



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 Marino Institute of Education

Professional Masters in Education (Primary Teaching)

July 2014

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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 criteria and to submit them for accreditation.

1.5 Programme overview

This report relates to the review of the following programme provided by Marino Institute of Education – Professional Masters in Education (Primary Teaching) - hereinafter referred to as ‘the programme’. This is a 120 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credit programme offered over two years which prepares graduate students to become primary teachers. The Department of Education and Skills determines the number of offers to be made on an annual basis. Some sixty students have been registered in each of the last four years on the Higher Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching), which was the precursor to this reconceptualised programme.

2. The Review Process

The review of the Professional Masters in Education (Primary Teaching) (PME - Primary Teaching) took place between January and June 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 Professor Anthony Finn as Chairperson.¹ To assist and support the work of the panel, Dr Pádraig Ó Donnabháin was appointed as Rapporteur. His functions included liaison with Marino Institute of Education, 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 Marino Institute of Education, hereinafter also referred to as MIE, in January 2014. The panel met initially on 28 January 2014 to give preliminary consideration to the MIE submission. At that meeting, the panel also gave consideration to the report of the panel which reviewed the Higher Diploma in Education (Primary) programme in 2011 and, specifically, the recommendations which were included in that report.

Issues for further clarification were identified by the panel and were communicated by the Rapporteur to MIE. Following consideration of the documentation including the responses to issues identified as well as a collation of the initial views of the members of the panel, representatives of MIE were invited to meet with the panel to discuss the programme and its particular aspects. The panel engaged with staff members who made a presentation embracing various aspects of the programme.² Further issues were identified for elucidation arising from this meeting. In the course of reviewing the documentation and clarification responses, the panel maintained contact on a systematic basis both by e-mail and audio-link. A further meeting of the panel was held on 27 May 2014.

On 28 January 2014, the Chairpersons of four review panels and their Rapporteurs attended a meeting convened for the primary purpose of identifying commonalities of judgement and refining reporting conventions and procedures.

¹ Details of the Review Panel membership are included in Appendix I

² A list of the programme staff who presented to the panel is included in Appendix II

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.

4. *Documentation*

The documentation submitted in January 2014 by MIE 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
- Student Intake
- 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, together with the supplementary clarification documentation that was provided subsequently, the panel adjudges that the programme satisfies the criteria set down by the Teaching Council in its *Criteria and Guidelines*. Accordingly, the panel recommends to the Teaching Council that the programme be granted accreditation.

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.

In the case of the national issues raised in Section 8 of this report, the panel recommends that the Council engage in dialogue on these issues at national level.

The panel proposes that accreditation of the programme would have an initial lifespan of three years after which time a mid-term progress report would be submitted by Marino. Subject to all programme commitments being fulfilled, it would be anticipated that the Council would then grant a further two years, making an overall accreditation period of five years.

6. Commendations

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during the meeting 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

Marino Institute of Education engaged willingly and enthusiastically with the review process. Appointing a liaison person to act on its behalf, MIE responded comprehensively to the panel's requests for clarification of particular aspects of the programme. When the panel met with MIE staff, a common and purposeful approach was evident in the manner in which staff dealt with various aspects of the reconceptualised programme. The panel commends the thorough and professional engagement of MIE staff with the review.

6.2 Inputs

6.2.1 Conceptual Framework

The panel commends the conceptual framework for its clarity and cohesion in linking and integrating theory and practice across the programme. The panel notes the shared vision of staff and the firm commitment of Marino to develop graduate students who will become reflective practitioners with a positive disposition to lifelong learning.

6.2.2 School Placement

The panel commends the comprehensive and detailed provision for school placement which is linked to all elements of the programme. The panel believes that through provision made for experience in a variety of school contexts including different class levels in mainstream schools, placement and observation in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools and special education settings, and possible placement in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools, school placement is carefully delineated and sharply focused as regards learning outcomes.

6.2.3 Approximations of Practice and Reflective Practice

The panel commends the module *Teaching and Learning: Approximations of Practice and Reflective Practice* for the opportunities on offer to students to reflect on their attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning, to develop and practice key skills, and to record and assess their experience and performance in classrooms.

6.2.4 Partnership with schools

The panel commends MIE for its developmental approach to partnership with schools. This is exemplified in the *School Partnership Programme* which aims to build on established links with schools by offering a more formalised structure within which schools and teachers can enjoy a more participative and innovative approach to school placement. Adopting an incremental and gradual process of consultation and engagement, the programme seeks to develop a shared vision for school placement and offers a range of targeted supports for partnership schools. A further positive element of partnership is the creation of the *Maestro* information system that holds promise of various benefits for schools and students not least of which is the prospect of improved school placement arrangements.

6.2.5 Continuing Professional Development of School Placement Tutors

The panel commends the provision for continuing professional development for school placement tutors including associate placement tutors who are employed on a part-time basis. It is apparent that MIE provides for extensive conference sessions, including workshops and inputs from curriculum, professional studies and foundation studies staff, to ensure consistency and reliability in school placement generally. The panel notes with approval MIE's dedication to quality assurance and the manner in which established staff provide quality assurance for the work of adjunct staff.

6.2.6 Research project

The panel commends the careful planning invested in the research project. Providing for correct ethical procedures and for valuable assistance for students in devising suitable topics for research, it is apparent that MIE makes suitable demand and expects appropriate rigour in the completion of research projects. The sharing of research findings with partnership schools should serve to strengthen linkages with schools.

