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DEAKIN AUTHENTIC TEACHER ASSESSMENT
Deakin ATA

REPORT 2, June 2011

“Authentically Assessing Beginning Teaching: Professional Standards and Teacher Performance Assessment”

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Executive Summary

Entry to the teaching profession in Australia is currently regulated by state agencies that use input models to make decisions about teacher registration and readiness to teach. Judgments are made about the quality of a teacher education program usually by paper review involving a panel of stakeholders deciding on the likelihood that the program will prepare a competent beginning teacher. Then, employers and teacher registration authorities use proxies like completion of the accredited teacher education program, grades in university subjects or practicum evaluation forms and observations of teaching to make a judgment about a graduating teacher’s level of professional knowledge and practice - about their readiness to teach. However, authentic assessments of the actual professional practice of teachers in the workplace, incorporating multiple measures, and focussing on judging the impact of teachers on student learning, are only now being explored. An authentic assessment has become more relevant with the recent introduction of the new national system of accreditation (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, 2011) and the requirement that teacher education providers provide evidence that graduates can demonstrate graduate standards. The Deakin ATA (Authentic Teacher Assessment) was developed as an authentic, workplace-based assessment of professional practice as defined by Victorian Institute of Teaching VIT’s Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers. It was implemented in 2010 as a capstone summative assessment in the new Master of Teaching course at Deakin University.

The questions guiding this research project were:

1. Is the Deakin ATA a valid measure of professional practice for beginning to teach?
2. What are the key considerations in the development and implementation of the Deakin ATA as a capstone assessment in teacher education courses?
3. How does the Deakin ATA inform course evaluation and course improvement?
4. How does the Deakin ATA impact pre-service teachers’ professional learning?

The Deakin ATA project was built through two stages. Stage 1 of the research project investigated a small-scale trial of the Deakin ATA with a group of volunteers completing their final practicum in Deakin University’s Bachelor of Teaching (Primary and Secondary) in October 2009. The results of the volunteer preservice teachers and academic perceptions of the Deakin ATA were detailed in Report 1 of this study completed in July 2010. Stage 1 findings informed the design of the Stage 2 research. This report is the second report for the project and presents the findings from Stage 2 of the research. Stage 2 of the project investigated the implementation of the Deakin ATA as the capstone summative teacher performance assessment in the new Master of Teaching course at Deakin University, which had its first
intake of preservice teachers in March 2010. It involved the first group of 30 preservice teachers enrolled in the Master of Teaching completing the Deakin ATA during Trimester 3, 2010 (November, 2010 to February, 2011). The classroom teachers who supervised the preservice teachers during the practicum component of the unit in which the Deakin ATA was embedded (EPR703) as well as the Deakin University academics involved in the implementation of the Deakin ATA, participated in this second stage of the research.

This project provides an evidence base for an authentic teacher assessment and makes recommendations for its further development and implementation. This research indicates that the Deakin ATA is generally succeeding in its aim to be a meaningful and authentic means of assessing beginning teacher readiness in relation to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers. Specific findings relate to:

- the Deakin ATA as a valid measure of teacher readiness for beginning teaching,
- development and implementation of the Deakin ATA,
- course evaluation and improvement and
- impact on preservice teachers' professional learning.

Following the in-depth and rigorous analysis of the data, six detailed recommendations regarding the Deakin ATA are made and three recommendations for further investigation are identified.

The report is organised into eight sections. **Section 1** describes the project purpose. **Section 2** provides the research questions which have framed the project. **Section 3** provides a review of the literature in relation to teacher effectiveness and portfolio assessment. **Section 4** describes the context of the research project. **Section 5** follows with a description of the Deakin ATA, its links to VIT’s Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers and details of its components. **Section 6** addresses processes of data collection and analysis including details of participants across four groups. **Section 7** provides details of the findings from the analysis and is organised around the research questions. **Section 8** provides a summary of the findings which then lead to recommendations from the project. The Appendices include *inter alia* the Deakin ATA Handbook and the Assessment Criteria and Rubrics.
1. **Project purpose**

This report documents the second and final stage of research funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) into the development and trial of a summative capstone teacher performance assessment in Deakin University’s teacher education program, called the Deakin Authentic Teacher Assessment (Deakin ATA). The Deakin ATA is designed to authentically assess preservice teachers’ readiness for beginning teaching as defined by the VIT *Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers*. Specifically, the Deakin ATA was designed to provide the opportunity for preservice teachers to demonstrate their ability to:

- Identify the important features of the classroom and school context that need consideration when planning, teaching and assessing;
- Draw on students’ prior learning when planning and teaching lessons;
- Work with students both collectively and individually to build their knowledge and skills in a particular area;
- Engage students in meaningful activities and monitor their understanding;
- Critically reflect on professional practice and the impact on students’ learning;
- Assess student learning and determine patterns in whole class learning as well as individual learning needs; and,
- Use student assessment to inform subsequent professional practice.

To do this, the Deakin ATA comprised tasks or activities designed for preservice teachers to demonstrate their understanding of, proficiency with, and critical reflection on aspects of teachers’ work:

- Understanding contexts for students’ learning;
- Planning for teaching and assessment;
- Teaching and supporting students’ learning;
- Assessing student learning and using that assessment to inform future planning and teaching; and
- Reflecting on and evaluating professional practice.

Stage 1 of the research project investigated a small-scale trial of the Deakin ATA with a group of volunteers completing their final practicum in Deakin University’s Bachelor of Teaching (Primary and Secondary) in October 2009. The results of the volunteer preservice teachers and academic
perceptions of the Deakin ATA were detailed in Report 1 of this study completed in July 2010. This report is the second report for the project and presents the findings from Stage 2 of the research.

Stage 2 of the project investigated the implementation of the Deakin ATA as the capstone summative teacher performance assessment in the new Master of Teaching course at Deakin University, which had its first intake of preservice teachers in March 2010. It involved the first group of 30 preservice teachers enrolled in the Master of Teaching completing the Deakin ATA during Trimester 3, 2010 (November, 2010 to February, 2011). The classroom teachers who supervised the preservice teachers during the practicum component of the unit in which the Deakin ATA was embedded (EPR703) as well as the Deakin University academics involved in the implementation of the Deakin ATA participated in this second stage of the research.

2. Research questions

The entire project was guided by four key research questions:

1. Is the Deakin ATA a valid measure of professional practice for beginning to teach?
2. What are the key considerations in the development and implementation of the Deakin ATA as a capstone assessment in teacher education courses?
3. How does the Deakin ATA inform course evaluation and course improvement?
4. How does the Deakin ATA impact preservice teachers’ professional learning?

Two further questions were beyond the scope of this research project, but will be investigated in the future as the preservice teachers take up full time employment.

5. What is the relationship between success in the ATA and performance during the first year of teaching?
6. How does the ATA support the mentor/ beginning teacher process?

3. Review of the Literature

Entry to the profession in Australia is regulated by state agencies that use input models to make decisions about teacher registration and readiness to teach. Judgments are made about the quality of a teacher education program usually by paper review involving a panel of stakeholders deciding on the likelihood that the program will prepare a competent beginning teacher. Then, employers and teacher registration authorities use proxies like completion of the accredited teacher education program, grades in university subjects or practicum evaluation forms and observations of teaching to make a judgment
about a graduating teacher’s level of professional knowledge and practice - about their readiness to teach. However, authentic assessments of the actual professional practice of teachers in the workplace, incorporating multiple measures, and focussing on judging the impact of teachers on student learning, are being explored. This has become more relevant with the recent introduction of the new national system of accreditation (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, 2011) and the requirement that teacher education providers provide evidence that graduates can demonstrate graduate standards.

Determining teacher effectiveness

In the last decade, the US has seen steady increase in the use of various forms of teacher assessment for teacher licensing decisions. However, this has usually been in the form of written tests. In 2004, all 50 US states and the District of Columbia reported having a written test policy for teacher licensure/registration (both initial and ongoing) (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2005). However, despite at least one state in Australia planning to follow this trend (Masters, 2009), research on such teacher testing has called into question their predictive validity and their capacity to actually measure a teacher’s ability to teach (Wilson & Youngs, 2005).

With the increasing focus on outcomes in education policy, the spotlight is turning to ‘how [teacher] preparation influences teachers’ effectiveness, especially their ability to increase student learning in measurable ways’ (Darling-Hammond, 2006a, p.120). In the literature, academic success as well as teaching aptitude, content expertise, or intelligence are often cited as markers of teacher impact on student learning (for a complete review of relevant studies, see Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). The research identifies several characteristics (including teaching ability, subject matter expertise, and content pedagogy) important when measuring teaching impact on student learning. From this, we know that no one single factor can be identified as the sole contributor to the impact a teacher has on student learning. Therefore, evaluation of teachers on multiple measures is important when considering teacher impact on student learning. Moreover, as Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) note, ‘There is a growing interest among educators and evaluators in constructing other forms of assessment that better reflect the complexity of teaching and can provide valid data about competence while helping teachers improve the calibre of their work’ (p.526), and that assessments such as the practicum report do ‘not address important differences in context and content, and they ignore ... the influence of teaching on learning’ (p. 525).

Darling-Hammond and Snyder propose five aspects of authentic assessment to judge teaching:
1. The assessments sample the actual knowledge, skills and dispositions desired of teachers as they are used in teaching and learning contexts, rather than relying on more remote proxies. E.g. videotapes of teaching, lesson plans and assessments of student learning.

2. The assessments require the integration of multiple kinds of knowledge and skill as they are used in practice. For example, making curriculum and pedagogical decisions for a child’s literacy development might rely upon: study of research and theory about literacy development, learning, curriculum, and assessment; instruction in the use of literacy assessment tools and instructional strategies; practice and coaching in the collection and analysis of data about children’s literacy learning; and, reflection upon the data collected, its meaning, and implications for instruction.

3. Multiple sources of evidence are collected over time and in diverse contexts. E.g. written analyses, observation data (such as from a supervisor’s observation), and samples of student work from the preservice teacher’s classroom.

4. Assessment evidence is evaluated by individuals with relevant expertise against criteria that matter for performance in the field.

5. The assessment practice includes multiple opportunities for learning and practicing the desired outcomes and for feedback and reflection, ... in order to develop as well as measure teaching judgement and skill.

(Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000, p. 526-528)

Increasingly, any authentic assessment of readiness to teach, includes a focus on candidates’ application of subject-specific pedagogical knowledge that research finds to be associated with successful teaching (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2006b; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Moreover, the importance of assessing the dimensions of teachers’ work linked to successfully working with diverse student groups is highlighted. For example, with her colleagues at Boston College, Marilyn Cochran-Smith has challenged much of the discourse about the pervading ‘cultures of evidence’ talk ever present in school and teacher education, highlighting the absence of cultural understandings and nuances in many approaches to gather and use evidence. They identify four key aspects designed to capture a more nuanced approach to evidence involving: (1) development of a portfolio of studies about processes and outcomes; (2) recognition that teacher education always poses values questions as well as empirical questions; (3) an exploratory, open-ended approach to evidence construction; and, (4) multiple structures that institutionalize evidence collection and use locally and beyond (Cochran-Smith & the Boston College Evidence Team, 2009).

**Portfolio Assessment**
The three most commonly used means of collecting evidence about the quality of teaching in preservice teacher education programs are: i) observation protocols that include teacher educator developed evaluation scales linked to professional standards for beginning teaching, ii) portfolios documenting preservice teachers’ professional knowledge and reflection on their professional practice; and iii) teacher and/or student work samples (Arends, 2006a, 2006b). Often, these approaches are designed to be used in formative ways to support teacher learning, by providing information about specific strengths and weaknesses in preservice teachers’ professional practice that can be used to support their growth as well as inform program improvement.

Portfolio assessments are widely used in teacher preparation programs, most often as a form of ‘capstone’ or culminating assessment (St. Maurice & Shaw, 2004), and can be structured and unstructured portfolios. Structured portfolios are those that require preservice teachers to submit specific artefacts of teaching in response to standardized prompts. These artefacts and responses are then scored in a standardized way by trained scorers using a common evaluation tool, usually a rubric. With unstructured portfolios, what and how artefacts are selected varies. For example, in a ‘showcase portfolio,’ preservice teachers are free to choose artefacts that represent their ‘best work’. In portfolios that are meant to be used as a tool for professional learning, preservice teachers’ selection may be more scaffolded to include specific artefacts, such as a statement of teaching philosophy, a videotape of their teaching, lesson plans or units, or original curriculum materials they have developed, with accompanying analytical reflections. While a great deal of time and effort goes into the compilation and assessment of these portfolios, they serve primarily a formative purpose. However, if a portfolio is to be used to support a graduation or registration decision, then the design and the development of the assessment must be much more structured and psychometric issues need attention.

[A teacher’s portfolio] can be used as a summative evaluation tool, but to do so requires a much more structured process and a complex set of assessment strategies. The assessment component requires clear criteria, an established set of reliable and valid scoring rubrics, and extensive training for the evaluators in order to ensure fairness and reliability. These considerations can all be met, but they are often beyond the capacity or the will of a local university (Wilkerson & Lang, 2003, pp.94-95).

An example of a structured portfolio that has been used for high stakes decisions is the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) – see http://www.pacttpa.org/. PACT represents a multiple measures assessment used for initial teacher registration in California and to gather evidence of content and pedagogical knowledge as well as higher-order thinking skills from preservice teachers (Pecheone & Chung, 2006).
‘Since 2002, the PACT has been through eight years of development and implemented in 32 teacher education programs in California, including both traditional preservice teacher education programs and alternative certification programs offered by school districts and a charter management organization. The assessment allows for both formative and summative assessment of preservice teacher performance. Following specific design principles, PACT was designed to ensure an assessment focus on student learning through intentional teaching practices and the systematic collection of teaching artefacts. The design principles require that a teacher performance assessment should:

- Maintain the complexity of teaching
- Focus on content/pedagogy within disciplines embedded in the teacher preparation curriculum
- Examine teaching practice in relationship to student learning
- Provide analytic feedback and support
- Be both adaptive and generalizable

Programs have used the data generated by PACT to make programmatic improvements that have resulted in enhanced preparation and preservice teacher performance. PACT has been approved as an official performance assessment for licensing by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing based on extensive reliability and validity studies that met rigorous standards. Extensive research continues to ensure reliability and validity measurements, including an in-progress value-added study of preservice teaching in relation to student learning in California.’

(Mayer, Pecheone, & Merino, 2011, in press)

PACT assesses ‘the planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection skills of student teachers against professional standards of practice’ (Darling-Hammond, 2006a, p.121). The tasks ‘are designed to measure and promote candidates’ abilities to integrate their knowledge of content, students and instructional context in making instructional decisions and to stimulate teacher reflection on practice’ (Pecheone & Chung, 2006, p.24). Both the structure and the content of the PACT tasks have informed the design of the Deakin ATA.

Thus, the ATA in the Master of Teaching course marks a shift from using a single teacher assessment measure, for instance the practicum evaluation report, to the ATA involving ‘multiple measures that allow a comprehensive view of what candidates learn and what a program contributes to their performance’ (Darling-Hammond, 2006a, p. 135). Drawing on the structure and content of the PACT assessments or Teaching Events (TEs), the Deakin ATA uses multiple sources of data (teacher plans, teacher artefacts, student work samples, video clips of teaching, and personal reflections and commentaries) which are organized in four categories of teaching: planning, teaching, assessment, and
reflection, to better understand graduates readiness to teach as measured by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) *Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers*.

### 4. Research Project Context

The Deakin ATA was implemented in 2010 as a capstone summative assessment in the new Master of Teaching course at Deakin University. The Master of Teaching is a postgraduate teacher education program completed in the equivalent of two years’ full-time study. Preservice teachers studying in the Master of Teaching will normally have completed a bachelor degree in a discipline other than education. Graduates of the Master of Teaching are eligible for registration as early childhood, primary or secondary teachers, depending on the strand of study they elect to complete. Candidates can complete a dual credential course of study which will qualify them to teach in both early childhood and primary, or primary and secondary settings. The Master of Teaching also offers internship, research and applied learning pathways as options in the final trimester. The primary and secondary teaching strands of the Master of Teaching had their first intake of preservice teachers at the beginning of 2010. The first intake of early childhood candidates occurred at the beginning of 2011.

The Deakin ATA is a compulsory part of the Master of Teaching course and is completed by all candidates in all strands. It occurs at the end of one and a half years’ study (or equivalent), as the final assessment in the final professional experience unit. All Master of Teaching preservice teachers are required to complete three core units in Education Studies and three core units in Professional Experience studies. School-based professional experience or practicum is embedded in the three Professional Experience core units. The Deakin ATA is embedded in the third Professional Experience core unit, named EPR703.

The first cohort of Master of Teaching preservice teachers to complete the Deakin ATA did so during Trimester 3 2010. This cohort had already successfully completed the two prerequisite core units in Education Studies and the two core units in Professional Experience including two school-based practicums, and was enrolled in the final two core units. They began working on the requirements of the Deakin ATA while completing 20 days of practicum in either a Primary or Secondary school setting. They submitted the Deakin ATA as a major assessment task for their final Professional Experience core unit, EPR703.
5. The Deakin ATA

The Deakin ATA was developed as an authentic, workplace-based assessment of professional practice as defined by VIT’s Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers. The development work was informed by similar work in which members of the team have been involved developing PACT in California (see above) linked to the California Teaching Performance Expectations and in Malaysia linked to the Malaysian Teacher Standards.

In the Deakin ATA, preservice teachers are required to demonstrate their ability to:

- Teach proficiently and demonstrate the VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers
- Identify the important features of the classroom context that influence their planning, teaching and assessment;
- Draw on students’ prior knowledge and learning when planning and teaching lessons;
- Work with students to build their knowledge and skills in a particular area;
- Engage students in meaningful activities and monitor their understanding;
- Critically reflect on their professional practice and its impact on students’ learning;
- Assess student learning and determine patterns in whole class learning as well as individual learning needs; and,
- Use student assessment to inform their professional practice.

To do this, they plan and teach a sequence of 5-8 lessons during their teaching practicum. They are also required to keep a journal to record their reflections about their teaching practice and their own learning.

The ATA has five components designed as activities that reflect components of the whole teaching experience of the preservice teacher.

