



College of Education

Te Kura Ākau Taitoka

Kia ora Principals and Centre Managers,

On behalf of the University of Otago College of Education, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for working with our student teachers during their professional practice experiences (teaching practicum). Your ongoing support is greatly appreciated.

This letter is about addressing the provisions of the [Children's Act 2014](#) (formerly Vulnerable Children Act 2014) and its associated regulations [Children's \(Requirements for Safety Checks of Children's Workers\) Regulations 2015](#). As part of the Teaching Council requirements for ITE requirements, in addition to the Council's requirements for confidential written referee reports and visual interviews, providers must also undertake Vulnerable Children Act safety checks on behalf of the organisations where professional experience placements occur, prior to those placements taking place. You may rely on this letter as confirmation that, for student teacher placement purposes, we carry out the required safety check on your behalf.

As you will know, the provisions of the Act came fully into effect on 1 July 2016. The Children's Action Plan, in coordination with MOE, Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (formerly Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand), Universities New Zealand and associated organisations have been working to support education settings and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers to address the provisions of the law. I would like to remind you of the steps being taken by us to safety check our student teacher candidates.

University of Otago College of Education Selection Process

1. A candidate who is applying for admission to an ITE programme at the University of Otago College of Education must submit official documentation to the University. This includes original or verified copies of primary and secondary identity documents (as defined by the Act) and verified qualifications. As part of enrolment, the forms of ID must be sighted in person. In addition, the candidate must supply two confidential referee reports. If the candidate is a school leaver, one of the referee reports is prepared by the candidate's school. All candidates must also complete a New Zealand Police Vetting Service request and consent form.
2. Candidates are required to declare and provide an explanation of any criminal convictions as part of their application. When this occurs, a convictions panel is convened to discuss the application. The panel considers the conviction type, time since it was incurred, penalties served, and the candidate's explanation. A candidate with a minor conviction may be given an opportunity to be interviewed for an ITE programme, but only if the University is confident that upon graduation from the programme they would likely be eligible to apply for teacher registration and certification in New Zealand. Therefore applications are either declined at this point or proceed to shortlisting. Any candidate who has an offence listed in Schedule 2 of the Principal Act would have their application declined.
3. The candidate is interviewed by a panel. The panel generally consists of experienced teacher educators and a representative from the profession. Applicants' references are considered and if any questions are raised, referees are contacted for further information.

4. If the applicant is offered a place in the programme, their place is conditional until the satisfactory Police vet is obtained.

Therefore, as per the Act, the section 31 safety check components are addressed as follows:

- Identity confirmation occurs twice, as part of the submission and sighting of two forms of ID, consistent with those listed in the Schedule to the Children's (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children's Workers) Regulations 2015, Confirmation of Identity.
- Referee checks and Police vetting occurs as part of the selection process described earlier.
- A risk assessment is made subsequent to interview and the candidate is offered a place in the programme, or not.

Therefore, you may be assured that all teacher education candidates have been Police vetted, interviewed, and judged as 'no risk' as part of their selection to ITE. Any students whose programme of study extends beyond the normal three-year term go through a re-check process. This includes being police vetted again.

The University of Otago College of Education publishes the [Initial Teacher Education – Professional Standards and Criminal Offences policy](#) in the University of Otago Calendar and website, which outlines the University's obligation to ensure we have confidence in the character and behaviour of teacher education candidates. Breaches of professional standards and convictions incurred during students' ITE programme are notified to the Associate Dean (Teacher Education), in writing. A determination about the student's eligibility to continue to study towards the qualification will be made by the Dean of the College of Education on the recommendation of the Associate Dean Initial Teacher Education.

In summary, please be assured that any student teacher coming to your centre or school has been fully safety checked – including Police Vetting. Please contact me if you require any further information or clarification of our selection processes.

Once again, I extend my sincere appreciation of the important role you play in supporting our student teachers.

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