (2018) reinforces earlier findings reported by the TEMAG (2014, p.13) that draw on a rich case study of data from Monash University (Dobson & Skuja, 2005), summarising findings thus:

> Available research indicates that while ATAR may be a good predictor of success for students entering university with strong secondary school performance, it loses predictive capability for those entering university with lower scores, as many students with average or comparatively low senior secondary results also do well once at university. Significantly, the research also noted that, while rankings are clearly a very good predictor of performance in engineering, agriculture and science, the relationship is low for education.

Certainly, some participants emphasised the need for flexibility in terms of admission requirements. One academic staff member cautioned against equating a tertiary entrance score with quality of performance at the end of a course:

> If you set the bar too high, you're denying access to some who would otherwise be really enthusiastic teachers [and] who might grow into the job over four years, you know? (A7).

While there was agreement that pre-service teachers need to demonstrate that they meet the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* on graduation, it was noted that 'not everyone has a traditional entry into university and [we need] to make sure that we have different pathways for different people' (A5):

> So, we're saying we'll maintain a high standard but not be inflexible about what that standard is or how that can be achieved. So not everyone will have the same ATAR score (A5).

"while [ATAR] rankings are clearly a very good predictor of performance in engineering, agriculture and science, the relationship is low for education"

(TEMAG, 2014, p.13).

> Since January 2017, everyone applying for admission to any of the initial teacher education courses at the University of Tasmania must complete the Non-Academic Capability Assessment Tool, which examines personal traits as well as understandings about becoming a teacher.

All in all, it seems that ATAR scores are only one part of the process of creating high quality beginning teachers, and opinions vary about the usefulness of an ATAR benchmark for entry into initial teacher education courses (Morgan & Apsland, 2018).

2.2 Capacities and dispositions for teaching

Discussion about entry requirements led participants to consider the importance of taking account of pre-service teachers' non-academic capabilities and dispositions for teaching generally. As noted in our Phase 1b report, Wurf and Croft-Piggin (2015, p.86) found that:

> ATAR was a significant predictor of achievement, [but] it was not the strongest predictor. Students' self-reported behavioural engagement and motivation … emerged as the most powerful single predictor of academic achievement.

While the focus in that research was on academic achievement, it corroborates a view held by participants in the research reported here, consistent with arguments in favour of alternative pathways into teaching, that these non-academic capabilities are just as, if not more important than, ATAR scores:

> As far as the quality of intake [is concerned], I work with any students I'm given. I'm paid to do that. Some of them are harder than others, but I think their literacy is less of a problem than their attitude towards learning and engagement. So, for the students who are determined to work their hardest, they will be okay (A8).

This section addresses two issues: the way in which non-academic capabilities are assessed at UTAS, and findings about personal characteristics emphasised in the data.

2.2.1 Assessment of non-academic capabilities

Established in 2014 to advise the Australian Government and Council of Australian Governments about how to improve teacher education courses, the TEMAG (2014, p.xv) has recommended that:

> Higher education providers select the best candidates into teaching using sophisticated approaches that ensure initial teacher education students possess the required academic skills and personal characteristics to become a successful teacher.

In response to the reference to personal characteristics, all prospective pre-service teachers applying for admission to the University of Tasmania to gain entry to any of the initial teacher education courses must, since 1 January 2017, complete the Non-Academic Capability Assessment Tool.[14] NACAT is an online, entry-level assessment that focuses on a range of personal traits and capabilities (willingness to learn, conscientiousness, resilience, communication skills, and organisation and planning

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14 For prospective pre-service teachers, completion of the Teacher Capability Assessment Tool replaces the need to sit the NACAT. See: http://www.utas.edu.au/education/student-resources/non-academic-capability. In 2018, UTAS Faculty of Education began using the Non-Academic Requirements for Teacher Entry (NARTE) assessment process, administered by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

skills) and elicits information about respondents' understanding of what it means to become a (pre-service) teacher. Applicants must write a 1000-word personal statement demonstrating awareness of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and confirm that they have completed this work without assistance.[15] The instructions outline two categories (Table 3).

Table 3: NACAT categories and instructions[16]

Category 1: Interest in teaching and children/young people

Write approximately 500 words/one page about your motivation and suitability for teaching. You may consider the following prompts to frame your response:

– Who or what has inspired you to become a teacher?

– Why is teaching a good career choice?

– Why are you interested in teaching children/young people?

– What subjects are you interested in teaching and why?

– What does being a good teacher mean?

– What skills and abilities do you have that will make you a good teacher?

Category 2: Involvement in personal learning and leadership activities

Write approximately 500 words/one page about your involvement in learning and/or leadership activities that demonstrate capabilities such as:

– Willingness to learn

– Conscientiousness

– Resilience

– Interpersonal and communication skills

– Organisation and planning skills

Described by one academic as 'a hurdle rather than a tool to exclude' (A1), the NACAT was highly valued by staff working in University of Tasmania initial teacher education courses as 'something they have to do before they can even come to a class' (A2). The observation was made that the NACAT has had the effect of reducing the number of applicants who were perhaps ambivalent about teaching as a career choice and, as a result, 'the standard and quality … is a little bit better now (A2).

Because NACAT was introduced in 2017, it was not part of the experiences had by the beginning teachers we surveyed for Phase 3 and interviewed for Phase 2. While NACAT therefore does not feature in their reflections it is relevant as an action already taken at the University to improve pre-service teacher education.

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15 https://utaseducation.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8IzbRQNmVsSYyfH
16 Quoted from https://utaseducation.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8IzbRQNmVsSYyfH

One specific personality trait considered vital in order for pre-service teachers to become successful teachers of literacy was an openness to ongoing learning.

2.2.2 Key motivations and personality traits

Participants emphasised the importance of understanding pre-service teachers' motivations for enrolling in an initial teacher education course. Evidence of a strong desire to become a teacher was regarded as a key indicator of suitability to successfully undertake any such course. For one academic, there was a notable difference between students enrolling at the start and the middle of the year:

> The students who start in first semester are the ones who are really wanting to be a teacher, they're organised this time of year, ready to enrol in first semester. So, first semester's pretty good. Second semester, less so, because there's some of the accidental students who just happen to wander along and UTAS offers a mid-year enrolment, and so they take that (A8).

Among the specific personality traits noted as vital for pre-service teachers to possess if they are to become successful teachers of literacy was an openness to ongoing learning. Interestingly, an experienced practitioner who participated in Phase 2 of the project observed that in recent years there was less evidence of this trait among beginning teachers: 'it's those lifelong kinds of learners that would take on all that stuff from those people around them, and I don't think you see that as much anymore' (EP15_PS). Since 'willingness to learn' is included in NACAT, it will be useful to see if graduates who commenced after January 2017 unsettle this kind of perception.

Returning to the issues discussed in section 2.1, and the adequacy of the LANTITE for assessing whether pre-service teachers' personal literacy skills are 'good enough' for teaching, one academic summed up a sense of internal conflict as follows:

> In one way, I really worry about [pre-service teachers being able to sit the LANTITE multiple times]. But in another way, if they're so determined, then maybe that's a good quality for a teacher to have and maybe they'll get some extra support once they're in a school (A6).

The matter of the support provided for new graduates in their first professional teaching jobs is taken up in section 5. However, attention turns first to a key focus of this report, namely the detailed context in which the university prepares pre-service teachers to teach literacy.

Section 3. University context

Popular wisdom tends to position universities as sites in which teachers-to-be gain requisite theoretical knowledge, while schools and classrooms are seen as sites where "real learning" happens. Such views are unfortunate because they create a false dichotomy between 'theory' and 'practice' and perpetuate a perceived 'knowing/doing gap' (Yeigh & Lynch, 2017, p.115) in initial teacher education.

As noted in the Phase 1b literature review (Stewart et al., 2018a), discussion needs to shift away from simplistic notions about the need for 'more practice' and 'less theory' toward a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes quality teacher education. Evidence suggests that the most effective initial teacher education programs are those that successfully integrate university-based coursework and practical professional experience (Kriewaldt et al., 2017; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Love, 2009). The discussion that follows is based on such understanding.

The section starts with a description of the initial teacher education programs at the University of Tasmania, with a focus on the coursework offerings that are specifically relevant to the preparation of pre-service teachers for teaching literacy. Findings are presented first in terms of course content, structure, and delivery, and then in relation to assessment of pre-service teachers for teaching literacy.

As a bridge to section 4, in which attention turns to the Professional Experience component of initial teacher education, the discussion of the university context concludes by considering the relationship between the University and the Department of Education as it is currently perceived by the participants in the research.

Evidence suggests that the most effective initial teacher education programs are those that successfully integrate university-based coursework and practical professional experience, avoiding a false dichotomy between "theory" and "practice".

3.1 Initial teacher education at the University of Tasmania

At the University, there are two main pathways to obtaining a teaching degree:

– Bachelor of Education (BEd)

– Master of Teaching (MTeach)

The BEd is an undergraduate degree completed in a minimum of four years. The degree may focus on early childhood and primary teaching, or on secondary teaching in the areas of health and physical education (HPE), science and maths, or applied learning.

As a postgraduate degree, the MTeach may be completed within two years and may have either a primary teaching or a secondary teaching focus.

The BEd and the MTeach are discussed in turn below, each discussion focusing attention specifically on the units of study that prepare pre-service teachers for teaching literacy. A distinction is made between units of study that are *literacy*-focused and those that are *English*-focused. Each unit is considered first in terms of content, and observations are made about how the requirements of the Australian Curriculum are addressed. For each unit, a summary is provided of outline the

intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and assessment tasks (ATs); comments are made about how they align with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Graduate)*; and unit structure and delivery are reported on.[17]

Table 4: Literacy/English units, University of Tasmania initial teacher education courses

Level	Bachelor of Education units	Master of Teaching units
Early Childhood	ESH106 Academic Literacies ESH110 Foundations of English ESH210 Developing Understandings of English ESH310 Critical Approaches to English	
Primary	ESH106 Academic Literacies ESH110 Foundations of English ESH210 Developing Understandings of English ESH310 Critical Approaches to English	EMT511 Foundations of English EMT611 English Curriculum and Pedagogy
Secondary (English)		EMT515 Approaches to English Teaching EMT610 Teaching, Literature, Culture
Secondary (Other)	ESH106 ESH112 Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice	EMT510 Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice

3.1.1 Bachelor Education

The BEd comprises 32 units, of which five are particularly relevant to the present research. Two units are literacy-focused (relating to literacy as general capability across the curriculum) and three relate to English as a specific learning area in the Australian Curriculum: English (AC: E).

ESH106 Academic Literacies

Academic Literacies is a first-year unit, compulsory for all BEd students, primary and secondary. As noted in Section 2, the unit aims 'to prepare pre-service teachers for academic success at the start of [their] university studies' and to 'reflect on [their] own literacies in light of the academic literacy requirements necessary for [their] study and [their] new role as … pre-service teachers' (ESH106_UO).

The unit includes the requirement to undertake national numeracy and literacy testing for initial teacher education students, which is mandated by the Australian Government, and the expectation that students will develop a 'portfolio of evidence'

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17 See https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/apst-resources/australian_professional_standard_for_teachers_final.pdf

as they progress through their teacher education course. (This matter is discussed more in Section 3.2 in relation to assessment of pre-service teachers.)

Content

In the Academic Literacies unit, pre-service teachers investigate ideas about academic integrity and apply those concepts to master referencing conventions. They also learn about online communication, the use of social media and associated ethical considerations, and digital literacies and the use of technologies to support academic work. The unit provides opportunities to develop and practise academic writing in a supported writing task:

> In summary, the unit identifies and then elaborates expectations in relation to a range of essential academic literacies and links to the professional application of these literacies for pre-service teachers (ESH106_UO).

Intended Learning Outcomes

– ILO1*:* Identify and reflect on academic literacy strategies, processes, and requirements and on how these might support you to achieve academic success.

– ILO2*:* Demonstrate and enact knowledge and understanding of policies and practices relating to academic integrity.

– ILO3*:* Use digital search tools and develop strategies to find and critically access credible, accurate, and reliable scholarly material.

– ILO4*:* Use a range of technologies and media to construct and communicate ideas, concepts, and knowledge informed by critical engagement with the literature.

Assessment Tasks

– *AT1: Personal reflection on literacies* requires pre-service teachers to outline how they understand literacy and reflect on their own learning experiences, including the challenges they face as new pre-service teachers and the plans they mean to put in place to address those challenges.

– *AT2: Online quizzes* require pre-service teachers to complete a number of quizzes about academic integrity, APA referencing, social media and ethical online practice, academic literacies, and literacies in action.

– *AT3: Essay* requires pre-service teachers to select a quote relating to education and learning and then build an argument applying the quote to the context of contemporary schooling, supporting their ideas with scholarly literature. The task is in two stages: an essay plan is submitted and then used to develop an academic essay.

– *AT4: Production of digital artefact* requires pre-service teachers to use the argument developed in AT3 as the basis for a digital artefact, using minimal text and using instead images, and possibly audio and/or animation to express their idea.

It is worth noting that in this unit, assessment is embedded in and drives the content.

> So that's why students who have this strategy—where they just do the assessment and ignore the content—usually fall over in this [unit] because you just can't do that (A8).

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1	AT1, AT2	2.5, 6.2, 7.1
ILO2	AT2, AT3, AT4	2.5, 2.6, 6.2, 7.1
ILO3	AT2, AT3	6.2, 7.1
ILO4	AT1, AT2, AT3, AT4	2.5, 2.6, 6.2, 7.1

Structure

The unit content is structured in five modules, as follows:

Module 1: Personal literacies includes audit of pre-service teachers' existing literacy skills to meet new literacy challenges; completion of the Faculty Literacy and Numeracy Competencies Test (noted in section 2).

Module 2: Academic Integrity includes understanding scholarship in terms of recognising and acknowledging the contributions of others; academic integrities and practice.

Module 3: Academic Literacies includes academic writing as a defined process with stages, work to develop and adapt content depending on the genre and vehicle of communication.

Module 4: Literacies in Action includes using literacy skills to engage with academic activities and to produce writing for assessment purposes; production of a synthesised, polished product.

Module 5: Literacies in the Digital Age includes discussion of digital literacy as an integral part of contemporary education; use of technologies to support and extend communication and presentation skills.

In relation to digital literacies, the following comment is noteworthy:

> The digital literacy aspect … tends to get put into curriculum units in a peripheral way, whereas it is actually a curriculum area in its own right. And so, we can integrate [the digital into ESH106]. I mean, the digital storytelling work that I do, you can integrate all sorts of literacies into that (A8).

Delivery

This unit is offered *online* and *face-to-face*. A blended learning approach is used to align teaching and learning content for external and on-campus students. All teaching materials for all students are provided on the unit MyLO Page. The unit is also based on a "flipped classroom" approach, meaning that before attending class or completing activities all students, external and on-campus, are required to complete preparatory work such as watching videos, reading, or reflecting.

ESH110 Foundations of English

Foundation of English is a first-year unit compulsory for *early childhood and primary pre-service teachers*. It is the first of three English units in the BEd degree, provides a foundation to the discipline of English, and is the basis for two subsequent English units.

Content

This unit focuses first on the nature of language and culture, and on how young people learn to use language from birth. It then seeks to provoke curiosity about language functions, introducing critical thinking about texts, and the role of texts in culture and society. Pre-service teachers engage in close study of texts and consider their implications for learning contexts:

> This unit has a major focus on the Language Strand of the Australian Curriculum: English and aims to develop understandings of the nature of language and how it works in contemporary society and schools (ESH110_UO).

Pre-service teachers are invited to reflect on their own experiences of learning and participation in English activities from twin perspectives as both student and adult. They are asked to share these reflections with others, and to use them as the basis for curricular and pedagogical analysis and evaluation to inform their own teaching of English. The unit outline for ESH110 notes that 'student contributions are an important part of the learning context for this unit' (ESH110_UO).

Intended Learning Outcomes:

– ILO1: Apply knowledge of culture, language, and literacy concepts and theories.

– ILO2: Analyse and interpret children's language choices in written texts.

– ILO3: Demonstrate academic and information literacy skills.

Assessment Tasks

– *AT1: Knowledge quiz about language* requires pre-service teachers to complete a one-hour timed quiz analysing a selection of text excerpts to demonstrate their knowledge of systems of language.

– *AT2: Understanding language* requires pre-service teachers to apply their knowledge of language and culture, oral and written language, and language variation and change to write an essay responding to a scenario and take account of cultural influences and social interactions with parents, caregivers, peers, and prospective English educators.

– *AT3: Analysing and interpreting language* requires pre-service teachers to analyse and interpret the genre staging and grammatical features of three short texts: an information report, a factual recount, and a procedure.

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1	AT1, AT2	1.2, 2.1, 2.5, 3.3
ILO2	AT2, AT3	2.1, 2.5, 5.4
ILO3	AT2, AT3	3.4

Structure

The unit is structured in two modules.

Module 1: Foundations of language and literacy includes language and culture, systems of language, language learning—oral language, language learning—written language, and language variation and change.

Module 2: Understanding texts includes features of texts—purpose and structure, knowledge about language, processes/verb groups, participants/noun groups and adjective groups, adverbials/ circumstances.

Delivery

This unit is *fully online* and for both external and on-campus students the expected time commitment is approximately ten hours per week.

External students engage with the unit in weekly lectures, readings, tasks, and discussions, and complete assignments. That work includes reading or viewing the resources provided, searching for additional information/resources necessary to complete assessment tasks and other activities, and participating in weekly tasks and online discussions.

On-campus students are expected to listen to lectures delivered online via MyLO prior to attending a weekly two-hour tutorial on campus. In addition to accessing lectures online, pre-service teachers may be required to engage in other online activities to complete the unit.

Students are supported in preparing assignments by sharing ideas and group discussions. 'This collaborative sharing of ideas is an important aspect of the unit and all students, on-campus and online, are expected to participate' (ESH110_UO).

ESH210 Developing Understandings of English

Developing Understandings of English is the second-year unit that builds on ESH110 in language, closely integrating the content with the Literacy Strand of the Australian Curriculum: English. It is compulsory for early childhood and primary pre-service teachers.

Content

This unit focuses on contemporary approaches to teaching reading, including close attention to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, word knowledge, and comprehension of a wide range of texts. In relation to the teaching of phonics, the following comment is noteworthy:

> There's a fairly strong focus on phonics and phonemic awareness partly because, even though we've always been doing it, it's such a hot potato. It's really political, and the messages that students hear from all different places confuses them, and … so, we spend quite a bit of time talking about what the debates are, talking about what they might see in different schools, teaching them what phonemes are, what phonemic awareness is, what different programs are out there … So, there's a lot of connection between the content that they learn and then how they need to apply that to their teaching (A6).

Emphasis is given to teaching children to write, with a close study of text types and grammar:

> Throughout the unit there is a strong focus on the pedagogical imperatives underpinning the English curriculum—including explicit teaching, assessing student work and catering for diverse learners (ESH210_UO).

Pre-service teachers learn to apply this knowledge by developing a portfolio of lesson plans in reading and writing.

As with ESH110, ESH210 asks pre-service teachers to reflect on their own experiences of learning and participation in English activities, and to share their reflections with others using them and associated conversations as the basis for curricular and pedagogical analysis and evaluation. Student contributions and collaborative sharing of ideas are again emphasised as important aspects of the learning context for this unit and 'all students, on-campus and online, are expected to participate' (ESH210_UO).

Intended Learning Outcomes

– ILO1*:* Apply theoretical knowledge about the English discipline.

– ILO2*:* Analyse and describe written texts.

– ILO3*:* Design a portfolio of lessons / experiences to teach reading and writing, in response to specific outcomes and diverse student needs.

Highlighting one of the key tensions inherent in initial teacher education, one academic said:

> I would probably have a whole unit just on reading and a whole unit just on writing. At the moment, that unit is probably the most packed of all. But if we did that and didn't have any literature, we'd be missing a third of the curriculum (A6).

– *AT1: Phonics Quiz* requires pre-service teachers to analyse and describe a selection of text excerpts to demonstrate their phonological and graphological knowledge.

– *AT2: Reading Portfolio* requires pre-service teachers to work with a partner completing the same degree to design two lessons/activities using a text from a set of options. They list and then describe how they would assess whether and to what extent students have met the intended lesson outcomes and justify their planning using relevant theoretical knowledge about learning to read, supported by the AC: E and/or Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

– *AT3: Grammar Quiz* requires pre-service teachers to analyse and describe a selection of text excerpts to demonstrate knowledge of language concepts/ grammar.

– *AT4: Writing Portfolio* requires pre-service teachers to design a portfolio of two lessons to teach the concepts related to a specific outcome selected from either the early childhood or primary outcomes. Each lesson plan is to account for the requirement to teach the focus language feature using the gradual release of responsibility model, indicate how the lesson would be assessed, and provide the theoretical rationale/s to justify the design of the lesson.

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1	AT1, AT4	1.2, 1.5, 2.1
ILO2	AT1, AT3	2.1
ILO3	AT2, AT4	2.1, 2.3, 2.5

Structure

The unit is structured in two modules.

Module 1: The teaching of reading includes introduction to the AC: E and the EYLF (Outcome 5); phonological knowledge; graphological knowledge; semantic knowledge—comprehension; teaching and assessing reading.

Module 2: The teaching of writing includes introduction to writing—spelling, punctuation, and handwriting; grammar—the language of experience, the language of evaluation; persuasive texts; imaginative texts; assessing writing.

Noting that 'some of the statistics that have come out of NAPLAN show that while reading has steadily been slightly improving, it's writing that's been taking a big dive', one academic said that in the BEd there was a strong emphasis on grammar across the three English units [ESH110, ESH210, ESH310]:

> I think by looking at the grammar really, really closely, and having links across all three units, whether you're looking at written grammar or visual grammar, I think that's kind of nice and cohesive, and they get a really strong opportunity to understand how grammar works (A6).

Delivery

As with ESH110, this unit is *fully online* and both external and on-campus students are expected to commit to it approximately ten hours per week.

External students engage with the unit in weekly lectures, readings, tasks, and discussions, and complete assignments. That work includes reading or viewing the resources provided, searching for additional information/resources needed to complete assessment tasks and other activities, and participating in weekly tasks and online discussions.

On-campus students are expected to listen to lectures delivered online via MyLO, prior to attending a weekly two-hour tutorial on campus. Accessing lectures online, pre-service teachers may be required to engage in other online activities to complete the unit.

In addition, the unit outline for ESH210 states that:

> In this unit, face to face and online modes of delivery are integrated for the benefit of all students. All students will have access to discussion boards and online lecture and tutorial material (ESH 210_UO).

ESH310 Critical Approaches to English

Critical Approaches to English is the third-year compulsory English unit for *early childhood and primary* pre-service teachers. As the culminating unit in the series of three, it furthers the work of the preceding units (ESH110 and ESH210). However, the focus is on the literature strand of the AC: E.

Content

This unit involves critical studies of children's literature, including picture books, traditional tales, novels, poetry, film and other media forms. Pre-service teachers:

> explore the role of literature in the socialisation of children, and … learn about the ways that beliefs, values and ideologies in literature shape children's lives … [They also] investigate the written and visual language choices authors and illustrators make to serve different purposes in different social, historical and cultural contexts (ESH310_UO].

Included in the program of study are classroom approaches to teaching literature, such as responding to literature, examining language features and devices, and creating multimodal narrative texts. Pre-service teachers also learn to apply both theoretical and pedagogical knowledge by designing a literature-based unit of work.

Noting the need to vertically align the three English units in the BEd, one participant said:

> we have tried to make it sequential, make each unit dependent upon what they've learned before … So, it's not just the content but also the pedagogy that is increased in sophistication by the time they get to the third year (A6).

Intended Learning Outcomes

– ILO1: Critically examine theoretical concepts about children's literature.

– ILO2: Analyse children's literature from a range of perspectives.

– ILO3: Design critical and creative classroom experiences centred around literature.

Assessment Tasks

– *AT1: Quiz* requires pre-service teachers to demonstrate their understanding of textual concepts and their skills in analysing literature.

– *AT2: Short Answer Quiz* requires pre-service teachers to demonstrate their skills in analysing and interpreting visual texts for their structural and ideological meanings and applying this knowledge to a teaching context by developing a lesson plan based on their analysis.

– *AT3: Unit Design* requires pre-service teachers to create a unit of work comprising eight sequenced lessons centred around a theme or issue and based on a literacy genre of their own choosing. They must provide an overview of their eight lessons, including assessment, and a rationale justifying their unit design based on contemporary theory about the teaching of literature.

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1	AT1, AT3	2.1, 3.2
ILO2	AT1, AT2	2.1
ILO3	AT2, AT3	3.3, 3.4, 5.1

Structure

The unit is structured to address the following topics:

– the literature strand of the English curriculum;

– poetry: poetic devices;

– picture books:semiotic approaches; ideological approaches;

– narrative concepts: point of view and focalisation; character; theme, plot, settings;

– genre: traditional tales; fantasy fiction; realistic fiction;

– designing a unit: critical and creative pedagogies; sequencing and assessing.

Delivery

In 2018, this unit was offered in *online mode* only. Early childhood and primary students had separate tutorial groups.

The unit outline notes that:

> Teaching strategies/learning approaches used in ESH310 are consistent with instructional methods used in higher education. Additionally, many of the strategies/approaches/resources used in the unit are drawn from well-respected publications on best practice English instruction and can be applied to primary and early childhood classroom contexts (ESH310_UO).

ESH112 Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice

Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice is a first-year unit for BEd pre-service teachers specialising in *secondary HPE*, *science and maths*, *and applied learning*. It addresses literacy as a cross-curriculum priority in the Australian Curriculum and accounts for the requirement that all teachers be teachers of literacy.

Content

This unit focuses on literacy for communicating in ways that are appropriate to the discipline, audience, and purpose, noting that communication increasingly involves information communication technologies (ICTs), multimedia, video, music, and other forms appropriate to varied discipline areas. Pre-service teachers learn about theories of language and literacy in terms of their implications for teaching and learning, and about the literacy demands of various curriculum areas.

Intended Learning Outcomes

– ILO1: Reflect upon the concept of literacy as a cross-curriculum teaching responsibility.

– ILO2: Integrate what you know about literacy with your subject area expertise.

– ILO3: Design literacy strategies to engage students in your subject area, using what you know about literacy and your subject area.

– ILO4: Select and design resources for your subject area, using your professional knowledge and knowledge of literacy theory.

Assessment Tasks

– *AT1: Literacy Infographic* requires pre-service teachers to consider significant concepts, and theories that have expanded their existing notions of literacy and then develop an infographic showing different ways that literacy is an essential part of their subject area/s. The infographic must be supported with a theoretical rationale derived from the unit content and must link these to classroom practices.

– *AT2: Reflective Journal* requires pre-service teachers to create a weekly 150- to 200-word reflective response to a guiding question provided at the end of each week's content.

– *AT3: Planning for Literacy Outcomes* requires pre-service teachers to demonstrate their understanding of planning for literacy outcomes by selecting and using a report or a persuasive or procedural text appropriate for the learners in their context.

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1	AT1, AT2, AT3	2.1, 2.5, 3.2, 3.3, 6.3
ILO2	AT1	1.2, 2.1, 2.5
ILO3	AT1, AT3	2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 3.2, 3.3, 6.3
ILO4	AT3	1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 3.3

Structure

The unit is structured in two modules.

Module 1: Theories of literacy includes introduction to language, literacy, and culture; literacy across the content areas; multiliteracies—contexts and discourses, modes and mediums; functional literacy pedagogy; critical literacy; genres.

Module 2: Teaching literacy includes persuasive, procedural, and report texts; language features of persuasive, procedural, and report texts; close study 1—Humanities; close study 2—Sciences.

Delivery

This unit was offered online only in Semester 1, 2018.[18] The unit outline states that:

> The Student Advisor or Director of Student Engagement can provide advice on strategies that might be useful in developing requisite skills with engaging with text and the online environment. We encourage you to develop study groups with others enrolled in this unit. Study groups allow for discussion and can help further develop your understanding of unit content and concepts (ESH112_UO).

Discussion is emphasised as one of the learning strategies used in this unit, noting that both formal and informal engagement on the discussion board are encouraged, and that some of these discussions form part of the assessment for this unit.

3.1.2 Master of Teaching

The MTeach has 18 units, of which five are especially relevant to preparing pre-service teachers to teach literacy. In this degree program, one unit is specifically *literacy*-focused, and the remaining four are *English*-focused.

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18 Staff availability and number of enrolments determine the mode of delivery. However, in general, units in the BEd and MTeach are offered in both face-to-face and online modes. It should also be noted that while the terms 'distance learning' and 'online learning' are sometimes used interchangeably, technically they differ in so far as 'distance' implies geography and applies to external students, while 'online' describes the method of learning. Therefore, online learning can in fact be used in a face-to-face situation, as part of a blended learning approach, and can apply to both external/distance and on-campus students.

EMT511 Foundations of English

Foundations of English is a first-year core unit for *primary pre-service teachers*, designed to introduce the discipline of English as it is articulated in the three strands of the Australian Curriculum English: Language, Literacy, and Literature. It is intended to 'provoke your curiosity about how language works, ignite your passion for English' (EMT511_UO).

Content

This unit explores how children learn to speak, read, write, and communicate in varied contexts. It focuses on contemporary approaches to teaching reading, closely attending to phonemic awareness, phonics, word knowledge, and comprehension of a wide range of texts. Pre-service teachers learn how to analyse children's language use (oral language, reading fluency, writing), and use 'specific outcomes from the curriculum to plan explicit teaching experiences for language and literacy learning' (EMT511_UO). Reading is strong focus because it 'is the foundation to success in every single subject area as you go through school' (A_BH). Pedagogy is emphasised to ensure that

> preservice teachers understand the complexities and why they need to know how to teach reading. Whether or not they'll be teaching Prep, 1, 2 or 4, 5, 6 it doesn't matter, because if students, for some reason, miss that instruction in Prep, 1, 2, they're not going to do very well for the rest of their schooling anyway … So, my units are quite practically-based (A9).

Intended Learning Outcomes

– ILO1: Apply theoretical knowledge of the English discipline to teaching and assessment.

– ILO2: Analyse a range of texts for their pedagogical purposes.