Activity 1: Context for Learning

Preservice teachers are required to write a commentary on the learning context within which they are working, describing the school and the classes they teach in terms of location, socio-economic factors, cultural and language backgrounds of the students, gender ratio, available resources and any other factors that impact on the learning environment.

Activity 2: Planning Teaching & Assessment
Preservice teachers are required to write a commentary in which they describe, explain, and justify their teaching and assessment plan for the sequence of 5-8 lessons they are planning to teach.

**Activity 3. Teaching Students and Supporting Learning**

Preservice teachers are required to videotape themselves teaching, submit a ten-minute segment of the video, and to write a commentary on the video, reflecting on their teaching practice and how they facilitated student learning.

**Activity 4: Assessing Student Learning**

Preservice teachers are required to report on the assessment tasks that they planned and implemented, and provide samples of work from three students. They must describe how the assessment tasks assisted in measuring student learning, summarise and reflect on the whole class learning, analyse three samples of students’ work, describe how they gave feedback to students about their learning, and then describe how the assessment tasks would inform their ongoing planning and teaching.

**Activity 5: Reflecting on Teaching & Learning**

Preservice teachers are required to demonstrate their ability to analyse their own teaching practice and students’ learning in order to improve their teaching practice. They are required to write a reflection on what they have learnt throughout their teaching experience, drawing on their journal entries. They are required to identify general patterns in their planning, teaching and assessment, reflect on the effectiveness of the sequence of lessons with reference to current learning theories and pedagogical models, and comment on student learning and their relationships with students.

Details are provided in the Deakin ATA Handbook available in Appendix 2.

**6. Data Collection and Analysis**

As explained above, the first stage of the research in October 2009 trialled the Deakin ATA with a group of preservice teachers completing the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary & Secondary) at Deakin University. The participants in this first stage of the research were volunteers who completed the Deakin ATA as part of the research project. The ATA was not part of the Bachelor of Teaching in which they were enrolled, and the research participants were not assessed on it as part of their degree course.

This second stage of the research involved the first cohort of preservice teachers enrolled in the new Master of Teaching course at Deakin University who completed the Deakin ATA as a compulsory and major assessment task in the course. These preservice teachers had already successfully completed
four of the six compulsory core units in Education Studies and Professional Practice which were designed to scaffold their learning in the key areas of planning, teaching, assessment and reflection on professional practice that are measured by the Deakin ATA.

a) Research participants – Stage 2
The research participants represented all parties involved with the implementation of the Deakin ATA. The participants were preservice teachers, the classroom teachers who acted as their supervisors and mentors during the practicum, and the Deakin University academics who chaired the final Education Studies and Professional Experience core units and visited the preservice teachers during the practicum. All research participants were interviewed individually, and the interviews were audio taped.

Preservice Teachers
Five preservice teachers were selected as a representative sample of the whole cohort completing the Deakin ATA. The five participants included both male and female, as well as local and international preservice teachers. One participant spoke English as a second language and two had completed some of their prior education outside of Australia. There were two primary teaching candidates and three secondary teaching candidates teaching in range of subject areas. The participants had completed prior study in the Master of Teaching with grades ranging from Pass to High Distinction levels. Each of the five preservice teachers was interviewed twice. The first interview took place immediately at the completion of the teaching practicum during which they completed the requirements of the ATA. The second interview took place immediately after the preservice teachers had compiled the artefacts and written commentaries and reflections and had submitted the ATA portfolio for assessment.

Practicum Supervising Teachers
Three out of five practicum supervising teachers were interviewed. The remaining two were unable to participate due to professional commitments. The practicum supervising teachers interviewed included a primary school teacher and two secondary teachers from different subject areas. The schools involved were two government schools and one private school. Each practicum supervising teacher was interviewed once, soon after the end of the practicum period.

Deakin Academics
The two Deakin academics who chaired the core Education Studies and Professional Experience units during Trimester 3, 2010-2011 and who visited the preservice teachers while they were on practicum in primary and secondary schools, were interviewed once each soon after the end of the practicum period.

Deakin Assessor
The unit chair of the Professional Experience unit in which the ATA was embedded was interviewed a second time as the assessor of the Deakin ATAs submitted for the trimester. The interview was conducted soon after the assessment process was complete. The unit chair had by this time also received feedback from all preservice teachers who had undertaken the Deakin ATA, and discussed this feedback during the interview.

b) Data Analysis

The interview data was analysed over several phases. In the first phase, the interviews were analysed for emerging themes. In the second phase, the data attached to themes was further analysed in response to the Research Questions. This was then analysed against document analysis. The Deakin ATA was analysed for construct validity, content validity, predictive validity, concurrent validity and also inter-rater reliability. The findings from the analyses are organised to indicate responses to the research questions as they reflect specific themes.

7. Research Findings

7A. Research Question 1: ‘Is the Deakin ATA a valid measure of professional practice for beginning teaching?’

Findings are organised in the following sections:

The Deakin ATA as a valid measure of teacher readiness for beginning teaching:
- Authentically capturing the work of teachers
- Demonstrating VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers
- Validity and reliability of the ATA activities and the rubrics
- Fairness

7B. Research Question 2: ‘What are the key considerations in the development and implementation of an ATA as a capstone assessment in teacher education courses?’

Findings are organised in the following sections:

Development and Implementation of the Deakin ATA
- Structure of the ATA
- Structure and timing of the related coursework
- Structure and timing of the practicum
- The role of practicum supervisors
- The role of Deakin academics
f. Support for preservice teachers

7C. Research Question 3: How does the Deakin ATA inform course evaluation and course improvement?

Findings are organised in the following section:

Course Evaluation and Improvement

7D. Research Question 4: How does the Deakin ATA impact preservice teachers' professional learning?

Findings are organised in the following sections:

Impact on Preservice Teachers' Professional Learning
a. A deeper understanding of teachers' work
b. Enhancing profession learning during the practicum
c. Reflection on professional practice
d. Learning over time
e. Learning about assessment
f. Assessment as a diagnostic tool
g. Professional learning and the components of the ATA

7A. The Deakin ATA as a valid measure of teacher readiness for beginning teaching

We were already experiencing everything that the ATA was asking us to do on our last practicum... I think I'm ready to teach.... [The ATA is] basically a summary of everything we've done. (preservice teacher)

a. Reflecting the work of teachers
Preservice teachers, practicum supervisors and Deakin academics who participated in this research all considered the Deakin ATA to be an authentic assessment of teacher readiness because it is based on evidence of preservice teachers’ actual experience of doing the complex work of teachers.

I think it's basically as close as you're going to get to an authentic assessment. (practicum supervisor)
You go through all of the stages that I believe are called for in a teacher... planning... assessment, and you are actually teaching... I would definitely say in terms of a written piece that's as good as you can get without actually seeing the real thing. (preservice teacher)

The Deakin ATA requires preservice teachers to show evidence of their actual teaching practice and to demonstrate that they are able to reflect on and learn from their practice. From the preservice teachers’ perspectives, this makes it a more effective measure of teacher readiness than an essay or similar written assessment, and at the same time it provides preservice teachers with an opportunity to learn about themselves as teachers.

You can't determine what kind of teacher you are going to be by sitting in a classroom and writing a seven thousand-word assignment on theory. You need to be able to practice that. So the [ATA] assignment is good in that way, because it is making us reflect on how we are as a teacher and what we're going to be like when we get into the profession.... It's a lot better than just writing a normal university assignment. (preservice teacher)

Accountability, according to one participant was a key aspect of the ATA.

We have to be accountable to whatever we did, to whatever decisions we had to make and you couldn't do it by fluke. You know how some assessments you could just study the night before and then pass...but you end up not knowing much. But I think this one you really had to know what you were doing. You couldn't fake it. (preservice teacher)

[If a preservice teacher wasn't ready to begin teaching]... It would show up in the planning, it would show up in the management [and] organisation. It would show up in many ways.... because the ATA is a snap shot of what teachers do, so I think it would clearly show any problems or inadequacies. (practicum supervisor)

Despite some concern expressed by several participating preservice teachers that maybe a skilled writer could complete the Deakin ATA successfully even if they were not ready to teach, the Deakin academic who assessed the ATA believes that this would not be possible because of the individualised and subjective process of reflecting on the evidence required to complete the ATA.

A good essay writer could write it in an objective way. I think the ATA requires a form of writing, especially in that last section that is reflection on themselves [that] ...requires [preservice teachers] to see something across a range of difference aspects of teaching, planning, [and] ... assessment, viewing self in a kind of teaching space. And each of them are so individual.... a good essay writer could template someone else’s essay and could just transpose it. You can’t do that with the ATA because your own experience at [a private secondary school name] is so different to mine at [a government primary school name]. So that’s why I think it is such a good
b. Demonstrating VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers

The Deakin ATA was designed with reference to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers (VIT Standards). Preservice teachers and practicum supervisors agreed that overall the Deakin ATA was well designed so that preservice teachers could demonstrate the VIT Standards, ‘When I looked at the standards and looked at what we were being asked to do [in the ATA], you could see the link’. (preservice teacher)

In fact, some preservice teachers reported that completing the ATA helped them better understand the range of skills and understandings that were encompassed by the VIT Standards. They found that when they read the VIT Standards prior to completing the ATA, they seemed to be too broad and complex to be able to be demonstrated in reality. After completing the ATA, they began to understand what the Standards meant in practice, and to comprehend that teachers’ work does involve the range of professional skills and understandings listed... after I started writing the ATA I can sort of... picture... what the actual words [in the VIT Standards] mean. (preservice teacher). One of the Deakin academics however stated that it was beyond the scope of a single assessment task to address all of the VIT Standards.

No one piece of assessment is going to cover all of the standards and we need to figure out where along the way [in the Master of Teaching] other standards need to be addressed. (Deakin academic)

c. Validity and Reliability of the Deakin ATA Activities and Rubrics

One member of the research team who had no direct involvement in the development and implementation of the Deakin ATA examined the ATA to judge the extent to which the content of the ATA activities were authentic representations of important dimensions of teaching reflected in the Master of Teaching and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers (Content Validity). This person also examined the ATA to judge the extent to which the ATA actually measured what it set out to measure (Construct Validity). Given the small sample, this was done by referring to the theoretical ideas underpinning authentic assessment of preservice teacher performance. In addition, results from other measures of preservice teacher performance for this cohort were examined to ascertain the extent to which the Deakin ATA results correlated with these other measures (Concurrent Validity). Likewise, the validity and reliability of the rubrics were examined.
**Deakin ATA Activities** (see Handbook, Appendix 2)

**Content Validity:** The Deakin ATA has strong content validity with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) *Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers*. There are direct links from each component of the Deakin ATA to the Standards. However, due to University requirements for assessment tasks, every assessment must be linked to a university unit. At the time of this research this capstone task was located in the final professional experience unit of the Master of Teaching course. Despite this structural constraint, using traditional analysis the Deakin ATA still evidences moderately high content validity. There are strong links between the assessment activities and the content of the units taught within the course.

**Construct Validity:** The Deakin ATA strongly aligns with the evidenced-based theoretical work of Darling Hammond and Snyder (2000, p.526-528) who argued five aspects of authentic assessment to judge teaching:

1. The assessments sample the actual knowledge, skills and dispositions desired of teachers as they are used in teaching and learning contexts. [Deakin ATA activity 2, 3 and 4]
2. The assessments require the integration of multiple kinds of knowledge and skill as they are used in practice. [Deakin ATA, Activity 2 and 5]
3. Multiple sources of evidence are collected over time and in diverse contexts. [Deakin ATA, Activity 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5]
4. Assessment evidence is evaluated by individuals with relevant expertise against criteria that matter for performance in the field. [Deakin ATA, assessed by teacher educators]
5. The assessment practice includes multiple opportunities for learning and practicing the desired outcomes and for feedback and reflection, ... in order to develop as well as measure teaching judgement and skill. [Deakin ATA process and activity 5]

**Concurrent Validity** refers to the degree to which the Deakin ATA results correlate with other measures of beginning teacher readiness measured at the same time. The small sample did contain two preservice teachers whose assessment as failure in the ATA stood in stark contrast to the excellent practicum evaluation reports from their practicum supervisors. One of these preservice teachers reported being unable to write in a concise enough manner to meet the word limit of the assignment and another seemed to struggle with reflective writing. These were common issues across the whole cohort but were reported as very significant for these two. This requires further investigation and recommendations for addressing further the issue of word length (discussed elsewhere in this report) and further instruction in reflective practices.
**Predictive Validity:** Like concurrent validity, predictive validity is the extent to which the Deakin ATA results or grades correlate with other measures of teacher performance at some time in the future. This is a very significant issue for the profession. The predictive validity of the Deakin ATA can only be addressed in a longitudinal study. The Chief Investigators in this project are recipients of an ARC Linkage project which is focussed on a longitudinal study of the impact of teacher education courses. This will inform this issue.

**Reliability:** The ATAs that were assessed as a failure were marked again blind (the student and their original grade was not known) by a second assessor. The second assessment was the same or within two marks of the original grade given.

**Deakin ATA Marking and Rubrics** (see Appendix 3)

**Content validity of rubrics** is achieved through aligning criteria to curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities. It is interesting to note that the activity that has the least content validity (Activity 4 Assessment) attracts the largest number of marks. This problematises the overall content validity. However, the rubric does draw directly on the activities that are directly linked to the course curriculum and the assessment tasks. Overall the rubrics evidence moderate content validity.

**Construct validity of rubrics** is achieved by aligning criteria to a rationale. The rubrics relate strongly to the VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers. These need to be aligned to the theoretical work on effective beginning teaching to strengthen construct validity.

**Reliability of rubrics** is achieved by setting criteria that assessors can apply consistently and objectively. The levels of performance are largely differentiated through graduated performance descriptions e.g.

- ‘Does not adequately describe... Describes superficially ... Describes in some depth... A thorough description’

- ‘Gives an insufficient account. Some explanation... A thorough explanation... A supported explanation’

The performance descriptions above overlap and lack differentiation that could be consistently applied across assessors. The criteria and the related descriptors sometimes cover more than one area e.g. ‘Explanation of assessment timing and teaching to learning objectives.’ The levels of performance are indicated as ‘developmental’ – ‘not shown; beginning; established and advanced’. These need to be justified in regard to the incremental descriptors. The marking related to these stages is problematic as ‘beginning’ standard in the development attracts half the possible marks.
The activities themselves are well positioned in terms of validity and reliability. The rubrics have moderate content and construct validity and low reliability based on examination of the levels of performance. It is recommended that the rubrics be reviewed in this light.

**d. Fairness**

Several ‘fairness’ issues have emerged from the data and included differences between experiences based on sector, year level, nature of school activities, content knowledge of the assessor, classroom context, curriculum structure and the mode of the Deakin ATA.

**Sector and year level**

In order for the Deakin ATA to be a fair measure of teacher readiness, preservice teachers in primary and secondary settings need to have equitable opportunities to demonstrate their readiness in relation to the graduate standards regardless of what subject or year level they teach. The Deakin ATA is designed to focus on the essential aspects of teaching and learning which are consistent across all levels and areas of teaching, and with enough flexibility in its requirements to be adaptable to a range of teaching circumstances. Did the participants experience it in this way?

All preservice teachers in this research reported that they were able to use activities appropriate for the subject and year level they were teaching when completing the ATA. All participants considered the ATA to be flexible enough to be adaptable to all teaching circumstances. The Deakin assessor who marked the ATA in 2010-2011 found that all primary and secondary preservice teachers were able to complete all the requirements of the ATA suggesting that the activities were relevant to all the settings in which the preservice teachers were completing their practicum. Moreover, there was no notable discrepancy in the overall quality of the work submitted between primary and secondary candidates. However, the cohort was small and in order to draw general conclusions about any differences between primary and secondary candidates completing the ATA, further analysis will need to occur as the number of preservice teachers completing it grows each trimester.

**Nature of school activities**

Although participants found the Deakin ATA and its activities flexible enough to apply to any discipline and any year level, some preservice teachers found it an extra challenge to fulfil the ATA requirements in areas requiring lots of practical learning activities, particularly in regards to the assessment activities. Two of the five preservice teachers participating in this research, one a primary teacher and one a secondary Physical Education teacher, expressed experiencing some difficulty collecting appropriate assessment data for the ATA due to the practical nature of the tasks they were assessing. However,
this probably indicates a limited understanding of assessment. Practical tasks like written tasks can of course be assessed. Despite these perceived difficulties, both of these preservice teachers ultimately judged the ATA to be fair for all disciplines and teaching circumstances. The Deakin assessor reported that all preservice teachers in practical method areas did manage to complete all ATA requirements, including the assessment activities.

Content area expertise of the assessor
One preservice teacher suggested that the Deakin ATA could not be fairly assessed unless the assessor had experience and training in the subject areas of the preservice teacher candidates. However, after assessing the first ATA submissions, the Deakin assessor was confident that the ATA’s focus on the essential aspects of teaching and learning and preservice teachers’ explanations and reflections on their teaching practice meant that the assessor did not need to have specialised knowledge of all the method areas covered. The emphasis was on assessing the teaching and learning process and its inherent professional judgment, rather than making a judgment about demonstrating ‘correct’ or ‘best’ practice. However, we believe this is an area that needs further examination as the ATA is implemented with larger cohorts.

Classroom context
Another aspect for consideration in terms of fairness is that the circumstances of the teaching practicum could potentially have a significant impact on a preservice teacher’s success in the ATA because their capacity to demonstrate their readiness to teach may be affected by the degree of control they have over what they do in the classroom (i.e. their supervisor’s classroom), the level of support received from practicum supervisors, and the timing of the practicum.

Curriculum structure
One primary preservice teacher found that the integrated unit she used for her sequence of lessons, which had a cooperative practical task involving the whole class as its main learning activity, was too large in scope to be appropriate for the requirements of the ATA. The integrated unit had multiple learning aims connected to many areas of the curriculum that she believed made it too broad and complex a task to lend itself well to the word limit of the ATA.

