An Chomhairle
Mhúinteoireachta
The Teaching Council

Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following a review of an Initial Teacher Education programme

Name of HEI: **University of Limerick (UL)**

Name of Programme: **Professional Master of Education**

Date: **March 2023**

Contents

Programme Overview

This report relates to the review of the following programme provided by University of Limerick:

Professional Master of Education, hereinafter referred to as 'the programme'.

Background

Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education sets out the standards which programmes of initial teacher education in Ireland must meet in order to gain accreditation from the Teaching Council. It is also a benchmark for anybody seeking to register as a teacher in Ireland.

The Teaching Council's *Procedures for the Professional Accreditation of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education* (hereinafter referred to as the *Procedures*) sets out the process by which programmes are reviewed.

University of Limerick submitted a completed pro forma, toolkits and appendices which mapped the programme against each of the standards outlined in *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*. The programme was reviewed by the Review Panel following the *Procedures.*

Particular requirements for post-primary programmes

In November 2020, the Council published *The Teaching Council Registration Curricular Subject Requirements (Post-Primary),* which set out the Council's revised subject criteria requirements for approved curricular subjects. The requirements may be met through studies incorporated into a concurrent programme of initial teacher education or may be met through undergraduate studies prior to completing a consecutive programme of initial teacher education. This also guides providers of post-primary consecutive programmes in determining suitability of entrants, outlining which curricular subjects, entrants can ultimately be registered to teach, as well as matching students to appropriate methodology modules.

The Review Process

The review of the **Professional Master of Education** at University of Limerick (UL) took place between July 2022 and March 2023 in accordance with the Council's *Procedures for the Professional Accreditation of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education*.

Step 1 Notification	The Council notified UL of its intention to review the Professional Master of Education on 17 February 2022.
Step 2 Preliminary Meeting	A preliminary meeting was held between the Council executive staff and UL on 9 March 2022 to provide an overview of the submission documentation and answer queries from UL.
Step 3 Submission	UL submitted the proforma and supporting documentation for the Professional Master of Education on 7 July 2022.
Step 4 Desk-based Review	A desk-based review was conducted by the Council staff on 20 July 2022 and a letter requesting clarifications was sent to UL on the 28 July 2022. UL submitted their response on 2 September 2022.
Step 5 Appointment of Review Panel	The process was formally initiated when the Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as 'the panel') was appointed by the Teaching Council's acting director, with Prof Sheelagh Drudy as Chairperson and Mr Patrick McVicar and Prof Margery McMahon as panel members. The panel was briefed by Teaching Council staff.
Rapporteur	The review panel was supported in their role by Tríona Cleary as rapporteur. The rapporteur's functions included liaison with UL, 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 external subject experts and by the acting director of the Teaching Council and her executive staff nominees.
Step 6 Review panel meeting 1	The panel met on 27 October 2022 to consider the submission. They requested clarifications from UL on 7 November 2022. UL responded to this request on 18 November 2022.
Step 7 Engagement with the HEI	The panel chair and rapporteur held a pre-meet with UL on 8 November 2022 to discuss arrangements for a site visit.
Review panel meeting 2	The full panel met on 1 December 2022 to discuss the schedule for the site visit and consider the clarifications received from UL.

Site Visit	The panel conducted a site visit to University of Limerick on 8 December 2022. This was also attended by the rapporteur and Teaching Council staff. The panel had a tour of the facilities and met with representatives from the university management team, the programme teams, the school placement team and some students and recent graduates of the programmes. The panel met the following: • Provost • Dean, Faculty of Education & Health Sciences • Dean, Faculty of Science & Engineering • Dean, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences • Director of Finance at UL • Financial Controller • Finance Business Partner • Professor of ITE & Deputy Head of School of Education • Deputy Head of School of Education • Accreditation & Quality Officer • Project Manager • LM091 Programme Team • LM094 Programme Team • LM095 Programme Team • PME Programme Team • Students & recent graduates The UL President and Head of School of Education were unable to attend the site visit but were represented by the UL Provost and the Deputy Heads of the School of Education.
Step 8 **Review panel meeting 3**	The panel sought some further clarifications from UL following the site visit and then compiled their overall findings.
Step 9 **Reporting**	The report was drafted and issued to the HEI for the 30-day feedback period. It was finalised when the final response was received from UL.
Step 10 **Education Committee**	The Chair will present the report at the next meeting of the Education Committee. They may decide to: accredit the programme, accredit the programme with requirements or not accredit the programme.

