Final Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following a review of a proposed Initial Teacher Education Programme at Trinity College, University of Dublin

Professional Master of Education

December, 2013

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. *Particular requirements for post-primary programmes*

In November 2011, the Council published *Teaching Council Requirements for Entry onto a Programme of Initial Teacher Education,* that set out the Council's revised subject criteria in draft form. Following a wide ranging consultation process inlvoving all the major education stakeholders, a final set of proposals were developed. These were approved by Council in December 2012, and the Minister for Education and Skills has conveyed his agreement with the Couincil'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 subjects entrants can ultimately be registered to teach. They will 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 provided by Trinity College, University of Dublin : Professional Master of Education, (PME).- hereinafter referred to as "the programme".
The programme, which was heretofore a one-year Higher Diploma in Education and more recently called a Professional Diploma in Education, was reconceptualised in 2013, as a full-time, consecutive initial teacher education programme to be offered over two years. The university plans to offer it at Master's level from September 2014. It would have a credit weighting of 120 ECTS credits and be offered on a full-time basis. It is planned to offer it annually to a projected student intake of 120.

In broad terms, the programme is comprised of Foundation Studies, Professional Studies and School Placement. The allocation of ECTS credits is as follows:

- School placement (40 ECTS credits)
- Foundation Studies (35 ECTS credits)
- Professional Studies(including 20 credit dissertation) (45 ECTS credits)[1]

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[1] *The nature of the relationship between the Year 2 Research Project and the School Placement modules and related school-based work assigned for students as set out in the submission and clarified in the exchanges between the panel and TCD representatives, warrant the identification of 10 credits associated with the dissertation being assigned appropriately to School Placement, thus complying with the requirement set out by Council for balance between the elements of the programme.*

2.   *The Review Process*

The review of the Professional Masters in Education took place between September and December, 2013, 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 John Coolahan as Chairperson.[2]   To assist and support the work of the panel, Dr Barney O'Reilly was appointed as Rapporteur. His functions included liaison with Trinity College, University of Dublin, 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 Trinity College, University of Dublin (hereinafter referred to as 'TCD') in August, 2013, following academic accreditation and was circulated to panel members in September 2013. Individual members of the panel reviewed the submission and circulated their comments and questions to other members of the panel. Following consideration of the documentation and a collation of the initial views of the members of the panel, panel meetings were held on 15 October and 12 November, 2013 (two meetings).

The panel members visited TCD School of Education on November 12th, 2013 and engaged in discussions with the Head and members of the School of Education and College officers.[3] The visit had as its primary objective the clarification of issues arising from the documentation. Prior to the meetings, the Rapporteur communicated a set of issues for clarification to the School of Education, TCD. The responses provided by the School of Education to these requests for clarification provided the main agenda for the meeting. The visit schedule is included in Appendix 2.

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.

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[2] Details of the review panel membership are included in Appendix I

[3] A list of the staff member present at the meeting is included in Appendix II

4. Documentation

The documentation submitted to the Teaching Council by TCD in July 2013, was in accordance with the Council's pro forma and guidelines. The college provided information as follows under three general headings – inputs, process and outcomes:

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 in response to the panel's queries, and subsequent discussions with programme staff, the panel adjudges that the programme satisfies the criteria set down by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines* and the methodology and other entry requirements set down in its curricular subject requirements. Accordingly, it recommends to the Teaching Council that the programme be granted accreditation, subject to the stipulation which is set out in Section 8 (see 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 suggests that the Teaching Council should require the university to set out and submit, within twelve months of receiving the final review report, its 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 stipulation in section 8 relates to areas which the panel believes to be of such strategic importance to the programme that accreditation should be subject to the stipulation being met.

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

In view of the reconceptualisation of the new programme with regard to content and processes, the panel recommends that TCD submit a progress report to the Teaching Council in Spring 2016, prior to a third cohort of students being admitted to the two-year programme. The Teaching Council should check that all programme commitments are being fulfilled prior to extending approval of programme accreditation.

Therefore, the panel proposes that accreditation of the programme would have a lifespan of two years, with a further three years' accreditation to be approved subject to the Council's satisfaction with the progress report referenced above.

6. Commendations

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted, and
2. information gleaned during the meeting with TCD,

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

6.1. General engagement with the review process

TCD staff is to be commended for its professionalism, collegial and collaborative approach to the work of the panel and willingness to accommodate the panel in relation to the arrangement of the visit and meetings.

