



WHY ACU STUDENTS WILL BE SPENDING MORE TIME IN SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

Education students at Australian Catholic University's Ballarat campus will walk straight in to a school classroom as the university introduces a new "embedded" model for future teachers. Students studying any of ACU's Bachelor of Education courses will spend two days a week working in a school or early childhood centre to experience what it is like to be a teacher right from the start of their studies.

"They will get to see the full cycle of the teaching year, and it will allow our students to engage in more observation of qualified teachers' practice," said ACU Ballarat Deputy Head of the School of Education Dr Mellita Jones. "They will be able to develop their own practice with small groups of children. This also means they will have time to build relationships with children and school staff and to understand the school's routines which prepares them far better as they move into the supervised and assessed teaching 'block' that follows."



Students will still take part in traditional teacher placements for longer blocks of time, but the focus will be on regular classroom time throughout the year. Local schools, particularly Catholic primary schools, have been approached to become involved.

"So far there has been a high level of interest from local principals to be involved," Dr Jones said. "Teachers and school leaders want to do what they can to support the profession generally and are generous in their engagement with a range of initiatives that help to shape the next generation of teachers."

Dr Jones said similar programs were running at other ACU campuses in primary and secondary education and it made sense to extend it to the primary and early childhood courses at Ballarat to support development of high-quality teachers for regional areas.

"This opportunity will help support students at our regional campus to develop a deeper understanding of regional schools' environments and help to develop close relationships with local schools, increasing the likelihood that these students will seek employment in regional and rural schools," Dr Jones said. "The more integrated approach should also see them moving into graduate positions feeling prepared and confident to manage the full range of experiences that a teacher engages in, and to better understand the nuances of daily school life."

With the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group and education commentators calling for more "classroom ready" graduates, Dr Jones said the extra classroom time across four years would help better prepare new teachers, giving them deeper insight in to the schools and classroom before they graduate.

*Article courtesy of the Ballarat Courier. Text by Michelle Smith and picture by Lachlan Bence
Photo: ACU Ballarat Deputy Head of the School of Education Dr Mellita Jones*