

# An invisible voice for music: Regulatory requirement dictating the provision of music and the arts in initial teacher education.

David Forrest, RMIT University

Neryl Jeanneret, The University of Melbourne

## Abstract

The paper explores the relationship between the regulatory requirements to be registered to teach and the provisions to meet these requirements in the initial teacher education programs in Australia. This is part of a broader study of the regulatory requirements for music and art teachers in primary and secondary schools in Australia, and only the music component will be reported in the paper.

The statutory regulatory authorities (often referred to as teaching institutes) in each educational jurisdiction mandate the professional and academic requirements for registration to teach. These authorities outline the amount of study required to be registered to teach in primary and secondary schools across Australia. The actual requirements differ between the various States and Territories.

To teach in primary schools a graduate is required to demonstrate an ability to cover the eight key learning areas (including the Arts) and specifically in literacy and numeracy. For teaching in secondary schools a graduate must evidence of successful study in two designated teaching areas (often across two learning areas). Across Australia, over the last decade there have been moves from undergraduate degrees in Education (with specialist/major studies) to undergraduate degrees followed by two-year Master of Teaching degrees. The registration authorities recognise both initial teacher education pathways into the profession. The universities have been regularly criticised for their reduced provision (and delivery) of specific discipline content in the initial teacher education programs, and continue to respond that they are delivering what is required by the registration requirements of the regulators. This ongoing response has resulted in significantly reduced time for areas such as Music, which is included in the broader Arts key learning area, with an expectation that a student will be exposed to a range of the disciplines in the Arts and not focus on one discipline. This continues to have a significant impact on teaching and learning in Music as well as the ability, confidence and preparation of future music educators.

**Key words:** music, teacher registration, regulatory requirements, policy

## Introduction

There has been much debate in Australia about the provision in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) for music education and more broadly arts education (Jeanneret, 2006; Jeanneret & Forrest, 2009; Hocking, 2009; Jeanneret & Stevens-Ballenger, 2013; Forrest & Jeanneret, 2015; Collins & Hocking, 2023). ITE is frequently criticised as a factor in

these debates with calls for increased contact teaching hours in university degrees and the depth and breadth of content, while the requirements of teacher registration have been largely ignored as a potential influence. This paper reports on aspects of a larger study to do with the regulation and provision of music and art (and more broadly, the arts) education in Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

and the impacts on beginning teachers in Australia. This study came about from the questions of:

1. What music is included in initial teacher education programs?
2. What music study is required to be evidenced by a graduate teacher in order to be registered to teach?

Through the initial stages of this work, we have grappled with the tension between policy and regulation as policy provides the guidance and possibilities while regulation imposes the limits on the interpretation, direction and implementation. In Australia, the provision of arts education and ITE is by no means consistent across the educational jurisdictions. In this paper we are examining the State of Victoria and music.

## Australian and Victorian context

In Australia, the six States and two Territories have the responsibility for school education, with some input and funding (for specific targets and agendas) from the Federal government. The States and Territories have the responsibility for funding and administering public education. It should be noted that early childhood education, independent (non-government) schools (which account for approximately 25-30% of Australia's primary and secondary schools), and universities are funded by the Federal government.

ITE has been undertaken in university settings since the early 1990s and there are various pathways into teacher education that will be discussed in this paper. Currently, ITE in Australia has been offered as a Bachelor of Education (4 years) primary and secondary, or an undergraduate degree (3 or 4 years) with an add on Master of Teaching (2 years) for primary and secondary.

In each educational jurisdiction there is a statutory regulatory authority (often referred to as a teaching institute) that mandates the professional and academic requirements for registration to teach. In Australia it is a legal requirement for all teachers to be registered in their State in order to undertake their duties as a teacher. The Victorian

Institute for Teaching (VIT) acknowledges that "Teachers work in many different education settings including government, Catholic and independent schools and early childhood services, as well as other teaching contexts such as hospitals, zoos and museums" (VIT, 2021c). It identifies the diverse range of settings in which registered teachers work including as:

- early childhood teachers work in early childhood education services such as childcare centres, preschools and kindergartens
- primary and secondary teachers work in primary or secondary, P-12 or special education school settings
- specialist teachers work in special education school settings, hospitals or museums
- principals can work as educational leaders in a large range of education services.
- (VIT, 2021c)

Before discussing the specific requirement for ITE it is useful to consider the influence of the overseer, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) with its federal mission to promote "excellence so that teachers and leaders have the maximum impact on learning in all Australian schools and early childhood settings" (AITSL, 2017a). This national body (in consultation with the States and Territories) determines the accreditation standards and procedures for ITE, stating:

The accreditation requirements for initial teacher education, or ITE, underpin the delivery of quality ITE programs and set up teachers to be successful in the classroom. We work with state and territories to ensure all accredited ITE programs align with the nationally agreed standards. (AITSL, 2017b)

At this national level, the standards are grouped in three strands: Professional knowledge, Professional practice, and Professional engagement. These agreed standards inform the work of the State and Territory registration authorities in determining the amount of study required to be registered to teach in primary and secondary schools across Australia but as noted above, the actual requirements differ

between the States and Territories.

## Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT)

In the State of Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) is the “independent statutory authority for the teaching profession, whose primary function is to regulate members of the teaching profession” (VIT, 2021a). It has been in existence since 2002. Its stated vision is to “ensure that Victorian learners have the best teachers”. Its obligations under a parliamentary act are:

- regulating the registration of teachers and early childhood teachers to teach in Victorian schools and early childhood settings
- ensuring that only qualified and suitable persons are eligible to work in Victorian schools
- accrediting initial teacher education (ITE) programs
- conducting statutory functions including investigating and making findings on instances of misconduct, incompetence or lack of fitness to teach. (VIT, 2021b)

This current research focuses on the second and third points:

- ensuring that only qualified and suitable persons are eligible to work in Victorian schools;
- accrediting initial teacher education (ITE) programs.

## Accreditation and teacher registration

In order to be registered a teacher must have completed an accredited program from an accredited institution. It is the accrediting of initial teacher education (ITE) programs that is the concern of this paper. The VIT accreditation process adheres to a nationally-agreed approach to accreditation, endorsed by the Education Council in 2015. The process ensures all initial teacher education programs meet the Australian standards outlined in the Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures (AITSL, 2019). These

standards are designed to ensure all graduates of ITE programs have the knowledge, skills and experience to make a positive impact on student learning” (AITSL, 2019). There are a series of panels that work through all the university programs for accreditation and if approved, a program is accredited for up to five years only. In Victoria, there are 12 providers associated with ITE.

For people applying for registration for primary and/or secondary teaching there are two pathways, via undergraduate programs or graduate entry programs. At the primary level, all programs must include study in each of the Key Learning Areas of the *Victorian Curriculum* in order to equip the graduates to teach across Foundation to Year 6. After undertaking mandatory context requirements in literacy and numeracy, the remainder of the ITE program may be structured to include extension or specialist studies. At the graduate entry level evidence must be provided of one year of study of discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies across the learning areas and must include specific study in English, Maths and Science.

For secondary teachers the requirements are more stringent and discipline based as articulated in Table 1.

We need to place these requirements next to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2019b) where there are three components:

- Professional knowledge (two standards)
- Professional practice (three standards)
- Professional engagement (two standards).

The Professional knowledge standards include:

1. Know students and how they learn.
2. Know the content and how to teach it.

The other standards include planning and implementing effective teaching and learning, supportive and safe learning environments, assessment and feedback, professional learning and engagement with colleagues, parents and communities. It is evident that of the nine standards only one is to do with content and how to teach the content.

Moving further into the “Know the content

<b>Secondary programs</b>	
Discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies must prepare graduates to teach across the years of secondary schooling.	
<i>Undergraduate programs – mandatory content requirements</i>	
Secondary programs must provide a sound depth and breadth of knowledge appropriate for the teaching area(s) the graduate intends to teach.	
These programs must provide discipline studies:	
a. of at least a major study in one teaching area, and	Equivalent to three-quarters of a year EFTSL <sup>15</sup>
b. preferably a second teaching area, which must comprise at least a minor study.	Equivalent to half a year EFTSL <sup>16</sup>
In addition, these programs must include:	
c. discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies. <sup>17</sup>	At least one-quarter of a year EFTSL for each teaching area
<i>Graduate entry programs – mandatory content requirements</i>	
These programs must provide:	
a. discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies. <sup>17</sup>	At least one-quarter of a year EFTSL for each teaching area
These programs may include up to one quarter of a year of full-time-equivalent study of relevant discipline studies as elective units that could be undertaken by applicants who do not fully meet prerequisite discipline study requirements.	

**Table 1: Schedule 1 for Program Standard 4.21 (AITSL, 2019a, p. 17)**

and how to teach it” standard, we see that this is dealing with Content and teaching strategies of the teaching area, Content selection and organisation, Curriculum, assessment and reporting, Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Literacy and numeracy strategies, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Of the six identified areas only the first two identify subject based content.

