An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta
The Teaching Council

Final Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following a review of the reconceptualised Initial Teacher Education programme at Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Professional Master of Education

October 2014

Contents

1. Background

1.1 The Teaching Council's Review and Accreditation Function

The Teaching Council is the statutory body charged with setting the standards for entry to the teaching profession and ensuring that these standards are upheld.

In accordance with Section 38 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, the Council shall:

(a) review and accredit the programmes of teacher education and training provided by institutions of higher education and training in the State,

(b) review the standards of education and training appropriate to a person entering a programme of teacher education and training, and

(c) review the standards of knowledge, skill and competence required for the practice of teaching,

and shall advise the Minister and, as it considers appropriate, the institutions concerned.

The Teaching Council's role in relation to the review and accreditation of programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is distinct from the academic accreditation which programmes also undergo. Academic accreditation is based on the suitability of a programme for the award of a degree/diploma, whereas professional accreditation for any profession is a judgement as to whether a programme prepares one for entry into that profession.

The review and accreditation of programmes of ITE by the Teaching Council provides an opportunity for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to demonstrate that they offer quality programmes of teacher education. It is expected that the graduates of such programmes will achieve programme aims and learning outcomes which are aligned with the values, professional dispositions, and the standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence that are central to the practice of teaching.

1.2 Review and Accreditation Strategy

In order to guide its review of programmes, the Teaching Council has published *Initial Teacher Education: Strategy for the Review and Accreditation of Programmes* (hereinafter referred to as the Council's review strategy). That document sets out the process by which programmes are reviewed.

1.3 National Policy Framework

In carrying out reviews, the Council is mindful of its *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* which sets out its vision for teacher education at all stages of the continuum – ITE, Induction, and Continuing Professional Development. Published in 2011, the policy highlights the evolving and dynamic context for teaching and the increasingly complex role of teachers in Ireland today. The policy states that "…the time is now right for a thorough and fresh look at teacher education to ensure that tomorrow's teachers are competent to meet the challenges that they face and are life-long learners, continually adapting over the course of their careers to enable them to support their students' learning." It further states that innovation, integration and improvement should underpin all stages of the continuum.

In parallel with the development by the Council of its *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*, the Minister for Education and Skills initiated a national consultation process on the theme of improving literacy and numeracy. This culminated in 2011 with the publication of *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* as the national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy standards among children and young people in the education system. The strategy emphasised teachers' professional development and proposed that the duration of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes should be extended and that programme content should be reconceptualised.

1.4 Accreditation Criteria

The Teaching Council, having established an Advisory Group on Initial Teacher Education, developed criteria to be observed and guidelines to be followed by providers in reconceptualising programmes of initial teacher education at primary and post-primary levels. They were approved by the Council and published in June 2011 as *Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers* (hereinafter referred to as the Council's criteria). These relate to a range of areas, including programme design, areas of study, the duration of programmes, the numbers and qualifications of staff, facilities and resources. As such, they form the bridge between the Council's policy and the development and implementation of reconceptualised programmes. Significantly, the criteria:

- prescribe those areas of study which will be mandatory in programmes, including numeracy and literacy, behaviour management, parents in education, ICT and inclusive education
- set out for the first time the expected learning outcomes for graduates of all ITE programmes
- propose raising the minimum requirements for persons entering programmes of ITE at primary level and a literacy and numeracy admissions test for mature entrants
- require a 15:1 student-staff ratio
- call for the development of new and innovative school placement models,

involving active collaboration between HEIs and schools, and an enhanced role for the teaching profession in the provision of structured support for student teachers
- require that student teachers should spend at least 25% of the programme on school placement, and that such placements should be in a minimum of two schools
- require increased emphasis on research, portfolio work and other strategic priorities.

While recognising the inter-related nature of all aspects of programmes of teacher education, the criteria and guidelines are categorised under Inputs, Processes and Outcomes. All three dimensions have an important bearing on the quality of teacher education. The required Inputs and Outcomes are clearly elaborated in the document, while the Processes are less prescriptive to allow HEIs the freedom to develop the processes which best suit their individual situations.

Providers of existing programmes have been asked to reconceptualise their programmes in line with the revised criteria and to submit them for accreditation.

1.5 Programme overview

This report relates to the review of the following programme provided by Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, National University of Ireland, Maynooth - Professional Master of Education - hereinafter referred to as 'the programme'. This is a 120 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credit programme offered over two years which prepares graduate students to become primary teachers. The Department of Education and Skills determines the number of offers to be made on an annual basis. Some thirty students have been registered in each of the last four years on the Higher Diploma in Education (Primary), which was the precursor to this reconceptualised programme. While there was sanction for 50 places on the programme this year, there are 47 students enrolled for 2014/15.

