

Progress Report for the University of Limerick: Findings and Analysis

**Professional Master of Education
(Business) (Languages) (Music) (Physical
Education) (Technology) (Mathematics)**

April 2016

Contents

1. Background	2
1.1 The Teaching Council’s Review and Accreditation Function	2
1.2 The Initial Review Process.....	2
2. The Progress Report Process	3
3. Publication of this Report	3
4. Overall Findings.....	4
4.1 Further Accreditation.....	4
4.2 School Placement.....	4
4.3 Resourcing.....	4
4.4 Recommendations	4
5. Informing the next cycle of Review and Accreditation.....	6
Appendix 1: Review Panel Membership	7

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 where appropriate accredit, the programmes of teacher education and training provided by institutions of higher education,

(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 that programmes must also undergo. Academic accreditation is based on the suitability of a programme for the award of a degree or diploma. This process must be completed in advance of seeking professional accreditation, which is a judgement as to whether a programme prepares one for entry into that profession as per the Council's *Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers*.

1.2 The Initial Review Process

The initial review of the Professional Master of Education (Business) (Languages) (Music) (Physical Education) (Technology) (Mathematics) in the University of Limerick took place between May and July 2014, in accordance with the Council's review strategy. The final report was published on the Teaching Council website in October 2014. With regard to this programme, the report contained commendations, recommendations and stipulations. The accreditation of the programme had a lifespan of two years, with accreditation for a further three years to be approved subject to the Council's satisfaction with the submission of a Progress Report providing evidence of progress in the key areas highlighted in the original report.

2. The Progress Report Process

A Progress Report Panel was appointed by the Director to consider the progress report submissions relating to a number of ITE programmes. This Panel was comprised of two former Review Panel chairpersons and a Teaching Council member. A Rapporteur (a Teaching Council Associate) worked closely with the Panel to support the drafting and finalising of documents for each Higher Education Institute (HEI) during this process.

The Council communicated with the University of Limerick in December 2015 to set out the purpose of the Progress Report process, and to outline the composition of the Panel, the submission format required, and the relevant timeframe.

Having considered all programmes that required a Progress Report, and in line with Council's strategic priorities, the following were key areas for inclusion in all Progress Report submissions:

- **School Placement and**
- **Resourcing, with particular reference to student-staff ratio.**

HEIs were also required to demonstrate progress made with regard to recommendations (in addition to the two key areas above) outlined in their first cycle of review and accreditation.

A Progress Report submission template was designed and guidelines were developed in order to ensure that information provided by the HEI to the Panel was accessible and of a concise nature (20 pages maximum, including supporting documentation). A School Placement Handbook for Students, with the relevant areas highlighted, was also requested to accompany the submission.

The University of Limerick Progress Report submission was received on 1 February 2016, followed by a small number of clarifications sought by the Panel. Documentation was circulated by the Rapporteur to Progress Report Panel members in advance of a full-day meeting convened on 10 March 2016. The purpose of this meeting was to review the documentation and discuss conclusions with regard to further accreditation.

Based on the Progress Report submission and the outcomes of the Panel meeting, this report – including a recommendation for further accreditation – was agreed by the Panel. This report was then presented to Education Committee for final decision regarding further accreditation.

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. Overall Findings

The summary, below, outlines the findings of the Panel in relation to further accreditation and the three key areas that were included in the Progress Report submission from the University of Limerick for the Professional Master of Education (Business) (Languages) (Music) (Physical Education) (Technology) (Mathematics).

4.1 Further Accreditation

Having regard to the documentation that was initially submitted, together with the clarifications sought in response to the Panel's queries, the Panel is satisfied with the progress made in relation to aspects as previously identified in the first cycle of review and accreditation. Accordingly, it recommends to the Education Committee that the programme be granted further accreditation for three years (until autumn 2019).

4.2 School Placement

The Progress Report Panel is satisfied with the progress made in school placement. The details provided align with the Council's Guidelines regarding direct teaching hours, sector and level, and range of settings. Progress has also been evidenced in working towards the desired target of 200-250 hours direct teaching in this programme.

The submission also included a School Placement Handbook, with relevant extracts highlighted, demonstrating progress made regarding HEI-school placement partnership. This handbook was commended by the Progress Report Panel.