– ILO3: Reflect on and create learning experiences for teaching reading.

– ILO4: Demonstrate academic and information literacy skills through the use of scholarly literature, APA referencing, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

Assessment Tasks

– *AT1: Faculty-based Literacy Competency Test* must be attempted by pre-service teachers to be eligible to undertake Professional Experience (PE1).

– *AT2: Understanding Literacy Development* requires pre-service teachers to write three statements, with reference to the scholarly literature about the development of oral language, reading and writing skills, and to construct an analytical exposition about the importance of literacy development in contemporary Australian society.

– *AT3: Classroom Observation* requires pre-service teachers to observe and describe the teaching of reading in an authentic learning setting (i.e. while on PE1), to reflect on the reading practices observed, identifying the underpinning theoretical approaches used, and then to design a detailed learning experience for teaching one aspect of reading.

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1	AT1, AT2	2.1, 2.5
ILO2	AT1, AT2, AT3	1.2, 2.1, 2.5, 3.3, 5.4
ILO3	AT1, AT2, AT3	6.3
ILO4	AT1, AT2, AT3	–

Structure

The unit content is structured in two modules.

Module 1: Literacy Development Introduction to Language and Literacy includes: Key elements in literacy development - oral language, reading, writing.

Module 2: Teaching reading and writing includes: Strategies and approaches for teaching reading and writing; Resource sharing and collaboration.

Delivery

A range of teaching and learning strategies are used in this unit; these include group work, collaborative discussions, practical activities and individual tasks.

External students have access to discussion boards, online lectures, learning resources, and tutorial material, and are encouraged to engage with these materials on a weekly basis to develop their knowledge of English and how English is taught in primary settings.

On-campus students also have access to discussion boards, online lectures, and learning resources. They are required to attend a weekly two-hour tutorial on campus and engage actively in the material covered. As for external students, regular participation is strongly encouraged to support pre-service teachers with assignments.

As for EMT510, active engagement is strongly encouraged and evidence of this is to be demonstrated via completion of the following two activities by Week 4 of semester: attempting the Faculty-based Literacy Competency test, and regular participation in online and/or face to face tutorials.

In addition, the unit outline highlights that

> Teaching is a social profession and therefore active participation and collaboration are important aspects of this unit which all students are expected to undertake (EMT511_UO).

EMT611 English Curriculum and Pedagogy

'English Curriculum and Pedagogy' is a second-year core unit for *primary* pre-service teachers. In this unit, pre-service teachers are introduced to and examine the three strands of the Australian Curriculum: English—language, literacy, and literature.

Content

This unit is based on the range of texts typically encountered in children's lives. Emphasis is given to the importance of understanding socio-cultural contexts and their impacts on how different text types or genres construct meanings. Attention is paid to how texts vary with respect to field, tenor, and mode. Students examine features of written texts, and learn to teach text types and grammar. The unit involves critical studies of children's literature, including myths, legends, fairy tales, picture books, novels, poetry, and film. There is:

> a strong focus on the pedagogical imperatives underpinning the English curriculum—including explicit teaching, creative and critical approaches to English pedagogy, catering for diverse learners, sequencing lessons for cumulative learning, and assessment (EMT611_UO).

Intended Learning Outcomes:

– ILO1: Demonstrate theoretical knowledge about the English discipline.

– ILO2: Interpret meanings of written language and visual language.

– ILO3: Transform theoretical knowledge about discipline into practical classroom applications.

Assessment Tasks

– *AT1: Quiz* requires pre-service teachers to analyse meanings of written language.

– *AT2: Short Answer Quiz* requires pre-service teachers to analyse three texts for their written features and apply and justify their analysis to the classroom context.

– *AT3: Unit Design* requires pre-service teachers to create a unit of work comprising eight lessons that teaches one of the literary genres. Using images and text excerpts, they must include an overview, two detailed lesson plans, and a justification and reflective statement.

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1	AT3, AT3	2.1
ILO2	AT1, AT2, AT3	2.1
ILO3	AT1, AT3	3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 5.1

Structure

The unit is structured in two modules.

Module 1: Teaching Writing includes writing, grammar, and the teaching—learning cycle; written grammar—processes, participants, processes; teaching narrative text types; teaching information text types; teaching persuasive text types; and classroom strategies for further supporting student writing.

Module 2: Teaching Children's Literature includes picture books—structural meanings; critical literacy overview; picture books—ideological meanings; designing a literature unit; genre—fairy tales, realistic and historical fiction, fantasy fiction, poetry, and film.

Delivery

This unit is available for both *external* and *on-campus* students. As also stated in the unit outline for ESH310, the unit outline for EMT611 notes that the teaching strategies and learning approaches used are:

> consistent with instructional methods used in higher education. Additionally, many of the strategies/approaches/resources used in the unit are drawn from well-respected publications on best practice English instruction and can be applied to primary classroom contexts (EMT611_UO).

EMT510 Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice

Foundations of Literacy: Processes and Practice is a first-year core unit for *all secondary* pre-service teachers undertaking the MTeach. It is similar to ESH112 in that it is designed for prospective secondary school teachers. However, it differs from ESH112 in terms of the ILOs, the focus of the modules, and the assessment tasks. In common with ESH112, the 'Foundations of Literacy' unit in the MTeach has a cross-curricular focus.

Content

Designed to help pre-service teachers develop their knowledge and skills to teach literacy in secondary classrooms, this unit explores the nature of literacy in Australia. Learning about the vital roles that language and literacy play in the learning process across the curriculum, pre-service teachers examine literacy throughout curriculum documents and come to understand how they can be or are implemented across different discipline areas:

> Explorations of literacy will be related to current theories of language development and acquisition, their impact on teaching and learning, and the literacy demands/requirements of the teaching profession (EMT510_UO).

Noting that 'a lot of [secondary teaching] students have the perception that literacy is for the English teacher', one academic emphasised the need to 'embed in this unit the belief that literacy must be covered by all teachers regardless of the subject area' (A9). Expanding on how pre-service teachers learn to incorporate literacy into their subject specialist areas, this participant went on to explain:

We look at a couple of models of literacy, [including] the Four Resources Model. We look at multiliteracies, critical literacies, and visual literacies but in a very general sense. [I like to] change the texts each week. So, one week they might be looking at a Maths-based text or a Science-based text or a History text or sometimes they look at them all together. So, the Maths people will go off with their text and the English will have their text … they're actually using texts that they will be using in the classroom … So, when they do their lesson planning … they must have literacy as a general capability in that lesson plan and be able to clearly show how the content descriptors link with that general capability in the overall picture of the lesson plan (A9).

Intended Learning Outcomes

– ILO1: Articulate knowledge of current theoretical approaches to literacy.

– ILO2: Critique and reflect on your literacy skills and understandings and identify opportunities for development.

– ILO3: Embody an advanced understanding of the literacy conventions and demands associated with particular curriculum areas.

– ILO4: Identify appropriate texts for specific educational contexts and create literacy strategies to support student engagement with text.

– ILO5: Exemplify academic and information literacy skills through the use of scholarly literature, APA referencing, punctuation, spelling and grammar.

Assessment Tasks

– *AT1: Personal and Professional Reflection on 'Why Literacy?'* requires pre-service teachers to demonstrate their understandings of literacy, personally and professionally, considering significant concepts and/or theories that have expanded their existing notions of language and literacy. Reflecting on which personal literacy skills they need to develop to teach effectively in their discipline area, they need to explain how they plan to achieve this.

– *AT2: Planning Literacy Learning* requires pre-service teachers to design a lesson plan suitable for implementation in a secondary classroom, making links between their knowledge of literacy theories, curricula documents, teaching resources, and teaching strategies relevant to their discipline area, providing justification for the suitability of the lesson.

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1, ILO2	AT1	2.1, 2.5, 6.1
ILO3, ILO4	AT2	1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5
ILO5	AT1, AT2	6.2

Structure

This unit is structured in two modules.

Module 1: Foundations of Literacy and Language includes 'What is literacy and why do I need to teach it?'; literacy in the Australian context; language acquisition; literacy across the content areas.

Module 2: Literacy and Classroom Practices includes text types; multiliteracies; critical literacies; visual literacies; resource sharing and exploration of literacy organisations.

Delivery

The unit is available to both *external* students and *on-campus* students. Active engagement is expected and monitored in the following ways: attempting the internal Faculty-based Literacy Competency Test, and weekly attendance in face to face tutorials and/or weekly MyLO posts throughout the semester.

The unit outline for EMT510 states:

> If you do not demonstrate evidence of having engaged actively with this unit by completing these two activities by Week 4 of semester, your enrolment may be cancelled, or you may be withdrawn from the unit (EMT510_UO).

EMT515 Approaches to English Teaching

Approaches to English Teaching is a first-year MTeach unit compulsory for those pre-service teachers wishing to be *secondary English* teachers and is designed to provide the theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary for teaching English as a specific learning area in high school classrooms.[19]

Content

This unit focuses on how adolescents learn to read, write, and communicate in English at the secondary level. It draws on contemporary approaches to the teaching of reading and writing in the secondary years and pays close attention to the teaching of short stories, narratives, poetry, film, and multimodal texts. The unit outline notes that:

> An important part of this unit involves understanding the Australian Curriculum: English content and developing theoretically informed pedagogical approaches. You will be involved in analysing student work samples (reading and writing), observing the teaching of English in authentic learning settings, and in using the curriculum documents to plan explicit teaching experiences for language, literature, and literacy learning (EMT515_UO).

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19 As from 2019, primary specialisations are being introduced into initial teacher education courses, enabling pre-service teachers training to be primary teachers to elect to specialise as English/literacy teachers. It is worth noting that one academic made the comment that 'It's a specialisation with a very small s … it's actually just a strength or a predominance of experience … they're still going to be generalist teachers … across everything that they're supposed to do' (A1).

Intended Learning Outcomes

- ILO1: Analyse a range of literary texts and text types for their pedagogical purposes.

- ILO2: Apply theoretical knowledge of the English discipline to teaching and assessment.

- ILO3: Demonstrate academic and information literacy skills by correctly or appropriately using scholarly literature, APA referencing, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

Assessment Tasks

- *AT1: Analysis of Student Work* requires pre-service teachers to examine authentic samples of students' work and analyse two of three work samples that respond to a narrative text, a poem and a film.

- *AT2: Observing and Examining English Practice* requires pre-service teachers to observe and describe teaching of English in authentic learning settings while on PE2, reflect on their observation, identify underpinning theoretical approaches used, and then create their own learning experience for teaching one aspect of English.

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1	AT1	1.2, 2.1, 2.5, 3.3, 3.4, 5.4
ILO2	AT2	1.2, 2.1, 2.5, 3.3, 3.4, 5.4
ILO3	AT1, AT2	–

Structure

Under the broad heading "introduction to secondary English", this unit addresses the following topics: exploring the novel; exploring film; exploring poetry; exploring dramatic performances; and exploring multimodal texts.

Delivery

The unit is available for both *external* and *on-campus* students.

Because 'curriculum units such as EMT515 necessarily integrate subject English texts and theory with education and pedagogical theory', there is a heavy reading load for pre-service teachers undertaking this unit. The unit outline notes:

> You will be required to read both English texts, such as novels, as well as pedagogical theories of English teaching. Whilst the reading load will be heavy, it will be directly transferrable to your practice as a secondary English teacher, as well as being thoroughly enjoyable! (EMT515_UO).

EMT610 Teaching, Literature, Culture

Teaching, Literature, Culture is the second-year unit that follows EMT515, and it is compulsory for those MTeach pre-service teachers wishing to be *secondary English* teachers. It is intended to further pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills to teach English as a learning area, in secondary and senior secondary classrooms.

Content

This unit examines curriculum goals and content, text selection, program sequencing, and teaching strategies. Pre-service teachers develop knowledge of senior secondary English studies and knowledge of the pedagogical practices needed to implement the major aspects of AC: E content in the classroom. The unit outline notes that:

> Special emphasis is placed on the pedagogical content knowledge teachers require for effective planning and teaching subject English. This unit is both theoretical and practical in nature (EMT610_UO).

Intended Learning Outcomes

- ILO1: Demonstrate a deep understanding of best contemporary practice in teaching English, particularly in senior years.

- ILO2: Critically reflect upon an expanding repertoire of resources and strategies appropriate to teaching secondary English.

- ILO3: Create a selection of resources and strategies appropriate for classroom use.

- ILO4: Apply sophisticated knowledge of current curriculum content and sound practical knowledge of classroom teaching.

- ILO5: Identify factors that influence student development in reading comprehension and composition and accommodate these in planning learning sequences.

- ILO6: Communicate using appropriate academic and information literacy skills by correctly or appropriately using scholarly literature, APA referencing, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

Pre-service teachers undertaking this unit are encouraged to be active participants in their own learning and to draw upon their own life experiences, noting that work submitted for assessment may draw on knowledge and skills that pre-service teachers could 'reasonably be expected to have acquired before enrolling in this unit' (EMT610_UO). The unit outline delineates such knowledge and skills as 'appropriate communication, information literacy, analytical, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills', encouraging pre-service teachers:

> to take responsibility for further developing these skills and applying them to professional contexts [because] these skills and attitudes are those you will need as a teacher, and to experience personal achievement (EMT610_UO).

Assessment Tasks

– *AT1: Resource Critique and Design* requires pre-service teachers to critique a selection of English teaching resources (designed for years 9 to 12), drawing upon their knowledge of secondary and senior secondary curricula documents and knowledge of theories and approaches to the teaching of English, justifying their critique with reference to the scholarly literature. They are also required to design one to two teaching resources which address one aspect of English teaching (text studies, test types, speaking and/or listening, reading and/or viewing), and provide a justification for the suitability of their teaching resource.

– *AT2: Learning Sequence and Analysis* requires pre-service teachers to design a learning sequence suitable for implementation in a secondary or senior secondary English course comprising eight to 12 lessons, demonstrate and make links between their knowledge of curricula documents, teaching resources, pedagogical practices and student development in subject English, and provide a justification for their learning sequence.

Assessment alignment to professional standards

Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks	AITSL Teacher Standards (Graduate)
ILO1	AT1, AT2	1.2, 2.1, 2.5, 3.3, 3.4, 5.4
ILO2	AT1, AT2	1.2, 2.1, 2.5, 3.3, 3.4, 5.4
ILO3	AT1, AT2	2.5, 3.4
ILO4	AT1, AT2	2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4
ILO5	AT2	2.2, 4.1
ILO6	AT1, AT2	–

Structure

The unit is structured in two modules.

Module 1: What do I teach? includes Introduction to secondary and senior secondary English; examination of secondary and senior secondary English curricula documents and frameworks; overview of texts and text types taught in secondary and senior secondary English (prose, fiction, scripted drama, poetry, expository text, film, digital media, canonical texts); examination and exploration of resources appropriate to the content topics and text types taught in secondary English are also explored.

Module 2: How do I teach it? includes introduction to pedagogical content knowledge: putting theory into practice; barriers influencing student development and progress in English; instructional techniques: explicit instruction and inquiry; appropriate reading, writing, viewing, speaking and listening strategies and approaches for teaching subject English; program planning for English: designing learning outcomes and assessment tasks.

Concerns about the crowded curriculum in initial teacher education courses means that not all aspects of the Australian Curriculum can be covered adequately, and content knowledge may be prioritised at the expense of pedagogical knowledge.

Delivery

This unit is offered both *externally* and *on-campus*.

Both external and on-campus students have access to discussion boards, online lectures, learning resources, and tutorial material, and are encouraged to engage with these materials on a weekly basis to develop their knowledge of English and of how English is taught in secondary and senior settings.

In addition, on-campus students are required to attend and engage actively in a weekly two-hour tutorial. However, regular participation is expected of all students and is intended to ensure that pre-service teachers are supported with assignment preparation by sharing ideas, engaging in video walkthroughs and group discussions, and by listening to advice from the unit coordinator.

Reiterating the statement made in EMT511, pre-service teachers are reminded that 'teaching is a social profession and therefore active participation and collaboration are important aspects of this unit which all students are expected to undertake' (EMT610_UO).

3.1.3 General comments regarding content, structure, and delivery

Participants made various general comments in relation to content, structure, and delivery of initial teacher education programs at the University of Tasmania. While these comments were not always made specifically about the literacy-related units of study of interest here, they are pertinent to the broader context in which initial teacher education occurs and have an impact on pre-service teacher preparation for literacy teaching. Themes that emerged from these wider discussions are considered below.

Content

Overwhelmingly, the comment made about course and unit content was that the sheer volume of material to be covered meant that many teacher educators felt they were 'just scratching the surface' (A9) of the necessary content:

> There are three strands in the English curriculum. They barely get a taste of it … because there is so much to cover (A2).

These three strands are language, literature, and literacy. Teaching into such a "crowded curriculum", teacher educators said that they felt their only option was to pack their units densely with content, so that:

> our pre-service teachers in both the Bachelor of Education and the Master of Teaching are able to graduate, hand on heart, with as much preparation as we can squeeze in (A4).

However, preparation for teaching does not necessarily equate to "packing in content", as one experienced classroom practitioner emphasised:

> [They need to know both] what to teach [and] how to teach and how to develop students to be thinkers, and problem solvers, and inquirers and—unless we do that at a training level with preservice teachers—we'll keep [getting] teachers who come out thinking content is the ultimate aim of teaching. They become some purveyors of encyclopaedic knowledge to students. That's not what teachers should be (EP39_PS).

It was suggested by some participants in Phase 2 that one way to redress this perceived imbalance between the *what* and the *how of literacy teaching in initial teacher education would be to make the Department*'s Good Teaching Literacy Guides more prominent in course content. When asked about the incorporation of the guides into the University's BEd and MTeach courses, academics said they 'refer to Department of Education relevant documents' and value students being 'familiar with some of the local practices and documents' (A5). They are careful, however, not to make departmental materials 'a big part of the content' (A3) since initial teacher education at the University needs to prepare graduates for teaching in any jurisdiction and in all schools.

Structure

Academics participating in the research were united in their praise of the English/literacy team in the Faculty of Education at the University, emphasising the sequential nature of the literacy and English units in both degrees. This sequencing suggests strong vertical integration in terms of structure of these units. However, there seems to be limited evidence of attempts to link literacy as a general capability between units that were not oriented to literacy or English, suggesting weaker integration within courses as a whole.

One academic said that 'nearly all our units identify language … and [disciplinary] discourse as a very important component of that', noting that quizzes are frequently used to test comprehension:

> But if you don't link that then to explicit literacy and show them that's actually what you're trying to do here, that that's the underlying nature of what you're doing, then the students mightn't realise it (A7).

By way of explanation, another participant said that 'it's very culturally embedded that people manage their own units' and while staff get on well, 'there is no formal arrangement' for connecting their units (A8). This lack of connection across units may contribute to less coherent development of literacy teaching skills. As one participant noted:

> The consistent development of literacy across the course is not clear. It's there. It's just not clear and it's not consistent (A7).

Delivery

In relation to delivery of course content, two issues emerged from the data as significant. The first relates to *how* unit content is delivered to pre-service teachers and the second to who delivers it.

Regarding delivery mode, most participants expressed substantial concerns about the increasing use of *online* teaching and learning. Academics recognised that students 'want flexibility because they have to earn money to study' (A4) and a lot of online students are mature-aged. While understanding that many pre-service teachers choose to study online in order to fit their initial teacher education in around a range of life commitments, academics were concerned about the effect this had on their learning. One academic emphasised the point that 'their academic abilities are quite similar' but 'for the students who I do fail, more of them are online than they are face-to-face' (A9). A student who 'did 100 per cent of my degree online' stated that in particular 'The final unit covering adverbs, clauses, etc … was heavy and hard. That really needs to be a whole unit and didn't work well for online students' (BT4_MT_S).

On the whole, academic staff preferred 'to see greater face-to-face delivery or expectation that [pre-service teachers] actually attend on campus' because:

> from the perspective of the lecturer, you've got the opportunity to have that interaction happening in real time and so you can actually pick up on their errors or their beliefs or whatever they do, whereas you've got less chance of changing beliefs online because you don't have that interaction with them (A3).

Beginning teachers also valued face-to-face classes, wanting more contact time and less online delivery:

> Nearly every subject that we did in the Masters of Teaching course, I feel … could've been improved by more contact time … The subjects that I remember the best, and that I learned the most from, were the ones that had more contact time, with really engaging tutors or lecturers that kind of got us into workshops. … The ones that were online, I feel like I didn't engage with anywhere near as much (BT74_MT_S).

However, not all participants shared the view that online teaching and learning were inferior to face-to-face interaction.

> That's interesting because that's often the assumption, that if you want students to engage, they have to come face-to-face, but I have students in class who check their phones and Facebook and may or may not turn up to class (A8).

Perhaps the most important argument for more face-to-face contact time was that teaching is ultimately an interpersonal and social profession. An academic noted the irony: 'I do find it interesting that you can teach such a social profession through a computer [laughter]' (A9). This view was echoed by an experienced practitioner:

> One thing I really struggle with is the fact that, these days, you can learn to be a teacher over the Internet … I have to deal with little human beings every day, I have to learn how to speak to them, I have to learn how to speak to my

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Given the interpersonal and social nature of teaching, participants were critical of online delivery of initial teacher education and queried how 'you can teach such a social profession through a computer' (academic participant) and 'learn to be a teacher over the Internet' (experienced practitioner).

colleagues, I have to know how to speak and communicate to parents on a daily basis. And I can't do my job on a laptop or on a computer or on a screen, and I just don't know how you learn how to communicate, how you learn how to speak, how you learn how to put it all into practice over the Internet. And I really have grave concerns about that (EP1_PS).

Some participants also expressed clear views about *who* is best equipped to deliver initial teacher education for teaching literacy. Posing a rhetorical question, one experienced practitioner said:

The people who are teaching the literacy at university, don't they have to be great teachers of literacy themselves to teach the students? And if that's a problem, get people in who are great teachers of literacy to teach the students. That would make sense to me (EP1_PS).

Another practising teacher expressed a similar view.

I do think you need some grassroots people, even if they're just there for a semester or for a term, just to teach these basic strategies that are in the Good Teaching Guides (EP30_PS).

Reminiscing about their own initial teacher education, another experienced practitioner from Phase 2 pointed out that in the past practising teachers were seconded to the university as teacher educators.

I know when I was at college, as it was then, TCAE, we had seconded teachers [as lecturers]. You had teachers coming in from schools for two years, and it would be current, and it would be relevant, and it would be great. Whereas sometimes lecturers that are at uni, it's a long time since they've taught in a classroom … the seconded lecturers were always the ones that you really felt were really onboard with current stuff and they gave you a good perspective on reality [in the classroom] (EP40_PS).

It is worth noting that while all the academics interviewed reported that they did have experience of teaching at the pre-tertiary level, some conceded that this experience was not recent. However, in response to criticisms that teacher educators at the University of Tasmania did not have current classroom experience, one academic said:

We do have staff who are fairly recent from the classroom because we try to capitalise on those experiences, particularly when we're employing casual tutors. So, we do try to make sure that people do have classroom experience (A3).

Nevertheless, some disgruntled beginning teachers complained about 'old, boring, unmotivated has-beens' (BT_36) and 'rude and unhappy' tutors (BT6_BE_P2). Of course, it is possible that staff may be perceived as such while having recent classroom experience.

3.2 Assessment of pre-service teachers' capacities to teach literacy

Turning attention now to the critical issue of how to assess pre-service teachers to gauge their abilities to teach literacy, discussion begins with an imperative and a caveat.

In the words of an experienced practitioner participating in the research, it is incumbent on those involved in the provision of initial teacher education to ensure that 'underperforming students [do not] become underperforming teachers' (EP39_PS). This is a core principle for assuring teacher quality. On the other hand, even with the increasing sophistication of assessment it remains an imperfect art/science. One academic asked, 'can they really check everything?' then said, 'it's hard to design [assignments] well enough to capture [everything]' (A4).

At the University pre-service teachers are assessed both in relation to general teaching capabilities and to literacy. The combination of a range of complementary assessment methods goes some way to addressing concerns about the limitations of assessment.

3.2.1 Assessment of pre-service teachers' personal literacy

Although covered in section 2.1, it is worth here briefly reiterating the point that pre-service teachers at the University of Tasmania undergo two checks in relation to their personal literacy: an internal Faculty-based literacy competency test and the externally LANTITE. All pre-service teachers at the University are required to take the internal literacy competency test in the first semester of their first year of initial teacher education study. Primary and secondary BEd pre-service teachers sit the test as part of ESH106. Primary MTeach pre-service teachers take it as part of EMT511, and secondary MTeach pre-service teachers sit the test as part of EMT510. While pre-service teachers are permitted multiple attempts, to be eligible to undertake Professional Experience, ultimately they are required to pass the test, which means scoring 80 per cent or higher. Several academics were of the opinion that the internal Faculty-based test is more rigorous than LANTITE.

Three attempts are ordinarily allowed for the LANTITE,[20] which must be passed prior to the final Professional Experience.[21] In this way, LANTITE functions as a gateway to graduation as a teacher. As one academic put it:

> They're not going to get a teaching degree from us [if they don't pass LANTITE]. They will end up exiting with another degree, but it won't allow them to teach (A2).

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20 'In special and/or extenuating circumstances, institutions may consider that individual students should be allowed additional test attempts up to a maximum of five (including the initial three attempts)' https://teacheredtest.acer.edu.au/results/re-sit.

21 The LANTITE web page notes that 'it is not possible to provide the number of questions or a percentage figure needed to meet the standard' https://teacheredtest.acer.edu.au/faq/after-the-test.

While testing of pre-service teachers' personal literacy levels is considered essential at a national level (as evident in the AITSL *Accreditation Standards and Procedures*) this beginning teacher felt the balance was wrong:

> There seemed to be a lot of testing of our knowledge of literacy in a way that made me feel as if we were doing a NAPLAN test. I felt [the assessment] was less about teaching and more about our knowledge of curriculum content (BT24_MT_P).

3.2.2 Assessment of pre-service teachers' abilities to teach literacy

In addition to levels of personal literacy that put them in the top 30 per cent of the Australian population (as measured by LANTITE), prospective teachers need to have certain non-academic capabilities and dispositions (as assessed by NACAT, discussed in section 2.2). To become proficient teachers, they also need teaching ability grounded in sound pedagogical content knowledge and skills. Attention now turns to consider this aspect of pre-service teacher assessment.

Since 2015, it has been a requirement of initial teacher education accreditation that providers show evidence that they have prepared pre-service teachers to meet the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. As outlined in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, all units of study in the University of Tasmania BEd and MTeach courses are mapped to the standards, and assessment tasks are aligned with intended learning outcomes. In addition:

> we have to show that every Standard has been taught, practised and assessed multiple times across their degree and in multiple units (A2).

Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment

An important new assessment is the Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA) tool, which was developed by a consortium of 17 universities as part of a national agenda to improve teacher quality. The University of Tasmania was part of that group. From 2019, all pre-service teachers in Australia must pass the GTPA before they can be registered to teach in their state or territory. In this way, the GTPA may be regarded as a key response to the challenges of pre-service teacher assessment described above.

Intended as a culminating assessment, the GTPA demands significant demonstration by pre-service teachers that they are personally and professionally ready to teach. Submissions require them to show that they can use student data appropriately; employ a range of challenging and engaging teaching and learning strategies; use a variety of assessment practices exercising professional judgement; reflect on their teaching; and appraise its impact on students.

Importantly, the GTPA is intended to enable 'a closer connection between the theory and practice of the teaching profession'.[22] According to University of Tasmania academics involved in the crafting of the tool and in assessing the first round of submissions:

The Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment must be passed by all pre-service teachers in Australia from 2019 onwards before they can be registered to teach in their state or territory and forms a key response to the challenges of pre-service teacher assessment.

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22 http://www.utas.edu.au/latest-news/utas-homepage-news/new-tool-for-assessing-new-teachers

> So far, the GTPA submissions are confirming what we already knew: graduates from the University of Tasmania are ready to impact student learning and make a difference in the lives of young people.23

Most participating academics were generally positive about the GTPA, seeing it as 'a valid thing' (A4) and as a step toward more authentic pre-service teacher assessment. Noting that 'it's tough to provide an assessment that is clear enough to be helpful, but generic enough to be applicable to a range of contexts' (A5), one academic offered the following opinion:

> I think the GTPA is going to be really helpful. I think it's going to prompt pre-service teachers to really be rigorous around the kind of evidence [they provide] and the way that they assess it. That'll be the big thing … there's more requirement to document and evidence diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment, to have the artefacts and evidence to show the decisions they've made and also to document and think about impact (A5).

Observing that the GTPA provides 'an extra layer of rigour' (A5) in relation to assessment, that participant also noted the benefits of collaboration with both schools and with other universities. Providing 'natural opportunities for benchmarking in moderation across other universities in Australia' (A5), the GTPA is also expected to generate 'a bit of work for us in schools … because it needs supervising teachers to be able to help [pre-service teachers] gather that information and think in that way' (A5).

Despite the anticipated advantages of the GTPA, its limitations were also noted, tempering optimism with caution. Noting that 'there are a lot of critics of competency-based assessment', one academic emphasised the point that 'just because you can [show you can] do something doesn't mean that that's your day to day behaviour going forward' (A1). Picking up on this thread, another academic observed that the way the GTPA is 'currently understood and implemented' it is not designed to 'do that developmental work, which I think we still want to do and need to do' (A5). Adding that this shortcoming is 'not a downfall of the GTPA' (A5), this participant said:

> I'm just hoping that in our course restructuring and future thinking we can make sure that we're looking at how we ensure there's space for that developmental process and the ongoing learning and reflection (A5).

Bringing the conversation back to assessment for teaching literacy specifically, and voicing a perennial quandary, another academic had this to say:

> The GTPA is supposed to show that they're teacher-ready … So theoretically, if they can demonstrate the GTPA, then they've demonstrated a certain level of ability to teach literacy and numeracy. [But] how we make clear the links between [their] own personal literacy and [their] ability to teach it … I'm not sure how we do it … it's not an easy question (A7).