6.2.7 Support for students

The panel commends MIE's provision of a broad range of supports for students. These include a personal tutor system, counselling, peer-on-peer support, a mentoring programme and a teaching enrichment programme.

7. Recommendations

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during 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 Partnership with schools

The panel recommends that MIE continue to develop and extend its positive and innovative partnership with schools, seeking new ways of developing professional collaboration that is mutually beneficial with teachers and schools.

7.1.2 Staff / Student Ratio

The panel recommends that MIE take steps, wherever possible, to improve staff/student ratios. Notwithstanding the difficulties faced by the Institute, the Teaching Council criteria suggest that an improved staff/student ratio should be put in place.

7.1.3 Title of programme

The panel recommends that the programme title 'Professional Masters in Education (Primary Teaching)' be changed to 'Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)' to be consistent with the title being used by other providers of consecutive programmes, all of whom are using the title 'Professional Master (SINGULAR) of (NOT IN) Education'.

8. National Issues

Having regard to:

1. the Pro Forma documentation which was submitted
2. the supplementary material which was submitted
3. information gleaned during 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.

8.1 Partnership between schools and HEIs

Having regard to the Teaching Council's *Guidelines on School Placement* (2013) and the importance accorded to a partnership approach to facilitate and assist school placement, the panel recommends that the Council, in conjunction with other agencies, explore the general issue of partnership between schools and HEIs seeking to identify means by which this can be developed and systematised to benefit the teaching profession and in the interests of the pupils in the classroom.

8.2 Calculation of Staff /Student ratio

The panel notes that the Council's Pro Forma for the submission of programmes for accreditation purposes, while requesting information on staff student ratio, does not include a formula by which this should be calculated. The panel recommends that the Pro Forma be updated to include such a formula, so as to ensure absolute clarity for review panels in determining if this requirement has been met.

8.3 Teacher supply

The panel recognises the importance which the Teaching Council gives to the question of Teacher Supply. Having considered the quantitative and qualitative implications of this matter across the programmes currently presented for accreditation, the panel wishes to highlight its view that teacher workforce planning is an essential component of a balanced calculation of the future needs of Irish primary and post-primary schools and is consistent with long-term planning for the development of the teaching of Irish and of other specialist subjects. The panel believes that the Council should now encourage national consideration of this matter, with a view to ensuring that the needs of Irish schools are met in an open, planned way, with due emphasis on quality, equity and accessibility.

8.4 Guidance on accreditation meetings with and visits to providers

The panel recognises that the Teaching Council has, by necessity, tailored its review process and believes that the process is fair and accountable. The panel understands that it is the Council's intention to revise its Strategy for the Review and Professional Accreditation of Existing Programmes when the current cycle of reviews has been completed. It is suggested that when doing so, consideration should be given to the provision of templates and practice guidelines for meetings and visits in order to promote efficiency and consistency across review panels.

Appendix 1 - Review Panel Membership

Review Panel Chairperson: Professor Anthony Finn

Anthony Finn is a Professor of Teacher Education and Professionalism in the University of Glasgow and Chair of the Board of the new Scottish College for Educational Leadership. He was Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), the world's first independent, self-regulating professional body for teaching until his retirement in October 2013. Tony spent most of his career working in schools. Originally a Modern Languages teacher, he spent 18 years as Head Teacher of a successful secondary school. Before taking up his post with GTCS, he was Senior Manager (Depute Director) for Education in Fife.

Claire Connolly is the School Experience Co-ordinator at St Mary's University College, Belfast. She has experience in evaluating and reviewing modules, procedures and documentation to maintain the quality of teacher education programmes in SMUC. She has extensive knowledge of the Teaching Council's review and accreditation role, having previously served on several review panels for the Council.

Derbhile de Paor is a member of the Teaching Council. She was elected to the Council in the Munster constituency (primary). An experienced primary school teacher and school leader, at present she is Principal of Castleconnell NS in Co. Limerick. A graduate of Mary Immaculate College, her further studies include a Higher Diploma in Educational Administration (UCC) and a Masters in Educational Mentoring (UL). She serves on the Education and Disciplinary committees of the Teaching Council.

Anne Feerick is a Senior Inspector assigned to the Teacher Education Section of the DES. She is involved with the management of the National Induction Programme for newly qualified teachers and the Professional Development Service for teachers. Anne has extensive experience in evaluating the work of both probationary and experienced teachers in schools and centres for education. Prior to joining the Inspectorate, Anne was an administrative principal in a large DEIS urban primary school and worked as a facilitator with the School Development Planning Service.

Rapporteur: Dr Pádraig Ó Donnabháin taught at primary-school level before working as an inspector of schools with the DES. He has extensive experience of schools and educational issues and, together with Professor John Coolahan, wrote *A History of Ireland's School Inspectorate 1831-2008*. He has acted as an adviser to the Education Committee and has served as Rapporteur on other reviews.

Appendix 2 – Meeting with Marino Institute of Education staff

Date: 09.00 to 11.30 on 10 March 2014

Venue: Ashling Hotel, Dublin.

Attendance

For Marino Institute of Education:

Dr Anne O’Gara, President
Eugene Mehigan, Principal Lecturer
Dr Patricia Slevin, Director of School Placement
Dr Anne Ryan, Senior Lecturer in Education
Dr Barbara O’Toole, Senior Lecturer in Education
Aodán Mac Suibhne, Príomhléachtóir

For Teaching Council panel:

Prof. Anthony Finn, Chair
Derbhile de Paor, Member
Claire Connolly, Member
Anne Feerick, Member
Dr Pádraig Ó Donnabháin, Rapporteur