Overall Findings

The panel commends the very detailed and thorough submission by University of Limerick (UL). The proforma, toolkits and appendices were comprehensive and easy to navigate and demonstrated a significant effort to align the programme to the *Céim Standards for Initial Teacher Education*.

The panel appreciated the deep engagement by UL with the review and accreditation process and the willingness to clarify any queries sought and take on board any constructive feedback.

The panel were impressed with the quality and qualifications of the UL School of Education staff, particularly the significant number of staff with notable International research profiles. The interfaculty collaboration and university wide commitment to high quality and research informed teacher education was evident throughout the submission and during our conversations with representatives from UL's senior management, School of Education and programme teams on the site visit.

The facilities available to support students' research, teaching and learning were impressive, particularly the newly refurbished library and the microteaching spaces.

Graduates of the Professional Masters in Education with eligible degrees will be able to register with the Teaching Council as post-primary teachers.

Programme Design

	Comment	Standard addressed?
1.1.1 The Programme	The Programme received academic accreditation on 2 March 2022 prior to being submitted to the Teaching Council for professional accreditation and is in line with the Council's Registration Regulations 2016.	Yes
1.1.2 Conceptual Framework	The programme is supported by a clearly defined conceptual framework. In the submission, UL demonstrated how the conceptual framework is developed in the context of the providers' mission and ethos and how it is informed by research and the Council's *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education.* *"Underpinning UL's ITE programmes is the mission statement of enabling student teachers to "become teachers of all young people in Irish schools in a global context informed by a vision of professional practice."* *Appendix 6(a)* They demonstrated the core idea that being and becoming a teacher is a lifelong process involving knowledge and skills as well as the development of teacher voice and agency and a commitment to the needs of all learners and the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* *"UL's ITE provision is informed by both in a number of ways: (i) commitment to fostering life-long learning of prospective teachers through a focus on `adaptive expertise' (Timperley et al., 2007; Anthony et al., 2015), (ii) undertaking research on teacher education across the continuum of teacher education with a particular focus on ITE, (iii) commitment to the values underpinning the profession of teaching. Central to our programme design (see design principle 2) is our*	Yes

	adoption of an integrated thematic spiral design across core elements, key concepts and core practices."	
	The application demonstrated how the conceptual framework provides a rationale for the model of ITE which has been adopted and how it enables student teachers while on placement to demonstrate the link between the sites of practice (HEI and School).	
	"The adoption of an integrated and thematic approach to UL's ITE programme design is intended to support students demonstrating links between `sites of practice' in learning to teach. In particular, we note the role here of the Planning for School Placement (EN6171), the professional portfolio and other campus-based coursework that scaffolds student teachers understanding (and enactment of practice) in advance of school placement (SP) by providing `appropriate approximations of practice."	
	The application showed how school placement is the fulcrum of the continuum of teacher education and how keys themes are revisited over the programme.	
	"A well implemented spiral curriculum facilitates sequencing of content moving to greater complexity overtime in revisiting focal topics."	
	It demonstrated how the professional studies aspect of the programme gives student teachers sufficient opportunities to actively learn from practising teachers about relevant and innovative methodologies, appropriate to their practice in using a variety of strategies, such as *"case studies", "micro-teaching", "reality chats", "video cases" etc*.	
1.1.3 Programme Aims	The application clearly defined the aims of the programme, demonstrating how the aims are closely aligned with the conceptual framework and are reflected in specific learning outcomes.	Yes
	"To develop knowledge of learners and their development in social context, teaching, subject pedagogy (business, languages, mathematics, music, physical education, science and technological education) and curriculum goals (including national priorities)."	
	The application demonstrated how the programme caters for curriculum development, to include the learning outcomes-based curricula and national priorities.	
	"As noted in the context of the integrated thematic spiral curriculum underpinning the programme design there are multiple opportunities in which students engage with	

