

Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following a review of the Initial Teacher Education programme at Mary Immaculate College, Thurles.

Bachelor of Arts in Education, Mathematics & Business

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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 Particular requirements for post-primary programmes

In January 2017, the Council implemented the *Teaching Council Requirements for Entry onto a Programme of Initial Teacher Education*. These were approved by Council in December 2012, and the Minister for Education and Skills has conveyed his agreement with the Council's views in this area. They have guided providers of post-primary concurrent programmes in determining the subject content coverage which is appropriate. They also guide providers of post-primary consecutive programmes in determining suitability of entrants and which curricular subject's entrants can ultimately be registered to teach. They also guide PME providers in matching students appropriately to methodology modules.

1.6 Programme overview

This report relates to the review of the following programme BA in Education, Mathematics and Business provided by **Mary Immaculate College, Thurles** - hereinafter referred to as 'the programme'

2. *The Review Process*

The review of BA in Education, took place between June 2020 and March 2021 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 Dr. Mary Fleming as Chairperson, and Ms Valerie Lewis and Dr Niall Seery as panel members. The Review panel was supported by a Rapporteur. The Rapporteur's functions included liaison with MIC Thurles, 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 external subject experts and by the Director of the Teaching Council executive staff nominees. The panel conducted its review through virtual meetings and on-line discussion, due to the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Documentation relating to the application was submitted to the Teaching Council by MIC Thurles, (hereinafter also referred to as 'MICT') in June 2020. The panel met initially on 16 November 2020 to give preliminary consideration to the submission. Issues for further clarification were identified by the panel and were communicated by the Rapporteur to MICT on 18 December 2020. Following consideration of the supplementary documentation received on 18 January 2021 and a collation of the initial views of the members of the panel, a further meeting of the panel was held on 11 February 2021. The report was drafted after this meeting.

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.

4. *Documentation*

The documentation submitted in June 2020 by MICT 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 documentation that was provided, the panel adjudges that the programme satisfies the criteria set down by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines* and in its Curricular Subject Requirements in respect of the curricular subjects Mathematics and Business. Accordingly, it recommends to the Teaching Council that the programme be granted accreditation.

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 college 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.

In the case of the national issues raised in Section 8 of this report, the panel recommends that the Council engage in dialogue on those issues at national level.

The panel proposes that accreditation of the programmes would have a lifespan of five years.

6. Commendations

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. advice received from the curricular subject specialists who supported the review process and

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

6.1 Engagement with the review process

MIC Thurles has co-operated fully with the review process. The panel were satisfied with the pro-active response to clarifications sought.

6.2 Inputs

6.2.1 Conceptual Framework

The panel commends the focus on graduates' skillset in Mathematics and Business which has problem solving, creativity and innovation at its core. This skillset has the potential to create opportunities for the expansion of entrepreneurial knowledge in pupils thereby contributing in a unique way to the broader school community.

6.2.2 Programme Aims

The panel commends this programme which addresses a national need for qualified Mathematics teachers.

6.2.3 Programme Design

The panel commends the well-rounded, coherent and holistic design features of the programme

6.2.4 Student Support and Guidance Systems

The panel commends the programmes emphasis on student wellbeing and supports available for student teachers, such as counselling and career guidance.

6.3 Processes

6.3.1 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Approaches

The panel commends the student centred approach to learning and focus on teacher practice development and reflection.

6.3.2 Development of Professional Attitudes, Values and Dispositions

The panel commends the emphasis on the values of social justice and inclusion within the programme.

7. Recommendations

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. advice received from the curricular subject specialists who supported the review process .

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

7.1 Inputs

7.1.1 Conceptual Framework

The panel recommends that it be clearly visible in the conceptual framework how the foundational, professional studies and curricular subject elements of the programme are integrated. To support this, the panel recommends that the philosophical foundations of education be interrogated to help explicate how the spirality of learning through the four years of the programme is achieved.