Notwithstanding a few misgivings, overall, participants thought that the GTPA was a welcome move towards more authentic and rigorous assessment of pre-service teachers' teaching ability. Whether it is seen as 'an exit assessment for students exiting a course such as ours' or 'an entry assessment for students entering

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23 http://www.utas.edu.au/latest-news/utas-homepage-news/new-tool-for-assessing-new-teachers

the profession' (A1), the GTPA portfolio was generally perceived to be 'heading in the right direction. It's just going to take time to bed in, in the way that it needs to' (A1).

> Noting that 'gone are the days when we can set one task or one exam and that's going to give us a reliable outcome' (A9), another academic was enthusiastic about the ePortfolio format of the GTPA. Emphasising the point that this format affords 'different opportunities for multimodal assessment', the chance for pre-service teachers 'to show what they can do in different ways' (A9), the GTPA was generally seen as an important move toward differentiated assessment.

Observation of practice

In addition to the processes/practices described above, observation of pre-service teachers in the classroom remains a cornerstone of pre-service teacher assessment:

> You need to see them. I think that's really important. You have to see them in action, on numerous occasions, more than just one, see them in a classroom and see them in different classrooms and different contexts, teaching different topics. See them interacting with students. See how they respond to behavioural problems in the classroom. Have a look at whether or not they can assess work. Can they use the curriculum? What sort of feedback do they give students? Basically, looking at all the aspects of teaching as a whole. It's very difficult to assess [them] just on a written component (A9).

This participant was also quick to inform us, somewhat wistfully:

> I don't see any of my students teach, [but] I would love to. It would be amazing … [but] my workload is so big I can't do Professional Experience visits (A9).

With so little time to visit pre-service teachers in schools, university-based teacher educators rely heavily on school-based colleague teachers' Professional Experience reports. However, this reliance:

> can be problematic as well because, of course, there's so much variance in terms of what one [colleague] teacher will think is acceptable in comparison to another … We do give them quite firm guidelines on what students should be doing, but as with anything, that can be interpreted in different ways and we do know that some students sneak through who shouldn't necessarily (A9).

An experienced school-based practitioner supported this observation, suggesting that at times they have 'failed a student only to know that they go back, and they redo it' (EP39_PS) and another supervising teacher ends up giving a pass.

In the next section, the spotlight turns on the Professional Experience context, focussing on the relationship between university coursework and the teaching practicum in the preparation of pre-service teachers to teach literacy.

Observation of pre-service teachers in the classroom remains a cornerstone of pre-service teacher assessment. Especially important are judgements made about pre-service teachers during professional experience by school-based colleague teachers.

Section 4. Professional experience context

Pre-service teachers at the University of Tasmania may be placed for their Professional Experience (PE) in a school in any sector: government, Catholic, and independent. However, the large size of the government sector in Tasmania means that the relationship between the University of Tasmania and the Department of Education is highly relevant for the Professional Experience context.

The profound importance of Professional Experience as a site of crucial learning in initial teacher education is evident in national requirements for accreditation (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018; section 4.1). Of course, in Adoniou's model the four contexts of teacher preparation are interconnected. Professional experience is both part of the University's initial teacher education courses and, at its best, it also is a site in which pre-service teachers deepen and apply learning from coursework studies. Indeed:

> for many students, [Professional Experience is when] the light bulb goes on and they can connect the work they've been doing with the teacher-educators [at university] as it comes alive in the classroom (A4).

However, as noted in the Phase 1b literature review (Stewart *et al.*, 2018a), field experience is often favoured as the paramount context for pre-service learning, especially by students themselves. This insight is evident in the following comments from beginning teachers in our research.

> I believe that my practical experiences in a variety of classrooms were the most useful in preparing me to teach literacy (BT47_BE_P).

> My practical experiences were the key contributors to my literacy knowledge and understanding (BT23_BE_P).

> The pracs were definitely the most useful—I was able to work alongside teachers and see how they operate, and what is best practice (BT65_MT_S).

Such statements have become commonplace in research with pre-service teachers and new graduates (Lawson *et al.*, 2015; Reynolds *et al.*, 2016), frequently elevating the status of professional education relative to coursework in initial teacher education. Significantly, this way of thinking sets up a false dichotomy between theory and practice (Barrow, 1990; Fenwick *et al.*, 2014; Yeigh & Lynch, 2017) and underplays the possibility that what pre-service teachers observe in schools may not always be best practice. This shortfall is of concern and, not surprisingly, its existence was also vigorously challenged by academics participating in the research.

> Many students, I think naively, will privilege their Professional Experience. "Everything we learnt is on PE". I disagree with that. I think they actually are too new to teaching to actually understand the need for the foundational work that we do here and the theoretical work. And some of that insight doesn't emerge for them until further on into their career (A4).

Noting that 'it's always a challenge to marry the theory with the practice' and to 'get them to see the value of the theory' (A3), one academic observed, somewhat dispiritedly:

> So, we often get comments like, "Well, I learned more in prac than I've learned in my four years of university" (A3).

Such statements merit further consideration because they do not represent the experiences of *all* pre-service teachers. One beginning teacher expressed their view as follows:

> I believe that having the opportunity to be on Professional Experience enabled me to use what I had been learning at UTAS and apply it to a real-world context (BT10_BE_P).

The salient words here, in added italics, are 'use' and 'real-world', which suggest that perceived problems may lie in the *relationship* between coursework and Professional Experience rather than in their relative importance. This complex dynamic is considered in section 4.1.

4.1 The relationship between coursework and practicum

One document, Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia – Standards and Procedures (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018), stipulates that providers base their program development, design, and delivery on 'a coherent and sequenced delivery of program content'. This program logic includes 'professional experience that facilitates achievement of the Graduate Teacher Standards' (Standard 2.1).

Program Standard 5 articulates specific requirements for accreditation, pertaining to the relationship between Professional Experience and coursework.

> *Standard 5.1* – Formal partnerships, agreed in writing, are developed and used by providers and schools/sites/systems to facilitate the delivery of programs, particularly professional experience for pre-service teachers.
>
> *Standard 5.2a* – The professional experience components are relevant to a classroom environment and include no fewer than 80 days in undergraduate and double-degree teacher education programs and no fewer than 60 days in graduate-entry programs.
>
> *Standard 5.3* – For every professional experience placement, regardless of delivery mode, there are clear mechanisms to communicate between the initial teacher education provider and the school.
>
> *Standard 5.4* – Providers work with their placement schools(s)/systems to achieve a rigorous approach to the assessment of pre-service teachers' achievements against the Graduate Teacher Standards.
>
> *Standard 5.5* – Providers support the delivery of professional experience in partner schools/sites, including by identification and provision of professional learning opportunities for supervising teachers and communication from, and access to, designated initial teacher education provider staff who, preferably, have current or recent experience in teaching.

"I believe that having the opportunity to be on professional experience enabled me to use what I had been learning at UTAS and apply it to a real-world context"

(beginning teacher, BEd [Primary]).

Underscoring the importance of literacy, at the University of Tasmania successful completion of the internal literacy and numeracy competency test is mandated before students undertake their *first* professional experience placement. Passing the national LANTITE is mandated prior to undertaking their *final* professional experience placement.

As one such provider, the University of Tasmania meets the standards set out in the Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia – Standards and Procedures (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018), thereby fulfilling its requirements.[24] Pre-service teachers undertaking the BEd (Primary), BEd (Science and Mathematics), and BEd (HPE) have the requisite 80 days Professional Experience spread over three placements.[25] MTeach pre-service teachers have 60 days spread over four placements. Table 5 below sets out the Professional Experience units in each degree, their location within the degrees, prerequisite units, and the duration of each placement. As noted in Section 2, all pre-service teachers must

– achieve a score of at least 80 per cent to pass the Faculty-based literacy and numeracy competency test before they are permitted to undertake their *first Professional Experience placement*

– complete the national LANTITE prior to undertaking their final Professional Experience placement.

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24 Accreditation stage one applies to new initial teacher education programs entering the accreditation system for the first time and focuses on a provider's plan to demonstrate impact. Programs must achieve accreditation stage two within five years of having achieved stage one. The focus in stage two is on the provider's interpretation of the evidence they have collected on impact. At UTAS, three programs have Stage 2 accreditation: BEd (HPE); MTeach (Primary); MTeach (Secondary). The remaining programs (BEd EC; BEd Primary) have their Stage 2 accreditation in 2020.

25 The BEd (Early Childhood) has 90 days spread over four placements and the BEd (Applied Learning) also has four placements but a total of 80 days of professional experience, in common with other BEd courses.

Table 5: Professional experience – University of Tasmania initial teacher education

Degree	PE Unit Code	Prerequisites	Year	Days
BEd (Primary)	ESH101 (PE1)	ESH102, ESH110, ESH120	2	20
	ESH200 (PE2)	All 1st and 2nd year units + ESH101	3	30
	ESH300 (PE3)	All 1st, 2nd & 3rd year units + ESH200	4	30
BEd (Early Childhood)	ESH107 (PE1)	ESH102, ESH110, ESH120	1	10
	ESH207 (PE2)	All 1st year units + ESH107	2	15
	ESH307 (PE3)	All 1st & 2nd year units + ESH207	3	30
	ESH308 (PE4)	All 1st, 2nd & 3rd year units + ESH307	4	35
BEd (Science and Mathematics)	ESH113 (PE1)	Currently under review – likely to include all core 1st year units	2	20
	ESH213 (PE2)	All 1st and 2nd year units + PE1	3	30
	ESH313 (PE3)	All 1st, 2nd and 3rd year units + PE1 and PE2	4	30
BEd (HPE)	ESP100 (PE1)	ESH102, ESP180, ESP170, ESP114, ESP104, ESP160, ESP180	2	20
	ESP200 (PE2)	All 2nd year units + ESP100	3	30
	ESP300 (PE3)	All 3rd year Units + ESP200	4	30
BEd (Applied Learning)	EAL112 (PE1)	EAL102	1	10
	EAL211 (PE2)	EAL112	2	20
	EAL302 (PE3)	EAL211	3	20
	EAL334 (PE4)	EAL302, EAL303, EAL310, EAL311	4	30
	EAL323 (PE4)	EAL302, EAL303, EAL310, EAL311		
MTeach (Primary)	EMT500 (PE1)	EMT502, EMT504, EMT511, EMT521	1	5
	EMT501 (PE2)	EMT507, EMT508, EMT592, EMT593 + PE1	1	10
	EMT600 (PE3)	All level 500 theory units + four 12.5CP level 600 theory units (EMT603) + three 12.5CP level 600 theory units + PE1 and PE2	2	20
	EMT601(PE4)	All level 500 units + four level 600 theory units + 12.5CP level 600 theory units (EMT607 and EMT608) + three 12.5CP level 600 theory units + PE1, PE2 and PE3	2	25
MTeach (Secondary)	EMT513 (PE1)	EMT502, EMT504, EMT510, EMT520	1	5
	EMT523 (PE2)	EMT507, EMT508 + two 1st year specialisation units + PE1	1	10
	EMT613 (PE3)	All level 500 theory units + four 12.5CP level 600 theory units (EMT603) +three 12.5CP level 600 theory units	2	20
	EMT623 (PE4)	All level 500 theory units + four 12.5CP level 600 theory units + four 12.5CP level 600 theory units (EMT607 and EMT608) + three 12.5CP level 600 theory units + PE1, PE2 and PE3	2	25

Source: Faculty of Education (UTAS) webpages and internal documentation

> The structure of professional experience placements each semester in the MTeach facilitates strong linkages between learning in coursework and learning from professional experience.

Accredited providers all meet the AITSL Accreditation Standards for Professional Experience, but this does not mean that such experience has the same structure and nature across all providers. Accreditation standards leave significant room for difference in the implementation of Professional Experience. At the University of Tasmania, some participants said that the relationship between Professional Experience and coursework was not working optimally in terms of 'getting that theory-practice nexus happening' (A2).

One academic characterised the relationship as 'remote' because 'students are not actually within a unit when they're in practice primarily' (A1). Another academic suggested the structure at another university worked well, where 'the placement was the hub and the units connected into it' (A8). Another agreed that it would be useful for Professional Experience to be 'returned to a more central focus which we build around' (A7). A fourth suggested that the relationship between Professional Experience and coursework is the subject of 'an ongoing and important conversation in unit and course design' (A5).

Importantly, these comments applied mainly to the BEd courses. Several participants made the point that the connection between coursework and the practicum was working better in the MTeach degree.

4.1.1 Professional Experience in the Master of Teaching

The MTeach program incorporates four Professional Experience placements across the two-year degree: 'In the MTeach, [students] do a PE each semester. Every semester, the units that they're learning have the capacity to link to their Professional Experience' (A7). This arrangement enables unit coordinators to structure units around Professional Experience:

> So, you can pre-empt their experience by getting them to look at things that they might do, like how they set up their reading program, or how they teach spelling … And then they come back, and you can then unpack that wisdom and get them to reflect on what they've observed (A3).

One academic explained that ideally students 'design something practical' as part of their coursework, so that 'they can then go and actually implement that straight away into the next prac' (A_AT). This learning strategy is most effective when 'there's a really good match between when the unit finishes and when their prac starts' (A6).

However, not all MTeach pre-service teachers apparently experienced this synergy, as one beginning teacher noted: 'I couldn't feel any connection to how [the coursework] would be implemented in the classroom' (BT80_MT_P). While this view is only one among several, it highlights that the structure of Professional Experience is only one element that can contribute to success.

4.1.2 Professional Experience in the Bachelor of Education

In contrast to the MTeach, in the current structure of the BEd at the University of Tasmania, there are three annual Professional Experience placements commencing in Year 2 of the degree (note exceptions for the BEd Early Childhood and Applied Learning, see Table 5). This arrangement means that most pre-service teachers 'don't actually do anything in terms of Professional Experience until halfway through their second year' (A7).

The 'Foundations of Teaching Unit' (ESH102) in the first year of the BEd gives pre-service teachers 'a bit of a taste of what classroom experience is really like' (A3) by providing an opportunity for classroom observation. According to some participants, however, the first formal Professional Experience placement for BEd pre-service teachers comes too late.

> It would be good if they could do [a] formal placement before second year, because sometimes they might go through their first year and then realise [teaching's] not for them, but they haven't had a real professional placement to [help them] decide (A3).

One academic considered the Professional Experience arrangement in the BEd courses as 'puzzling', adding that 'it worries me greatly' (A7). That participant went on to suggest that the relative separation in time and focus between coursework and Professional Experience means possibilities for valuable learning are missed because it is too hard to 'say to a student in your unit, "think of your PE that you did last year" or, "think ahead to the PE that you're going to do in a year and a half's time"' (A7).

However, a colleague expressed optimism that change regarding the timing of BEd Professional Experience placements was currently under serious consideration.

> We're on the cusp of this exciting synergy … we haven't got there yet, but I'm very hopeful about how that's going to happen, so things like ensuring that students get to practise. So that some of the lessons that they do in year 2 for literacy, they get to practise them in a prac and are assessed on how they do it. So, then it becomes more meaningful to the student if they know they're actually going to do it in their classroom and it's not some abstract exercise (A6).

Another academic pointed out that the key consideration was that 'when we do have it [Professional Experience] during the semester, to make sure they're integrated well' (A5).

Participants generally agreed that there was room for improvement in terms of connecting the learning contexts of university-based coursework and school-based Professional Experience, with one academic concluding that:

> The relationship between coursework and Professional Experience is something that we're always going to be improving upon because [as] with any relationship … it's dynamic. It always needs to be maintained and nurtured and valued. I think it's working at the moment, but I think it could work and should work better (A5).

Participants' suggestions for improvements are taken up in Section 7.

4.1.3 The need to integrate coursework and Professional Experience

Noting that the relationship between coursework and Professional Experience is 'never going to be perfect because you've got disparate units that don't always fit next to a prac' (A6), there was overall agreement that there needs to be tighter alignment between the two learning contexts.

> **"I feel I learnt more and made connections between theory and practice when I was able to learn concepts and strategies at university and then put them into practice concurrently"**
>
> (beginning teacher, BEd [Primary]).

Criticisms of the current model, especially in the BEd, generally related to lack of integration between coursework and Professional Experience.

> I think there are things we could do that would improve the placement setting by way of rethinking our pattern of placements … But the critical one to me is better integrating with PE because I think it's crucial to students' holistic and comprehensive understanding of what it is that they're training to be, a teacher (A1).

Overwhelmingly, that sentiment was echoed by the beginning teachers who participated in the research. This was a strong theme in comments made as part of the survey. Like academic staff, several beginning teachers referred to the structure and timing of Professional Experience:

> I feel I learnt more and made connections between theory and practice when I was able to learn concepts and strategies at university and then put them into practice concurrently. This is something I don't think university offers enough of (BT29_BE_P).

> Our pracs were few and far between, and knowledge of strategies was lost in the interim … [for example] learning how to teach specific spelling strategies was right at the beginning of the course, which wasn't useful by the time I reached working with a class (BT38_BE_P).

Beginning teachers consistently referred to the need for better alignment between coursework and Professional Experience, as the following comments testify.

> While the theory is a crucial aspect, I believe it would have had more merit if I could have used what I was learning in practical contexts that supported my understanding of the content (BT10_BE_P).

> It would have been great to align the literacy unit with the practicals in order to build on my understanding of literacy and how to teach it (BT24_MT_P).

> A lack of classroom experience made the knowledge gained hard to relate to and it was difficult to often see how topics discussed fitted into the broader picture of teaching and its importance (BT66_BE_P).

In Section 6, reference is made to the issues raised here in relation to perceived weaknesses in pre-service teachers' preparation for teaching literacy.

4.2 Responsibilities of parties to the relationship

The Professional Experience context brings together stakeholders from the personal, university, and employment contexts. This complexity means that 'when a student's placement goes really well, it's not usually down to one thing. If a placement goes really badly, it's usually not down to one thing' (A1). Highlighting the number of variables at play, this comment is a reminder that successful Professional Experience placements depend on several factors, not least productive communication among the various stakeholders.

> For each pre-service teacher, there's a conversation between us at the university, that pre-service teacher, and a supervising teacher in the school at one of their several placements. And that gives a good chance for us to interact over a lived experience for the pre-service teacher. Sometimes that can be quite intense and involve discussions with a supervising teacher and the university member if the pre-service teacher is needing additional support. Or otherwise, it can be informal email conversation, "Is everything going okay? Have you got all the forms and documentation you need?" They're the sort of conversations that help us look at, "Well, is this actually happening in practice for each pre-service teacher?" (A5).

Implicit in discussions with participants about this three-way relationship was the need for clear expectations, mutual regard, professional respect, and recognition of the role that each party plays.

As discussed in both the Phase 1b literature review (Stewart *et al.*, *2018a)* and the Phase 2 report (Stewart *et al*., 2018b), pre-service teachers often report mismatches between what they observe in practice on Professional Experience placements and what they learn at university. In response to a question about how such perceived mismatches are handled, one teacher educator was clear that it was important not to undermine school-based practitioners. An example was given of a pre-service teacher debriefing session, which occurred after a placement during which their colleague teacher was thought to have been using a whole language approach. The pre-service teacher involved was concerned that this strategy on the part of the colleague teacher did not reflect a phonics-based approach to teaching reading:

> My feedback to [the pre-service teacher] is that a whole language approach is appropriate in some situations. For example, if you're doing sight words, you have to use a whole language approach. But to really understand how words work and to understand the sounds that they make, you need to be decoding and looking at phonemes and developing phonemic awareness, so a whole language approach could stand beside a more explicit teaching approach to complement it in certain areas … What you don't want to do is tell them, "Oh, that teacher was wrong" (A9).

At the University, the Faculty of Education's Professional Experience guidelines make explicit that the 'Professional Experience process is a collaborative one, with many parties involved in the process'.[26] Working from the premise that relationships require multilateral commitment, attention now turns to consideration of the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of each of the three key stakeholders: pre-service teachers, the university, and schools.

"For each pre-service teacher, there's a conversation between us at the university, that pre-service teacher, and a supervising teacher in the school at one of their several placements. And that gives a good chance for us to interact over a lived experience for the pre-service teacher"

(academic participant).

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26 http://www.utas.edu.au/education/professional-experience/procedural-guidelines

4.2.1 Expectations of pre-service teachers

Pre-service teachers are at the centre of Professional Experience, which is for them, but which also entails that responsibilities be observed by them. The Professional Experience guidelines[27] delineate the conditions of placement for pre-service teachers. These include:

– not approaching school sites or individual teachers to secure a placement without permission of the Professional Experience coordinator;

– disclosing any conflict of interest when applying for placement;

– ensuring they are available to undertake placement during the designated times;

– being prepared to travel to their allocated placement and bear any associated costs;[28] and

– obtaining the relevant compliance requirements. such as Working with Vulnerable People registration and TRB University of Tasmania Student Good Character Determination.[29]

Among academics in the Faculty of Education, expectations of pre-service teachers in relation to their engagement in Professional Experience are also very clear.

> It's very sequential across their placements … [the] linkages are … clearly defined … [and there's] alignment between what's expected from the students on their Professional Experiences and what they've received up to that point, with very strong gates that only open if the prerequisites have been met. So, you can't leapfrog into placements. Some students don't like it because it can delay their study plan by a year. You can't go on PE2 because you don't have this prerequisite. Not negotiable … it's unfair to let our students on Professional Experience where we've clearly articulated expectations that only are possible if they've done this coursework. There can be no greyness. So, it's a very tight system (A4).

Colleague teachers in schools also have expectations of pre-service teachers on placement. One experienced practitioner emphasised the importance of being organised.

> One of the first things I say that they need to get under their belt is their organisation and their ability to structure their time so that they can achieve what they want to achieve … Obviously time helps. The more times you do it [laughter], the better you get at doing it. But also, being completely organised to the point of some people thinking it's a little bit too organised—but anyway, that's okay (EP11_PS).

In response to the frequent call from pre-service teachers for 'more practical experience', one beginning teacher said that, while not an expectation, 'there was certainly encouragement to go and volunteer in schools [outside of formal Professional Experience placement times]' (BT80_MT_P). However, as this beginning

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27 http://www.utas.edu.au/education/professional-experience/procedural-guidelines

28 Pre-service teachers undertaking their final placement may be eligible to apply for funding under the Tasmanian Department of Education's Professional Experience in Isolated and Rural Schools (PEIRS) program which can assist with travel and accommodation costs.

29 See https://www.trb.tas.gov.au/Documents/Applying%20for%20a%20Student%20Good%20Character%20Determination.pdf

teacher went on to point out, the realities of making time for additional voluntary placements 'when you're working and studying at the same time … becomes sort of pie in the sky' (BT80_MT_P).

4.2.2 Expectations of the University

At the University of Tasmania, various Faculty of Education staff members have different, often overlapping roles and responsibilities in the Professional Experience program:

– Academic Director, Professional Experience, who is responsible for leading and coordinating the Faculty's Professional Experience program across all courses;

– Coordinator, Professional Experience, who oversees placements for all students across all courses;

– Professional Experience Officers, who work closely with the Professional Experience coordinator to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the program;

– Professional Experience Administrative Assistant, who assists with administrative tasks within the Professional Experience office;

– Professional Experience Leaders, who have oversight of placements in their relevant area, providing support for pre-service teachers and supervision of teachers as needed; and

– Professional Experience Mentors, who liaise between individual schools/education settings and pre-service teachers.

In addition, staff who teach into initial teacher education are expected to make every effort to integrate theory with practice in their coursework offerings, thereby contributing to a positive Professional Experience for pre-service teachers. On this point, however, it was acknowledged that:

> Some lecturers do it better than others. And you will get that response from the students who say, "Oh my gosh, I love person X's lectures. He really makes them live. It's authentic. I go on prac, and I can see everything that's been said in my classes played out here." Another person, will go, "Oh, it's got nothing to do with what I see in schools." So, we try to have professional learning in our own [Faculty of] Education amongst staff to try and make them understand that. Most of them have come from a teaching background, so it's not like they haven't got that experience (A2).

Underscoring the value of regular communication with schools and classroom teachers, one academic said that 'it's very important that we stay current with what's happening in the field' (A9).

This vital interaction is brokered largely by the university's Professional Experience mentors, who are allocated to pre-service teachers on placement and who, as part of their role, 'communicate with the pre-service teacher and their supervising/colleague teacher prior to a visit' (A1). According to that academic, the Professional Experience mentor scheme is working effectively and is 'a really important component of the Professional Experience program [and] something I'd definitely like to see increased' (A1).

Participants agreed that regular three-way communication is essential. This vital interaction is brokered largely by the University's professional experience mentors who are allocated to pre-service teachers on placement.

The point about keeping 'the lines of communication open' (A5) was also made in more general terms by participants who referred to the importance of 'really acknowledging … and value[ing] the work that the supporting teachers do, [because] they invest time and energy into it… [and] teachers are very, very busy' (A5).

In recognition of the critical role played by supervising teachers who are 'out there, doing great stuff' (A5), one participant said that the University of Tasmania is 'planning to have awards for outstanding supervising teachers … just so that they know that they're valued [because] that is important' (A5).

4.2.3 Expectations of schools

In school settings, Professional Experience placements are managed by two key personnel.

– *School Placement Coordinator*, usually the Principal, Assistant Principal, or Advanced Skills Teacher, with oversight of school Professional Experience placements;

– *Supervising Teacher* ("colleague teacher" in some schools) who must be 'a qualified, registered teacher with a degree or equivalent in education';[30] who is pivotal to Professional Experience success; and who has extensive responsibilities including:

- modelling best practice in planning, teaching, and assessment;

- demonstrating respect for the rights of the pre-service teacher;

- maintaining a professional learning relationship with the pre-service teacher;

- being familiar with expectations of the pre-service teacher as set out in the professional experience guidelines;

- introducing the pre-service teacher to all school staff;

- providing advice and leadership about school procedures and protocols;

- supervising all of the pre-service teacher's lessons, including by sighting and reviewing written lesson plans;

- providing regular constructive and collegial feedback and support;

- always retaining legal responsibility for the class when the pre-service teacher is in attendance;

- consulting with the pre-service teacher's professional experience leader and/ or mentor as required, and responding promptly to any emerging problems with the pre-service teacher's performance; and

- evaluating the pre-service teacher's performance and providing written interim and/or final reports against professional experience assessment criteria (see Appendix E).[31]

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30 http://www.utas.edu.au/education/professional-experience/procedural-guidelines

31 Interim Professional Experience Assessment Report forms are available at: http://www.utas.edu.au/education/professional-experience/support-for-supervisors

Consistent with the literature (Burns *et al.*, 2018), the need for supervising or colleague teachers to be exemplary experienced classroom practitioners was undisputed among participants in the research. As one teacher educator noted, 'the main thing that we want is for [pre-service teachers on placement] to see really great practice' (A5). Supervising teachers also need to 'be able to provide the kind of clear, objective feedback to pre-service teachers about their development that's going to help them with that process' (A5).

> And then it's just [giving them] access to the data and evidence and those opportunities that, really, the supervising teacher needs to create. And resources. If there are resources in the schools, if there are measures for assessment learning and teaching tools, documents—if they can share those with pre-service teachers, it'd make their world a lot easier for them (A5).

Illustrating this sort of positive interaction, one experienced practitioner explained how they mentored pre-service teachers under their supervision, firstly by reassuring them that 'it comes with practice' (EP13_PS).

> That's certainly what I'm saying to my prac student at the moment. It comes with practice. "This works for me, how I plan for my groups and where I pull all the information from, but you might want to tweak it and you might want to plan a different way… I show them our overviews as well and I think it has assisted them—particularly our literacy overviews and how we compile them. I've been going right back to scratch with that person really. It's been like, "How do I teach that? Where do I start? How do I put that together?" (EP13_PS).

Noting that 'we have some outstanding supervising teachers [and] schools that are amazingly supportive' in actively 'helping to shape the profession' (A5), one participant observed that in schools:

> where there's a real openness to grow and learn, we find that that kind of creates the conditions where a pre-service teacher will be welcomed, supported, and actually others around them will say, "What are you learning at university? Are there new ideas that we can take up?" So, where there's that culture of learning and professional development of staff, that's good (A5).

However, there is wide variability in the calibre of supervising teachers and in the resultant quality of the Professional Experience for pre-service teachers, which is echoed in the literature (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Izadinina, 2015). The following comment from a beginning teacher exemplifies this point:

> I absolutely hated my pracs because the teachers I got were too negative and not supportive at all. It's a miracle I started teaching after my degree to be honest! (BT42_BE_P).

Expanding on this point, one academic said that what is 'beyond our control sadly is the quality of their colleague teacher' (A4). Of concern, an experienced teacher noted that:

> Some prac students go out having been [placed] with a very first year out teacher, which is great for learning things [together] … but not quality literacy practices because they're still learning themselves (EP7_PS).

Despite (perceived) shortcomings in current Professional Experience arrangements, participants' comments suggest that there is cause for optimism, with many observing that the system is changing for the better and that 'some big levers are beginning to move in that direction, which is encouraging' (A5).

> I think with changes to the levels of teacher registration and the supervision of pre-service teachers, being part of a suite of evidence that might go towards them progressing, I think that sort of recognition is becoming more formalised, and I think that's a good thing. I think that in the coming years, the TRB [Teachers Registration Board] may require that supervising teachers be fully registered. At the moment, it's provisional … but in years to come it is possible that teachers have been through some next level documentation of evidence of their practice that means that all people who are capable to be, or eligible to be supervising teachers, will be fully registered and [work], on the whole, [at] a higher standard than they are at present (A5).

It was also widely agreed that supervising teachers have to be reflective practitioners. Musing on the benefits of being a supervising teacher, one experienced practitioner said:

> I've actually got my prac student viewing me and I want to know, "what do you hear? What do you see? What am I saying?" Because you're oblivious to it sometimes … And it's not about judging, it's not about "that was terrible" or "that was really awesome." It's not about that. It's just providing me with feedback [about what they've observed] and then we unpack that together … And I've had to explain not [only] why I think it works best, but why I do it like this, or why I'm working with this group … You think about it probably more self-consciously … to verbalize it and to explain it to someone else certainly makes you more accountable to say "this is why I do it" (EP13_PS).

An openness to lifelong professional learning and reflective practice are key characteristics of high-quality teaching (Larrivee, 2000; Loughran, 2002). Such points are taken up in the next section, where consideration is given to pre-service teachers' first employment context, and more attention is paid to matters and situations beyond initial teacher education.