	curriculum, outcome based curriculum planning and national priorities."	
	UL demonstrated how the programme will enable newly qualified teachers to facilitate quality teaching and learning for all pupils, how it prepares student teachers for teaching, learning, reflective practice, and assessment in their schools, and prepares them for entry into their professional role.	
	"…the programme enables newly qualified teachers to facilitate quality teaching learning for all pupils based on the knowledge, skills and dispositions developed through the course of the programme with an appropriately broad framing of inclusion encompassing education for pupils with special needs, students from educationally disadvantaged settings and or students from diverse cultural backgrounds."	
	The application demonstrated how the programme aims foster student teachers' agency and mind-set to be open to professional growth and learning over the course of their careers, to reflect on their own professional learning and that of their pupils, and to support their pupils in achieving their full potential.	
	"The programme actively fosters student teachers agency and mindset to be open to professional growth and learning over the course of their careers in a number of ways including (i) framing the initial teacher education experience in the context of the continuum of teacher education, (ii) focus on teaching as a practice and a role that can be learned and developed across the professional life cycle"	
1.1.4 Programme Duration & Balance	The submission demonstrated that this consecutive programme meets the criterion of a minimum of two years duration, and how the models of teaching, learning and assessment set out in the conceptual framework are evident in the programme structure.

Professional Master of Education is a two year, 120 ECTS consecutive programme, comprising 48 ECTS of School Placement and 72 ECTS of Foundation and Professional Studies. As evident in Toolkit A, the programme is structured in a manner which ensures that there is a balance between all areas of study over the course of the two years.

UL demonstrated that all areas of study are relevant to students' future work as teachers, that the programme will facilitate student teachers' personal development and their growth and wellbeing into their professional role, enabling them to become responsible, trustworthy, and reflective practitioners who are prepared for life in the classroom. | Yes |

	"Students are encouraged to address their personal and professional development both through reflecting on the content of modules as well as reflecting on other cultural, community and wider national/international experiences."	
1.1.6 Integration and Diversity of Programme Content	UL demonstrated that foundation studies are integrated into the programme in a way that is meaningful for student teachers and their practice; that the programme design follows a spiral learning approach and that the programme allows student teachers to experience a variety of teaching, learning and assessment modes. *"The strategic placement of the modules allow the spiral curriculum to actually work providing the wider programme architecture to support the thematic focus in teaching, learning and, assessment, modalities."* The application referenced the integration of *"a more blended model of initial teacher education"* from Autumn 2022 *"to support greater integration and connection between coursework and placement"* and opportunities for *"small group work including small group discussions, peer feedback and some group-based assessments."* Students are given opportunities for individual and collective reflection *"through written reflections and dialogue with school placement tutors"* and *"online school placement tutorials"*	Yes
Aptitude test	UL completed an 'Aptitude Test' declaration form, confirming that the programme design allows for the provision of 'aptitude tests' for teachers who have qualified outside of the State.	Yes
1.1.7 Required Areas of Study	The review process determined that the Foundation Studies, Professional Studies & School Placement elements of the programme meet the requirements of this standard. Foundation Studies The programme provides research informed insights to support student teachers' understanding of the practices of teaching, learning and assessment for all pupils, provides the basis of a strong professional ethic in teaching and learning and includes curriculum studies, the history and policy of education, philosophy of education, psychology of education and sociology of education. *"…students are supported in systematically engaging with insights from research through lectures, tutorials involving*	Yes

readings, in many instances peer-reviewed journal articles, multimedia and their own written reflections."

The programme, enhances students' understanding of the Irish education system, locates it in context and enables students to think critically about it.

"…historical elements of the Irish education system are frequently used as a lens to understand current policy and practice in education as evidenced across a number of other modules."

Professional Studies
UL demonstrated that the Professional Studies element of the programme develops the pedagogical expertise of student teachers, including subject specific pedagogical content knowledge.

"…the pedagogical expertise of student teachers is developed through providing multiple opportunities for students to engage with their disciplinary content knowledge (CK) and how they might best teach this with a specific focus on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)."

The programme ensures that opportunities are provided for students to experiment with and explore new and emerging technologies for teaching and learning and that their communication skills are advanced.

