



*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 Dublin City University.**

**Professional Master of Education (PME).**

**May, 2014**

## *Table of Contents*

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<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>4</b>
<b>3. Publication of this Report</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>4. Documentation</b> .....	<b>6</b>
4.1 Inputs.....	6
4.2 Processes .....	6
4.3 Outcomes .....	6
<b>5. Overall Findings</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>6. Commendations</b> .....	<b>8</b>
6.1 Engagement with the review process .....	8
6.2 Inputs.....	8
6.2.1 School Placement.....	8
6.2.2 Student Intake.....	8
<b>7. Recommendations</b> .....	<b>9</b>
7.1 Inputs.....	9
7.1.1 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies .....	9
7.1.2 School Placement.....	9
<b>8. Stipulations</b> .....	<b>10</b>
8.1 Agreed Final Text.....	10
<b>9. National Issues</b> .....	<b>11</b>
9.1 Teacher Supply .....	11
9.2 School Placement .....	11
9.3 Council Pro Forma Accreditation Documentation: .....	12
9.4 Relationship between academic accreditation and professional accreditation.....	13
<b>Appendix 1 - Review Panel Membership</b> .....	<b>14</b>

**Appendix 2 - Visit Schedule..... 15**

## **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 Dublin City University – Professional Master of Education - hereinafter referred to as ‘the programme’.

The Professional Master of Education is a 120 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credit, full-time programme offered over two years which prepares appropriately qualified graduates who have met the subject-related registration requirements of the Teaching Council, to teach in post-primary schools to Higher Leaving Certificate Level.

The programme replaces a Professional Diploma in Education at DCU which will be discontinued as the consecutive Initial Teacher Education programme at the university.

The programme provides for the ITE registration requirements of eligible graduate students to teach to higher Leaving Certificate levels in the following areas of the post-primary school curriculum: Mathematics, Business, Accounting, Science (Biology, Physics and Chemistry), Civic, Social and Political Education, Religious Education, English, Modern Languages, Gaeilge, Geography, History, Music and ICT. Modules in Music Education in year 1 and 2 will be delivered in the Mater Dei Institute of Education.

DCU will accept 100 students onto the programme each year.

The School of Education Studies at DCU has entered into a partnership arrangement with the National Institute for Digital Learning, also at the university, for the delivery of elements of the programme with online asynchronous learning opportunities thus providing a 'blended learning' experience.

DCU, together with St Patrick's College, the Mater Dei Institute of Education, and the Church of Ireland College of Education, is actively engaged in a process that will eventually lead to the full incorporation of these three colleges into DCU through the establishment of a new Institute of Education and an enhanced Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The proposed new Institute, which will include DCU's existing School of Education Studies, will constitute a new Faculty of Education in DCU.

## **2. *The Review Process***

The review of the Professional Master of Education took place between November, 2013 and May, 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 Prof. 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 Dublin City University, maintaining records of meetings, and drafting and finalising the panel's report in conjunction with the panel Chairperson. The panel was also supported in its deliberations by the Director and staff of the Teaching Council.

Documentation relating to the application was submitted to the Teaching Council by Dublin City University (hereinafter also referred to as DCU ) in October 2013. The panel met initially on 12 November, 2013, to give preliminary consideration to the DCU submission. Following this meeting, individual members of the panel circulated their comments, questions and issues for further clarification to other members of the panel. Issues for further clarification were identified by the panel and collated by the Rapporteur for consideration at a panel meeting in December, 2013. Following consideration of the documentation and the collated views of the members, the panel through the Rapporteur requested a revised submission to be delivered to the panel in January, 2014. The panel met to consider the revised submission on 27 February, 2014, following which arrangements were made for a meeting of panel members with representatives of the DCU School of Education Studies and appropriate other DCU staff. The Chairperson, Prof. Coolahan, and the Rapporteur, Dr. O'Reilly, and panel members Prof. McMahon and Mr. Kieran Christie, visited the university on 25 March , 2014 and engaged with staff members on the basis of an agenda furnished by the panel.<sup>2</sup> The visit schedule is included in

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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 DCU staff who participated in the meeting with the panel is included in Appendix II

Appendix 2. This was a visit that had as its primary objective the clarification of issues arising from the documentation and the identification of any adjustments needed to be made the programme. A further panel meeting was held on 25 March, 2014. In the course of reviewing the documentation the panel maintained on-going contact with the DCU School of Education Studies.