I also struggled with the word counts because there was just so much going on in my mind where I could link absolutely everything to everything, that it just made the task just a lot huger (sic). (preservice teacher)

This preservice teacher was dissatisfied with the unit she planned, and in particular with the assessments she used, but found that in writing up the ATA she was able to reflect on the weaknesses in her planning and thereby demonstrate her understanding of teaching and learning.
Even if you’re in my case where you think the actual unit you planned was shoddy, you’re still showing... That you’re able to justify why. Like if I thought it was terrible and just wrote it’s terrible, that wouldn’t show evidence. That wouldn’t be authentic... it’s the whole justification, the whole reflecting and the whys, the hows, the whats. (preservice teacher)

A preservice teacher who was unable to teach the full sequence of planned lessons during practicum due to time constraints was able to discuss this.

[Re:] The sequencing the lessons, I had to make up or say that I would have done an introductory lesson and an end lesson. I only got 3 [lessons] with them, in European handball as a subject, so I had to say, ‘This is what I would have done with them’... but it wasn’t actually what I did do with them. (preservice teacher)

Both of these preservice teachers were able to reflect on the unsatisfactory aspects of their teaching practicum when writing the commentaries and reflection for the ATA. The classroom teachers in both of these cases were experienced and supportive practicum supervisors.

The ATA may need to incorporate alternative possibilities for preservice teachers in practicum circumstances where they are unable to complete a sequence of 5-8 lessons, such as teaching two shorter sequences of 3-4 lessons each. However, the original intent of the 5-8 lessons was to reflect the real work of teachers as they plan and teach towards a concept or skill over time, rather than simply concentrating on a short term objective achievable within the time of one or two lessons with seemingly little connection to what comes after. The longer time frame of a sequence of lessons also more accurately reflects the professional judgment in which teachers engage as they scaffold student learning over time.

Mode of the Deakin ATA
Another concern regarding fairness raised by some of the preservice teacher participants was that despite being based on evidence of teaching practice, the final Deakin ATA is presented and submitted for grading as a written assessment and may not fully reflect the capabilities of preservice teachers who have difficulty expressing themselves in writing.

People might not be good at putting it into words as they are... their assignments might not reflect how good they are at teaching.... That doesn’t necessarily mean to me that they’re not ready to teach.... I wouldn’t like to see someone that has had excellent reports from their teaching, from their placement, come in and get a terrible ATA result and then that determines...whether you are ready to teach or not. Because it might be seen practically that they’re doing everything that’s possible to be a success. (preservice teacher)
Preservice teacher participants in this research highlighted two connected issues regarding the writing of the ATA. The first was a lack of experience and understanding about reflective writing, and the second was a belief that the ATA is too broad and complex a task to be addressed within the available word limit. During interviews with preservice teachers, the issue that stood out as having caused participants the greatest difficulty and anxiety was that of having to complete the ATA requirements within a word limit. The majority of preservice teachers believed that to be able to demonstrate their abilities and understandings they needed to write significantly more than was allowed and they felt that having to edit their writing down to meet the word limit disadvantaged them.

*I think the 5000-word count is a little bit unrealistic considering the amount of questions that we had to answer. ... the actual ATA handbook was like that thick of questions [demonstrates with a gesture] and 5000 to answer all that is I think a little unrealistic* (preservice teacher)

*... it’s probably such a massive task beyond just the word limit because it is like you’re trying to compact all of this prior knowledge and at the same time make sense and understand it for yourself and put it all into some kind of structure and some kind of word limit.* (preservice teacher)

As already discussed, it may be useful to consider how more explicit instruction about the nature of reflecting on professional practice and how to do this well in writing, as well as by having more opportunity to practice reflection incorporated into the earlier Master of Teaching units. The unit chair in which the Deakin ATA is embedded acknowledges that the ATA needs some rewriting to make it clearer and more streamlined and concise:

*I know there’s too much to cover. If you look at a task there’s too much to cover in what was in the prompts for each part that was given to them.*

In addition, as noted above, a dilemma emerged: two of the four preservice teachers who failed their ATA received excellent practicum reports. They believed that this was because they were unable to demonstrate their skills and understandings clearly and concisely within the word limit. However, this needs further investigation. There may be other reasons: a lack of understanding of the tasks, an inability to write commentaries and reflections in concise and relevant ways, and so on. Preservice teachers must pass both the school-based and the university assessment components of the professional experience units in order to pass them overall. There are several interrelated and somewhat pragmatic issues. University rules currently limit the assessments for any single unit to 6,000 words or equivalent. The Deakin ATA was designed as a summative, capstone assessment to judge teacher readiness. Some preservice teacher participants in this research expected that such an important assessment would be given greater status and gain more credit relative to other assessment tasks in the Master of Teaching program. In the trimester examined, the ATA was worth seventy percent
of the total grade for one unit, out of a total of sixteen units in the Master of Teaching program. The chair of the unit in which the ATA is embedded has made the Deakin ATA 90% of the total grade for the unit in 2011. University rules prevent any single assessment task accounting for 100% per cent of the unit grade. Clearly, further thinking about this is required and perhaps as a truly capstone assessment, the Deakin ATA should account for assessment across a number of units.

7B. Development and Implementation of the Deakin ATA

Question 2 ‘What are the key considerations in the development and implementation of an ATA as a capstone assessment in teacher education courses?’

a. Structure of the ATA

All participants considered all activities in the Deakin ATA to be valuable, but suggested the Context for Learning activity could be abbreviated. In this activity, preservice teachers were asked to describe the socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and other factors impacting on the learning environment. Preservice teachers suggested that this activity could be abbreviated and account for a smaller proportion of the overall marks in future versions of the Deakin ATA.

The Planning Teaching and Assessment activity in the ATA required preservice teachers to explain the rationale for their planned lessons and articulate how their chosen learning activities would help students achieve the intended learning goals. Participants in this research reported that the ATA did not allow them ample opportunity to document the thinking that informed their planning and teaching decisions. The Deakin assessor similarly found that many preservice teachers across the whole cohort did poorly at specifying learning aims and providing a rationale for their planning of learning activities.

... we didn’t actually have that much space on your sequence of planning and how you got to writing those lesson plans, and what your thinking was behind creating those activities, and how they did reflective learning, and how they were meeting the one objective. I think that would actually be really good to reflect on. And I don’t think that was able to be done throughout the ATA. (preservice teacher)

... Some of [the preservice teachers] had trouble even with why they were teaching something, the rationale for it. Some of them had trouble analysing what the object was to teach students and then so what teaching strategy are you going to use to teach them that ... and then assess.... the good ones made those connections very clear and accurately. The weaker ones ... didn’t connect across the ATA, so they saw it as kind of 5 different sections. (Deakin assessor)
However, the preservice teachers reported that even though having to articulate the thinking behind their planning decisions was challenging, completing the ATA made them think in depth about why they chose certain learning activities, how they were sequenced, and how they met or failed to meet the intended learning aims.

It makes you responsible for what you do, it makes you question what you do.... it was frustrating but it was also good because you learnt a lot. I realised that teachers don’t do things for [the sake of] doing… There is always a reason behind, or there should be a reason behind everything.... that is what I learnt. (preservice teacher)

[When planning lessons]... I started by thinking about why [the students] need to know this. So this is my starting point, which makes quite easy for me to plan, ...to do this activity hoping to reach to that purpose. But to articulate that is a very... difficult process.... There was thinking behind it, but to articulate that is very challenging. (preservice teacher)

Preservice teachers reported that having to explain their thinking processes helped them clarify their understanding of the decisions they made about planning, teaching and assessment.

I'm still in the process of working backwards .... I found with the nature of teaching you work backwards almost all the time and I try to work forwards. ... I always had the aims and objectives in my mind when I was teaching lessons, but I still need to go back through and really refine them. (preservice teacher)

One of the requirements of the Deakin ATA was that preservice teachers write a reflective commentary on a videotape of themselves teaching one of their planned lessons. In feedback to the unit chair, some preservice teachers suggested the video task could be omitted from the ATA and kept only as an assessment task in a prior unit (the second Professional Experience core unit, EPR702). However, all preservice teachers reported that the video task was a valuable learning opportunity. Preservice teachers had already completed a similar video task during EPR702 and some participants commented that having videotapes from two teaching practicums (one in EPR702 and another in EPR703) would help them reflect on their professional learning over time.

I think it's good to be able to reflect on ourselves as teachers. I really enjoyed the video footage last time and I think it would be good to see how I was then to now and reflect on that again. (preservice teacher)

Some logistical issues were encountered with videotaping lessons in Trimester 2 when the task was part of EPR702, but most of these issues were resolved by the time the preservice teachers videotaped their lessons for the ATA in Trimester 3, EPR703. This suggests that having the video task in EPR702 fulfilled its purpose of providing preservice teachers with a useful ‘practice run’ before they completed the ATA.
Practicum supervisors interviewed for this research also considered the videotaping activity to be a valuable activity. They highlighted the need for all teachers to engage in ongoing reflection on their professional practice, and suggested that the video task would provide a useful opportunity for reflection even for experienced teachers.

I probably should do it myself and just see how I come across. Because a lot of the time you just don’t know… you think you’re doing a great job and then maybe you’d watch it later and think, ‘Oh what an idiot’. (practicum supervisor)

I think it’s an excellent way of reflecting on your practice….with student teachers I reiterate that I’m still, we’re all still learning. I’m still making mistakes and [thinking] ‘How can I do this better?’... I think [the video task] is a great way for them to think ‘How can I improve?’ (practicum supervisor)

Participants also suggested that as part of the ATA, Deakin academics observe and provide structured feedback to preservice teachers teaching one of the classes in the sequence of lessons planned, taught and analysed for the ATA. Preservice teachers were concerned that the ATA provided mainly written opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their readiness to teach and some believed that less competent writers might be disadvantaged. This problematises the significance of ‘writing’ as a teacher skill. Moreover, observation and feedback on one lesson is a poor proxy for overall readiness to teach; indeed, this was the reason for the development of the ATA in the first place. However, preservice teachers also suggested that a professional conversation with a Deakin academic who had observed them teaching would give them an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to engage in professional dialogue, a component of the professional standards.

Preservice teachers completing the ATA were required to keep a daily reflective journal during their practicum to record reflections on their teaching practice, and this was to serve as a prompt when writing up the ATA. Preservice teachers found that having to make a daily entry in their journals forced them to think in more depth about their teaching practice, so as to improve their teaching.

It makes you stop and think ‘Well what am I doing here and how can I improve?’…. Whereas if I probably wasn’t doing an assessment afterward, I don’t know if I would have reflected in as much detail as I did. (preservice teacher)

Most preservice teachers reported that they would have thought about their teaching practice at the end of each day even if they were not required to keep a reflective journal, but that having to articulate their thoughts in writing improved the quality of their reflection. Participants found that this daily process of reflection helped them think more critically, and helped them immediately implement positive changes in their teaching practice.
Making you write it down and setting that time aside actually drew more out of you.... I thought ‘What could I do differently? What could I do to change this?’... I found that when I wrote things down ... the next lesson or the next few lessons that [I taught] always improved. (preservice teacher)

Practicum supervisors also considered the journal to be a valuable tool in training beginning teachers in the habit of reflecting on their professional practice, which they considered to be of great importance for all teachers. They also believed the practicum journal would provide preservice teachers with a useful record they could refer to in the future.

[Reflection]... is part and parcel of being a good teacher.... that daily reflection just allows you to clear your thoughts and set the direction for the next day. It’s a worthwhile thing. (practicum supervisor)

Some preservice teachers encountered several issues that impacted on their ability to successfully complete the Assessing Student Learning activity of the ATA. One important factor was the extent to which they were able to forward-plan in the units they were teaching so that each lesson contributed towards clear, assessable learning aims over time. One primary preservice teacher who taught an integrated unit was expected to improvise her planning as she went along.

It was just the context that we were in ...that probably affected [the issues regarding assessment] the most....I planned the sequence, but then throughout the whole thing I’d get, [from the practicum supervisor] ‘Alright now put in some science there.’ ‘Oh now that was a great idea. Why don’t you do that in your lesson?’ (preservice teacher)

Despite having struggled to successfully complete the assessment activities of the ATA, this preservice teacher’s reports indicated that the activity did seem to prompt her understanding of the purpose of assessment and frame her thinking for further teaching.

I felt like as a teacher I failed in that unit.... I definitely think [the students] learnt stuff, but in terms of showing the kids’ assessments, I was just poor.... I saw what I taught was not the best, but the ATA allowed me to look and go ‘Okay, well what was wrong about it? What could I do differently?’ You could go in to a bit of detail about all of those elements in the ATA. (preservice teacher)

This participant felt certain that undertaking the ATA had improved her professional practice because it had enabled her to identify and address her areas of weakness as a teacher. Through reflecting on her practicum experience, she began to understand the complexity involved in planning and assessing integrated units and practical learning activities.
I guess it’s shown me the need to have assessment despite the learning activity and I think if I was a classroom teacher I would have had the things that I did more as activities to connect to other aspects of their curriculum, rather than trying to get the learning outcomes from that sequence of lessons alone. I think it needed to be interlinked elsewhere. (preservice teacher)

There were several preservice teachers in the cohort completing the ATA who taught in practical teaching areas such as dance, drama and physical education, and reports from these participants indicated that preservice teachers who taught practical tasks faced extra challenges in completing suitable assessments of their students. For example, a secondary Physical Education preservice teacher struggled with the assessment requirements of the ATA, suggesting that in Physical Education there was no opportunity to collect written work samples from students and that student learning was mainly assessed through observation of practical activities conducted outdoors, which added an extra challenge to the normal requirements of teaching the class and managing student behaviour.

When you had to pick the three students that you had to focus on and assess, it was hard to monitor them whilst monitoring the whole class because you were focusing on those three...
And it was hard to assess the whole class, how they were going as well. (preservice teacher)

This preservice teacher also taught Health and found it much easier to conduct assessments and collect student work samples in that classroom environment. Despite the difficulties, the preservice teacher acknowledged that assessing physical tasks through observation was a necessary skill for Physical Education teachers. In order to complete the requirements of the ATA, he devised a set of assessment criteria that he applied to the learning of a specific sport. Moreover this preservice teacher named assessment as the area in which he had most developed through completing the ATA. The assessment activities in the ATA served as valuable preparation for entering the profession as a Physical Education teacher.

The assessment part of the ATA was the one that was beneficial for me.... I think with PE, assessments get thrown to the wayside.... the fact that that part of the ATA was there [meant] I had to develop criteria and so on... and I know what to do in the future now. (preservice teacher)

Some participants believed the Deakin ATA could have provided more focus was classroom management and relationships with students. All preservice teachers believed that relationships with students and classroom management are central to teachers' work and therefore that any assessment of professional practice needs to profile these quite significantly. However, the preservice teachers did find various ways to discuss their relationships with students and classroom management in different sections of the ATA.
I think it is also important if we write about just the basic relationship [between students and the preservice teacher]... I think that is quite important as well...[as] a teacher you are not just looking at the data and statistics and the work samples, but a lot of it is the relationship between students and us. I think there was not much about that [in the ATA] although I did write it down because that did affect somewhat how I taught and the choices I made... I just added it in as an extra, but if we had specific questions about it, that would be probably more whole. (preservice teacher)

[Relationships between students and teachers]... was what I thought it didn’t have. But I spoke a lot about it, because it does tie into your planning, it does tie in with how you assess and how you teach. But there wasn’t a specific thing on student relationships and maybe that would have been a good extra. (preservice teacher)

[re: behaviour management] I did it through the whole thing.... I did it in my planning and assessment.... pretty much in every aspect of the ATA in the classroom, ‘cause they were the things I focussed on in the practicum.... classroom management was a focus on this practicum [for me]. So I spoke about it pretty much in every section.... how it affects my planning, how it affects the activities I run. That’s pretty much my whole ATA right there.... (preservice teacher)

Practicum supervisors believed that preservice teachers should definitely be specifically assessed on their abilities to manage students and build relationships, but noted that these areas are already assessed in practicum reports.

... The job is to build a positive relationship so that the best learning can occur. (practicum supervisor)

... one of the most beneficial things for a preservice teacher is to build up those relationships with the students and actually get to know them and that’s when you actually do gain that confidence and you can start understanding that so-and-so has serious trouble spelling, so you can focus on that the next time. (practicum supervisor)

... if its not in the ATA it is in their teacher assessment and their student assessment [practicum reports]... we do have to assess them on building relationships with students and classroom management.... without student management, nothing else is really going to work. So I think [it has to be included] not so much [in] the ATA, but built into the overall student teacher assessment. (practicum supervisor)

The Deakin assessor and unit chair of EPR703 noted that classroom management was an area that many preservice teachers identified that they needed to learn more about. She suggested that classroom management be addressed within the Master of Teaching from a theoretical perspective,
linking theories of classroom management with learning theories, and that classroom management needs to be specifically assessed from this perspective as part of the ATA.

I think there needs to be a section on classroom management... if [the ATA] is a kind of benchmark [defining] this is ... what we want students to achieve, or demonstrate, I think some comments around classroom behaviour or an analysis of a critical incident that is around classroom behaviour would get them thinking about it.... I think [it is important] to ground it in actually analysing through critical incidents or seeing what the theories are.

b. Structure and timing of the related coursework

The Deakin ATA and the teaching practicum in which it occurs are embedded in the final core Professional Experience unit of the Master of Teaching named EPR703. From 2011 EPR703 is being offered in each of the three trimesters. The unit needs to be structured differently in each trimester in order to align practicum periods with school terms. When EPR703 is offered in Trimester 3, which begins in early November, the practicum has to be undertaken at the beginning of the Trimester before lectures and tutorials in the unit officially begin. This is pragmatically necessary but not an optimal arrangement, and was the way the unit was offered when the Deakin ATA was being investigated for this project.

Introduction to the ATA

Preservice teachers were given an introduction to the Deakin ATA in the final lectures of the previous Professional Experience unit, EPR702 and were offered the opportunity to have a one-on-one meeting with the unit chair of EPR702 to discuss the ATA requirements before the practicum began. Preservice teachers reported that this introduction to the ATA was valuable but they found it preferable to also have extended face-to-face contact with the EPR703 unit chair before commencing their practicum. Some preservice teachers found that peer support during practicum was vital to helping them understand the requirements of the ATA. Practicum supervisors also reported that some preservice teachers were not confident in their understanding of the requirements of the ATA, and that this caused some anxiety and confusion about what they should do in the classroom.

