

**Final Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council  
following the review of reconceptualised programmes of  
initial teacher education submitted for accreditation by  
National University of Ireland, Galway;**

**Professional Master of Education (PME)**

**&**

**Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas (MGO)**

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## 1. Background

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, master, etc., 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.

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.

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.

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. This report relates to the review of the following programmes provided by NUIG – the Professional Master of Education (PME) and the Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas (MGO) - hereinafter referred to collectively as ‘the programmes’.

## 2. *The Review Process*

The review of the **Professional Master of Education (PME) and Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas (MGO)** took place between January and September, 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.<sup>1</sup> To assist and support the work of the panel, Dr. Barney O'Reilly was appointed as Rapporteur. His functions included liaison with NUI Galway /OÉ Gaillimh (hereinafter referred to as NUIG or 'the university'), 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 NUIG in October, 2012. The panel met initially on 24 January, 2013 to give preliminary consideration to the submission. Following this meeting, 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, further panel meetings were held on 21 February, 2013 and 25 March, 2013.

Issues for further clarification were identified by the panel and were communicated to NUIG by the Rapporteur and the HEI responded.

The Chairperson, Professor John Coolahan, and panel members, Ms. Eibhlín Ní Scannláin and Mr. Kieran Christie, (and the Rapporteur, Dr Barney O'Reilly) visited NUIG on 25 April, 2013 and engaged with representatives of the School of Education. The visit had as its primary objective the clarification of issues arising from the documentation. On this date, a meeting also took place between the panel members and other NUIG staff with responsibility for resource-related decisions in respect of the programmes<sup>2</sup>. The responses provided by the School of Education to the panel's queries, requests for clarification, provided the main agenda for the meetings. The visit schedule is included in Appendix 2.

A further meeting of the panel was held on 2 May, 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> Details of the Review Panel membership are included in Appendix I

<sup>2</sup> A list of the staff member presenters is included in Appendix II

### **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](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie).

### **4. Documentation**

The documentation submitted in October, 2012 by NUIG 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 in response to the panel's queries, and subsequent discussions with programme staff, the panel adjudges that the programmes satisfy the criteria set down by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines* and the methodology and other entry requirements set out in its curricular subject requirements. Accordingly, it recommends to the Teaching Council that the programmes be granted accreditation, subject to the stipulations which are 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 programmes fall due for re-accreditation.

The stipulations in section 8 relate to areas which the panel believes to be of such strategic importance to the programmes that accreditation should be subject to those stipulations being met. Therefore, the panel recommends that the Teaching Council should require NUIG to set out and submit to the Teaching Council, within two months of receiving the final review report, its 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 those issues at national level.

In view of the reconceptualisation of the new programmes with regard to content and processes, the panel recommends that NUIG submit a progress report to the Teaching Council in Spring 2016, prior to a third cohort of students being admitted to the two-year programmes. 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 programmes 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 visit to the university and meetings with NUIG staff,

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

### **6.1 Engagement with the review process**

The panel commends the general quality of the submission and the extent to which it reflected the overall approach and the key requirements of the Teaching Council for reconceptualised programmes.

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

The panel also appreciates that NUIG has agreed to make adjustments to its original submission, in the light of queries and discussions in the course of the meeting with panel members.

Finally, the panel wishes to acknowledge with appreciation the letter from NUIG dated 26 April, 2013, in which the university acknowledges that additional resources will be required for the delivery of the programmes and indicates its commitment in that regard.

### **6.2 Inputs**

#### **6.2.1 Conceptual Framework**

The panel commends NUIG for an impressive submission reflective of much careful reflection and planning by the staff. It is in line with the requirements of the Teaching Council. The Panel is of the view that there is every reason to believe that the basis for satisfactory programmes is in place.

#### **6.2.2 Programme Aims and Programme Design**

The panel commends the programme aims and the course design which are clearly and comprehensively set out. The tables accompanying the submission provide helpful diagrammatic representations of these.

### ***6.2.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies***

The emphasis on the integration of theory and practice is to be commended and this is being further facilitated by the emphasis on "small group teaching" through workshops, tutorials and on-line discussion groups.

### ***6.2.4 School Placement***

The panel commends the School of Education on the development of its 'Partner School Placement Model' piloted in 20 schools. The strength of the relationships with schools and the commitment of the School of Education to professional development for school placement tutors is apparent. Staff showed commendable appreciation of the complexity of achieving the cultural changes involved.

### ***6.2.5 Student Intake***

The panel commends the admission procedures used to assess competence in the Irish language for the Máistir programme.

The panel commends the establishment of a bursary for science graduates taking the Máistir programme.

### ***6.2.6 Facilities***

The panel commends the range of resources, their availability to ITE students, and, in particular, the integration of 'cutting-edge ICT' into the programmes.

The School of Education and the University are to be commended on the recent investment in facilities to accommodate the School of Education, to be available for use in the coming academic year.

## ***6.3 Outcomes***

The NUIG submission included a well organised and focussed articulation of the planned course outcomes, which are in line with Teaching Council policy.

## **7. Recommendations**

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted, and
2. information gleaned during the visit to the university and meetings with NUIG

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

### ***7.1 Recognition of the strategic importance of the Máistir programme***

The panel recommends that the place of the Máistir programme in the strategic role of NUIG as an ITE provider, be made explicit.

