

Report of the Review Panel

Approved by the Teaching Council on 16 April 2012

following the review of the

Graduate Diploma in Adult and Further Education,

Mary Immaculate College,

Limerick

Report revised in May 2012 following receipt of observations from Mary Immaculate College

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Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following the review of the Graduate Diploma in Adult and Further Education

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 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 instructions concerned.

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 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 teacher education by The Teaching Council provides an opportunity for colleges and universities 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 which are aligned with the values and professional dispositions and the 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 has drafted its *Further Education: General and Programme Requirements for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications* (March 2011). In 2011 the Council invited expressions of interest from colleges and universities wishing to put forward

programmes for review in accordance with the Council's review strategy. A number of programmes was subsequently put forward and it was agreed that these would be reviewed in the 2011/12 academic year. This report sets out the findings following one of those reviews, i.e. the review of the Graduate Diploma in Adult and Further Education, hereinafter referred to as 'the programme', in the Faculty of Education in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, (MIC).

2 Statement with regard to the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003 (FOI Act) and 2003 (FOI Act)

The Teaching Council routinely makes information available to the public in relation to its functions and activities and, in line with that practice, a summary of this report will be available on the Council's website, www.teachingcouncil.ie.

The FOI Act is designed to allow public access to information held by public bodies which is not routinely available through other sources. The Teaching Council complies fully with the terms of the FOI Act and access to this document may be sought in accordance with that Act. It should be noted that access to information under the FOI Act is subject to certain exemptions and one or more of those exemptions may apply in relation to some or all of this report.

3 Overview of the Review Process

The review took place on 22 and 23 February 2012 in accordance with the Council's review strategy. The process was formally initiated when the Review Panel was appointed by the Teaching Council's Director with Stan McHugh as Chair. ¹The Review Panel Chair wrote to the university on 13 February 2012.

From the outset, there was wholehearted engagement by staff of the College and a genuine openness to the review and accreditation process.

The first meeting of the Review Panel took place on 21 February 2011. At that meeting, the panel reviewed the documentation and considered the visit schedule prepared by MIC. The Panel was cordially welcomed by the President, together with management colleagues and programme staff members to the college at the

¹Details of the Review Panel membership are included at Appendix I.¹

beginning of the review, and a list of attendees at the first session is listed in Appendix II.

At the conclusion of the visit, the Review Panel chair, in the company of fellow panel members, made an oral presentation to management and course staff in which he outlined their findings in broad outline and the subsequent steps in the review process. This report sets out the findings of Review Panel following its review.

4 Documentation

The documentation submitted by the University was comprehensive and adhered systematically to *Pro Forma for the submission of programmes of initial teacher education (further education) for accreditation by the Teaching Council (August 2011)*. Key areas of focus were:

- Programme description
- Conceptual framework
- Programme aims
- Programme design and structure
- Programme content
- Teaching, learning and assessment strategies
- Practical teaching programme
- Staffing
- Facilities
- Student support and guidance systems
- Communication and decision-making structures
- Financial resources
- Programme outcomes

The Review Panel considers that the document articulates the general requirements and programme details in a highly comprehensive and detailed manner. This provided valuable evidence of the programme structure and delivery and was of considerable assistance in assessing the focus of and quality of the various components.

5 Review Visit

As set out in the overview above, the Review Panel's visit to the College took place on 22 and 23 February 2012. In broad outline, it consisted of continuous dialogue with relevant programme staff members, programme mentors and students, together with observation of the facilities provided. This process afforded the Review Panel a valuable opportunity to consider the programme in detail. The logistical preparations made by the Course Director and colleagues facilitated a systematic and efficient examination of the various components of the programme.

The full schedule for the visit to the college is included in Appendix III.

6 Overall Finding

Having regard to the documentation which was submitted and considered in detail by the Review Panel, and the Panel's subsequent visit to the college, the Review Panel recommends to the Teaching Council that the programme be granted accreditation for its Graduate Diploma.

