

Report of the Review Panel

Approved by the Teaching Council

following the review of the

- **Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Teaching in Further Education and Adult Education**

and

- **Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching in Further Education**

Waterford Institute of Technology

12 June 2012

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1. Background

The Teaching Council is the statutory body charged with setting the standards for entry to the teaching profession and ensuring that these standards are upheld.

In accordance with Section 38 of The Teaching Council Act, 2001, the Council shall:

- (a) review and accredit 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 WIT .

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 25th and 26th of April 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. #

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

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 summarised their findings in broad outline and the subsequent steps in the review process of both programmes.

This report sets out the findings of Review Panel (herein after referred to as 'the Panel'). **Given that the two programme exhibit a high level of commonality, the report is structured to embrace both submissions in a single document. Within this framework, the specific programme(s) referred to are clearly identified.**

4. Documentation

The documentation submitted by the University was comprehensive and adhered to the template provided by the Teaching Council in *Further Education: 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 comprehensive documentation submitted beforehand carefully adhered to the template provided by the Teaching Council. This was of considerable assistance to the Panel in identifying the depth and focus of attention to the various components of the programme and formed a valuable evidential base in assessing the quality of the submission.

5. Review Visit

In broad outline, the review visit consisted of reading and dialogue with relevant members of the college staff members, together with observation of the facilities. This process afforded the Panel a valuable opportunity to consider the programmes in detail and facilitated the exploration of issues that emerged during the reading of the documentation. The ready co-operation of the college staff in supplementing documentation and providing clarification demonstrated a praiseworthy commitment and engagement with the review process.

6. Overall Finding

Having regard to the documentation which was submitted and considered in detail together with the visit to the college, the Panel considers that both programmes meet the requirements of the Teaching Council and should be granted accreditation. It is noted that Waterford Institute of Technology has already satisfactorily addressed the recommendations outlined below.

7. Commendations

Arising from its review of the programmes, the Panel notes a number of particular strengths attaching to both programmes, as follows:

7.1 Commitment of staff

The Panel commends a highly conscientious staff who exhibit an impressive level of commitment to the delivery and continuous development of two high quality teacher education programmes for those who will work in the Further Education (FE) sector.

7.2 Documentation

The strength of the documentation underpinning the submission is praiseworthy. It exhibits an impressive coherence and clarity that is richly complemented by high levels of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

7.3 A strong tradition of success

The Panel recognises that the programmes build on a strong tradition and specifically on what are obviously successful courses, as evidenced by diverse

evaluations. It is noted that some of these courses have been located below Level 8, a circumstance that gives eloquent testimony to an admirable ethos of support for adult education and the FE sector.

7.4 The philosophical underpinning

The Panel recognises an impressive coherence and a robust philosophical underpinning attaching to both programmes. The identification of the five key concepts and their linking to the outstanding theorists is particularly commendable; the commitment to the scholarship of teaching is welcome; and so too is the social constructivist approach and the declared commitment to the developing of communities of practice.

7.5 Teaching practice

In respect of both programmes, the Panel commends the robust approach to teaching practice that is purposefully rooted in a coherent logistical framework.

7.6 Staff development

The Panel acknowledges the potential benefit of the arrangements for the development of the skills of Mentors/ Co-operating teachers in both programmes. It commends the college for its initiative in instituting the two-option training courses that are usefully supplemented by a measure of blended learning support.

7.7 Students' perceptions

The students with whom the panel engaged exhibited an impressive level of interest and enthusiasm for their programmes. They were unhesitant in commending the relevant Department staff for their strong and generous level of support both on a personal and professional level. The Panel endorses their opinion.

7.8 Support of senior management

Senior management of the college exhibit an admirable awareness of the essential elements of the two programmes. This gives the Panel a high measure of confidence that for at least a period of three years there will be clear governance allied to a firm financial foundation.

8. Recommendations

Arising from its review of the programmes, the Panel notes a number of areas of the programmes which it recommends for further consideration.

The Panel's recommendations are as follows:

8.1 Entry requirements

The Panel recommends that the entry requirements for both programmes be reviewed in order to avoid any possible ambiguities or unnecessary barriers to entry.

8.2 Programme Aims and learning outcomes

The Panel recommends in respect of both programmes that WIT examines the aims and learning outcomes to ensure a closer alignment between Teaching Council requirements and the National Framework of Qualifications. In this respect, reflective practice ought to be specified in the Level 8 programme. Also, a higher level of consistency in the use of terms e.g. 'adult literacy, 'adult basic education', should be sought and perhaps included in a glossary.

8.3 Programme design

The Panel notes with concern the absence of an explicit reference to the provision of IT for students in the documents presented for the two programmes. A further concern relates to the implications for learning in the FE sector that is evidenced in the according of elective status to the literacy module on the Level 8 programme, and its 10 credit value. Another issue for the Panel relates to the appropriateness of the Strategic Management module on the Level 8 programme. The Panel recommends that these concerns should form part of a review that seeks to ensure alignment with Teaching Council requirements.

8.4 Reading lists

The Panel recommends that reading lists should be reviewed to ensure that relevant (FE) policy documents are included.

8.5 Consistency in use of FETAC levels

The Panel recommends that a greater consistency in the referencing of FETAC levels is warranted.

8.6 Assessment

The Panel recommends that in respect of both programmes the School ensures that credit is not given twice for what in effect is the same portfolio. Also, the Panel urges that the various assignments undertaken by students should reflect the progressive nature of both programmes.

8.7 Memorandum of understanding

The Panel recommends that in respect of both programmes the memorandum of understanding should be reviewed. This could usefully include a greater level of specificity relating to the role of the course providers and that of the co-operating teacher. Further, the Panel sees a convenience and advantage for WIT in engaging directly with relevant

management bodies such as VECs rather than individual providers. Also, given that the VECs have already satisfied FETAC Quality Assurance requirements and secured FETAC registration, there may be some duplication in the audit process suggested in the documents.

