



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

**Final Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following  
a review of the reconceptualised Initial Teacher Education  
programme at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra**

**Professional Master of Education**

**October 2014**

## Contents

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>1. Background.....</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| 1.1 The Teaching Council’s Review and Accreditation Function ..... | 1        |
| 1.2 Review and Accreditation Strategy .....                        | 1        |
| 1.3 National Policy Framework .....                                | 2        |
| 1.4 Accreditation Criteria .....                                   | 2        |
| 1.5 Programme overview .....                                       | 3        |
| <b>2. The Review Process.....</b>                                  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>3. Publication of this Report.....</b>                          | <b>4</b> |
| <b>4. Documentation .....</b>                                      | <b>4</b> |
| 4.1 Inputs.....  | 4        |
| 4.2 Processes.....   | 5        |
| 4.3 Outcomes .....   | 5        |
| <b>5. Overall Findings .....</b>                                   | <b>5</b> |
| <b>6. Commendations.....</b>                                       | <b>7</b> |
| 6.1 Engagement with the review process .....                       | 7        |
| 6.2 Inputs.....  | 7        |
| 6.2.1 Conceptual Framework.....                                    | 7        |
| 6.2.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies .....           | 7        |
| 6.2.3 Reflection and Enquiry .....                                 | 7        |
| 6.2.4 Literacy and Numeracy .....                                  | 7        |
| 6.2.5 Portfolio .....  | 8        |
| 6.2.6 Range of Supports for Students .....                         | 8        |
| 6.2.7 Coherence across the Programme .....                         | 8        |
| <b>7. Recommendations .....</b>                                    | <b>9</b> |
| 7.1 Partnership .....  | 9        |
| 7.2 Research Project.....  | 9        |
| 7.3 Staff Student Ratio .....                                      | 9        |
| 7.4 School Placement.....  | 9        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>8. Stipulation .....</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| 8.1 Final Agreed Text.....  | 10        |
| <b>9. National Issues.....</b>  | <b>11</b> |
| 9.1 Partnership between schools and HEIs.....                             | 11        |
| 9.2 Extended School Placement.....  | 11        |
| 9.3 Calculation of Staff /Student ratio .....                             | 11        |
| 9.4 Teacher supply .....  | 12        |
| 9.5 Guidance on accreditation meetings with and visits to providers ..... | 12        |
| <b>Appendix 1 - Review Panel Membership .....</b>                         | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Appendix 2 – Meeting with St Patrick’s College staff .....</b>         | <b>14</b> |

## 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 Programme overview

This report relates to the review of the following programme provided by St Patrick's College – Professional Master of Education - hereinafter referred to as 'the programme'. This is a 120 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credit programme offered over two years which prepares graduate students to become primary teachers. The Department of Education and Skills determines the number of offers to be made on an annual basis. In recent years the number of entrants annually to the Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary) the precursor to this reconceptualised programme has been 60. It is anticipated that 100 students will be enrolled for the Professional Master of Education in September 2014.

## 2. The Review Process

The review of the Professional Master of Education took place between April and September 2014, 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 Anthony Finn as Chairperson.<sup>1</sup> To assist and support the work of the panel, Dr Pádraig Ó Donnabháin was appointed as Rapporteur. His functions included liaison with St Patrick's College, 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 St Patrick's College (hereinafter also referred to as 'the College') in April 2014. The panel met initially on 27 May 2014 to give preliminary consideration to the St Patrick's College submission. The panel also gave consideration to the report of the panel which reviewed the Graduate Diploma in Education programme in 2010 and the report of the panel, which reviewed the St Patrick's College Bachelor of Education programme in 2012/2013. In the case of both, particular attention was paid to the recommendations which were included therein.

---

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

Issues for further clarification were identified by the panel and were communicated by the Rapporteur to St Patrick's College. Following consideration of the documentation including the responses to issues identified as well as a collation of the initial views of the members of the panel, representatives of the College were invited to meet with the panel to discuss the programme and its particular aspects. The panel engaged with staff members who made a presentation embracing various aspects of the programme.<sup>2</sup> Further clarifications were provided when requested.

In the course of reviewing the documentation the panel maintained contact on a systematic basis both by e-mail and audio-link. On 28 January 2014, the Chairpersons of four review panels and their Rapporteurs attended a meeting convened for the primary purpose of identifying commonalities of judgement and refining reporting conventions and procedures.

### **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 April 2014 by St Patrick's College 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

---

<sup>2</sup> A list of the programme staff who presented to the panel is included in Appendix II

- 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 clarification documentation that was provided subsequently, the panel adjudges that the programme satisfies the criteria set down by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines*. Accordingly, the panel 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.