Section 5. First employment context… and beyond

In *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers*, the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG, 2014, p.29) states that:

> Beginning teachers have responsibility for student learning from their first day in the classroom. This means they must be classroom ready upon entry to the profession.

The Group notes that 'the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (Professional Standards) provide a nationally agreed outline of the knowledge and skills required' of beginning teachers (TEMAG, 2014, p.29). It also stipulates that initial teacher education providers must ensure that their teaching graduates meet the required standards. As noted in Sections 3 and 4 above, the University of Tasmania is fully compliant with the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia – Standards and Procedures* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018). In relation to the university context, section 3.2 discussed the challenges involved in assessing the evidence that pre-service teachers meet those standards.

In terms of teachers' first employment context, the work that is needed to design and impose standards raises various questions about what is meant by the injunction for new graduates to be classroom-ready. As Mockler (2017, p.335) points out, the descriptor is 'both slippery to define and hard to argue against'.

5.1 Classroom readiness

So, what does classroom readiness mean? A rare example of tackling that question head on is provided by Brown (2015, p.18) who identifies four interconnected components—teacher knowledge, Professional Experience, dispositions, and school context. These components have synergies with Adoniou's (2013) four contexts, which structure this report.

> Classroom readiness is a multi-faceted concept that requires attention in each of the four domains. Each domain in itself is not sufficient to create a classroom ready teacher, nor can domains be addressed without connection to each other. For beginning teachers, this requires initial teacher education programs to integrate understanding of *Teacher Knowledge* in a way that relates to Professional Experience of the pre-service teachers. Early, explicit identification of Dispositional factors is similarly important together with opportunities to explore, reflect upon, and be mentored as these important qualities are developed. Introducing students to a range of *School Contexts* is not always possible through school experience placements but can be facilitated through the use of case studies, simulations and contact with practitioners. But graduation is only the beginning. Orientation, induction and providing a collaborative and supportive school context, being mindful of the inevitable pressures on beginning teachers are all in the next important stage. (Brown, 2015, p.18; emphasis added)

In much of the literature, however, classroom readiness remains undefined—as though it is self-evident, or it is defined superficially, for example as a capacity among beginning teachers' 'to use their professional knowledge' (Strangeways & Papatraianou, 2016, p.117).

In relation to the 2014 TEMAG report, Mockler (2016, p.268) points out that 'nowhere in either the report itself nor [in] the government response is an attempt made to define the concept of classroom readiness. Instead, the report articulates classroom readiness as meeting the graduate level of the Professional Standards,[32] which have seven elements in three clusters:

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Know students and how they learn

2. Know the content and how to teach it

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments

5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning

PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

6. Engage in professional learning

7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community

Both the list and the specific standards under each element are useful for clarifying expectations held by beginning teachers. They also raise questions about the feasibility and, indeed, the reasonableness of expecting new graduates to be capable immediately on graduation. In other words, is it fair, reasonable, or practical to expect them to deploy the array of content and pedagogical knowledge gained during their initial teacher education studies from day one in a classroom, which—for most—is a new environment?

Rather than conceptualising classroom readiness as an endpoint achieved on graduation, a more constructive understanding is that such readiness is a process that *begins* when pre-service teachers complete their formal initial teacher education studies; then *gains momentum* when they take up their first employment; and continues throughout their teaching careers. As Brown (2015, p.17) suggests, the knowledge, skills, and disposition needed for classroom readiness:

> are developed in pre-service teacher education, supported through the transition into the school context, and continually consolidated and enhanced through in-service professional learning. We could argue that classroom readiness requires collaborative and continuing attention throughout these three distinct phases of a teacher's professional career.

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32 https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards

The 2014 TEMAG report acknowledges the importance of effective inductions for beginning teachers (Brown's second phase) and also emphasises the responsibilities that rest with those providing initial teacher education (Brown's first phase). As highlighted by Mockler's (2016) thorough analysis, this position by the ministerial group is in stark contrast to an earlier, equally high profile, report: *A Class Act: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998, p.204). The report states that:

> It is generally acknowledged by all those involved—university educators, practising teachers, education departments and beginning teachers themselves—that no pre-service training can fully prepare new teachers to perform at their full capacity from their first day at work. This is not a reflection on the quality of new teachers nor on the standard of pre-service training. It is a recognition of the complexity of teaching and of the large number of variables (such as type of school, socio-economic and cultural background of students, school 'ethos', extent of support from colleagues and principal etc) affecting a teacher's performance. This being the case, induction programs have a vital role in ensuring a smooth transition for beginning teachers from university trainees to competent practitioners.

Indeed, while graduation from initial teacher education programs is a significant milestone for pre-service teachers, their first employment as a teacher marks the beginning of a whole new chapter of learning. As one academic pointed out when interviewed, 'that's why we call it initial teacher education … It's initial' (A4). Underscoring this point, another academic said:

> We've got to treat the degree as the starting point, [and recognise] that they are not [immediately] going to be the absolute[ly] brilliant English literacy teachers [they] can be… It's going to be an ongoing thing (A2).

Effective induction and mentoring for beginning teachers are crucial activities and are taken up in more detail in section 5.3. Acknowledging that 'we can't teach our pre-service students everything … and we shouldn't try to', one experienced practitioner in Phase 2 argued that once students graduate 'we just need to put them beside good practitioners' (EP31_HS). Another teacher empathised with the pressures on new graduates, sensing that:

> young teachers now feel like [they have to be] … almost up and running straight away in classrooms and working to the same level as much more experienced teachers and [they are] not necessarily getting the support and grounding that they might need in schools (EP34_PS).

Finding themselves plunged headlong into a 'sink-or-swim kind of profession' (BT78_PS), new graduates struggle to navigate the turbulent waters of their first year of teaching. Those who do not survive the first-year rite of passage, seem invariably to have suffered from lack of, or limited support from more experienced colleagues (Lunenberg, 2011; Rubinstein, 2010). For those who do manage to emerge relatively unscathed, experiences of teaching in subsequent years tend to become easier.

> Second year in, I feel much better about my literacy program. First year, I really struggled … I feel I was very lucky to have a great teaching partner during my first year, who helped me develop a great literacy program. Without her help, I would have really struggled (BT19_BE_P).

It is generally acknowledged by all those involved that no pre-service training can fully prepare new teachers to perform at their full capacity from their first day at work. People recognise the complexity of teaching and understand the large number of variables affecting a teacher's performance. Such being the case, induction programs are vital to ensure a smooth transition for beginning teachers from university trainees to competent practitioners.

(paraphrased from A Class Act: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession).

> It is widely acknowledged that new graduates experience a steep learning curve in their first year of teaching. Expecting newly-minted teachers to be "classroom-ready" may well convey the message that they need to "know everything" from day one of their careers.

Under certain conditions, novice teachers can steadily grow in skill and confidence as they forge their own paths in their chosen profession and accept that much of what they will do is 'learning on the go' (BT5_MT_P).

> Now I'm in my third year of teaching, I feel like things are falling into place a lot better, and I have a stronger, a better-rounded understanding of my role (BT80_MT_P).

> I have become more confident since I started working as a teacher. It has been a period of trial and error. However, I am gaining confidence (BT37_MT_S).

Nevertheless, not all beginning teachers have such positive experiences to support them to settle into their teaching role. Estimates for the attrition rate of early career teachers within the first five years following graduation vary from 25 to 50 per cent; although these figures have been challenged in part because they are variable across schools and locations (Weldon, 2018). Whether and to what extent new graduates thrive in teaching depends on a complex combination of factors (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016b). Analysis suggests that these factors may fall into two categories: one relating to what new graduates bring to their first teaching job; the other to what they receive from the context of their first employment.

Attention now turns to these two groups of factors and consideration is given to what makes the new graduate experience positive and growth-enhancing. With reference to the data, discussion includes an assessment of the extent to which positive experiences appear to typify teachers' work in schools in Tasmania.

5.2 What new graduates bring to their first teaching jobs

It is widely acknowledged that new graduates experience a steep learning curve in their first year of teaching as they make the transition from 'decontextualised learning about teaching, to contextualised practice and practising of teaching' (Miles & Knipe, 2018, p.107). Typically, and not surprisingly, new graduates report that they lack confidence when they first set foot in their "own" classrooms. In our research, the remarks made by some experienced practitioners shed an interesting light on this narrative:

> They just come out and it's almost as if, if they admit that they don't know something, that they're admitting to some kind of weakness (EP15_PS).

In some cases, this attitude apparently translates into 'a first-year telling you what to do … and that happens, it happens a lot' (EP36_PS). Such comments may well speak to the individual personality traits of some new graduates. However, perhaps they also point to the dangers of placing unrealistically high expectations on first-year teachers. Expecting newly-minted teachers to be classroom-ready may well convey the message that they need to know everything and they need to know it from day one of their careers.

5.2.1 Disposition towards ongoing learning and rising to challenges

Beginning teachers participating in this research who appeared to have fared relatively well in their first teaching jobs generally displayed a 'disposition of inquiry' (Miles & Knipe, 2018, p.105) and a mindset oriented to embracing present and prospective learning challenges. The following comment typifies this attitude:

> Everything's so fluid; I mean, it's always changing … you've got to … really have that open mind … [and say to yourself] "Okay. I can learn new things. And I can teach different things in different ways" (BT81_ BE_EC).

One significant theme emerging from the data about the first employment context experienced by new teachers was that having to teach outside of the learning area(s) and/or developmental stage(s) for which they were trained was relatively widespread, and that the impact of that requirement was variable. For some new graduates, having to teach out-of-area severely exacerbated what Adoniou (2013) calls the reality shock their first year in a classroom. Having full responsibility for the students in their charge seemed challenging enough, without them then discovering substantial gaps in their content and pedagogical knowledge. These two beginning teachers had completed the BEd (Primary):

> [There are] gaps [in my knowledge] due to now being a prep teacher. So, my confidence is low (BT61_BE_P).

> I am primary trained and [now] teaching a 1/2/3. [There's] lots of early childhood information that I wish I had (BT64_BE_P).

Reflecting on time as a new teacher, one experienced practitioner remembered that 'it was certainly a shock coming out of uni and having to go into upper primary because I was really out of the loop with that, [having] majored in early childhood' (EP13_PS). However, that participant had managed to reframe the experience and went on to add:

> But I think it makes you a better teacher because you can see where [the students] need to be. You know where they've got to be at in years 3 and 4, 5 and 6. And you know how important the early years are, particularly with literacy (EP13_PS).

The impact of having to teach out-of-area therefore seems to be mediated by several variables. As the following beginning teacher's comments suggest, being able to lean into challenges is a distinct advantage when feeling out of one's comfort zone.

> I have had to teach English this year, although I am not formally trained in English, and this has been a steep learning curve in some respects, but I have surprised myself with how much I enjoyed learning things, such as how to teach sentence types and how to write paragraphs (BT27_MT_S).

Indeed, for one beginning teacher, teaching out-of-area was not simply a challenge to be overcome but 'an opportunity I am extremely grateful for, as it has supported me across the curriculum, including in my own area of art teaching' (BT44_MT_S). For that novice teacher, successfully negotiating the 'steep learning curve' of teaching out-of-area involved being proactive in seeking out opportunities for support.

> **New graduates who had the benefit of exposure to classrooms separate from, and in addition to, mandatory professional experience placements saw themselves as having a solid practical foundation upon which to build their teaching expertise. For those beginning teachers, their first employment as an initial teacher education graduate was not necessarily their first job in a classroom.**

Teaching out-of-area I have made an effort to engage in many professional learning experiences to support me here, to ensure I do have strategies to support student literacy, reading and writing … I was trained in the visual and creative arts and developed skills/techniques and strategies to ensure my practice incorporated opportunities for literacy in this area. Teaching core English and HASS classes has reinforced this learning across areas (BT44_ MT_S).

5.2.2 Prior classroom experience

A second clear theme to emerge in relation to new graduates' experiences of their first teaching jobs was the influence of prior classroom encounters. Consistent with existing research, those new graduates in the sample who had had the benefit of exposure to classrooms, separate from and in addition to mandatory Professional Experience placements, saw themselves as having a solid practical foundation upon which to build their teaching expertise (Miles & Knipe, 2018; and see section 4). For those beginning teachers, their first employment as an initial teacher education graduate was not necessarily their first job in a classroom. A major joint initiative between the University of Tasmanian and Department of Education involves pre-service teachers being placed as interns in their final year. Prior classroom experience can also be gained from a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) before graduation and below reference is also made to participation in that scheme and to experiences among pre-service teachers who had worked in teacher assistant roles.

Previous employment as an intern

Internships were the main pathways on which beginning teachers had gained solid in-class experience prior to graduation. The (limited) evidence about teaching internships suggests that well-designed and well-supported programs help produce teaching graduates who are more classroom-ready than those who do not undertake internships (Foxall, 2014; Ledger & Vidovich, 2018)—although again the notion of classroom readiness is not clearly defined.

In Tasmania, the Teacher Intern Placement Program (TIPP) was established in 2016 as part of a Department of Education workforce development strategy. The program provides opportunities for University of Tasmania pre-service teachers to do their final year of study online while based full-time in a government school, working alongside experienced teachers. TIPP interns spend 35 hours per week at the school and have up to 15 hours allocated as study time to complete their course requirements. The selection criteria for entry into the program focus on:

– progress to date (being on schedule to graduate),

– commitment to teach in the TIPP location determined by DoE and in a government school after graduation, and

– overall 'aptitude to becoming a highly accomplished teacher'.[33]

For TIPP interns, the program is attractive because it provides access both to substantial in-school experience in their final year (and thus furnishes opportunities to be mentored and guided by experienced teachers) and to a permanent position

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[33] http://www.utas.edu.au/education/study-with-us/teacher-interim-placement-program

in a Tasmanian Government school on successfully completion and graduation. TIPP interns also receive a $15,000 scholarship, use of a teacher laptop, and access to the Department's network and support, including accommodation and/or travel where relevant.

Currently, the program is available to 40 pre-service teachers. Interestingly, not all the newly-graduated beginning teachers in the research were aware of TIPP.

> I was unaware of the programs put in place to allow pre-service teachers to have the opportunity to undergo internships. I feel if I had that communicated to me I would have taken the opportunity (BT10_BE_P).

TIPP is a relatively new program and inevitably there have been some 'teething problems' (A2). Both the University and the Department have learned from the first iteration to adapt and improve and as a result the program is:

> getting better and better every year … every year, we've improved it, and I think it's indicative this year [2018 for the 2019 TIPP] because 90 applicants have put their hand up' (A2).

According to one experienced practitioner whose school had employed several interns, the

> internship program is brilliant in giving them the opportunity to be out at a school in their last year (EP7_ PS).

However, the exigencies of internship ought not to under-estimated. Final year pre-service teachers typically have assessment tasks attached to multiple units of study that they are required to complete concurrently with their in-school demands. These competing demands are likely to have an impact on the novice teacher's developing professional identity (Ledger & Vidovich, 2018). Drawing attention to the responsibilities of schools in this regard, one academic observed that 'principals need to get on board as well and not use our students [to fill staffing gaps]' (A2). To illustrate this point, a couple of common scenarios in schools were sketched out.

> If I'm sitting there and I'm [an intern] doing my uni work in my office, and my principal comes in and says to me, "Oh, we've just had an accident in the playground, and we need you to run out there and [see to] it," what do you do? Of course, you go: "Oh, I've just had a phone call from teacher X, and we need you to go in and be on that class." What do you do? You do it. And all of a sudden, your time that you're meant to be spending on your uni work is being reduced, and so then that enhances the chance of failing the unit, and so it goes on (A2).

Up to 15 out of 35 hours per week is intended for study in the TIPP, and therefore this comment highlights the point that while the school environment offers exceptional opportunities for interns, it has many challenges and may not always be best suited for that arrangement. For one beginning teacher who had been a TIPP intern, the pressures of study took priority over becoming familiar with the school environment such that:

> It took me a while to get settled [in my first year out after the TIPP] … [During the TIPP] I was so busy last year studying … we had a certain [number] of hours off to do our uni work and we just had to meet all of our UTAS expectations … I guess the uni couldn't let us have any less time doing the

> "I found my internship process with an experienced teacher the BEST learning I have had in preparing me for my own class this year … when pre-service teachers and mentors are well matched it works really well and prepares us better for the real deal!"
>
> (beginning teacher)

subjects that we're doing because [the course] was already so stripped back as it was, so they had no wriggle room … [That] makes total sense, but we still had to do the same course [as other pre-service teachers] (BT74_MT_S).

The regulatory constraints on how the university can give credit for learning during TIPP are addressed in section 6.4.1. The full-time nature of the internship also means that it is not a suitable choice for all pre-service teachers and thus should be seen as one option of a suite of alternatives. One beginning teacher was happy to endure a year of financial hardship because 'the fantastic thing about [an internship] is you get your permanency with the Department straight away [and] you are … with that school for a six-year contract' (BT71_BE_P_). However, not all pre-service teachers are in a position to take on a TIPP:

> It's got to be horses for courses because I don't think every professional person in our degree could possibly do a TIPP model. As I said, all the commitments they've got and everything else, it couldn't work, and the pay [$15,000] just wouldn't cover [their needs] (A2).

That participant went on to say that despite the substantial challenges for pre-service teachers involved in undertaking an internship, there were many success stories (see Buckworth, 2017; Le Huu Nghia & Ngoc Tai, 2017). Perhaps counter-intuitively:

> Some of the most successful TIPP graduates we've had have been mature age [students] with lots of family commitments who have said, "I want this because I want this job" .So [they're prepared for] one year of absolute [financial] hardship. But again, usually those ones have got a very supportive partner or family base as well and are not doing extra things like looking after parents. So, if you look into the success stories, there are different reasons for it (A2).

A small proportion of beginning teachers (10 out of 70 survey respondents or 14 per cent) had been interns and their experiences were variable. However, on balance there were more positive than negative experiences and constructive internships were invariably associated with effective mentoring, while "learning on the job" (see section 5.3):

> I found my internship process with an experienced teacher the BEST learning I have had in preparing me for my own class this year… [Learning to teach children how to read] isn't something that happens overnight and fortunately I was one of the lucky ones … given the opportunity to observe my mentor model these skills and receive feedback and assistance … Learning on the job is the best way to learn! … The biggest booster [to my learning] was my mentor and internship … when pre-service teachers and mentors are well matched it works really well and prepares us better for the real deal! (BT33_BE_EC)

Among beginning teachers who had been interns, another key advantage of internships was that the experience gave them valuable opportunities to become familiar with whole school literacy programs and practices in their placement school:

> During my internship last year, I was able to participate in a classroom (and school wide) phonics program, which means I was basically familiar with a phonics program this year (BT14_MT_P).

> [Being an intern] enabled me to look at the practices of the school, really understand the way things were taught, and become really, really familiar with the school before I was then teaching on my own (BT71_ BE_P).

In the narratives provided by interns with histories of positive internships a recurrent theme was the importance of school leaders in establishing supportive conditions for pre-service teachers to thrive. One principal explained how she optimised the learning experience for one of the school's most recent interns:

> I put her in two different classes, so she saw one teacher for the first half of the year and another teacher for the second half of the year. So, she was basically room-ready for this year … That's a really healthy way to get people job ready (EP8_PS).

Previous employment on a Limited Authority to Teach

In addition to TIPP, pre-service teachers may gain classroom experience prior to graduation as school employees granted a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT). The Tasmanian Teacher Registration Board explains that this authorisation:[34]

> is the mechanism that allows a person, who has an appropriate skill set but is not a qualified and registered teacher, to be employed to teach. In most circumstances the granting of a LAT is a temporary measure required as a result of a school or educational setting being unable to find a suitably skilled and qualified registered teacher for a specific teaching placement. In all cases, an application for a LAT is generated by the school or the employer, not by the person who will be the LAT holder. The application process is the process by which the school or the employer seeks permission from the Board to employ a person under a LAT.

One early career teacher explained how starting on a LAT had facilitated the capacity to take up career development opportunities and move early into a leadership position:

> I only graduated from UTAS in 2014. I had been working here on a LAT throughout that year. I was completing an honours project at that time and was doing some research … I got offered a full-time position at the end of that year to start 2015 … And then at the end of my first year here, a lead teacher role was advertised [within my research area]. I wasn't going to apply for it because I didn't think someone at the end of their first year of teaching was potentially ready for something like that, but I was encouraged to … From that point, I guess, I've started attending leadership team meetings … and so it just snowballed from there (BT79_BE_P).

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34 https://www.trb.tas.gov.au/Web%20Pages/Limited%20Authorities%20to%20Teach%20(LATS).aspx

Previous employment as a teacher assistant

Participants who had been teacher assistants (TA) prior to graduating as teachers were already familiar with teaching practices, classroom management, and school processes, and firmly believed that their prior experience had stood them in good stead for their first year out:

> I was lucky because I've been in the system for a long time. So as a teacher assistant, I picked up all those skills; how to benchmark and how to do guided reading sessions … if I hadn't had that experience, I would not have come out equipped enough to teach literacy the way it should be [taught] in a classroom (EP24_HS).

> I graduated three years ago. So, I did my last prac here and then … didn't leave [laughter]. Prior to that though I was in an independent school as a TA in a support centre (BT77_BE_EC).

Teacher assistants often play a significant role in schools, ranging across individual student support, curriculum, classroom management, and broader school inclusion (Gibson *et al*., 2015). Such experiences are undoubtedly invaluable for the transition into a classroom teacher role.

5.3 What new graduates receive from the context of their first employment

New graduates who embrace learning challenges and/or who have had the benefit of extended classroom experience prior to their first employment as qualified teachers may make the transition from 'student of teaching to teacher of students' (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p.1027) with more ease than do counterparts without these qualities or experiences.

However, what new graduates *bring to* their first employment context is only part of the picture. Equally important is what they *get from* the school environments in which they start their first teaching jobs.

In this context, the importance of school leadership cannot to be over-estimated. One principal who participated in Phase 2 spoke at length about how the leadership team at the school had made a conscious decision and concerted effort to 'get really good at what we do with our first-year teachers when they come in, so we can support them … really, really well' (EP22_HS). At that school, providing support to new graduates involved the principal:

> Stand[ing] up and say[ing] to our new teachers, "Please, you do not have to cover the breadth of the curriculum. We're teaching for deeper understanding". So, I think making sure that they're concentrating on what they're doing and doing it explicitly and focused in the areas that we've identified is key (EP22_HS).

5.3.1 Induction and orientation[35]

The importance of strong induction and orientation programs for new teachers are highlighted in the research literature (see Clement, 2011; Lunenberg, 2011). Yet, participants spoke little about such mechanisms, other than by reference to individual mentoring and general support for first-year teachers. This finding is perhaps not surprising given that there are currently no mandated mechanisms to induct teachers in Australia (Kearney, 2017). Nevertheless, there is a national framework in the form of the *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016c). The Department uses those induction guidelines in its course, *Meeting the Standards: Induction for Early Career Teachers*, delivered by staff from the Professional Learning Institute (PLI).[36] The course offers a broad induction to teaching in the government system, and seems to have been embraced by both beginning teachers and school leaders as useful and necessary, although insufficient on its own. Observations shared by one experienced practitioner are salient:

> I think there's some work that we could do for our first-year teachers, for literacy. We send them out, into our schools, and we get two days before they start at the beginning of the year, and we've got the accountability checklist that you have to go through. And we've got first-year teachers that want to set up classrooms and do all of that. And then we've got to work with them on what they want to do … It's just not enough time with everything that we want to do. We do get BeTTR[37] time, and we do apply for that, we get that … [but it's] really a bit of a frustration because they need that help and if you could sit there with that time and give it to them, that would help them … it's nowhere near what it should be (EP22_HS).

5.3.2 Mentoring

One response to the challenge of early attrition of new teachers from the profession has been the introduction of mentoring programs (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, mentoring is a contested concept and practice varies from one setting to another (Heikkinen *et al*., 2017). Nonetheless, even in the absence of shared understanding about the term's meaning, participants spoke volubly about the importance of mentoring for beginning teachers.

While some schools reportedly had strong formal mentoring programs in place, in other schools the arrangement was more *ad hoc* and informal. Sometimes, matching mentors with new graduates depended more 'on the principal's and school's needs' (EP7_PS) than on the needs of a new teacher.

The Department's course *Meeting the Standards: Induction for Early Career Teachers* is delivered by staff from the Professional Learning Institute and seems to have been embraced by both beginning teachers and school leaders as useful and necessary, although insufficient on its own.

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35 While these terms are often used interchangeably, there are differences between them. The human resource literature tends to refer to "induction" as a short-term process intended to welcome new employees into an organisation, and "orientation" as a longer-term endeavour designed to integrate the new employee into the organisation. Interestingly, and somewhat confusingly, the use of the terms is reversed in the literature related to beginning teachers (see Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

36 It is worth reiterating that the survey sample of 70 beginning teachers was drawn entirely from the 2018 cohort undertaking this course. Of these, 65 had graduated from the University of Tasmania, 55 of them in 2017.

37 In 2013, the Department introduced the Beginning Teacher Time Release (BeTTR) program to allow extra non-contact time for new teachers to prepare for class and attend professional development opportunities.

> **Constructive mentoring may be partly a function of the matching process. Effective mentors recognise and attend both to the pedagogical and practical needs of their new colleagues, and also to their emotional and psychosocial wellbeing.**

Thinking about their own first year out, one experienced practitioner highlighted the importance of minimising stress on new graduates while their self-confidence is still shaky. Commenting on the impact on first year teachers of being observed teaching, that participant said that staff were used to watching each other work and had become 'oblivious to others coming in and watching us' (EP13_PS). But that person acknowledged that new teachers find being observed unnerving, even if that observational work is done by a supportive mentor:

> It doesn't bother me—well, not anymore. It used to. Because it was just like, "What are they thinking?" You feel like you are being scrutinized a bit … So, I say "just relax, be confident. You've had some outstanding lessons. Just imagine [your mentor is] not even in the room. She's not going to judge you". That's really hard for a new grad … because it is always about assessment for them. Going on a prac and then seeing if they're meeting the standards. So, they just need to relax a little bit more … So, I say [to them] "don't stress about it. It's not a big deal" (EP13_PS).

Constructive mentoring may be partly a function of the matching process. It is also related to mentors' skills, experiences, and personal characteristics. Research suggests that effective mentors recognise and attend both to the pedagogical and practical needs of their new colleagues, and also to their emotional and psychosocial wellbeing (Gilles *et al.*, 2013). A reassuring and collegial manner is therefore a key characteristic of effective and supportive mentoring, as one participant reflected:

> It was just the way [my mentor was] … Because if she'd come in and said "right, you need to do this, this, and this", I would have gone "I'm not doing anything right". But she helped me find resources. She helped me. And she just was there. And if I had a bad day, I'd go and say, "I've had a bad day". And she'd go "Yeah, I have too". And I'd think, "Oh, you still have bad days". She was just—it was her personality, and being an excellent teacher, so I was just lucky (EP35_PS).

Informal mentoring occurred in many schools, sometimes in addition to more formal programs, and sometimes in lieu of structured mentoring. A significant theme that emerged in conversations about informal mentoring was the generosity shown by experienced teachers in sharing their knowledge with novices:

> It's not really a defined role, but if there's a [new] graduate who's working next door to me and they're not quite sure how to do [something], I try to make sure that there are opportunities to come into my room, or we can sit after school and I can share my practice … with the idea that "this is just one way of doing it, and you can add bits of that to your own repertoire, if it suits you and your children". But eventually, they will find their own way. So, I'm kind of like, I don't know, a bit of a backstop, kind of like a mentor. But just a person that someone can say, "You know, I'm really struggling with how to organize my spelling groups. What do you do?" (EP1_PS)

Another experienced practitioner in the same school described what happened there as 'an umbrella kind of mentoring' (EP4_PS) that entailed new teachers having 'time to either go and sit in on other people's classes, or time to go and have a look at the resources that we've got' (EP4_PS).

It's not generally going, "this is your mentor" but it's the teacher next door to you that has been teaching that class. And I think senior staff are very clever here [because] wherever there's a new teaching staff [member], there's always been somebody that's been in that area for them … Just to have those informal conversations. You're encouraged to team teach. You're encouraged to plan together… It's highly encouraged to go and sit with expert teachers, to have a look at their lessons … Like if you've said "look I'm not really happy with my reading program at the moment" … X will go "Okay. We'll organise somebody to be on your class, so you can go and sit in on a lesson with me". So [they are] heavily mentored (EP4_PS).

Perhaps not surprisingly, schools with the most comprehensive mentoring programs for beginning teachers had high intakes of new graduates every year:

We had seven first-year teachers [last year] and I think we have got a pretty good system in working with first-year teachers because that's what we have to do. So, we've had to have a really good look at how we support them … so every new teacher to our school, whether they're first-year or not—but I don't think we've had one for a while that hasn't been first-year—is allocated a mentor, preferably within their PLC [Professional Learning Community], that's not their lead teacher. [Because] often they might just need to debrief [and] that might be a bit of a whinge or something at the end of the day, and we want them to have the opportunity to do that without needing to go to someone in the leadership team (BT79_HS).

That teacher acknowledged that 'the first six months is tricky' for new graduates and suggested that while the school might 'want to try and improve their practice as quickly as possible, [new graduates] are not necessarily in a space to want that at that time' (BT79_HS) because they tend to be preoccupied with the fundamental issue of classroom management (Dicke *et al.*, 2015; Friedman, 2006). Mirroring the gradual release of responsibility model used with school students, good mentoring means adapting the nature and focus of mentoring support over time.

5.3.3 Supportive school environments

Whether formal or informal, effective mentoring for new teachers tends to reflect a supportive school environment, which is crucial to mitigating the so-called reality shock experienced by most new graduates (see Corcoran, 1981). It is vital, therefore, to communicate to new graduates the message that 'we're here to support, we're not here to criticise' (EP14_PS).

Some participants expressed the view that support for new graduates was much better now than it had been in the past, one describing it thus:

In the Dark Ages, when the first year out teachers were [placed] in a school, it was like "There you go, survive." I think we've come a long way (BT80_MT_P).