8.8 Programme aims and learning outcomes at Level 9

The Panel recommends that the Level 9 submission be strengthened to reflect more clearly the required academic standards of a Level 9 programme. Specifically, the learning outcomes of each module need to be expressed with a clarity that gives assurance of a rigour consonant with the higher expectations of a programme located at Level 9.

8.9 Programme design and structure of the Level 9 programme

The Panel recommends that it be made more readily apparent that a greater rigour attaches to Level 9 than that at Level 8. To that end, action research might become a central feature. Also of value too might be the inclusion of some elements of management or of the strategic management module in the current version of the Level 8. Further, in respect of assessment a greater and more refined breadth and depth should be a fundamental overall and this ought to include the promotion of assessment for learning which is a key FETAC requirement. Also, the teaching practice feedback template could be reviewed and amended in order to facilitate an unambiguous and consistent application of the criteria. In respect of the reflective journal, the Panel cautions that it has the potential to demotivate if it begins to make unreasonable demands on student capacities – as some students asserted. This leads to further recommendation that the journal concept be reviewed so that its undisputed learning potential may be optimised within the scenario of competing demands throughout the programme.

9. National Issues

The Review Panel recommends to the Teaching Council that, in time, it considers further the long-term implications of granting registration on the basis of a Level 9 award when in fact Level 8 is adequate in accordance with Regulation 5.

Appendix I – Review Panel Membership

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

Evan Buckley, currently Education Officer, City of Dublin VEC

Dr Ann Walsh, Academic Coordinator, Professional Diploma in Education (FE), NUIG

Edward McArdle, former Registrar of General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Dr Patrick O'Connor, former school principal and Divisional Inspector, DES and rapporteur for the Panel

Dr Cathal de Paor, Director of Continuing Professional Development, Faculty of Education, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

Appendix II – Visit schedule

Day One: Wednesday 25th April 2012

| Time | Meeting | Participants | Location |
|-----------------|---|--|---|
| 09.00 | Panel arrives at WIT Tourism and Leisure Building Main boardroom | Welcome John Wall, Head of School of Education Mary Fenton, Head of Department of Adult and Continuing Education Helen Murphy, Head of Literacy Development Centre | WIT Tourism and Leisure Building Main boardroom |
| 09.30 -11.30 | Panel pre-assessment meeting | Panel members | |
| 11.30 -11.45 | Tea/coffee | | |
| 11.45 | Panel meeting with School management | John Wall, Mary Fenton, Helen Murphy | |
| 12.00 | Introductory presentation by WIT of proposed TEQ programmes at level 8 and 9 | John Wall, Mary Fenton, Helen Murphy | |
| 12.30 | Lunch | | Seasons Training Restaurant WIT Tourism and Leisure Building |
| 13.30 | Core themes across both programmes General requirements of each programmes Rationale for each programme Programme aims and outcomes Conceptual framework Attitudes and values Model for Teaching Practice/Practical teaching E-Learning Support | John Wall, Mary Fenton, Helen Murphy Dr Seán Moran, Dr Maeve O’Grady, Geraldine Mernagh, Patricia O’Neill, Helen Maher, Karen Bunyan, Dr Catherine Lowry O’Neill and Dr Anne Graham (<i>Programme lecturers from level 8 and level 9 programme</i>) | WIT Tourism and Leisure Building Main boardroom |
| 15.30 | Tea/Coffee | | |
| 15.45 | Level 8 Programme Review Design, structure, | John Wall, Mary Fenton, Helen Murphy, Dr Seán Moran, Geraldine Mernagh, Helen Maher, , Karen Bunyan, Dr Anne | WIT Tourism and Leisure Building |

| | | | |
|-------|---|------------------------------|----------------|
| | content/teaching, learning and assessment Teaching Practice Reflective practice | Graham and Dr Maeve O'Grady. | Main boardroom |
| 17.00 | Panel Meeting | | |
| 17.30 | End of day one | | |

Day Two: Thursday 26 April 2012

| Time | Meeting | Participants | Location |
|-------|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| 09.00 | Level 9 Programme Review Design, structure, content/teaching, learning and assessment | John Wall, Mary Fenton, Geraldine Mernagh, Dr Anne Graham, Dr Seán Moran, Dominic Kirby, Dr Catherine Lowry O'Neill, Dr Jane Russell O'Connor, Dr Valerie Mannix. | WIT Tourism and Leisure Boardroom |
| 10.30 | Tea/coffee | | |
| 10.45 | Student Facilities/Student Support | Student Life Long Learning and Support, Martina Harte, Laura Keane | WIT Tourism and Leisure Boardroom |
| 11.00 | Tour of WIT facilities | JW/MF/HM | Main atrium, classrooms, library |
| 11.40 | Staffing, governance, financial resources | Neil O'Sullivan/Tony McFeely John Wall, Mary Fenton, Helen Murphy | WIT Tourism and Leisure Boardroom |
| 12.00 | Student Support E-Learning | Laura Widger, WIT e-Learning Vicky Phelan, Student Support LDC | WIT Tourism and Leisure Boardroom |
| 12.20 | Students | Students and graduates from programmes at level 8 and 9 | WIT Tourism and Leisure Boardroom |
| 1.00 | Lunch | | Gallery Restaurant |
| 14.00 | <i>Short tour of facilities</i> | | <i>School of Education</i> |
| 14.30 | <i>Panel review and brief feedback to WIT School of Education management</i> | <i>School Management</i> | <i>School of Education</i> |
| 16.00 | <i>End of panel visit</i> | | |