### ***7.2 Inputs***

#### ***7.2.1 Programme Aims***

The panel recommends that the development of students' competence in Irish be acknowledged appropriately as a key aim of the Máistir programme.

#### ***7.2.2 Areas of Study***

The panel notes the extent to which assessment as a professional responsibility of teachers and the related competency demands of the Junior Cycle reforms are provided for by being embedded in a number of modules in both year 1 and 2. The panel recommends that the School of Education ensures that programme delivery gives additional emphasis and focus to teacher competence in assessment of learning and assessment *for* learning in the context of current curricular and assessment reforms.

#### ***7.2.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies***

The panel recommend that provision be made so that inputs from the Educational Sciences are seen to inform the programmes over the two years.

The panel also recommends that the scale of the Practitioner Based Research Project be increased to about 10,000 words or equivalent, and the majority of marks be allocated for the quality of the research project, with less emphasis on preliminaries.

#### **7.2.4 School Placement**

The panel recommends that the numbers of students per tutor be modified as additional resources become available to the programmes.

The panel recommends that adjustments are made in the School Placement arrangements between the first and second year of the programmes, having regard to the minimum block placement requirement in the second half

The panel recommends that the Máistir programme and its partner schools be included in the development of the NUIG School of Education's School Partnership Initiative.

The panel recommends that school placement documentation should indicate clearly that the primary responsibility for the progress of learners, including for formal school-based assessment in the context of Junior Cycle reform, lies with the co-operating teacher and not with the student teacher on placement.

#### **7.2.5 Student Intake**

The panel recommends that a proposed annual intake of 140 for the PME programme and 22 for the Máistir programme - resulting in programme numbers of 324 in year 2 of the programmes - be reviewed and amended as necessary, in the light of the resources available for the delivery of the programmes and the staff-student ratio set out by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines*.

#### **7.2.6 Staffing**

The panel recommends that NUIG School of Education develop a detailed staffing schedule for the effective implementation of the programmes, having regard to the staff-student ratio set out by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines*.

#### **7.2.7 Engagement of Student Teachers with Staff and with other Student Teachers**

The panel recommends that cross-programme collaboration between the PME and the Máistir programme be a characteristic of the Practitioner Based Research module.

## **8. Stipulations**

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted, and
2. information gleaned during the visit to NUIG

the panel has noted a number of areas of the programmes which it considers must be addressed prior to commencement of the programmes.

### **8.1 Programme Design**

The panel stipulates the re-alignment of the credits balance between Educational Sciences Year 1 and Year 2 Practitioner Based Research Module to provide 20 Credits for each.

### **8.2 School Placement**

The panel stipulates that NUIG makes provision for one repeat opportunity for students who fail School Placement modules.

### **8.3 Staff-student ratio**

The panel stipulates that if the planned student intake is maintained, it will be necessary to significantly increase the School of Education staff, prior to the intake of 2015, having regard to the staff-student ratio of 1:15 set out by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines*.

## **9. National Issues**

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted, and
2. information gleaned during the visit to NUIG,

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
- c. the Council consider the potentially central and strategic role of the Máistir programme at NUIG to meeting demand for initial teacher education for Irish medium schools, at a national level.

### **9.2 School Placement**

- a. Further to the development of 'Guidelines on School Placement' 1st (draft) Edition (2012), 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 limited role of the student teacher in school based assessment following Junior Cycle reform.
- c.



### 9.3 Council Pro Forma Accreditation Documentation:

a. 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.

b. 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.

c. 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.

### **Teaching 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 a Post-Primary Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills. She is assigned to the Department’s Teacher Education Section and also contributes to the Inspectorate’s Literacy, Numeracy, Curriculum and Assessment Unit. She has broad range of experience in school inspection (including the Irish-medium sector), teaching, applied linguistics, assessment, curriculum development and teacher education.

### **Rapporteur – Dr Barney 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 – NUIG Staff who made a presentation on 25 April, 2013.***

Venue for meetings: Alexander Anderson Board Room, Quadrangle.

### **PME team:**

Dr Mary Fleming,	Head of School of Education, NUIG
Dr Manuela Heinz	Director of Teaching Practice
Dr Veronica McCauley	Subject Methodologies
Dr Pat Eaton	Educational Sciences
Andrea Higgins	TP tutor and School Partnership Programme

### **Máistir team**

Dr Brendan MacMahon Director  
Ms Sinéad Ni Ghuidhir  
Mr Seán Ó Grádaigh.

### **University officers:**

Dr Edward Herring, Dean, College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies  
Mr Michael Kavanagh, Academic Secretary, NUI Galway

11.00am-12.45pm: Meet representatives of the PME Programme

12.45pm-1.30pm: Meet with University Officers

1.30pm-2.00pm: Lunch

2.00-3.00pm: Meet representatives of Máistir programme

3.00pm: Site visit...Block D and parallel meeting with students from the Irish medium programme an Dioplóma Gairmiúil san Oideachtas with Eibhlín Ní Scannláin.

Prof Coolahan and Dr O'Reilly visited the Education Technology Centre at the School of Education and received a presentation on the range and operation of the Centre's facilities of the Centre by Mr. Jim Leneghan, Chief Technical Officer, and Dr. Dolores Stewart, Senior Technical Officer.