



*An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta*  
**The Teaching Council**

**Final Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council  
following a review of a reconceptualised programme  
submitted for accreditation by National University of  
Ireland, Maynooth**

**Professional Master of Education**

14 October, 2013

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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 programme provided by National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM) the Professional Master of Education - hereinafter referred to as 'the programme'.

## 2. *The Review Process*

The review of the Professional Master in Education took place between January and June, 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 National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 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 National University of Ireland, Maynooth (hereinafter also referred to as 'NUIM') in January, 2013. The panel met initially on 24 January, 2013 to give preliminary consideration to the NUIM 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, 25 March and 2 May 2013.

The Chairperson, Professor John Coolahan, and panel member, Mr Kieran Christie, visited NUIM on 22 April, 2013 and engaged in discussions with representative members of the Department of Education, NUIM. The visit had as its primary objective the clarification of issues arising from the documentation.<sup>2</sup> Prior to the meetings, the Rapporteur communicated a set of issues for clarification to the Department of Education, NUIM. The responses provided by the Department of Education to these requests for clarification provided the main agenda for the meeting. The visit schedule is included in Appendix 2. Further to NUIM receiving the draft of the final report of the Review Panel, in accordance with Section 7 of the Council's review strategy, the panel would like to acknowledge NUIM for providing further updates and clarification and revised programme documentation, taking account of matters raised during the course of the review.

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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 January, 2013 by NUIM 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 programme satisfies the criteria set down by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines*. Accordingly, it recommends to the Teaching Council that the programme 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 programme falls due for re-accreditation. The panel welcomes the assurances given by NUIM during the course of the review process that these issues will be appropriately addressed, and indeed, it has been advised that action has already been taken in relation to a number of the recommendations.

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 those stipulations being met. Therefore, the panel recommends that the Teaching Council should require NUIM to set out and submit to the Teaching Council, within two months of receiving the final review report, its proposals for implementing the stipulations. It welcomes the assurances given by NUIM during the course of the review process that these issues will be prioritised, and indeed, it has been advised that action has already been taken in relation to stipulation 8.1.

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 NUIM 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 visit to the college/meeting with HEI,

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

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

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

### **6.2 Inputs**

#### **6.2.1 Conceptual Framework**

The panel commends the articulation of the conceptual framework which provides for the clear, integrated and spiral development of the key principles of the programme which are very much in harmony with Council's philosophy and requirements.

#### **6.2.2 Programme Aims**

The six aims are succinctly stated and they are precise, well focussed, and targeted on key dimensions of the teacher's work.

#### **6.2.3 Programme Design**

The panel commends the programme structure which is thoughtfully designed; the balance, overall simplicity and the conceptual integration of elements of the programme are impressive.

#### **6.2.4 Areas of Study**

The panel commends the inclusion of the Discretionary Module in year 2. It introduces a welcome element of extension into areas of professional activity of special interest to the individual student. It welcomes the fact that the university has successfully integrated into the programme the mandatory areas which are set out in Table 2 of the Council's *Criteria and Guidelines*.

#### **6.2.5 School Placement**

The panel commends the clear recognition of the realities of working with schools in the early days of the development of a partnership model. In particular, the panel commends the careful thought that has gone into establishing a sound protocol for dealing sensitively, and firmly, with students who in the end have to be counselled off the course as a result of poor performance in relation to school placement.

## **6.3 Processes**

### **6.3.1 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Approaches**

The panel commends the extent to which the processes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment model the educational values of the programme.

### **6.3.2 Development of Professional Attitudes, Values and Dispositions**

The specific grade being assigned for "Professional Responsibilities" indicates to student teachers that the concept of professionalism is being taken seriously and is commended by the panel.

### **6.3.3 Reflective Processes**

The sustained attention to reflective processes throughout, allied to continual small group work in tutorials, workshops and micro-teaching groups, is to be commended.

## **6.4 Outcomes**

The use of the phrase "...evidenced by..." in the articulation of the expected learning outcomes indicates thoughtful planning and thinking through of the desired outcomes.

## **7. Recommendations**

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted, and
2. information gleaned during the meeting with NUIM, Department of Education representatives,

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

### **7.1 Inputs**

#### **7.1.1 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 & 2. The panel recommends that the Education Department 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.

#### **7.1.2 School Placement**

The panel draws the attention of NUIM Education Department to Council Guidelines regarding the hours requirement for school placement. It recommends that the hours be adjusted to approximate to the recommended hours thus providing additional student time for the enhanced Year 2 Research Project as per Stipulation 8.1 below.

### **7.2 Processes**

#### **7.2.1 Progression within the Programme**

The panel draws the university's attention to the Council's criterion whereby providers should allow one repeat of school placement. The panel notes the apparent conflict with the *discretion of the Examinations Board* as set out in the programme submission, and recommends that the university takes steps to provide for compliance with the Council's requirements. See Teaching Council (2011) p.15.

## **8. Stipulations**

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted, and
2. information gleaned during the meeting with NUIM Education Department representatives,

the panel has noted a number of areas of the programme which it considers must be addressed prior to the admission of a second intake to the programme.

### **8.1 Research Project**

The panel stipulates a credit allocation for this module of 20 credits.

### **8.2 Resources**

The panel stipulates that if the planned student intake is maintained, it will be necessary to increase the numbers of NUIM Education Department staff, prior to the intake of 2015, having regard to the recommended staff-student ratio of 1:15 which is set out in the Council's criteria.

## **9. National Issues**

Having regard to:

1. the documentation which was submitted, and
2. information gleaned during the visit to the college/meeting with NUIM 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 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

- 9.1.1. the Council should facilitate, in association with the relevant stakeholders, the rationalisation of the supply of post-primary subject methodologies across institutions.
- 9.1.2. 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**

- 9.2.1. 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.
- 9.2.2. 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. 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.

### 9.3.3. 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 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 – NUIM Staff who made a presentation on 22 April 2013***

Dr Padraig Hogan      Acting Head of Department of Education, NUIM,  
Dr Rose Dolan          Course Leader.  
Ms Angela Rickard  
Ms Majella Dempsey  
Mr Anthony Malone.