

# TEACHING COUNCIL

NEW ZEALAND | Matatū Aotearoa

20 April 2020

Minister of Education, Hon. Chris Hipkins

Tēnā koe e te Minita

## **Proposed changes to the Teaching Council's Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Policy in response to the Covid-19 pandemic**

The Teaching Council wishes to consult you on a proposal to make temporary changes to our Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Policy, as required in the Education Act (s. 382 (1)(fa)). These proposed changes are intended to help ITE providers and student teachers respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, they are intended to provide an alternative pathway to registration for student teachers who may not otherwise be able to meet the Council's minimum practicum requirements because of classroom and centre closures.

We sought urgent feedback from stakeholders about our proposed changes. The responses we received are set out in Appendix A.

The Board of the Teaching Council met late last week to consider the changes proposed in this paper. Due to the need to urgently provide students, education providers, schools and centres with some certainty, the Board has provisionally approved the following temporary changes to our ITE Policy in response to Covid-19, provided that consultation with you raises no significant concerns.

- i. Reduction to practical experience requirements in ITE programmes ending mid-year in 2020 will now be assessed on a case by case basis.
- ii. A new temporary change in the ITE policy that allows for a 25 percent reduction in practicum requirements, in combination with additional induction and mentoring support and additional criteria on affected teachers' Provisional Practising Certificates to offset this reduction.
- iii. A temporary removal of the requirement for 'blocks' of consecutive practicum experience.
- iv. A temporary removal of the requirement for practicum at 'away' schools or centres.
- v. A temporary removal of the requirement for employment- and field-based ECE ITE student teachers to be employed for a minimum of 12 hours per week at an ECE centre.
- vi. The Teaching Council will support field-based and employment-based ITE programmes to investigate and propose ways to use students' historical and future field and employment practice to meet practicum requirements.
- vii. The Teaching Council will support ITE providers to investigate and propose 'alternative practicum experiences' that fulfil the provider's practicum learning outcomes.

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## **Background**

The Teaching Council is concerned about the impact of Covid-19 on ITE for several reasons:

- we want to limit the unfair impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on student teachers, particularly those in their final year of study. This includes financial impacts, but also impacts on these graduates' preparedness to teach, professional reputations, and careers
- we are conscious of the existing pressures on teacher supply and want to support current student teachers to continue their journey towards registration and employment
- we are conscious that ITE providers might struggle to provide enough spaces on 2021 programmes for student teachers who may need to re-sit assessments, as well as the next cohort of student teachers
- we want to avoid a situation where two cohorts of student teachers graduate simultaneously (i.e. the majority of the 2020 cohort having to re-do their studies in 2021) as this will likely make it more difficult for beginning teachers to find jobs, as well as putting additional pressure on registration, certification, and induction and mentoring processes.

## **Allowing for a reduction in minimum practicum requirements for student teachers affected by Covid-19**

The Teaching Council requires that all approved ITE programmes include a minimum amount of practicum experience. Our stakeholders have informed us that they are concerned about the effect that Covid-19 has had and will continue to have on students' ability to complete the required minimum amount of practicum before the end of their programmes. ITE providers have advised us that they are unable to grant qualifications to students who do not meeting the Teaching Council's practicum requirements.

The Teaching Council reached out to ITE providers to gather what data we could about practicum in 2020. Based on the response we received, we found that to date:

- students scheduled to graduate mid-year have completed an average of 69.8 percent of the required practicum
- three programmes whose cohorts are scheduled to graduate mid-year have met the full practicum requirements
- students scheduled to graduate at the end of the year have completed an average of 25.3 percent of the required practicum
- one programme whose cohort is scheduled to graduate at the end of the year has already met the full practicum requirements. A further three programmes are two days short of meeting the full practicum requirements, and another programme has some students who have already met practicum requirements, but not a full cohort.

Because the small number of ITE programmes ending mid-year will likely have no opportunity to complete any further practicum, the Teaching Council proposes **assessing these programmes on a case-by-case basis** to determine students' preparedness to teach.

For programmes ending at the end of 2020, in order to create opportunities for more student teachers to complete their qualification, we propose **allowing a temporary 25 percent reduction in minimum practicum requirements for students whose studies have been affected by Covid-19, in combination with additional induction and mentoring support and additional criteria on affected teachers' Provisional Practising Certificates to offset this reduction.**



Appendix B outlines the options that would then be available to ITE students in their final year. These options would provide for three possible outcomes for student teachers:

- obtain ITE qualification, registration and Provisional Practising Certificate (for those who have met all current requirements, or have almost met requirements and been assessed by provider as meeting the learning outcomes)
- obtain ITE qualification, but with a reduced practical experience component that meets our Covid-19 temporary ITE requirements policy. Additional induction and mentoring support to be provided, and additional criteria are to be met as part of Provisional Practising Certificate (for those who meet the reduced requirements)
- fail practical experience component of ITE qualification, with an option to re-sit to be determined by the student's ITE provider (for those who do not meet the reduced requirements).

We note that this solution is designed with the assumption that, at some point later in 2020, New Zealand will return to lower alert levels and students and providers will have a reasonable opportunity to return to 'normal' life. Should it become apparent that the disruption from Covid-19 is having longer term effects and the proposed solution is unlikely to be effective, the Teaching Council expects to revisit and revise the solution.