"Students have the opportunity across multiple modules to engage with these new and emerging technologies through individual and collaborative activities."

Students are afforded the opportunity for reflection and engagement in and with research to develop their adaptive expertise.

"…adaptive expertise will be presented as a hallmark of their professionalism as they work and develop from a position of novice in the teaching profession and develop their practice across the continuum of teacher education."

School Placement
UL demonstrated how the school placement model on the programme provide opportunities for student teachers to experience a high support/high challenge model of placement and engage in research on their own practice, making connections between the sites of practice.

"…our programmes are both ambitious and challenging, as well as providing extensive support and scaffolding, all

premised on the development of thoughtful, competent and agentic teachers."

Students are given the opportunity to observe experienced teachers and plan for and undertake class teaching, learning and assessment in a diversity of class settings and subject levels, to assist them in establishing classroom management strategies.

"Observation, along with planning, professional conversation and reflective practice, comprise our programme core practices."

As one of the six design principles of the ITE programme at UL, student teachers will be encouraged to reflect critically on their practice and programme of study through their Taisce, reflecting on feedback and identifying areas for further professional learning for Droichead.

"Preparation for further professional learning during the ITE programme centres on provision of SP tutor feedback to students where key areas for development for the Droichead programme are highlighted…"

<u>Core elements of programmes of ITE</u>
The review process determined that the following elements underpin all aspects of the programme.

1.Inclusive Education

UL demonstrated that inclusive education is *"a core component"* of the programme.

"…in EN6242: Diversity of Learning: SEN and Inclusive Teaching, students develop their capacity to teach inclusively in their classroom and within a whole school framework."

2. Global Citizenship Education

The application evidenced how global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, wellbeing, social justice and interculturalism are ingrained in the programme.

"Our programme enables pre-service teachers to develop critical consciousness about issues pertaining to social justice and sustainability, an active appreciation of the importance of interrogating these issues, and the capacity and commitment to incorporate them in an appropriate and effective manner into their teaching and professional practice."

3. Professional Relationships and working with parents

UL showed that the core element of establishing professional relationships and working with parents and other stakeholders is integrated into the programme "in a spiral manner"

"….the students will deepen their understanding of their role as members of a professional school community by interrogating the concepts of professional identity and agency and provide opportunities for professional collaboration and communication with parents."

4. Professional identity and agency

The application demonstrated that the programme includes support for the development of the teacher as a self-reflective autonomous professional, integrating the core values outlined in the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers into their teaching practice and the continuum of their teacher education.

"The principles of professional identity and agency are inculcated across all initial teacher education programmes in UL within our foundation studies, school placement and professional studies modules from year one through to graduation. Furthermore, this core element is deliberately anchored in several core modules and supported by others."

5. Creativity and Reflective practice

UL demonstrated how the programme fosters a creative mindset among student teachers as reflective practitioners, innovators and researchers through core and support modules:

"In EN6144 students are required to draw together equality, diversity and inclusion theory and practice insights to construct a sociological reflection on their school placement period."

6. Literacy and Numeracy

The programme design shows a commitment to enhance students' own literacy and numeracy while also ensuring that they learn techniques to develop their future pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

The application referenced *"the key anchor module EN6151 (Becoming a Teacher – Identity and Agency)"* where *"students are required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the planning implications for developing*

	students' literacy and numeracy knowledge and concentrate on the empowerment inherent in both, with a particular focus on their development in the subject, classroom and school." 7. Digital Skills UL demonstrated that digital skills are incorporated into the programme to support teaching and learning for all learners and that student teachers have the opportunity to explore new and emerging technologies. *"When enrolled in UL, all students enter a digitally-rich learning environment with access to the campus-wide digital architecture including an extensive online library system, a comprehensive learning management platform and a range of bespoke software and digital hardware related to specific disciplines."*	
Post-primary: Curricular subject criteria registration requirements	The programme is Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The entry selection processes are aligned with the Council's curricular subject specific registration requirements.	Yes
	The submission demonstrated that the programme includes subject specific curricular studies and pedagogies (methodologies) for seven subject areas (Business, Languages, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Science and Technological Education).	
1.1.8 Learning and Assessment Strategies	UL demonstrated how the principles, beliefs, and values about teaching, learning and assessment which are set out in the conceptual framework are evident in the teaching, learning and assessment modes used in the programme. It demonstrated the relationship (constructive alignment) between the learning opportunities and the assessment criteria which student teachers are expected to meet, and how the assessment processes and procedures are coherent and integrated using a variety of assessment modes. *"An example of strategies to support student teachers engagement include use of peer and self-assessment across a broad range of modules to facilitate students in monitoring the quality of their work as it progresses through reflection and evaluation."* *"student teachers establish how to balance between assessment as a quality assurance mechanism and assessment as a learning orientated tool. With this understanding student teachers plan and develop strategies*	Yes

