

Teacher Capability Assessment Tool (TCAT) is an evidence-based approach to the selection and development of pre-service teachers. The tool assesses a range of cognitive and non-cognitive domains associated with successful completion of initial teacher education programs. The TCAT instrument is based on current research of quality teaching and is designed to improve the selection of students into teacher education programs. To date, no other cohesive or comprehensive model, grounded in research, has been developed for pre-service teacher selection, although there are such models in other comparable occupations.

Our model of pre-service teacher selection is comprised of two core and two extended components. The two core components are: Informed Self-Selection, and Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skill Assessment (*Figure 1*). The extended components comprise a Structured Behavioural Interview and Teaching Demonstration.

“TCAT is an evidence-based approach to the selection of pre-service educators”

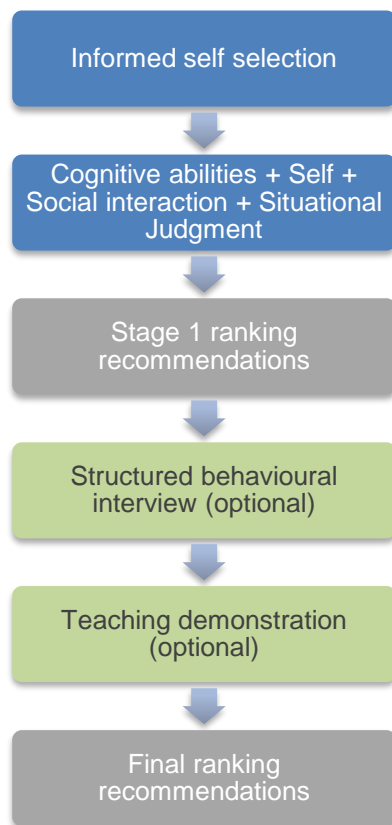


Figure 1: The TCAT Model of Student Selection for Entry into Initial Teaching Programs

The core components are completed online. As prospective pre-service teachers complete the web-based Informed Self-Selection and Assessment, data are collected on a number of personal attributes and capabilities related to their experience and readiness to enter pre-service training, their Ability, Self and Social Interaction.

Core Components

The **informed self-selection** section allows candidates to demonstrate thoughtful and considered understanding of the teaching role and elements that contribute to success. Research confirms that having a clear and realistic expectation of a role improves retention, enjoyment and success.

Prospective pre-service teachers come with a wealth of experience in areas closely linked with teaching and the subject area they wish to teach. This section allows candidates to articulate their work and professional experience, plus experiences related to teaching along with the subject area they wish to teach, in order to assess suitability and readiness for teaching. This section also allows for the assessment of academic ability and achievement (i.e., previous GPA) as these are commonly considered to be important factors in predicting success at university, and also within the teaching profession.

Some of the written responses in this section are assessed against general teacher traits, such as: know the students and how they learn, plan for effective learning, creating a supportive environment, and others.

A measure of general **cognitive ability** consisting of numerical, verbal and non-verbal reasoning tasks is included in TCAT and provides an indication of candidates' strengths and areas for growth in these domains. Evidence suggests, cognitive ability is a good predictor of occupational performance.

The **self** section assesses qualities such as disposition, self-regulation and resilience in the face of challenge. For teachers, such qualities are related to higher job performance, an increased understanding of how students learn and better ability to plan and manage time.

Teaching is an inherently social occupation hence assessment of aspects of a candidate's **social interaction** is important. TCAT includes self-report items related to a candidates' communication style, ability to act fairly, cultural sensitivity and self-awareness. The inclusion of these items is based on evidence that teachers need to be skilled in the efficient transfer of information and to act in a democratic and fair manner. Teachers must also be able to both recognize that students come from a range of backgrounds and cultural contexts and to leverage these differences to enhance learning.

Finally, a set of **situational judgment** items further assess several of the non-cognitive factors through a candidate's chosen course of action when faced with common teaching circumstances. Responses to these items reflect implicit information and further validate the responses from the self-report assessments.

Extended Components

The **interview** component involves a trained panel of interviewers who assess candidates in six key research-supported areas of relevance, including Interpersonal Skills and Behavior Under Pressure. The purpose of the interview is to gain valid data from the prospective pre-service teacher, in a manner that reflects their own expression and ways of thinking within the complexity of their daily experience.

The **teaching demonstration** component is a means of assessing candidates' performance in a classroom environment. Candidates are presented with a teaching scenario and asked to prepare a short lesson, based on a learning area of their choice, and to present this lesson as a role to a panel of assessors. The assessing panel is comprised of experienced and active education experts (e.g., school principals and teacher educators).

Process

Information from TCAT is aggregated and analyzed to provide a profile of the candidate. Successful pre-service teachers (those who have been accepted into an ITE course) are given a summary report (*Figure 2*), showing a comparison to minimum standards in the cohort. The summary can be used to assist the pre-service teacher to set individual goals relevant to work placement and preparation for teaching practice. Aggregated data across the cohort assists in planning and fine-tuning course offerings based on identified areas of strength and development to help better prepare pre-service teachers for classroom teaching.

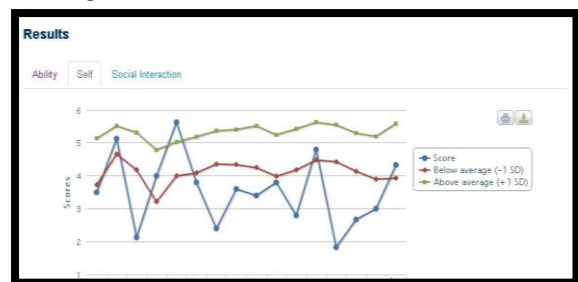


Figure 2: Example graph from student report.

TCAT information provides clients with richness comparable to, if not better than, standard interview and entry procedures. Further, this tool allows for a tailored selection procedure, as scores can be variously combined, considered and weighted, to suit the needs of our clientele in order to make decisions about student selection in the current data-driven era.

Contacts

Asoc. Prof. Janet Clinton
Chief Investigator
e. jjclinton@unimelb.edu.au

Dr. Gerard Calnin
Senior Fellow
e. gcalnin@unimelb.edu.au

Georgia Dawson
Research Manager
e. georgia.dawson@unimelb.edu.au

Lee Kiong Au
Project Manager
e. lee-kiong.au@unimelb.edu.au