Guidance note
Stage one accreditation applications

Effective date: 1/05/2024

Background

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs in Australia are required to meet national accreditation standards. The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) is the teacher regulatory authority (TRA) responsible for ITE program accreditation in Victoria. All Victorian ITE programs must meet national accreditation standards and specific Victorian overlays before accreditation is granted, generally, for a period of five years.

The national accreditation system focuses on program development, delivery, outcomes and improvement throughout, and at the end of, an accreditation period. The accreditation process consists of two accreditation stages and involves annual reporting. **Stage one** applies to new programs entering the accreditation system for the first time. **Stage two** focuses on improvements to the existing program – the ITE provider is expected to apply for this stage prior to the program expiring.

Elements that may constitute a new program include
- significant changes to program learning outcomes
- significant changes to the program structure or rationale
- significant replacement or redesign of units, including core units
- an inability to transfer pre-service teachers (PST) from the original program into the new program
- reviews, for example, those undertaken internally by the provider or externally by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, that determine the program as being new.

Once a program has been successfully accredited for stage one, it should not go through another stage one accreditation. All subsequent reaccreditations for that same program should be submitted for stage two accreditation. Providers should consult with VIT before preparing a stage one submission for an existing program. For more information, please refer to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia.

The purpose of this guidance note is to provide advice to ITE providers who are considering applying for stage one accreditation. A guidance note for stage two accreditation applications is also available on VIT's website.

Requirements for stage one applications

Providers can either submit a separate application for each program, or one application for multiple programs with similarities such as a common spine of units. Several programs may be submitted concurrently. Providers should contact VIT for any advice prior to commencing the application.

AITSL has resources available to assist with applications. This includes templates required for all submissions and should be completed electronically. These can be downloaded from the AITSL website.

Under Division 2A of the *Education and Training Reform Act (2006)* (the Act), VIT has established the requirements, criteria and standards that a program or course must satisfy before it can be approved as an ITE program *(Appendix 1)*. If required, providers can contact VIT for guiding information on the requirements.

An application for stage one accreditation should include the following
- Application cover sheet (template 1)
- Program Standards Matrix (template 2)
- Graduate Teacher Standards Matrix (template 3)
- Plan for demonstrating impact (template 4)
- Graduate Teacher Standards Map
- evidence to support the application.

Template 1

The Application cover sheet contains high-level information about the program being submitted and is signed by the Dean / Head of School or their representative. This information will be published in the accredited programs lists on VIT's website and the AITSL website.

Template 2

The Program Standards Matrix is used to map evidence against each of the Program Standards. Panellists assess the standards using the elements requiring verification and professional judgement as outlined in AITSL's Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia (2021) document.

Template 3

The Graduate Teacher Standards Matrix is used to map the evidence against each of the Graduate Teacher Standards. Panellists use their professional judgement to determine whether sufficient evidence is provided for Graduate Teacher Standards following the Taught, Practised and Assessed elements.

Evidence must be sequenced correctly as per the below order and can be within the same unit. Endeavour to only provide one or two sources of quality evidence should be provided against each element.

1. **Taught** – the evidence should provide opportunities for PSTs to acquire skills, concepts, and content for all components of the descriptor
2. **Practised** – the evidence should provide opportunities for PSTs to consolidate their learning of all components of the descriptor after it has been taught
3. **Assessed** – the critical tasks should assess each component of the descriptor. Consider the verb / process in the descriptor e.g. demonstrate, know and understand, implement, plan, describe. A critical task is an assessment task identified as core to demonstration of a

Graduate Teacher Standards descriptor or component of a descriptor. Evidence is drawn from unit outlines and should include description of the task and the criteria (such as rubrics) used for making judgements. One critical task may capture multiple descriptors and should be in core units.

Template 4

The Plan for demonstrating impact assists providers to identify how evidence will be selected, used and analysed to demonstrate program outcomes during, and at the end of, an accreditation period in terms of

- PST performance
- graduate outcomes
- program impact.

Graduate Teacher Standards Map

Providers map units to Graduate Teacher Standards indicating where standards are based on the elements in template 3 – Taught, Practised and Assessed.

Principles for national accreditation

Impact

The accreditation process relies on evidence of the program's impact.

Evidence-based

Evidence must underpin all elements of ITE, from the design and delivery of programs to teaching practices. Evidence is the basis on which panels make accreditation recommendations.

Rigour

A relentless focus on rigour across all elements of the accreditation process is vital in assuring robust and nationally consistent decisions, program quality and positive graduate outcomes.

Continuous improvement

Accreditation contributes to improving the quality of ITE in Australia. The ongoing cycle of review and reaccreditation provides assurance of graduate teacher quality and build public confidence in the profession.

