# An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta
# The Teaching Council

**Final Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following a review of the reconceptualised degree programme submitted for accreditation by Marino Institute of Education**

**Bachelor of Education Programme**

May 2013

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## 1. Background

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in March 2006 as the professional standards body for teaching. It works within the framework of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, Section 38 of which sets out the Council's statutory role in reviewing and accrediting programmes of initial teacher education.

The Teaching Council's role in relation to the review and accreditation of programmes of initial teacher education is distinct from the academic accreditation which programmes already undergo. Academic accreditation is based on the suitability of a programme for the award of a degree/diploma, whereas professional accreditation is a judgement as to whether a programme prepares one for entry into a profession.

The review and accreditation of programmes of initial teacher education by the Teaching Council provide 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 achieve programme aims and learning outcomes that are aligned with the values, professional dispositions and standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence which are central to the practice of teaching.

In order to guide its review of programmes, the Teaching Council published its *Initial Teacher Education: Strategy for the Review and Professional Accreditation of Existing Programmes* in September 2011.

In carrying out reviews, the Council is mindful of its *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* 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 and guidelines to be used by providers in reconceptualising programmes of initial teacher education at primary and post-primary levels. These were approved by the Council and published in June 2011 as *Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers*. These set out learning outcomes for all graduates of ITE programmes as well as the criteria and guidelines which providers of programmes of ITE are required to observe. As such, they form the bridge between the Council's policy and the development and implementation of reconceptualised programmes. 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.

A *Pro Forma for the Submission of Existing Programmes for Review and Accreditation by the Teaching Council* was designed to obtain the necessary documentation to enable an independent Review Panel to read and evaluate reconceptualised programmes.

This report relates to the review of the Bachelor of Education (hereinafter referred to as "the programme") provided by Marino Institute of Education (hereinafter referred to as "the College").

## 2. 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*

## 3. Overview of the Review Process

The Review Panel was appointed in July 2012 with Thomas Kellaghan as Chairperson.[1] The Panel was commissioned to review six separate primary ITE programmes. Panel members were in a position to consider the various programmes in the overall context of the reconceptualisation of teacher education at primary level.

To assist and support the work of the Panel, Pádraig Ó Donnabháin was appointed as Rapporteur. His functions included liaison with HEIs, maintaining records of meetings, and drafting and finalising the Panel's report in conjunction with the Review Panel Chairperson and Panel members.

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[1]Details of the panel membership are included at Appendix 1

The initial meeting of the Panel was convened on 3 July 2012 at which a general briefing was provided by Tomás Ó Ruairc, Director, and Carmel Kearns, Education Officer of the Teaching Council. The Teaching Council's terms of reference and general principles bearing on the review and accreditation of the reconceptualised programmes of initial teacher education were outlined.

By mid-July Panel members were supplied with the documentation in respect of the Bachelor of Education programme of Marino Institute of Education in electronic and hard copy formats. In the course of a series of meetings, the documents were studied taking into consideration the Council's requirements, most notably *Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers*. Additional information and clarity were sought in regard to a number of issues, to which the College responded in a further written submission. An opportunity was provided by the Panel for representatives of the College to attend a meeting on 11 April, 2013 to make an oral submission for clarification purposes.[2]

Panel members made extensive use of electronic mail to exchange views and comments prior to forming a collective view of the programme. The Panel prepared its report having considered the College's initial submission and its further clarifications.

## 4. Documentation

Marino Institute of Education adhered to the *Pro Forma for the Submission of Existing Programmes for Review and Professional Accreditation by the Teaching Council* of June 2011, supplying detailed information under all prescribed headings. The Pro Forma submission extended to 285 pages.

The Pro Forma submission provided detailed information under three main headings (Inputs, Processes, Outcomes). In the view of the Panel, the documentation was comprehensive, providing evidence of the College's commitment to the process of reconceptualising initial teacher education in accordance with the Teaching Council's criteria and guidelines. The Panel commends the College for its application and endeavour, as well as its willing co-operation in furnishing supplementary information.

## 5. Overall Finding

Taking account of the documentation which was submitted and considered in detail by the Review Panel, and the supplementary material furnished by the College, the Panel recommends to the Teaching Council that the programme be granted accreditation. The Panel proposes that such accreditation would have a lifespan of five years.