	Comment	Standard addressed?
	and resources for the integration of assessment in their practice as teachers."	

Programme Resourcing

	Comment	Standard addressed?
1.2.2 Staffing	The review process determined that the programme meets this standard by providing: •programme staff qualifications and experience •evidence that the programme meets the Céim standard of at least 50% of all School Placement Tutors to be registered with the Teaching Council, with the submission demonstrating that 54% of the programme's School Placement Tutors are registered. The application demonstrated the staff distribution mechanisms they have in place to show that prior to qualification, while on school placement, a student teacher will be summatively assessed at least once by a registered teacher. It also demonstrated how the student:staff ratio of 15:1 is achieved, with the programme demonstrating a ratio average of 12.68:1 UL demonstrated the staff development policies that are in place to ensure that staff continue to enhance their knowledge and expertise including early career supports, Sabbatical and Special Research Leave, Further Study, Mentoring, Professional Development Leave, Research grants etc.	Yes
1.2.3 Facilities	The submission detailed the facilities that are available to support research, teaching, and learning, providing the following: a library, language learning hub, digital technology resources, silent and group research spaces, science labs microteaching labs and an Education Technology Centre.	Yes
1.2.4 Student Support and Guidance Systems	The review process determined that provisions are in place for the personal and social development and pastoral care of student teachers. UL have a wide range of student supports and services in their Student Affairs Division such as *"Disability Support Services, Chaplaincy Service, Counseling Service, Mature Student Office, Student Health Centre, First Year Support Coordinator, Access Office and Arts Officer."*	Yes

	"The Division also operates the SilverCloud programme for personal wellbeing which is available 24/7 to all students and staff in the university." UL demonstrated how a student teacher might transfer to an alternative programme, where feasible, and to carry credits in so doing, with due regard to the exit award arrangements already in place in the HEI. *"In supporting individual progression students may seek to exit the programme based on accumulated credits. Students already enrolled at UL can transfer onto a different programme through internal transfer, and students from other higher education institutions (HEIs) can transfer onto a UL programme through external transfer."*	
1.2.5 Communication and Decision-making Structures	The submission demonstrated the structures that are in place to facilitate the participation of staff and students in relevant deliberation and decision-making processes and that the *"The Head of Education is a member of Academic Council."*	Yes
1.2.6 Financial Resources	UL demonstrated that the programme is adequately resourced to ensure that programme aims are met through student fee income and state grants.	Yes

School Placement

	Comment	Standard addressed?
1.3.1 A Shared Vision for School Placement	The UL school placement model supports the shared vision for School placement. The review process determined that student teachers experience a supportive model of placement which facilitates professional conversational engagement between all partners. *"Our partnerships with schools are underpinned by the effective implementation of a peer-support network, where teacher-educators and classroom-based practitioners can communicate better, learn from each other and support student teachers in terms of assistance and assessment."*	Yes
1.3.2 Duration	The review process determined that the duration of school placement is in compliance with the Teaching Council's requirements and includes both school-based and HEI-directed activities, thus meeting the requirements of this standard.	Yes

