

**Report of the Review Panel**  
**Approved by the Teaching Council**  
**following the review of the**  
**BSc Education & Training (Further, Adult and Continuing Education)**  
**Dublin City University**

**27 May 2013**

Council also considered letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013 in response to the Addendum submitted by DCU in February 2013

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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 were subsequently put forward and it was agreed that these would be reviewed in the 2011/12 academic year, or as soon as possible after that. This report sets out the findings following one of those reviews, i.e. the review of the proposed BSc Education & training (Further, Adult & Continuing Education), hereinafter referred to as 'the programme', in Dublin City University, Whitehall, Dublin 9.

The proposed programme is a four year concurrent programme and has been reviewed in the context of the note appended to section 1.7 of the Council's programme requirements as referred in the foregoing paragraph.

## **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](http://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 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> November 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. <sup>1</sup>

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

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

At the conclusion of the visit, the Review Panel Chair, in the company of fellow panel members, gave feedback to management and course staff in which he summarised their findings in broad outline and the next steps in the review process. The Chair subsequently sent the Panel's initial findings to management. Following its consideration, DCU submitted an Addendum to its original submission which addressed the recommendations contained in the Panel's feedback. This report sets out the final findings of the Review Panel (herein after referred to as 'the Panel') following its review of both the submission and the Addendum.

#### **4 Documentation**

The original documentation submitted by the University 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 Panel considered that in general terms the document articulated the general requirements and programme details. This was of considerable assistance in identifying the various components of the programme and formed a valuable evidential base for the Panel in assessing the quality of the submission. It is noted that the inputs, processes and outcomes associated with the programme were treated in a systematic manner. Furthermore, a number of amendments are recommended so that the submission will be more fully in keeping with the requirements of the Teaching Council's Programme Requirements for the Further Education sector. At all stages of the process the programme leaders demonstrated a determination to ensure that their submission would reach the levels of

comprehensiveness that the Panel suggested, and their commitment to the delivery of a high quality programme was apparent to the Panel.

## **5 Review Visit**

As set out in the overview above, the Panel's visit to the University took place on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of November. In broad outline, it consisted of reading, dialogue with the relevant university staff members and observation of the facilities provided. This process afforded the Panel a valuable opportunity to consider the programme in detail and in particular it allowed for the exploration of a number of issues which had emerged during the reading of the documentation.

The detailed logistical preparations made by the DCU School of Education Studies team facilitated a systematic and efficient examination of the various components of the programme.

## **6 Overall Finding**

Having regard to the documentation which was originally submitted and considered in detail by the Review Panel, the Panel's subsequent visit to the University, the Panel's feedback, and the Panel's detailed consideration of the University's Addendum, the Review Panel recommends to the Teaching Council that the Programme be granted accreditation for its BSc in Education and Training (Further, Adult and Continuing Education).

The Panel wishes to record its commendations and recommendations arising from its review of the original documentation and its visit, as follows:

### **6.1 Strategic commitment to education**

6.1.1 The Panel were impressed by Dublin City University's strategic identification of education as a transformative process as embraced in the University's current strategic plan – '*Transforming Lives and Societies*'. This concept was evident in discussions with staff.

6.1.2 DCU's strategic commitment to establishing a research led Institute of Education in collaboration with its partner institutions with the goal of integrating initial teacher education and continuous professional development for teachers across the education continuum underpins its commitment to education. The emphasis on research is very much welcomed.

6.1.3 The University and School of Education's commitment and achievement of a variety of routes of access to entering programmes is to be commended with the flexible delivery mode particularly noteworthy.

**6.2 Commitment to adult education**

6.2.1 It was evident to the Panel that there is a strong and long-standing commitment in DCU and the School of Education to adult and further education. The values of equality, social inclusion and diversity were apparent in the programme materials, the attitude of staff and student/graduate feedback.

6.2.2 It was clear to the Panel that graduates of the University's Further and Adult education programmes make a positive impact on the wider spectrum of further education in Ireland and particularly in the Dublin area.

**6.3 Support of senior management**

6.3.1 The support offered by the university senior management as observed by the Panel is seen as key to the sustainability of the proposed programme.

**6.4 Commitment of School of Education and staff**

6.4.1 The core values and vision of the teacher as a professional are very evident in discussions with School staff and graduates, and the programme documentation provided. These align with the Teaching Council's vision and values.

6.4.2 The high level of research activity among school staff is commended by the Panel.

6.4.3 The Panel was impressed with the level of commitment and support given by staff to students. The very high student retention rates are clear evidence of what can be achieved with such an approach.

**6.5 The Proposed Programme**

6.5.1 The pre-existing three year programme BSc in Education and Training is well-established, has evolved to meet new needs and gives a solid base on which to launch the proposed four year programme.

6.5.2 The already existing school placement/teaching practice structures provide a good basis for undertaking the extended placement in the proposed programme.

6.5.3 The various access routes to entry to the programme and the flexible delivery option are very much in line with the Teaching Council's

objective of wider access alternatives and flexible student friendly programme delivery options.

