

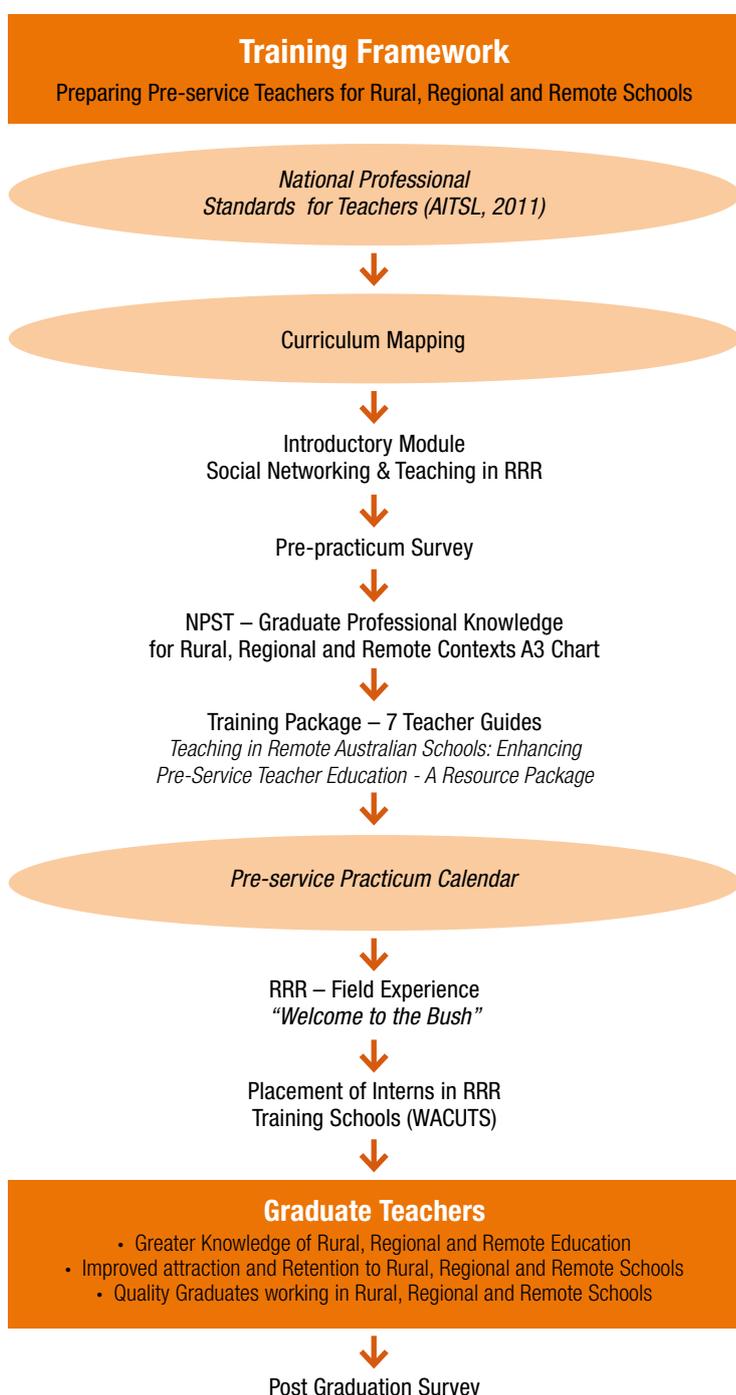
A TRAINING FRAMEWORK FOR PRODUCING QUALITY GRADUATES TO WORK IN RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA

In 2009 a group of tertiary educators from four universities in Western Australia with an interest and experience in rural, regional, and remote education, and especially in improving the attraction and retention of quality teachers to non-metropolitan locations, formed the Tertiary Educators Rural, Regional and Remote Network (TERRR Network). In 2010 the TERRR Network was successful in obtaining a grant from the Australian Council of Teaching and Learning (ALTC) now the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) to undertake a project titled: *Developing Strategies at the Pre-service Level to Address Critical Teacher Attraction and Retention Issues in Australian Rural, Regional and Remote Schools*.