Timing of submission

Preservice teachers reported that the requirement that the Deakin ATA be submitted before the end of EPR703 was also a source of anxiety. Candidates found the process of submitting the ATA 'early' meant the work for the ATA was too rushed and some believed this prevented them from doing justice to the work. They would have preferred that the ATA be submitted at the end of the trimester. Preservice teachers also reported that they encountered many questions when writing up the ATA after the intensive EPR703 classes in the first half of the trimester were finished, but they had little
opportunity for face-to-face contact with the lecturer or other preservice teachers to help clarify these issues. Issues were addressed on DSO [Deakin University online platform for student-staff communication], but preservice teachers found this an unsatisfactory alternative to face-to-face contact with the relevant lecturer.

I think the timing of it all is a little bit off and since this assignment has so much emphasis placed on it for us to be ready to teach, I don't think it's fair that we are being rushed to do it. I think it should be something that we should be working progressively on over the term. (preservice teacher)

... we just had to pump it out so we could get it in on time.... It was a lot of effort just to get it done first of all and I know myself, I didn't have that time to go back through and to do the editing and checking the criteria over again like I normally would. (preservice teacher)

I found when we were working on [the ATA] in class, although sometimes it was good, because we weren't that familiar with it because we hadn't started it, we didn't have the questions and everything ready as what we did when we were out on our own trying to write it. And trying to communicate over DSO ... it's just not the same as [being] in class hearing everybody else's thoughts. (preservice teacher)

Both preservice teachers and practicum supervisors believed the limited time candidates had to complete and submit the ATA prevented them from being able to reflect on their practice in sufficient depth.

... if you're struggling to get it done, you're going to try and finish it of course, but [the preservice teacher] didn’t really have much time to let it sit and to really think about it on a deeper level. If you have a little bit of space, even if you got them to do a reflection but not finish the major assessment for another couple of week so they have some more time to relax and think about it properly that could be good. (practicum supervisor)

... since rounds I’ve already thought way more about what’s in my journal and I actually wanted to add things ‘cause ... I [have] thought about that more and this is what I think might be the reason for that happening. I think that’s the same with the actual parts [of the ATA].... if we had another couple of weeks I’m sure that I’d be able to improve mine a lot more. (preservice teacher)

Allowing an extended length of time to prepare and complete the ATA for submission and scheduling classes throughout the trimester would give candidates an opportunity to reflect on their teaching practice in more depth and support a richer learning experience, and may result in higher quality ATA submissions. Extending work on the ATA over the whole trimester would enable preservice teachers to
identify and address areas of weakness in their understanding of teaching and learning, and to have these issues addressed with the help of EPR703 lecturers.

c. Structure and timing of the practicum
Preservice teachers believed that a four-week block of professional experience was the minimum length of time needed to complete the requirements of the ATA. However, even with a four-week block, one preservice teacher did not have the opportunity to teach a sequence of more than three lessons due to timetable constraints. Preservice teachers agreed that it would have been very difficult to complete the ATA if they were only attending their practicum schools two days a week as they had in earlier practicums.

... in the [last] practicum ... I was just doing one lesson here, one lesson there, another lesson here and so, it wasn't in a continuum, so it was whatever I got was what I got on the day.... I think if it was just one lesson here and one lesson there [while doing the ATA], it would be a bit harder, because you couldn't assess where they were before and where they were at now. (preservice teacher)

Practicum supervisors also believed it was important for preservice teachers to have an extended, intensive period of practicum in order to complete the ATA. They stressed the importance of having enough time to build relationships with students that supported teaching and learning, and to experience the work of teachers.

... one of the most beneficial things for a preservice teacher is to build up those relationships with the students and actually get to know them... But I think the combination of those could be really good. To start off with it might be a little less daunting if you just have one day a week and get in there a couple of classes and then later on do your full 4 weeks learning practice.

None of these issues appear to have impacted significantly on preservice teachers’ capacity to successfully complete the ATA, but some consideration may need to be given as to how these circumstances can best be dealt with in future.

d. The role of practicum supervisors
Practicum supervisors provide crucial support for preservice teachers completing the ATA. Preservice teachers were best supported by practicum supervisors who:

- were organised and predictable in the way they ran the class;
- gave preservice teachers adequate time to discuss issues;
- shared their resources;
• allowed preservice teachers enough control in the classroom to implement their own planning;
  and,
• understood the nature of the ATA requirements.

Practicum supervisors interviewed for this research varied in their knowledge of the aims and requirements of the Deakin ATA. The ATA was described in the Practicum Handbook supplied to schools, but this did not appear to have been passed on to the practicum supervisor in every case. In other cases, practicum supervisors did not read the whole handbook because of time pressures.

... it probably wasn’t until I just spoke to you now that I understood the overall idea that you were going to be assessing them a little bit differently. (practicum supervisor)

Often, the main way in which practicum supervisors were informed about the ATA was through conversations with preservice teachers.

I did receive a Handbook and the preservice teacher did talk to me about it but I have to be honest and say with everything else, I didn’t sit down and thoroughly study it. I trusted the preservice teacher that she knew what she had to do and that we talked about lots of things at the actual tasks that she was doing and how they fitted in to the curriculum but the real nuts and bolts of the project really are left to her. (practicum supervisor)

One preservice teacher participant in this research was not able to do her own planning but instead had to use the lessons already planned by the practicum supervisor. Another was unable to complete the final assessment planned for preservice teachers at the end of the unit taught because the practicum supervisor made different plans for the day at the last minute. These are critical issues impacting the successful implementation of the ATA and highlight the importance of both the practicum supervisors and the preservice teachers having a clear understanding of the requirements of the ATA from the beginning of practicum period.

Practicum supervisors suggested that a one-page summary explaining the aims and the requirements of the Deakin ATA would have been useful to them, but thought this brief summary should be supported by more detailed information for them to refer to if necessary. Practicum supervisors also mentioned that more contact with Deakin staff by phone or email might have helped them understand the nature of the ATA from the outset of practicum. Practicum supervisors displayed a willingness to cooperate with the requirements of the university and support preservice teachers completing the ATA, both practically and in the feedback they gave them on their teaching. However, they needed to have a clearer understanding of the expectations of the ATA in order to be able to offer the best support to preservice
teachers. Deakin academics agreed that it is important for practicum supervisors to be adequately informed about the nature of the Deakin ATA.

... what we also need to do is to have more ongoing conversations with the supervising teachers about our expectations, why we have done the M Teach [Master of Teaching] this way, why we are structuring it, how we can see their roles as being absolutely critical and absolutely essential but different, different from ours. (Deakin academic)

e. The role of Deakin academics

A Deakin academic visited preservice teachers completing the Deakin ATA once during the practicum. The visit involved a professional conversation with the preservice teacher, and also with the practicum supervisor in some cases. Some preservice teachers were also observed teaching a class. The role of the Deakin academics was to ensure the preservice teachers were clear about the practicum expectations and to support them in their professional learning. In particular, Deakin academics tried to ensure that preservice teachers and practicum supervisors understood the requirements of the Deakin ATA.

... it was kind of making sure that in fact that the preservice teacher had had that conversation [about the requirements of the ATA] and had been upfront right from day one ... about the expectations, and that the supervising teacher was well aware so that there was a clear expectation, everybody had shared expectations, everybody was on the same page. (Deakin academic)

I also think that there was a lot of anxiety about [the ATA] because it is an important piece of assessment.... I just wanted to make sure that they were very clear about why they were doing it, what they had to do and how I could help them reflect. In some ways it was rehearsing the reflection with them.... some of them would give an example of a class that hadn't gone very well and then we'd talk about in hindsight what would you do differently, reflecting back on it and I think it does serve as that purpose. (Deakin academic)

Preservice teachers generally found the visits from Deakin academics helpful, and in some cases the Deakin academic was able to assist with particular issues that had arisen regarding the ATA. However, preservice teachers raised several issues about Deakin academic visits. One preservice teacher did not have the opportunity to meet privately with the Deakin academic during the visit because both of her practicum supervisors were present at the meeting. This preservice teacher had had some difficulties in her relationship with one of her supervisors and would have liked an opportunity to discuss this with the Deakin academic.
Some preservice teachers were concerned that they did not have contact with a Deakin academic early in the practicum, when they were most likely to have concerns that needed to be addressed, and that the contact they did have later in the practicum was too limited. Regular contact with a Deakin academic was particularly important for preservice teachers who were the only Deakin preservice teachers placed in their practicum school.

*I think perhaps to have regular contact even it's just through email or something... it might be good to touch base after your first week of rounds to see how your transition is going. Then maybe to meet end of the 2nd week or start of the 3rd week. Because it's very overwhelming when you don't have it.* (preservice teacher)

*... at my last placement I had seven other Deakin students so we always were there to talk with each other and help each other through. But because I was by myself it was sort of a big deal to me [to have contact with a Deakin academic].* (preservice teacher)

Preservice teachers and practicum supervisors believed that having a Deakin academic observe preservice teachers in the classroom as part of the ATA, would give the ATA greater authenticity. They suggested that if preservice teachers had the opportunity to discuss their teaching practice with the Deakin academic who observed their teaching, this would allow them to demonstrate their ability to engage in professional dialogue, and to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in a way that was not available to them in the written ATA.

*I think [the ATA] is quite authentic... it looks at every aspect of teaching.... I probably can't really think of any other way for someone to demonstrate if they are good. But I think... having Deakin people out to watch us as we teach, then that would be completely 100% demonstrated.* (preservice teacher)

*The main thing that I would put in the ATA would be for someone to come out- someone from your field or anyone- come out and watch you and observe. And then maybe if the people weren't as good at writing it they could talk to that person as to why they did the activity, how they incorporate different styles in their planning.* (preservice teacher)

Preservice teachers also believed that being observed by a Deakin academic and being able to have a professional conversation afterwards would offer an excellent opportunity for professional learning. They believed Deakin academics could offer them different feedback from that given by practicum supervisors, as Deakin academics could link their practicum experience with their university studies and help them connect theory with practice. Preservice teachers believed that advice about linking theory with practice was particularly important for them when they were completing the ATA.

*I think if they are going to observe you, you've got to be able to have that conversation as well after. Even just being able to go through the ATA with them and any concerns you can then*
relate it back to what you've just been teaching, what they've seen you teach as well. (preservice teacher)

Preservice teachers believed it was important to have an ongoing relationship with the Deakin academic who visited them so that their knowledge of the preservice teacher's teaching context could inform future discussions in class, particularly in relation to the ATA. The Deakin academic who chaired the Professional Experience unit in which the ATA was embedded similarly believed that observing preservice teachers in class informed her discussions with them.

It really is about the relationship with the lecturer. It's almost like you need to know them so that they can come and see you teach and then follow you up.... but I don't think there is any point someone just coming in and seeing you and then you never seeing them again, because when they see you in practice you can then ask them questions when you're back in class. (Deakin academic)

Overall, preservice teachers believed that they could be best supported by Deakin academics while they were undertaking the ATA if they had an opportunity for ongoing contact from the beginning of practicum, if they were observed while teaching and then had a professional conversation about their teaching, and if the Deakin academic was one of the teaching staff in the Professional Experience unit so that discussions about their teaching could continue back in class on campus and inform the ATA.

f. Support for preservice teachers

There were several other factors regarding support for preservice teachers raised in this project. Participants believed it would be helpful for preservice teachers to have a template for the Deakin ATA to serve as a guide when working through it, as well as to have access to examples of past ATAs to help them understand the requirements.

I think it would be really good ... to get a standard based template of what an ATA could look like in a portfolio form.... as a point of reference to keep you on track .... it is all so broad and you can take assessment and planning in teaching any way you want. (preservice teacher)

Preservice teachers highlighted the important role that support from their fellow preservice teachers played throughout the Master of Teaching course and specifically while they worked on the Deakin ATA. Discussions with peers helped them make sense of what they were learning and helped them understand the requirements of the course and the ATA. Although DSO is an important medium for information and discussion, preservice teachers reported that the amount of information on DSO can be overwhelming and can result in them missing important notices. They found person-to-person discussions with peers were important for clarifying issues and providing personal support.
[having a peer in the same practicum school was helpful because]... even at lunchtime you could really quickly go ... and have really basic conversations just to clarify it for yourself. Even if I knew everything that I was doing, I almost needed just reassurance. (preservice teacher)

Contact with peers was particularly important during practicum and those preservice teachers placed alone in a practicum school reported feeling isolated and cut off from these important lines of support. This was an extra cause for anxiety in relation to the ATA because these preservice teachers were unable to discuss issues that arose during the practicum with their peers, and consequently were less confident about expectations. It may be useful in future to facilitate contact between preservice teachers placed alone in practicum schools, such as by having a contact list for these preservice teachers so they could telephone, email or text each other during the practicum.

The international student who participated in this research reported experiencing some difficulties related to English language issues while completing the Deakin ATA. Significantly, local preservice teachers also raised all the difficulties mentioned by the international student, but the difficulties were intensified for the international student because English is her second language. The international student reported that the introduction to the ATA given at the end of EPR702 was too brief for her and she was unclear about the expectations of the ATA when she began the practicum. She suggested that a longer and slower process of introducing the ATA before practicum began would have been of much greater benefit. This international student also found that some questions in the ATA were unclear and too open-ended. She expressed some difficulty in knowing what kind of language was appropriate for reflective writing on professional experience. She also found it difficult to articulate in English the thinking that informed her planning and teaching discussions.

International preservice teachers may experience some disadvantage when completing the ATA if they are unclear about the requirements due to English language issues. They may need extra support at important junctures in the Master of Teaching, such as when they begin work on the ATA. Even though this study has raised some issues regarding international preservice teachers and the Deakin ATA, it should be noted that this is based only on the experience of a single student. Further investigation is required to determine whether international preservice teachers experienced particular difficulties or disadvantage overall when completing the ATA.

7C. Informing Course Evaluation and Improvement

Question 3 ‘How does the Deakin ATA inform course evaluation and course improvement?’
The first stage of this research project reported three ways in which the Deakin ATA could be used to inform course development, evaluation and improvement:

1. inform practicum supervisors’, Deakin teacher educators’ and preservice teachers’ professional conversations
2. inform the sequential planning and review of curricula and assessment in Master of Teaching units to ensure that preservice teachers are explicitly scaffolded through what will be required of them as teachers
3. be useful for teacher educators to assist preservice teachers develop deeper understandings of their students as learners in specific contexts, making links between their own teaching and assessment goals and students’ learning needs.

The evidence from Stage 2 of the research clearly shows that the Deakin ATA did inform professional conversations between preservice teachers and Deakin teacher educators, both during practicum visits and in classes following the practicum period. Preservice teachers found these conversations valuable in terms of their professional learning and expressed a wish to have more opportunities to engage in professional conversations around the ATA, and to have Deakin educators have more experience of their classroom teaching in order to enrich these conversations.

Conversations between practicum supervisors and preservice teachers around the ATA tended to focus on practical concerns. This was sometimes due to time constraints and sometimes due to both preservice teachers and practicum supervisors not having a thorough understanding of the aims and requirements of the ATA. Practicum supervisors did express a willingness to shape their feedback to preservice teachers in line with the requirements of the ATA but were often not able to do this due to insufficient understanding of the ATA.

Deakin academics involved in developing the Master of Teaching units report that backward mapping from the Deakin ATA and its requirements helped them clarify what needed to be covered in the units and informed how they could scaffold preservice teachers’ professional learning.

... the ATA, I think has forced us as teacher educators to be much more explicit about... stepping them through, scaffolding them through. This is how you look at the context, this is how you learn about your students, this is... [what] you need to be aware of. And then we did try to structure that in the course. (Deakin academic)

The ATA provides a snapshot – albeit over a period of time – of the skills and understandings of the preservice teachers. As an evidence-based assessment grounded in actual teaching practice in the workplace, it aims to assess the readiness of preservice teachers to do the actual work of teachers.
Therefore, the ATA portfolio submissions can provide evaluative feedback for teacher educators in relation to how well the Master of Teaching is preparing preservice teachers to teach.

*I think part of this task is the opportunity to back map to kind of say, well if we want students to have ... quite an intimate knowledge or reasonable knowledge of assessment then where is that in their course? If we want students to know how to plan and to link to there and also engage students, where is that in the course? If we want students to know the kind of theories of learning and teaching and to use the language of their discipline in their particular area, where is that in the course?* (Deakin assessor)

The areas of the ATA that much of the cohort of preservice teachers reported having difficulty with and in which they did not receive good marks, were assessment and reflection. Preservice teachers did not seem to fully understand how to write reflections on their professional practice. They reported having had little prior instruction or experiences in this area. While some participants felt confident in their ability to reflect on their professional practice, they suggested that this was a skill they had acquired before enrolling in the Master of Teaching program. Other participants were unclear about what kind of reflection was appropriate in a professional context. These participants suggested that they would benefit from more explicit instruction in reflecting on professional practice, as well as from more practical experience. The Deakin academics who chaired the Professional Experience and Education Studies core units and who visited preservice teachers during the practicum agreed that preservice teachers varied in their ability to appropriately reflect on their professional practice. They suggested that while preservice teachers would benefit from more explicit instruction about professional reflection, this instruction needed to be supported by opportunities for practical experience.

In the Assessment of Student Learning activity, preservice teachers were generally able to successfully design and implement assessments of student work, but did poorly at analysing the assessment data and using it to inform future teaching. Understanding of assessment and planning varied across method areas, but a more detailed analysis would be needed to determine which method areas needed improvement in the way they scaffolded learning in these areas. The Deakin ATA assessor reported that as a whole the 30 preservice teachers who completed the ATA in Trimester 3 did less well on the assessment component than any other activity of the ATA. This assessor found that while all participating preservice teachers were able to provide examples of student assessments, many of them were unclear about how to analyse this data and how to use it to inform their teaching. She suggested that more explicit instruction was necessary to support preservice teachers’ learning in this area.

*The main area of weakness was the assessment, and especially where they had to analyse the student results and [explain] what does that mean for teaching.... I would say only 1 or 2 students did that well.... Now that’s quite a sophisticated skill.... teaching this next time I’d show...*
them how to do that kind of assessment for learning and talk about assessment for teaching and what does that now mean. (Deakin assessor)

The feedback provided by preservice teachers, practicum supervisors and the Deakin assessor indicate that preservice teachers would benefit from more practical experience in assessing student learning, and from more explicit instruction in how to analyse assessment data and use it to inform planning and teaching.