The Panel recommends the development of graduate teacher identity as subject teachers of Business and Mathematics. To facilitate this, module descriptors, in the first instance should make explicit the clear delineation of subject methodologies and learning outcomes for each of these subjects. Secondly, and once the delineation is clear, reference should be made to the pedagogical synergy between the two subject areas. The use of Taisce in supporting graduate teacher identity development should be clearer.

7.2 Processes

7.2.1 Progression within the Programme

The panel recommend that the production of a dissertation proposal be included as a learning outcome for module -*EDS350 Research Methods-Ethical Foundations for Teaching and Research*.

8. *National Issues*

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. advice received from the curricular subject specialists who supported the review process.

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

8.1 *Covid 19 Implications for Initial Teacher Education*

In light of the responsibilities placed on teachers during the current pandemic, opportunities for student teachers to engage in the theory and practice of remote and blended learning should be enhanced. In this regard, further consideration of alternative and varied methods of assessment should also be considered.

Appendix 1 - Review Panel Membership

Independent Review Panel Chair

Dr Mary Fleming Emeritus Senior Lecturer in NUI Galway. She was Head of the School of Education, NUI Galway from 2013-2016 and member of the Teaching Council 2016-2018. As Director Teacher Education within the School of Education from 2012, she had primary responsibility for the development and accreditation of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Programmes and was academic Director of the Professional Master of Education. Mary lectured and taught modules in the areas of Leadership and Policy development, Curriculum Studies and Professional Practice. Her research interest areas are concerned with the dynamics of teaching and learning within classrooms, leading learning and policy developments within the system and leadership practices within educational contexts.

Panel Member

Valerie Lewis is an Educational Policy and Development Officer at Education and Training Boards Ireland. She has over twenty years of experience in the Irish Education arena at post-primary and tertiary level, working across a range of sectors. She has previously worked in the Public Information and Communication and, Development Education sections of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, supporting the design and enhancement of their formal education programmes and Strategic Education Partnerships. Valerie has also written and designed a range of citizenship education and training materials, distributed both in Ireland and at European level.

Panel member

Niall Seery is currently Deputy President of Athlone Institute of Technology. He served as Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registrar before taking the role as Director of the Technological University Project at AIT. He has a PhD in Engineering Education and has a background in Engineering and Technology Teacher Education, where he spent 15 years as an academic with a specialist interest in pedagogical practice. He received the Regional Teaching Excellence Award for Higher Education Teaching in 2013. Niall has served as Director of studies at undergraduate and masters level, while also developing an emerging research agenda. In 2010, he founded and continues to direct the Technology Education Research Group, where he is still active in research development and mentorship. He has supervised a number of PhD students to completion and actively contributes to a number of journal editorial boards in the area of Design and Technology education. He also served as a visiting Associate Professor of Technology Education at the Royal Institute of Technology, KTH in Stockholm. Niall has experience in hosting international education conferences and participation in international research projects.

Appendix 2 - Teaching Council Registration: Curricular Subject Requirements(Post-primary) Effective for registration on or after 1 January 2017

Mathematics

*In order to meet the registration requirements, set down in the Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations in respect of the curricular subject of Mathematics, an applicant must meet **all** of the following criteria:*

1. (a) Applicants must hold a degree-level qualification, with Mathematics studied up to and including third-year level or higher (or modular equivalent).

(b) The qualifying degree must be equivalent to at least Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and with a minimum pass¹ result in all examinations pertinent to the subject of Mathematics.

¹ (c) The qualifying degree must carry at least 180 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits (or equivalent) with the specific study of Mathematics comprising at least 60 ECTS credits (or equivalent) and with not less than 10 ECTS credits (or equivalent) studied at third-year level or higher (or modular equivalent).