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[2] The names of the representatives are listed in Appendix 2.

The commendations in Section 6 relate to areas of particular strength identified by the Panel.

Recommendations in Section 7 relate to areas which the Panel considers to be of strategic importance to the programme. It, therefore, proposes that the Council should require the College to set out and submit, within twelve months of receiving the final review report, its proposals for their implementation. It further proposes that the Council prioritise those areas for attention when the programme falls due for re-accreditation.

In the case of the national issue raised in Section 8, the Panel recommends that the Council engage in discussion with relevant parties at national level.

## 6. Commendations

Arising from its review of the programme, the Review Panel has noted the following strengths of the ITE programme.

### 6.1 Aims, programme design and learning outcomes

The Panel commends the College's conceptual framework for the re-configured programme. Four pillars, which are closely linked to learning outcomes related to knowledge, skills and dispositions, underpin the programme. The pillars include: teacher as instructional manager; teacher as caring and moral person; teacher as generous expert learner; and teacher as cultural and civic person. The pillars and the manner in which they are woven into module learning outcomes lend coherence and integrative strength to the overall programme.

The Panel commends the Pro Forma for its succinctness and its description of a programme that is comprehensible and has a clear vision of the type of teacher the College hopes to produce. It is evident that much thought and reflection were committed to the development of the programme. School placement is at its heart, and there is significant emphasis on connecting it to college-based activities. The relationship between theory and practice is further consolidated by linking aspects of taught courses with particular school placements. Continuity and coherence among courses, and between the courses and school placements, are also promoted through an Academic Forum.

The Panel commends the detailed table that is provided of relationships between learning outcomes and the values set out in the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers.

### 6.2 Integration of programme components

The Panel commends the College's efforts to facilitate the clear integration of its programme components (foundation studies, curriculum/pedagogical studies, professional studies, specialist studies, school placement). For example, in the module *Drama and the Arts* in Year 2, assessment of students requires them to present an overview of an idea for a drama scheme for use in an introductory lesson on school placement (Pro Forma, p. 79). The module *Maths Methods and Social Environmental & Scientific Education* (Year 3) is designed to integrate mathematics and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE). The linking of Physical Education and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) to highlight the importance of health and well-being is also commended.

### 6.3 Variety of teaching and learning approaches

The Panel commends the provision of a variety of teaching and learning approaches (lectures, seminars, practical workshops, project work, directed learning, and individual tutorials) which are designed with a view to developing analytical skills, creative thinking, reflective practices, individual and group initiative, teamwork, and interpersonal and communication skills.

### 6.4 Creative approach

The Panel commends the creative approach that is adopted in the formulation of particular elements of the programme. For example, the module *Integration, Imagination and Innovation* (Year 2) is designed to sustain students as lifelong creative and innovative thinkers. This module emphasises the integration of higher-order imaginative thinking and aesthetic factors in its learning outcomes.

### 6.5 Reflective practice

The Panel commends the clear focus on reflective practice throughout the programme. For example, the module Reflection on Professional Practice (Year 4) is acknowledged for its potential to contribute significantly to the development of students' reflective practices.

### 6.6 Focus on progression in areas of study

The Panel commends efforts that are in evidence in descriptions of some areas of study to provide for progression and 'revisiting' of key concepts and topics over the course of the programme. For example, the module *Inclusive Education/Psychology/Early Childhood Education* (Year 4) revisits key messages gleaned from students' earlier engagement with these areas (Pro Forma, p. 112). The module *Maths Methods and Social*

*Environmental & Scientific Education* (Year 3) builds appropriately on the earlier module, *Social Environmental & Scientific Education* (Year 2).

## 6.7 Approximations of practice

The Panel commends the provision of opportunities in professional studies to support students in developing their competence as teachers. The module, *Teaching and Learning 1* (Year 1), featuring 'approximations of practice' with twenty-minute lessons and small classes, promises to provide a range of key experiences designed to promote practical classroom skills with a focus on particular areas of the curriculum. In its arrangement, design, and methods of assessment, the module provides imaginative scope for students to practise and refine critical teaching skills.

The Panel commends the module, *Teaching & Learning 2* (Year 3), for its continuation of the use of 'approximations of practice' in a range of core practices in teaching, including behaviour management, and interaction with the wider school community. The original and novel approach in the design of such modules should result in practical benefits for students.