**Case Example:** Master of Teaching (Primary), Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne

The Master of Teaching (Primary), implemented in 2023, is a two year, end-on education qualification that enables graduates to register with the Victorian Institute of Teaching and teach Foundation to Year 6 in Victorian primary schools. It reflects a common approach in many ITE institutions in Australia although some provide an undergraduate qualification. Students complete 15 subjects over four semesters, most of these being

12.5 points which equates to three face-to-face hours per week over a 12 week semester. While the Victorian curriculum includes five art forms (dance, drama, media, music and visual arts), the Faculty of Education elects to cover drama, music and visual arts in the 36 hours allocated and devotes 12 hours to each, discrete discipline rather than trying to integrate the three. Having said that, the Faculty's assessment stipulation means the tasks cater to the students' arts preference or involve an integrated arts approach. This new iteration of the degree reduced the scope of the degree significantly and eliminated the capacity for students to engage in elective subjects. In the previous version, students were able to focus on a specialisation pathway that included the arts and up to 68% (in 2019) chose the arts specialisation that enabled them to focus on the arts in four of their subjects over the two years. The degree went through the strict review and vetting process by the Victorian Institute of Teaching and points to this institutional lack of

support for music education at a fundamental level that is frequently overlooked by advocacy groups. A survey of ITE providers recently gathered "baseline data about the provision of music education within primary teaching degrees in Australia" (Collins & Hocking, 2023, p. 8) concluding that this provision was poor. The authors make numerous recommendations, focussing on the responsibility of universities to increase "length, scope, quality and credit point value of music education" (p. 9) within these degrees. There is no mention in the Report of the role of regulators in shaping these degrees.

### Conclusion

When we consider the registration requirements for teaching, we start to gain some understanding of the scope of course selection with Initial Teacher Education programs of study. In a user pays tertiary education sector, the universities are providing

Year 1 100 pts	<b>Semester 1</b> <span style="float:right">50 pts ^</span>			
	<small>ENGAGING AND ASSESSING LEARNERS</small> <b>Engaging And Assessing Learners (Prim) 1</b> <a href="#">EDUC91078</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>First Nations In Education</b> <a href="#">EDUC91047</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>Language And Literacy: F To Year 2</b> <a href="#">EDUC91079</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>Mathematics Education: Primary 1</b> <a href="#">EDUC91080</a> 12.5 pts
	<b>Semester 2</b> <span style="float:right">50 pts ^</span>			
	<small>ENGAGING AND ASSESSING LEARNERS</small> <b>Engaging And Assessing Learners (Prim) 2</b> <a href="#">EDUC91081</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>Learning In And Through Primary Arts</b> <a href="#">EDUC91082</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>Language And Literacy: Years 3 To 6</b> <a href="#">EDUC91083</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>Mathematics Education: Primary 2</b> <a href="#">EDUC91084</a> 12.5 pts
Year 2 100 pts	<b>Semester 1</b> <span style="float:right">62.5 pts ^</span>			
	<small>ENGAGING AND ASSESSING LEARNERS</small> <b>Engaging And Assessing Learners (Prim) 3</b> <a href="#">EDUC91085</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>Mathematics Education: Primary 3</b> <a href="#">EDUC91086</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>Literacy Assessment And Learning</b> <a href="#">EDUC91087</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CAPSTONE</small> <b>Professional Learning Capstone (Prim)</b> <a href="#">EDUC91088</a> 25 pts
	<b>Semester 2</b> <span style="float:right">37.5 pts ^</span>			
<small>CORE</small> <b>Primary Science Education</b> <a href="#">EDUC91089</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>Wellbeing, Health And Physical Education</b> <a href="#">EDUC91090</a> 12.5 pts	<small>CORE</small> <b>Primary Humanities Education</b> <a href="#">EDUC91091</a> 12.5 pts		

**Table 2: Case Example: Master of Teaching (Primary), Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne**

what the industry regulators are requiring of graduates in order to be employed.

Although there have been cries for as long as we have been teaching and associated with schools that the Universities are not delivering context and knowledge required for teaching, it is the regulators that are in fact determining what the universities must deliver within the time frame of an initial teacher education program of study. The regulators are dictating the provision of what is taught and studied in teacher education. This can only change if the regulators allow some flexibility of the higher education providers without reducing the quality and music education advocates turn their attention to these regulators to initiate change.

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