The panel appreciates that TCD School of Education agreed to make adjustments to its submission in the light of the queries and discussions at the visit of panel members to the institution.

The panel finds the TCD School of Education PME proposal to be carefully prepared with a sound theoretical basis, following commendable consultation and to be, overall, an impressive document. The panel appreciates the care and time that has gone into the preparation of the submission.

6.2. Conceptual framework

The panel commends the TCD submission as a comprehensive and insightful articulation of the purposes of initial teacher education. The holistic approach and constructivist orientation are welcomed as a framework within which reflective practitioners are prepared for entry to the profession.

The conceptual framework is well expressed. Care has been taken to relate with Teaching Council requirements and guidelines. The framework and overall programme, are built on three foundation principles:- the reflective practitioner, constructivism and a holistic policy.

The concept of the *'thinking and feeling teacher''* is to be welcomed.

6.3. Areas of study (including mandatory areas)

The panel is impressed by the extent to which the School of Education references the mandatory areas specified by the Council. Table 5(pp.28-30) of the Pro Forma submitted to the Council is a helpful tabulation of these. The panel notes with approval the attention to Literacy and Numeracy, ICT in the Classroom and Social Inclusion as themes of strategic importance in the programme.

6.4. Partnership with schools

The panel commends the work evident in the Pro Forma submission on the school partnership being established by the TCD School of Education with the 40 schools collaborating with the school placement programme, and the visionary nature of the structures and supports being planned.

6.5.   Communication and decision-making structures

The panel commends arrangements set out for consultation and student representation during the programme.

6.6.   Arrangements for student intake

The panel is pleased to note that the arrangements for student intake are thoughtful and thorough. Appropriate details are provided in respect of the interview process, the associated shortlisting criteria, and procedures in place to ensure students are aware of and meet the Council's registration requirements.

7.   Recommendations

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted, and

2. information gleaned during the meeting with TCD,

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

7.1.   Small group teaching

The School of Education should demonstrate how the desired forms of small group teaching set out in pages 30-32 of the Pro Forma submission, are incorporated in the timetable arrangements of the course design. In respect of the tutorial teams in Foundation Studies which will be led by the foundation lecturers, the panel recommends that the foundation lecturers contribute to the delivery of the tutorials.

7.2.   Microteaching facilities

The panel recommends that the TCD School of Education examine the desirability and feasibility of using microteaching facilities in a more focused way in assisting reflective practice by students, and, in particular, as part of the supports for students experiencing difficulties on their school placement.

7.3.   Resources

The School of Education should designate a link person to act as a liaison with Library concerning the provision and updating of teaching resources required by student teachers.

8.   *Stipulation*

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted,

2. information gleaned during the meeting with TCD School of Education representatives, and

3. the subsequent discussions and the additional documentation supplied,

the panel makes the following stipulation:

8.1.   *Submission of revised Pro Forma text to Council*

Within two months of receiving the final review report, TCD is required to submit to Council a revised Pro Forma submission which incorporates those variations and clarifications to the original submission:

i)   as presented to the panel in response to the queries forwarded following its meeting of 15 October, 2013, and

ii)   as set out in discussions at the meeting between the panel and TCD representatives on 12 November, 2013, and the related variations and clarifications subsequently provided in documentation to the panel.

The changes to the Pro Forma should be highlighted so that additions and amendments can be easily identified and the Council can determine that the salient issues have been fully addressed.

9. National Issues

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted, and
2. information gleaned during the visit to TCD and meeting with School of Education staff and senior officers of the HEI,

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

9.1. Teacher supply

The panel welcomes the fact that the Teaching Council is planning to establish a working group to inform its deliberations in relation to the issue of teacher supply. It understands that that group's terms of reference are currently being developed. In that context, it recommends that:

(a) the Council should facilitate, in association with the relevant stakeholders, the rationalisation of the supply of post-primary subject methodologies across institutions

(b) in line with "20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010- 2030", the teacher supply needs of Irish-medium schools and the teaching of Irish, require the special attention of the Council.

9.2. School placement

a. Further to the development of 'Guidelines on School Placement' 1st Edition (2013), that Council, in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills, support, encourage and facilitate schools to work in co-operation with HEIs , in the implementation of the vision and the processes for appropriate school placements, as set out in the Draft Guidelines.

b. The panel recommends that Council and the NCCA clarify the role of the student teacher in school based assessment following junior cycle reform.

