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## THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ENTRANTS INTO GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION COURSES

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The qualifications of those offered places in Graduate Diplomas in Education at Edith Cowan University in 1994 were of high quality and similar to the qualifications of students in these courses in recent years. An account of the quality of those qualifications is presented here to assist those wishing to judge the quality of teachers.

Impressions of the quality of teachers in schools are formed by people using various types of evidence. Teachers' salary scales, levels of industrial dispute, academic qualifications, socio-economic origins, children's examination results, level of juvenile criminal and anti-social behaviour, public utterances by teachers and their representatives, and teacher-bashing media campaigns by self-interested politicians and lobbyists are among the types of evidence which contribute to public perceptions of teacher quality.

One type of evidence commonly cited is the minimum aggregate score for entry into university preservice teacher education courses. This score is a convenient, readily accessible number which can be used to identify and rank the quality of teachers in comparison with other university educated occupations.

Whatever the validity of entrance qualifications as an indicator of teacher quality, the use of the minimum aggregate score is problematic in a number of ways. It does not indicate the distribution of actual entrance scores. Moreover, variation in the minimum aggregate score from year to year does not indicate changes in teacher quality when selection is from within a pool of competent candidates rather than discriminating between those who are competent and those who are not. Further, it does not reflect the entry into teaching of mature-age entrants who do not have matriculation scores as the basis for entry or entrants into graduate diplomas who have completed a degree before admission. Up to 30% of undergraduate entrants to teacher education at Edith Cowan University have been mature-age entrants and about 25% of graduating teachers in Western Australia have a graduate diploma. So the minimum aggregate score is a very limited indicator of teacher quality.

It should be noted that the minimum aggregate score for undergraduate entry to teacher education at Edith Cowan University has varied over time. For example, the minimum aggregate score out of a possible 550 was, for primary teacher education, 294 (1991), 313 (1992), 322 (1993) and 300 (1994). The increases in 1992 and 1993 were influenced by the shortage of jobs for school-leavers. The drop in 1994 was partly in response to the Commonwealth Government's direction to take a greater proportion of school leavers in the intake to the University.

Instead of using the minimum aggregate score as an indicator of teacher quality it may be more useful to consider whether the entry qualifications of those in teacher education courses are satisfactory to enable teachers of quality to graduate and enter the profession. To this end it would be helpful to have a description of the qualifications of the entering cohort so that judgement could be made as to whether this was a satisfactory base from which to work towards producing quality teachers capable of educating children in the manner desired. The following is such a description of the entrants into graduate diplomas in early childhood, primary and secondary teaching at Western Australian universities in 1994.

The Western Australian universities handle their entry into graduate diplomas in education through the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre which received applications as shown in Table 1.

Age	<25	<29	<34	<39	<44
Applicants	387	178	106	89	65
Age	<49	<54	<59	<65	>65
Applicants	33	17	7	1	1

TABLE 1: Age of applicants to Graduate Diploma in Education courses in Western Australia (1994)

University	Course	Male	Female
CURTIN	Secondary	38	49
ECU	Early Childhood	1	35
	Primary	13	22
	Secondary	57	88
MURDOCH	Primary	8	34
	Secondary	24	45
UWA	Secondary	72	121
	Psychology	5	25

TABLE 2: Number of offers of places in Graduate Diploma in Education courses made in 1994.

Of the applicants for places in Graduate Diploma in Education courses in Western Australia in 1994, 834 graduated from a university in Western Australia, 72 were from interstate and 71 were from overseas.

	WA	Aust	Overseas
Early Childhood	86%	14%	
Primary	86%	3%	11%
Secondary	89%	7%	4%

TABLE 3: Location of initial degree of persons entering Graduate Diploma in Education courses at Edith Cowan University in 1994.

While the vast majority of persons offered a graduate diploma place at Edith Cowan held a pass degree, one person in the primary course held an honours (2B) and in the secondary course one person held an honours (2B) in Sociology, one an honours (2A) in English, three held first class honours in English, Chemistry and Mathematics, one held an MBA and another a Master of Arts in Politics. In the early childhood course 45% of persons held qualifications other than their base degree, in primary 20% held other qualifications and in secondary 23% had additional qualifications. In the early childhood course 20% were employed or had been employed recently, primary 17% and secondary 7%.

The high quality indicated by these degrees noted above is also reflected in the grades achieved in pass degrees by students offered places in the graduate diplomas in 1994. In addition, these students with recent employment are often making a mid-career change from vocations such as social work, nursing, law, and medical technology or are

returning to the workforce after having raised a family.