Other participants held opposing opinions:

I do, sometimes, feel that there isn't the opportunity for young teachers to be mentored as much anymore, based on my own experiences as an early teacher. The ability to … work alongside experienced teachers, or go and visit and look in other classrooms … [is] not just about the teaching … It's [about learning how to manage] the other social needs [of school students, which] …

> **"We had seven first-year teachers [last year] and I think we have got a pretty good system in working with first-year teachers because that's what we have to do. So, we've had to have a really good look at how we support them [and] every new teacher to our school is allocated a mentor"**
>
> (beginning teacher).

I feel is sometimes very overwhelming—very overwhelming for young teachers (EP34_PS).

Such comments may say as much about the challenges of being a teacher in the twenty-first century as they do about levels of support for new graduates. It is entirely possible that new teachers do, in fact, receive comparatively more support than did previous generations of teachers. However, given the increasing recognition of complex of student needs, the level of support available may be simply inadequate in some school settings.

Notwithstanding, new teachers were and are supported in Tasmanian schools. Most commonly, participants spoke about a culture of collaboration that provides a supportive network for beginning teachers—a safety net in some respects, and one serving to help struggling novices/initiates keep their heads above water. Certainly, in relation to a whole school approach to literacy, senior staff play a pivotal role in actively modelling such collaborative school cultures (Stewart *et al.*, 2018b).

> I can't speak for any other schools because I haven't worked in any other ones, but … here, it is a very supportive environment. Our senior staff are fantastic. Our AP, especially, is very hands-on and very happy to come in and be like "oh, if you're struggling with that, I'll come in, and I'll show you how I might teach that, or I'll come in and show you different approaches and work with you, give you resources." So, senior staff are fantastic as a support in this school (BT78_BE_P).

In schools with a collaborative culture, practices of working together prevailed (Kohm & Nance, 2009), enabling new teachers to feel comfortable seeking help when they needed it.

> It's really lovely to have those people you can go to and say "this is my problem. What can I do?" because sometimes you can be banging your head against a wall and you can try lots of different things, but it might not work. So, it's nice to have that teamwork happening and being able to help and support each other (BT75_BE_P).

However, not all new teaching graduates felt well-supported in the context of their first employment.

> I don't feel like I get much direct support about literacy in the classroom. I feel like I have a lot of knowledge about it from working with teachers, and [from being exposed to the] influence of teachers around the school, and doing my pracs, and studying at university. But I don't feel like there is somebody that I could go to now and say "I'm having trouble with these six, or these four, students. Their literacy is just really low. What should I do?" … The people that I [feel I] can ask for help are just the people that I've gotten to know or have been supportive … But in terms of asking somebody for kind of more formal literacy help, I don't think we've got any of that sort of stuff in place here (BT74_MT_S).

That teacher highlighted the usefulness of university learning and Professional Experience, as well as informal networks. Nevertheless, more was needed and this was difficult in the absence of more formal support.

Participants spoke about a culture of collaboration that provides a supportive network for beginning teachers. In relation to a whole school approach to literacy, senior staff play a pivotal role in actively modelling such collaborative school cultures.

> And because I'm [in my] first year, I don't always feel super confident in my behaviour management stuff, so then, I'm kind of reverting back to these maybe more formula-like lessons, just to make sure that I can be on top of things (BT74_MT_S).

For that new graduate, first year out was proving to be a rather lonely and isolating experience.

> Since I've been teaching full-time, I just feel like I'm going on alone with it, which is fine … Everybody's really busy, but there's just not any sort of systematic ways that senior staff are coming in, watching what I'm doing, maybe giving me feedback and being in the room … I mean it'd also be really nice to just have another teacher in the room to help some of those kids that are having trouble, but that's probably unlikely (BT74_MT_S).

While this beginning teacher was feeling acutely alone in her first year of total responsibility in the classroom, the evidence suggests that her experience is unlikely to be an isolated case (Kelly *et al.*, 2018; Lunenberg, 2011).

5.3.4 Access to professional learning

Finally, ongoing 'in-service' professional learning plays a major role in terms of what new graduates receive in their first teaching job to support their classroom readiness. The array of accreditation requirements means that there are limitations on the capacity of those providing initial teacher education to prepare pre-service teachers to teach literacy in their first year in the profession. As one participant pointed out:

> Can we give them everything they need at university and their courses? No, we can't. We haven't got enough space [in the course]. This is why I keep saying … we need classroom-ready teachers, but you cannot assume that that means they're ready for the rest of their life. It has to be an ongoing professional learning program that supports them as well (A2).

In section 6.2, consideration is given to the constraints and challenges in initial teacher education for preparing pre-service teachers to teach literacy. Here, attention turns to the role played by in-service professional learning in helping to address the (inevitable) gaps in pre-service teachers' learning.

Beginning teachers' need for timely access to professional learning in the first few years after graduation has been argued extensively in the literature (see Dharan, 2015; Hunter *et al.*, 2011; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). As identified in the Phase 2 report, in-service professional learning takes various forms, including mentoring and coaching, and may be delivered informally or formally and provided in-house or externally (Stewart *et al.*, 2018b). Such professional development also needs to be contextually relevant and tailored to the specific needs of different cohorts of new graduates, as one participant explained:

> If we're going to go and throw a group of first year out teachers up to the west coast, they've got to know about how different it is to teach children in that rural or remote area compared to teaching them in Hobart. So, they need extra and different professional learning (A2).

> "I would not
> be where I
> am without
> our literacy
> coordinator. Not
> at all … Because I
> go to her and say,
> "Oh, I don't know
> what I'm doing."
> And she'll go,
> "Here, try this."
> And she just puts
> you at ease and
> really supports
> you"
>
> **(beginning teacher).**

In both the scholarly literature and empirical findings from this research, there is substantial evidence that new teaching graduates highly value practice-focused professional learning, particularly the learning gained by participating in professional learning communities and teams (PLCs and PLTs) (De Neve & Devos 2017).

> I have been able to attend professional learning sessions, and work in a PLT, to create authentic literacy units and observe teaching practices in our school (BT47_BE_P).

The following comments from participants testify to the power of professional learning, provided at the point of need, to build novice teachers' confidence.

> I have been provided with a huge amount of PL and literacy coaching throughout my first year of teaching which is the only reason I feel moderately confident (BT24_MT_P).

> My confidence has definitely developed by working at my current school, with colleagues and through the literacy PLs from this year (BT43_BE_P).

> This is where I feel I have developed most of my confidence through a variety of PLs and through collaboration with other teachers (BT45_BE_P).

In addition to referring to confidence dividends, beginning teachers also commented on how professional learning helped 'to develop [the] ability to teach literacy' (BT69_BE_P), adding to the knowledge gained in initial teacher education:

> The strategies I use to teach I learnt during professional learning over the last two years, [which] have enabled me to build on my knowledge and understanding of what works for me and different strategies to use to help teach students (BT69_BE_P).

In relation specifically to developing new teachers' literacy teaching practice, access to in-house literacy expertise was deemed invaluable:

> I would not be where I am without our literacy coordinator. Not at all … Because I go to her and say, "Oh, I don't know what I'm doing." And she'll go, "Here, try this." And she just puts you at ease and really supports you (BT77_BE_EC).

The value of in-class literacy coaching was underscored by an experienced practitioner who related the following example.

> The most effective example that I've seen of teacher support this year has been through a literacy coach, a raising-the-bar coach, coaching a first year out teacher. I can walk up the corridor past classrooms, and I can see a first year out Teach for Australia[38] teacher … with very limited teacher training … and she's doing near perfect literacy practice in that room. I think the thing

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38 Teach for Australia is an initiative supported by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, that offers an employment-based pathway into teaching. Those selected to participate (known as 'Associates') work as a full-time teacher with full salary and benefits, in a secondary school in a low socio-economic area, while studying a postgraduate degree (Master of Teaching) through the Australian Catholic University (ACU). See https://www.teachforaustralia.org/join-tfa/ldp/about-the-program/

that supported the development of that first year out teacher has been the in-class support, the on-the-job training that's happened. And I think that's got to be the way that teaching starts to build a bit more capacity in the way we do things (EP19_HS).

Some schools are investing considerable thought and effort into exploring different ways of incorporating professional learning as an integral component of their support program for new graduates. One beginning teacher was especially enthusiastic about harnessing the affordances of digital technologies for this purpose.

I think from the 21st-century learning perspective, [we need to think about] how we can utilise digital technologies … to better support [new teachers' learning]. So, if we're running a PL session, yes, it's fantastic that they're face-to-face, but why can't all of that be recorded in some way that is then available for teachers to go back and watch? And for first-year teachers, if this is the first time they're hearing this stuff, it might be really important for them to be able to go back and access that in their own time … a database for some of our core PL … that would be really beneficial (BT79_BE_P).

Ongoing professional learning

In that part of Phase 2 focusing on literacy teaching in schools, there was widespread agreement that professional learning was needed to facilitate literacy teaching—for early career teachers, and also for mid- and late-career teachers and for teacher assistants. It is imperative for all educators to be lifelong learners. For experienced teachers as much as for beginning ones, 'the onus [is on] teachers to actually stay up to date with [literacy teaching practice], because we are a profession' (EP7_PS). Comments from experienced practitioners suggest an openness to updating and enhancing their knowledge and skills to improve their teaching practice. Reflecting back on their initial teacher education, one experienced teacher noted:

at that stage, [teaching literacy] was [about] … immersion in language, that kind of [whole language] approach. But then, when I started teaching, I realised that I wasn't seeing gain in student learning, and so I went on a bit of a journey to improve my own practice. And that was through my own professional learning … I wanted to provide the best education possible for the children and so … I looked at research-based evidence [and] … at models for a teacher-guided reading (EP17_PS).

Recognising gaps in their own grammatical knowledge, another experienced practitioner related the following example of self-initiated professional development.

In terms of English literacy, I wasn't happy with myself grammatically, so I went and did a lot of work with Bev Derewianka about sentence structure and learn[ed] how to teach sentence structure … where to put commas in, what makes the subordinate clauses, and all that kind of thing, [as well as] how to teach that in a way that's not going to make students fall asleep! I … used the participant process and circumstance approach that [Derewianka advocates], and [that is how] I specifically taught my children (EP4_ PS).

Exemplifying the growth mindset (Dweck, 2000) characteristic of teachers who are able to facilitate students to develop strengths to support their own learning (Seaton, 2018; Zalaznick, 2018) one participant said:

> I think you have to have a passion to keep updating [your learning] because if you don't, then you're not going to keep up with the new generations that we've got through. And I think when you've been [laughter] around for a long time, it makes your job more exciting … to try something new (EP29_PS).

Highlighting the importance of reciprocity in the learning relationship between novice and veteran teachers, one highly experienced classroom practitioner noted:

> As a teacher you're always wanting to learn, you want new ideas … I've got a couple [of early career teachers] on my team; they're all younger, and they've got good ideas, and I think, "Oh, that's a great idea." Sometimes I think I don't have enough ideas … So, when people say, "Oh you're really experienced and knowledgeable" I think, "Well, am I?" … You're always wanting more ideas (EP35_PS).

In other words, despite all the discussion of deficiencies in the skill sets used by beginning teachers, they also may have ideas to offer to more experienced colleagues.

To conclude, by returning to the question posed at the start of this section: does the notion of 'classroom readiness' need re-thinking? As Brown (2015, p.18) shows, it is too simplistic to view classroom readiness as determined by the length or curriculum design of initial teacher education programs, or by a test for pre-service teachers. Findings reported here also support Mockler's (2017, p.337) suggestion to reframe classroom readiness not 'as a standard to be attained at graduation, but a process of becoming, to be committed and re-committed to over the course of a career'. This interpretation opens the concept up to incorporate much more than "meeting the standards". It makes room for what beginning teachers bring to their first employment context and for what they receive from that and takes account of myriad intersecting factors that influence what and how new graduates learn in that context.

In the next section, effort is made to pull together the evidence reported thus far to provide some conclusions about the overall status of pre-service teacher preparation in Tasmania as it relates to literacy teaching.

Section 6. Preparedness and preparation to teach literacy

> **Preparedness is an outcome from the task of preparation. It connotes the *state or condition* of being ready; this is open to interpretation and based on perception.**

How classroom-ready are University of Tasmania teaching graduates to teach literacy? The answer to this question depends on context—on who is responding and from which standpoint. In this section, consideration is given to various responses from university-based teacher-educators, beginning teachers, and experienced classroom practitioners in schools.

An important distinction is made here between preparation and preparedness:

> *Preparation:* this is about a task—that is, the work to prepare pre-service teachers for teaching literacy in Tasmanian schools. It describes *what has been done* to achieve a state of readiness or preparedness. While descriptive of *actual* actions and practices this is not necessarily objective, since participants differ in how they remember and value various practices..

> *Preparedness:* this is an outcome from the task of preparation—that is, it connotes the *state or condition* of being ready. This term is open to interpretation and based on *perception*. In particular, we noticed a tendency among participants to conflate "confidence" with "feeling prepared". Undoubtedly, the two states are related. Nevertheless, confidence is a personal quality to which some are predisposed and that others develop with experience (see Meeks *et al.*, *2016; Stephenson, 2018)*.

Previous sections have addressed the *preparation* of pre-service teachers for teaching literacy, especially in terms of university-based coursework and Professional Experience placements. Here, the focus expands to include participants' perceptions of the *preparedness* of new graduates to teach literacy, before an evaluation is made of the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities that characterise pre-service education at the University of Tasmania oriented to literacy teaching.

6.1 Perspectives on preparedness

In this first section, consideration is given to a range of general perspectives on preparedness, and reference is made to the viewpoints held by academics who provide initial teacher education, by beginning teachers, and by experienced practitioners.

6.1.1 Perspectives on preparedness among initial teacher education providers

University of Tasmania academics grappled with the idea of preparedness, as one participant explained:

> There are things in the curriculum we can't teach because we just don't have enough time. And we tear our hair out thinking, what's enough? We can't teach everything. What's good enough to get teachers to a point where we feel confident? We've had long debates about what must be included and which bits we either expect or hope that they learn through their prac teaching experiences and once they become a teacher. So, I guess that's the problem (A6).

> **Just over half of the beginning teachers responding to the survey felt either 'not very well-prepared' or 'not at all well-prepared' and just under half felt 'fairly well-prepared' or 'well-prepared' for teaching literacy. This finding aligns with a national survey by GradAustralia, which found that just over half of teaching students felt that their course had provided them with the skills needed for the labour market.**

Overall, however, Faculty of Education staff usually shared the view that 'what we're doing is as good as it can be' (A2) and feedback from schools indicated that the quality of teaching graduates was generally high:

> I think, on the whole, we prepare [students] very well. And when you go out and you visit them on Professional Experience, you get a lot of positive feedback from the teachers and from the principals about how well prepared they are and about how professional they are (A3).

> From the numbers of people [who] are graduating and [are now] in roles and succeeding, [our] school contacts are saying "we can see the difference between a University of Tasmania person [and graduates from other institutions], and we'll have more of them, please" [and this feedback] is quite encouraging (A5).

6.1.2 The beginning teachers' perspective

Notwithstanding the positive comments noted above, beginning teachers felt under-prepared. This finding is not unique to University of Tasmania graduates, with a recent survey conducted by GradAustralia finding that:

> Compared to those from other disciplines, teaching students were the least likely to report feeling that their course had provided them with the skills needed for the labour market. Only 52% of respondents felt prepared, while more than two-thirds in health and medical science did.[39]

Those findings accord with the results of the survey, in which beginning teachers were asked how well they felt their course had prepared them for teaching literacy (Figure 3). Note that of the 70 respondents who completed the beginning teacher survey, five did not undertake their initial teacher education at the University of Tasmania and their responses are excluded from the analysis here.

Overall just over half of the beginning teachers (51 per cent) felt either 'not very well-prepared' or 'not at all well-prepared', and less than half (43 per cent) said they felt 'fairly well-prepared'. A minority (six per cent) self-assessed as 'well-prepared' and no respondents reported feeling 'exceedingly well-prepared'.

A greater proportion of MTeach graduates than of BEd graduates said that they felt either 'fairly well-prepared' or 'well-prepared', and fewer felt 'not very well-prepared' or 'not at all well-prepared'. It is possible that these ratings reflect existing literacy levels among pre-service teachers (see Section 2) since prior research suggests that master's level students generally demonstrate substantially greater knowledge of literacy than do their undergraduate counterparts (Louden *et al.*, 2010).

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39 https://www.campusreview.com.au/2019/03/teaching-humanities-students-feel-most-unprepared-for-labour-market-survey/?utm_medium=email&%E2%80%A6

Figure 3: Beginning teachers' views on how well their course prepared them to teach literacy
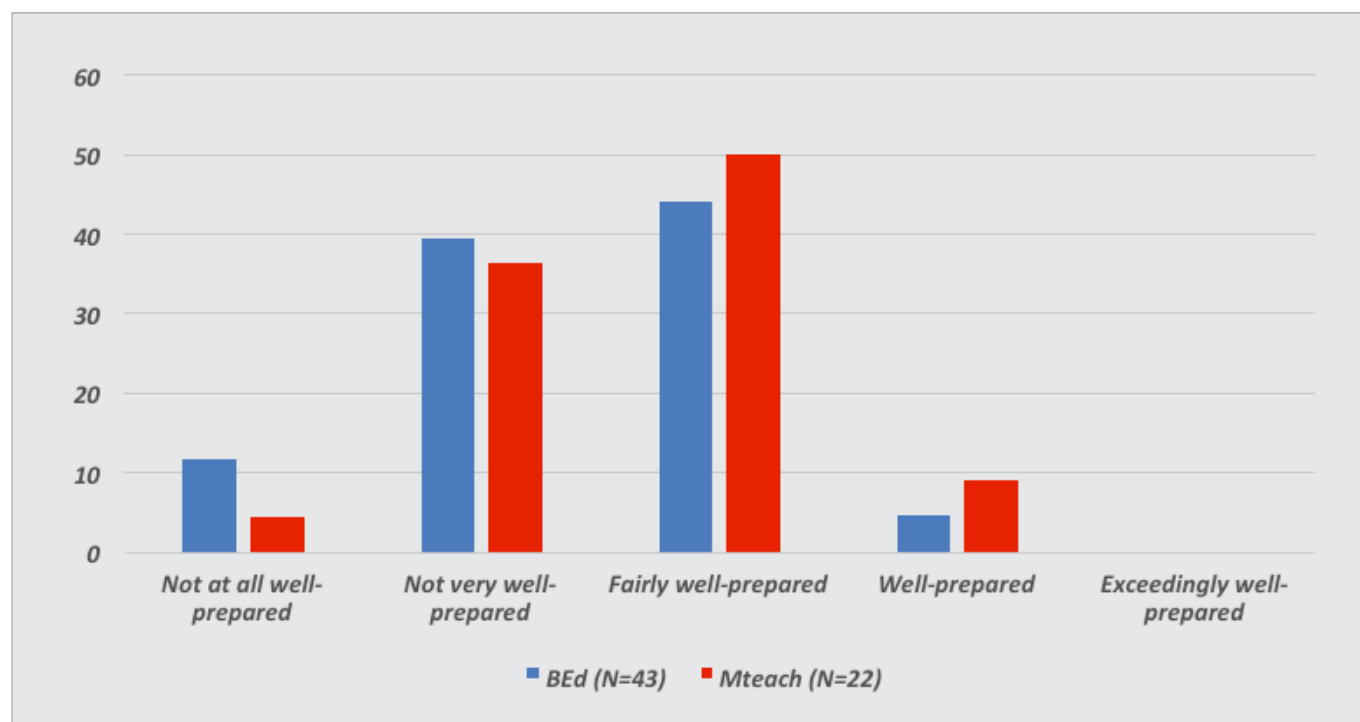
Some participants drew attention to specific aspects of their initial teacher education that they felt were lacking:

> I only did one literacy course during my whole degree at University. The unit was a good unit, however there was a lot of focus on theory and teaching us about how to identify nouns, verbs, adverbial phrases. I felt as if it was less about the teaching and more about whether we knew literacy terms. I didn't feel prepared to teach writing, reading or spelling from the one unit I studied (BT24_MT_P).

In contrast, another MTeach graduate thought that knowledge of literacy had been absent in the course: 'While I thoroughly enjoyed the degree, I am concerned that the basics of literacy have not been taught, yet I am expected to know these things' (BT65 _MT_S).

It is worth noting that both graduates would have undertaken a foundations of literacy unit (EMT510 or EMT511). Moreover, while participant BT24 referred to only 'one literacy course' in their 'whole degree', the MTeach (Primary) program includes two literacy-focused units, EMT511 (Foundations of English) in first year and EMT611 (English curriculum and pedagogy) in second year (see section 3.1.2). Another beginning teacher referred to 'the literacy unit' as not preparing 'you for teaching literacy in the classroom' (BT40_BE_EC). This reference to '*the* literacy unit' is puzzling. As shown in Table 4 (in section 3), the BEd (Early Childhood) course includes four units. These include ESH106 'Academic Literacies' as well as three units that focus on English as a specific learning area: ESH110 (Foundations of English) in first year; ESH210 (Developing Understandings of English) in second year; ESH310 (Critical Approaches to English) in third year (see section 3.1.1).

This dissonance between the fact and perception in relation to units offered does not take away the significance of graduates feeling under-prepared. Comments from other participants who had indicated they felt 'not very well-prepared' and 'not at all well-prepared' highlight their strong feelings.

> I expected that I would of [*sic*] needed to consolidate my theoretical learning, but I never expected I would be so ill-equipped and ignorant in the classroom this year (BT14_MT_P-).

> The course I undertook did not support me to teach literacy skills to my current students (BT49_BE_S).

It was confronting to hear that one beginning teacher who had apparently 'received a distinction result' in an unspecified literacy-focused unit reported emerging from their degree 'confused and none the wiser' (BT49_BE_S) about teaching literacy. As a result, that new teacher felt 'helpless when trying to assist students with inadequate/underdeveloped literacy skills' (BT49_BE_S). An overwhelming sense of feeling unprepared led another beginning teacher to conclude:

> Either I teach myself how to do those things, or I inevitably suffer the consequences inflicted by the students (when they realise I have no I idea what I'm talking about) (BT12_MT_S).

It is worth noting that those beginning teachers whose opinions were less negative about their preparation for teaching literacy conceded that their course 'had good and bad aspects' (BT42_BE_P). Acknowledging that some subjects had showed them 'how to provide rich, authentic literacy learning experiences', one beginning teacher concluded that the initial teacher education course 'did prepare me the best it could' (BT42_BE_P).

Reassuringly, over 50 per cent of the beginning teachers who completed the survey nominated specific aspects of their degrees that they felt did help to prepare them for teaching literacy. In Section 6.2.2, consideration is given to aspects of initial teacher education courses that were named by participants as especially useful.

6.1.3 The experienced practitioners' perspective

In general, the perspectives held by many of the experienced practitioners resonated with those held by beginning teachers, with respect to the issue of preparedness to teach literacy. Responding to the common attacks on teacher standards in the media, one teacher preferred to shift responsibility by suggesting 'perhaps our university courses might be a better standard' so that pre-service teachers 'learned how to teach reading, in the first place' (EP12_PS). Another classroom teacher's interpretation of preparedness for the teaching profession extended beyond skills for teaching literacy:

> I get worried about the reasons why people choose this profession now. And I do have concerns about [whether they are] prepared for the absolute relentless exhaustion that comes with the job, the stress, the tears, the absolute effort you have to make for every single child? And if you're not, maybe you shouldn't be there (EP1_PS).

This comment may beg the question of whether such expectations of new and experienced teachers are reasonable. Nevertheless, it serves to highlight the wide range of understandings regarding preparedness for teaching, as well as the

demanding expectations placed on novice teachers from day one of their careers (Hay Group, 2014).

On the other hand, experienced teachers also said they 'came out of university probably not with the skills that we needed to be a classroom teacher straight up' (EP3_PS) and were concerned about increased pressures:

> I do worry about young teachers coming into schools. I feel they've got a very difficult task at the moment (EP34_PS).

In the remainder of this section, effort is made to shed light on these diverse understandings and expectations in relation to the preparation for teaching literacy, and a response is made to the specific request in the project brief to identify areas of strength and weakness in the delivery of the skills, knowledge, and practices necessary for the effective teaching of literacy. First, a summary is provided that maps out participants' views about the strengths of initial teacher education for teaching literacy, at the University of Tasmania. Second, the perceived limitations in new graduates' preparation are examined. The section concludes with a discussion of constraints and challenges in the current initial teacher education arrangements to prepare pre-service teachers for teaching literacy.

6.2 Perceived strengths of initial teacher education at the University

Participants' comments highlighting the strengths of initial teacher education at the University of Tasmania focused on two key areas: characteristics of the Education Faculty staff and features of the course content.

6.2.1 Characteristics of Education Faculty staff

Participating academics were unanimous in their praise of the English/literacy team, several participants noting that 'they're probably one of our two tightest teams here in our School' (A4). The individuals who operate as part of this small, 'cohesive and streamlined team' (A4) were seen as being 'passionate about literacy' (A8), and as dedicated teachers who 'know their stuff' (A9).

Noting that 'the strength is the teams, the people who work here', one academic added:

> And that's the difference … Our students become passionate about [literacy] when they are working with people who are experts and talented in the area (A8).

Beginning teachers made comments that reinforced this focus on the staff as a major strength of the course. One survey respondent wrote:

> There were some units that were excellent, and those units were delivered by teachers who had classroom experience and who provided practical activities and resources (BT25_MT_P).

Staff in the English/literacy team in the Faculty of Education were seen as being "passionate about literacy" (academic); as dedicated teachers who "know their stuff" (academic); and as "excellent tutors" (beginning teacher).

One key strength running throughout the initial teacher education courses that literacy is a cross-curricular responsibility for all teachers. An experienced practitioner said: "I think perhaps the younger teachers coming from university now do have a better grasp on that fact"

Another beginning teacher was fulsome in their praise generally, writing of the benefits of:

> extensive literacy training in each year of study, excellent tutors [who] were able to focus on the most important areas [of literacy teaching] and how they would relate to the actual teaching process (BT39_BE_P).

Beyond the English/literacy team, reference was made to the ways in which Faculty of Education staff in general enjoyed close and supportive relationships with pre-service teachers. Key to providing effective student support was being accessible and treating each student 'like a real person … and not a number' (A5):

> We're not a university where staff don't get to actually talk and work with the students. We don't fob them off to our HDR [Higher Degree by Research] students or tutors all the time. The students get access to the actual unit coordinators who are on our academic team. So I think that's a real strength …They can come along the corridor and knock on the lecturer's door, whereas some universities have got these corridors now where they're closed off and they've got to make appointments, which could be quite off-putting to a student who might want to just come and have that personal conversation at that moment … our staff don't just sit in their offices in other words, and just do their own thing. They really are out there working and engaging (A2).

It was also noted that 'unit coordinators do a hell of a job supporting students … which goes unrecognised, largely, by the workload models' (A1). This comment resonates with the findings in existing Australian research exploring the roles of university unit coordinators, which have established that they frequently face challenges for recognition and often lack institutional support in managing the complexities of their role (Pepper & Roberts, 2016).

6.2.2 Initial teacher education course content

The second area of strength identified by academics, experienced practitioners, and beginning teachers was course content:

> I think one of the strengths is that all the content is rigorously designed, there's a cohesion between all the units … and there's a level of intellectual rigour (A6).

A clear thread running throughout the initial teacher education courses was that literacy is a cross-curricular responsibility for all teachers. As one academic strenuously pointed out:

> There's no way that a student who comes out of our degree could possibly say that they're not aware of [the importance of literacy across the curriculum] … I think most of our units do a really good job of identifying the literacy components of their own discourse. At that level, I think we're really strong (A7).

Encouragingly, this view was echoed by both experienced practitioners in schools and beginning teachers themselves:

> I think perhaps the younger teachers coming from university now do have a better grasp on that [literacy as a cross-curricular responsibility]. I think it's been a traditional concept that it was our [English teachers'] responsibility. A couple of the younger teachers here that have come straight from university … I've been most impressed by them (EP32_HS).

> I feel that there was a deliberate focus in other content specific subjects at UTAS, especially maths and science, to talk about combining curriculum areas, and examples of how to include literacy (BT14_MT_P).

Responding to a question in the survey about what they regarded as the *most useful* aspects of their teaching degrees, some beginning teachers answered in broad terms about preparation for teaching generally. These comments often reflected an understanding of initial teacher education as 'providing the skeleton of what's required that is later revisited at a deeper level' (BT18_BE_P). These new graduates appreciated how their courses had introduced them to 'a range of tools and resources' (BT38_BE_P) upon which they could draw and 'refer back to' (BT40_BE_EC).

Another beginning teacher noted that 'behaviour management strategies were the most useful' (BT38_BE_P), reflecting a practical concern with basic classroom management shared by many new teachers (Sempowicz & Hudson, 2012).

Overall, new graduates tended not to highlight theoretical input as a strength of their initial teacher education. There were, however, exceptions to the tendency to prioritise practice over theory. One participant referred to the value of 'learning about the many different ways in which children learn' (BT41_BE_EC). Another described the utility of 'theoretical knowledge [about] how children develop language skills' (BT22_MT_P). A third emphasised the value of a sound theoretical foundation in the following terms:

> Some of the theories are so valid and so helpful in what you do, like, I mean, the zone of proximal development, Piaget, and all those sorts of things. They've always stuck with me (BT81_PS).

Other participants gave feedback on preparation for teaching literacy, one noting that 'the three [literacy-focused] units were comprehensive and interesting' (BT4_MT_S). Some survey respondents provided more granular-level responses, naming as strengths of their initial teacher education the preparation given to teach specific aspects of literacy:

> I found the explicit focus [on] reading comprehension and decoding strategies extremely useful for my work as a teacher, as most schools place emphasis on reading (BT29_BE_P).

> In first year, we learnt about phonological awareness, phonics, phonemic awareness etc, and I feel these are very important aspects to have a good knowledge of when entering schools, especially if you are teaching early childhood, as this stuff is crucial (BT32_BE_P).

> "I think that all literacy units were useful, but as the curriculum contains so much content, the course was unable to cover everything. The planning of lessons based on the curriculum in university units was very helpful in preparing me. The coverage of grammar and reading in units was also helpful, but not many other areas were covered to the same degree"
>
> (beginning teacher).

