

MEDIA RELEASE

Newest teachers more likely to be teaching out of field

24 August 2016: Early career secondary teachers are more likely than their experienced colleagues to be teaching outside their area of expertise, according to a report, *Out-of-field teaching in Australian secondary schools*, released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Report author, ACER Senior Research Fellow Dr Paul Weldon, said 37 per cent of Year 7-10 teachers with up to two years of experience are teaching a subject out of field, compared to 25 per cent of teachers with more than five years of experience.

Overall, about 26 per cent of teachers at Years 7-10, and about 15 per cent of teachers at Years 11-12 were teaching a subject out of field.

The subjects most likely to be taken by a teacher working out of field include Media (41 per cent), Geography (40 per cent), Religious Studies (38 per cent) and Information Technology (34 per cent). About one quarter of teachers are working out of field in Languages, History, Graphic Communication, Computing and Social Studies.

Classes in remote schools or locations with a low socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely to be taught by an out-of-field teacher. In Years 7-10 about 26 per cent of classes in remote schools are taught by an out-of-field teacher, compared to 14 per cent in metropolitan schools. In low-SES locations, 19 per cent of classes are taught by an out-of-field teacher, compared to 13 per cent in schools in high-SES locations.

“Recent calls to improve the quality of initial teacher education and select the best candidates into teaching aim to make high-quality teachers available to all students, but this may not be effective if they are teaching outside their fields of expertise,” Dr Weldon said.

“In every subject, the number of teachers who have specialised but are not currently teaching their specialisation far outweighs the number of teachers who are teaching that subject out of field.”

“Further work is required to better understand the demand for teachers across different subjects and the nature of the pressures on schools that cause out-of-field teaching. A good first step would be for all state teacher registration bodies to collect data on the distribution of secondary teachers by subject,” Dr Weldon said.

“Further investigation of how schools manage resourcing and timetables to reduce out-of-field teaching would allow us to learn from successful solutions. Reducing the proportion of beginning teachers who are required to teach outside their fields is an important means of supporting those teachers and may improve retention rates,” Dr Weldon said.

Demand for secondary teachers will increase during the next 10 to 15 years, with strong growth in student numbers across most of Australia.

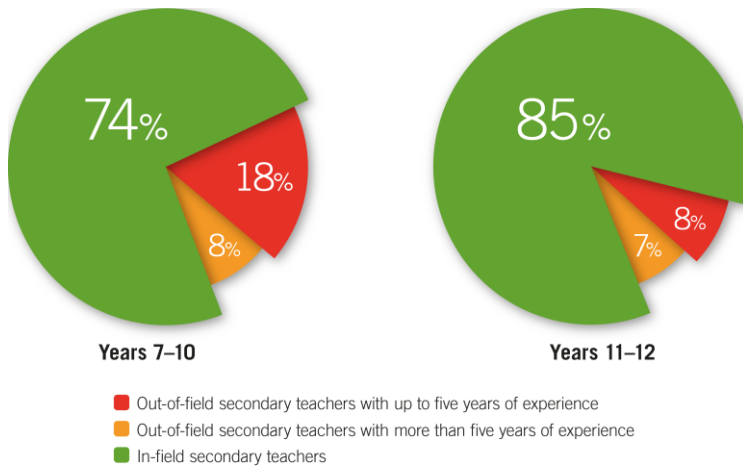
In the report, out-of-field teaching is defined as a secondary teacher teaching a subject for which they have not studied above first year at university, and for which they have not studied teaching methodology. The report is a new analysis of data from the Staff in Australia’s Schools survey in 2013, which surveyed more than 10 000 teachers from 760 secondary schools. This report looks at more subject areas and also includes analyses of out-of-field teaching based on teacher experience, geographic location and SES.

Read the full report, *Out-of-field teaching in Australian secondary schools*, Policy Insights 6, by Dr Paul Weldon and published by ACER, at <http://research.acer.edu.au/policyinsights/6>

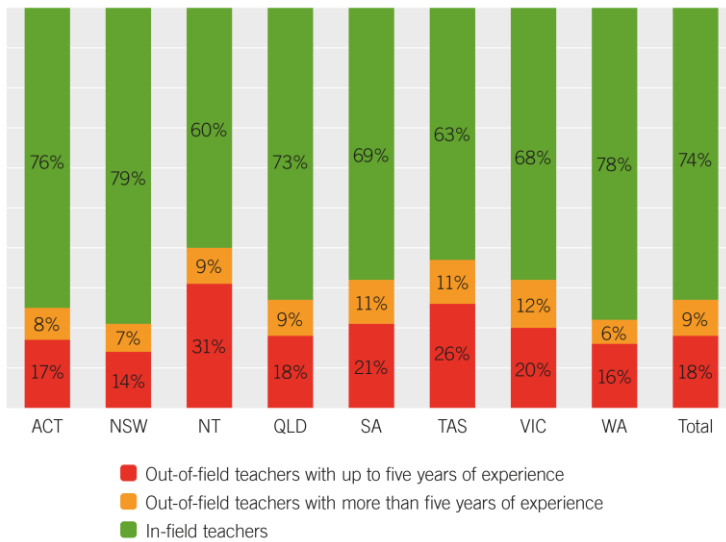
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Media enquiries: Julia Robinson, 03 9277 5582 or 0419 340 058 communications@acer.edu.au

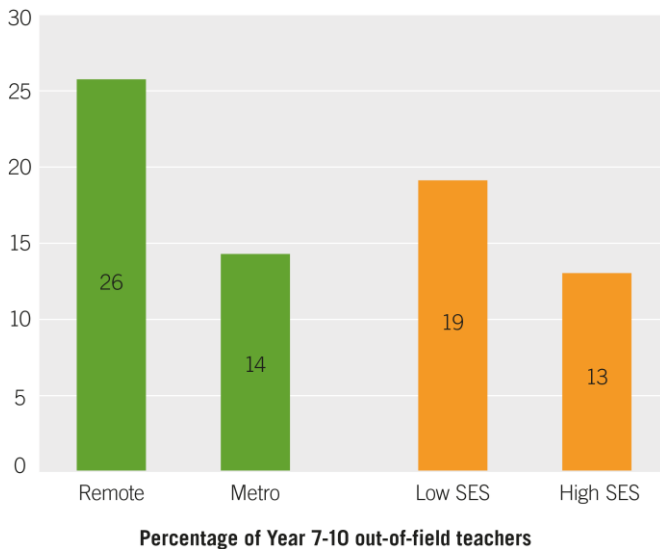
Attachment: See page 2 for infographics.



Teachers of Years 7-10 and Years 11-12 teaching out-of-field, at least some of the time



Teachers of Years 7-10 teaching out-of-field at least some of the time, by state/territory (may not equal 100 due to rounding)



Percentage of Year 7-10 out-of-field teachers