Many of the students in graduate diploma courses do not have aggregate scores which would enable comparisons to be made with undergraduate entrants because some degrees were taken overseas or in the eastern states, some students entered with mature age qualifications and others were too old to remember or have comparable scores. The scores lower than 290 are an indication of alternative entry procedures being applied for mature age students who have completed degrees before applying for teacher education courses.

1994	n	Range	Mean	SD
Early Childhood	9	295-387	338.3	31.14
Primary	20	280-464	342.9	45.44
Secondary	78	250-495	350.0	41.24

Table 4: Aggregate scores of some persons entering Graduate Diploma in Education courses at Edith Cowan University in 1994.

The professional judgement of university academics who teach these graduate diploma students and supervise them in schools accords with that of the teachers in schools who help assess their practical teaching and with that of the employers. This judgement is based on day - to - day experience of these students and observations of their subsequent careers in teaching. This judgement is that, in general, these students are well qualified and bring a diversity of background to schools, are dedicated to their studies, are committed to the well-being of students, welcome the opportunity to teach and become teachers of high quality.

While the quality of entrance qualifications of students entering Graduate Diploma in Education courses is high, judging by those students entering Edith Cowan University in 1994, there is no evidence to suggest that the pool of candidates for entry into such courses is so large that this high quality could be maintained if end-on entry became the only means of entry to teaching. A virtue of a one year course is that it encourages mature age entry which increases the diversity of background in the teaching workforce. It also facilitates more rapid adjustment to employment variations. However, the attraction of high quality, dedicated students into teaching directly from school should remain a feature of concurrent

teacher education courses so as to maintain the diversity of sources of teachers.

To conclude with a personal observation, in both the concurrent and end-on courses at Edith Cowan University the students work harder, in higher quality courses, than did the students I taught when I first entered teacher education a quarter of a century ago.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Thomas Haynes in data collection and entry and Geoffrey Law in data analysis.

## EMPLOYMENT OF INTERNS COMPLETING THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION COURSE IN 1992-93

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Adey and Speedy (1993) describe the University of South Australia's intern-based Diploma in Education in which the university, four participating secondary schools and the Education Department formed a partnership allowing students to spend the majority of their time in the four schools and a home base in one of the schools.

Practising teachers are selected serve as mentors. The dominant mode of teaching and learning is student inquiry and reflection. Adey and Speedy (1993, p.39) make the point that following the initial evaluation of the course in its foundation year, 1992, there will be a need to monitor the progress of graduates in the employment market in order to evaluate the efficacy of the program. While it is early in the day to be doing this (with the second cohort now only in their first half-year of employment) the signs are excellent. On the last day of First Term 1994, 33 out of the 36 graduates from the two cohorts were employed, 29 in teaching roles. This represents an employment rate of 92%.

The relatively small number of interns involved in the program, which has an intake of 22 each year, means that it is easy to follow their careers through personal contacts. The following table indicated the areas where the graduates from the two cohorts are working. Of those who have so far gained permanent positions as school teachers, three are in metropolitan Adelaide, four in rural South

Australia and two interstate. Altogether eight graduates are working interstate and two overseas. Of those in the category 'Contract or Regular Relief Teaching', nine were involved in contracts of at least half a school year on the census date (six were on twelve months contracts).

The 'Other Teaching' category includes graduates working in further education, staff training in industry and language teaching in the private sector. Two graduates have formed a business which offers pre-vocational training courses under contract to Government agencies. In general the graduates have proved themselves to be imaginative and tenacious job-seekers, and are widely spread both geographically and among the various educational and other employment sectors.

This spread appears to support the course planners' intentions that the program was not exclusively for people intending to teach in secondary schools. The second half of the year, especially the practicum contained in it, is viewed as an opportunity for the interns to search widely for a placement (and general experience) that suits their career aspirations at the time. It also appears to justify the attempt to put them in contact with a range of people and situations who can advise them in their search for employment among other things. This is done through the large number of visitors to the course and the many contacts that are made during the preparation for and presentation of the University High School section of the course.

In their closing section, 'Wider Use of this Approach', Adey and Speedy say (p.39) that the University High School component 'while not essential, has proved to be of such value that the inclusion of something akin to it should be considered.' While recognising that with larger groups of interns it might not be possible to conduct University High School quite as is done in this course, we would want to claim that it is, for us, essential. It should be clear that University High School, which will have about 170 students in 1994 involves the interns in designing and running a school which has to have everything found in a "real" school. This means that they have to

	1992	1993
Permanent School Teaching	3	6
Contract or Regular Relief Teaching	4	9
Other Teaching Employment	5	1
Other Employment	1	3
Further Study	0	1
<b>Total Employed</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total Number of Graduates</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>

Table 1: Employment pattern for graduates from 1992 and 1993 cohorts