The stipulation in Section 8 relates to an area which the panel believes to be of such strategic importance to the programme that accreditation should be subject to this stipulation being met. Therefore, the panel recommends that the Teaching Council should require St Patrick's College to set out and submit to the Teaching Council, within three months of receiving the final review report, its response to the stipulation.



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

The panel proposes that accreditation of the programme would have an initial lifespan of three years after which time a mid-term progress report would be submitted by St Patrick's College. Subject to all programme commitments being fulfilled, it would be anticipated that the Council would then grant a further two years, making an overall accreditation period of five years.

## 6. Commendations

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during the meeting with programme staff

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

### 6.1 Engagement with the review process

The panel appreciates the professional approach of the staff of St Patrick's College in relation to every aspect of the review process. The clarity and precision of the initial submission material along with the clarification provided later ensured that the panel could gain insight and understanding of the programme without difficulty. The panel commends the College for its willing collaboration and commitment.

### 6.2 Inputs

#### 6.2.1 Conceptual Framework

The panel commends the conceptual framework underpinning the programme. With clearly articulated values and cogent epistemological and pedagogical principles, the programme has a strong framework with five pillars and four conceptual bands which facilitate progression in key dimensions of learning. Indeed, the panel was very impressed with both the philosophy behind, and the presentation of, the St Patrick's College approach to teacher education.

#### 6.2.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies

The panel commends the distinct spiral nature of the programme and the varied selection of teaching, learning and assessment methodologies that are in place. These are soundly based on the College's strong conceptual framework. In addition, there is significant merit in the indicative modes of delivery, pedagogical approaches and modes of assessment which are largely derived from sound research; and the resultant practices are generally very well matched to students' needs as they develop as reflective practitioners.

#### 6.2.3 Reflection and Enquiry

The panel commends the provision for reflection and enquiry as an embedded element of the programme from its commencement. The careful scaffolding envisaged to assist students to become reflective practitioners is intended to promote the integration of knowledge, research and the school-based learning.

#### 6.2.4 Literacy and Numeracy

The panel commends the constructively planned arrangements made by the College to develop literacy and numeracy in line with national and Council guidelines.

### **6.2.5 Portfolio**

The panel commends the manner in which the portfolio is considered as a framework through which students will develop their capacities for reflection and begin to develop their professional identities as teachers. The panel notes with approval that students will devise personal learning targets and articulate a rationale underlying their choices.

### **6.2.6 Range of Supports for Students**

The panel commends the broad range of supports to be provided for students. These include provision for support at induction including library learning skills, support for students experiencing difficulties during school placement as well as the availability of a wide range of experiences which can enhance personal and social development.

### **6.2.7 Coherence across the Programme**

The panel commends the coherence discernible across all elements of the programme. The panel notes in particular the innovative and creative use of blended learning which has the potential to be an important component for continuing and enhancing learning throughout the second year of the programme.

## **7. Recommendations**

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during the meeting with programme staff

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

### **7.1 Partnership**

The panel recognises the College's ongoing good work in embedding its partnership with schools. It recommends that the positive elements of the College's partnership programme now be further developed and widely shared with more co-operating schools and teachers.

### **7.2 Research Project**

The panel recognises that the College was willing to discuss fully the question of coherence in its research project in Year 2. While acknowledging the innovative practice which underpins this research project, the panel nonetheless recommends that the College should review the demands and requirements of students undertaking this project, with a view to ensuring that all students engage in a challenging and coherent project which integrates theory and practice in a rigorous manner.

### **7.3 Staff Student Ratio**

The panel recommends that, notwithstanding any difficulties faced by the College, it review its allocation of staff, in the light of the increased intake in September 2014, so that it can continue to make progress in moving closer to the Teaching Council's requirement for an improved staff/student ratio.

### **7.4 School Placement**

The panel recognises that the College agreed to revisit the arrangements for school placement following the meeting held on 25 June. The panel now recommends that the College should monitor carefully the development of successful student pedagogical practice during their 10 week placement in one school during the latter part of Year 2.

## 8. Stipulation

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during the meeting and subsequent engagement with programme staff

the panel has noted the following area of the programme which it considers must be addressed to the satisfaction of the Council as a matter of priority and, at the latest, prior to the deadline set out in the stipulation.

### 8.1 Final Agreed Text

The panel requires that programme adjustments and clarifications which were made in response to queries and exchanges with the panel on the original submission, be incorporated into a final agreed text. This is to be submitted to the Teaching Council as the final text in relation to the programme in a single concise document following the Pro Forma template and with changes highlighted for ease of reference. The final agreed text is to be provided to the Council within three months of receiving the final report.

## 9. National Issues

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during the meeting with programme 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 Partnership between schools and HEIs

Having regard to the Teaching Council's *Guidelines on School Placement* (2013) and the importance accorded to a partnership approach to facilitate and assist school placement, the panel recommends that the Council, in conjunction with other agencies, explore the general issue of partnership between schools and HEIs seeking to identify means by which this can be developed and systematised to benefit the teaching profession and in the interests of the pupils in the classroom.