Flexibility, diversity and innovation

Accreditation encourages providers to be innovative in the delivery of programs to meet the diverse needs of students and the profession, and to demonstrate a positive impact.

Partnerships

National accreditation is built around partnerships involving shared responsibilities and obligations among ITE providers, education settings, teachers, employers and TRAs. There is also a shared commitment to improve ITE and work to positively affect student learning and graduate outcomes.

Transparency

The accreditation process requires transparency across all elements of ITE, from entrant selection to program outcomes. This results in publicly available data that is valid and comparable. It also provides clarity for PSTs on what to expect from ITE as well as what is expected of them throughout the course.

Research

Accreditation generates from, and relies on, a foundation of in-depth research that informs program design and delivery, and the continual improvement of teacher education programs.

Evidence required in a stage one application

Accreditation submissions must include appropriate evidence. Depending on the context, this may include, but is not limited to

- program maps
- unit outlines
- critical tasks (assessment tasks identified as core to demonstrating Graduate Teacher Standards being assessed)
- assessment and marking rubrics
- citations of research used to inform program development, design and delivery
- basis for the chosen primary teaching specialisations on offer (for primary programs)
- policy outlining selection criteria and entry procedures
- professional experience handbooks
- Department of Education Memorandum of Understanding for PST placements with schools
- descriptions of processes for collecting, analysing and evaluating data, and how the results may be used to improve the program.

Program accreditation processes and VIT timelines

Case management

Two VIT Accreditation staff are assigned to case manage each ITE provider. Case managers have undertaken AITSL national panel training and are responsible for convening panels to assess applications. They take on a facilitation role at accreditation panels as Panel Executive Officers and provide impartial advice and guidance to the panel.

Case managers will work closely with providers to manage ITE program accreditation from receipt of the application through to the final accreditation decision. Providers are strongly encouraged to contact their case managers with any queries related to ITE accreditation.

Accreditation panels

Accreditation panel members are required to have completed AITSL panel training prior to sitting on a panel.

The primary responsibility of accreditation panels is to assess whether a program meets each of the Program Standards and Graduate Teacher Standards.

Panels consists of a minimum of four members - this includes an interstate representative and the Chair, who will have completed specialised AITSL Chair training. Cross-jurisdictional accreditation panels will have an additional panel member from each state / territory where the program is delivered on campus.

Each panel will encompass a range of expertise and experience relevant to the type of program being assessed such as

- registered teacher
- principal / school leader
- specialist or expert in relevant area of education
- higher education
- TRA
- teacher employer such as Department of Education.

Once case managers have finalised panel membership, panellists will be provided with a copy of the application and supporting documentation to assist in making an accreditation decision. Panellists are expected to review the provided materials and make an initial determination against the Program Standards (template 2) and Graduate Teacher Standards (template 3).

When the panel convenes, they will formally consult and assess the program against the Program Standards and Graduate Teacher Standards. Panel members will use their professional judgement to apply the evidence requirements. This will be supported by the information and tools found in the guidance material provided by AITSL and VIT.

The panel's Executive Officers will prepare interim accreditation reports that summarise the panel's findings and requests for further information from the provider. This is an opportunity to submit additional information and evidence to meet the standards.

Requests to the provider for further information will generally be limited to two occasions, with the provider generally having two opportunities to respond to each request. Any requests for further information by either party should be in writing.

Accreditation timelines

Providers should submit applications for accreditation **at least eight months** before the commencement of planned delivery or accreditation expiry of programs. The VIT will endeavour to complete the application process within eight months; however, it can take longer due to circumstances beyond VIT's control such as difficulty finding panel members and multiple requests to the provider for additional evidence following the accreditation panel.

Once application(s) are received, case managers will undertake the following
- completeness check and desktop audit which may include requests for further information from the provider
- convene panels and provide documentation for panel review
- facilitate panels and provide general and impartial advice
- prepare interim accreditation reports which include further requests for information from the provider
- receive interim accreditation report responses from provider and request further panel review until unanimous agreement is reached
- prepare accreditation reports and briefing papers for VIT's Accreditation Committee for final accreditation approval decision
- formally advise provider of the accreditation decision and request a clean copy of the accredited program
- ensure VIT and AITSL websites are updated.

Accreditation of programs delivered across jurisdictions

Additional requirements will apply to programs delivered across multiple jurisdictions (states / territories) in Australia. To avoid regulatory duplication, the provider will nominate the TRA under whose legislation they are formally established as the lead Authority. Cross-jurisdictional accreditation panels will have an additional panel member from each state / territory where the programs are delivered on campus. Case managers will work closely with the providers throughout the process.