## 6.8 Classroom communication strategies

The Panel commends the module, *Classroom Communication, Organisation and Management* (Year 1) for its practical attention to communication strategies involving oral, written, print, electronic and other dimensions, and for its use of a variety of assessment procedures.

## 6.9 School placement

The Panel commends the location of school placement as an integral and central element of the programme. Its procedures and processes are clearly outlined. Important positive features of school placement identified by the Panel include its carefully structured developmental approach and systematic opportunities for observation and reflection. The expertise of the co-operating teacher is available to support student teachers in the preparation and delivery of lessons and to provide constructive feedback. Post-observation debriefing conferences provide linkage between taught modules and school placement and encourage students to reflect on their practice in a shared and meaningful way.

The Panel commends the provision of opportunities to review and moderate grade descriptors for assessing school placement to ensure rigorous quality assurance. It also commends the high expectations set for students in school placement, while recognising the importance of having clear procedures for identifying, monitoring, and supporting students experiencing difficulty. The Panel commends the well-developed and structured programme of continuing professional development in place for all school placement

tutors and the thorough induction programme provided for associate placement tutors which should ensure consistency of approach in the assessment of students.

### 6.9.1 School placement in Gaeltacht areas

The Panel commends the provision to enable students take up school placements in Gaeltacht locations. A scholarship scheme provides students who have competence and interest in the language with the opportunity to acquire experience of teaching through the medium of Irish and to gain insight into the culture of a Gaeltacht community.

## 6.10 Partnership with schools

The Panel commends the online support programme which has been developed to support co-operating teachers. The programme provides a range of supports, including video footage prepared by subject specialists and other pertinent information. The College's intention to provide a series of online and face-to-face workshop sessions and discussion fora is noted.

## 6.11 Child Protection

The Panel commends the College's commitment to ensuring that students will be familiar with the use of appropriate health and safety strategies underpinned by Child Protection guidelines and will have the opportunity to study the *Stay Safe* Programme as part of SPHE provision.

## 6.12 Language studies

The Panel commends the focus in the modules English and Irish (Language, Literacy and Literature) on developing students' own literacy skills, their knowledge of the structure of language, and their ability to read and respond to literature from a range of genres. The Panel commends the College's broad approach to language studies which includes provision for teaching English as an additional language and teaching through the medium of Irish. The clear and interlinked learning outcomes for language studies in the module *Language Study / Teaching English as an Additional Language / Teaching Through the Medium of Irish*, are commended.

### 6.12.1 Literacy (English)

The Panel commends the College's approach to developing students' competence in literacy which reflects a spiral development from a broad understanding of the topic to a more refined focus on the pedagogical skills required to teach literacy in English.

The Panel commends the focus on developing students' knowledge of the teaching of language and on the use of practical formative assessment approaches. The

importance of developing students' ICT skills to support literacy development receives due attention. In the *Early Childhood Education* module in Year 3, the focus is on developing students' understanding of how young children acquire basic literacy skills.

### 6.12.2 Literacy (Gaeilge)

The Panel commends the College's efforts to sustain its tradition and commitment to promoting use of the Irish language. Appropriate attention is accorded the study of professional Irish using relevant and meaningful contexts to promote and support accuracy in oral and written language. In addition, Irish language activities are organised for students through the College's Cumann Gaelach.

The Panel commends the focus, in evidence in the modules English Methods and Irish Methods in particular, on the need to develop students' understanding of language functions, the communicative approach, and structured teaching approaches across all class levels. It also commends the multi-disciplinary perspectives adopted in the Year 2 module, *Language Study/Teaching English as an Additional Language/Teaching through the Medium of Irish*, to examine first and second language acquisition. Together with a focus on the teaching of English as an additional language, the module explores possibilities for teaching other subjects through the medium of Irish in schools where Irish is the second language.

## 6.13 Mathematics

The Panel commends the innovative work undertaken to support the teaching of mathematics. The evidence-based workshop/laboratory and lesson study approaches are intended to develop students' reflective and critical thinking by placing a particular emphasis on reflective processes and on developing conceptual understanding, thereby challenging students' own perceptions of mathematics teaching. The approach supports the development of students' competencies as facilitators of learning and their knowledge of how children learn.