### 9.2 Extended School Placement

The panel recognises that some providers have faced difficulties in securing suitable extended placements for student teachers in Year 2, as required by the Teaching Council's guidelines. However, the panel believes that this change is of both pedagogical and cultural importance and recommends that the Council, in association with partners, should continue to review progress and provide clearer guidelines on its implementation. As part of this process, the panel recommends that the Council should make more explicit its expectation that the extended placement in Year 2 should be based in one class. This is an expectation which the panel fully endorses, bearing in mind that the student teacher is nearing the end of the programme and can be expected to have moved from a strongly supported placement experience, to more independent teaching. The panel also recommends that the Council should, in any future guidelines, clarify its intention that the minimum duration of 10 weeks refers to ten school weeks, i.e. 50 school days.

### 9.3 Calculation of Staff /Student ratio

The panel notes that the Council's Pro Forma for the submission of programmes for accreditation purposes, while requesting information on staff student ratio, does not include a formula by which this should be calculated. The panel recommends that the Pro Forma be updated to include such a formula, so as to ensure absolute clarity for review panels in determining if this requirement has been met.

## **9.4 Teacher supply**

The panel recognises the importance which the Teaching Council gives to the question of teacher supply. Having considered the quantitative and qualitative implications of this matter across the programmes currently presented for accreditation, the panel wishes to highlight its view that teacher workforce planning is an essential component of a balanced calculation of the future needs of Irish primary and post-primary schools and is consistent with long-term planning for the development of the teaching of Irish and of other specialist subjects. The panel believes that the Council should now encourage national consideration of this matter, with a view to ensuring that the needs of schools are met in an open, planned way, with due emphasis on quality, equity and accessibility.

## **9.5 Guidance on accreditation meetings with and visits to providers**

The panel recognises that the Teaching Council has, by necessity, tailored its review process and believes that the process is fair and accountable. The panel understands that it is the Council's intention to revise its Strategy for the Review and Professional Accreditation of Existing Programmes when the current cycle of reviews has been completed. It is suggested that when doing so, consideration should be given to the provision of templates and practice guidelines for meetings and visits.

## Appendix 1 - Review Panel Membership

### **Review Panel Chairperson: Professor Anthony Finn**

**Anthony Finn** is a Professor of Teacher Education and Professionalism in the University of Glasgow and Chair of the Board of the new Scottish College for Educational Leadership. He was Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), the world's first independent, self-regulating professional body for teaching until his retirement in October 2013. Tony spent most of his career working in schools. Originally a Modern Languages teacher, he spent 18 years as Head Teacher of a successful secondary school. Before taking up his post with GTCS, he was Senior Manager (Depute Director) for Education in Fife.

**Claire Connolly** is the School Experience Co-ordinator at St Mary's University College, Belfast. She has experience in evaluating and reviewing modules, procedures and documentation to maintain the quality of teacher education programmes in SMUC. She has extensive knowledge of the Teaching Council's review and accreditation role, having previously served on several review panels for the Council.

**Derbhile de Paor** is a member of the Teaching Council. She was elected to the Council in the Munster constituency (primary). An experienced primary school teacher and school leader, at present she is Principal of Castleconnell NS in Co. Limerick. A graduate of Mary Immaculate College, her further studies include a Higher Diploma in Educational Administration (UCC) and a Masters in Educational Mentoring (UL). She serves on the Education and Disciplinary committees of the Teaching Council.

**Anne Feerick** is a Senior Inspector assigned to the Teacher Education Section of the DES. She is involved with the management of the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). Anne has extensive experience in evaluating the work of both probationary and experienced teachers in schools and centres for education. Prior to joining the Inspectorate, Anne was an administrative principal in a large DEIS urban primary school and worked as a facilitator with the School Development Planning Service.

**Rapporteur: Dr Pádraig Ó Donnabháin** taught at primary-school level before working as an inspector of schools with the DES. He has extensive experience of schools and educational issues and, together with Professor John Coolahan, wrote *A History of Ireland's School Inspectorate 1831-2008*. He has acted as an adviser to the Education Committee and has served as Rapporteur on other reviews.



## Appendix 2 – Meeting with St Patrick’s College staff

**Date:** 13.00 to 14.45 on 25 June 2014

**Venue:** Ashling Hotel, Dublin.

### Attendance

For St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra:

|                         |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Prof. Fionnuala Waldron | Dean of Education  |
| John Smith              | Programme Director |

For Teaching Council panel:

Prof. Anthony Finn, Chair

Derbhile de Paor, Member

Claire Connolly, Member

Anne Feerick, Member

Dr Pádraig Ó Donnabháin, Rapporteur