

23 September 2016

The Hon. James Merlino MLA  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Education  
Minister for Emergency Services  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
East Melbourne 3002 VIC

Dear Deputy Premier

Swinburne University of Technology is pleased to submit a response to the Victorian Government's discussion paper *Working Together to Shape Teacher Education in Victoria*.

Swinburne supports the Victorian Government's commitment to excellence and equity in Victoria's education system and the teaching profession. We are also in strong agreement with the Government's intentions that people from diverse backgrounds and academic experiences are provided opportunities to pursue a career in teaching.

In order to ensure these reforms achieve their intended outcomes and Victoria has a workforce of teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes continues to be developed, it's vital that alternative access to university must be preserved and acknowledged as an important pathway for quality students.

As a dual sector university and one that has worked closely with the Victorian Government to restore the strength and integrity of the state's vocational education and training system since November 2014, Swinburne is disappointed by the higher education-centric nature of the alternative pathways for entry into the teaching profession proposed in the discussion paper.

Regrettably, the discussion paper appears to place no value whatsoever on appropriate vocational education qualifications as a pathway to further study. This is at odds with the clear policy direction that the Victorian Labor Government has pursued since returning to government of ensuring that quality vocational qualifications are valued and appropriately supported.

In a similar vein, the proposed entry criteria would not allow for the admission of many qualified candidates for initial teacher education who have demonstrated relevant work experience.

**Professor Linda Kristjanson**  
Vice-Chancellor and President

**Chancellery**  
Level 1 Swinburne Place South  
24 Wakefield Street Hawthorn  
Victoria 3122 Australia

PO Box 218 Hawthorn  
Victoria 3122 Australia

Telephone + 61 3 9214 8163  
Facsimile +61 3 9818 3649  
Email [vc@swin.edu.au](mailto:vc@swin.edu.au)  
[swinburne.edu.au/chancellery](http://swinburne.edu.au/chancellery)

ABN 13 628 586 699  
CRICOS Provider 00111D

In our submission we make specific recommendations to address these apparent errors.

We would be pleased to provide any further information and are available at any time should your Department or Office wish to discuss these issues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Kristjanson', written in a cursive style.

Professor Linda Kristjanson  
**Vice-Chancellor and President**

## ***Working Together to Shape Teacher Education in Victoria***

### **Swinburne University of Technology's response to the Discussion Paper**

#### **Response to Area of Focus 1**

Swinburne University of Technology supports this Area of Focus and believes access and equity are key pillars to ensuring we are producing quality teachers and should be taken into account when developing threshold and entry standards.

Swinburne supports the introduction of the national language and numeracy test for initial teacher Education (LANTITE).

While ensuring and maintaining high entry standards is one method of ensuring teacher quality, we must be careful not to exclude students who have the potential to be our best teachers.

*"It is critical that higher entry standards do not unreasonably exclude students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those facing difficult personal circumstances"*

(p.7 of the Discussion Paper)

Swinburne caters to many students from regional areas via Swinburne Online in Victoria and nationally (see Appendix 1), and we find many of these students achieve strong results in our online courses, without past commensurate academic achievement.

Since the beginning of 2016 Victorian Universities have been working together to create a teacher admissions index aimed at achieving a more holistic assessment of a student's suitability for the teaching profession.

Universities believe that the adoption of the Index proposal across the sector would represent an important step in better assessing the breadth of skills, attributes and experiences that make a student suitable to becoming a teacher, and would position Victoria as the national leader on ITE admission in Australia.

Swinburne strongly supports the index concept and would be pleased to work with the Department to further hone its criteria and weighting.

The index is comprised of criteria which measure both academic and non-academic attributes such as:

- motivation to teach;
- interpersonal and communication skills;
- willingness to learn;
- resilience;
- self-efficacy;
- conscientiousness; and
- organisational and planning skills.

As with any new selection mechanism, it will be important to ensure that index results are tracked and appropriate longitudinal research is undertaken to determine the reliability and validity of the measure, such research will be critical to inform future iterations.

## **Response to Area of Focus 2**

Access to teacher education programs through bridging courses and other alternative pathways are proven conduits for quality students.

Swinburne supports recognising the value of life and work experience in our Initial Teacher Education candidates. To this end, the reform process should ensure there is no discrimination on access to education based on age and life experience.

*“Many prospective candidates’ pursue different careers before developing an interest in teaching. These candidates bring valuable life experience, content expertise and perspective into the teaching profession” (p.8 of the Discussion Paper).*

Older students often bring a maturity and focus to their studies, which can produce higher quality teachers and better learning outcomes for the students they teach. Mature students often have previous life or work experiences and have come to teaching with a sincere passion for the career and motivation to make a difference.

Swinburne admits many outstanding candidates to ITE study on the basis of successful vocational education study outcomes. It would be highly regrettable were the Victorian Government to deny access to initial teacher education to qualified students who have chosen a vocational education pathway.

Swinburne strongly supports the maintenance of diverse entry pathways for prospective ITE students. Swinburne therefore submits our current alternate entry criteria as an example of practical, effective benchmarks which could become mandatory entry standards:

- Candidates must have completed a Certificate IV or above with an average of 60 per cent
- Candidates must have completed a minimum of 4 units or above of a Diploma or Advanced Diploma with an average of 55 per cent
- Candidates must have completed a minimum of 3 units of a Bachelor or undergraduate with an average of 50 per cent
- Candidates must have a minimum of 4 years work experience (not concurrently) plus one of the following:
  1. Occupation: Manager, Professional or Qualified Trade Technician

2. Completed Certificate III within 10 years
3. Demonstrate a Level of Responsibility within their role: eg; Project Management, Team leadership
4. Demonstrate a level of Data Analysis: eg; data analysis, report writing, problem solving, critical thinking skills

To contextualise Swinburne’s position, we have provided the results of an analysis of 2,348 records of student results across second, third and final year Bachelor of Education units at Swinburne Online. The data is based on later year results to ensure it includes students who have practical experience in the classroom.