Two years on as the project draws to a close it is with pleasure that the Network is able to present the deliverables/outcomes of their endeavours encapsulated in the *Training Framework for Producing Quality Graduates to Work in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia* depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1 highlights the process undertaken and the production of support materials to form the Training Framework for both pre-service teachers and their lecturers that together have three significant expected outcomes. Firstly, as a result of applying the Framework it is expected that pre-service teachers will have a greater knowledge of rural, regional and remote education and what it means to be a quality teacher in those demanding locations. Secondly, as a result of having access to authentic knowledge about rural, regional and remote Australia, it is expected that more pre-service teachers will apply to work in non-metropolitan locations on graduation. Thirdly, it is expected that the processes and support materials inherent in the Training Framework will improve the quality of Graduate teachers who take up the challenge of living and working in rural, regional, and remote Australia. The fact that the Training Framework is grounded in the National Professional Standards for Teachers (Graduate Level) provides the quality assurance foundation in that “they define the work of teachers and make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective teaching in the 21st century schools that will improve educational outcomes for students” (AITSL, 2011).

Figure 1. The Training Framework



The *Training Framework for Producing Quality Graduates to Work in Rural, Regional and Remote* is made up of ten components, namely:

- The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST).
- Pre-service Teacher Curriculum Mapping
- An introductory module titled *Social Networking and Teaching in Rural, Regional and Remote Western Australia*.
- A pre-practicum survey.
- The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST): Graduate Professional Knowledge for Rural, Regional and Remote Context.
- A resource package comprising of seven teachers guides.
- A practicum calendar for the four public universities in Western Australia.
- A field experience that links pre-service teachers with rural, regional and remote schools, communities local governments and business.
- The placement of interns in rural, regional and remote training schools.
- A post-graduation survey.

The ten components are grouped into two categories the 'lens' and the outcomes. Those that appear in the oval shapes are the 'lens' through which the experiences and outcomes have been developed and achieved. These lenses serve two functions. The National Professional Standards for Teachers as a lens provides a focus on the national initiative to improve the quality of teaching. Second, the lens of providing the curriculum mapping and the practicum calendar provide a focus on the need for greater attention on rural, regional and remote education across the four universities involved in pre-service education. As well as providing a focus on the gaps in the pre-service curriculum, this second lens provided a foundation for the Training Framework, and in particular the materials produced as part of the Framework, with more than a "rural lens" (Boylan and Wallace, 2007) expanding the outcomes to "regional and remote lens". It is through this lens that consolidated and innovative strategies to better prepare teachers for working and living non-metropolitan Australia have been developed. As Boylan and Wallace identify, applying rural lens *offers a practical means by which we might return to rural education issues with a rural rather than an outsiders' agenda and embrace rural education in the process* (p. 15).

The National Professional Standards for Teachers

On 1 January 2010, and in the early stages of the TERRR Network project the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Learning (AITSL) came into being. One of AITSL's first tasks was to assume responsibility for validating and finalising the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) which had commenced by the National Standards Sub-group of the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC) in 2009. AITSL completed the development of the NPST during 2010 and was endorsed by MCEECDYA in December of that year. The NPST are a major milestone for teaching and learning in Australia as the Standards that articulate a national approach to what *teachers are expected to know and be able to do at four career stages: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead* (AITSL, 2011). The TERRR Network acknowledged this important major initiative in Australian education by focusing the Training Framework and the Teacher Guides around the Standards.

The TERRR Network was also aware that AITSL is keen to develop supporting documentation for the NPST for the context of teaching in rural, regional and remote schools. Therefore, in addition to modelling the use of the Standards in the development of pre-service curriculum, the TERRR Network is supporting and supplementing the work of AITSL in providing documents that will assist graduates and proficient teachers to apply the Standards to their work in the rural, regional and remote context.

Curriculum Mapping

One of the first tasks of the project was to undertake a mapping exercise of the pre-service teacher education curriculum in Western Australian, as well as at the National and International level. Mapping at the State and National levels were comprehensive and identified that there is not a strong focus in Australian universities on preparing pre-service teachers for the challenges of education provision beyond the metropolitan cities. The exercise did, however, highlight pockets of innovative practice throughout Australia and these innovative approaches helped inform the Training Framework.

Mapping of curricula beyond Australia was selective and determined mainly by knowledge among the TERRR Network of international curriculum initiatives for preparing teachers to address the teaching and learning challenges imposed by geographic remoteness in countries such as Canada.