4.3 Resourcing

The information submitted to the Progress Report Panel detailed the current student-staff ratio as 8.2:1, which is below the Council's recommended ratio of 15:1. The Panel noted that the formula for student-staff ratio calculation was clearly outlined and captured the complexity of the allocation of resources from the many departments that contribute to the ITE programme.

4.4 Recommendations

As part of the Progress Report submission, the University of Limerick was also required to address two outstanding recommendations, as identified in the first cycle of review and accreditation:

7.1.3 Focus on the Junior Cycle Student Award skills

The introduction of the Junior Cycle Student Award with its focus on deeper learning and building key skills for life will present a considerable challenge to the student teacher and,

accordingly, the Panel recommends that a developing awareness of how its demands may be addressed be given a higher measure of prominence on the programmes.

The Panel concluded that this recommendation has been addressed in the extensive examples of a focus on these skills in different modules provided in the submission.

7.2 Title of programme

The Panel notes that the title of the programme – Professional Master of Education (Technology) – has the potential to confuse, as it references one of the Leaving Certificate subjects which the programme prepares students to teach, and excludes the others. It is recommended that the programme title be reviewed and amended by the university, in consultation with the Teaching Council, to reflect more accurately the course content.

The Panel concluded that this recommendation has been addressed in the change of title to Professional Master of Education (*Technological Education*).

5. Informing the next cycle of Review and Accreditation

The Progress Report Panel noted the following issues that it believes merit further attention by all HEIs providing programmes of Initial Teacher Education, and should be afforded particular attention by Council in revising its criteria as part of the next cycle of review and accreditation:

- The School Placement handbooks are a valuable resource for student teachers, HEIs, schools and Co-operating Teachers, as a guide to their roles and responsibilities for the duration of an Initial Teacher Education programme. For that reason, it is advised that, in keeping with Teaching Council *Guidelines on School Placement*, the School Placement handbooks should make explicit the role of the Co-operating Teacher in assigning the teaching of areas of the curriculum to the student teacher while retaining the primary responsibility for the progress of the learners.
- In line with the Teaching Council *Guidelines on School Placement*, it is incumbent on the HEI to ensure that the student teacher is supported and assessed by *two or more HEI placement tutors*, at least one of whom has relevant curricular/subject expertise.
- The extended school placement, consisting of a ten-week block in the second half of the Initial Teacher Education programme should span consecutive weeks and five full schooldays, in line with the school timetable.
- The challenges experienced by HEIs in securing placements for their students have been noted, but these challenges have been lessened in HEIs committed to formally developing a school-HEI partnership model. The development and implementation of a formal Memorandum of Understanding is seen as central to this model.
- While the Panel has noted the student-staff ratio calculated by the University of Limerick, it is aware that Council intends to develop a standard formula to be used by all HEIs. This is very welcome and it is recommended that the formula be provided to HEIs in advance of the next review cycle.

Appendix 1: Review Panel Membership

Professor Áine Hyland

Professor Áine Hyland is Emeritus Professor of Education and former Vice-President of University College Cork. She was a member of the European Universities Association Institutional Evaluation team from 2007 to 2014 and was involved in reviews of universities in Italy, Turkey, North Cyprus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovakia, Portugal and Romania. She is author of *A Review of the Structure of Teacher Education Provision in Ireland*, a background paper published in June 2012, and *Transition from Second to Third Level*, published in September 2011.

Professor Sheelagh Drudy

Professor Drudy is Professor Emeritus of Education at University College Dublin. She is a former teacher, educational researcher and teacher educator. She was a member of the first Teaching Council appointed by the Minister in 2005. She has been an external examiner at a number of HEIs and has been involved in quality assurance reviews in various HEIs. She has chaired a variety of panels which reviewed Initial Teacher Education programmes for the Teaching Council. She acts as an expert reviewer for international education journals and for research organisations.

Patsy McVicar

Patrick McVicar was nominated to the Teaching Council by the post-primary school management organisations and served as a member of the Education, Registration and Disciplinary sub-committees and on the Post-primary Applications Panel until his term of office ended in March 2016. He was previously Principal of Pobalscoil Chloich Cheannfhaola, Falcarragh, Co. Dhún na nGall. He is a former member of the Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) Executive Committee, where he chaired the Education sub-committee. He served on a number of NCCA committees including Course Committees for Technical Graphics, Design & Communication Graphics and the Board of Studies for Technological Subjects.