There is much evidence in this research to show that the Deakin ATA assisted teacher educators to help preservice teachers move away from a focus on themselves and concerns about ‘passing’ the practicum, to a focus on developing deeper understandings of their students as learners, and to link their teaching practices with student learning needs. Teacher educators assisted preservice teachers in this way through discussions and assessment tasks in Master of Teaching units leading up to the ATA, through the preparation of the ATA documents, and through professional conversations during and after practicum.

7D. Impact on Preservice Teachers’ Professional Learning

Question 4 ‘How does the Deakin ATA impact preservice teachers’ professional learning?’

One of the benefits of using authentic, workplace-based assessments of professional practice is that they are in themselves powerful tools for teacher learning (Pecheone and Chung, 2006, p. 22). The preservice teacher participants in this research saw the ATA as a means of demonstrating their professional practice and learning, but they were unanimous in describing it as a meaningful and beneficial learning experience. They consistently highlighted the value of the ATA as a source of professional learning, and all reported thinking more deeply about their own teaching practice and the learning needs of students as a result of completing the ATA. Moreover, the preservice teachers displayed a greater level of professional engagement when completing the ATA compared to earlier practicums and tended to view themselves as beginning teachers rather than university students.

a. A deeper understanding of teachers’ work

Most preservice teachers in this project reported that completing the ATA helped them gain a better understanding of teachers’ work in a holistic way.

[The ATA]... steps you through every process: the pre-teaching, during the teaching and then after the teaching... you’ve got the five areas and the criteria that it covers... it’s all reflecting really on teachers’ experience. (preservice teacher)
Preservice teachers also reported that the ATA helped them understand the way in which effective teachers need to always keep in mind the overarching learning and teaching goals, while at the same time focussing on the detail of what is happening in the classroom.

[The ATA gave me] ... a good idea about the scope...[of] what is the teacher’s profession, [of what a teacher] has to be looking at. It’s not just ‘walk into the classroom and teach.’

(preservice teacher)

For some preservice teachers, the ATA helped them to understand more fully the way teachers plan units of work and monitor student learning.

[The ATA taught me about] ... looking at students and seeing where they were at before and seeing if they have continued. And having a rationale for whatever you do...You really get to see teachers really have to do that.

(preservice teacher)

Many preservice teachers reported significant gains in their confidence as a teacher after having completed the ATA. They reported that completing the ATA had given them the confidence to apply for teaching jobs, as well as providing them with evidence of their teaching ability and experience they could draw on during job interviews.

b. Enhanced and focused professional learning during the practicum

All preservice teacher participants reported that completing the ATA enhanced their learning during the practicum. It gave them a framework for thinking about teaching and learning that helped them gain a deeper understanding of what they witnessed and experienced on practicum. ‘It was a good guide to remind me what I should really be looking at and reflecting on.’ (preservice teacher).

The specific requirements of the ATA activities seem to focus and motivate preservice teachers during practicum. They described themselves as more alert to what was going on in the classroom and felt a greater sense of responsibility as teachers because of the expectations of the ATA. Some preservice teachers reported that they learnt much more during this practicum than in prior practicums because the ATA gave them a greater sense of accountability for what they were doing in the classroom and motivated them to make a greater effort.

From day one it gave me something I was working towards. I guess it’s the same with students’ learning... giving them the outcomes and showing them what they are working towards is, I think, very beneficial and it helps in teaching and planning and motivating you to do more. (preservice teacher)

It makes you responsible for what you do, it makes you question what you do. (preservice teacher)
All the preservice teacher participants reported that the greatest benefit of undertaking the ATA was that it forced them to think more rigorously about teaching and learning and their own professional practice.

c. Contributed to deeper professional learning over time: meta-reflection
The process of reflecting on their teaching practice happened in stages over the several weeks it took to complete the ATA. Preservice teachers first reflected on their daily experiences during practicum in their journals. When they compiled the ATA towards the end of and after the practicum, they engaged in a second process of reflection that drew on their journal entries and their practicum experience overall. Preservice teachers reported that this second process of reflection was beneficial in helping them to understand how to improve their teaching practice.

I can now see more clearly my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher.... Without reflecting on it, I wouldn’t have seen the detail in it. (preservice teacher)

[Without the ATA] I would have just kind of gone, ‘Oh there are a few things I would have liked to have changed, but over all it was good.’ But after doing the ATA I’m like wow! There’s so many things that I would do differently in all elements of it. It just made me think. (preservice teacher)

Reflecting on their daily journals while completing the ATA also helped preservice teachers think about different aspects of teaching and learning that they had not considered in depth during practicum. In particular, the process of revisiting their journal writings as part of completing the ATA task in preparation for submission shifted preservice teachers' focus from their classroom management and organisation skills to thinking about the students as learners.

I didn’t really reflect on the students as learners [during practicum] because I was more worried about my management and my activities ... but the ATA made you think about that aspect as well. (preservice teacher)

[Doing the ATA]... made me a lot clearer about my expectations about myself as a teacher and what I want and what I don’t want in a class. (preservice teacher)

Some preservice teachers reported that analysing their journals after practicum helped them think differently about their practicum experience, which gave them insights about how to improve their future practice. For example, while analysing her journal, one preservice teacher realised that there was a connection between student engagement and classroom management when she noticed that she made no mention of behavioural issues in her journal on days when she reported high levels of student engagement. Preservice teachers reported that the second process of reflection they experienced as they wrote up the ATA helped them understand the connections across various aspects of planning, teaching and assessment.
[I was thinking] this is what’s happening in the classroom situations, but how does that link to student assessment? How does that link to the teaching and the planning? (preservice teacher)

The process of compiling and writing the ATA also helped participants connect different aspects of their learning from across the whole Master of Teaching program. Preservice teachers experienced the ATA as a summary of everything they had done previously in the course. Completing the ATA helped to clarify their understanding and make connections across much of the new information with which they had engaged during the year. It was almost like a process of untangling it all and making sense of it all to myself, rather than [just thinking] this is an assessment task I have to do. (preservice teacher). In this sense, preservice teachers found the ATA to be a valuable and authentic learning experience for themselves, which had great value to them as beginning teachers beyond merely satisfying the requirements of their teacher education course.

d. Learning about assessment

The ATA required all preservice teachers to plan, implement and use student assessments during the practicum. They had to explain and critically reflect on their assessment plan, demonstrate how they evaluated student learning across the whole class, and analyse work samples of three students in detail. This area of the ATA proved to be interesting. It was the one which provided strongest program evaluation directions for us as teacher educators – we needed to prepare preservice teachers better to design and use student assessment (see above) – but it was also the area that the preservice teachers reported not only their greatest challenge and but where the most significant learning took place for preservice teachers as they completed the ATA.

The assessment part of the ATA was the one that was beneficial for me…. Because it pushed me. (preservice teacher)

[Doing theATA]… made me see a whole lot of things that I wouldn’t have seen if I didn’t do the ATA…. like the assessment…how it really needs to be planned right from the beginning. You need the outcomes to match the objectives…. you really need to be clear about what is the final outcome. (preservice teacher)

One of the reasons seemed to be that the preservice teachers had had little or no experience of developing and implementing student assessments during their previous practicums - despite having successfully completed two teaching practicums.

I’ve never been able to make my own assessment. I’ve always had to follow the teacher. (preservice teacher)
[In prior practicums]... I was just doing one lesson here, one lesson there... it wasn't in a continuum. It was whatever I got on the day. I was just teaching for the experience of teaching, so I didn't do any assessment. (preservice teacher)

The section above, 7B. Implementation of the Deakin ATA (a. Structure of the ATA), includes some reference to ways in which preservice teachers felt that the Assessing Student Learning activity helped their professional learning despite it being probably the greatest area of challenge for them.

All the practicum supervisors interviewed for this research agreed that it was important that preservice teachers gain experience in assessment during practicum and on which they needed to be assessed.

I think this is an area that a lot of student teachers struggle with or [struggle] just to experience.... assessment is an area that I think needs to be the whole assessment: of us and for learning. (practicum supervisor)

Overall, participants regarded the activities in the ATA as valuable opportunities for professional development that fostered a rich learning experience over the several weeks it took to complete the ATA.

8. Summary and Recommendations

a. Summary of findings

This research indicates that the Deakin ATA is generally succeeding in its aim to be a meaningful and authentic means of assessing beginning teacher readiness in relation to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers. Specific findings include:

The Deakin ATA as a valid measure of teacher readiness for beginning teaching:

1. The ATA is as authentic a means of measuring beginning teacher readiness and includes activities that reflect the actual work of teachers. However, there was some indication and concern that since the final portfolio assessment submission was largely a written task, candidates with more highly refined writing skills might be advantaged. Our belief is that strong written communication skills are important skills for a teacher to have but we accept that there may need to be some attention given to alternative ways of including and presenting some of the artefacts and commentaries that comprise the ATA. For example, it was suggested that observation of preservice teachers' classroom teaching by Deakin academics could be added to the structure of the ATA.
2. The Deakin ATA has moderately high content validity in terms of its component activities. Overall, there is a strong link between the VIT *Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers*, the ATA activities and the skills and abilities that are needed for safe and competent professional practice. However, the time in the Master of Teaching course spent on teaching ‘Assessment design and analysis’ is not commensurate with the weighting this has in the task. The Deakin ATA has strong construct validity, but limited concurrent validity with some inconsistent alignment of ATA grades and practicum evaluation reports. Predictive validity is outside the scope of this current project and will be addressed over time.

3. The Deakin ATA rubrics have moderate content and concurrent validity, and low-level reliability.

4. The Deakin ATA is flexible enough to be used in all teaching contexts represented in this research. It is generally a fair measure of teacher readiness for primary and secondary teachers. However, teachers in practical subject areas faced some difficulty in collecting appropriate assessment data. This could be addressed within the course units and more explicit instructions regarding assessment data for practical tasks could be added to the ATA.

5. There were mixed views about whether the ATA assessor should have expertise in the same subject/content area that is the focus of the submitted ATA. Given that much investigation of this issue has occurred in the US context, this needs further investigation as the ATA is completed by more preservice teachers in the Master of Teaching.

6. Some candidates expressed difficulty completing some requirements of the ATA due to a lack of ownership and curriculum control being, as they were, in supervising teachers’ classrooms during the practicum. Placement circumstances and the level of support received from practicum supervisors could impact on preservice teachers’ ability to successfully complete the ATA, but the design of the ATA allowed candidates some scope to demonstrate their understanding of teaching and learning through reflection on their professional experience even when there were shortcomings in their practicum experience.

**Development and Implementation of the Deakin ATA:**

7. All activities in the ATA are valuable, but the Context for Learning activity could be abbreviated. Preservice teachers suggested more weight be given to explaining the thinking that informed their planning for teaching and assessment decisions, as well as the inclusion of some sort of activity linked to classroom observation by the Deakin academic. The videotaping activity was considered useful, as was the reflective journal. Some difficulties were encountered in the Assessing Student Learning activity, sometimes as a result of the classroom context and the requirements of the classroom teacher, and sometimes as a result of the teaching area. Both preservice teachers and supervising teachers suggested that issues related to classroom management and relationships
with students were not given focus in activities and prompts in the ATA and needed to be more explicitly included in the requirements. The ATA could focus on linking classroom management theory with learning theory.

8. The Deakin ATA is a broad and complex task that seems to require a greater word limit than the prescribed 5,000-6,000 words. Preservice teachers felt unable to do justice to the ATA within the word limit, and suggested a word limit of up to 10,000 words. Consideration needs to be given to the weight and structure of the ATA as an assessment task within the Master of Teaching, especially if it is to be truly a capstone experience for their teacher preparation course.

9. Successful completion of the ATA required a minimum of four weeks block practicum. The timing of the practicum at the end of the school year caused some preservice teachers difficulties. Consideration needs to given to alternatives to the requirement to teach a sequence of 5-8 lessons when this is not possible due to placement circumstances.

10. The timeframe available for completing the ATA portfolio for submission in Trimester 3, 2010-2011 was too short. Preservice teachers need to work on the Deakin ATA through the whole trimester in order to have time to reflect more deeply and have the richest possible learning experience, and to produce their best work.

11. Preservice teachers need to have a thorough understanding of the aims and requirements ATA prior to beginning their practicum. The introduction to the ATA should preferably be given by the EPR703 unit chair as the introductory phase of the unit, perhaps in collaboration with the EPR702 unit chair. Preservice teachers would be better supported in their learning if they had more face-to-face contact with the EPR703 teaching staff during the period when they are writing up the ATA. A template for the Deakin ATA and samples of past ATAs would support preservice teachers in completing their ATA.

12. Practicum supervisors have a valuable role to play in supporting preservice teachers undertaking the ATA. This role complements but does not replace their overall supervisory role. Practicum supervisors need to be adequately informed about the aims and requirements of the ATA in order to be able to best support preservice teachers. Practicum supervisors learned about the Deakin ATA mostly from preservice teachers, even when the practicum handbook had been received. Consideration needs to be given to how preservice teachers can be supported in this role of informing practicum supervisors about the aims and requirements of the ATA. A one-page summary of the aims and requirements of the ATA would be a useful supplement to the practicum handbook.

13. Deakin academic visits provided preservice teachers with a valuable opportunity to engage in a professional conversation that related their university studies to their practicum experience. These
conversations supplement, but do not replace, conversations with practicum supervisors. These professional conversations would be more meaningful and useful if Deakin academics first observed preservice teachers in the classroom.

14. Peer support was important throughout the Master of Teaching and especially during practicum. Preservice teachers who had no other Master of Teaching students placed in their practicum schools felt isolated, and may benefit from having contact with other students in the same situation during the practicum in which they are completing the ATA activities.

15. International students faced challenges in understanding the Australian education system and the requirements of the Master of Teaching. International students also faced challenges related to studying in a second language. International students may experience some disadvantage when undertaking the ATA. Ways to offer extra support to international students need to be considered.

**Course Evaluation and Improvement:**

16. The Deakin ATA, as a capstone assessment, helped teacher educators clarify what needed to be included in the whole Master of Teaching course curriculum, and also how preservice teachers’ professional learning could be scaffolded and developed in all the units in the course.

17. The Deakin ATA, as a capstone assessment, highlights dimensions of learning to teach that the Master of Teaching program does not seem to helping preservice teachers to develop:

   a. The areas of greatest weakness in ATA submissions for the whole cohort of preservice teachers were assessment and reflecting on professional practice.

   b. Overall, preservice teachers did poorly at analysing student assessment data and using this to inform their future planning and teaching. Preservice teachers’ understanding of assessment and planning varied across method areas.

**Impact on Preservice Teachers’ Professional Learning:**

18. Completing the Deakin ATA helped preservice teachers gain a fuller understanding of the work that teachers do, built their confidence, and helped prepare them to enter the profession. In addition, it helped them better understand the VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers.

19. The Deakin ATA is a valuable professional learning experience for preservice teachers that improved their professional engagement, motivated them and focused their learning during their practicum. Completing the ATA helped them reflect on their own learning, think more deeply about
their teaching practice and make links between planning, teaching, assessment and student learning. It helped them to move their focus from attention to classroom management and organisation to important decisions informed by thinking about student as learners.

20. The Deakin ATA provided preservice teachers with an opportunity for rich learning over time, both during teaching practicum and in the following weeks when they were engaged in reflecting on their practicum and compiling the ATA portfolio and writing the responses and commentaries.

b. Recommendations

Based on the data collected and analysed in this study, we make the following recommendations:

1. The Deakin ATA Activities and Rubrics:
   a. Retain all current activities in the ATA, but abbreviate the Context for Learning activity.
   b. Include more focus on classroom management and relationships with students in the ATA activities, with an emphasis on linking theories of classroom management with learning theories.
   c. Include a greater emphasis on preservice teachers explaining the thinking that informed their planning and teaching decisions. (NB: The word limit of the ATA may need to increase to enable these changes: See 2a below)
   d. In the assessment activity, include explicit instructions about the options for collecting assessment data through observation of practical tasks to remove any disadvantage to preservice teachers teaching in more practical subject areas.
   e. Refine the instructions and criteria for Activity 5: Reflection on Teaching and Learning, and for reflection throughout other activities in the ATA.
   f. Retain the requirement to keep a daily journal during practicum while completing the ATA. Make the guidelines for the practicum journal more explicit and detailed. Base Activity 5 more directly on the practicum journal.
   g. Consider adding observation of preservice teachers’ classroom teaching by Deakin academics to the requirements of the ATA. This will need to be carefully considered to ensure that these observation judgments are built in as another component of the ATA and do not assume a preferential weighting either real or perceived. The aim of the ATA is to assess teachers’ work in a more authentic way than one-off observations can do.
   h. The rubrics for the Deakin ATA need to be revised to address the low level of reliability and the poor content validity in Activity 4.

2. Fairness of the ATA
a. Ensure appropriate preparation for the assessors of the ATA and a process of moderation of the ATA assessments.

b. Compare the ATA submissions of primary and secondary teachers (and early childhood educators as this strand is offered) in future cohorts of preservice teachers to determine whether any group is disadvantaged by the structure or implementation of the ATA.

c. Monitor the experiences and results of preservice teachers in a range of school settings and teaching in a range of subject areas to ensure all are able to successfully complete the ATA and demonstrate their capabilities. Monitor the experience and results of preservice teachers in a range of practical disciplines such as Dance and Physical Education in future cohorts to ensure they are not disadvantaged in the ATA, in particular in regards to collecting assessment data.

d. Consider including alternative options to planning and teaching 5-7 lessons to accommodate preservice teachers whose practicum circumstances prevent them from teaching such a long sequence. For example, consider using two sequences of 3-4 lessons which form a logical sequence of learning a longer-term concept etc.

e. Investigate any particular difficulties faced by international students completing the ATA and ensure these preservice teachers have adequate support to prevent them being disadvantaged.