Introductory Module

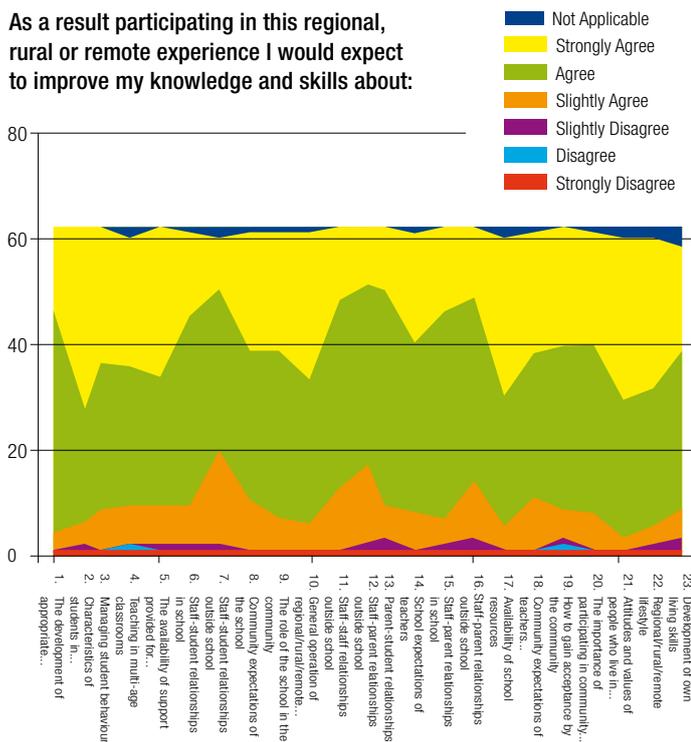
Social Networking and Teaching in Rural, Regional and Remote Western Australia is a curriculum learning object in the form of a guided set of tasks that focuses on rural, regional and remote education linked to technology. The curriculum learning object was developed at Curtin University and initially used with first year teacher students enrolled in the Early Childhood and Primary programs in 2011. Following the success of the Curtin University trial the learning object was refined and adapted for use by the three other public universities involved in the project.

The learning object has been a popular inclusion in the teaching and learning program reinforcing the role that technology can play in helping to address the challenges imposed by geography. It is able to promote the idea of participating in a rural, regional or remote practicum/field experience, along with the notion of teaching in non-metropolitan locations on graduation, and this needs to be embedded early in First Year programs.

Pre-service Survey and Data Collection

As part of their engagement with the learning object *Social Networking and Teaching in Rural, Regional and Remote Western Australia* pre-service teachers were invited to complete an online survey. This survey is designed to gauge the extent to which, as a result of participating in a non-metropolitan practicum/field experience, they expect to enhance their knowledge and skills associated with 23 different fields of teaching and learning. The survey results have recently been published in the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education* (Trinidad et. al, 2012) and part of the data collected is summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: First Year Student Results of Participating in a RRR Practicum



The survey has been repeated in 2012 with first year students enrolled in teacher education programs at the four universities involved in this OLT project.

The data collection process is an important component of the Training Framework. The Framework is evidence-based and through ongoing data collection and analysis, will remain dynamic.

Teacher Guide	Standard	Focus Area	Descriptor
1	1.0 Know students and how they learn.	1.1 Physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students and how these may affect learning.
2	1.0 Know students and how they learn.	1.2 Understanding how students learn.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of research into how students learn and the implications for teaching.
3	1.0 Know students and how they learn.	1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.	Demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.
4	1.0 Know students and how they learn.	1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.
5	6.0 Engage in Professional learning.	6.1 Identifying and planning professional learning needs.	Demonstrate an understanding of the role of the National Professional Standards for Teachers in identifying professional learning needs.
6	7.0 Engaging Professionally with Colleagues, Parents/Carers and the Community.	7.3 Engaging with Parents/Carers.	Understand strategies for working effectively, sensitively and confidentially with parents/carers.
7	7.0 Engaging Professionally with Colleagues, Parents/Carers and the Community.	7.4 Engaging with professional teaching networks and broader communities.	Understand the role of external professionals and community representatives in broadening teachers' professional knowledge and practice.