## 6.14 Arts Education

The Panel commends the College's strong commitment to ensuring that students are provided with opportunities to study Music, Visual Arts and Drama, as both discrete and integrated areas of pedagogical study. An appropriate emphasis is also placed on students' active participation in support of the development of their receptive, expressive and critical understanding and appreciation of the Arts. Arts-related activities (e.g., extra-curricular workshops, art exhibitions, instrumental classes, voice coaching, college choir, drama society) are organised with or by students annually to cater for those who wish to perform, exhibit, or otherwise engage with the Arts. The College also fosters long-standing linkages with non-profit organisations to involve students in promotion of the Arts.

### 6.15 Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE)

The Panel commends the emphasis in SESE modules on practical experience (including field work in science, history, and geography) and the sensitivity of modules to the environments in which students will teach.

### 6.16 Religious Education

The Panel commends the approach to religious education which addresses understanding and appreciation of diverse religions and belief systems, strategies for inclusive practice, and students' own spiritual, religious, and moral development.

### 6.17 Inclusive education

The Panel commends the provision in Year 2 of the programme of lectures and tutorials in special education which are complemented by school placements where students gain experience of high- and low-incidence difficulties and disabilities. The Panel also commends the College's commitment to addressing educational disadvantage, and the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) strategy. There is provision also for cultural diversity for all students to complete a fifteen-day placement in a school serving a designated area of educational disadvantage.

### 6.18 Provision for developing students' capacity to carry out assessments

The Panel commends the modules which cover topics to evaluate learner progress such as *Teaching and Learning 2 Assessment / Differentiation* (Year 3) and *Curriculum & Assessment and Sociology* (Year 3).

### 6.19 Co-operative learning

The Panel commends the attention given to the principles of co-operative learning, as advocated in the *Primary School Curriculum (1999).* This includes providing students with the opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of the elements of co-operative learning such as positive interdependence, individual and group accountability and group processing.

### 6.20 Variety of methods of assessment

The Panel commends the wide variety in methods of assessment employed throughout the programme.  For example, in *the Maths Methods* module, students are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of appropriate formative assessment strategies through the use of various examples.  Other examples of varied methods of assessment can be found in the modules *Classroom Communication, Organisation and Management* (Year1), *Drama and the Arts* (Year 2), and *Inclusive Education / Psychology / Early Childhood Education* (Year 4).

### 6.21 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The Panel commends the opportunities provided for students to develop skills required to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the classroom. For example, the module *Creative Technologies* is intended to integrate the full range of creative technologies available to students with a view to developing pedagogical understanding for classroom applications.

Provision for ICT includes access to a refurbished computer room, cloud-based storage, and the availability of WiFi on the campus. The posting of course materials on the College's virtual learning environment provides enhanced opportunities for students' learning.

### 6.22 Professional portfolio

The Panel commends the College's provision for the development of professional portfolios by students which include documenting their work throughout the course of the programme and supports the development of reflective practice. The portfolio is also used to record experience acquired in school placement, including insights from collective debriefing tutorials. The portfolio has a multi-media format and will accompany students as they embark on a lifelong learning journey.

### 6.23 Pastoral care and support

The Panel commends the range of student support and guidance systems available in the College. These include health and counselling services, a personal tutorial system with a focus on the general welfare and development of students, and a 'buddy system' to support first year students. Social and cultural events and activities contribute to students' personal and academic development.

### 6.24 Exit routes

The Panel commends the provision for students who fail to meet the requirements of the programme. Supports such as the personal tutorial system and the Counselling Service of Trinity College are available to assist in directing students towards alternative options.

### 6.25 Involvement of stakeholders

The Panel commends the College's commitment to inclusive and consultative practices with all stakeholders and partners. The College has a clear commitment to fostering and nurturing links with relevant stakeholders including subject associations, national educational bodies, and national support services.

### 6.26 Commitment to improvement

The Panel commends the College's commitment to continuous improvement and enhancement of the quality of its activities. The quality promotion team, established as part of the College's strategic plan, is designed to develop and nurture a culture of quality and excellence in the delivery of all courses and services in an open and transparent manner. The holistic development of students and meeting their needs as future teachers are central to the College's promotion of quality in its activities.

