

Guidance note

Primary specialisations

Effective date: 27/09/2023

Background

The Accreditation Standards and Procedures require that primary initial teacher education (ITE) graduates have a primary specialisation. This means that primary graduates will be prepared to teach in all of the learning areas of the primary school curriculum¹, and in addition will undertake a specialisation in one learning area. The intention is that the primary teacher's expertise will be available within the school to assist other teachers with the knowledge and expertise to teach the subject effectively.

Primary specialisation requires that graduates have developed additional depth of understanding in one primary learning area in terms of three domains of skills and knowledge

1. expert content knowledge
2. pedagogical content knowledge
3. highly effective classroom teaching

Flexibility, diversity and innovation are key principles that underpin the accreditation of initial teacher education programs. Consequently, program standard 4.4 does not specify the model that providers use to deliver primary specialisations, nor does it mandate the number of units required.

The onus is on the provider to demonstrate how the primary specialisation meets the program standard. This recognises the diversity of ways that initial teacher education programs are structured.



Program 4.4

In addition to study in each of the learning areas of the primary school curriculum sufficient to equip teachers to teach across the years of primary schooling, programs provide all primary graduates with a subject specialisation through:

- a. clearly defined pathways into and / or within a program that lead to specialisations, that are in demand, with a focus on subject / curriculum areas
- b. assessment within the program requiring graduates to demonstrate expert content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge and highly effective classroom teaching in their area of specialisation
- c. publishing the specialisations available, and numbers of graduates per specialisation through their annual reports.

What constitutes a primary specialisation?

Program standard 4.4 requires that specialisations focus on subject / curriculum areas that are in demand.

The following areas have been approved by VIT's Accreditation Committee and will be recognised as options for primary specialisations offered

- mathematics
- numeracy
- English
- literacy
- science
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics)
- languages (other than English)
- technologies
- the arts
- inclusive education
- special needs education
- humanities and social sciences
- health and physical education
- student welfare
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies
- religious education

The VIT will also consider additional specialisations where providers can demonstrate that it is an area of priority and will contribute to quality teaching and improved outcomes for students.

Requirements for Primary specialisations

When applying for program accreditation, ITE providers are required to include a rationale for the specialisation, linking it to the overall program rationale. Providers must also outline how it improves student learning outcomes and provide evidence of employer demand.

Where a specialisation outside of the approved list is proposed, providers must apply for VIT approval prior to the application for accreditation of the program. This should be submitted in writing and must articulate the rationale for offering the specialisation, including how the specialisation aligns to subject / curriculum areas in demand. VIT's Accreditation Committee must approve the primary specialisation before the application for accreditation is submitted.

Further information or support

Please contact your VIT co-case managers for guidance prior to submitting a primary ITE program with a proposed specialisation.

- [AITSL Accreditation Standards and Procedures](#)
- [AITSL Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia](#)
- [AITSL Primary specialisation \(Program Standard 4.4\): Guidelines](#)

¹ Curriculum is defined as the approved content to be covered in a classroom or educational setting. Primary curriculum refers to the primary elements of the Foundation to Year 12 Australian curriculum; alternative curriculum frameworks that have been assessed by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) as meeting the requirements of the Australian curriculum; and any curriculum authorised by jurisdictional authorities.