AITSL Expert Advisory Group (EAG) and Program Standard 1.2

The EAG assesses all teaching performance assessments against the requirements of Program Standard 1.2. In assessing an individual ITE program's approach to implementing a TPA, an accreditation panel is provided with a report containing the EAG's assessment. This report includes implementation evidence requirements which an accreditation panel will need to sight to ensure the TPA is implemented with fidelity.

Tips for ITE providers preparing stage one applications

- prepare and collate the submission documentation so that it can be easily navigated by the panel
- ensure active hyperlinks to evidence and websites are included in the submission. Panellists usually prefer to work from electronic documents, rather than hard copy versions
- ensure accreditation submissions are saved as a single Microsoft Word or PDF file to allow for easy navigation. Accreditation submissions are often hundreds of pages and hyperlinks may not work across multiple documents
- ensure the application submission has an index, and pages are sequentially numbered. This allows case managers to highlight evidence for panellists to review and confirm during the desk top audit
- the program rationale should be an evidence-based justification of program development, design and delivery. It should describe how the program will develop effective teachers who meet the Graduate Teacher Standards, including having a positive impact on student learning
- endeavour to only provide one or two pieces of quality and relevant evidence, rather than every instance where the standard is addressed
- panels will often look for evidence of Graduate Teacher Standards being Taught, Practised and Assessed in unit / subject outlines as follows
    - Taught within unit description or learning outcomes
    - Practiced within weekly activities
    - Assessed within TPA or assessments / critical tasks.
- providers should refer to the AITSL EAG final report for the Graduate Teacher Standards that are covered in the TPA.
- evidence for Graduate Teacher Standards being assessed that are **not** covered in the TPA must be located within other assessments / critical tasks
- ensure that evidence presented in template 3 is sequenced correctly in that Graduate Teacher Standards should be Taught, before they are Practised or Assessed
- evidence for standards being Taught, Practised and Assessed may be within the same unit
- wherever possible, use the language of the standard in the unit / subject outlines. The panel will look for key words from the Graduate Teacher Standards to clearly identify and verify evidence
- avoid inserting scanned documents into submissions as the search function will not work, and the panel will be unable to use key language or phrases to quickly locate evidence
- ensure the Graduate Teacher Standards Map is accurate
- update the original application submission with further evidence and information provided during the interim report phase to ensure a clean copy of the accredited program is available. Using tracked changes in Microsoft Word is preferred. This becomes critically important when the program expires and an application for stage two accreditation is required.

Further information or support

Please contact your VIT case managers to discuss upcoming applications and refer to the following resources for more information

- [AITSL Accreditation Standards and Procedures](#)
- [AITSL Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia](#).
- [Stage two guidance notes](#)

Appendix 1

Defining 'the form' approved by VIT – Initial Teacher Education programs

Purpose and context

Under Division 2A of the *Education and Training Reform Act (2006)* (the Act), VIT has established the requirements, criteria and standards that a program or course must satisfy before VIT can approve it as an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program.

The Act requires that providers seeking VIT approval of an ITE program must provide an application for accreditation in the form approved by VIT.

The purpose of this document is to define the form and provide guiding information for ITE providers regarding the requirements for an application for accreditation.

Relevant legislation, policy and information

Policy

ITE policy

Legislation

Division 2A – ITE program approval process
- 2.6.6D application for approval or variation of approval
    - a provider of a program or course of study may apply to the Institute for the provider's program or course to be approved as an ITE program
    - a provider of an ITE program may apply to the Institute for a variation of the approval of the program or course of study as an ITE program
    - an application made under subsection (1) or (2) must be
        - in the form approved by the Institute
        - accompanied by the application fee fixed by the Minister.
- 2.6.6F application for renewal and approval of renewal by the Institute
    - a provider of an ITE program may apply to the Institute for renewal of an approval given under section 2.6.6E in respect of the program before the approval expires
    - an application made under subsection (1) must be
        - in the form approved by the Institute
        - accompanied by the application fee fixed by the Minister.

The form approved by VIT

An application for the approval of a program or course of study as an ITE program or renewal of approval must be submitted to VIT
- on the nationally agreed templates for accreditation valid at the time of submission, as detailed within the Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia
- with responses that are relevant and specifically address each of the Program Standards and each of the Graduate Teacher Standards as detailed within the accreditation of ITE programs in Australia Standards and Procedures and the Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia
- addressing all Victorian overlays on national accreditation requirements with the accompanying fee, fixed by the Minister.

The VIT reserves the right to request additional information and / or evidence as part of an application for accreditation.