Introduction
This project studied stress levels among education students whilst undertaking teaching practicum and theory units. Three major papers were published in relation to first-year and other years’ education students, male education students, and undergraduate and graduate entry students.

A summary of the three papers follows.

Survey links men’s stress responses to male teacher shortage
Heightened stress could be causing a widespread shortage of male teachers in Australian classrooms. Using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and an online questionnaire, there were six significant findings: a) male pre-service teachers had higher stress levels than the general population; b) males preferred to undertake their placement in middle or above level schools; c) the age of male pre-service teachers was strongly correlated with their stress levels; d) over half of male pre-service teachers were not aware of or had no access to support; e) optimistic male pre-service teachers had higher stress levels than pessimistic males; and f) male pre-service teachers found collaborative group work more stressful than other tasks. Stakeholders such as teacher educators, male teachers and policy makers will find this paper useful in terms of understanding male pre-service teachers’ stress levels and the implications for provision of support in teacher education programs and for the retention of male teachers.

Comparing stress levels of graduate and undergraduate pre-service teachers following their teaching practicums
In comparison to undergraduate pre-service teachers (PSTs), graduate PSTs have previously completed a three-year bachelor degree and are enrolled in initial teacher education (ITE) programs to become a teacher. Following a review of literature on teachers’ sense of stress, reflection and identity development, this study compared the stress levels and concerns of graduate PSTs with those of undergraduate PSTs. One hundred and fifty-one graduate and one hundred and fifty-nine undergraduate PSTs participated in the study. The graduate PSTs had significantly higher stress levels than undergraduate PSTs (p < .01). Contributing stressors from both groups’ own demographic background and teaching practicum perspectives were investigated and compared. These findings provide an empirical basis from which to develop appropriate strategies to support both groups of PSTs to manage their stress, develop their identity and personal beliefs and increase their retention in teacher education programs.

First-year education students are more stressed
First-year education students appear to be under more stress than those in other disciplines. The first-year education students had significantly higher stress levels than other years’ education students, (p < .01). Contributing stressors included academic work commitment; completing placement and related performance assessments in schools and at university; having a good understanding of the requirements of professional teaching, such as classroom management, and working with mentor teachers, and conflicting work and family commitments. These findings provide greater understanding about the stressors experienced by first-year education students and usefully inform ways to help this group achieve their study and career goals.

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References