3. Implementation of the Deakin ATA:

i. Master of Teaching units

a. Determine the status of the Deakin ATA as a capstone assessment task within the Master of Teaching, particularly in relation to practicum reports and other assessments in units.

b. Consider extending the word limit of the ATA and giving the ATA more weight as a capstone assessment piece in the Master of Teaching. Given university rules that limit assessments in any one unit to 6,000 words, an enlarged Deakin ATA may need to be shared across multiple units making it more authentically ‘capstone’.

c. Investigate the correlation between practicum reports and results of the Deakin ATA. Review the practicum evaluation reports to align evaluative criteria more closely with the VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers and the ATA rubrics. Formulate a policy regarding major differences in results between these assessments, such as when a preservice teacher passes practicum but fails the ATA.

d. Make the ATA due at the end of the trimester to allow preservice teachers more time to engage with and complete the ATA. Schedule face-to-face contact with EPR703 teaching staff throughout the trimester.
ii. Practicum Period

a. Ensure preservice teachers have a minimum of four consecutive weeks of professional experience in which to complete the practical requirements of the ATA.

b. Investigate any difficulties that arise in future connected with having practicum in Trimester 3 close to the end of the school year.

iii. Information about the ATA

a. Ensure preservice teachers have a comprehensive introduction to the ATA before they begin practicum. In Trimester 3, offer at least one intensive day of preparation run by the EPR703 teaching staff towards the end of Trimester 2.

b. Make the background and core aims of the Deakin ATA explicit in all information given to both preservice teachers and practicum supervisors.

c. Continue conversations between Deakin teacher educators and host schools about the purpose of the Deakin ATA, and the role practicum supervisors can play in its implementation.

d. Continue to provide information about the requirements of the Deakin ATA in the practicum handbook, but add an explanation about the background and core aims of the ATA.

e. Provide information sessions for practicum supervisors and school practicum coordinators.

f. Advise preservice teachers about the kinds of lesson sequences that would be appropriate in scope for the ATA, and examine exemplars from previous cohorts in the information and intensive preparation sessions.

g. Work with practicum supervisors to encourage them to allow preservice teachers to plan, teach and assess lessons themselves as part of the requirements of the ATA, rather than teach lessons planned by the practicum supervisor. The preservice teachers will need to ensure that their lesson sequence continues the supervisor’s overall plan for the class/es.

h. Include negotiation of filming permissions for the video task in initial contacts with schools. Include a form for seeking parental permission for the video task in the practicum handbook and make it available to preservice teachers in electronic form.

iv. Deakin academic visits & support

a. Include observation of preservice teachers’ classroom teaching in practicum visits by Deakin academics (whether or not these are included as part of the ATA) and use these classroom observations as the basis of a professional conversation between the preservice teacher and the Deakin academic.
b. Ensure preservice teachers have an opportunity to meet privately with Deakin academics during practicum visits, even when the visit also includes a meeting with practicum supervisors.

c. Ensure that Deakin staff who visit preservice teachers during practicum also teach in the core units following the practicum, to enable preservice teachers to have an ongoing relationship with a Deakin academic.

d. Consider options for having more contact between Deakin staff and preservice teachers early in the practicum period so that issues are identified, especially regarding the ATA.

e. Options could include:
   - Having all preservice teachers email their assigned Deakin academic at the end of the first week of practicum.
   - Scheduling practicum visits for the middle, rather than the end of the practicum period.

f. Ensure all preservice teachers are aware of which Deakin staff they could contact for assistance if they face difficult issues during practicum with the ATA.

g. Consider options for having more contact between Deakin academics and practicum supervisors early in the practicum, such as by sending a generic email to all practicum supervisors at the end of the first week of practicum requesting a brief reply.

4. Prior Master of Teaching units and practicums
   a. Scaffold learning about writing subjective reflection on profession practice through prior units in the Master of Teaching.
   b. Make it compulsory to keep a practicum journal in prior practicums and include an assessment task based on the journal in a prior Professional Experience unit.
   c. Include an activity in which preservice teachers are required to conduct assessment of student learning in an earlier practicum to be assessed as part of a prior curriculum unit (Primary or ECE) or methods unit (Secondary) in order to give preservice teachers more experience with an assessment before they undertake the ATA.
   d. Include more explicit instruction on assessment in prior Professional Experience and/or Education Studies units in the Master of Teaching, with an emphasis on how to analyse student assessment data and use it to inform planning and teaching.
   e. Analyse ATA portfolio submissions to determine which method areas need to include more explicit instruction on assessment and planning. Ensure all method areas scaffold learning in how to analyse student assessment data and using it to inform planning and teaching.
   f. Continue to include the videotaping activity as an assessment task in EPR702 to give preservice teachers experience with the task and to overcome logistical issues.
g. Determine which aspects of the VIT *Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers* are not addressed by the ATA, and ensure these are covered in other assessment activities in the Master of Teaching.

5. **Support for preservice teachers**
   a. Provide a template of the Deakin ATA and examples of past ATAs for preservice teachers to use as references.
   b. Facilitate peer support for preservice teachers placed in schools with no other Deakin students, such as by providing a contact list to these students.
   c. Investigate particular difficulties faced by international students and provide necessary support. Consider nominating a liaison within the Master of Teaching to act as a first point of contact for international students to assist in understanding the rules and requirements of the Master of Teaching and to offer support at important junctures in the Master of Teaching such as immediately prior to beginning work on the ATA.

6. **Informing Course Evaluation and Improvement**
   a. Continually analyse ATA portfolio submissions in detail and use the data to inform a review of curricula and assessment of Master of Teaching units. Include an analysis of the assessment activity to determine which method areas may need to improve teaching about assessment.

*We also recommend further investigations into the following issues that were not directly examined in this study:*

1) Investigate the experiences and the results of early childhood preservice educators completing the ATA in 2011.
2) Investigate the relationship between success in the ATA and performance during the first year of teaching.
3) Further validity and reliability studies be conducted, for example:
   a) Factor analyses conducted on the marking data to investigate further how the ATA activities (Planning, Teaching, Assessment, and Reflection) are meaningful constructs that represent significant domains of teaching skill.
   b) Further concurrent validity studies conducted with larger cohorts and with the modifications to the ATA suggested in this report to investigate the level of consistency between the grades calculated for the ATA and the results of practicum evaluation forms as well the validity of the passing standard to evaluate candidate performance.
9. References


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research schedule and processes
Appendix 2: Student handbook
Appendix 3: The Deakin ATA assessment rubrics
Appendix 4: Interview Questions

  4.1 Interviews Questions: preservice teachers
  4.2 Interviews Questions practicum supervisors
  4.3 Interviews Questions: Deakin academics
  4.4 Interview Questions: Deakin assessor

Appendix 5: Plain language statement and consent form
Appendix 6: Changes to the Deakin ATA in Trimester 1, 2011
Appendix 1: Research Schedule and Processes

Stage 1: September, 2009 - July, 2010

September, 2009
- Literature reviewed
- Deakin ATA developed
- 10 preservice teachers in the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary and Secondary) volunteered to complete the ATA during their final practicum in October 2009
- Preservice teachers and supervising teachers prepared
- NEAF and DEECD Ethics approval gained

October, 2009
- ATA implemented during final practicum rounds
- Data collected: School visits by research team to interview preservice teachers, observe and collect field notes, discuss process with supervising teachers (as available)

November/December, 2009
- Data collected through focus group interviews with Preservice teacher participants and supervising teachers.
- Data analysed

2010:
- Preparation of website

A Research Assistant was employed to assist with the organisation of meetings and collection of resources and data associated with Stage 1 of the project. Specifically, the Research Assistant:
- Conducted a search of the relevant literature and prepared a review
- Assisted with the preparation of the Deakin ATA activities and the related Handbook
- Organised and participated in the school visits to observe and prepare field notes
- Organised focus group interviews with preservice teachers and supervising teachers.
- Collected, transcribed, collated and analysed the data

An Advisory Committee was established for the project that included representation from VIT, DEECD, participating schools, teacher unions, as well as the research team. Membership is:
- Mr Adam Usher/ Mr Max Caruso - Independent Schools Victoria
- Ms Ruth Newton – Victorian Institute of Teaching
- Ms Elvira Vacirca - Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
• Dr Elizabeth Hartnell-Young - Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
• Mr Michael Phillips – Principal, Ringwood Secondary College
• Mr John Graham – Australian Education Union
• Ms Bronwyn Knox - Catholic Education Office, Melbourne
• Deakin University Research Team - Prof Diane Mayer, Assoc Prof Mary Dixon, Assoc Prof Andrea Allard, Dr Andrea Gallant

Stage 2: October, 2010- April, 2011

October, 2010
• Representative sample of preservice teachers in the Master of Education selected and consent for participation sought.
• Consent sought from practicum teachers supervising preservice teachers while they completed the practical requirements of the Deakin ATA.

November, 2010
• First round of interviews with preservice teacher participants
• Practicum supervising teachers interviewed
• Deakin academics who visited preservice teachers on practicum interviewed

December, 2010
• Second round of interviews with preservice teachers

January, 2011
• Unit chair of Professional Practice teaching unit who assessed submitted Deakin ATAs was interviewed

February, 2011
• Data analysed
Appendix 2: Deakin ATA Handbook

Faculty of Arts and Education

EPR 703
Reflecting on practice in professional experience

Deakin Authentic Teacher Assessment Handbook

2010
Introduction
This Handbook contains the guidelines for successfully completing the Deakin Authentic Teacher Assessment (Deakin ATA). This is the major assessment task (70%) for EPR 703. Collectively, the activities that make up the Deakin ATA are designed to authentically assess your readiness for beginning teaching. In trimester 3 2010, the compiling of data for the Deakin ATA will occur after professional experience.

By completing the Deakin ATA you will have the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to:
- Demonstrate teaching proficiency in relation to the VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers;
- Identify the important features of the classroom context that influence your planning, teaching and assessment;
- Draw on students’ prior learning when planning and teaching lessons;
- Work with students to build their knowledge in a particular area;
- Engage students in meaningful activities and monitor their understanding;
- Critically reflect on your professional practice and its impact on students’ learning;
- Assess student learning and determine patterns in whole class learning as well as individual learning needs; and,
- Use student assessment to inform your professional practice.

Overview of the Deakin ATA
In the Deakin ATA, you will focus on student learning and demonstrate your proficiency with the strategies you use to support students’ learning. You will also have the opportunity to explain the thinking underlying your teaching decisions, assessment and examine the effectiveness of your professional practice.

The main activity is the development and teaching of a sequence of 5-8 lessons that build upon one another towards a central focus. These lessons may be part of a larger unit.

Required teaching artefacts and analysis - You will submit lesson plans, copies of teaching resources and assessment materials, a 10-minute video clip of your teaching, a summary of whole class learning and an analysis of student work samples. You will also submit descriptions of the teaching context and an analysis
of your own teaching practices, reflecting on what you have learned about your own teaching practice and also about students’ learning

Components of the Deakin ATA

Activity 1: Context for Learning
Activity 2: Planning Teaching & Assessment
Activity 3: Teaching Students and Supporting Learning
Activity 4: Assessing Student Learning
Activity 5: Reflecting on Teaching & Learning

1. Context for Learning
Description and commentary on context for learning
Activity 1

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<tr>
<td>Lesson plans</td>
<td>Video clip</td>
<td>Analysis of whole class achievement + 3 student work samples</td>
<td>Daily reflections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources, handouts, overheads, etc.</td>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>Analysis of learning needs for the 3 students</td>
<td>Reflective commentary</td>
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<td>Planning commentary</td>
<td>Activity 3</td>
<td>Assessment commentary Activity 4</td>
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Assessment of the Deakin ATA

The Deakin ATA will be assessed according to criteria framed by key questions related to the activities and aligned with the VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers. The rubrics reflect the quality of performance and discriminate the between levels of quality learning. Submit the Deakin ATA in a ring binder with the five sections of this task.

Journal

You are required to keep a journal for this task. This is to record your teaching, resource development, reflections and to serve as a prompt to complete the Deakin ATA. You are to begin using this journal at the start of Professional
Experience from Day 1. You will not be able to complete this task without ongoing recording in this journal and are required to submit the journal.
Activity 1: Context for Learning

*Link to VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers*

3.4 Have an understanding of cultural and religious diversity and of socioeconomic factors which may influence the students they teach

3.3 Know how to identify the prior knowledge, the learning strengths and weaknesses of students, and other factors which impact on learning

3.2 Regard all students as capable of learning and demonstrate an understanding of, and commitment to, equity in their practice

**Purpose:**
The purpose of Activity 1 is to provide a brief overview of the important features of the classroom/ school/ community. Understanding these contexts will influence your teaching and planning your sequence of lessons.

**Activity:**
You are required to describe the subject /key learning area you are going to teach in the sequence of lessons, the school in which you are teaching, the students in the class and provide information about the content required by the curriculum and the resources available in the classroom.
1. Context for Learning Commentary

Students are to provide the following context information for the class you have selected for the Deakin ATA.

1. Subject/Learning Area
   Grade/ year level/s
   Subject/ learning area
   Specific topic / focus

2. School Context - Briefly describe the school / community in which you teach. This includes: location, socio economic /cultural background, school type, number of students, like school, My School website and other contexts that may be influential.

3. Students - How many students are in your class? What is the ratio of boys/ girls in your class? What is the cultural diversity of students in your class? What languages are spoken by students in your class?

4. Students’ academic development - What do you observe about the students’ learning styles? What can they do and what are they are still learning to do? Describe how you would identify the prior knowledge and learning strengths and weaknesses of students and other factors that impact on their learning and other factors that impact on learning.

5. Students’ social development - Describe the students’ abilities, getting along with each other and expressing themselves –verbally, in writing, through individual or group problem solving or experiments.

6. Resources - What resources (textbooks, handouts, computers, equipment, etc) are available in your classroom/ school to help students learn?

7. Other - Include any other relevant information about the learning context not covered by the above points.

Presentation – Students may present this data in a table format
Activity 2: Planning Teaching & Assessment

Link to VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers

4.1 Use their professional knowledge to establish clear, challenging and achievable learning goals for students as individuals and groups

4.2 Design lesson and unit plans which integrate a range of activities, resources, and materials to support learning, including the use of ICT and other learning technologies

4.3 Evaluate student responses and work samples, using a variety of strategies and tools to make appropriate assessments of learning and plans for future teaching and activities

4.4 Plan learning sequences and units which are consistent with curriculum statements, frameworks and assessment structures commonly used in schools

4.5 Monitor and record student learning, providing appropriate feedback to students on their progress and how to improve, and for reporting to parents

4.6 Have a sound knowledge of current learning theories and of pedagogical models from which they draw their practice

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to explain your decisions as you develop the teaching and assessment plan for the 5-8 lessons. You are asked to demonstrate your ability to develop a lesson and unit plan designed to help students achieve the intended learning goals for students. You are to plan assessment activities designed to inform both you and the students about learning outcomes.

Activity

You are required to write a commentary that asks you to describe, explain and critically reflect on your teaching and assessment plan for your sequence of 5-8 lessons.
2. Planning Teaching & Assessment Commentary

Answer separately the following prompts.

1. Teaching Focus and rationale
What is the central teaching focus of your planned lessons? Why is the content or what you planned important for your students to know? What concepts are you teaching? How is your teaching consistent with current curriculum documents (Early Years, VELS, VCAL, VCE)?

2. Theoretical and Pedagogical Framework
Describe the theoretical framework/learning theories/ pedagogical models and/or research/readings that inform your lesson plans.

3. Learning Activities
How does the design of your lessons develop students’ knowledge and abilities? How do the learning activities in your lesson plans challenge students to learn?

4. Teaching Strategies
How do your choices of teaching strategies, materials and the sequence of learning activity reflect students’ backgrounds, developmental levels, interests and needs? Be specific about how your knowledge of these students informed the lesson plans.

5. Assessment
Explain when and how you will assess student learning. How will student assessments help you understand if students have achieved the learning objectives?

Supporting Documentation
Attach the plans for your 5-8 lessons. In addition, attach and submit all teaching resources materials, including class handouts, PowerPoint presentations, etc, and informal and formal assessment tools (including evaluation criteria and rubrics) used during the lesson plan sequence. If any of these materials are from a textbook, please provide a copy of the pages you used along with a list of references. Include resources you have designed or developed yourself for example handouts, experiment materials, web pages, Power Points, to support your teaching.
Activity 3: Teaching Students and Supporting Learning

Link to VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers
7.1 Teachers regularly reflect on and critically evaluate their professional knowledge and the effectiveness of their teaching;
7.2 Be aware of their own strengths, preferences and needs as a learner, and can identify areas for development as an emerging practitioner and member of the profession

Purpose
Activity 3 requires you to videotape a 10-minute segment of a lesson and provide a commentary and a reflection about the lesson. Complete the consent form for filming in the classroom and have the appropriate permission from the school/parents/guardians of your students.

Activity
1. You are required to provide a commentary about the lesson and reflect on the video clip of your teaching and students’ learning. Write a commentary that answers the prompts provided.

2. Submit a 10-minute unedited videotape segment of the lesson that illustrates how you facilitated students’ engagement in meaningful learning. Ensure that you follow the following guidelines:
   - The videotape should be continuous and unedited, with no interruptions. You can videotape as much of the lesson as you wish, but then select a continuous 10-minute segment to submit.
   - The video clip can feature either the whole class or a small group of students.
3. Teaching Students and Supporting Learning Commentary

In this section you are required to reflect on the videotape of your teaching. Write a commentary that answers the following prompts:

Sequence in Lesson

1. Other than what is stated in the lesson plan(s), what occurred immediately prior to and after the video clip that is important in order to understand and interpret the interactions between and among the students during the videotaped segment?

2. Describe any routines such as group work, experiments, problem solving, use of materials, etc that were operating during the learning activity(s) seen on the video clip. If specific learning activities were new to the students (group work for example), how did you prepare students for them? From viewing the video what surprised you?

Engage students in Learning

3. In the teaching seen on the clip, how did you further students’ knowledge and skill and engage them in understanding concepts? Provide examples of both overall strategies to address the needs of all of your students and strategies to address the specific needs of individual students.

4. Describe and justify the use of the strategies you used to monitor student learning during the lesson shown on the video clip. Provide two examples of what students did or said (in summative or formative assessments). Analyse how this gave you information about whether the students were/ were not progressing towards achieving the lesson learning objectives?