9.3. Council Pro Forma accreditation documentation

9.3.1 Diversity in the teaching profession

The panel recommends that Council consider policy on diversity in the teaching profession, so that it might be more representative of the diverse population served by Irish post-primary schools. In that context, the panel believes it would be helpful were the Council to amend its pro forma documentation for accreditation purposes to require HEIs to indicate policies and procedures in place at HEI level to promote diversity of intake to ITE.

9.3.2 Junior cycle reform

In the context of the proposed changes to the junior cycle programme, and of international best practice, all teacher education programmes should be required to make visible their approach to curriculum design and assessment. In practical terms, this requires a greater emphasis on the processes by which curriculum is designed, the theory and practice of formative and summative assessment and on the uses and limitations of testing. Arising from this, the Teaching Council's criteria and associated *Pro Forma and Guidelines* should be kept under review, having regard to the evolving context for the junior cycle.

9.3.3. Resource data presentation

The panel suggests that Council develop a template for the presentation of the resource data which will facilitate   evaluation of the human and financial resources i) required, and ii) committed, for the delivery and support of programmes proposed for accreditation.

9.3.4 Use of ECTS framework in module descriptors

The panel suggests that the structure provided by the European Frameworks on Programme Design, and European Transfer Credit System (ECTS) for the presentation of data relating the elements of student workload - *Staff Contact, Independent Study, School Placement, Preparation for Assessment* and *Assessment* - should be considered for more comprehensive use by Council when providing HEIs with Pro Forma documentation for accreditation purposes. (See European Communities (2009) ECTS Users' Guide. p18-19.)

Appendix 1 – Review Panel Membership

Chair – Professor John Coolahan.

Dr John Coolahan is Professor Emeritus at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He has had extensive involvement in public service, advising the Department of Education and Skills on educational policy and development in Ireland since 1991. In 2007, he produced a position paper for the Teaching Council on "*Thinking and Policies Relating to Teacher Education in Ireland*". He is a former President of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland and former Academic Chairman of the Association for Teacher Education in Europe. He is a co-founder of SCoTENS (Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South). He has previously chaired two review panels on behalf of the Teaching Council.

Teacher Educator – Professor Harry McMahon.

Dr Harry McMahon is Professor Emeritus at the University of Ulster where he was Head of School of Education. Dr McMahon was previously an external examiner at University College Dublin, University College Cork, NUI Maynooth and NUI Galway at both M.Ed. and Ph.D. levels.

He is a co-founder with Professor John Coolahan of SCoTENS, (Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South).

Teaching Council Member – Kieran Christie.

Kieran Christie was elected to the Teaching Council in the Community and Comprehensive schools category. He is a teacher of Materials Technology (Wood), Technology, Technical Graphics and Construction Studies in St. Attracta's Community School, Tubbercurry. He was previously a member of the Technology Syllabus Committees and the Short Course Committee of the NCCA. Kieran was awarded his B.Tech (Ed.) qualification in the University of Limerick.

DES Inspector – Eibhlín Ní Scannláin.

Eibhlín Ní Scannláin is an Irish language inspector, Post-Primary. She is currently assigned to the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills.

Rapporteur – Dr O'Reilly

Dr. Barney O'Reilly has worked as a second-level teacher and a teacher educator. As CEO of 'Kerry Education Service - *the VEC in Kerry*' until 2011, he has worked as an administrator and as an educational leader for over twenty-five years and participated in education related policy formulation and implementation at a national and a local level. He holds a PhD degree from the University of Edinburgh and continues to be active in policy related research, with a particular interest in issues relating to publicly-managed schools.

Appendix 2 – Visit Schedule – 18 June 2013.

Venue: Trinity College.

10.30am - 12.45pm: Meeting of panel

1.00pm - 1.45pm. : Lunch hosted by School of Education, Trinity College.

2.00pm - 4.00pm.: Meeting at TCD School of Education

4.00pm - 5.20pm: Meeting of panel

Attendance

For TCD

Prof. Shane Allwright (Registrar),

Dr. Aideen Long (Dean of Graduate Students),

Dr. Carmel O'Sullivan (Head of School of Education),

Dr. Damian Murchan (Director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning, School of Education),

Dr. Colette Murphy (Director of Research, School of Education),

Dr. Ann Devitt (PME Coordinator),

Mr. Paul Coote (Financial Services Division),

Ms. Claire Dolan, School Administrator.

For Teaching Council panel:

Prof. John Coolahan, Chair,

Prof. Harry McMahon, Member,

Mr. Kieran Christie, Member,

Ms. Eibhlín Ni Scannláin, Member,

Dr. Barney O'Reilly, Rapporteur.