

Report of the Review Panel
Approved by the Teaching Council
following the review of the
Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education), Level 8
Mary Immaculate College
Limerick

14th October 2013

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Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following the review of the Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education), Level 8

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 published 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 for review. This report sets out the findings following one of those reviews, i.e. the review of the Professional Diploma in Education (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 may 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 4th July 2013 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 Chair¹.

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 3rd July 2013. At that meeting, the panel reviewed the documentation and considered the visit schedule prepared by MIC. The following day, the Panel was cordially welcomed by the President, together with management colleagues and programme staff members to the college at the beginning of the review, and a list of attendees at the first session is listed in Appendix II.

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

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 stated their findings in broad outline and the subsequent steps in the review process. This report sets out the findings of the 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 4th July 2013. It consisted of continuous dialogue with relevant programme staff members and programme mentors. 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 College be granted accreditation for its Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education).

7 Commendations

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

7.1

The submission document shows a coherent philosophical underpinning of the course with an obvious institutional commitment of the values espoused by the Teaching Council. There is an appropriate balance between the functional and transformative aspects of education.

7.2

The document is appropriately context specific with a clear recognition of the demands and pressures facing the further education sector and tensions between teaching and instructional roles.

7.3

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

7.4

The programme submitted for accreditation 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.

7.5

The programme shows a clear intention of the need to empower students to be informed and effective contributors to the public discourse regarding education.

7.6

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. The Review Panel welcomes the partnership approach with Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in both the construction and delivery of the programme.

7.7

The proposed models of delivery of the programme on both a full and part-time basis and the blended approach to teaching and learning are commended by the Review Panel.

7.8

The Panel welcomes the submission of this programme at Level 8, as it offers both the Teaching Council and MIC an ideal opportunity to evaluate the issues arising from the similarities and differences between it and MIC's Graduate Diploma programme already accredited at Level 9.

Recommendations

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

8.1

The Review Panel considers that the programme would benefit from a review of the volume of assessment as currently presented and a further consideration of possible opportunities for integrating assessment across some modules.

8.2

The Review Panel recommends reconsideration of the requirement that the placement supervisors should have a Master's Degree. As a prerequisite, it may be unduly restrictive given the diverse nature of the further education sector and the stated aspiration to align the placement supervisors' subject expertise with the students' subject area of expertise.

8.3

The Review Panel considers that the assessment procedures as outlined in the submission document regarding teaching practice would benefit from more clarity and recommends more detailed guidance for assessors in relation to the marking criteria being applied to ensure greater consistency to the award of marks and grades.

Appendix I – Review Panel Members

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

John Fitzgibbons, Education Officer, Cork Education and Training Board

Gene Mehigan, Principal Lecturer, Marino Institute of Education

Edward McArdle, Former Registrar of Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Dr Patricia Eaton, Lecturer in Education, Programme Director – Postgraduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs, NUI Galway

Ailish Murphy, Executive Officer, The Teaching Council, rapporteur for the Review Panel

Appendix II – Attendees at the Preliminary Meeting, 4th July 2013

Professor Michael Hayes, President

Professor Eugene Wall, Vice President, Academic Affairs

Professor Teresa O'Doherty, Dean of Education

Dr Emer Ring, Head of Department

Dr Cathal de Paor, Programme Director

Appendix III - Visit Schedule

Mary Immaculate College, 4th July 2013

- 9.00 a.m. Arrival of Panel at Mary Immaculate College
- 9.10 a.m. Panel meeting with senior and programme management:
Prof. Michael Hayes, President
Prof. Eugene Wall, Vice-President, Academic Affairs
Prof. Teresa O'Doherty, Dean of Education
Dr Emer Ring, Head of Department
Dr Cathal de Paor, Programme Director
- 9.30 a.m. Introductory presentation by Mary Immaculate College – overview of the programme:
Prof. Teresa O'Doherty, Dr Cathal de Paor, Dr Emer Ring, Dorothy Morrissey
- 10.00 a.m. General requirements of the programme: *Dr Cathal de Paor, Dr Emer Ring, Dorothy Morrissey*
- 10.45 a.m. Conceptual framework / programme aims and outcomes [*as above*]
- 11.00 a.m. Tea/coffee break**
- 11.15 a.m. Design, structure and content / teaching, learning and assessment:
Dr Cathal de Paor, Dorothy Morrissey, Brendan Barry, Brendan Ryan, Dr Aislinn O'Donnell, Cólín Ó Braonáin, Des Carswell, Dr Brian Clancy, Dr Patricia Kennedy, Dr Anne O'Keefe
Practical teaching - *as above*
- 12.45 p.m. Staffing / Governance / Financial resources: *John Coady, Vice President, Administration & Finance*
- 1.00 p.m. **Lunch**
- 2.00 p.m. Panel Discussion
- 2.30 p.m. Attitudes, Values / Lifelong Learning / Reflective Practice : *Dr Cathal de Paor, Dorothy Morrissey*
- 3.30 p.m. Panel Discussion
- 4.30 p.m. Brief Feedback to Director and senior management