On 28 January, 2014, the Chairperson, Prof. Coolahan met with the Chairpersons of two other review panels and their Rapporteurs, 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 October 2013 and January, 2014 by DCU 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
- 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 and to the revised documentation submitted at the request of the panel, together with the supplementary documentation that was provided pursuant to the visit to DCU and the meeting with programme staff on March 25 2014, the panel adjudges that the programme satisfies the criteria set down by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines* and the methodology and other entry requirements set out in its curricular subject requirements.

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 areas which the panel believes to be of such strategic importance to the programme that accreditation should be subject to that stipulation being met. Therefore, the panel recommends that the Teaching Council should require DCU to address the matters in that stipulation not later than one month following receipt of the the final review report.

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 DCU 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 Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the revised submission and the supplementary material which was submitted, and
3. information gleaned during the visit to DCU and meeting on 25 March 2014, and subsequent engagement 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 and commends the constructive and professional engagement of the DCU School of Education Studies leadership and staff and the senior staff of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and of the University with the panel and its work.

The panel appreciates that DCU School of Education Studies agreed to make a revised pro forma submission and also to make a number of significant adjustments to this submission in the light of the queries and discussions at the visit of panel members to the institution.

### **6.2 Inputs**

#### **6.2.1 School Placement**

##### School Placement Partnership Relationships

The panel commends the DCU School of Education Studies for the diverse range of Research Centres at the University, developed and available to provide professional development programmes to partnership schools and to co-operating teachers.

The panel also commends the related commitment of the School of Education Studies to the development of arrangements to provide for 'HEI staff to teach and research within host schools where appropriate'.

#### **6.2.2 Student Intake**

##### Student Intake - Diversity in the post-primary teaching profession.

The panel wishes to commend the evident awareness of the DCU School of Education Studies staff of issues of diversity of background and cultural characteristics in the post-primary teaching profession. It further commends their commitment to positive action in this area in the admission of students to the programme which was evident to the panel where additional details of the admission processes were presented at the meeting on 25 March 2014.

## 7. Recommendations

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the revised submission and the supplementary material which was submitted, and
3. information gleaned during the visit to DCU School of Education Studies, the meeting and subsequent engagement 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 Inputs

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

Noting the development of the national Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL) at Dublin City University, the panel recommends the development by the DCU School of Education Studies of a plan and implementation programme for the appropriate use of the full range of digital technologies in the delivery of the programme.

#### **7.1.2 School Placement**

The panel recommends that the DCU School of Education Studies continue the ongoing development of the School Placement Cooperative Programme (SPCP) and develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)-type document in collaboration with partnership schools reflecting the best-practice guidelines of the Teaching Council as outlined in Teaching Council (2013) *Guidelines on School Placement*.

## **8. Stipulations**

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted, and
3. information gleaned during the visit to DCU School of Education Studies, the meeting and subsequent engagement with programme staff

the panel has noted the following matter in relation to the programme which it considers must be addressed to the satisfaction of the Council as a matter of priority, and not later than one month from receipt of the final report:

### **8.1 Agreed Final Text**

That adjustments to its revised submission agreed to in the light of the queries and discussions at the visit of panel members to the DCU School of Education Studies be incorporated into a new text and be submitted to the Teaching Council as the final text in relation to the programme, with changes highlighted for ease of reference.