#### **Why a 25 percent reduction in minimum practicum requirements?**

This recommendation aims to provide a balance between pragmatism and the need for student teachers to have high-quality practical teaching experiences. The specific 25 percent reduction figure is based on:

- data indicating that there is a wide range of amounts of practicum completed across the ITE cohort graduating in 2020. Different programmes range from students having done no practicum at all, to having already met the full requirements
- the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act, which assumes that New Zealand and Australian teachers have broadly equivalent skills and training. The Australasian Teaching Regulatory Bodies have agreed to a 25 percent reduction in their practicum requirements. Using the same percentage of practicum reduction would be in the spirit of this equivalency
- the fact we are not able to predict how many further weeks of practicum student teachers will be able to gain before the end of 2020.

#### **Changes to make it easier for students to complete practicum experience despite ongoing disruption**

We propose a series of further temporary changes to other Teaching Council ITE policies to help students and ITE providers meet the reduced practicum requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic. These temporary changes are intended to allow ITE providers more flexibility in arranging practicum experiences.

When communicating these changes to ITE providers, the Teaching Council would emphasise that providers and students should still strive to meet the intent of the original requirements where possible.

We propose ***temporarily removing the requirement for consecutive 'blocks' of practicum***. This requirement is intended to ensure that student teachers practise sustained teaching. We consider that this requirement may be difficult for student teachers, providers, and partner schools and centres to fulfil in the context of Covid-19.

We propose ***temporarily removing the requirement for student teachers to gain practicum experience at an 'away' centre or school***. This requirement is intended to ensure that student teachers gain diverse



teaching experiences. We consider that this requirement may be difficult for student teachers, providers, and partner schools and centres to fulfil in the context of Covid-19.

We propose **temporarily removing the requirement for employment- and field-based ECE ITE student teachers to be employed for a minimum of 12 hours per week at an ECE centre**. This requirement was intended to ensure students' job security and ability to meet course requirements. We consider that this requirement creates unnecessary inflexibility for student teachers, providers, and partner centres in the context of Covid-19.

We propose that the Teaching Council **supports field-based and employment-based ITE programmes to investigate and propose ways to use students' historical and future field and employment practice to meet practicum requirements**.

We propose that the Teaching Council **supports ITE providers to investigate and propose 'alternative practicum experiences' that fulfil the provider's practicum learning outcomes**. ITE providers have already begun to suggest 'alternative practicum experiences' to the Teaching Council. Examples of such alternative experiences might include:

- digital teaching
- use of real data to plan teaching, evaluate student progress, and provide formative feedback
- responding to scenarios.

### ***A new pathway into the profession for ITE students who complete their qualification with reduced practicum experience***

To support the 'reduced practicum' cohort of ITE graduates to begin their teaching careers, the Teaching Council proposes that we place additional criteria on this cohort's Provisional Practising Certificates. These criteria would sit alongside additional induction and mentoring support, and both would be intended to offset the reduction in practicum experience.

The intention of this criteria is not to place extra burdens on beginning teachers and their mentors, but rather to ensure that this cohort of teachers are given scaffolded guidance for their first few months of teaching practice and that the expectations placed on them are fair and supported.

The details of the enhanced induction and mentoring criteria will be developed by the Teaching Council's Policy Team over the coming weeks. At this stage no decisions have been made about what the criteria should be, or the length of additional induction. The Teaching Council intend to work with stakeholders and the Ministry of Education to make these decisions. When complete, these new criteria will require changes to the Teaching Council's Registration Policy, and the Teaching Council will seek your input on these changes.

Examples of possible criteria to be considered include:

- a requirement to complete an additional three months of practice (on top of the standard two years) before being eligible to apply for a Full Practising Certificate; and
- a requirement to include reflections on teacher wellbeing and sustained practice in the first three months of practice; and
- a requirement to identify the diversity of learners in the teacher's class/learning environment and discuss and apply appropriate teaching strategies for these learners.

The Teaching Council's new registration and certification policy is not explicit about the content of induction and mentoring programmes, meaning that the changes to the Provisional Practising Certificate could sit outside the policy as an operational matter.



The advantages of this approach are that:

- this cohort of teachers would not be differentiated from other previous or future graduates, other than for the purposes of any checks and evaluation the Teaching Council may need to make;
- this would ensure that this cohort of graduates is given additional support to recognise the unusual circumstances they were required to complete their qualification in;
- there would be minimal disruption to the Teaching Council's registration and certification process;
- the Teaching Council retains the integrity of the three main certificate types, which will be important during the period of transition to our new Registration policy, particularly as teachers will also be making their applications in the new online environment.

The disadvantages of this approach are that:

- it requires buy-in from the profession to ensure that the additional criteria can be met;
- it will work best with centralised support, ideally including financial backing from the Ministry of Education.

### ***Additional support for induction and mentoring***

We consider that the 'reduced practicum' cohort of ITE graduates should be provided additional induction and mentoring support, as well as having additional criteria placed on their Provisional Practising Certificates.

This additional support would work best if it can be provided in a centralised way, and ideally with support from the Ministry of Education. We are conscious that asking employers to provide additional induction and mentoring resource may negatively impact these graduates' ability to secure teaching jobs.

The Teaching Council has been liaising with the Ministry of Education regarding its advice to you on the cost implications of providing additional induction and mentoring support.

### ***Pathway for those ITE students who cannot meet the reduced practicum requirements***

If a student teacher is unable to meet the reduced practicum requirements, ITE providers have informed us that they will be unable to grant that individual a qualification. We remain conscious of these students' situation and are considering scenarios where New Zealand remains at higher lockdown levels for a prolonged period and many students end up not able to meet the reduced requirements.

We are currently investigating what possible options exist to create a pathway for student teachers who are unable to meet the reduced practicum requirements. These options, if developed, are likely to fall outside our ITE Policy and therefore are not described in this letter.

Should you require more information about our proposed policy changes, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Nāku ā ngākau pono



Lesley Hoskin,  
Chief Executive





# Appendix B