5. Evaluate what you learned about your (a) planning and (b) teaching from viewing yourself in the video clip (what worked well and what you might want to work on in the future). Explain how and why in your next lesson, you will build on the successful aspects of your lesson and address aspects that you have identified need further development.

6. How did this reflection (in 5) assist you to identify your strengths, preferences and areas for development as an emerging practitioner?
Reflect on what implications this has for improving your own teaching. Refer to journal entries to support your comments.

**Required documents:**

1. The 5-8 lesson plans focussed on the development of key concepts (as in Activity 2). These can be photocopied or scanned. Indicate which lesson included the videotaped segment.

2. Journal Entries

   Daily teaching reflections after teaching each lesson that respond to the following prompts:
   - What is working? What is not? For whom? Why?
   - How will you change or adapt your next lesson based on this reflection?
Activity 4: Assessing Student Learning

Link to VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers

4.3 Teachers monitor student engagement in learning and maintain records of their learning progress;

4.4 Teachers select assessment strategies to evaluate student learning, to provide feedback to students and their parents/guardians and to inform further planning of teaching and learning.

6.4 Teachers provide meaningful feedback to students and their parents/guardians about their developing knowledge and skills.

Purpose

In this section you are to demonstrate how you evaluate student learning needs through analysis of work samples. You are to collect all students’ work in relation to this assessment task. You will provide evidence of your ability to:

- Select or design an assessment tool and criteria aligned with curriculum/central focus/big idea and learning objectives;
- Analyse students’ learning in relation to the identified learning objectives;
- Provide evidence of feedback to students; and,
- Use the analysis to inform and identify next steps in teaching for the whole class and also for individual students.

Activity

This activity requires you to focus on the assessment task to:

- Identify and synthesise patterns in relation to the learning outcomes for the whole class.
- Provide assessment examples from 3 students whose work demonstrates a variety of learning outcomes. All 3 examples need to include the feedback that you provided where you outlined what the student had learnt and what they still not fully understood.
- Examine the students’ work samples and analyse these with the intention of identifying successful learning and future learning needs.
4. Assessing Student Learning Commentary

In this section you are required to write a commentary that addresses the following prompts. You are to include aspects of the assessment task such as specific objectives for the task, criteria for assessment (or rubric) and curriculum documents.

1. Assessment task

Report how the selected criteria assisted in measuring student learning of the objectives? Demonstrate how your assessment tool can indicate what a student does and does not understand?

2. Whole Class Assessment

Summarise from marking the assessment task the whole class results in table form.

How will you know that the assessment tool is reliable and valid? Evaluate if the assessment tool is effective in assessing learning?

What are the gaps in student learning? How would you know if the assessment was appropriate?

To demonstrate the patterns you have identified in the student learning discuss what most students appear to understand and, if relevant, any misconceptions, confusions, or needs (including a need for greater challenge) that became apparent for some or most students.

3. Sample Student assessment

Analyse the three student work samples to provide specific evidence to support your analysis of student learning.

For the 3 students whose work samples were selected, describe their prior knowledge of the content and their individual learning strengths and challenges. Cite specific evidence from the work assessment and from other classroom assessments relevant to the same evaluative criteria (or rubric).

4. Feedback
What written feedback did you provide to individual students and/or the group as a whole (refer the reviewer to any feedback written directly on submitted student work samples)? Explain how and why your approach to feedback supports students’ learning? In what ways does your feedback address individual student needs and learning goals? Cite specific examples and reference the 3 student work samples as evidence to support your analysis.

5. Assessment for Learning

Based on the student performance on this assessment, include how your specific learning plan you would design to improve the areas of weakness identified and monitor the improvement.

For those who achieved learning goals, what new challenges and ways of monitoring would you consider for this group of students? These next steps may include a specific teaching activity or other forms of re-teaching to support or extend continued learning of objectives, standards and/or central focus/big idea for the learning segment. Document how these next steps will improve student performance?

6. Conclusion: Assessment for teaching

Reflect on how to improve the task for next time that would influence your teaching?

**Required documents:**

- Assessment tool and criteria (or rubric) that was used to assess the students’ work.
- Record of student learning in assessment task as a Table
- Three student work samples. These should represent what students generally understood in the class as well as those areas that students were still struggling to understand. Label these work samples as “Work Sample 1”, “Work Sample 2”, and “Work Sample 3”.
- Provide your feedback to these 3 students. If it is not written directly on the work sample, provide a copy of any written feedback or write a summary of oral feedback.
Activity 5: Reflecting on Teaching & Learning

Link to VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Graduating Teachers

7 Teachers reflect on, evaluate and improve their professional knowledge and practice.
7.1 Teachers regularly reflect on and critically evaluate their professional knowledge and the effectiveness of their teaching;

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to reflect on what you have learned from your teaching and assessing students’ learning. This section draws from your journal entries and your thinking around the lessons. It provides you with the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to analyse teaching and students’ learning in order to improve your teaching practice. You should also comment on your relationships with students.

Activity

- Ensure that you keep a record your reflections after teaching each lesson, that includes discussion of how the lesson went for the class as a whole as well as for specific students. (See instructions for Activity 4)
- Review your daily reflections (journal) and your analyses of the effectiveness of teaching and assessment strategies. Use these specific analyses and reflections to identify more general patterns within your planning, teaching, and assessment practices across the learning sequence.
- Reflect on your teaching of the sequence of lessons in light of your observations of the effectiveness of your teaching practice in helping students learn; and, the theoretical perspectives/ current learning theories and pedagogical models from your Master of Teaching course.
- Using your journal as evidence reflect on how your thinking about teaching has shifted.
5. Reflecting on Teaching & Learning Commentary

You will need to draw from your journal to address the following prompts.

1. When you consider the learning of your students, what do you think explains the learning or differences in learning that you observed during the sequences of lessons? Cite relevant research or theory that explains what you observed that has been noted in your journal.

2. Based on your experience teaching these lessons, what did you learn about your students as learners (e.g., easy/difficult concepts and skills, easy/difficult learning activities, common misconceptions)? What is working? What is not? For whom? Why? Please cite specific evidence from your teaching as well as specific research and theories that inform your analysis and your journal entries.

3. If you were to teach this sequence of lessons again to the same class to improve the learning, what would you do differently in terms of planning, teaching and assessment? How does this reflection inform what you plan to do in the next lesson? How will you change or adapt your next lesson based on this reflection?
Dear Parents,

Deakin University students in the Master of Teaching program are required to critically assess their teaching skills as part of their assessment requirements.

To enable them to do this, Deakin University student teachers have been asked to film a ten-minute section of a lesson they conduct while on practicum at your school.

The video will be submitted as part of the final assessment for the professional practice unit the students are now undertaking.

The video will be kept in strictest confidence. It will be seen only by the student teacher involved, and by the Deakin University assessor who marks the assignment. The video will then be destroyed.

Deakin University would appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Could you please sign and return this permission form to your school as soon as possible, indicating whether you grant permission for your child to appear in this video.

Thank you for your assistance,

Julie Dyer
Deakin University, Burwood
julie.dyer@deakin.edu.au

--------------------------------------------------------------

Student name: _______________________________ Year: _______

I  GIVE /  DO NOT GIVE (please circle) permission for my daughter (student name) to be filmed as part of the Deakin University Master of Teaching assessment program.

I understand that the film will be viewed only by the student teacher involved and the Deakin University assessor, following which all copies will be destroyed.

Parent Signature: _______________________________

Parent Name: __________________________________
Deakin University
CONSENT FORM

I  ………………………………………………………………………………………

Principal of  ………………………………………………………………………………………

(address): ……………………………………………………………………………

give consent to allow Deakin University Master of Teaching preservice teachers to video tape their own teaching while on professional experience in my school.

I understand that the purpose of the videotaping is to allow the preservice teachers to capture 10 minutes of their teaching for the purpose of reflection and improvement on their practice. The videotaping will be used as part of their assessment task, will not be seen by anyone other than their assessor and after their assessment task has been completed the videotape of their teaching will be destroyed.

Signature:  ………………………………….  Date:  …………………

PLEASE RETURN SIGNED FORM TO: Dr Andrea Gallant

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT
Julie Dyer 92446725 or at julie.dyer@deakin.edu.au
Appendix 3: Deakin ATA Assessment Criteria and Rubrics

EPR 703 Reflecting on Practice in Professional Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1: Contexts for Learning</td>
<td>24 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2: Planning Teaching &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>40 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3: Teaching Students and Supporting Learning</td>
<td>48 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4: Assessing Students’ Learning</td>
<td>52 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 5: Reflecting on Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>34 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>196 marks = /70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Activity 1: Contexts for Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Not shown 0-4</th>
<th>Beginning 4</th>
<th>Established 5-6</th>
<th>Advanced 7-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Context:</td>
<td>Does not include all features of the classroom context</td>
<td>Lists features of the classroom environment</td>
<td>Explains features of the classroom environment</td>
<td>Comprehensive and clear description of all features of the classroom environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade/ year level/s and subject/ learning area; Specific topic for teaching; Number of students in the class; Cultural diversity; Language/s spoken; Resources available in your classroom/ school. /8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ academic development:</td>
<td>Does not identify/insufficient identification of learning styles without evidence. Does not identify factors that impact on learning</td>
<td>Identifies some learning styles with some evidence. Identifies at least two factors that impact on student learning.</td>
<td>Identifies and describes learning styles supported through some sets of evidence.</td>
<td>Identifies and describes students learning styles supported through evidence linked to learning styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of students learning styles, strengths and weaknesses with evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of prior knowledge, the learning strengths and weaknesses of students, and other factors which impact on learning /8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ social development:</td>
<td>Does not adequately describe students social, development with little evidence from classroom observation</td>
<td>Describes superficially students social, development using some appropriate language evidenced from some classroom observation</td>
<td>Describes in some depth students social, development. Uses language evidenced from supported classroom observation</td>
<td>A thorough description of students social, development that is fully supported using appropriate language and justified with evidence from classroom observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of students social, development using appropriate language evidenced from classroom observation /8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks .../40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Activity 2: Planning Teaching & Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Not shown 0-4</th>
<th>Beginning 4</th>
<th>Established 5-6</th>
<th>Advanced 7-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teaching Focus and rationale: Inclusion of, teaching focus, rationale, concepts and links to current curriculum documents. /8</td>
<td>Does not include aspects of teaching focus, rationale and assessment</td>
<td>Teaching Focus and Rationale provided Description of concepts with links to Current curriculum documents</td>
<td>Teaching Focus explained with supported rationale. Clear description of concepts with links to current curriculum documents</td>
<td>Teaching Focus explained with justified supported rationale. Clear description of appropriate concepts with appropriate links to current curriculum documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Theoretical and Pedagogical Framework: Description of theoretical framework that informs your lesson /8</td>
<td>Provides a sketchy description with little or no links to theoretical framework</td>
<td>Notes theoretical framework/s with some connection to the lesson</td>
<td>Notes and accounts for the selection of theoretical framework with links to the lesson</td>
<td>A thorough description and rationale for the selection of theoretical framework with justification to the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Learning Activities: Design of lessons to build knowledge and skills to challenge students’ learning /8</td>
<td>Provides an incomplete account of lesson design and students learning</td>
<td>An account that describes how the lesson design links to building knowledge and skills. A description of how the lesson challenges students’ learning</td>
<td>An in depth account that describes how the lesson design links to building knowledge and skills. An explanation of how the lesson challenges students’ learning</td>
<td>An in depth account that describes how the lesson design links to building knowledge and skills. An thorough explanation of how the lesson challenges students’ learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teaching strategies: Explanation of teaching strategies in terms of students. /8</td>
<td>Gives an insufficient account that does not draw from knowledge of students.</td>
<td>Some explanation about the selection of teaching strategies aligned to some aspects of students.</td>
<td>A thorough explanation about the selection of teaching strategies aligned to students.</td>
<td>A supported explanation about the selection of teaching strategies justified to your knowledge of students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Marks .../40**
### Activity 3: Teaching Students and Supporting Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Not shown</th>
<th>Beginning 4</th>
<th>Established 5-6</th>
<th>Advanced 7-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lesson sequence: Description and explanation of the contexts of the film clip /8</td>
<td>Does not identify or limited description of contexts of film clip</td>
<td>Identifies and describes contexts for learning through reference to lesson before &amp; after film clip.</td>
<td>Describes in detail contexts for learning through connections s to evidence before and after film clip.</td>
<td>A fully supported explanation of the film clip with evaluation of the significance of ‘before’ and ‘after’ the film clip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Routines and Learning activities: Interpretation of the contexts for learning /8</td>
<td>Does not identify or limited description of routines and learning activities.</td>
<td>Describes and identifies how classroom routines influence learning.</td>
<td>Accounts for how classroom routines influence learning through film clip evidence</td>
<td>A critical interpretation of the classroom routines and learning activities with film clip evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Engage students in learning: Accounts for strategies to engage students in learning. /8</td>
<td>Does not identify or limited description of strategies to engage students in learning. Does not/limited evidence from film clip</td>
<td>Identifies and describes strategies that promoted student engagement knowledge and skills in learning</td>
<td>Identifies and explains how teaching strategies promote student engagement knowledge and skills (individual and class) in learning from the film clip</td>
<td>A justified account of the rationale for teaching strategies that promoted student engagement, knowledge and skills (both individual and class) in learning with evidence from the film clip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Strategies to monitor students learning: Accounts for strategies to monitor students learning. /8</td>
<td>Does not describe nor account for strategies to monitor students learning.</td>
<td>Description of strategies to monitor learning through two student examples. Some analysis of student progression towards learning objectives.</td>
<td>Description and justification of strategies to monitor learning with evidence from two student examples. Some in depth analysis of student progression towards learning objectives.</td>
<td>Description and justification of strategies to monitor learning with evidence from two student examples. A thorough and in depth interpretation and reflection of student progression towards learning objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Evaluation of your own learning /8</td>
<td>Little explanation of your own planning and teaching to inform next lesson.</td>
<td>Description of your own learning cited through evidence from the film clip to inform future practice.</td>
<td>Evaluation and interpretation of own learning in planning and teaching through evidence film clip to inform practice.</td>
<td>Critical reflection of your own learning in planning and teaching through evidence from the film identified as</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Self knowledge of teaching: Awareness of one’s progress as an emerging practitioner drawn from evidence /8

| Mark | Does not show evidence or little evidence of self-knowledge as a teacher. | A description that shows awareness of strengths, preferences and areas for development. Some reference to journal entries. | A description that shows self-knowledge in strengths, preferences and areas for development. Self-appraisal and reflection that shows a plan for improvement. | A reflection on self-knowledge that shows understanding of one’s strengths, preferences and areas for development as a teacher. Draws from journal entries and includes a plan for improvement. |

Marks. .../48
### Activity 4: Assessing Students’ Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Not shown</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Established</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Assessment task: Explanation of how the assessment task criteria measured student learning. /4</td>
<td>Description does not report on how the assessment task criteria measured student learning.</td>
<td>Superficial description of the relationship between assessment task criteria and student learning</td>
<td>Clear explanation of the relationship between assessment task criteria and student learning</td>
<td>Thorough explanation of the relationship between assessment, task criteria and student learning. Description of the implications for future assessment task design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Whole Class Assessment in table /4</td>
<td>Does not show / limited whole class assessment in table form</td>
<td>Shows whole class assessment in table form</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of assessment using terms – reliable and valid. /4</td>
<td>Does not explain meaning of assessment.</td>
<td>Explains meaning of assessment with some use of the terms.</td>
<td>Accurately explains assessment using reliability and validity of assessment</td>
<td>Thorough explanation using assessment terms such as reliability and validity and student supported by evidence in the table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sample Student Assessment: Analysis of student work samples /8</td>
<td>Does not/limited analysis of student work samples</td>
<td>Some explanation and analysis of student work samples using appropriate terminology.</td>
<td>Description and analysis of students’ samples that illustrate connections to assessment and teaching.</td>
<td>Description and analysis of students’ samples that illustrate understanding of assessment, implications for teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Feedback: Description, explanation and application of feedback to students /8</td>
<td>Does not show /limited description and explanation of feedback to students</td>
<td>Some description and explanation of feedback to students. Evidence for feedback provided linked to student learning.</td>
<td>Describes feedback given and explains how feedback relates to improving students learning.</td>
<td>Describes and justifies feedback related to improving students learning drawn from evidence and theory to support your answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Assessment for Learning: Application from assessment to student learning /8</td>
<td>Does not show /limited description of assessment for learning.</td>
<td>A description of assessment for learning that cites evidence and theory to create a learning plan for students who did not achieve and a ‘next steps’ for students who achieved goals.</td>
<td>A thorough description of assessment for learning that draws from some evidence and theory. Creates a learning plan for students who did not achieve and a ‘next steps’ for students who achieved goals.</td>
<td>An in-depth analysis of assessment for learning that draws from evidence and theory. Creates a learning plan for students who did not achieve and a ‘next steps’ for students who achieved goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Assessment for Teaching: Critiques assessment task for improvement /8</td>
<td>Does not/limited comment on assessment for teaching.</td>
<td>An description of assessment that informs teaching that draws from existing practice (assessment task)</td>
<td>An description of your knowledge of assessment to inform future teaching through some critique of existing practice (assessment task)</td>
<td>An account that includes critical reflection on your knowledge of assessment to inform future teaching through a critique of existing practice (assessment task)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks ... /52</td>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** There are two changes to this section of the Deakin ATA rubrics from Wednesday 8th Dec discussion.

1. **Students as learners.** There is only one rubric now on students as learners. In the previous one there were two. This was confusing because there was a lot of similarity and little discrimination between the two.