7 Commendations

Arising from its review, the Review Panel commends the College for the following strengths of the programme:

7.1 The submission document

Their submission document gives witness to a strong sense of purpose, underpinned by a mission statement that celebrates equity, freedom and opportunity. The Review Panel recognises its alignment of core values with programme aims and finds its tabular mapping of National Framework of Qualifications, programme and Teaching Council learning outcomes most useful in identifying the breadth and depth of the intended learning experiences.

7.2 Support of senior management

The college senior management provides a level of support that is highly commendable.

7.3 A rich foundation

The programme successfully builds upon existing strengths and structures that are grounded in sound research and a proud tradition of teacher education. Its coherent structure reflects a richness of academic thinking that is shaped by rigorous analysis of the socio-economic contexts of the programme, and is informed by relevant educational and social theory. The emphasis on critical reflection, action research and the constructivist approach is admirable. This focus is highly valuable in the context of the lifelong learning paradigm.

7.4 Commitment of staff

The commitment of staff to the delivery of the programme is highly impressive. Their background in teacher education provides them with valuable insights on best practice and their building of positive relationships with education partners such as the VEC's is rich in potential.

7.5 Mentoring

The Panel commends the promotion of the school based mentoring as an important element in the strengthening of support for students and views this initiative as one that enriches the programme for the student teachers.

7.6 Facilities and Staffing

The facilities available are impressive, not least the new and well-equipped lecture rooms that exhibit the latest in technological learning tools. Also worthy of note is the large staff complement drawn from a wide range of disciplines who are readily available to the programme Director and students.

8 Recommendations

Arising from its review of the programme, the Review Panel notes a number of areas of the programme which it recommends for further consideration, as follows:

8.1 Blended learning

Recognising the crucial importance of blended learning in the context of the Further Education sector, the Review Panel recommends that the online dimensions be strengthened and promoted systematically as the programme develops.

8.2 Literacy and Numeracy

Mindful of the issue of literacy and numeracy in Further Education, the Review Panel recommends that the programme provides for a more explicit engagement with learner needs in these crucial areas.

8.3 Collaboration and specialisms

The Review Panel recommends that the programme staff consider entering into discussion with other HEIs to explore the feasibility of collaboration in the delivery of programmes. In practice, this might lead to the identification of specialisms appropriate to particular institutions and regions and could help avoid unnecessary duplication of provision.

8.4 Extending partnerships

Acknowledging the valuable partnerships already forged with Limerick and Clare VEC's, the Review Panels recommends that the College considers developing relationships with other VECs and other FE providers such as voluntary and community groups.

8.5 Framework Levels

The Review Panel agrees that the programme as submitted is accurately pitched at Level 9 in the *Framework* but notes that the Teaching Council's benchmark standard is Level 8. It is recommended that the College considers the possibility of developing and delivering a programme at Level 8, while taking into account the recent policy decision of the Council to extend initial teacher education programmes for post primary teaching to two years. Furthermore, the development and delivery of a programme at Level 7 could provide an access route for staff already engaged in the FE sector to progress to full professional accreditation as teachers over time.

8.6 The role of mentors

The Review Panel recommends that the College **describes in more detail** the role and responsibilities of mentors.

8.7 Teaching Practice

In accordance with Teaching Council policy, the Review Panel recommends that practice placements should, where possible, encompass two settings. It is noted that the College is indeed committed to the promotion of practice in two placements insofar as is practicable, and to the extent that it succeeds in

effecting this arrangement it will more profitably address the diversification of practice inherent in the FE teaching environment.

8.8 Student support

The Review Panel recommends that the course providers continue to seek out ways to support its students, and especially so in respect of the challenges posed in the academic areas of the programme. Also, given that the concept of people working in close collaboration constitutes an important dimension of FE, it is recommended that the promotion of group work features more prominently in the programme.

8.9 Selection

The Review Panel recommends a greater level of **clarity** in respect of the criteria applied in the selection of students for the programme as it expands, while noting the success of the process as it now operates.

9 National Issues

The Review Panel recommends that the Teaching Council might usefully promote a process of collaboration between the various HEIs undertaking programmes in Further Education. In practical terms, a forum might be established to allow for a sharing of ideas on issues relating to the development of specialisms in particular Higher Education Institutions that would lead to a purposeful sharing of resources.