2. The Review Process

The review of the Professional Master of Education took place between April and September 2014, in accordance with the Council's review strategy. The process was formally initiated when the Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as 'the panel') was appointed by the Teaching Council's Director, with Professor Anthony Finn as Chairperson.[1] To assist and support the work of the panel, Dr. Pádraig Ó Donnabháin was appointed as Rapporteur. functions included liaison with Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, maintaining records of meetings, and drafting and finalising the panel's report in conjunction with the panel Chairperson. The panel was also supported in its deliberations by the Director and staff of the Teaching Council.

Documentation relating to the application was submitted to the Teaching Council by Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, (hereinafter also referred to as the "Froebel Department") in April, 2014. The panel met on 27 May 2014 to give preliminary consideration to the Froebel Department's submission. Issues for further clarification were identified by the panel and were communicated by the Rapporteur to the Froebel Department.

Following consideration of the documentation including the responses to issues identified as well as a collation of the initial views of the members of the panel, representatives of the Froebel Department were invited to meet with the panel to discuss the programme and its particular aspects. The panel engaged with staff members who made a presentation embracing various aspects of the programme.[2] Further issues were identified for elucidation arising from this meeting and other clarifications were provided when requested. In the course of reviewing the documentation and clarification responses, the panel maintained contact on a systematic basis both by e-mail and audio-link. The panel also gave suitable consideration to the report of the panel which reviewed Froebel's Bachelor of Education programme in 2012/2013 and, specifically, the recommendations included in that report.

On 28 January 2014, the Chairpersons of four review panels and their Rapporteurs attended a meeting convened for the primary purpose of identifying commonalities of judgement and refining reporting conventions and procedures.

3. Publication of this Report

The Teaching Council routinely makes information available to the public in relation to its functions and activities and, in line with that practice, this report will be available on the Council's website, www.teachingcouncil.ie.

[1] Details of the Review Panel membership are included in Appendix I

[2] A list of the programme staff who presented to the panel is included in Appendix II

4. Documentation

The documentation submitted in April 2014 by the Froebel Department was in accordance with the template provided by the Teaching Council in the Pro Forma and Guidelines which accompany the Council's review strategy. Key areas of focus were:

4.1 Inputs

- Conceptual Framework
- The Programme
- Programme Aims
- Programme Design
- Areas of Study
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies
- School Placement
- The Duration and Nature of the Programme
- Student Intake
- Staffing
- Facilities
- Student Support and Guidance Systems
- Communication and Decision-Making Structures
- Financial Resources

4.2 Processes

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Approaches
- Engagement of Student Teachers with the Programme
- Engagement of Student Teachers with Staff and with other Student Teachers
- Progression within the Programme
- Personal and Social Development
- Development of Professional Attitudes, Values and Dispositions
- Lifelong Learning
- Reflective Processes

4.3 Outcomes

- Knowledge-Breadth/Knowledge-Kind
- Know-How & Skill-Range/Know-How & Skill-Selectivity
- Competence-Context/Competence-Role
- Competence-Learning to Learn
- Competence-Insight

5. Overall Findings

Having regard to the documentation that was initially submitted, together with the supplementary clarification documentation that was provided subsequently, the panel adjudges that the programme satisfies the criteria set down by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines.* Accordingly, the panel recommends to the Teaching Council that the programme be granted accreditation subject to the stipulations set out in Section 8 below.

The commendations in Section 6 below relate to areas of particular strength which the panel has identified.

With regard to the recommendations in Section 7, the panel submits that the Teaching Council should require the Froebel Department to set out, within twelve months of receiving the final review report, its detailed proposals for implementing the recommendations. It further recommends that the Teaching Council should prioritise those areas to be accorded particular attention when the programme falls due for re-accreditation.

The stipulations in Section 8 relate to areas which the panel believes to be of such strategic importance to the programme that accreditation should be subject to these stipulations being met. Therefore, the panel recommends that the Teaching Council should require the Froebel Department to set out and submit to the Teaching Council, within three months of receiving the final review report, its timebound proposals for implementing the stipulations.

In the case of the national issues raised in Section 9 of this report, the panel recommends that the Council engage in dialogue on these issues at national level.

The panel proposes that accreditation of the programme would have an initial lifespan of three years after which time a mid-term progress report would be submitted to the Council by the Froebel Department. It is anticipated that a strong area of focus for this progress report should be placed on the arrangements for a suitable, coherent experience for student teachers on school placement and especially on the panel's concerns about the extended placement in Year 2 (recommendation 7.1). Subject to satisfactory progress in this area and to all programme commitments being fulfilled, it would be anticipated that the Council would then grant a further two years, making an overall accreditation period of five years.