2. **Reflective Practice** There is a rubric ‘reflective practice’ directly related to VIT standard - “teachers reflect on their professional knowledge and effectiveness of their teaching. “ This will allow you to bring together your reflections on your current knowledge and effectiveness of your teaching drawing from the journal, comments made in previous sections of the Deakin ATA and from readings and/or theoretical perspectives. It is now clear that these rubrics are different. This allows you to bring together your knowledge of students as learners and your current professional knowledge and teaching effectiveness.
## Activity 5: Reflecting on Teaching and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Not shown / Limited 0-5</th>
<th>Beginning 6-8</th>
<th>Established 9-10</th>
<th>Advanced 11-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student Learning: Reflect on students as learners /12</td>
<td>Does not/limited comment on students as learners.</td>
<td>Describes students’ learning drawn from journal entries.</td>
<td>Describes and explains students as learners drawn from journal entries and some theories of learning.</td>
<td>Comments using ‘reflection on practice and for action’ of students as learners drawn from journal entries and theories of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reflective Practice: Reflect on your overall professional knowledge and teaching effectiveness. /20</td>
<td>Little evidence of a reflective practitioner with little/no examination of current professional knowledge and teaching effectiveness. Employs excerpts from the Deakin ATA/journal with little connection between reflection and journal excerpts.</td>
<td>Little/some evidence of a reflective practitioner with some examination of current professional knowledge and teaching effectiveness. Employs excerpts from the Deakin ATA/journal to support this reflection with some connection between reflection and journal excerpts.</td>
<td>Some evidence of a reflective practitioner with examination of current professional knowledge and teaching effectiveness. Employs selected excerpts from Deakin ATA/journal to support this reflection.</td>
<td>Evidence of a reflective practitioner with clear examination of current professional knowledge and teaching effectiveness. Employs thoughtfully selected excerpts from Deakin ATA/journal to support an insightful reflection.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marks. .../32
Appendix 4.1 Interview questions: Preservice Teachers

1. Do you think the ATA authentically measures preservice teachers' readiness to begin teaching?

2a. Do you think the ATA gives preservice teachers ample opportunity to demonstrate their readiness to teach? Why/Why not?

2b. How might that be affected by the circumstances of your placement?

3. Do you think the ATA is a fair instrument for measuring teacher readiness, given the varied contexts in which preservice teachers complete their professional practice?

4. The ATA is based on the VIT Standards For Graduating Teachers. Do you think the ATA successfully prepares students to meet the graduate standards?

5a. Did the ATA help you understand the work that teachers do?

5b. Did undertaking the ATA make you feel more confident about entering the profession?

6. Were you able to articulate why you chose the learning activities you used in your lessons, and how they supported student learning? Why/why not?

7a. Do you think the ATA focuses enough on measuring student learning?

7b. Do you think the assessment activities in the ATA have helped you understand how to use student assessment data as a diagnostic tool for learning?

7c. How did you give feedback to students about their learning?

8. One of the VIT Graduate Standards is that teachers should have knowledge of pedagogical approaches that are specific to the content area. Did the ATA give you an opportunity to use approaches to teaching that were appropriate for the subject area?

9. Did completing the ATA help you to reflect on your teaching practice?

10a. Did you find every activity in the ATA useful/important? Why/why not?

10b. Are there any areas not addressed by the ATA which you believe should be addressed?

11. Were you able to satisfactorily complete all parts of the ATA during your placement? Why/why not?

[For second interview: When you wrote up the ATA, did you find you had collected all the material you needed during practicum?]

12. Do you think that the Master of Teaching units completed prior to undertaking the ATA prepared you sufficiently to complete the ATA?

13. Is there anything that would have helped you to complete the ATA more successfully?

14a. Did you find the visit from your Deakin mentor useful? Why/why not?

14b. Do you think it is more useful to have a professional conversation with your Deakin mentor, rather than have the mentor observe your teaching practice?
OTHER ISSUES RAISED DURING INTERVIEWS

Subsequent interviewees were asked to comment on these issues

Word limit of the ATA

Timing of the ATA and EPR703

Clarity of expectations for preservice teachers regarding the ATA

Classroom management & relationships with students

Support from practicum supervisors & placement circumstances

Prior practicum experience
Appendix 4.2 Interview questions: Practicum Supervisors

1a. Did you have enough information about the Deakin ATA to prepare you to supervise a preservice teacher undertaking the ATA?
1b. Were you clear about what the expectations were for preservice teachers as they completed the ATA?
1c. Were you clear about your role in relation to the ATA?
1d. Did you find that you had sufficient time to discuss issues related the ATA with the preservice teacher you supervised?
1e. What might have helped you be better prepared to supervise a preservice teacher undertaking the ATA?

2a. What do you normally look for when observing and assessing a preservice teacher on practicum?
2b. How did the ATA fit or not fit with that?

3a. The idea of the ATA is that preservice teachers are assessed based on evidence that they are able to do the actual work of teaching. Do you think the ATA succeeds in capturing real teacher’s work?
3b. Do you think the ATA authentically measures preservice teachers’ readiness to begin teaching?
3c. Do you think the ATA has the potential to identify a preservice teacher is not ready to enter the profession?

4a. Do you think the ATA gives preservice teachers ample opportunity to demonstrate their readiness to teach? Why/Why not?
4b. How might that be affected by the circumstances of the placement?

5. Do you think the ATA is a fair instrument for measuring teacher readiness, given the varied contexts in which preservice teachers complete their professional practice?

6a. Do you think the ATA helps students understand the work that teachers do?
6b. Do you think undertaking the ATA is likely to make students feel more confident about entering the profession?

7. The ATA is based on the VIT Standards For Graduating Teachers. Do you think the ATA successfully prepares preservice teachers to meet the graduate standards?

8. Was the student you supervised able to articulate why they chose particular learning activities in their lessons, and how they supported student learning?

9a. Do you think the ATA focuses enough on measuring student learning?
9b. Do you think the assessment activities in the ATA would help preservice teachers understand how to use student assessment data as a diagnostic tool for learning?

10. One of the VIT Graduate Standards is that teachers should have knowledge of pedagogical approaches that are specific to the content area. Do you think the ATA gave the preservice teacher you supervised an opportunity to use approaches to teaching that were appropriate for the subject area?

11. Do you think completing the ATA is likely to help preservice teachers reflect on their teaching practice?

12a. Do you consider every activity in the ATA to be useful/important? Why/why not?
12b. Are there any areas not addressed by the ATA which you believe should be addressed?
13. Was the preservice teacher you supervised able to satisfactorily complete all parts of the ATA during the placement? Why/why not?
Appendix 4.3 Interview questions: Deakin Academics

1. What do you think the role of a Deakin mentor is in relation to a preservice teacher undertaking the ATA?

2a. When you visited students on the recent practicum, did you observe them teaching, or did you meet to have a professional conversation?  
2b. Do you consider it to be more useful to preservice teachers to have a professional conversation with their Deakin mentor, or to have their mentor observe their teaching practice?  
2c. Do you think that if Deakin mentors did observe preservice teachers teaching during practicum they might be able to offer preservice teachers different kind of feedback on their teaching from that given by supervising teachers?

3a. Based on your experience of school visits during this Trimester, do you think that Deakin preservice teachers were prepared well enough to undertake the ATA?  
3b. How do you think preparation for the ATA could be improved for preservice teachers?  
3c. What kinds of concerns and/or questions did students have for you when you visited them on practicum?

4a. Did you meet with any supervising teachers? Why/why not?  
4b. Did you speak with any other school staff about the practicum or the ATA?

5a. Based on your experience of school visits during this Trimester (whether through meeting with preservice teachers OR supervising teachers), do you think that supervising teachers are prepared well enough to supervise preservice teachers undertaking the ATA?  
5b. How do you think preparation for supervising teachers could be improved?  
5c. Did you find that the supervising teachers you met with (or heard about) had a positive view of the ATA process?  
5d. What kinds of concerns/questions did supervising teachers have about the ATA?

6. Do you think that school visits by Deakin mentors have a role to play in supporting and legitimising the process of undertaking the ATA?
Appendix 4.4 Interview questions: Deakin Assessor

1. After assessing the ATA submission for this Trimester, what is your overall impression?

2. Was there any notable difference between the quality of ATA submissions of primary and secondary candidates?

3a. Did the quality of ATA submissions vary with the subject area being taught?  
3b. Do you think the ATA is a fair instrument for measuring teacher readiness?

4. Were all candidates able to successfully complete the ATA? Why? Why not?

5. What was the pass/fail rate?

6. What were the areas of greatest strength & weakness in the cohort overall?

7. Did preservice teachers demonstrate the ability to reflect on their teaching practice in depth?

8. What was the standard of the work in the assessment task?

9a. After marking the first submissions, do you think the Deakin ATA succeeds in being an authentic measure of beginning teacher readiness? 
9b. Do you think a preservice teacher who was not ready to teach could pass the ATA? 
9c. Do you think a preservice teacher who was ready to teach could fail the ATA?

10. What changes would you recommend to the design of the ATA?

11. Did preservice teachers in the whole cohort have any difficulties completing the task within the word limit?

12. Did preservice teachers in the whole cohort have any difficulties completing the task within the time limit?

13. Were there any issues raised by preservice teachers regarding the structure and timing of EPR703?

14. Do you think prior units in the Master of Teaching program adequately prepared this cohort of preservice teachers to undertake the ATA?

15. How do you think students could be better prepared to undertake the ATA?
Appendix 5: Plain Language Statement and Consent Form

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participant

Plain Language Statement

Date: 8th September 2009
Full Project Title: Authentically Assessing Beginning Teaching: Professional Standards and Teacher Performance Assessment

Principal Researcher(s): Associate Professor Mary Dixon, Professor Diane Mayer, Associate Professor Andrea Allard, Dr Andrea Gallant

Student Researcher: N/A
Associate Researcher(s): N/A

This Plain Language Statement and Consent Form is 6 pages long. Please make sure you have all the pages.

1. Your Consent

You are invited to take part in this research project. This Plain Language Statement contains detailed information about the research project. Its purpose is to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision whether you are going to participate.

Please read this Plain Language Statement carefully. Feel free to ask questions about any information in the document. You may also wish to discuss the project with a relative or friend or your local health worker. Feel free to do this.

Once you understand what the project is about and if you agree to take part in it, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form. By signing the Consent Form, you indicate that you understand the information and that you give your consent to participate in the research project.

You will be given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep as a record.

2. Purpose and Background

Purpose:

The purpose of this research is to investigate the implementation of an ATA (previously called TPA) which is designed to authentically assess preservice graduate readiness for beginning teaching. This project will involve a small group of participants (10) voluntarily selected from the Bachelor of Education (primary) and Bachelor of Teaching (secondary) course at Deakin University. Participation in the ATA process will occur during the final teaching placement (October).
Please note that the academic advisor will NOT be one of the participants’ current lecturers nor will they be involved in any university assessment for their degree. Participation is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw from the project at anytime.

**Background:**

Previous experience has shown that decisions about graduating preservice teachers readiness for employment, beginning teaching and professional registration are made using a range of proxies, for example, completion of an accredited teacher education program, grades in university subjects, practicum evaluation forms and observations, and so on. Only recently have some in the profession begun to think about a more outcome focussed approach and authentic ways of assessing the actual professional practice of beginning teachers in the workplace. The proposed teacher performance assessment (ATA) will be designed as an authentic, work place based assessment of professional practice as defined by professional standards for teaching.


3. **Funding**

This research is totally funded through Deakin University in-kind.

4. **Procedures**

Participation in this project will involve

- Participants are required to video their teaching during their October placement. They will then select 10 minutes of footage to critically reflect on an aspect of their teaching. The participants are then required to discuss their reflection with a trusted peer. It is required that this conversation be recorded and audiotapes be provided to the researcher during an interview.

- Participants will be required to provide the research team with copies of their teacher plans, student work samples, and personal reflections and commentaries that they have produced during their October 2009 placement. This will not be extra to their placement work.

- 1 meeting at Deakin University prior to placement with all participants and academic advisors to discuss TPA research project requirements for placement which will be audio recorded.

- 2 interviews with the academic advisor during the placement at the school to discuss process of reflection. This interview will be audio recorded.

- 1 focus group interview at Deakin University for all participants to discuss process of TPA. This interview will be audio recorded.

5. **Possible Benefits**

Possible benefits for the participants include

- An opportunity to enhance teacher identity
- Being part of the conversation on how best to assess preservice teachers
• Building a rich portfolio of work for submission to the VIT for full membership at the conclusion of your first year of teaching.

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this project.

6. Possible Risks

There are no known risks, however there may be unforeseen risks. Participants can suspend or end their participation in the project if distress occurs.

7. Privacy, Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the School of Education, Deakin University, Burwood Campus for a minimum of 6 years after final publication, after which time the data will be destroyed. Only the aforementioned research personnel will have access to the data.

The data will be de-identified, meaning that the participants' identity will not be linked to the data, the data will be coded as, for instance, 'preservice teacher A'.

Any information obtained in connection with this project that can identify you will remain confidential. It will only be disclosed with your permission, subject to legal requirements. If the participant gives us your permission by signing the Consent Form, we plan to share, discuss and publish findings from this research with interested bodies such as government departments, professional associations including VIT and also in academic papers and professional journals.

There will be no commercial development of the research results.

In any publication, information will be provided in such a way that participants cannot be identified. Confidentiality of focus group discussions cannot be guaranteed, however, focus group members will be asked to respect the confidentiality of other members of the group.

8. Results of Project

A report based on the data and findings will be provided to each participant in 2011.

9. Participation is Voluntary

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Teacher participants will be coded as a way of identifying data until the data is processed or the participant's identifying details are removed. Any information obtained from you to date will not be used and will be destroyed. Data gathered from the focus group discussion will not be possible to be withdrawn.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with Deakin University.

Before you make your decision, a member of the research team will be available to answer any questions you have about the research project. You can ask for any information you want. Sign the Consent Form only after you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers.

If you decide to withdraw from this project, please notify a member of the research team or complete and return the Revocation of Consent Form attached. This notice will allow the research team to inform you if there are any health risks or special requirements linked to withdrawing.
10. **Ethical Guidelines**

This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

The ethics aspects of this research project have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University.

11. **Complaints**

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Office of Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

Please quote project number EC [number] -2008.

12. **Reimbursement for your costs**

You will not be paid for your participation in this project.

13. **Further Information, Queries or Any Problems**

If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project (for example, any side effects), you can contact the principal researcher or

The researchers responsible for this project are:

*Associate Professor Mary Dixon*
*Professor Diane Mayer*
*Dr Andrea Allard*
*Dr Andrea Gallant*
*Ms Gisela Boetker-Smith*

*School of Education, Deakin University*
*221 Burwood Hwy, Burwood VIC 3125*
*9244 6361 (Associate Professor Mary Dixon)*
*0421 511 565 (A/H: Gisela Boetker-Smith)*
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participants

Consent Form

Date:

Full Project Title: Authentically Assessing Professional Standards and Beginning Teacher Performance Assessment

I have read and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant’s Name (printed) ………………………………………………………………………

Signature ……………………………………………………… Date  …………………………

RETURN ADDRESS:

Associate Professor Mary Dixon
School of Education
Deakin University
221 Burwood Hwy
Burwood VIC 3125
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participants

Revocation of Consent Form
(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date:

Full Project Title: Authentically Assessing Beginning Teaching: Professional Standards and Teacher Performance Assessment

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise my relationship with Deakin University.

Participant’s Name (printed) .................................................................

Signature ................................................................. Date .........................

Please mail or fax this form to:

Associate Professor Mary Dixon
School of Education
Deakin University
221 Burwood Hwy
Burwood VIC 3125

Tel: 9244 6361
Fax: 9244 6752
Appendix 6: Changes to the Deakin ATA in Trimester 1, 2011

In response to the first group of 30 pre-service teachers’ experiences of and feedback on the Deakin ATA completed in Trimester 3 2010-2011, the following changes have been made or are in process:

General changes:

- The word limit of the ATA has been extended to 6000 words (the maximum allowable under University guidelines for one unit).
- The ‘Context for Learning’ activity has been changed to include a shorter commentary and the use of visuals.
- Criteria and rubrics for each section have been reviewed and fewer ‘prompts’ are included since some of the preservice teachers mistakenly thought they had to address each prompt (which in turn caused some concern re the word limit).
- Supporting documentation, rather than coming last in a long appendix, has been incorporated throughout, and therefore linked more explicitly to each of the relevant activities.
- Where possible and if invited, the academic will observe the preservice teacher teaching. In conjunction with this, the differing roles of the supervising teacher and the university academic will be clarified—i.e., feedback on classroom-based teaching is best provided by the supervising teachers; professional conversations about planning, assessment and journal reflections and questions regarding aspects of the ATA are the main foci of the academic visit.
- A small Teaching and Learning grant provided in early 2011 by the Faculty of Arts and Education will enable Master of Teaching academics to conduct a close analysis of the results of the next 60 ATAs that will be completed in Tri 1 & 2, 2011, with particular focus on questions raised here regarding international preservice teachers’ experiences, the ways in which practical discipline areas may need different assessment guidelines, and whether different secondary ‘methods’ result in differing ATA results, etc.
- Means to establish better communication between supervising teachers and Master of Teaching academics who will be visiting the preservice teachers during the professional experience, including emails and summations of what the ATA requires, are being examined.

Adjustments for completing the ATA in Trimester 3.

Unlike Trimester 1 and 2 timetables, if the pre-service teacher chooses to complete EPR703 in Trimester 3, they must complete their professional experience in schools BEFORE the official start of the Trimester, in order to fit in the requisite number of days. (Trimester 3 begins in mid-November and ends in first week of February). To ‘fit’ the requisite number of days in school, the professional
experience for Tri 3 begins in mid-October. Therefore, a number of issues raised by the participants in the research here do not apply to the way in which the unit and the ATA is structured for Tri 1 & 2. However, with regards to Trimester 3:

- The professional experience placement for Trimester 3 has been changed from 4 weeks in October-November and 1 week in February, to five weeks in October-November.
- The due date for the ATA in Trimester 3 has been extended so preservice teachers have a longer period to complete the task in January.
- 2011 preservice teachers who are considering study in Trimester 3 have been briefed regarding the tight timetable for professional experience, the use of intensives for teaching in Trimester 3 and the lack of holiday time, so that they can now make a more informed choice as to whether they wish to study in that time period.
- Those who do choose to study EPR703 in Trimester 3 and therefore the ATA will be briefed in the final session of EPR702 and again in the week before they begin their professional experience in schools as to requirements of the ATA. (This was done in 2010 but not all of the preservice teachers attended the final session of EPR702). Information, including ATA Handbook, will be available via Deakin Studies Online.