## 7. Recommendations

Arising from its review of the reconceptualised programme, the Panel has noted a number of areas of the programme which it recommends for further development/improvement. These recommendations are offered to assist and support the College's internal review mechanisms.

### 7.1 Relationships between modules

The Panel recommends that the relationship between modules that are provided at different points in the programme should be explicit and, in particular, should indicate how a later module builds on an earlier module. This is not always the case. It is not clear, for example, how the module *Philosophical and Historical Understandings of Education* in Year 4 builds on the module with the same title in Year 1. The *English and Irish Methods* modules (Years 1, 2, 3) do not sufficiently distinguish in their rationales between literacy instruction at different stages of primary schooling.

### 7.2 Learning outcomes

While the learning outcomes are stated clearly in some modules, the Panel recommends that learning outcomes should be stated precisely and in specific terms in all modules. This recommendation relates to a number of modules. For example, the learning outcomes outlined in the module descriptors for music and SPHE need to be more specific.

### 7.3  Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

While the learning outcomes for the modules *PE and SPHE* include provision for health and safety strategies underpinned by Child Protection guidelines, the Panel recommends that anti-bullying guidelines should be emphasised to ensure that students develop a thorough understanding of relevant issues.

### 7.4 Measures to enhance proficiency in Irish

The Panel recommends that more detail be provided for students on how Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is developed across the programme to support students' competencies in the teaching of Irish.  For examples: it would be useful to know which subject areas are targeted. Are Irish medium vocabulary guides provided for and developed?

### 7.5 Indicative reading materials

The Panel recommends that 'Indicative Reading Materials' be revised for all modules to provide guidance to students in their reading. Lists should focus on the content of modules and be limited in number, in recognition of the demands on students in other modules. The lists attached to the vast majority of modules do not meet these criteria. Despite the length of lists, the omission of relevant literature in some modules is noticeable. For example, the module, *Reflection on Professional Practice* (Year 4), which deals with factors that contribute to high quality teaching and the impact of teaching on children's 'learning experience', contains no references to the school effectiveness or teacher effectiveness literature.

## 8. National Issue for the attention of the Teaching Council

The Panel identified the following issue in its review of initial teacher education programmes which has implications for all HEIs and which, therefore, should be considered at policy level by the Council.

### 8.1 Diversity of practice in school placement

The panel notes that the Teaching Council's new conceptualisation of the school placement in ITE programmes allows for the inclusion of some non-school based activities, such as micro-teaching, preparatory workshops and collective reflection sessions. It further notes the Council's expectation that the greater part of the placement should be school-based, but that it has not determined the minimum proportion of the overall placement component which should be school-based.

In view of the diversity of practice across HEIs in the amount of time spent by students (a) in schools and (b) in actual teaching, it is recommended that the Teaching Council should carry out research with a view to determining the appropriate balance of these activities.

## Appendix 1 – Review Panel Membership

**Independent Review Panel Chairperson:  Dr Thomas Kellaghan** is a former Director of the Educational Research Centre.  He is a member of *Academia Europaea* and a fellow of the International Academy of Education.  He chaired the Working Group on Primary Preservice Teacher Education.  The report of the Group, *Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century* (2002), recommended extension of the B.Ed. programme to four years.

**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 two review panels for the Council.

**Dympna Mulkerrins** is a primary-school teacher with many years' experience. She is deputy principal in a DEIS 1 school. As a member of the Council since its inception, and a member of the Education Committee for a number of years, she has extensive knowledge of the Council's review and accreditation role and its policy on the continuum. She has a M.Ed. degree and a post-graduate diploma in special education.

**Dr Treasa Kirk** is Divisional/Senior Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills, assigned to the Department's Teacher Education Section. She chairs the steering committee of the National Induction Programme for Teachers and represents the DES on a European Commission working group and on the European Network on Teacher Education Policies. A former deputy principal and curriculum support service facilitator, she has extensive knowledge of the Council's review and accreditation role, having previously served on a review panel for the Council.

**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 in-depth knowledge of the Council's education functions, having previously acted as an adviser to the Education Committee.

## *Appendix 2 – Marino Institute of Education staff who made a presentation during the meeting on 11 April, 2013*

Dr Anne O'Gara — President

Dr Seán Delaney — Registrar

Gene Mehigan — Principal Lecturer

Dr Patricia Slevin — Director of School Placement