Professional Knowledge for Graduates in the Rural Regional, and Remote Context A3 Chart

The A3 chart titled *Professional Knowledge for Graduates in the Rural, Regional and Remote Context* makes a start at mapping the key knowledge, skills and concepts that need to be mastered at the Graduate level for successful teaching in rural, regional and remote Australia. The project reference and network groups contributed to the chart. The intention is that the chart remains dynamic and the team encourages pre-service teachers and their lecturers to keep adding content to the document. As noted, the chart only reflects a small percentage of the body of knowledge available in the complex topic of rural, regional and remote education.

Training Package/7 Teacher Guides

The first and foremost stated deliverable in the TERRR Network application was the development of:

Regional, rural and remote teacher education curriculum Teacher Guides for pre-service courses across four universities, based on the guidelines being developed by the parallel ALTC project "Renewing Rural and Regional Teacher Education Curriculum" (RRRTEC) that can be used by other universities.

The resource package consists of seven Teacher Guides and is a key component of the overall Training Framework. In keeping with the intention of building on the work of the RRRTEC, the TERRR Network team committed to focusing the Teacher Guides on teaching and learning in the remote context. The RRRTEC project considers the rural and regional context in depth while the teachers' guides from this project challenge the pre-service teacher to come to terms with what it means to address the National Professional Standards for Teachers at the Graduate level in the remote context.

Within the scope of the project the TERRR Network concentrated on three of the Standards and selected Focus Areas and Descriptors within those three Standards. Specifically:

The entire NPST framework is important in every context and requires all teachers, no matter where they are teaching, to engage in deep thinking about their work across all Focus Areas and Descriptors. The TERRR Network believe, however, that Standards 1, 6 and 7 provided a good starting point for the development of teachers' guides as work associated with these Standards represent significant challenges for Graduates in the remote context.

Practicum Calendar

This part of the project resulted in mapping the practicum times during the year on to a single calendar with the intention of identifying common times where all four universities have pre-service teachers on practice placements. With this knowledge the TERRR Network have worked towards maximising opportunities for non-metropolitan practicum placements, for example; establishing a network of schools that are willing to accept a number of practice students from all four universities, the possibility for pre-service teachers sharing transport and accommodation, building strong rural, regional and remote practicum networks encompassing all key stakeholders and enabling action research.

The work associated with mapping both the pre-service teacher curriculum and the practicum placement times has also provided an opportunity for the four universities to provide a joint non-metropolitan field experience.

Non-metropolitan Field Experience

The non-metropolitan field experience component of the Training Framework builds on the benefits of such an exercise identified by Sharplin (2001, 2002, 2009). The first week long field experience is planned for August 2012 with the intention of linking pre-service teachers with schools and their communities, local governments, industry and business, a range of agencies both government and non-government, and the environment as a teaching and learning resource in the Goldfield-Esperance Region. Another intended outcome of the field experience is the strengthening of the rural, regional and remote education network that is emerging as a result of the Training Framework. Pre-service teachers from all four public universities in Western Australia will be invited to participate in the field experience.

Placement of Interns in Rural and Regional Training Schools

An outcome of this OLT project has been the awarding of a contract by the Department of Education (Western Australia) to the Combined Universities Training School partners. The Training Schools project is a partnership between Murdoch University, the University of Western Australia, Curtin University and The Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA), to develop and deliver an innovative pre-service teacher training program. The Training Schools Project is part of the Australian Government's *Smarter Schools National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality* to increase the capacity and work

readiness of pre-service teachers in both metropolitan and rural areas. A corner stone of the Combined Universities Training School project is the placement of interns, final year pre-service teachers from the participating universities, in schools between two and three days pre-week over the entire school year. The project has placed 50 interns of which 19 are in rural and regional schools.

Graduate Survey

An adapted version of the pre-practicum survey was used to survey new graduates in 2011. This data collected assisted with the development of the materials. The survey will be used to follow up future Graduate teachers.

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TERRR Network Team

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This resource package has been produced for the Tertiary Educators Rural, Remote and Regional Network (TERRR Network) as part of an Office for Learning and Teaching (formally the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) project titled *Developing Strategies at the Pre-service Level to Address Critical Teacher Attraction and Retention Issues in Australian Rural, Regional and Remote Schools*.

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