One participant nominated 'learning about the purpose, structure and language features of text types' (BT54_BE_P) as one of the most useful aspects of their literacy teaching preparation, while another referred to 'having a variety of literacy-based subjects, [from] grammar [to] children's books' (BT56_BE_P).

These comments highlight the point that literacy has many elements, which is evident in the ACARA definition of literacy as it applies to oral, written and visual dimensions (ACARA, no date).[40] These various understandings of literacy created tensions about what can be covered in depth—or at all. While some teachers perceive the coverage in initial teacher education at the University of Tasmania to have the balance right, others disagree—as will be apparent in the section 6.3.

One beginning teacher had the following to say about how their initial teacher education had prepared them adequately for teaching some, but not all, aspects of literacy:

> I think that all literacy units were useful, but as the curriculum contains so much content, the course was unable to cover everything. The planning of lessons based on the curriculum in university units was very helpful in preparing me. The coverage of grammar and reading in units was also helpful, but not many other areas were covered to the same degree (BT31_BE_P).

This view succinctly summarises a dilemma expressed by the teacher educators who were interviewed for this research (see the next section).

6.3 Perceived weaknesses in new graduates' preparation to teach literacy

There is a growing body of literature on professional practice and learning that posits practice as a significant mode and site of emergent learning (Fenwick & Nerland, 2014; Nicolini, 2011; Reich & Hager, 2014). Here, reference is made to that literature in grouping participants' perceptions of the weaknesses in the preparation of new graduates for teaching literacy into two overlapping categories:

– knowing *about* practice (that is, propositional knowledge needed *for* practice); and

– knowing *how to* practise (that is, knowing how to apply propositional knowledge *in* practice, and developing skills *through* practice).

6.3.1 Knowing *about practice*

Some academics were quick to acknowledge that 'there are things in the curriculum we can't teach because we just don't have enough time' (A6). Indeed, several specific areas of propositional knowledge were nominated that participants wished could be strengthened. For example:

> we could do with another unit on grammar, on all these kinds of issues that are out there in relation to the curriculum, how to teach spelling … But we're hamstrung by the model that we have. So again, it's not perfect, but we try and do the best we can, and we certainly try and cover the Australian curriculum to the best way we can in the limited time we've got (A2).

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40 https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/literacy/

Underscoring the combined effects of a crowded curriculum at the University and the broad ACARA definition of literacy, one beginning teacher made the following apposite observation:

> With the literacy curriculum being so broad and diverse, having the ability to walk out of uni and be able to teach a comprehensive literacy program that provides choice, relevance and differentiation is a stretch (BT30_BE_P).

Similarly acknowledging that 'four years isn't a lot of time to cram in all areas of the curriculum', one experienced teacher said that 'it would be nice to think that they came out with the relevant stuff that practising teachers were using' (EP40_PS). While views on "relevance" may depend on standpoint, there were enough comments related specifically to literacy teaching to warrant inclusion here as perceived weaknesses in preparation.

Some experienced practitioners were vocal in their criticism of the University's preparation of graduates for teaching literacy, citing a lack of 'foundational knowledge … around the core practices' (EP17_PS). The result is that 'we have to start from scratch and teach them everything' (EP1_PS). Specifically, these teachers mentioned a lack of knowledge about guided reading, guided writing and using running records.

In addition to learning about teaching reading, classroom teachers identified several other 'holes in [pre-service teachers'] learning for literacy' (EP29_PS). They did not, however, all agree on what those holes were—a finding that highlights again the complexity, wide-ranging and contested characteristics of literacy and literacy teaching. Reflecting perhaps a personal priority, one experienced teacher lamented new graduates' lack of knowledge about contemporary children's authors.

> I was concerned about why [the new graduates I worked with] didn't know any authors other than Roald Dahl and Paul Jennings. How come you don't know all the others? … How can you recommend books? How can you talk to kids about books if you don't know them yourself? (EP1_PS).[41]

For another experienced teacher, grammar was the key issue—something identified in other research (Harper & Rennie, 2008).

> When you read their reflections, or you read their planning, [you wonder] are you really going to go and teach grammar when I'm reading this and it's not grammatically correct? How are you going to go and teach that? I do have real concerns about that (EP1_PS).

These last two comments from classroom practitioners may reflect the personal characteristics and backgrounds that beginning teachers bring to their initial teacher education (discussed in Section 2) rather than the quality of university-based teacher preparation. It is also worth considering the possible impact of the introduction of LANTITE on literacy levels among new graduates in the future. As the national test was introduced in July 2016 for all initial teacher education students beginning a

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In terms of literacy content knowledge, participants nominated several specific topics as needing more attention—such as running records, grammar, and children's literature—reflecting the complexity and wide-ranging nature of literacy and English in the Australian Curriculum.

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41 This comment resonates with recent research suggesting that early career teachers who practise in disciplines they love tend to see themselves as better quality teachers and are more likely to stay on in the profession. See https://theconversation.com/helping-teachers-practise-what-they-teach-could-help-them-stay-teaching-for-longer

teaching degree, the first cohort of teaching graduates to have experienced this examination of their personal literacy levels would not yet have graduated from the University of Tasmania at the time our fieldwork was conducted in schools in 2017.

6.3.2 Knowing *how to practise*

Not surprisingly, many comments pertaining to perceived weaknesses in initial teacher education focused on new graduates lacking knowledge about how to apply what they had learned *about* practice *to* their practice: one experienced practitioner called this 'making it real' (EP29_PS). It also speaks to Gherardi's (2014) important ideas about 'knowing-in-practice', which connect 'knowing' with 'doing', and which highlight the nexus between learning *for* teaching literacy and learning *through* engagement in practice.

Time and again participants reiterated the need to practise using 'the tools of HOW to teach the mechanics of basic literacy' (BT56_BE_P). Participants' comments about beginning teachers' skill gaps focused on general teaching know-how, in which literacy teaching is embedded, and on specific literacy-related know-how. Beginning teachers were outspoken about their own lack of practical skills. One beginning teacher claimed that 'the expectations of teaching a full literacy curriculum were not fully taught' (BT14_MT_P).

Experienced practitioners generally endorsed the comments provided by beginning teachers in this regard, at least one participant saying:

> I'm not sure that uni supports teachers to go into the work place ready to roll out a literacy program that's supportive of students' (EP27_PS).

This reference to being 'ready to roll out' a program raises again the complex and contested notion of classroom readiness which was discussed in section 5.

Gaps in learning how to teach reading

Consistent with gaps identified in new graduates' knowledge about literacy teaching practice (discussed in section 6.2.1), beginning and experienced teachers alike said that knowing *how* to teach reading was a skills gap among new graduates (also see Meeks *et al.*, 2016):

> Teachers have to understand how people learn to read from the beginning. I don't know how much the training's changed, but these are fairly youngish teachers [who] are saying, "We didn't do anything about those first steps in reading. It was really more about the novel studies and all that sort of thing" (EP6_HS).

In the context of secondary education, a focus on the AC:E strand of literature is perhaps not surprising. However, several participants in primary schools also expressed genuine puzzlement about the fact that many new graduates coming to their schools appear to 'have no idea about reading strategies … and that's scary' (EP13_PS). In relation to running records, one teacher observed that:

> they're coming out [of uni] without having done one, or [have done] just a 40-minute lesson or tutorial around it … and they're expected to… know how to do it, but they haven't had the opportunity to actually embed the knowledge (EP7_PS).

Knowing how to practise is about being able to apply what is learned about practice to practice. Participants' comments about beginning teachers' skills gaps focused on general teaching know-how, in which literacy teaching is embedded, as well as on specific literacy-related know-how.

One participant whose school had several beginning teachers on staff augmented this kind of comment, noting that 'they all say that they haven't covered any of the things that [we] do, in their university training, even running records', so:

> we're having students coming out of early childhood and primary, Bachelor of Education not knowing what a running record is and not knowing any early intervention support strategies. Not knowing how to start children off with their writing and reading … We need to be explicitly teaching the teachers to be explicitly teaching [laughter] (EP9_PS).

Such comments about practical strategies used in schools raise questions about the function of Professional Experience to provide such knowledge. Interestingly, there was a tendency among some participants to focus more on the teaching of reading than on other aspects of literacy development. Regardless of whether one adopts a broad or narrow definition of literacy, this question is important. Possible solutions to this perceived problem in are explored Section 7.

Gaps in learning how to teach other aspects of literacy

Beginning teachers noted several other aspects of literacy teaching know-how that they felt were lacking in their preparation. For example:

> How to set up literacy programs—e.g. spelling, novel studies—that we could use in our first year. I felt that these programs were all new to me in my first year out (BT19_BE_P).

> I wish there [had been] more focus on punctuation and grammar and how to teach these effectively, as well as spelling programs (BT42_BE_P).

Two additional areas identified as weaknesses in teacher preparation were student assessment and differentiation, both fundamental skills for teaching. One seasoned teacher said that in their experience while beginning teachers 'have a lot of ideas', they have 'no knowledge of how to formatively assess students and diagnose issues and know what to do about it straight away' (EP30_PS). A related issue was a lack of understanding about 'how to read data, what to do with data' (EP37_PS). Reflecting on their own teacher education, one teacher said that prior to graduation they had never been shown how to access and use data to inform their teaching, adding:

> We're measured on NAPLAN, we're measured on PAT [progressive achievement tests], but if teachers don't know how to access [data] and use it effectively … why are we not teaching teachers how to do that at uni? (EP22_HS).

These comments were echoed by beginning teachers themselves, one of whom candidly revealed that 'before leaving University, I had little to no understanding of assessment processes within literacy' (BT24_MT_P).

A lack of ability to differentiate their instruction to cater to the range of students' literacy needs was evident in the following comments:

> We need to learn things such as how to scaffold and how to differentiate … [we did] not actually learn from experts HOW to teach to a diverse range of students (BT22_MT_P).

Generally, as well as in ways that have an impact on literacy teaching, gaps were identified in teacher preparation with respect to student assessment and differentiation, both fundamental skills for teaching.

There was a strong inclination among beginning teachers and experienced practitioners to position theory in opposition to practice, which establishes a false and unhelpful dichotomy.

An experienced teacher gave an example of a pre-service teacher on Professional Experience who 'had to deal with a severely disabled child' but had 'no idea [how] to set that prep child work, set that child with disabilities work' (EP29_PS). The participant went on to argue that pre-service teachers need 'to be able to come out into a classroom with 25 kids who all have social and emotional needs, physical disabilities, so many different levels' (EP29_PS). Arguably, achieving such competence to differentiate relies as much on the work of supervising teachers during Professional Experience placements as on university coursework.

Interestingly, the lack of focus on how to differentiate literacy instruction to cater for students who were struggling was also remarked upon by one teacher-educator:

> I've spoken to many secondary teachers about [what they would do] if they had a student who was struggling in [their] class and they're not sure. They say "we weren't trained for that. We just refer them to literacy support". And then if you go outside of the English teachers into the other subject areas [they have] even less knowledge for how to provide that support (A9).

Imbalance of theory to practice

An overriding perception evident in comments made both by beginning teachers and their experienced colleagues was that initial teacher education suffers from a surfeit of theoretical input at the expense of practice. There was a strong inclination to position theory in opposition to practice which establishes a false and unhelpful dichotomy (Barrow, 1990; Fenwick *et al.*, 2014; Yeigh & Lynch, 2017). This distinction was exacerbated when novice teachers experienced a disconnect between Professional Experience placements and University coursework (discussed in Section 4), and thus:

> between the classroom practice and the classroom pedagogy. It was more sort of ideas up in the air and theories … but not about how to implement it in the classroom. Not about what it necessarily looked like when you've got 28 kids in front of you (BT80_MT_P).

Emphasising the point that 'learnings at uni feel completely separate and abstract [from] what I am now expected to be teaching in the classroom', one beginning teacher referred to a lack of 'practical opportunities to apply our learnings at uni in context i.e. going out and seeing them/doing them in a classroom' (BT30_BE_P). Another beginning teacher said:

> There was nowhere near enough practical knowledge and understanding within the four-year Bachelor course. There was far too much time focussed on teaching theories and correct assignment procedures[42] (BT23_BE_P).

This view was endorsed by several experienced classroom teachers who had little hesitation in suggesting that 'there's definitely way too much theory over practical' (EP20_PS). Conceding that 'yes, we need our theory, absolutely we do', another experienced teacher was nevertheless keen to press the point that:

> these pre-service teachers need to know how to teach small group, individual, whole class, how to differentiate a practice, as it says in all the Good Teaching

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42 This reference to a focus on "assignment procedures" may speak to the heavy emphasis on pre-service teacher assessment and initial teacher education providers' obligations under accreditation guidelines to provide evidence of the achievement of the graduate level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Also see section 6.4.1

Guides, straight away, and I just don't think that the universities are preparing them enough to do this (EP30_PS).

Again, the expectation that pre-service teachers need such know-how "straight away" connects with our discussion of 'classroom readiness' which was discussed in section 5.

6.4 Constraints and challenges in initial teacher education for teaching literacy

The value of expanded opportunities for pre-service and beginning teachers to gain both relevant knowledge and the "know-how" to integrate theory and practice is well-supported in the literature (Adoniou, 2013; Grossman *et al.*, 2009; Kriewaldt *et al.*, 2017). Yet it seems that providing such opportunities is not as straightforward as it sounds. There are several key constraints in the current initial teacher education environment that make it challenging to increase attention given to various aspects of literacy and literacy teaching, and to recalibrate the relationship between literacy teaching theory and practice. Some of these constraints are contingent on each other, exacerbating the complexity of effecting change.

6.4.1 Tight regulatory environment

Academic staff were most aware of external constraints, in particular in relation to a tightened regulatory environment in initial teacher education. One academic was unequivocal in assessing the impact of the Australian Government's response to a perceived "literacy crisis" as measured by declining scores on international student performance tests: 'The blame got put on teacher education for the most part … I don't agree with that because there are multiple agents' (A4).

That participant explained that, as a result of the 'very strict regulations imposed by the federal government' on initial teacher education providers, some learning areas and topics have been 'shrunk [to] half-units to create space for what we deem to be the most important units' (A4). The fact that literacy units are included among those most important ones is evident in their relative proportion: four out of 32 units (or 12.4 per cent) in the BEd (Early Childhood) and BEd (Primary) and two out of 18 (11 per cent) in the MTeach (Primary) and MTeach (Secondary: English) focus on literacy.

Another academic explained the impact of the AITSL accreditation requirements like this:

> There are rules and regs around the content that we have to have in our units that has been approved by the [Teachers] Registration Board that we have to show every student has done … Every single thing, every single standard—and there are 37 of them—has to be taught, practised and assessed (A2).

These "rules and regs" translate into inflexibility—an outcome exemplified by the fact that the substantial hours spent by TIPP interns in gaining valuable Professional Experience in classrooms were not 'countable' (and see section 5.2.2):

> We would love to be able to say "hey, those 50 hours you've just spent working with those kids on literacy, we can count that for your literacy unit". Well,

> "There are rules and regs around the content that we have to have in our units [and] that we have to show every student has done … Every single thing, every single standard—and there are 37 of them—has to be taught, practised and assessed"
>
> (academic participant).

I'm sorry, but the TRB [Teachers Registration Board] won't accept that. And being in a school working with those kids doesn't cover off on every single standard. We can use that experience in their school, get them to write their assignment based on what they've worked with and seen, but we still need to have that product. We have to have that product that's occurred. It can't just be an experience (A2).

Another academic reinforced this point about the impacts of tighter regulation of initial teacher education providers, noting that increasing content 'around literacy in terms of time in the teacher education courses' would require 'some flexibility from accreditation around the other learning areas' (A5):

It is a very broad curriculum, and that makes it challenging, I think. So, any changes without having large-scale sort of reform around the Australian Curriculum and what it means to be a teacher and what schools do, it would be difficult to see major changes in terms of the breadth and the time given to those [literacy units] (A5).

Indeed, according to another participant, the pattern of reaccreditation precludes making substantial changes to the curriculum 'because as we go into accrediting one course, we've already had to accredit another'(A1). Accordingly, this arrangement means that:

It would be very hard I think to make the changes that I've described, and in fact they've only ever happened in institutions where they've been able to tell the accreditors "we're just going to take a year to make this happen. And we'll come out as another type of institution on the other side. But you've got to give us this time". So, at the best, we're only ever going to make tweaks, not wholesale changes (A1).

Such challenges posed by accreditation processes are unlikely to be well-known to pre-service and practising teachers.

6.4.2 Budgetary limitations

A second constraint identified by participants relates to funding. Budgetary limitations were thought to have a pronounced and deleterious impact on the operation of the Professional Experience component of the initial teacher education programs. Academic staff explained that 'there's a certain amount of funding that's given to universities for running Professional Experience programs' and at the University of Tasmania 'pre-service teachers will have [only] one visit from a university staff member over their placements' (A5) because 'it's a huge cost' (A4) to do school visits:

Any time I take half a day to go to a school, that's half a day's salary. And we have thousands of students. So, do the math on that! It becomes a budgetary decision (A4).

Similarly, increasing the amount of time pre-service teachers spend on Professional Experience is constrained by the financial costs:

Of course, I'd love to increase [the number of days of Professional Experience]. But we are only given a certain amount of money from the federal government to fund it, and it already doesn't cover all the costs we have in terms of our staffing needs. We've got to pay the teachers (A2).

In addition:

> Sometimes, the visits are done by people that are brought in externally, so retired principals, people that have done some TA[43] work for us. And they then become the broker that visits … I'd like to see more training for those people because they're interpreting what we do. To me, it should be us that's out there doing the school visits (A4).

Brokering partnerships with schools carries costs not only for the university but also for schools, as one academic pointed out:

> we don't always control all those things … And I suppose for schools, it's about saying, "Okay. Will we actually need a placement co-ordinator who liaises with the uni and does those sorts of things?" And so that's a bit of release time [that's needed]. So, it's all those things that actually go to make the partnership work (A5).

Similarly, making changes to coursework and in particular adding new content, as another participant said:

> We've got to be pragmatic. It takes money. There are no two ways about it. If there is not additional money, we can't run these additional activities … So often, the best practice models, or what I would consider the best practice models, are the hardest to implement and the most costly (A2).

Drawing a parallel between the increasing demands placed on teachers in schools and the mounting pressures on teacher-educators in universities (Mayer *et al.*, 2017), that participant emphasised the impact of stretched funding on academic staffing:

> It's a bit like schools. If you could free up the teachers who are really interested in English to have a professional learning day, well, guess what? That costs money to do that. Same happens at universities. There's cost to doing all those things (A2).

6.4.3 Lack of time

Closely related to, and in many cases an outcome of, budget limitations, the most commonly cited constraint was lack of time both in schools and at the University. Explaining the challenges involved in securing school placements for pre-service teachers, one participant described the process as 'a sort of balancing act' involving:

> availability, and time, and timing as well because you want to sort of avoid when they're doing NAPLAN testing and you want to avoid putting students on placements right at the beginning of term and right at the end of term (A3).

The impact of time pressures on schools continues beyond Professional Experience placements for pre-service teachers and into the first few years of mentoring and supporting new graduates to acclimatise to the classroom (Huling et al., 2012; McCormack, 2005). One experienced practitioner explained:

> We have a lot of early career teachers between their second and third year[s] of practice and sometimes [in] their first year of practice. And so, for us, it is getting those teachers up to speed and it takes time to embed that. And it's also the support required to do that … And the other thing that we find is that we just get them trained up and they all go (EP17_PS).

> **"I'd love to increase [the number of days of professional experience]. But we are only given a certain amount of money from the federal government to fund it, and it already doesn't cover all the costs we have in terms of our staffing needs. We've got to pay the teachers"**
>
> **(academic participant).**

43 Teaching Academic

Staff in initial teacher education are not unwilling to change. Rather, in many cases, they are as frustrated as beginning and experienced teachers by having too few options to improve preparedness for teaching literacy.

For many academics, time pressures translated into 'every aspect of our work here [being] squeezed' (A4). When calculated in terms of hours of contact time between teacher-educators and pre-service teachers, the reality of preparation for 'classroom readiness' for teaching literacy was starkly apparent:

> One of the major things that I think has hamstrung a number of our courses is there's been a decrease in the contact hours that students have had to engage … Students now, full-time load, are lucky to be on campus 12 hours a week, or online (A2).

Referring to MTeach (Primary) pre-service teachers, that participant said:

> These guys have 13 weeks, two [literacy-focused] units of 13 weeks[44] to [learn how to] teach young people how to read, write, engage in literature, engage in language. So that's 26 hours of lecture time and 52 hours of tutorial time (A4).

Although two units out of 18 is a significant commitment to literacy in the MTeach (Primary) degree, the hours this translates to highlight the limitations on covering all relevant content and pedagogical knowledge.

Responding to this situation and to the expressed need for more time for practical application of theory, at various times the University of Tasmania Faculty of Education has offered additional professional learning opportunities to pre-service teachers to gain practical teaching skills. However:

> our experience is there's very little uptake because their lives are busy … Wouldn't it be great if our graduates left with more intimate knowledge of what those literacy strategies are, through a day-long workshop where we get people to come in? My experience of trying to initiate those [extra-curricular PL sessions] is a really disappointing uptake (A4).

This view contrasts to requests from some beginning teachers for more practical support that is more 'like PLs [professional learning sessions] that I've attended' (BT42_BE_P).

This section ends with words shared by one dedicated teacher-educator who was acutely aware of the constraints that characterise initial teacher education for teaching literacy and felt relatively powerless to address the identified challenges in getting pre-service teachers classroom-ready:

> Look, I still think that we need more time to do specific instruction in those core areas. I really think that that's a big factor because if we can train teachers as they need to be trained, it's going to relieve a lot of the problems that we have currently in schools. So if we are 100 per cent confident that all of these preservice teachers are graduating with the skills to teach, and I talk about it all the time, but to teach reading, writing and spelling, properly, explicitly, primary and secondary and to know how to identify the learning problems and how to help these children, that in my mind will only be reflected through the students that come through the school and their literacy ability. So, we really need to do something in that space and I can't do it in 13 weeks (A9).

This point highlights the fact that staff in initial teacher education are not unwilling but are, in many cases, as frustrated as beginning and experienced teachers by having too few options to improve preparedness for teaching literacy. In the next section, attention turns to an examination of possibilities for change in the initial teacher education space.

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44 These units are: EMT511 (Foundations of English) and EMT611 (English curriculum and pedagogy). See section 3.1.2 for details.

Section 7. Suggestions to improve initial teacher education for teaching literacy

This section pulls together suggestions for change that were made explicitly and implicitly by participants in the research, and that have been alluded to in previous sections of the report. Included below are proposals made in response to an invitation to indulge in "blue-sky thinking" about areas for improvement in teacher preparation in Tasmania, and ways in which to narrow perceived gap between "what is" and "what could be".

This section, unsurprisingly, features responses to perceived weaknesses in literacy teaching and pre-service education to such ends (see Section 6.2) as well as commentary referring to changes that are already underway and that were welcomed by participants. In other words, suggestions discussed in this section are not formal recommendations arising from our study, but a set of additional findings based on the analysis of participants' comments.

First, it is important to note that, on the whole, comments were offered in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration rather than in an adversarial manner. As one academic argued 'a culture of blame will just make people defensive' (A4). Despite occasional comments leaning toward reproach, overall there was a strong sense of a shared commitment among those in schools and those in initial teacher education to supporting the best possible education for all young Tasmanians—and a strong commitment among the academics we interviewed to ongoing improvement.

Knowing that the focus of this phase of the research was on examining initial teacher education, one academic asked: 'So, are there things we can improve? Of course!' (A2). Moreover, academic staff recognised they have 'got a lot to learn from practitioners [and so] it's very much a two-way street' (A1). The academics we spoke with also invariably expressed a keen desire to engage with Department staff, one noting:

> Our biggest stakeholder is the Department, so it's really critical that we have that connection, and I think we do. And I think there's a lot of investment there (A5).

At their core, the ideas that participants from all groups put forward were fuelled by shared concerns. These concerns were based on an identified need for closer integration of theory and practice *across* the four contexts for pre-service teachers' learning (horizontal integration), and tighter linkages between units *within* initial teacher education programs (vertical integration). As one participant put it:

> It's a matter of us making the connections through [the course units], and so it has to be vertical and horizontal, and I think if we can strengthen those [connections], we'll do much better (A8).

Overall there was a strong sense of a shared commitment among those in schools and those delivering initial teacher education courses to support the best possible education for all young Tasmanians—and a strong commitment to ongoing improvement among academic staff.

Below, consideration is given to participants' suggestions for change in relation to each of Adoniou's (2013) four domains of pre-service teacher preparation, which has served as the organising framework for this report (see Section 1). Emphasis is given to where the proposed changes may contribute towards greater horizontal and vertical integration of learning contexts. The section closes with reference to participants' reflections on how to further strengthen the relationship between the University and the Department. Improvements in this key area may well go some way to addressing the changes identified as necessary to enhance initial teacher education for teaching literacy in Tasmania.

7.1 Suggested changes to selection of pre-service teachers

Discussion now turns to consider suggestions for change related to the first context in Adoniou's (2013) model for teacher preparation: the pre-service teachers' personal context. As discussed in Section 2, participants expressed various opinions regarding the appropriateness of current selection criteria for entry into initial teacher education courses. While some indicated that they thought that existing admission processes were equitable and appropriate, others were clearly not convinced that the status quo ought to be maintained.

Suggested changes centred principally on evidence of academic capabilities generally, and personal literacy levels specifically. Notwithstanding current debates about the predictive validity of ATAR scores[45], and setting aside the fact that many initial teacher education students enrol using other pathways, there was evidence of pockets of support in all three groups of participants for the idea of raising initial teacher education entry-level scores. At times, participants conflated standards on entry with standards in the course or on exit:

> At our school, we're always trying to raise the levels … but we need other institutions to be doing that too, and it's no good saying "we're happy with a C" or "I'm happy if you come in and you've got 40 [ATAR][46] points from year 12" (EP1_PS).

In terms of non-academic aptitudes and attributes, most academics expressed the view that the NACAT was a useful recent change to the pre-admission process for prospective pre-service teachers. One academic added that, to assess their overall suitability for teaching, 'if we had [only] 30 or 40 pre-service teachers and lots of time, we would probably [also] interview each of them' (A5).

Not surprisingly, given the focus of this research on literacy, the personal literacy levels of pre-service teachers upon entry to university came under substantial scrutiny as an area for potential change. A beginning teacher suggested that 'perhaps literacy skills should be tested prior to commencing an education degree' (BT48_BE_P). This view was endorsed by more than a handful of participants. Several academic staff agreed:

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45 See https://theconversation.com/the-atar-debate-students-need-to-be-able-to-finish-uni-not-just-start-it-36478

46 As noted in Section 2.1.4, the minimum ATAR score for entry to BEd courses at the University of Tasmania was 65 in 2018.

> I would like them to do an entry test that shows whether or not they actually have the basic skills: understanding what a semicolon is and when to use it or [describing] a paragraph … And then, if [they] don't pass it, we can direct them and give them assistance or support (A9).

> What would be good, I guess, is if they could do … a pre-test before they came in and then maybe a bridging [unit or course] before they … get accepted into the course (A3).

Several academic participants made the point that existing checks and balances, such as the internal literacy test (discussed in section 2.1) were useful but insufficient for ensuring that all pre-service teachers had the requisite literacy skills and knowledge to equip them to be good teachers.

> I think their own personal literacy could do with more emphasis. Now, I know that we do have a personal literacy unit, but from a person who marks their assignments, I think that there needs to be more emphasis on the importance of their own personal literacy (A3).

The idea of "screening" prospective pre-service teachers with respect to their personal literacy garnered considerable support. While proponents of this idea conceded that this would introduce 'another hurdle' in the admission process, they also felt that it was a necessary move.

> We want everybody to have the opportunity, but if they have to go through another hurdle first or at the same time, then I think that's what we need to do to keep the integrity of our units (A6).

Some participants proposed that the introduction of a pre-admission literacy test (either the LANTITE or an internal university-based test) ought to be accompanied by a bridging course that needs to be completed successfully *before* acceptance into an initial teacher education course. Noting that pre-service teachers' personal literacy levels had long been a concern at the University, one academic acknowledged that while:

> we have places where we can refer the students if they need specific support… for some of them, it's not working … So, we need to take control and do something there. Either we [make them] do a [literacy] test [to get in] and don't let them in [if they fail], which might be a little bit harsh because one test isn't necessarily going to reflect whether or not they're going to be a good teacher… but we need to do something (A9).

One alternative was to require that pre-service teachers identified (via a pre-entry test) as having low literacy skills undertake a 'catch-up' literacy course which would run alongside their coursework; this would, in at least the academic's view 'help things a lot' (A9).

> **The idea of 'screening' prospective pre-service teachers with respect to their personal literacy garnered considerable support. Participants proposed that the introduction of a pre-admission literacy test should be accompanied by either a bridging course to be completed successfully before acceptance into initial teacher education or a 'catch-up' literacy course running alongside their initial teacher education coursework.**

7.2 Suggested changes to university coursework

This section considers proposed changes relevant to Adoniou's second context for pre-service teacher learning: the university context. As noted in Section 6.2, participants were keen to offer their ideas for changes to initial teacher education coursework. Suggestions related to content (the *what*) and to course structure

and/or delivery issues (the *how*). Rather than discuss these as separate dimensions of course design, they are addressed together to highlight their interconnectedness and to emphasise the possibility of structure and delivery decisions being contingent on content changes.

Taking a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), it was established that three key directions for change emerged from participants' responses. These were:

– greater emphasis on explicit strategies for teaching literacy;

– stronger focus on cross-curricular teaching of literacy; and

– closer alignment with literacy teaching practice in schools.

Each theme is now considered in relation both to possible changes to course content and to any implications for changes to course structure and/or delivery.

7.2.1 Greater emphasis on explicit strategies for literacy teaching

Heeding the counsel to 'ask early careers teachers what they needed, take into consideration the feedback students at the universities give [because] we often feel our voices aren't heard' (BT44_MT_S), attention is first given to what beginning teachers said.