6. Commendations

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during the meeting and subsequent engagement with programme staff

the panel has noted a number of particular strengths of the programme, as follows:

6.1 Engagement with the review process

The panel commends the Froebel Department's ready co-operation with and responsiveness to its work in the review process. The documentation was succinct and easily accessible while staff were helpful and accommodating in arranging a meeting and in providing further clarification. The willingness to adjust the programme in the light of discussions is appreciated and acknowledged.

6.2 Inputs

6.2.1 Conceptual Framework

The panel commends the Froebel Department's conceptual framework for its clarity of vision incorporating five integrating principles with a commitment to Froebelian ideas permeating teaching and learning across the programme. There is a clear focus on student teachers developing their critical understanding within a community of practice and a recognition that this is the beginning of their development as 'adaptive experts'.

6.2.2 Community of Practice

The panel commends the carefully planned approach to the development of communities of practice through the use of learning circles, seminars, and CPD for staff and co-operating teachers.

6.2.3 Emphasis on Reflective Practice

The panel commends the emphasis placed on reflective practice as a key principle of the programme with the intention to develop teachers who have the capacity to analyse, critique and refine their own practice.

6.2.4 Literacy, Language, Numeracy across the Curriculum

The panel commends the provision for literacy and numeracy across the programme. The emphasis on linkage, integration and differentiation of language teaching and learning seems clearly focused while the integration of mathematics and scientific enquiry across the curriculum appears to be a beneficial approach for developing teaching skills.

6.2.5 Student Support

The panel commends the constructive engagement with and support for students throughout the programme and, in particular, before, during and after the school placement experience. This is of real benefit to students.

7. Recommendations

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during the meeting and subsequent engagement with programme staff

the panel has noted a number of areas of the programme which it believes should be developed. They are as follows:

7.1 School Placement

The panel recognises the argument presented by the Froebel Department that its relocation has caused difficulty in adapting its previous arrangements for school placement in line with the Teaching Council's guidelines and, in particular, in introducing a fully coherent, extended placement. Nonetheless, the panel now recommends that, as a matter of priority, Froebel Department revisit the final school placement in Year 2 with a view to ensuring that this extended period of time in schools allows students to have a better understanding of the full range of responsibilities which a new teacher will assume once qualified. A longer period of experience with one class group would, for example, help to assist understanding of planning, curriculum and assessment.

7.2 Partnership with schools

While recognising the advantages and difficulties caused by the relocation to Maynooth, and the efforts of the Director of School Placement to establish new relationships with schools, the panel recommends that Froebel Department should continue to seek to develop partnership arrangements with schools in line with the effective model it had in its previous location in Dublin.

7.3 Research / Portfolio Dissertation Project

The panel recognises that Froebel Department was willing to accept advice on the need for greater coherence and increased rigour in its planned portfolio dissertation. The panel now recommends that Froebel Department review its revised model to ensure there is a recognisable coherence in student reflection on selected topic areas, resulting in a challenging and coherent project which integrates theory and practice in a more robust manner.

7.4 Staff / Student Ratio

While a recent addition to the number of staff is noted, the panel recommends that the Froebel Department reviews and increases its allocation of staff to the reconceptualised programme, having regard to the numbers of students enrolled on the programme, thus ensuring that it can continue to make progress in moving closer to the Council criteria on staff/student ratio.

8. Stipulations

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during the meeting and subsequent engagement with programme staff

the panel has noted the following areas of the programme which it considers must be addressed to the satisfaction of the Council as a matter of priority and, at the latest, prior to the deadline set out in the stipulation.

8.1 Curriculum Studies

The Froebel Department is required to provide details of how it will include Curriculum Studies as part of Foundation Studies. In the final agreed text to be submitted (as per 8.2 below), the Froebel Department should highlight the changes made to provide for Curriculum Studies.

8.2 Final Agreed Text

The panel requires that programme adjustments and clarifications which were made in response to queries and exchanges with the panel on the original submission, be incorporated into a final agreed text. This is to be submitted to the Teaching Council as the final text in relation to the programme in a single concise document following the Pro Forma template and with changes highlighted for ease of reference. The final agreed text is to be provided to the Council within three months of receiving the final report.

9. National Issues

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during the meeting and subsequent engagement with programme staff

the panel has noted the following issues which it believes merit further attention by the Teaching Council and/or other national stakeholders.

9.1 Partnership between schools and HEIs

Having regard to the Teaching Council's *Guidelines on School Placement* (2013) and the importance accorded to a partnership approach to facilitate and assist school placement, the panel recommends that the Council, in conjunction with other agencies, explore the general issue of partnership between schools and HEIs seeking to identify means by which this can be developed and systematised to benefit the teaching profession and in the interests of the pupils in the classroom.