6.5.4 The facilities available in **the** School of Education in areas such as dedicated micro-teaching rooms and dedicated IT facilities are commended. The active use of technology in teaching is noteworthy.

6.5.5 The overall support structures for students deserve particular praise.

## 7 Recommendations

The Panel's recommendations on the original submission were as follows:

- 7.1 The Conceptual Framework as set out in the proposal documentation does not reflect fully the research base which informs the thinking and philosophy of the programme. The Panel noted that aspects of the conceptual framework were visible within the documentation provided but that the proposal would be enhanced if this was presented in a more integrated manner.
- 7.2 The content and structure of the additional year (3<sup>rd</sup> year) in the proposed programme was not readily apparent to the Panel. A review and re-construction should be undertaken with a view to:
- 7.2.1 Providing greater specificity in relation to indicative content and outcomes
  - 7.2.2 Providing a structured programme covering the academic year/60 ECTS credits
  - 7.2.3 Ensuring there is a sufficiency of intellectual content and rigour
- 7.3 The review of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the programme envisaged in 7.2 above is likely to have an impact on the content of the existing 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years. The Panel draws attention to section 2.4 (Structure and Content) of the Council's *Further Education: General and programme Requirements for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications* where integration and clear linkage between the various components of the programme (foundation studies, professional studies and practical teaching experience) is sought.
- 7.4 In reviewing the 3<sup>rd</sup> year and the teacher education programme as a whole, consideration might also be given to the elements relating to:
- 7.4.1 Psychology of learning
  - 7.4.2 Literacy/numeracy



- 7.4.3 Special education
  - 7.4.4 Curriculum development
  - 7.4.5 Quality assessment requirements of Awarding Bodies
  - 7.4.6 The potential for elective topics.
- 7.5 The extended four year BSc will inevitably require additional staffing resources and it is essential that existing staff resources are not further stretched.
- 7.6 The student/graduate base of the existing programme would appear to be heavily routed in the Dublin area, particularly North Dublin. Consideration should be given to widening the reach of the programme to a broader hinterland.

## **8. Recommendations following review of the Addendum**

An Addendum to DCU's submission was sent to the Teaching Council in February 2013. The Panel met on 28 February 2013 to review the Addendum. The Panel welcomed the Addendum, and noted that it represented sizeable progress towards addressing the recommendations included in the feedback to the original submission. This allowed the Panel to reach its overall and conclusive finding in favour of accreditation (as in 6 above), while identifying three key elements which it recommends for further attention by DCU, as follows:

8.1 The Programme would benefit from a further elaboration and articulation of the conceptual framework underpinning the rationale for the model of teacher education being adopted, focussing in particular on the programme philosophy, structure and content as it is now presented.

8.2 It is not yet clear to the Panel how the current structure facilitates optimum integration as required by the Teaching Council in relation to Foundation studies, Professional Studies and teaching practice. The teaching practice in Year 3 appears to be quite separate from the foundation and professional studies. It is suggested that this issue could be addressed by:-

(a) including specific learning outcomes and indicative content relating to integration activities, and/or

(b) identifying the indicative content and workload involved in the additional lectures provided for in the Addendum in year 3.

8.3 With regard to the two modules in Year 3, each would benefit from a more definite constructive alignment between the learning outcomes, indicative content, workload and assessment design.

## **9 National Issues**

The Review Panel recommends that the Teaching Council explores FE teachers' need for subject knowledge and expertise and the opportunity for such as afforded by the concurrent model. The experience of DCU with the concurrent model should provide a useful starting point in this regard.

## **Appendix 1 – Review Panel Membership**

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

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

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

**Dr Anne Walsh**, Academic Co-ordinator, Open Learning Centre, NUI Galway

**Brendan O’Dea**, Deputy Director, The Teaching Council acted as rapporteur to the Panel.

## **Appendix 2 – Attendees at the Preliminary Meeting, 06 November 2012**

The following personnel from Dublin City University were in attendance

Dr Joe O’Hara, Head of Department of Education Studies

Dr Justin Rami, Chair of Programme (Flexible Mode)

Dr John Lalor, Chair of Programme (Full Time Mode)

Dr Carmel Mulcahy, Department of Education

Dr Brendan Walsh, Director of Teaching Practice

Prof John Doyle, Dean of Faculty of Humanities

Dr Claire Bohan, Support Services

## Appendix 3 - Visit Schedule

### Day 1 of Visit : 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012

Item
Panel meeting with Director of programme and senior management
Introductory presentation by Dublin City University – overview of programme
General requirements the programme
Conceptual framework/ programme aims and outcomes
Design, structure and content/ teaching, learning and assessment
Lunch
Panel discussion
Practical teaching
Attitudes, values/ lifelong learning/ reflective practice
Staffing/ governance/ financial resources
Student support
Panel discussion
End of session

### Day 2 of site visit: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012

<b>Student facilities: technological support</b>
<b>Panel discussion</b>
Feedback to Director and colleagues