	"The school-based element incorporates direct teaching experience of a minimum of 200 hours across School Placement 1 and School Placement 2."	
1.3.3 Elements of School Placement	The school-based and HEI-directed activities included as part of the placement experience are as outlined in the Guidelines on School Placement and regarding the stage the student teacher is at on the programme. *"The two 10-week block placements are strategically placed to allow students the opportunity to engage in a spiral curriculum and build and develop through four key practices."*	Yes
1.3.4 School Placement Models	The submission showed that school placement models are developed using a partnership approach, whereby the HEI and schools actively collaborate in the organisation of the school placement. School Placement *"is at the core of all ITE programmes and is driven by a collaborative partnership between UL, schools and students."*	Yes
1.3.5 Securing of Placement	The submission established that UL's School Placement Office in consultation with other faculty staff assumes overall responsibility for the placement of student teachers and uses an online placement system 'TUS' to manage school placements. *"The School Placement Office use an online placement system `TUS' which manages the sourcing of student placements and the assignment of tutors in a highly effective and professional manner."*	Yes
1.3.6 Diversity of Placement Settings	The review process determined that the programme meets the requirement of a minimum of two placement settings incorporating a variety of teaching situations, class levels and school contexts, including Irish medium schools. *"The School Placement Office strive to place students in a variety of school settings to experience diversity of teaching contexts."*	Yes
1.3.7 Taisce in School Placement	The submission provided evidence of the approaches UL is using to enable the student teacher to demonstrate, using their Taisce: o an understanding of inclusive education as applicable to that context o an understanding of working with parents	Yes

| 1.3.8 Research in School Placement | UL showed how the student teacher engages in research on their own practice that demonstrates the connection between the sites of practice during at least one school placement module.

The programme includes *"two dedicated Teacher as Researcher modules (EN6203 and EN6204) in the Autumn and Spring semesters of Year 2 ensuring extensive research support."* | Yes |
|---|---|---|
| 1.3.9 School Placement: Evaluation and Assessment | The review process determined that all student teachers are supported and assessed by two or more placement tutors, and at least once by a registered teacher. It outlined the teaching enrichment and mentoring support offered to students who fail a module of school placement.

"The SP mentor works congruently with the student's placement tutors to ensure adequate support and guidance is provided. This level of support is provided throughout the placement period. UL demonstrate due care and attention to the needs of students so that they are enabled to complete the requirements of school placement." | Yes |

Recommendation

Having regard to the documentation that was submitted, the panel adjudges that the programme meets the standards set down by the Teaching Council in *Céim: Standards* for Initial Teacher Education.

Accordingly, it recommends to the Teaching Council that the programme be granted accreditation.

Appendix 1 - Review Panel Membership

Chair: **Professor Sheelagh Drudy**

Prof Sheelagh Drudy is Professor Emeritus of Education at University College Dublin and former Head of the School of Education and Director of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education. Professor Drudy is a former teacher, educational researcher, and teacher educator. She was a member of the first Teaching Council appointed by the Minister in 2005 and has also been a Council member of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). She is the author and co-author of books and papers on education, including *Education in Ireland: Challenge and Change* (2009), Dublin: Gill and Macmillan. She is currently an external reviewer for a number of international journals and an assessor for international research organisations. She has been involved in quality assurance reviews in various HEIs.

Panel Member: **Patrick McVicar**

Patrick McVicar was nominated to the Teaching Council by the post-primary school management organisations and served as a member of the Education, Registration and Disciplinary sub-committees and on the Post-primary Applications Panel until his term of office ended in March 2016. He was previously Principal of Pobalscoil Chloich Cheannfhaola, Falcarragh, Co. Dhún na nGall. He is a current member of the Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)and of Donegal Education and Training Board, where he chairs the Finance Committee. He served on a number of NCCA committees including Course Committees for Technical Graphics, Design & Communication Graphics, and the Board of Studies for Technological Subjects.

Panel Member: **Professor Margery A. McMahon**

Professor Margery A McMahon is Head of the School of Education at the University of Glasgow and Professor of Educational Leadership. She is a former teacher of History and Politics and has been involved in teacher education, career-long professional learning, and leadership education since joining University of Glasgow. She is the author and co-author of a range of books and articles focusing on professional learning and leadership including, Forde, C., and McMahon, M., (2019) *Teacher Quality, Professional Learning and Policy*, London: Palgrave MacMillan. She is UK Representative for the International Study Association for Teachers and Teaching (ISATT).