9.2 Extended School Placement

The panel recognises that some providers have faced difficulties in securing suitable extended placements for student teachers in Year 2, as required by the Teaching Council's guidelines. However, the panel believes that this change is of both pedagogical and cultural importance and recommends that the Council, in association with partners, should continue to review progress and provide clearer guidelines on its implementation. As part of this process, the panel recommends that the Council should make more explicit its expectation that the extended placement in Year 2 should be based in one class. This is an expectation which the panel fully endorses, bearing in mind that the student teacher is nearing the end of the programme and can be expected to have moved from a strongly supported placement experience, to more independent teaching. The panel also recommends that the Council should, in any future guidelines, clarify its intention that the minimum duration of 10 weeks refers to ten school weeks, i.e., 50 school days.

9.3 Calculation of Staff /Student ratio

The panel notes that the Council's Pro Forma for the submission of programmes for accreditation purposes, while requesting information on staff student ratio, does not include a formula by which this should be calculated. The panel recommends that the Pro Forma be updated to include such a formula, so as to ensure absolute clarity for review panels in determining if this requirement has been met.

9.4 Teacher supply

The panel recognises the importance which the Teaching Council gives to the question of teacher supply. Having considered the quantitative and qualitative implications of this matter across the programmes currently presented for accreditation, the panel wishes to highlight its view that teacher workforce planning is an essential component of a balanced calculation of the future needs of Irish primary and post-primary schools and is consistent with long-term planning for the development of the teaching of Irish and of other specialist subjects. The panel believes that the Council should now encourage national consideration of this matter, with a view to ensuring that the needs of schools are met in an open, planned way, with due emphasis on quality, equity and accessibility.

9.5 Guidance on accreditation meetings with and visits to providers

The panel recognises that the Teaching Council has, by necessity, tailored its review process and believes that the process is fair and accountable. The panel understands that it is the Council's intention to revise its Strategy for the Review and Professional Accreditation of Existing Programmes when the current cycle of reviews has been completed. It is suggested that when doing so, consideration should be given to the provision of templates and practice guidelines for meetings and visits.

Appendix 1 - Review Panel Membership

Review Panel Chairperson: Professor Anthony Finn

Anthony Finn is a Professor of Teacher Education and Professionalism in the University of Glasgow and Chair of the Board of the new Scottish College for Educational Leadership. He was Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), the world's first independent, self-regulating professional body for teaching until his retirement in October 2013. Tony spent most of his career working in schools. Originally a Modern Languages teacher, he spent 18 years as Head Teacher of a successful secondary school. Before taking up his post with GTCS, he was Senior Manager (Depute Director) for Education in Fife.

Claire Connolly is the School Experience Co-ordinator at St Mary's University College, Belfast. She has experience in evaluating and reviewing modules, procedures and documentation to maintain the quality of teacher education programmes in SMUC. She has extensive knowledge of the Teaching Council's review and accreditation role, having previously served on several review panels for the Council.

Derbhile de Paor is a member of the Teaching Council. She was elected to the Council in the Munster constituency (primary). An experienced primary school teacher and school leader, at present she is Principal of Castleconnell NS in Co. Limerick. A graduate of Mary Immaculate College, her further studies include a Higher Diploma in Educational Administration (UCC) and a Masters in Educational Mentoring (UL). She serves on the Education and Disciplinary committees of the Teaching Council.

Anne Feerick is a Senior Inspector assigned to the Teacher Education Section of the DES. She is involved with the management of the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). Anne has extensive experience in evaluating the work of both probationary and experienced teachers in schools and centres for education. Prior to joining the Inspectorate, Anne was an administrative principal in a large DEIS urban primary school and worked as a facilitator with the School Development Planning Service.

Rapporteur: Dr Pádraig Ó Donnabháin taught at primary-school level before working as an inspector of schools with the DES. He has extensive experience of schools and educational issues and, together with Professor John Coolahan, wrote *A History of Ireland's School Inspectorate 1831-2008.* He has acted as an adviser to the Education Committee and has served as Rapporteur on other reviews.

Appendix 2 – Meeting with Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education staff

Date: 09.00 to 10.30 on 26 June 2014

Venue: Ashling Hotel, Dublin.

Attendance:

For Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education:

Prof. Marie McLoughlin	Head of Department
Séamie Ó Néill	Head of Education
Dr Patricia Kennan	Lecturer on English Literature

For Teaching Council panel:

Prof. Anthony Finn, Chair
Derbhile de Paor, Member
Claire Connolly, Member
Anne Feerick, Member
Dr Pádraig Ó Donnabháin, Rapporteur