The Council should also consider in time the implications for FE Teaching Programmes of its recent decision to extend ITE programmes for post-primary teaching to two years.

Appendix I – Review Panel Members

Stan McHugh, Former CEO of FETAC and Independent Review Panel Chair

John Fitzgibbons, Education Officer, City of Cork VEC

Professor Gary Granville, Head of Education, National College of Art and Design

Edward McArdle, Former Registrar of Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Dr Fionnuala Waldron, Dean of Education, St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra

Dr Patrick O’Connor, former school principal and Divisional Inspector, DES, and Rapporteur for the Panel

The Panel was supported in its work by **Ms Ailish Murphy**, Executive Officer, The Teaching Council

Appendix II – Attendees at the Preliminary Meeting, 22 February 2012

Professor Michael Hayes, President

Professor Eugene Wall, Vice President, Academic Affairs

Professor Teresa O’Doherty, Dean of Education

Professor Jim Deegan, Director, Postgraduate Studies in Education

Professor Gary O’Brien, Assoc. Vice President, Administration

Dr Emer Ring, Head of Department

Mr Cathal de Paor, Programme Director

Ms Dorothy Morrissey, Programme Tutor

Mr John Coady, Vice President, Administration & Finance

Appendix III - Visit Schedule

Mary Immaculate College, 22nd and 23rd February 2012

22nd February 2012 (Day 1 of Site Visit)

- 9.15 a.m. Arrival of Panel at Mary Immaculate College
- 9.30 a.m. Panel meeting with Director of programme and senior management:
Prof. Michael Hayes, President
Prof. Eugene Wall, Vice-President, Academic Affairs
Prof. Teresa O'Doherty, Dean of Education
Prof. Jim Deegan, Director, Postgraduate Studies in Education
Dr Emer Ring, Head of Department
Cathal de Paor, Programme Director
- 10.00 a.m. Introductory presentation by Mary Immaculate College – overview of the programme:
Prof. Teresa O'Doherty, Dr Emer Ring, Cathal de Paor, Dorothy Morrissey
- 10.30 a.m. General requirements of the programme [*as above*]
- 10.45 a.m. Conceptual framework / programme aims and outcomes [*as above*]
- 11.30 a.m. Tea/coffee break**
- 11.45 a.m. Design, structure and content / teaching, learning and assessment:
Cathal de Paor, Dorothy Morrissey, Brendan Barry, Brendan Ryan, Dr Aislinn O'Donnell, C  il  n    Braon  in, Des Carswell, Dr Brian Clancy,
Practical teaching - *as above and Dr Tony Bonfield, Dr Mary Moloney, Dr David O'Grady, Nuala Flannery*
- 12.45 p.m. Lunch**
- 1.30 p.m. Panel Discussion
- 2.15 p.m. Practical teaching: Principals - *Eimear Brophy, AEO, County Limerick VEC,*
Pat Maunsell, Director, Limerick College of Further Education (LCFE)
- 2.45 p.m. Staffing / Governance / Financial resources: *Prof. Gary O'Brien, Assoc. Vice President*
Administration, *John Coady, Vice President, Administration & Finance*
- 3.15 p.m. Students
- 3.45 p.m. Practical teaching: Mentors - *Karl Quinn (Clare VEC), Anne Daly (County Limerick VEC), Colin Cummins (City of Limerick VEC)*
- 4.00 p.m. Attitudes, Values / Lifelong Learning / Reflective Practice [*Cathal de Paor, Dorothy Morrissey*]
- 4.15 p.m. Student Facilities / Student Support [*Gerardine Moloney, Jim Coleman*]
- 4.30 p.m. Panel Discussion
- 5.30 p.m. End of session

23rd February (Day 2 of Site Visit)

- 9.15 a.m. Arrival of Panel
- 9.30 a.m. Panel Discussion
- 11.30 a.m. Brief Feedback to Director and senior management team
Prof. Michael Hayes, Prof. Teresa O'Doherty, Prof. Jim Deegan, Dr Emer Ring, Cathal de Paor