2. The study of Mathematics during the degree must show that the holder has acquired sufficient knowledge, skills and understanding to teach the Mathematics syllabus² www.curriculumonline.ie. To meet this requirement, the degree must include the study of all of the following essential areas to a minimum of 40 ECTS credits (or equivalent): ³ to the highest level in post-primary education (see

Essential areas of study

- (a) Analysis³ - minimum of 10 ECTS credits
- (b) Algebra⁴ - minimum of 10 ECTS credits
- (c) Geometry⁵ - minimum of 5 ECTS credits
- (d) Probability and Statistics⁶ - minimum of 5 ECTS credits

The remaining 20 ECTS credits (or equivalent) may be in any of the above essential areas, or be drawn from the following optional areas:

Optional areas of study

- (e) Dynamical Systems and Chaos
- (f) Calculus of Variations
- (g) Numerical Analysis or Computational Mathematics
- (h) Mathematical Modelling
- (i) Discrete Mathematics
- (j) History or Philosophy of Mathematics
- (k) Mathematical Logic
- (l) Set Theory and Cardinality

3. Applicants must also have completed a programme of post-primary initial teacher education (age range 12-18 years) carrying a minimum of 120 ECTS credits (or equivalent)⁷. The programme should include a module(s) on the teaching of Mathematics carrying a minimum of 5 ECTS credits (or equivalent)⁸.

¹ which includes pass by compensation.

² as approved by the Minister for Education & Skills, and published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

³ This must include modules in Differential and Integral Calculus in one and several variables, and may include modules in Differential Equations, Complex Analysis, Abstract Analysis, Measure and Integral, or Topology.

⁴ This must include modules in Linear Algebra, and may include modules on Abstract Algebra (Groups, Rings, and Fields), Cryptology, Coding Theory, or Number Theory.

⁵ This must include a module or modules in Euclidean and Non-Euclidean Geometry and may include modules in Differential Geometry, Algebraic Geometry, or Topology.

⁶ This must include modules in Probability and Statistical Inference and may include modules in Combinatorics or Stochastic Processes.

⁷ Applicants who have commenced a programme of initial teacher education prior to 01/09/2014 carrying less than 120 ECTS credits may be exempted from this requirement at the Council's discretion.

⁸ Applicants who have completed a specialist concurrent degree in Mathematics must meet all of the requirements as detailed above. This course should be equivalent to a minimum of 240 ECTS credits.

Business

*In order to meet the registration requirements set down in the Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations in respect of the curricular subject of Business, an applicant must meet **all** of the following criteria:*

1. (a) Applicants must hold a degree-level qualification, with Business studied up to and including third-year level or higher (or modular equivalent).
(b) The qualifying degree must be equivalent to at least Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and with a minimum pass¹ result in all examinations pertinent to the subject of Business.
(c) The qualifying degree must carry at least 180 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits (or equivalent) with the specific study of Business comprising at least 60 ECTS credits (or equivalent) and with not less than 10 ECTS credits (or equivalent) studied at third-year level or higher (or modular equivalent). *Please note that studies in the areas of Accounting and Economics will not be counted towards the ECTS credit requirement for the Leaving Certificate subject of Business.*

2. The study of Business during the qualification must show that the holder has acquired sufficient knowledge, skills and understanding to teach the Business syllabus² to the highest level in post-primary education (see www.curriculumonline.ie). To meet this requirement the degree must include the study of at least four of the following Business disciplines:

- (a) Organisational Behaviour
- (b) Business Enterprise and Entrepreneurship
- (c) Management
- (d) Business Environment (Domestic and/or International)
- (e) Human Resource Management
- (f) Marketing
- (g) Business Law

The degree must also have been supported by relevant studies in the application of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Business, e.g., Information Systems/E-commerce. (A maximum of 5 ECTS credits (or equivalent) will be allowed towards the overall requirement of 60 ECTS credits.)

3. Applicants must also have completed a programme of post-primary initial teacher education (age range 12-18 years) carrying a minimum of 120 ECTS credits (or equivalent)³.

Business Studies (Junior Certificate)

An applicant who meets the registration criteria for **Business** will also be deemed to have acquired the competency to teach the Junior Cycle curricular subject **Business Studies** if he/she has studied a minimum of 10 ECTS credits (or equivalent) in Accounting and a minimum of 10 ECTS credits (or equivalent) in Economics.

¹ which includes pass by compensation.

² as approved by the Minister for Education & Skills, and published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

³ Applicants who have commenced a programme of initial teacher education prior to 01/09/2014 carrying less than 120 ECTS credits may be exempted from this requirement at the Council's discretion.