## **9. National Issues**

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the revised submission and the supplementary material which was submitted and
3. information gleaned during the visit to the DCU School of Education and the meeting and subsequent engagement 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 Teacher Supply**

The panel recognises the importance of national deliberations in relation to the issue of teacher supply and the numbers of Initial Teacher Education places to be provided by HEI and accredited by Council. In that context, it recommends that:

- the Council continue to facilitate the national deliberation and decision-making, in association with all the relevant stakeholders - with particular reference to :
  - the rationalisation of the supply of post-primary subject methodologies across institutions, and
  - 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**

- a. Having regard to the issues raised in recommendation 7.1.2., 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 School Placement Guidelines.
- b. 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:**

#### 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.

#### Junior Cycle Reform

In the context of the proposed changes to the Junior Certificate programme, and of international best practice, all teacher education programmes should be required to make visible their approach to curriculum design and assessment. In practical terms, this requires a greater emphasis on the processes by which curriculum is designed, the theory and practice of formative and summative assessment and on the uses and limitations of testing. Arising from this, the Teaching Council's criteria and associated Pro Forma and Guidelines should be kept under review, having regard to the evolving context for the junior cycle.

#### 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.

In particular, the panel recommends that additional data be required in pro forma documentation re key characteristics of the academic staffing for ITE programmes that have a direct qualitative impact on the standards and coherence of programmes. The panel suggests data relating to the levels of relevant academic qualification of staff, the extent of recent relevant classroom experience and the balance of full-time, multi-annual contracts with part-time annual or sessional contracts be required in pro-forma submissions.

#### 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.

### Panel visits to HEIs- Protocols

The panel understands that the Council intends to review its strategy for the review and accreditation of ITE programmes, and its criteria and guidelines for accreditation, based on the experience of the current cycle of reviews. In that context, the panel recommends that Council, in consultation with HEIs, develop and make available a set of agreed protocols for the conduct of review visits by panels to HEIs and the associated meetings.

#### ***9.4 Relationship between academic accreditation and professional accreditation***

The panel recommends that any revised criteria to be developed by the Council should clarify the relationship between professional accreditation and academic accreditation, having regard to the fact that some of the recommendations and stipulations which are included in review reports, may have implications from an academic accreditation point of view.



## **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 Studies. 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 – Mr 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 – Ms Eibhlín Ní Scannláin.**

Eibhlín Ní Scannláin is an Irish language inspector, Post-Primary. She is currently assigned to the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills.

### **Rapporteur – Dr 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 - Visit Schedule***

**Date:** 25 March 2014.  
**Venue:** School of Education Studies, DCU

9.45am - 10.45am: Meeting of panel

11.00am-1.00pm.: Meeting with DCU School of Education Studies, and University representatives.

1.15pm - 1.45pm.: Refreshments

1.45pm - 3.30pm: Meeting of panel

### Attendance

For Dublin City University

Prof. Eithne Guilfoyle, Vice President Academic Affairs

Dr. John Doyle, Executive Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr. Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichill – Associate Dean Teaching & Learning

School of Education Studies Academic Staff

Prof. Joe O'Hara, School of Education Studies - Head

Prof. Gerard McNamara, School of Education Studies

Dr. James O'Higgins-Norman, Programme Director

Dr. Brendan Walsh

Dr. Francesca Lorenzi

Dr. Angela Leahy

Dr. Shivaun O'Brien

Dr. Geraldine Scanlon

Dr. James Lovatt

Dr. Majella McSharry

Ms. Fiona Gallagher MEd

Mr. Paul King MA MSc

Ms. Irene White MA

Ms. Catherine Flanagan MScEd

Mr. Peter Tiernan MSc

Ms. Bernadette Lawler MEd

Ms. Elaine Mullins MA

Ms. Victoria O'Hagan MA

Faculty Administrative Staff

Ms. Goretti Daughton – Senior Faculty Administrator

Ms. Máire Ní Sheighin – Faculty Administrator for PME

School Support Staff

Mr. Conor Sullivan MSc – ICT Support

Ms. Susan Byrne – School Secretary

Ms. Madeline McDermott – School Placement Administrator

Others

Mr. Ciarán O'Connor – Student Union

Mr. Jack Hyland - Library

Mr. Mark Glynn – Head National Institute for Digital Learning

For Teaching Council panel :

Prof. John Coolahan, Chair,

Prof. Harry McMahon, Member,

Mr Kieran Christie, Member,

Dr Barney O'Reilly, Rapporteur.