As a group, beginning teachers were unanimous in their call for greater attention to explicit teaching strategies in initial teacher education course content. Many referred specifically to literacy-related teaching strategies, such as 'the strategies for teaching comprehension, spelling, punctuation, sentence creation' (BT21_MT_P). Some suggested a need for 'several explicit literacy units with a high school focus' (BT49_BE_S). Two final year pre-service teachers agree:

> Whilst we were given lots of information about the literacy components, we were given limited strategies and approaches about what we as high school teachers can do to support (PST1_MT_S).

> [We need to know how to] teach literacy skills explicitly. When you go into a year 7–8 class you need to know how to help students learn to make meaning from all sorts of text. This is one thing I feel is missing and I have found it to be vitally important (PST8_MT_S).

These views are consistent with the findings from the survey of beginning teachers that proportionately even more secondary teachers (compared to early childhood or primary teachers) reported feeling under-prepared for teaching literacy[47]. These findings are perhaps not surprising given the fact that secondary school teachers have not historically been charged with the responsibility of providing literacy instruction and tend to see themselves first and foremost as discipline/subject specialists (Moon, 2014).

However, not only secondary early career teachers commented on the need for more attention to explicit literacy teaching strategies in initial teacher

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47 Amongst beginning teachers survey respondents, 60 per cent of those teaching years 7-10 reported feeling either 'not at all prepared to teach literacy' or 'not very prepared to teach literacy', compared to 47 per cent of those teaching years 3-6 and 46 per cent of those teaching in the K-2 years.

education. The suggestion from a newly graduated primary teacher that there ought to be 'more units in the MTeach on reading, writing, spelling—or one unit for each strand' (BT57_MT_P) was not an isolated comment.

Similarly, an experienced practitioner recommended that 'explicit strategies for reading and comprehension, writing, and spelling need to be a priority focus of the English component of the Masters of Teaching' (EP65_HS). This practising classroom teacher also requested 'an explicit focus on assessment strategies [because] it's such a large part of [being] an educator and a crucial part of the feedback process' (EP65_HS).

Another suggestion for improving the skills-based component of coursework was more focus on differentiated instruction, 'strategies to help with different learners' (BT60_BE_S), 'how to teach a mixed class or three grades, plus many different learning abilities' (BT64_BE_P). The need for graduate teachers to be equipped with skills for differentiated teaching was echoed in responses from many experienced practitioners, one of whom suggested that teacher preparation 'needs to be shaped for the types of clientele that graduates can expect to be teaching in Tasmania', noting that 'graduates who are entering those [disadvantaged] schools … need different skills for different students' (EP65_HS). A teacher educator strongly supported the need for coursework to 'incorporate strategies and pedagogy for how to assist students who are struggling with their reading and how to identify this in the first place' (A9).

Confirming research that points to behaviour management as one of the most challenging aspects of teaching (see Main & Hammond 2008), a classroom teacher suggested that 'it would be beneficial for behaviour management to be a larger focus at University'(EP3_PS). Expanding on this suggestion, they added:

> What I mean by this is, more specifically, learning difficulties in literacy and the behavioural implications [these] can lead to when children aren't adequately engaged. [Pre-service teachers] need more lectures/tutorials based on possible learning difficulties and strategies for teachers to use in order to teach effectively with positive outcomes for all (EP3_PS).

A beginning teacher pointed to the difference between learning separate subjects at the University and putting them together in the classroom: 'When you are taught units in isolation that do not respect the integrated nature of the profession, then inevitably there will be gaps '(BT25_MT_P). Exemplifying calls for vertical integration, one beginning teacher who had completed the MTeach (Secondary-English) said that they 'would like to have been given more information about what students learn in the Primary level', which 'could aid my differentiation and clarity of expectations' (BT4_MT_S). Adding that 'a general overview of the literacy progressions may have also helped with this' (BT4_MT_S), their suggestion resonates with a comment made by an academic who suggested that the literacy (and numeracy) progressions be used 'to overarch' (A7) all the initial teacher education programs.

In general, academics participating in the research seemed in agreement with suggestions put forward by beginning teachers and their more experienced colleagues. In terms of potential changes to coursework, many academics focused on the 'golden opportunity' (A7) afforded by 'changes coming down the pipeline' (A4), to expand the literacy offerings in initial teacher education. One academic explained:

From 2019, Primary Education initial teacher education courses will require students to choose a specialisation. The Australian Government has identified English/literacy as a national priority learning area for those primary specialisations. This requirement will significantly enhance the depth and breadth of preparation for literacy teaching.

> The federal government has mandated a specialisation for primaries, so you don't graduate as a generalist primary teacher. And one of the specialisations students can opt into is a literacy specialisation... What that means is that literacy will be embedded across four other units that we call our common curriculum. So, in four of those nominated units, assessment tasks for the primary students will be tied to their nominated specialisation. So that will be multiple additional opportunities to be engaging with topics of literacy (A4).[48]

Another academic who identified as 'probably a bit of an advocate for the primary specialisation that's coming in' (A3) reiterated a point made repeatedly by teacher educators, about the constraints imposed by having to cover the breadth of the Australian curriculum in a relatively short timeframe (discussed in section 6.3).

> It's very hard to try and fit everything into the four-year course anyway. So, at some point, it might be better to say "well, specialise in maths teaching or literacy or whatever because then at least you've got more of a depth of content knowledge" (A3).

The Guideline for Initial Teacher Education Accreditation Program Standard 4.4 (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2016a) states that English/literacy and maths/numeracy have been identified by the Australian Government as national priority learning areas for primary specialisation.[49] For one teacher educator we spoke with, this makes the reform tantamount to 'a gift' because 'all of the people who choose English will have not just the core, but they'll have three additional units' (A6).

> They can really go into looking at those areas where we think we pack in too much already. They can go into much more breadth. So, it's a really exciting time ... it means that some of the nagging issues that I've had ever since I arrived here will be at least resolved in part for the group of students who become specialists ... So, for the people who are English specialists, they'll graduate really being able to understand what they're doing and be a leader for the rest of the school (A6).

While not all pre-service teachers will choose the literacy specialisation, those who do may be able to provide peer support to their colleagues and thus further support the work by literacy coaches in schools (Tasmanian Government, 2019).

7.2.2 Stronger focus on cross-curricular teaching of literacy

One strength of initial teacher education at the University of Tasmania noted by participants is the clear cross-curricular thread that runs through the course (see Section 6.2). The second theme that emerged strongly from participants' suggestions was to further strengthen this vertical integration of literacy teaching. In these comments, the emphasis was on practical skill development in discipline areas, 'making sure that everyone, no matter what subject you teach, can teach reading' (EP23_HS). As this experienced practitioner said:

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48 The first of the Primary specialisations (for the BEd Primary course) is scheduled to start in Semester 2, 2019. For the English specialisation, one unit will be taught in Semester 2 of pre-service teachers' third year and the remaining three units will be taught across their fourth year.

49 See https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/guideline-primary-specialisation.pdf?sfvrsn=1ffec3c_0

If science teachers were shown how to teach reading or how to teach reading strategies within their subject area, then everyone [will] realize that it's not just an English teacher's job. That if you are a teacher, you teach reading and you teach writing, and if everyone coming through uni and in their first year accepts that and has the tools to teach reading and writing, then we shouldn't have as many kids that can't read and write because they are getting the same messages from everyone (EP23_HS).

This idea was generally supported by the early career teachers in the sample. For example, one beginning teacher commented that:

It would [have been] great to have had [literacy] subjects targeted at the specific learning area we teach in, for example Literacy in Humanities, Literacy in Maths/Science, Literacy in The Arts … This way we could learn the way we can actually implement these things in our everyday teaching, without thinking that these ideas of spelling, grammar, etc. are only for English teachers (BT9_MT_S).

The University's re-accreditation as an initial teacher education provider was seized upon by some academics as a valuable opportunity to work towards greater connection and coherence across units within programs. While not all academics were equally enthusiastic about this externally-imposed process program (and see Rowe & Skourdoumbis, 2019), others saw it as a means of working towards the goal of vertical integration of literacy throughout the Bachelor of Education:

We've got accreditation coming up in 2020. And one of the things that has become evident to me is the consistent development of literacy across the course is not clear. It's there. It's just not clear and it's not consistent … I'm very much impressed with the ideals and the motives and the whole set up of the ESH106 [Academic Literacies] unit which sets them up well, but there's no explicit—that I can see now—no explicit reference back to that at a later stage [in the degree] … And part two [of the accreditation process], is asking us to show impact and identify where we've done things … So, I would hope that we're going to have a more explicit and cohesive picture about literacy and everyone's role in it for accreditation (A7).

Noting that 'the nature of this review is actually to look across our course in a holistic fashion for a number of components, of which one is literacy' (A7), this participant explained that the goal was 'to identify clearly in their units and their learning objectives where the literacy component is' (A7). However, to ensure such ends, it was suggested that some academic colleagues might need assistance to find ways to 'put in more than just the generic Standard but actually have some explicit reference to or a commitment to literacy within their unit' (A7):

I want to see some graded development of literacy across our course. I must admit, I've always been aware of that maxim, everyone's a teacher of literacy … But we know that that's not the reality, and so we need to do something to help our colleagues become part of that equation … It's not resistance [from non-English academics] so much as we need to show them ways in which they can do this within the curriculum that they've got … So, [for example] you've got an assessment piece. You've asked your students to design an assessment task for a Year 6 class, so why not build a literacy focus around your assessment of what they do? (A7)

> "I've always been aware of that maxim 'everyone's a teacher of literacy' … But we know that that's not the reality, and so we need to do something to help our colleagues become part of that equation"
>
> (academic participant).

This suggestion for how literacy teaching may be better integrated into all units of study resonates with that of one beginning teacher who recommended 'build[ing] a literacy teaching element into all assignments where [pre-service teachers] are expected to plan a lesson/lesson sequence that they could/would implement in a school with student' (BT27_MT_S).

When asked what, if anything, needed changing to achieve a more vertically integrated curriculum for teaching literacy at the University, one academic said: 'I [would] love to see cooperative teaching … embedded across the whole course'. While this is 'really hard to do' the Faculty are taking steps towards this by having staff 'working in teams' more (A2). This comment highlights the interconnectedness of content, delivery and structure as aspects of improvement.

7.2.3 Closer alignment with literacy teaching practice in schools

The third area nominated for improvement was the connection between University coursework and literacy teaching practice in schools (see Section 3.3). On that issue, beginning teachers were very keen for university coursework to reflect more what practising teachers are doing in classrooms. A common suggestion in this context was to 'focus on programs that already work in schools' (BT2_MT_S):

> Introduce and explain the different programs to use in the classroom such as Jolly Phonics, spelling programs etc. Use these practically in the university classroom and then have leaders speak and explain further (BT21_MT_P).

While the suggestion may seem highly practical, neither the Department nor the University would find it appropriate to promote commercial products, especially when opinions are divided over whether, how, or to what extent they ought to be used. Introducing any such programs in initial teacher education would need careful moderation: there are risks of reinforcing and entrenching existing teaching practices not considered best practice by literacy leaders in the Department.

Another suggestion was to involve practising classroom teachers in presenting situated and practical knowledge to pre-service teachers in university settings. This strategy is well-established (see Cope & Stephen, 2001; Russell, 2015) and may produce horizontal integration of literacy teaching across pre-service teachers' learning contexts. As one beginning teacher put it 'it might be more effective to get an actual teacher into the uni to do a lesson with pre-service teachers'; and that person continued:

> So, instead of [having] a tutorial, actually model a lesson, and show it in light of the Good Teaching Guides … So, each week, [they could] pick an approach. It could be the comprehension strategies. Or it could be a speaking and listening activity or just showing them how formative assessment works in the classroom and actually running through a lesson, where you have your explicit teaching, then your independent task or your group tasks, I think, would be probably what I would suggest (BT71_BE_P).

In this vein, it is worth noting that the AITSL website houses various illustrations of practice that teacher-educators might usefully incorporate into their coursework.

Another beginning teacher suggested that teacher-educators might usefully 'look at an actual year plan for literacy and deconstruct how it would run in a class' (BT52_BE_P). These ideas were echoed by several experienced practitioners, one of whom supported the idea of 'getting good teachers in and having an afternoon with them [pre-service teachers] or whatever, and them firing questions at you after some presentation (EP1_PS).

The involvement of exemplary classroom practitioners in delivering education to pre-service teachers was welcomed by many of the academics interviewed. In fact, one academic noted that the Faculty 'used to have a model where we did have practising teachers in here … supporting our teaching … [but] that hasn't happened in a few years now' (A4).

7.3 Suggested changes to school placement program

The changes discussed in this section relate to Adoniou's (2013) third learning context: Professional Experience. In the survey beginning teachers were asked: 'Do you have any suggestions to make about improving initial teacher education to better equip future PSTs for teaching literacy?'. The suggestions from almost 40 per cent (24 of 61) of those who had studied at the University of Tasmania were focused on practical experience. This finding is not surprising, given responses to questions asking how prepared they felt to teach literacy (see Section 6.2). It is also consistent with research suggesting that once pre-service teachers become practitioners they tend to privilege practice over theory (Allen, 2009).

Examples of beginning teachers' recommendations for changes to the Professional Experience component of their degree programs included more time in classrooms 'with a focus on literacy mentoring' (BT24_MT_P); 'to witness literacy blocks' (BT67_BE_EC) or 'as a support teacher/aide' (BT7_BE_S). Some participants offered more expansive answers to the question:

> I believe that more opportunities to be in the classroom as a pre-service teacher, seeing literacy being taught in the classroom, would have supported me with recognising similarities [between] the classroom [and] what was being taught at UTAS (BT10_BE_P).

> Ensure students understand the context of what they need to do in everyday life in a school and understand what is required from the curriculum and have a reference point by being in the schools frequently and seeing what areas need to be understood in order to teach (BT6_MT_P).

The comments offered by experienced practitioners tended to mirror those given by the beginning teachers themselves:

> I think they need more prac experience in the classroom. I really do. And every state's different, and every uni is different, but I think UTAS needs to provide them with more school experience (EP13_PS).

Participants from all three groups suggested having exemplary classroom practitioners present situated and practical knowledge to pre-service teachers in university settings. Such presentations have been organised in the past at the University and academics indicated they would be welcomed again.

There was widespread agreement about the importance of supervising teachers.

"We need to make sure that those people who are modelling are the best people for the job"

(experienced practitioner).

"This should be a well-earned position"

(academic participant).

Apart from more quantity of Professional Experience, participants also made suggestions for enhancing its quality. Central to this suggestion is the figure of the colleague teacher allocated in schools to support PSTs. An academic argues strongly that:

> these should be lead AITSL teachers: this should be a well-earned position … These should be our most experienced lead teachers. Only they [should be able to] take on teacher education students because this is a critical opportunity (A4).

Significantly, similar comments were made in Phase 2 by experienced classroom practitioners who reiterated the need 'to make sure that our students coming out have been exposed to best practice' and that:

> We need to make sure that those people who are modelling are the best people for the job … I think there needs to be something, a screening process, put in place because I think sometimes some of the teachers that are chosen may not necessarily be the best teachers. Because we've had nearly graduating teachers coming through without any exposure to explicit teaching of literacy reading strategies (EP7_PS).

A pervasive theme in interviews was that the role of colleague teacher needs to be taken more seriously than it is currently. Academic participants suggested colleague teachers need to be supported by the Department by being 'freed up to spend time' (A4) with the pre-service teachers they supervise. That participant also suggested that 'colleague teachers need mentoring just as much as the students need mentoring'.

At the University of Tasmania, improving quality relates to the need for tighter horizontal integration of the university context and the professional experience context of initial teacher education. Academic participants acknowledged that 'there are things we could do that would improve the placement setting' (A1). Faculty staff clarified that while no major changes to the structure of Professional Experience are confirmed at this stage, potential changes in the coming years may include a formal placement in the first year of the BEd (Primary).

Academic staff responses to questions about change with respect to professional experience focused on practicalities—how the perceived gap between coursework and professional experience might best be narrowed, and what might be the implications for funding arrangements (see Ure et al., 2017). Suggesting a 'rethinking of our pattern of placements', one academic emphasised the importance of working towards an integrated curriculum:

> Integrated curriculum at one level is just clever timetabling. So, we should be ensuring that students who are about to do a thing [on PE placement], have recently received the instruction on how that thing should be done (A1).

This comment mirrors a suggestion by a beginning teacher to organise classroom placements as 'perhaps a small group once per week to apply strategies that are being learnt at University' (BT38_BE_P). Such an idea has clear advantages in terms of relevance and developing knowing-in-practice (see section 6.2.2). However, the logistics of setting up such integration between university learning and application in schools would be formidable.

Another worthwhile but practically challenging suggestion given by an academic related to the idea of 'paired placements':

> So in first year first semester we do classroom observations and I actually think we should have classroom observations where students are paired, say a first year, first semester student with a more experienced student … Because that more experienced student can provide the gateway and the conversation shortcut between the colleague teacher and the absolutely green-as-grass [pre-service teacher] that needs to know if they're entering a profession, this is what it's going to look like. So paired placements; they have challenges in terms of how you do them, but I think it could be helpful in some situations (A1).

While one academic thought that 'we should have multiple different models' for different cohorts of pre-service teachers to gain professional experience, they strongly favoured the adoption of a preceptorship model 'similar to the medical or the nursing schools' (A2). Indeed, the clinical practice approach to the practicum was also suggested by other academics in the research (discussed in Stewart *et al.*, *2018b*).

> In the ideal world, if I could wave my magic wand, I'd love to see students not on these block placements. I'd love to see an integrated, one day a week, like the University of Melbourne does… I'd love that sustained relationship with children and teachers in a school across a year (A4).

Mindful both of the practicalities of organising Professional Experience in this more integrated manner, and of the ramifications for schools, one teacher educator said:

> One of the ways which I believe would work really well … is if we had the opportunity to go in and do observations of classrooms and teaching with our students. I know that that would be quite a disturbance for a lot of classrooms to have extra people going in often, so we'd have to really look at how to structure that in a way that wouldn't disrupt the classroom learning that's taking place (A9).

7.4 Suggested changes to induction and ongoing professional learning

Discussion now turns to consider a range of proposed changes which are relevant to Adoniou's (2013) fourth context, that related to new graduates' first employment. Attention is also paid to participants' proposals for change that extend beyond the first few years of teaching after graduation and incorporate ideas for ongoing professional learning.

The importance of comprehensive and extended induction for new teaching graduates is well-established in the literature (see Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) and recognised in policy (see TEMAG 2014; Commonwealth of Australia, 1998). However, as noted in Section 5.3.1, beginning teachers in our research rarely referred to having had formal induction, although valuable experiences of formal and informal mentoring were often noted. Australian research with early career teachers suggests induction practices could be improved.[50]

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50 See https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/spotlight/spotlight---induction.pdf?sfvrsn=a44aec3c_6

The 2018 Education Workforce Roundtable Declaration in Tasmania demonstrates commitment to 'support our experienced teaching workforce to provide mentoring and support to those who are less experienced'. The accompanying Action Plan highlights the importance of personalised early career training by offering 'a unique early career training package for teachers with wrap-around support from commencement of teacher training and through the early career years'.

Sharing a simple and useful suggestion, one beginning teacher talked about the need for schools to stage the expectations placed on new teachers, letting them 'find their feet [before] starting to load them up' (BT79_HS). An experienced practitioner's suggestion was to start the process of inauguration into the profession in the final year of initial teacher education before graduation: 'maybe [in] the fourth year, six months [before] they come out [they should] have a mentor' (EP29_PS).

Reflecting on their own experience supervising a final year pre-service teacher, one classroom practitioner spoke of the benefits of 'being able to pass on all of that knowledge and wisdom in that short amount of time [on a practicum placement]' (EP38_PS) and reflected on how those benefits would multiply over a more extended period of mentorship.

> She doesn't have to do the trial and error stuff and find her feet because she's been coached by me. And I think that that's been great. And I think that would've been great for me, for anyone, to have a really good coach … So, coaching, and if they could have a literacy support person, that would be great (EP38_ PS).

Recently, the Education Workforce Roundtable[51] in Tasmania has developed an action plan that includes the intention to: 'Offer a unique early career training package for teachers with wrap-around support from commencement of teacher training and through the early career years'. However, comprehensive mentoring programs require adequate resourcing because allocating mentors to individual pre-service teachers and new graduates represents a substantial impost on schools. One classroom teacher explained how important it is to 'recognise that schools do need adequate support' (EP22_HS):

> Because somehow we've got to address how we get that relief in … One of the things we did was we employed someone just solely to do the relief … and I think the investment in those first few years will get paid back, building their capacity for later (EP22_HS).

In this vein, the Education Workforce Roundtable has made a commitment to 'support our experienced teaching workforce to provide mentoring and support to those who are less experienced'.[52]

Another suggestion put forward to support the high numbers of first-year teachers in some areas, was to:

> appoint someone [who] can go around the local or the hub-type schools … and share knowledge and resources … or be a conduit for all of that so you're building up that expertise, especially for the isolated people that are out there (EP22_HS).[53]

This suggestion resonates with the proposal made by an academic to create 'practitioner lecturer' positions to act partly as 'mentors for our pre-service teachers'

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51 See https://documentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/Documents/Workforce%20Roundtable%20Action%20Plan.pdf

52 See https://documentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/Documents/Education-Workforce-Roundtable-Declaration.pdf#search=Education%20Workforce%20Roundtable%20Declaration

53 It is worth noting that the role of the newly-created positions of lead coaches includes working with school literacy coaches and many schools do, in fact, prioritise literacy coaches working with beginning teachers.

(A2) and to foster what Ure et al. (2011, p.15) call 'a *third space* that is distinct from university and school but overlaps each'. Indeed, the vision for these positions extended beyond support for early career teachers to ongoing professional learning for *all* practising teachers. That academic explained:

> I would like them to be a professional learning person for the teachers out there. I would also love them to be able to come back and assist my lecturing staff to say "this is the most recent practice that is happening in schools. We need to embed it in your English units, or your maths units, or whatever else it is" ... They would come together for professional learning a couple of times a year as a group. But then they're out doing this work and liaising with our Professional Experience team ... I'd really love to see that (A2).

It is well-established that timely access to professional learning is important in the first few years after graduation—and indeed throughout a teaching career (see Dharan, 2015; Hunter et al., 2011) and that insight was reiterated in participants' suggestions for improvement (also see section 5.3.4). Several academics were keen to promote post-graduate study for practising teachers to maintain their currency and to upskill in specific high priority learning areas:

> I mean we can't have more units [in the degrees] because there's no room. So maybe it's something that teachers have to do when they graduate. They might come back and do a master's degree or whatever, a Graduate Certificate or something. But we need to do a lot more in that space. A lot more (A9).

It is worth noting that the University does offer a Graduate Certificate in Education designed to meet the professional learning needs of experienced practitioners who wish to engage in 'personal and professional enquiry and intellectual engagement within a specialist area or across a range of specialisations'.[54] One academic elucidated:

> We currently offer a number of grad certs that are really popular [with practising teachers] and the DoE has been really endorsing of those. So, they've provided considerable money to free up teachers to take up grad certs (A4).

For example, since 2017, the Department has supported practising teachers to undertake the Graduate Certificate in Inclusive Education, the impact of which is currently being evaluated. Building on this precedent, one academic was highly supportive of the Department providing 'additional support to get a Grad Cert happening in literacy ... to be supporting practising teachers, to be enhancing their practices' (A4).

Moreover, reciprocal professional learning between university-based staff and school-based staff was suggested:

> We could offer the schools professional learning. They could offer us new approaches, teaching approaches that they come across that we're possibly not aware of because we're not in that context day-to-day (A9).

This kind of reciprocity would be a fruitful move towards horizontal integration across the learning contexts of initial teacher education as well as a way to strengthen relationships between the University and the Department.

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54 See http://www.utas.edu.au/courses/cale/courses/e5e-graduate-certificate-of-education

All participants highly valued a strong relationship between the University of Tasmania and the Department. They considered this relationship to be vital to high quality initial teacher education for literacy, as well as more generally.

7.5 Suggested changes to the relationship between University and Department

All participants highly valued a strong relationship between the University of Tasmania and the Department and considered this vital for ensuring high quality initial teacher education for literacy as well as in general.

Referring to existing initiatives that support the relationship between the Department and the University's Faculty of Education, an academic noted that requirements of accreditation for initial teacher education providers stipulate that:

> Unit coordinators will have their relationships with their discipline expertise networks, but then the courses have what we call a Course Advisory Committee that's made up of Department of Education, Catholic, independent, other stakeholders to ensure that what they're experiencing and seeing informs our courses. And that's an important part of our ongoing improvement (A5).

In addition, the Minister for Education established the Education Workforce Roundtable in 2018, which has membership of senior representatives of the University and the Department of Education, as well as the Australian Education Union, Tasmanian Principals Association, and Teachers Registration Board. This kind of partnership is unusual and a credit to all parties. Participants recognised and valued such high-level collaboration. Nevertheless, one academic suggested that the outcomes of these high-level meetings are 'trickling down but it's a slow process' (A7).

The importance of the relationship between the University and the Department is reflected in suggestions for improvement. Academic staff considered that this pivotal relationship 'could be a lot stronger' (A4). As a first suggestion, improved channels of communication were widely desired. A general trend in academics' comments about the communication between the University and the Department was that connections tended to be 'very informal … more about who I know rather than any formal arrangement' (A6), and involved 'isolated rather than combined efforts' (A3). One academic noted:

> Our relationship with DoE is still all a bit mysterious to me … and I'm not quite clear. It seems that DoE, for instance, seems to do some things which we're not even involved in or know about and vice versa (A7).

Academics saw a responsibility here not just for schools and the Department but also for themselves. Reiterating that strengthening partnerships with schools 'is a key priority' (A4), it was suggested the onus is on the university to support colleague teachers in schools, and to:

> move beyond [directing them to] a website where you just download the requirements, to [considering], "How can we really strengthen these partnerships with schools and have ongoing, growing relationships [with them]?" (A4)

An experienced practitioner pointed to the need for more 'shared understandings at a departmental level and a tertiary level about what it is we want from graduating teachers' (EP39_PS). This view was echoed by an academic, who emphasised the need to approach this as a shared responsibility:

> The overarching contract is between the University and the DoE. We also then need statements of intent between ourselves and our colleagues in practice, and that has to be very much a two-way street (A1).

Both professional experience and induction are key opportunities for school staff to support improved preparedness for literacy teaching. A more specific practical suggestion from one academic is the idea to produce:

> a series of videos of Tasmanian teachers in action that we can use with students to show "look, this is best practice. This is how these five different teachers in five very different contexts are teaching phonics in their classroom, or teaching written grammar in their classroom", because that is probably one thing that we would love to have that we don't have (A6).

Improved communication and more collaboration are fundamental to the joint effort of improving literacy teaching and learning in Tasmania. It can also address possible misperceptions as one academic suggested: 'I think that schools possibly perceive us as academic staff in such a way that's not necessarily the case' (A9).

Acknowledging that there were 'some exciting initiatives going forward', another academic noted that 'there's always room for more collaboration' (A6). In that spirit, the Education Workforce Roundtable has brought together expert education leaders from different parts of the Tasmanian education landscape as 'a bold, new, and innovative approach in collaboration across the education sector, demonstrating passion for improving education quality and learning outcomes for all Tasmanians' by 'raising the quality of teaching practices and workforce strategies to develop a skilled and future ready education workforce'.[55]

Finally, the point was made that to realise opportunities for change afforded by the initiatives proposed variously by the university, the Department, the Teacher Registration Board, the independent school sector, and the federal government, all these initiatives need to:

> align in a way that gives the priority and the resources and time to be able to do what we think actually needs to happen, rather than asking more of people without giving them time and resources to do it (A5).

If building stronger partnerships between schools and the University is to become a priority, 'then we need to invest in it' (A5). In such light, the importance of ongoing broad political support was accentuated because initial teacher education 'is not a quick-fix area' (A2).

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55 See https://www.education.tas.gov.au/about-us/projects/education-workforce-roundtable/

Section 8. Conclusion

The aim of Phase 3 of the *Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice in Tasmanian Government Schools* has been to investigate the current preparation of pre-service teachers for teaching literacy by examining initial teacher education at the University of Tasmania. In responding to this task, account has been taken of the various contexts within which pre-service teachers learn to become teachers.

Pre-service teachers represent a diverse cohort who bring a wide range of influences from their personal context to their initial teacher education. Among those influences are personal literacy levels and experiences of learning to become literate, as well as attitudes about teaching as a profession and motivations for becoming a teacher. Taken together, these personal characteristics undoubtedly have a bearing on the preparedness of newly graduated teachers and affect perceptions of the effectiveness of initial teacher education programs.

As an accredited provider of initial teacher education, the University of Tasmania offers two main pathways to entering teaching: the Bachelor of Education and the Master of Teaching. While these degrees attract different cohorts and have differing entry requirements, they both contain units that focus specifically on literacy as a general capability across the curriculum and units that focus on English as a discrete learning area (AC: E). All units are mapped against the *AITSL (2011) Professional Standards for Teacher (Graduate)*, each of which must be taught, practised, and assessed multiple times across the degree and in multiple units.

As part of their initial teacher education, pre-service teachers undertake several Professional Experience placements in schools. At the University of Tasmania, those enrolled in the BEd (Primary) and BEd (Secondary) program have 80 days of Professional Experience, spread over three placements, starting in their second year of study. Those enrolled in the MTeach undertake 60 days, over four placements, with one scheduled each semester of their study. The role of school-based colleague teachers who supervise pre-service teachers on placement is crucial to the latter's learning through Professional Experience.

While graduation from initial teacher education marks a significant milestone in pre-service teachers' development, the context of their first employment as teachers ought not to be under-estimated as an important site of ongoing professional learning. Mentoring and induction for beginning teachers are highly valued.

The idea of classroom readiness is best conceptualised as a process that begins when pre-service teachers complete their formal initial teacher education studies; then gains momentum when they take up their first employment; and then continues throughout their teaching careers. Nevertheless, beginning and experienced teachers perceived and/or contributed to pressure on new graduates to be 100 per cent ready to teach a new class in a new school from day one. Half of the beginning teachers in our research indicated that they felt under-prepared to teach literacy. This finding reflects more general, Australia-wide results for teacher education, which found that only about half of ITE students felt their course had prepared them with the necessary skills.