The results show that highest proportion of our online students who achieve Distinction or above are those who entered based on a Diploma (37%). They also show that the proportion of students who achieve a Distinction or above is alike between those who entered their degree based on work experience (29%) or previous Higher Education studies (29%).

It is important to note online education attracts a mature cohort (see Appendix 1) due to its flexible delivery and we only take a small percentage of our students based on ATAR scores, so the lower percentage of those amongst our top students is expected.

In the case of Swinburne’s Online delivery, we have not found any correlation between a student’s entry pathway into ITE and their ability to undertake ITE studies.

*Table: Proportion of higher performing students by admission in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> stage Education Units at Swinburne Online between 2014-16 (n=2,348 student records)*

<b>Admission Pathway</b>	<b>Assessment Results HD and D</b>	<b>Number of student records</b>
ATAR	5%	120
Previous Higher Education	29%	683
Diploma	37%	871
Work Experience	29%	674
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2348</b>

## Case Studies

To further highlight this point, we have included several case studies that demonstrate the success of some of our students. Under less flexible entry requirements, these students would be excluded from the teaching profession entirely, despite having proven to be successful students and increasing the quality of the teacher pool.

We can provide many more similar case studies of our top students who have entered our courses through non-traditional pathways.

**Name:** Veronica  
**Age:** Mid 30s  
**Location:** Victoria Metro (Medium Socio Economic area)  
**Status:** Graduated  
**Start Date:** November 2013



*Entry Criteria:* Gained entry through a Diploma of Children's Services (2012) obtained from Skills Plus Ltd (RTO 4087).

*Awards:*

- Top of class in Teaching Period 3 2014 for EDU30009 - Mathematics in the Primary Classroom
- Top of class in Teaching Period 2 2015 for EDU30010 - Teaching Literacy

**Name:** Bronwyn  
**Age:** Early 30s  
**Location:** Kingston, Tasmania Metro (Medium Socio Economic area)  
**Status:** Currently enrolled in study  
**Start Date:** July 2013



*Entry Criteria:* Gained entry after completing a Certificate IV (2003) in Youth & Community Work from Fusion RTO provider 3388.

*Awards:*

- Top 5 of class in Teaching Period 2 2014 for EDU20004 – Understanding and Supporting Behaviour
- Top 5 of class in Teaching Period 2 2015 for EDU20005 – Sustainable Education and Perspectives

**Name:** Scott  
**Age:** Mid 40s  
**Location:** Queensland Metro (Medium Socio Economic area)  
**Status:** Currently enrolled in study  
**Start Date:** March 2015



*Entry Criteria:* Gained entry through work experience. From 2001 until present Scott has taught English in public schools in Japan (both junior and secondary). He currently spreads his time between Brisbane and Japan.

*Awards:*

- Top 5 of class in Teaching Period 2 2015 for EDU10001 - Introduction to Curriculum Planning and Assessment: Practicum 1
- Top of class in Teaching Period 1 2015 for EDU10003 - The World of Maths
- Top of class in Teaching Period 1 2016 for EDU10007 - Contemporary Perspectives of Learning and Development for Early Childhood

**Name:** Sue  
**Age:** Mid 40s  
**Location:** Victoria Regional (Low Socio Economic area)  
**Status:** Currently enrolled in study  
**Start Date:** November 2013



*Entry Criteria:* Gained entry through a Diploma of Community Services (2013) obtained from Skills Training Australia (RTO 20828).

*Awards:*

- Top of class in Teaching Period 3 2014 for EDU10003 - The World of Maths
- Top of class in Teaching Period 1 2014 for EDU10001 - Introduction to Curriculum Planning and Assessment: Practicum 1
- Top of class in Teaching Period 3 2015 for EDU20004 - Understanding and Supporting Behaviour
- Top of class in Teaching Period 2 2015 for EDU30009 - Mathematics in the Primary Classroom
- Top 5 of class in Teaching Period 1 2015 for EDU20002 - Mathematics in Practice
- Top of class in Teaching Period 1 2016 for EDU20006 - Curriculum, Planning and Assessment for Primary: Practicum 2

### **Swinburne Online**

Swinburne University of Technology provides accredited courses and curricula and ensures academic quality. Degree programs offered by Swinburne Online are quality assured and accredited by Swinburne University's Academic Senate in accordance with the threshold standards overseen by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

Academic standards are rigorous for the online offering. Assessment standards are the same as that for courses conducted on-campus at Swinburne University.

Swinburne Online offers a three-term academic program and provides support for students 362 days a year. While students may be off-campus, they do not study alone. Students work together, collaborating in group assignments and in online activities. Academic and support staff are available 7 days a week within and outside of traditional operating hours. All students have free around-the-clock access to on-demand assignment assistance.

Students who complete their studies at Swinburne Online graduate with a Swinburne University qualification that is accredited and internationally recognised.

### **Student profile**

In 2016, more than 5600 Initial Teacher Education students are being educated through Swinburne Online.

Through its flexible online offering, Swinburne Online has been able to offer high-quality education to students who were traditionally not catered for by on-campus study. As a result, of the total Swinburne Online enrolment:

- The average age of enrolled students is 33
- 18% are considered to be of low socio-economic status
- 28% are from regional/rural areas
- 88% of students are women
- 77% study part-time

Most students gain entry to Swinburne Online programs through an avenue other than the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). With 75 per cent of students aged over 25, many students are seeking career change after either commencing at a different university, having completed a VE qualification or after significant work experience.