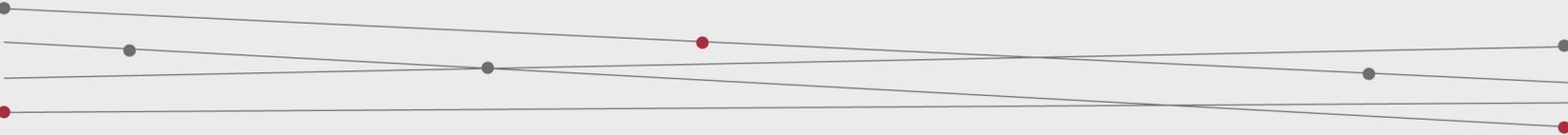


Teach for Australia Program Evaluation Report

MAY 2017



Introducing the Teach for Australia program and this evaluation

The Teach for Australia (TFA) program is an employment-based teacher training pathway.

The TFA program:

- Uses a multi-stage recruitment process. TFA selects a small number of applicants from a large pool to recruit high achieving university graduates, with degrees other than teaching, to become 'Associates'.
- Prepares Associates for teaching through an initial six-week intensive residential course and other preparatory academic work totalling 13 weeks.
- Places Associates in disadvantaged secondary schools for two years where they take on a 0.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching workload, and are paid around 80% of a graduate teacher salary.
- Provides Associates with ongoing support during their two-year placement, primarily through TFA-appointed staff.
- Partners with Deakin University as an academic provider.¹ Deakin provides a Master of Teaching over the two years, including some components that are taught during the initial intensive.

TFA's first cohort of Associates began in 2010 and was placed in Victoria. Since then, Associates have also been placed in the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The 2017 cohort also includes placements in Tasmania.

The TFA program is an adaptation of the 'Teach For' programs being delivered in countries including the UK and the USA.

TFA is a not-for-profit organisation with a mission of addressing educational disadvantage.

The Australian Government, TFA's major funder, commissioned this evaluation from dandolopartners.

The Australian Government, through its Department of Education and Training, is the major funder of the TFA program. The Australian Government was responsible for initial competitive tender processes that led to the establishment of TFA's program. The Australian Government has provided funding for each cohort to date, and, in December 2016, made a further commitment for funding for two additional cohorts (commencing 2018 and 2019). For the 2016 cohort, the Australian Government provided approximately three quarters of funding per Associate.

In May 2016, after a competitive process, dandolopartners (dandolo) was appointed by the department to conduct an evaluation of the TFA program.

The broad purpose of the evaluation was to determine to what extent the TFA program was delivering on the Australian Government's objectives, and identify opportunities for closer alignment of objectives. The focus of the evaluation was determined in consultation with the Australian Government, and given this, did not consider all aspects of the TFA program in detail. This evaluation considers seven cohorts, of which the first five (2010-2014) are referred to as alumni, and those completing the program at the time of the evaluation (2015-2016) as Associates except where a long-term view of all cohorts is reported (e.g. Principal surveys).

dandolo is grateful to the Australian Government for the opportunity to complete this important project, and especially to the Department of Education and Training project team, who have been highly responsive.

We also extend our thanks to TFA, its Associates and alumni, academic partners and partner schools, states, territories and wider stakeholders for their participation in this evaluation, provision of data, views and perspectives.

1. The University of Melbourne was TFA's academic partner for its first five cohorts and a Graduate Diploma of Education was delivered, rather than Master of Teaching.

Executive summary

The Australian Government invests in the Teach for Australia (TFA) program with a primary objective of placing high quality teachers in disadvantaged schools to meet specific skill requirements, for as long as possible. TFA substantively delivers on each aspect of this objective.

Associates become high quality teachers.

The Associates TFA recruits are capable, committed, and have personality traits that schools value. Support from TFA, especially professional coaches known as Teaching and Leadership Advisers (TLAs), is important in getting them through a challenging experience. In the context of a heavy workload, Associates prioritise their school commitments over their academic qualification.

By the end of their two-year placement, principals report that Associates demonstrate behaviours at the proficient level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 12% more often than other teachers with similar experience, and at the highly accomplished level 18% more often¹.

Most placements are in schools below the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) national median.

All TFA program placements have been consistent with eligibility requirements that have been set by states and territories, who have their own definitions of disadvantage. However, there is variation between jurisdictions and, as a result 13% of placements are above the ICSEA national median.² Based on dandolo estimates, around 34% of post placement teaching years are in schools above the national median.

Associates deliver the skills that schools need.

Associates are well matched to the needs of schools in terms of subject experience. Principals see subject knowledge as a strength. Most principals are appointing Associates because they prefer them to alternative options. Around 30% would not be able to access the skills they need if not for the TFA program.

dandolo found that most Associates remain teaching for two years after their placements, and that there is a moderate shift towards less disadvantaged schools among those who continue teaching beyond their two year placement.

dandolo has made estimates of TFA program alumni retention based on access to Victorian payroll data, and publicly available information about alumni career choices. Based on this dandolo estimates that:

- In the first year out of placement (third year) 65% are still teaching, and 45% in schools below the national median.
- In the second year out (fourth year) 60% are still teaching, and 36% in schools below the national median.
- From the third year after completing their placement the total population teaching remains steady just below 50%, with around 30% in schools below the national median.

School-based stakeholders (regardless of their experiences with the TFA program) consistently describe interest in greater retention.

TFA also contributes to the Australian Government's other objectives.

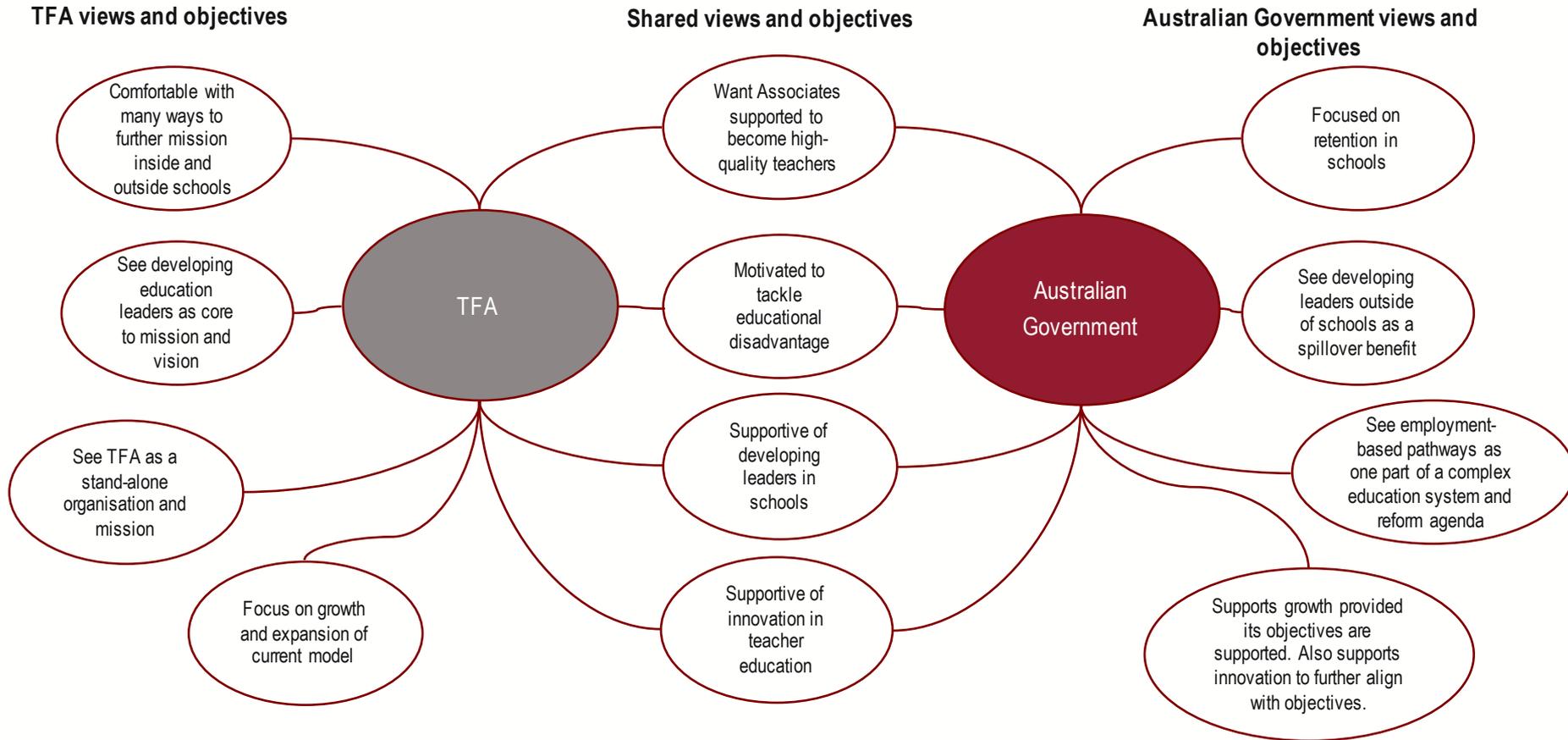
- Associates' early demonstration of highly accomplished Australian Professional Standards for Teachers suggests that the TFA program is developing a pipeline of leaders, and Associates appear to have an accelerated path into formalised leadership roles.
- Associates make contributions to their peers and school community. Some principals describe them as "more valuable in the staff room than the classroom".
- The TFA program is an innovative model which may have lessons for wider initial teacher education. However it is no longer unique as an employment-based pathway, or in its focus on disadvantaged schools.

1. See page 13 for more detail.

2. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) was developed by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority to describe the average level of educational advantage of the school's student population relative to those of other schools. It applies nationally, and is commonly used by the Australian Government. For more details see: https://acaraweb.blob.core.windows.net/resources/About_icsea_2014.pdf

TFA and the Australian Government: shared views and objectives

dandolo's view is that there is significant overlap in the views and objectives of TFA and the Australian Government. This underpins the investment the Australian Government has made.



Executive summary

There is potential for the TFA program to further align with Government objectives. dandolo has identified six priority areas for the Government to consider.

1 Structures and strategies to increase retention such as longer placement lengths, or incentives for Associates to stay in disadvantaged classrooms. A wide range of stakeholders are interested in greater retention, and there may also be opportunities to decrease Associates' significant workload.

2 Increased funding contributions from Associates (who derive significant personal benefit from the program), and from states and territories. Contributions from either source should offset Australian Government contributions and improve the cost effectiveness of the program for the Australian Government.

3 Better integration between TFA program supports and Master of Teaching. TFA and its academic partner share objectives and duplicate effort around practical teacher training and support. Greater integration of program elements could increase the value and effectiveness of the program as an initial teacher education pathway, reduce burden on Associates and lead to lower costs.

4 A national eligibility standard for schools where Associates are able to be placed would support national consistency, and may provide for an increased focus on serving disadvantaged schools.

5 A return to contestable funding for employment-based pathways. This may encourage potential providers to align as closely as possible with Australian Government objectives, and stimulate innovation and diversity in provision.

6 TFA's relationships with governments and academic partners are critical to ongoing success and sustainability. This evaluation identified challenges and opportunities for improvement including refreshed accountability structures and greater collaboration.

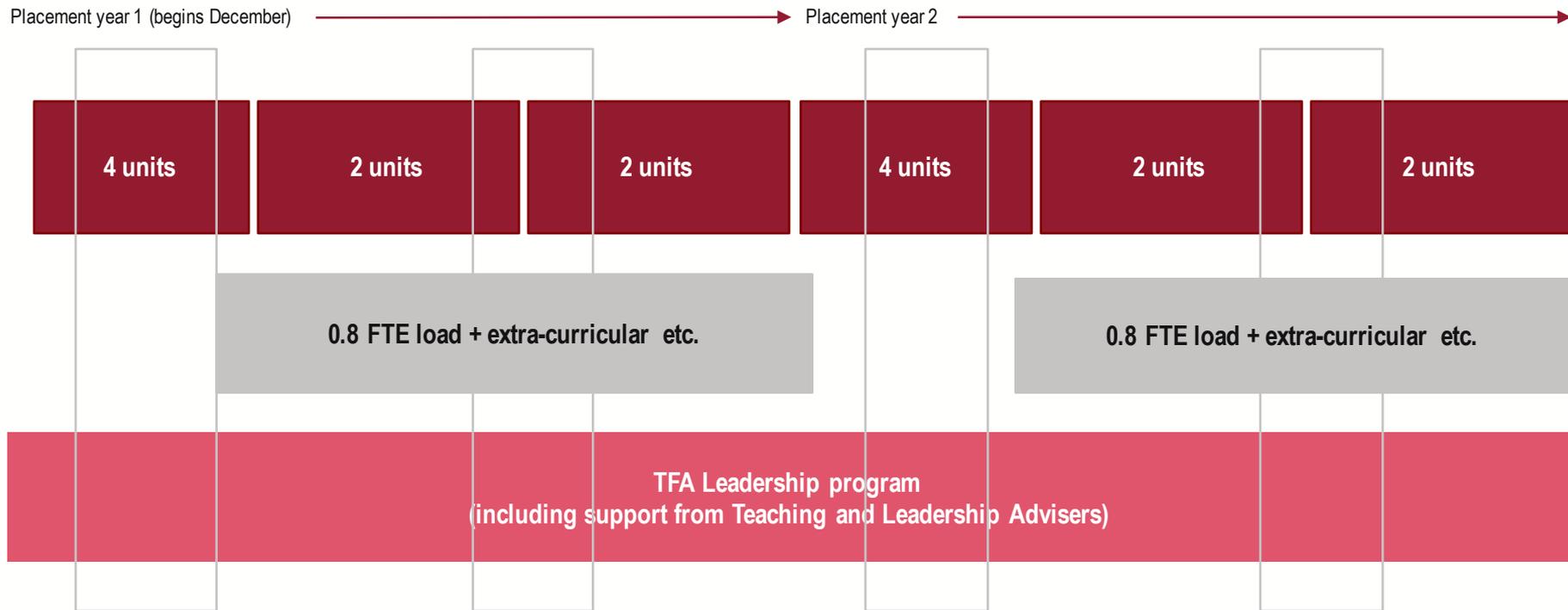
As next steps dandolo considers that the Australian Government should:

- Explore potential changes identified with TFA and other stakeholders.
- Convene discussions with states and territories to support alignment of approaches to issues such as funding, eligibility of schools and potential changes to the TFA model.
- Participate in, or have direct oversight of arrangements for TFA's academic partner, given the importance of this relationship to TFA's success, and potential wider implications for initial teacher education.

Introduction

Overview of TFA program

Over two years TFA Associates complete a Master of Teaching from Deakin University, are placed in a school where they teach a 0.8 FTE load and participate in TFA’s leadership program. They also participate in face-to-face intensives, which are convened by TFA.



Associates’ preparation and experience is significantly different to other initial teacher education pathways. They take on teaching responsibilities much sooner.

Undergraduate teaching students generally receive four years of training prior to graduating and entering the classroom. Postgraduate teaching students receive two years of training. Associates enter the classroom after attending an initial six-week intensive residential course and completing other preparatory academic work totalling 13 weeks.

The Australian Government's objectives for its investment

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine to what extent the TFA program was delivering on the Australian Government's objectives, and to identify opportunities for further alignment.

Primary objectives

To:

- Provide high quality teachers
- To disadvantaged schools
- To meet specific skill requirements
- For as long as possible.

Other objectives

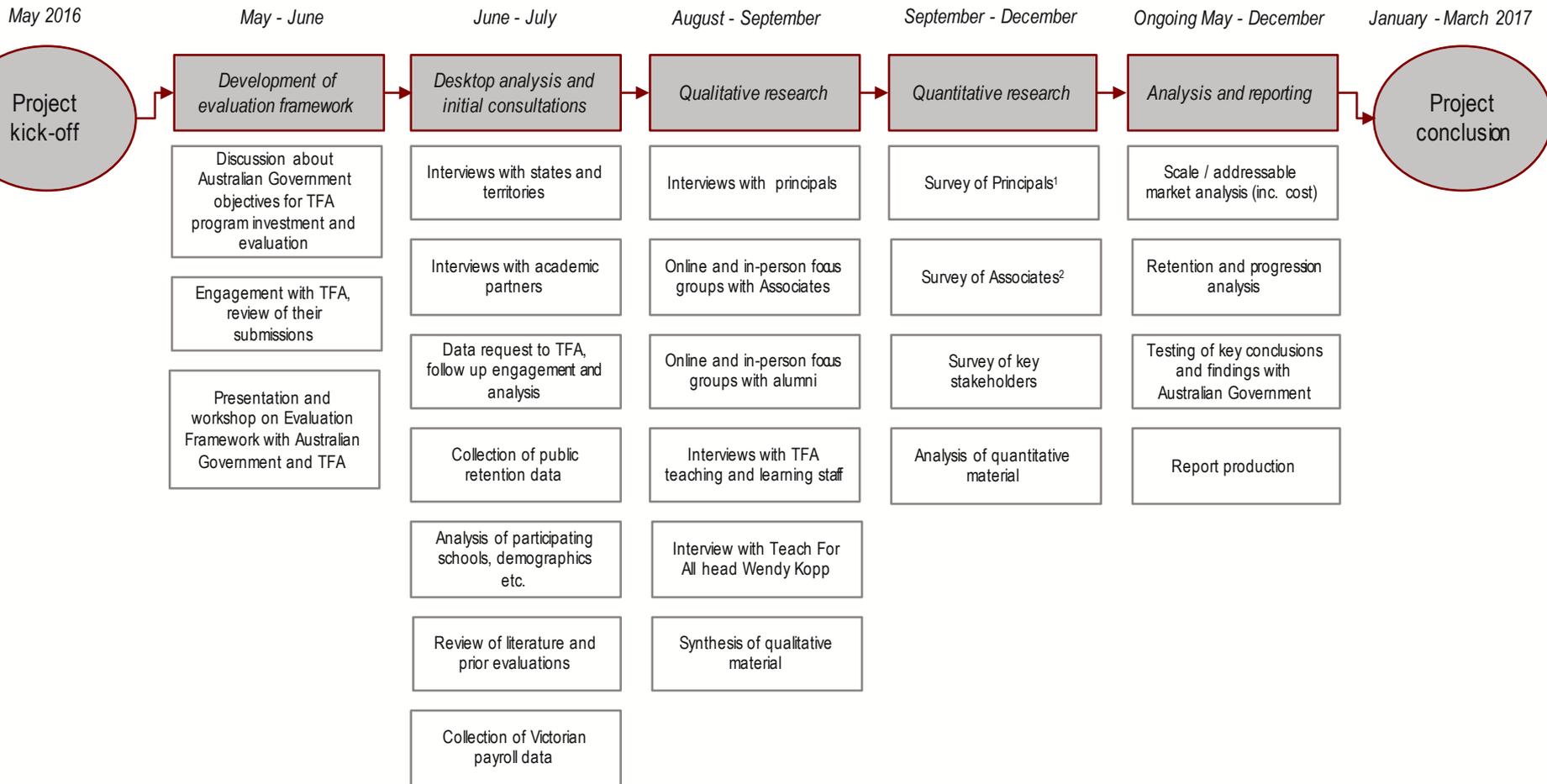
To:

- Develop a pipeline of education leaders
- Have a positive influence on colleagues / schools where Associates are placed
- Have an influence on initial teacher education.

These objectives are consistent with the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, and were confirmed by the Australian Government as representing its priorities.

Evaluation methodology

The substantive components of this evaluation lasted over nine months and included significant consultation and analysis.



1. dandolo sent an online survey to principals of all schools who have had TFA associates since the program began. 66 out of a possible 98 principals responded, this reflects a 67% response rate.
2. dandolo sent an online survey to Associates that were on placements in 2016 (i.e. the 2015 and 2016 cohorts), 152 of a possible 191 responded, this reflects an 80% response rate.

The TFA program's alignment with Australian Government objectives

Delivering high quality teachers: process

Associates have a challenging path, but become high quality teachers over the course of their placements.

Ingoing Associates are high-achievers, with positive character traits that are recognised and valued by principals.¹

Program design and process prepare Associates effectively...

Associates participate in an initial six week intensive residential course and complete other preparatory academic work totalling 13 weeks before they commence teaching. Across their two year placement they complete a Master of Teaching, receive additional support from TFA, including Teaching and Leadership Advisers (TLA), and participate in further intensives. They also have in-school mentors, and draw on informal support from other TFA Associates.

Generally, Associates highly value the special support they receive from their TLA who visit them on site, observe classes and provide coaching. TLA support is valued because it is frequent (generally fortnightly), tailored to specific coaching needs and because Associates can also reach out to TLAs for health and wellbeing support throughout the program.

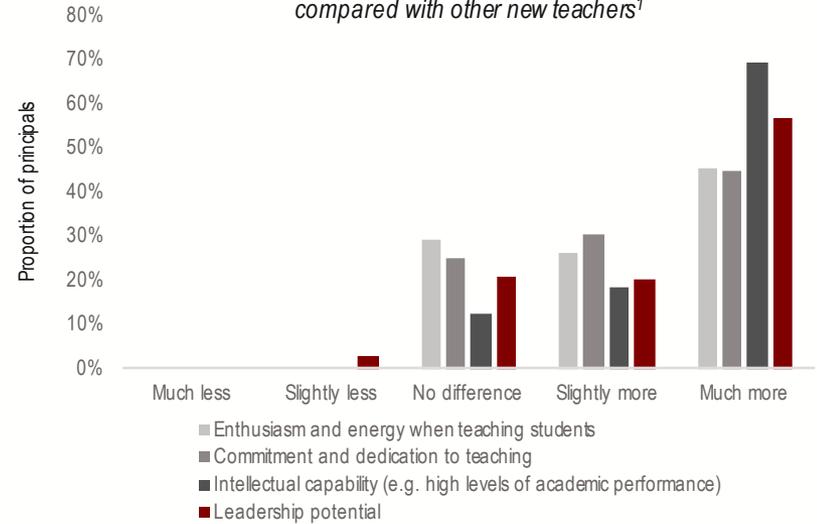
Associates also highly value their networks with other Associates and access them for resources, and for support through sharing of experience.

For a minority for whom TLA support is not frequent enough, or who feel less personally connected with their TLA or other Associates, getting the support they need can be a struggle.²

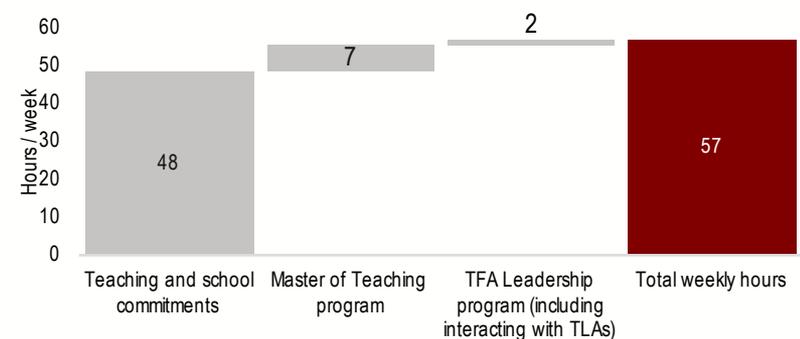
...but the program is highly challenging.

- Between a 0.8 FTE teaching load and completing the Master of Teaching most Associates work around 60 hours /week.
- TFA supports and the Master of Teaching program are not well integrated, with the latter seen as theoretical and somewhat removed from the everyday experience of Associates.
- More than 80% of Associates say their workload is difficult or very difficult to manage.³
- Associates tend to prioritise school and TFA commitments over their formal teaching qualification.⁴

Principal views of Associates' demonstration of positive traits compared with other new teachers¹



Associate weekly average hours of work⁵



1. dandolo interviews with and surveys of principals.
 2. dandolo focus groups with Associates and alumni, survey of Associates.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.

Delivering high quality teachers: impact

Associates begin teaching with less formal training than other new teachers, but by the end of their two-year placement are judged by principals to demonstrate impactful behaviours more frequently than other new teachers with similar classroom experience.

Most Associates report that they feel fully confident teaching towards the end of their first year, or at the beginning of their second.

Associates report variable performance among other early career teachers but believe that they are consistently among the best. They attribute this to a combination of their consistent enthusiasm and commitment and the specific TFA program supports they receive.

Principals noted the similarity of Associates and other early career teachers in interviews, however when surveyed regarding professional standards they consistently report that Associates outperform other early career teachers.

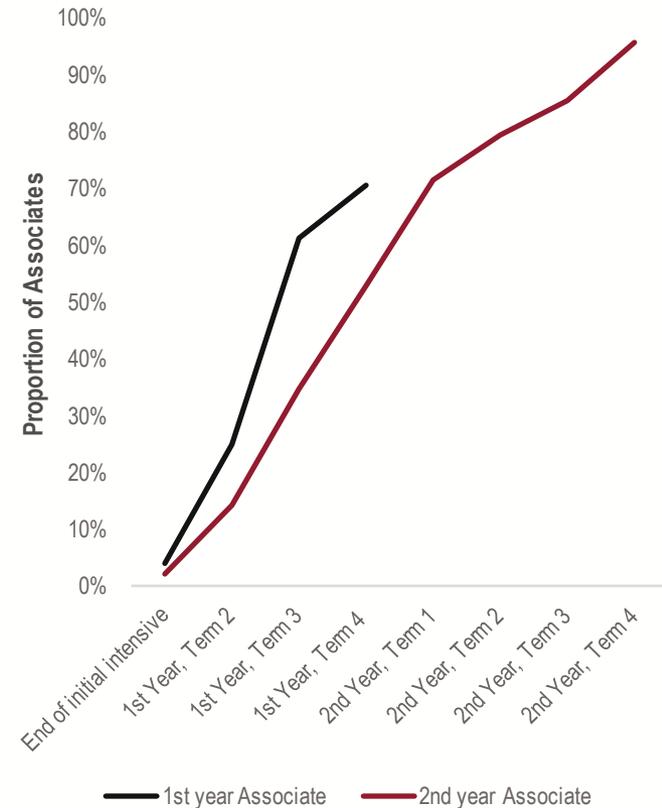
The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are produced by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. They comprise seven standards which outline what teachers should know and be able to do. They provide standards for different career stages. dandolo focused on two standards: proficient (the standard for teachers meeting full registration requirements) and highly accomplished (which are for teachers who are highly effective, skilled classroom practitioners).¹

Principals reported that Associates:

- Outperform their peers on all Australian Professional Standards for Teachers measures surveyed by dandolo after both have spent two years in the classroom.
- Demonstrated behaviour consistent with proficient standards 12% more frequently than their peers, and highly accomplished standards 18% more frequently than teachers with similar experience.

Detailed information about the demonstration of professional standards by Associates is provided on the next page.

Percentage of Associates who feel fully confident and capable as a teacher



1. For more details see: <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers>

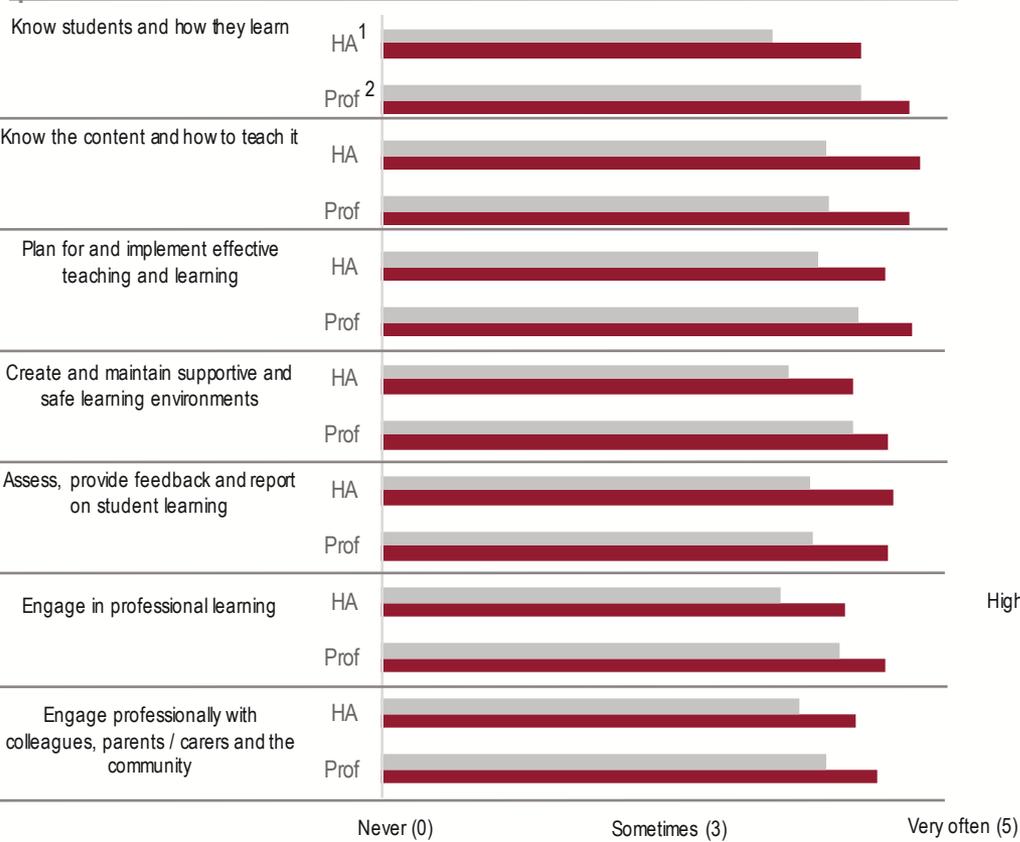
Note: dandolo did not seek to use student outcomes as a measure of impact in this case as: there is a lack of reliable data at an individual class / teacher level (rather than for whole schools), it was not realistic to gather such data in the course of this evaluation. This is because even if dandolo was able to do so, reservations about establishing causation and lag times would remain.

Delivering high quality teachers: demonstration of standards

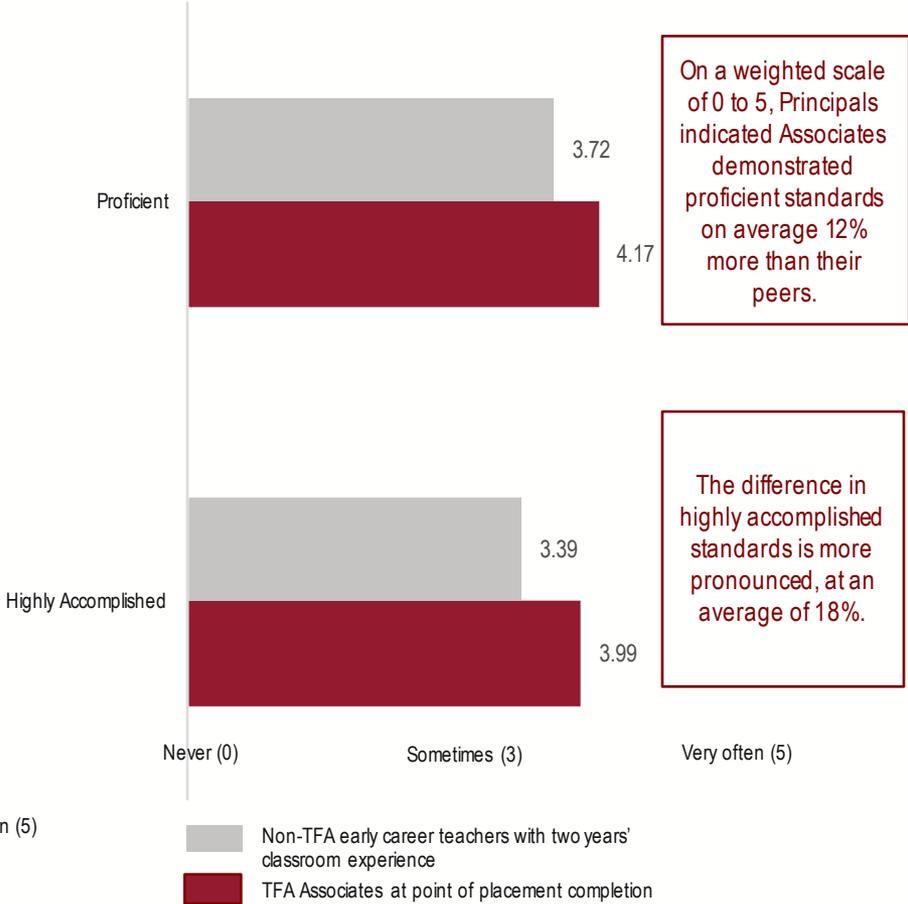
Principals report that Associates outperform other new teachers when assessed against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The difference in proficient standards is modest, but more pronounced for highly accomplished standards.

Performance against professional standards



Performance comparison by level of standard



Source: dandolo survey of principals. Principals were asked to describe how frequently Associates at the end of their placement and other new teachers with two years experience demonstrated knowledge and practices aligned with Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

1. Highly Accomplished
2. Proficient

Focus on disadvantaged schools

Most but not all placements are in schools below the national median based on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).¹ All placements have met state and territory eligibility requirements.

States and territories currently set eligibility requirements for schools, and all placements have been consistent with these requirements.

Participating states and territories that have chosen to have TFA program placements have set their own requirements for school eligibility. For example, Victoria has determined that schools with placements must be under the ICSEA national median and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) focuses on the bottom 10% of schools in the ACT.² All TFA program placements have been consistent with state and territory eligibility requirements.³

Most placements are below the national median. Some are above it.

Placements are mostly below, but not significantly below, the national median based on ICSEA. Placement schools tend to be clustered immediately below the median, rather than in Australia's most disadvantaged schools. 13% of placements were in schools that are above the national median. This is primarily due to jurisdictions setting eligibility requirements that reference local, rather than national, definitions of disadvantage. This results in inconsistency, and some inequity in which schools receive placements.

At the conclusion of placements there is a moderate shift to less disadvantaged schools among those still teaching.

When Associates conclude their placements they are free to move into other roles. Based on dandolo estimates there is a shift towards less disadvantaged schools with around 34% of post placement teaching years above the national median.⁴

National distribution of schools



Distribution of TFA school placements



Distribution of post-placement teaching years



Key

● National median

■ Proportion below the national median

■ Proportion above the national median

1. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) was developed by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority to describe the average level of educational advantage of the school's student population relative to those of other schools. It applies nationally, and is commonly used by the Australian Government. For more details see: https://acaraweb.blob.core.windows.net/resources/About_icsea_2014.pdf

2. Based on dandolo interview with ACT.

3. Based on dandolo interviews with states and territories.

4. Based on dandolo retention analysis. See page 16 for more details.

Matching specific skill requirements

Associates deliver the skills that schools need. Principals recruit them out of preference, not necessity.

Principals generally think Associates are well-equipped for the roles that they are recruited for.

Principals cite Associates' intellectual capability and knowledge of content and subject matter as particular strengths. In particular, they value the currency of Associates' knowledge, as they tend to have recently completed undergraduate qualifications in relevant disciplines.¹

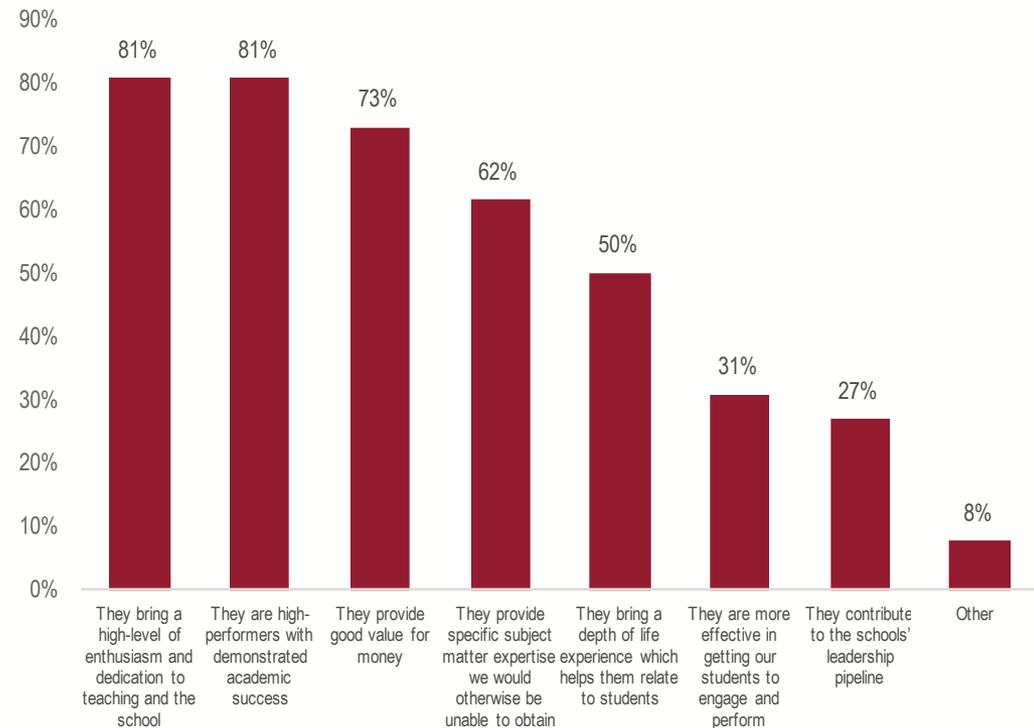
TFA recruits a large number of candidates with qualifications in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, this is recognised as an area of national need.

In most cases, Associates are recruited because of preference rather than because principals do not have other choices.

Principals are not generally employing Associates out of necessity. 70% of principals indicated that they consider they would have been able to employ a teacher with subject matter expertise required if an Associate was not an option. Instead they choose them for their attitudes, capability or a combination of both.²

As shown in the figure to the right, Associates' attitude and demonstrated academic success are the most significant factors for principals who intend to recruit Associates in future.

Reasons principals will recruit Associates in future³



1. dandolo survey of principals and interviews.

2. Ibid.

3. Based on dandolo survey, question was only asked of principals who indicated they did intend to recruit TFA associates in future.

Teaching for as long as possible

dandolo's analysis indicates that most Associates remain teaching for two years after their placements, and that after placements there is a moderate shift to less disadvantaged schools.

dandolo analysis found that:¹

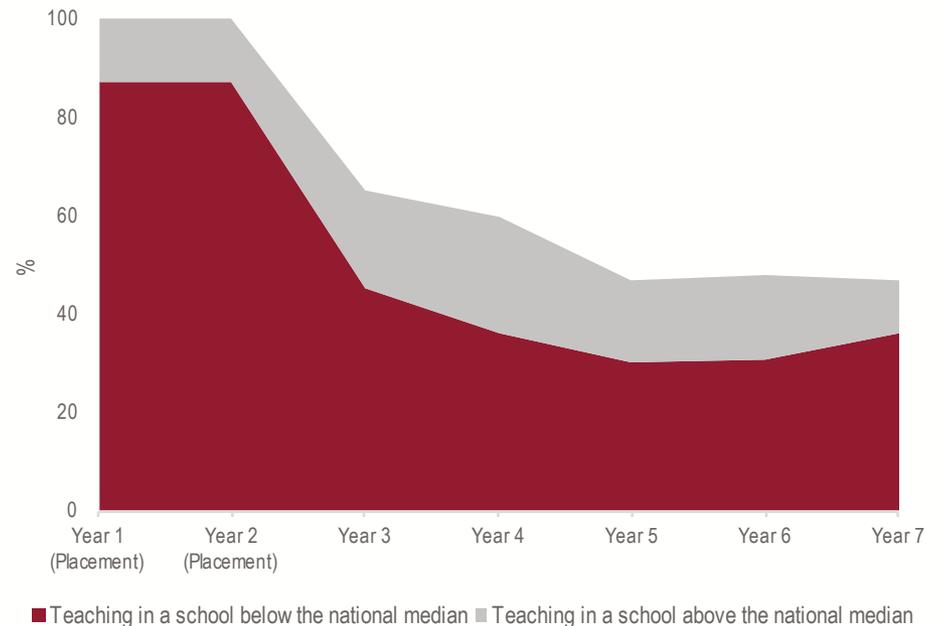
- In the first year out of placement 65% are still teaching, and 45% in schools below the ICSEA national median.
- In the second year out 60% are still teaching, and 36% in schools below the national median.
- From the third year the total population teaching remains steady at just below half, with around 30% in disadvantaged schools.
- Based on this data, and normalised to a potential seven years teaching, we estimate that the average Associate spends 4.7 years teaching including their two year placement, of which 3.2 years are in a school below the ICSEA national median.

School-based stakeholders consistently report an interest in greater retention.²

This evaluation was not able to draw comparisons with other new teachers in comparable schools. However, school-based stakeholders all describe interests in greater retention:

- Principals who do not intend to hire Associates again primarily cite concerns about retention, and wanting greater return on the investment they make in Associate training and development, given their length of service in schools.
- Principals who are enthusiastic about the TFA program also expressed strong interest in greater retention.
- A range of stakeholders reported that other teachers are frustrated by Associate retention, and see this as demonstrating a lack of genuine commitment.³

Estimate of retention of TFA Associates in teaching roles



Note on calculation

dandolo was able to construct an estimate of retention based on a range of data sources. dandolo was able to compile a detailed view of alumni behaviour for each year following placements for every TFA cohort. This was based on a combination of:

- Victorian payroll data for teaching staff at Victorian government schools provided in an aggregated and anonymised form (~50% of records).
- Publicly available information about alumni e.g. LinkedIn profiles or school newsletters (~30% of records).
- Inferences for the remaining population (~20%), based on the behaviour of the known population and for Victorian placements, being able to certainly exclude teaching in Victorian Government schools through access to payroll data.

1. dandolo analysis of Associate retention, driven by Victorian payroll data (provided in an aggregated and anonymized form), public information and some inferences.
2. dandolo survey and interview of principals, survey and focus groups of Associates and alumni.
3. dandolo interviews with principals and attitudes reported by Associates and alumni in focus groups.

Other objectives: delivery of other benefits

TFA Associates are a positive influence on the schools they work in, demonstrate leadership qualities and appear to progress into leadership roles more quickly than other early career teachers.

The TFA program contributes to the development of a pipeline of leaders.

Associates are actively encouraged and supported to pursue a leadership path by TFA both in schools and in the broader education system.¹ Conversely, the Australian Government is focused on the demonstration of leadership qualities within schools.

Associates' greater demonstration of highly accomplished Australian Professional Standards for Teachers is a lead indicator of preparedness for leadership roles.² Highly accomplished standards commonly refer to respect from and influence on other teachers.

Anecdotally, Associates appear to have an accelerated path into leadership positions in schools. By their fourth year out of placement, most Associates, based on public information, describe themselves as being in a leadership role. However, information about new teacher progression in schools with similar characteristics is not available so the extent to which Associates take on leadership roles relative to others could not be substantiated.³

Associates can have a positive influence on schools and peers.

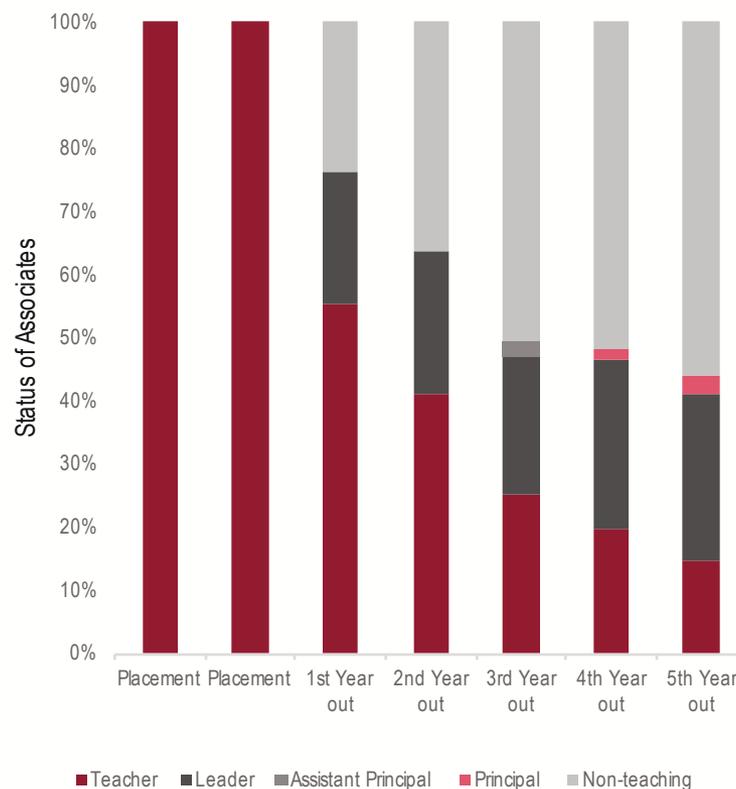
Some principals report that Associates provide “more value in staff rooms than classrooms”. They spread specific content knowledge, enthusiasm and access to professional supports that they can share.⁴

The TFA program demonstrates some promising practice in teacher education.

The TFA program represents innovative practice supporting high-performing candidates in disadvantaged schools, in particular through support from TLAs. However, TFA's offering is no longer unique as an employment-based pathway, or in its focus on disadvantage.⁵

Influencing initial teacher education more broadly would require increased collaboration with TFA's academic partner(s). It is likely to be best supported by stable and long-term relationships between TFA and its academic partner(s).

Associate / alumni progression into leadership roles⁶



1. dandolo interviews with principals, focus groups with alumni and Associates.
2. Based on dandolo survey of principals, see page 13 for more detail.
3. Based on dandolo analysis of publicly available information e.g. LinkedIn profiles. Note that this analysis is limited because of: reliance on self reported information, no consistent definition of 'leadership role', no comparator population available.
4. dandolo interviews with principals.
5. See for example, Melbourne Graduate School of Education Masters of Teaching (Internship), National Exceptional Teaching for Disadvantaged Schools (NETDS) program.
6. Based on interviews with principals, focus groups with alumni and Associates and review of publicly available data such as LinkedIn profiles.

Prospective areas for change

Prospective areas for change (1)

dandolo has identified six areas that merit investigation to further align the TFA program with the Australian Government's objectives.

1

Structures and strategies to increase retention

Rationale to consider further

School stakeholders express a strong preference for longer retention. Structures and strategies e.g. longer or differently structured placements, incentives etc. can increase retention.

Potential benefits

Increase value for money of Australian Government investment.
Program more attractive to schools.
Ability to reduce pressure on Associates to complete qualifications in two years.

Implementation considerations

Best structures and strategies to optimise retention while maintaining overall program effectiveness.
Impact on recruitment of candidates.
Alignment with teacher registration and employment approaches in states and territories.
Change in program structure, potential changes in cost.
Requires extended commitment from schools and jurisdictions.
May influence ability to target more disadvantaged schools.

2

National eligibility standard for schools

Decisions about eligibility have been devolved to states and territories. This has resulted in different requirements that are inconsistent when considered nationally, and has led to placements in some schools above the national median. There is scope to revisit eligibility through a national standard.

National consistency and equity.
Renewed focus on policy objective of targeting disadvantaged schools.

Development of a clear definition of disadvantage that is: not overly simplistic, does not create unintended consequences.
Impact on schools currently participating who may not meet a new definition.
Variation of impact for different states and territories.

3

Better integrate Master of Teaching into TFA program

Both TFA and its academic partner seek to provide practical teaching support however this is not well-integrated.
Associates tend to find TFA-led training more directly applicable to their experience.
There may be opportunities to change both TFA and academic partner supports to be better aligned and integrated.

Increased value and effectiveness of the program.
Greater relevance of academic qualification.
Alignment of TFA and partner work.
Reduce burden on Associates.
Cost reductions (from avoiding duplicated supports).

Tailoring to the TFA program experience while maintaining high academic standards.
Equity / fairness with other graduate initial teacher education pathways.

Prospective areas for change (2)

dandolo has identified six areas that merit investigation to further align the TFA program with the Australian Government's objectives.

	<i>Rationale to consider further</i>	<i>Potential benefits</i>	<i>Implementation considerations</i>
<p>4</p> <p>Cost sharing</p>	<p>The Australian Government is currently the major funder of the TFA program, accounting for about three quarters of funding per Associate.</p> <p>States and territories, and Associates themselves, accrue significant benefit from the program, so should contribute to costs.</p>	<p>Lower Australian Government cost per Associate.</p> <p>Alignment of Australian, state and territory government approach.</p> <p>Support clarity around the purpose and impact of different levels of government contributions and ensure that different levels of government are not inadvertently funding the same activities.</p> <p>Attract Associates who are prepared to make a greater commitment and therefore may stay teaching longer.</p>	<p>Alignment with and equity between states and territories.</p> <p>Potential considerations of higher individual contributions for Associate recruitment.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>A return to contestable funding for employment-based pathways</p>	<p>TFA was originally awarded funding as the result of a competitive process. Returning to this model allows its proposition to be tested against potential competitors, and may stimulate the development of more employment-based pathways.</p>	<p>Focus from providers on alignment with Australian Government objectives.</p> <p>Lower costs; geographic expansion; innovation.</p> <p>Diversity through supporting multiple providers.</p>	<p>Assessing / supporting the development of a market for providers.</p> <p>Determining best timing to introduce contestable funding.</p> <p>Ensuring quality from all providers.</p> <p>Potential scale economies and diseconomies.</p>
<p>6</p> <p>Change in stakeholder relationships</p>	<p>TFA's sustainability and success is dependent on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian, state and territory governments as major funders and owners of TFA's authorising environment. Its relationship with academic partners who deliver a major program component and represent a major program cost. <p>This evaluation has identified challenges in these relationships and opportunities for recalibration in the relationships between TFA, governments and academic partners.</p>	<p>Forward-looking accountability and reporting requirements that match strongly with Australian Government objectives.</p> <p>Shared view between Australian, state and territory governments on issues such as objectives, eligibility and funding.</p> <p>Stronger and more collaborative relationships between TFA and its academic partners supporting greater innovation, and integration of programs.</p>	<p>Refreshing reporting requirements and performance measures for Australian Government / TFA contract to strongly reflect Australian Government objectives and priorities.</p>

Areas not considered prospective for change

dandolo's conclusion was that in the short to medium term: significant growth in program scale is unlikely, there are no obvious savings in the current delivery model, and scale economies are unlikely to be significant.

Rationale to not consider further

1

Significant growth in program scale

dandolo considered a range of factors to assess the potential for significant growth of program scale in the short term:

- The *theoretical addressable market* for the TFA program is large: including nearly 700 schools.
- However, *current regulatory and employment settings* in non-participating jurisdictions reduce this by more than half. Based on consultations with these jurisdictions there is limited scope for change in the short term. Historically, the introduction of new jurisdictions has been the major driver of increases in scale.
- For *participating states and territories*:
 - Tasmania is a new participant from 2017 with 13 Associates.
 - Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory and Western Australia generally report some challenges in filling placements at this time, and forecast a maximum of 50% growth in the number of Associates in the next five years.
- *Australian Government funding commitments* create an effective ceiling on growth in the next two years.

As a result of all these factors, dandolo concluded that the number of Associates was unlikely to increase from its 2016 level of 124 to more than 150 by 2019.

2

Cost savings through changes in current model

TFA provided dandolo with a briefing about current cost structures and opportunities for reduction. dandolo accepted these at face value and used this as the basis for current costs. dandolo was not able to access detailed TFA cost information. However, on the basis of discussions with TFA and other stakeholders, and publicly available information, dandolo can make the following points at a general level:

- TFA outlined a number of initiatives it has taken to make savings within its existing model of provision.
- TFA appears to have significant fixed costs, and therefore many opportunities to reduce overall costs are likely to rely on an increase in scale (see below).

Therefore, dandolo was not able to identify significant savings within the existing TFA model.

From a comparative perspective, the TFA program has a higher unit cost than other initial teacher education pathways. This remains the case when accounting for non-completion rates, and non-teaching rates associated with other courses. However, the TFA program is significantly different from most other providers, and also generates different outcomes. Therefore, it was not possible to complete an 'apples with apples' comparison.

A contestable process for Australian Government funding for employment-based pathways would allow for the TFA program's costs to be tested against potential competitors.

3

Scale economies

Realising material economies of scale relies on a meaningful increase in scale which dandolo concluded was unlikely (see point one above).

Suggested next steps

As a consequence of this evaluation dandolo considers that the Australian Government should:

1 Explore potential changes identified in this evaluation with TFA and other stakeholders.

dandolo has identified six areas for prospective change to further align TFA's operations and program with the Australian Government's objectives. These findings are preliminary, require further investigation, and are designed to support a useful discussion between TFA, the Australian Government and other stakeholders.

2 Convene discussions with states and territories to support alignment of approaches to issues such as funding, eligibility of schools and potential changes to the TFA model.

The Australian Government, states and territories are, collectively, major enablers of the TFA program:

- The Australian Government is the major funder.
- States and territories govern the regulations which support employment-based pathways and are increasingly becoming significant funding contributors in their own right.

As a result there is significant overlap and alignment of interests in the TFA program and as such, a closer relationship between those participating jurisdictions and the Australian Government would be beneficial and should be further developed.

3 Participate in, or have direct oversight of arrangements for TFA's academic partner.

TFA's academic partner(s):

- Provide a core element of the program, and as such, an effective and collaborative relationship with TFA is crucial to its success.
- Through TFA, receive significant Australian Government funding.

In addition, academic partners have potential to drive reform and innovation in wider initial teacher education.

For all these reasons the Australian Government has a significant interest in the selection of and relationship with TFA's academic partner.

dandolo considers the Australian Government should explore formalising some form of oversight of this relationship. This would include, at a minimum, regular tripartite meetings, and Australian Government involvement in procurement.