In thinking about effective teaching of literacy, participants identified a range of strengths and weaknesses, and constraints and challenges related to initial teacher education. The results of this research highlight significant similarities between the work done in schools (Phase 2) and in relation to initial teacher education (this Phase). Both teachers in schools and teacher-educators struggle with the "crowded curriculum" and, in particular, with the breadth and depth of literacy as outlined in the Australian Curriculum. However, both teachers and teacher-educators are strongly committed to the (literacy) learning of their students.

Participants were forthcoming in offering suggestions that they felt would improve the preparation of pre-service teachers for teaching literacy. Their contributions were underpinned by a shared recognition of the need for closer integration across personal, coursework, professional experience, and first employment learning contexts.

Finally, participants highly valued the relationship between the University of Tasmania and the Department of Education. They were keen to continue to strengthen and consolidate this relationship into a powerful, collaborative partnership to support the joint effort of improving literacy teaching and learning in Tasmania.

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Appendix A

Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice in Government Schools

(Phase 3)

Participant Information Sheet

Group 1 – Staff, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

Invitation

We invite your participation in Phase 3 of the *Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice* project.

The research is being led by Professor Kitty te Riele, Deputy Director Research at the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment at the University of Tasmania, with Professor Elaine Stratford, from the Institute for Social Change, and Dr Sarah Stewart, Research Associate. The research is funded by the Tasmanian Government Department of Education.

What is the purpose of this study?

The overall aim of the Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice is to identify practices that are most effective in improving literacy outcomes for students attending Tasmanian government schools.

The project has four phases:

- a comprehensive literature review;

- a review of practice in up to 30 schools;

- a review of pre-service education at the University of Tasmania; and

- a synthesis of findings from Phases 1 to 3.

You are invited to participate in Phase 3, the specific objectives of which are to identify:

- areas of strength and weakness in the delivery of the skills, knowledge, and practices necessary for the effective teaching of literacy; and

- possibilities for changes to delivery, course offering, and structure of preservice teacher education to improve pre-service teachers' skills and knowledge for the effective teaching of literacy.

Why have I been invited to participate?

Three groups of participants have been identified as having valuable experiences and insights to contribute to this phase of the project:

- staff from the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania;

- students in the final year of the Bachelor of Education of the Master of Teaching at the University of Tasmania; and

- beginning teachers in Tasmanian Department of Education [government] schools.

You are invited to participate as a member of staff of the Faculty of Education (group 1) because of your relevant expertise.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, we ask you to sign and return the consent form attached to the same email message as this information sheet. We will then contact you to arrange an interview at a time and location that suits you.

The interview will take approximately 60 minutes, with the option of a second interview if useful. The interview will focus on course content, structure and delivery in relation to preparing pre-service teachers for teaching literacy as well as on assessing the skills and knowledge pre-service teachers have for teaching literacy. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. You will receive a transcript (or notes) of the interview and have the opportunity to make changes to that transcript before we use it for analysis.

Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?

The intention of the study is to inform the Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice. The interview is an opportunity for you to contribute your expertise and insights. This process will enable us to develop an accurate and deep understanding of preservice teacher education at the University of Tasmania in relation to literacy teaching.

Your participation is also an opportunity to inform the Department of Education, via our report, about approaches to pre-service teacher education in relation to literacy teaching at the University of Tasmania.

Finally, you may find it interesting and/or helpful to reflect on your practice in preservice education for literacy teaching.

Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?

You may feel some pressure to participate in the research. Please feel free to raise such unease with one of us. Participation is entirely voluntary: this means you may choose not to take part at all or choose to take part but select which questions to answer. Whether and how you choose to participate has no consequences for either your employment in the Faculty of Education or your relationship with the Peter Underwood Centre.

All data, including documents, interview recordings and transcripts will be treated in a confidential manner. In our publications, we will not refer to participants by name or specific role and instead assign pseudonyms and more general codes. Nevertheless, it is impossible to guarantee complete confidentiality. In particular there is a risk of identification by 'insiders' (such as colleagues) who may recognise an individual's typical turn of phrase if quoted in any reports or publications.

What if I change my mind during or after the study?

You are free to withdraw with or without explanation at any time up to the point of publication, which is anticipated to be April 2019. In the event that you would like to withdraw all or some specific data from the study, you must inform us by 1 April 2019. We will then destroy that data and not use it in any reporting. If you

do decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences for either your employment in the Faculty of Education or your relationship with the Peter Underwood Centre. What will happen to the information when this study is over?

Data will be stored in the Peter Underwood Centre's folders on the University of Tasmania's secure server. It will only be accessible to the project team with the requisite permissions. Data will be kept secure using the University's password protected network drive. Any hard copies will be held in a lockable filing cabinet at the Peter Underwood Centre on University premises. All research data will be kept for 10 years from the date of first publication, when all hard copies will be securely destroyed, and all electronic files deleted.

How will the results of the study be published?

We will write a report on the findings of this Phase of the Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice. In addition, the results will inform a report for Phase 4: a synthesis of findings from Phases 1 to 3. These reports are provided to the Tasmanian Department of Education, as the funder of the Review. We anticipate that those reports will be made publicly available.

We also intend to present the findings at relevant conferences and plan to write articles to submit for publication in scholarly journals.

What if I have questions about this study?

We will be happy to answer any queries that you have about your participation in the project. You are welcome to contact:

- Professor Kitty te Riele: Kitty.teRiele@utas.edu.au or 03 6226 6705

- Professor Elaine Stratford: Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au or 0409 956384

- Dr Sarah Stewart, Sarah.Stewart@utas.edu.au or 03 6226 1516

"This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on +61 3 6226 6254 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. Please quote ethics reference number H17501."

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Please refer to this information sheet before signing the attached consent form, which should be returned by email to Sarah Stewart.

Appendix B

Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice in Government Schools
(Phase 3)

Participant Consent Form

Group 1 – Staff, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

I agree to take part in the research study named above.

I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.

The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.

I understand that the study involves my participation in an interview of approximately 60 minutes and a possible follow-up interview, if useful.

I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for 10 years from the publication of the study results and will then be destroyed.

Any information I supply to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research.

I understand that the researcher(s) will make every effort to protect my identity in any published material but that they cannot completely guarantee that I will not be identified as a participant.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research at any time without any negative consequences, until April 2019.

Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant's name:

_____

Participant's signature:

_____

Date:

_____

Statement by Investigator

☐ I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this participant and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐ The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Investigator's name:

_____

Investigator's signature:

_____

Date:

_____

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

Group 1 – Staff, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

University Of Tasmania – Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice in Government Schools (Phase 3)

Preamble (2 mins)

1. check understanding of project

2. confirm consent and voluntary participation

3. obtain permission to audio-record (if not, take notes)

4. confirm time available for interview

Introduction (5 mins)

5. What is your role with the BEd and/or MTeach courses?

6. And specifically, what is your involvement with any aspects of those courses related to literacy?

7. If you have any experience working in schools, could you briefly describe what you did and when?

Course content, structure and delivery (15–20 mins)

8. In terms of the structure of the BEd and/or MTeach courses, where does preparation for literacy teaching sit?

9. Can you explain why it sits here?

10. Are there explicit connections between units, or year levels, in relation to preparation for literacy teaching? [How are those connections made explicit for students and/or staff?]

11. How well do you think that structure is working? [Why?]

12. Is there anything you would like to change about where literacy sits in the structure of pre-service teacher education courses, in terms of when and where literacy is addressed? [What would you change and why? What would enable or restrict those changes to be made?]

13. What is the relationship between university-based coursework and Professional Experience [that is, n-school placements/practicum] in preparing pre-service teachers for teaching literacy?

14. How well do you think that relationship is working? [Why?]

15. Is there anything you would like to change about the way Professional Experience placements work, particularly in terms of preparing pre-service teachers to teach literacy? [What would you change and why? What would enable or restrict those changes to be made?]

16. Which specific skills, knowledge, and teaching practices related to literacy do you think are emphasised in the BEd and/or MTeach courses here?

17. Why and how are those emphasised?

18. Do you think any other skills or knowledge for literacy teaching need more emphasis? [Which ones and why? What would enable or restrict those changes to be made?]

19. What are some of the most important resources that are used in relation to literacy teaching in the BEd and/or MTeach courses here? [Why & How? Prompt re. DoE good teaching guides if not mentioned]

20. Are there differences in how literacy teaching is addressed in English as a learning area (AC: E) versus literacy as a general capability? [What sorts of differences? Are they deliberate? Are they useful?]

21. Are there any ways in which Faculty staff and Department of Education staff collaborate to inform their respective or collective approaches to preparing preservice teachers for literacy teaching?

Assessment of pre-service teachers (10–15 mins)

22. Based on your experience with pre-service teachers, how would you rate their own personal literacy levels when they start their degree at the University? And when they graduate? [What evidence do you draw on when making that comparison?]

23. How do you assess pre-service teachers' competency—this time not for their own literacy, but to teach literacy?

24. Do you have any comments to make about the influence or effects of the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) on preparing pre-service teachers for teaching literacy? What about the Teacher Capability Assessment Tool (TCAT)? And the Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA)?

Forward thinking and wrapping up (5–10 mins)

25. Is there anything else you would like to highlight as a real strength in how the University's courses prepare pre-service teachers for literacy teaching? [Why did you choose that point? Can you elaborate on how you know it is a strength?]

26. And is there anything else about any aspects of pre-service teacher education for literacy teaching at the University that you think could be improved? [Why did you choose that point? What would it take to make that change?]

27. Is there anything else you think would be useful for us to know about pre-service teacher education for literacy teaching in Tasmania?

Appendix D

Survey (July 2018) for beginning teachers

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA – PETER UNDERWOOD CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice in Government Schools (Phase 3)

Invitation

We are writing to invite your participation in Phase 3 of a project entitled *Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice*, which is investigating the effectiveness of pre-service teacher preparation for teaching literacy. You are being invited specifically because you are a beginning teacher employed by the Department of Education.

The project is led by academics from the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment and Institute for the Study of Social Change, and has been commissioned and funded by the Tasmanian Government Department of Education.

What is the purpose of this study?
The overall aim of the study is to identify those practices that are most effective in improving literacy outcomes for students attending Tasmanian government schools. The project has four phases:

1. A comprehensive literature review
2. Review of practice in 28 schools
3. **Review of pre-service training at the University of Tasmania**
4. Synthesis of findings from Phases 1-3.

You are invited to participate in Phase 3, the specific objectives of which are to identify

- areas of strength and weakness in the delivery of the skills, knowledge and practices necessary for the effective teaching of literacy, and
- possible changes to delivery, course offering and structure of pre-service training to improve the skills and knowledge of pre-service teachers in the effective teaching of literacy.

What will I be asked to do?

We simply ask that you complete this online survey, which should take approximately 15 minutes.

Please note that participation is voluntary and that there are no consequences with the Department of Education or the University of Tasmania if you decide not to participate. Your participation is completely anonymous.

What are the benefits of participation?

Should you choose to participate, you will be contributing your unique insights and perspectives on the preparation of teachers to teach literacy in government schools in Tasmania. Your contribution will enable us to develop an accurate and deep understanding of pre-service teacher education in relation to literacy teaching. Your participation is also an opportunity to inform the Department of Education, via our report, about preparation for literacy teaching in Tasmania. In this way, you may help to bring about change to assist in lifting the literacy levels of Tasmanian students.

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In addition, at the end of the survey, as a small token of our thanks, you will be invited to enter the draw for one of ten $50 book vouchers. If you choose to do so, your response will be de-linked from the survey to preserve your anonymity.

Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?

You may feel some pressure to participate in the research. Please note that participation is **voluntary** and that there are no consequences with the Department of Education or the University of Tasmania if you decide not to participate. Your participation is completely anonymous.

What if I change my mind during or after the study?

You are free not to participate in the survey. However, completion and submission of this survey will be taken as an indication of your **consent** to participate and for us to use your responses for our research.

You cannot withdraw after you have submitted, because the survey is anonymous.

What will happen to the information when this study is over?

Data will be stored in the Peter Underwood Centre's folders on the University of Tasmania's secure server. It will only be accessible to the project team with the requisite permissions. Data will be kept secure using the University's password-protected network drive. Any hard copies will be held in a lockable filing cabinet at the Peter Underwood Centre on University premises.

All research data will be kept for 10 years from the date of first publication, when all hard copies will be securely destroyed and all electronic files deleted.

How will the results of the study be published?

We will write a report on the findings of this Phase of the *Review of Literacy Teaching, Training and Practice*. In addition, the results will inform a report for Phase 4: a synthesis of findings from Phases 1 to 3. These reports are provided to the Tasmanian Department of Education, as the funder of the Review. We anticipate that those reports will be made publicly available.

We also intend to present the findings at relevant conferences and plan to write articles to submit for publication in scholarly journals.

What if I have questions about the project?

The research team will be happy to answer any queries that you have about your participation in the project. Please contact:

- Professor Kitty te Riele: Kitty.teRiele@utas.edu.au or 03 6226 6705

- Professor Elaine Stratford: Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au or 0409 956384

- Dr Sarah Stewart, Sarah.Stewart@utas.edu.au or 6226 1516

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on +61 3 6226 6254 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. Please quote ethics reference number H17501.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

There are 33 questions in the survey, grouped into four sections:

1. About you
2. About the course you studied and your current teaching position
3. About your preparedness for teaching literacy
4. Reflections and suggestions

Your answers will be saved regularly.

Please note:
* completion and submission of this survey will be taken as an indication of your **consent** to participate and for us to use your responses for our research

* you cannot withdraw after you have submitted, because the survey is anonymous.

If you wish to be considered for a small token of thanks (a $50 book voucher) after completing the survey, you will be offered the opportunity to provide your email details. The software used separates your contact details from your responses so the two cannot be connected, thereby preserving your anonymity.

Please click **HERE** to start the survey

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SECTION 1: ABOUT YOU

Q1. What is your gender?

O female

O male

O transgender

O other

O prefer not to say

Q2. What is your age?

O under 25 years

O 25-29 years

O 30-39 years

O 40-49 years

O 50-59 years

O over 60 years

Q3. Did you have a career before entering teaching?

O No

O Yes (if yes, what was your area of employment?) _____

Q4. Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

O No

O Yes

Q5. Were you born in a country other than Australia?

O No

O Yes (if yes, what country?) _____

Q6. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

O No

O Yes (if yes, which language(s))? _____

SECTION 2: ABOUT THE COURSE YOU STUDIED

Q.7 Did you do your pre-service teacher education at UTAS?

○ Yes

○ No (if no, which institution?)_____

Q.8 In what year did you graduate?

○ 2017

○ 2016

○ 2015

Q.9 Which qualification did you complete?

○ Bachelor of Education

    o Early Childhood

    o Primary

    o Health and Physical Education

    o Science and Mathematics

    o Applied Learning

    o Other_____

○ Master of Teaching

    o Primary

    o Secondary

    o Other_____

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Q10. What year level(s) are you currently teaching? (tick as many as applicable)

○ K–2

○ 3–6

○ 7–10

○ 11–12

Q11. Did you have a specialised discipline area during your study?

○ No

○ Yes (if yes, what discipline area?)_____

Q12. Are you currently teaching outside of your specialised discipline area?

○ No

○ Yes (if yes, what area?)_____

○ Not applicable

Q13. What was your main study mode throughout your degree?

○ Full-time study

○ Part-time study

Q14. What proportion of your degree did you undertake via online study?

○ less than 25%

○ 25-49%

○ 50-75%

○ more than 75%

Q15. Did you have an internship through the Teacher Internship Placement Program (TIPP)?

○ No

○ Yes

SECTION 3: ABOUT YOUR PREPAREDNESS FOR TEACHING LITERACY

Q16. Do you feel that what you have learned about teaching literacy in your first year as a classroom teacher aligns with and builds on what you learned in your university study?

○ Yes

○ No (if no, please explain what you see as the gaps / discrepancies / misalignment_____)

Q17. *Overall*, how well do you feel your course prepared you for teaching literacy?

- ○ not at all well prepared
- ○ not very well prepared
- ○ fairly well prepared
- ○ well prepared
- ○ exceedingly well prepared

Q18.Thinking about your pre-service teacher education, rate the extent to which you feel your course prepared to teach each of the <u>elements of literacy</u>, as outlined in the <u>Department of Education Good Teaching Guides</u>.

ELEMENT	1.NOT AT ALL WELL PREPARED	2.NOT VERY WELL PREPARED	3.FAIRLY WELL PREPARED	4. WELL PREPARED	5. EXCEEDINGLY WELL PREPARED
Speaking	○	○	○	○	○
Listening	○	○	○	○	○
Reading	○	○	○	○	○
Viewing	○	○	○	○	○
Writing	○	○	○	○	○
Creating	○	○	○	○	○
Spelling	○	○	○	○	○
Grammar	○	○	○	○	○
Punctuation	○	○	○	○	○
Vocabulary	○	○	○	○	○

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The Tasmanian Department of Education's Good Teaching Guides also outline **ten evidence-based best practices for comprehensive literacy instruction**.

Below we quote each one exactly as it is expressed in those guides.

Please read through each one and rate **how confident you feel to implement each practice in the classroom.**

Each practice is quite rich. Therefore we also give you an **opportunity to make a comment after each rating.**

Q 19. How confident do you feel to:

create a classroom culture that nurtures literacy motivation by integrating choice, collaboration, and relevance into literacy tasks?

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

Q20. How confident do you feel to:

*provide students with opportunities to engage purposefully with texts across a wide range of literary, informative and persuasive genres, i**ncluding close reading and multiple revisiting of quality texts?*

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

Q21. How confident do you feel to:

provide students with scaffolded reading instruction in *phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension strategies to support the development of deep understanding?*

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

Q22. How confident do you feel to:

provide students with scaffolded writing instruction in text organisation, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation along with the processes of text composing and crafting?

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

Q23. How confident do you feel to:

provide opportunities for rich talk and discussion that encourages participation from all learners?

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

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Q24. How confident do you feel to:

integrate reading, viewing and composing written and multimodal texts to support learning?

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

Q25. How confident do you feel to:

teach literacy within and across all learning areas for authentic purposes?

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

Q26. How confident do you feel to:

use assessment processes that reflect the complex and dynamic nature of literacy?

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

Q27. How confident do you feel to:

promote literacy independence by providing time for self-selected reading and writing?

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

Q28. How confident do you feel to*:*

integrate technologies that link and expand concepts and modes of communication?

- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Not very confident
- ○ Moderately confident
- ○ Very confident
- ○ Extremely confident

Comments:

Q29. How has your *course* contributed to the levels of confidence you have indicated in questions 18–27?

Q30. How have your experiences since you started *work as a teacher* contributed to the levels of confidence you have indicated in questions 19–28?

SECTION 4: REFLECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

These are the final questions, enabling you to add further comments in your own words.

Q31. On reflection, what aspects of your pre-service teacher education course do you feel were *most useful* in preparing you to teach literacy?

Q32. On reflection, what aspects of your pre-service teacher education course do you feel were *least useful* in preparing you to teach literacy?

Q33. Do you have any *suggestions* to make about improving pre-service teacher education to better equip future PSTs for teaching literacy?

Thank you very much for your time. Please CLICK HERE to submit your survey.

Remember: by submitting the survey you indicate that you consent to out use of your responses for the research. You won't be able to withdraw your responses after you have submitted, because the survey is anonymous.

Appendix E

Faculty of Education
Professional Experience

Final Professional Experience Placement: *Assessment Report Form*

Pre-service teacher:	Course:
Total number of days:	School:
Specialisation/Grade:	Principal:
Supervising Teacher:	

KEY FOR ASSESSMENT
A - *Achieved* and exceeded expected standard
C - *Competently* demonstrated expected standard
F - *Failed* to demonstrate expected standard

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: Domains of Teaching

Professional Knowledge
Demonstrates developing professional knowledge and skills to be able to plan for and manage learning programs   F ☐   C ☐   A ☐

Professional Practice
Demonstrates a developing capacity to plan, implement and assess for effective teaching and learning as well as maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment   F ☐   C ☐   A ☐

Professional Engagement
Demonstrates a developing capacity to develop effective relationships with the school community to enhance learning opportunities   F ☐   C ☐   A ☐

Please note
- *In order to successfully pass this placement, pre-service teachers (PSTs) must not receive **F** for any Focus or Standard*
- *When completing the above summary of achievement, please make a judgement based upon the PST's overall achievement across the standards specifically relating to each of the above Domains of Teaching, and as indicated by your reporting on the following pages.*

On the basis of these assessments and in the context of the overall expectations of PSTs undertaking this Professional Experience placement, the following overall assessment is recommended:

SATISFACTORY ☐   **OR**
UNSATISFACTORY ☐

Signatures	Supervising Teacher:
	Principal:
	Pre-service teacher:
	Date: / /

Professional Knowledge

Demonstrates developing professional knowledge and skills to be able to plan for and manage learning programs

STANDARD 1: KNOW STUDENTS AND HOW THEY LEARN

Focus & Evidence	F	C	A
1.1 Physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students *Developmental indicator:* Develops learning experiences that take into account children's/students' physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics	☐	☐	☐
1.2 Understands how children/students learn *Developmental indicator*: • Demonstrates knowledge of the research that informs teaching practice • Demonstrates an understanding of this research through planning for individuals, small groups and the whole class (e.g. understanding human development, school policy, Australian Curriculum documents)	☐	☐	☐
1.3 Students/children with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds *Developmental indicator:* In collaboration with the Supervising Teacher, provides learning experiences that are responsive to the strengths and needs of children/students from diverse backgrounds	☐	☐	☐
1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students *Developmental indicator:* Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of children/students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.	☐	☐	☐
1.5 Differentiate teaching to meet specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities *Developmental indicator:* Provide learning experiences that are responsive to a range of children's/students' abilities	☐	☐	☐
1.6 Strategies to support full participation of students with disabilities *Developmental indicators:* • Demonstrates an understanding of learning theories and legislation that inform planning for children/students with disabilities • Plans appropriate learning experiences for individual children/students with disabilities • Works effectively with relevant support staff in providing appropriate experiences for children/students with disabilities	☐	☐	☐

Supervising Teacher comments:
(This box will expand as you type if using an electronic form. If required, please attach additional pages)

Professional Knowledge

Demonstrates developing professional knowledge and skills to be able to plan for and manage learning programs

STANDARD 2: KNOW THE CONTENT AND HOW TO TEACH IT

Focus & Evidence	F	C	A
2.1 Content and teaching strategies of the teaching area *Developmental indicator:* • Demonstrates appropriate knowledge and understanding of content • Able to use this content knowledge and understanding to inform pedagogy	☐	☐	☐
2.2 Content selection and organisation *Developmental indicator:* Selects and organises content into effective teaching and learning sequences	☐	☐	☐
2.3 Curriculum, assessment and reporting *Developmental indicator:* Develops learning sequences and lesson plans which demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant • Curriculum documents • Assessment procedures • Reporting requirements	☐	☐	☐
2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians *Developmental indicator:* Demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages	☐	☐	☐
2.5 Literacy and numeracy strategies *Developmental indicator:* As appropriate to the context • Develops learning sequences and lesson plans that demonstrate an understanding of literacy and numeracy curricula • Develops learning sequences and lesson plans that demonstrate an understanding of teaching strategies designed to develop children's/students' literacy and numeracy capabilities	☐	☐	☐
2.6 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) *Developmental indicators:* • Develops learning sequences and lesson plans that incorporate ICT to expand learning opportunities for children/students • Incorporates ICT in teaching/ planning across a range of contexts	☐	☐	☐

Supervising Teacher comments:
(These comment boxes will expand as you type if using an electronic form. If required, please attach additional pages)

Professional Practice

Demonstrates a developing capacity to plan, implement and assess for effective teaching and learning as well as maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment

STANDARD 3: PLAN FOR AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Focus & Evidence	F	C	A
3.1 Establish challenging teaching and learning goals *Developmental indicator:* • Establishes learning goals that are achievable for individuals, groups and the whole class • Ensures learning goals reflect relevant curriculum documents	☐	☐	☐
3.2 Plan, structure and sequence learning programs *Developmental indicators:* • having written or typed lessons planned (on an agreed proforma • planning discussed with and approved by the Supervising Teacher prior to delivery • planning demonstrates a sound knowledge of content, student learning and effective teaching strategies • consistently reflects on teaching sessions and, where relevant, implements necessary changes for subsequent learning experiences	☐	☐	☐
3.3 Use teaching strategies *Developmental indicators:* • Demonstrates the ability to explore, trial and reflect on the use of open and closed questioning techniques • Effectively engages a range of teaching strategies	☐	☐	☐
3.4 Select and use resources *Developmental indicator:* Selects and uses resources, including ICT, that promote children's/students' learning	☐	☐	☐
3.5 Use effective communication in the classroom *Developmental indicators:* • Communicates using grammatically correct oral and written language • Uses respectful and age appropriate language • Uses appropriate pitch, pace, volume and projection of voice • Shows an awareness of non-verbal communication strategies and body-language to promote engagement and learning • Gives clear instructions, directions, and explanations • Employs effective, age-appropriate questioning techniques to promote learning	☐	☐	☐
3.6 Evaluate and improve teaching programs *Developmental indicator:* In collaboration with the Supervising Teacher, begins developing evaluative tools and strategies aimed at improving teaching practice and student learning	☐	☐	☐

3.7 Engage parents / carers in the educative process

Developmental indicators:
- Develops strategies for involving parents / carers
- Demonstrates an ability to communicate with parents / carers in ways that support student learning

☐ ☐ ☐

Supervising Teacher comments:

Professional Practice

Demonstrates a developing capacity to plan, implement and assess for effective teaching and learning as well as maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment

STANDARD 4: CREATE AND MAINTAIN SUPPORTIVE AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Focus & Evidence	F	C	A
4.1 Support learner participation *Development indicator:* Identifies and implements strategies to safely and inclusively support learners' participation, engagement, and motivation.	☐	☐	☐
4.2 Manage classroom activities *Development indicators:* Demonstrates the capacity to maintain a well-organised, well-functioning classroom	☐	☐	☐
4.3 Manage challenging behaviour *Development indicator:* Demonstrates the ability to: • implement practical approaches to manage challenging behaviour • implement the class and/or school policy relevant to the management of challenging child/student behaviour	☐	☐	☐
4.4 Maintain learner safety *Development indicator:* Demonstrates an ability to identify and implement strategies that: • promote child/student emotional, social and physical wellbeing • ensure and maintain student safety	☐	☐	☐
4.5 Uses ICT safely, responsibly and ethically *Development indicator:* Identifies and implements effective strategies to promote the responsible and ethical use of ICT	☐	☐	☐

Supervising Teacher comments:

Professional Practice

Demonstrates a developing capacity to plan, implement and assess for effective teaching and learning as well as maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment

STANDARD 5: ASSESS, PROVIDE FEEDBACK AND REPORT ON STUDENT LEARNING

Focus & Evidence	F	C	A
5.1 Assess student learning *Development indicator:* Identifies and implements strategies to assess student learning including: • informal • formal • diagnostic • formative • summative	☐	☐	☐
5.2 Provide feedback to students on their learning *Developmental indicators:* • Identifies and communicates children's/students' strengths and capabilities • Provides timely, objective feedback to children/students • Provides feedback which clearly describes ways in which children/students can improve	☐	☐	☐
5.3 Make consistent and comparable judgements *Developmental indicators:* As appropriate to the placement context: • Participate in moderation of student work • Reflect upon moderation processes with Supervising Teacher	☐	☐	☐
5.4 Interpret student data *Developmental indicators:* Uses assessment data to: • Evaluate student learning • Evaluate teaching practices • Modify teaching practices where appropriate	☐	☐	☐
5.5 Report on student achievement *Developmental indicator:* Keeps accurate, professional, and reliable records of student achievement and use these to report to students, parents/carers and other stakeholders	☐	☐	☐
Supervising Teacher comments:			

Professional Engagement

Demonstrates a developing capacity to develop effective relationships with the school community to enhance learning

STANDARD 6: ENGAGE IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Focus & Evidence	F	C	A
6.1 Identify and plan professional learning needs *Developmental indicators:* In collaboration with the Supervising Teacher: • critically reflect on teaching performance throughout this PE placement and recognise areas needing improvement • takes positive action to improve student learning (e.g. adjusting teaching practices or attending professional learning opportunities)	☐	☐	☐
6.2 Engage in professional learning and improve practice *Developmental indicator:* Identifies and actively participates in appropriate professional learning opportunities for educators. Note: Professional learning opportunities include, but are not limited to, participation in regular staff meetings at the placement site.	☐	☐	☐
6.3 Engage with colleagues and improve practice *Developmental indicator:* Actively seeks and critically reflects upon collegial feedback on own practice, and acts on identified areas for improvement	☐	☐	☐
6.4 Apply professional learning and improve student learning *Developmental indicator:* Critically reflects upon the rationale for continued professional learning and the implications for student learning	☐	☐	☐
Supervising Teacher comments:			

Professional Engagement

Demonstrates a developing capacity to develop effective relationships with the school community to enhance learning

STANDARD 7: ENGAGE PROFESSIONALLY WITH COLLEAGUES, PARENTS / CARERS AND THE COMMUNITY

Focus & Evidence	F	C	A
7.1 Meet professional ethics and responsibilities *Developmental indicator:* Holds conversations with supervising teachers and/or senior staff and conducts him/herself in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of: • the code of conduct for the teaching profession and for the specific site • the importance of maintaining a dress code consistent with placement site expectations • the importance of confidentiality • ethical considerations	☐	☐	☐
7.2 Comply with legislative, administrative and organisational requirements Developmental indicator: Holds conversations with Supervising teachers and/or senior staff conducts him/herself in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of: • duty of care • mandatory reporting • legislative requirements and organisational policies	☐	☐	☐
7.3 Engage with parents / carers and school community *Developmental indicator:* Understands and uses strategies for working effectively, sensitively and confidentially with parents/carers and the school community	☐	☐	☐
7.4 Engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities *Developmental indicator:* Demonstrates an understanding of the roles of external professionals and community representatives in broadening teachers' in professional knowledge and practice	☐	☐	☐
Supervising Teacher comments:			

Overall comments regarding Pre-service Teacher performance
Supervising Teacher comments: