

Final Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following a review of the reconceptualised Initial Teacher Education programme at Hibernia College, Dublin

Master of Arts in Primary Education

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 revised criteria and to submit them for accreditation.

1.5 Programme overview

This report relates to the review of the following programme provided by Hibernia College – Master of Arts in Primary Education (MAPE) - 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 programme has received academic accreditation at level 9 from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The programme replaces the Higher Diploma in Arts (Primary Education) (HDAPE) programme. Hibernia College anticipates that it will have enrolment two times per year providing for a total approximate intake of some 600 students per annum.

2. The Review Process

The review of the Master of Arts in Primary Education (MAPE) 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 Hibernia College, maintaining records of meetings, and drafting and finalising the panel’s report in conjunction with the panel Chairperson. The panel was assisted by an independent expert who provided a desk-based report on blended learning. Hibernia College provided an additional paper on blended learning to assist the panel and the independent expert. 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 Hibernia College (hereinafter also referred to as ‘the College’) in January, 2014. The panel met initially on 28 January 2014 to give preliminary consideration to the College’s submission.

Issues for further clarification were identified by the panel and were communicated by the Rapporteur to the College. 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 Hibernia College were invited to meet with the panel on 10 March 2014 to discuss the programme and its particular aspects. As well as meeting board representatives, the panel engaged with staff members who provided information and clarification about various elements of the programme and ancillary features of provision.² A number of further issues were identified by the panel for clarification and these were forwarded to the College. Following receipt of additional documentation, another meeting was arranged with representatives of the College for 7 May 2014. This meeting at Hibernia College included presentations on online learning and library provision as well as a meeting with two students of the HDAPE programme referenced at 1.5 above.³ Various aspects of the programme were explored and a further written response in relation to particular features of the programme was received from the College. In the course of reviewing the documentation and the various clarifications, the panel maintained contact on a systematic basis both by e-mail and audio-link. The panel also sampled elements of the online learning provision of the College as well as the electronic library provision. A further meeting of the panel was held on 27 May 2014.

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

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

³ Details of this meeting are included in Appendix 3

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 a refining of reporting conventions and procedures.

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 Hibernia College in hard copy format was extensive. Presented in ten volumes some of which were subdivided into booklets and handbooks of various kinds, there were in all some 1,500 pages of typescript. The Pro Forma extended to 251 pages. The documentation was also presented in an electronic format. The documentation provided a significant challenge for the panel to comprehend and analyse. 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*

The panel recognises that Hibernia College has engaged fully with the review process and appreciates the College's willing and constructive response to issues identified by the panel at meetings and in correspondence. The panel acknowledges that the College has made significant modifications in response to discussions about the programme. The panel confirms that the proposed changes provide sufficient reassurance about the coherence and cohesion of the programme. However, as it will be necessary to have full confirmation of the detail of these changes, in both documents and in practice, some of the agreed changes are referred to in commendations, recommendations and stipulations in this report.

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.

The stipulations in Section 8 relate to areas which the panel believes to be of such strategic importance to the programme that accreditation should be subject to those stipulations being met. Therefore, the panel recommends that the Teaching Council should require Hibernia College to:

- (a) address the stipulation at 8.1. within three months of receiving the final report or immediately following the first available opportunity for QQI validation of the revised programme
- and
- (b) set out and submit to the Teaching Council, within two months of receiving the final review report, its timebound proposals for implementing the stipulations at 8.2., 8.3 and 8.4.

In the case of the national issues raised in Section 9 of this report, the panel recommends that the Council engage in dialogue on those issues at national level.

Having regard to:

- (i) the extensive documentation that was initially submitted
- (ii) the report of the independent expert on blended learning
- (iii) the supplementary documentation provided in response to requests from the panel
- (iv) the changes to be made to the programme arising from discussions with the panel

and having accepted the assurances given by Hibernia College that it will meet the specific stipulations set out in 8.1, including the submission of a revised programme which incorporates the changes referenced at (iv) above, the panel judges that the programme satisfies the criteria set down by the Teaching Council in its Criteria and Guidelines. Consequently, the panel recommends that, subject to the stipulations at 8 below, accreditation be granted for a period of two years. Any extension beyond that period would be conditional on approval by the Council of a progress report which provides clear evidence that the adjusted Hibernia College programme, as delivered, has taken sufficient account of the issues raised by the panel in the course of the review process and, in particular, those issues which have been highlighted in this report. The progress report should be submitted in January 2016.

6. Commendations

Having regard to:

- (i) the extensive documentation that was initially submitted
- (ii) the report of the independent expert on blended learning
- (iii) the supplementary documentation provided in response to requests from the panel
- (iv) the changes to be made to the programme arising from discussions with the panel

the panel has noted a number of particular strengths of the programme, as follows:

6.1 Engagement with the review process

The panel commends the commitment, engagement and enthusiasm of the Programme Director, Deputy Director and staff with responsibility for student learning.

6.2 Inputs

6.2.1 Improved arrangements for induction and support

The panel commends Hibernia College's undertaking, as part of the constructive discussions with the panel, to deliver an increase in face-to-face meetings for students and to provide a more extended induction programme for new students at the beginning of their programme.

6.2.2 Blended learning

The panel commends Hibernia College's carefully planned development of the concept of blended learning for this programme. The panel believes that this type of learning incorporates good practice and innovative thinking relevant to the formation of teachers. It also has considerable potential to contribute to the quality of teacher education, especially as it can improve access to learning for those unable to participate in traditional courses.

Notwithstanding some positive features of the Hibernia College programme, however, the panel believes that the changes agreed as part of this engagement, are necessary to ensure that the various elements of the blended and professional learning approaches are drawn together to form a truly cohesive student teacher experience. Some of these changes are therefore listed in 7 and 8 below.

6.2.3 Nua-Ghaeilge

The panel commends the provision for Gaeilge particularly for the manner in which it is an integral part of the programme and linked to the Gaeltacht placements.

7. Recommendations

Having regard to:

- (i) the extensive documentation that was initially submitted
- (ii) the report of the independent expert on blended learning
- (iii) the supplementary documentation provided in response to requests from the panel
- (iv) the changes to be made to the programme arising from discussions with the panel

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 Hibernia College continue to develop a positive partnership with schools, seeking to involve as many schools as possible in a partnership programme within a reasonable timescale.

7.1.2 Student support

The panel recommends that the College, in addition to current mentoring arrangements, offer other forms of constructive support for students, including peer review and microteaching.

7.1.3 School settings and diversity

The panel recommends that the College ensures a better and more explicit understanding of diversity and of Special Needs provision by continuing to develop opportunities for students to engage in a wider range of school settings.

7.1.4 Research project

The panel recommends that the College take forward proposals agreed with the panel to revise the Research Project in order to create a more rigorous Professional Curriculum Investigation which integrates learning about and through research with experience in schools and thus promotes the Council's view of teaching as an enquiry-oriented profession.

7.1.5 Title of programme

The panel recommends that the programme title 'Master of Arts in Primary Education (MAPE)' be changed to 'Professional Master of Education' to be consistent with the title being used by other providers of consecutive programmes.

8. *Stipulations*

Having regard to:

- (i) the extensive documentation that was initially submitted
- (ii) the report of the independent expert on blended learning
- (iii) the supplementary documentation provided in response to requests from the panel
- (iv) the changes to be made to the programme arising from discussions with the panel

the panel has noted the following aspects of the programme which it considers must be addressed to the satisfaction of the Council as a matter of priority.

In order to convince the Council of the effectiveness of the proposed programme and of its compliance with the Teaching Council criteria for a reconceptualised programme of teacher education, Hibernia College is required to:

8.1 *Revised submission and course design*

submit an updated Pro Forma in relation to the programme which reflects, to the satisfaction of the Council, the changes recently agreed during this accreditation process and which, as a result, provides greater clarity in the relationship between course components. The updated Pro Forma should be submitted to the Teaching Council within three months of receiving the final report or immediately following the first available opportunity for QQI validation of the revised programme. The updated Pro Forma should have changes highlighted for ease of reference.

The revised programme should show learning more clearly integrated across the two-year programme, thus ensuring a cohesive learning experience for all students. As part of this process, too, Hibernia College should:

- i) confirm its adjustment to the programme design to ensure that the early course delivered in Foundation Studies is formally revisited and further developed before students participate in the Advanced School Placement
- ii) ensure that it meets the Council's requirement that Curriculum Studies should be explicitly covered as a distinct component part of Foundation Studies.

8.2 *Shared vision of learning for teaching*

- (a) develop and publish for its staff a *shared* vision of how the programme will promote the development of newly qualified teachers with appropriate skills, professional standards and dispositions to work in Irish primary schools.
- (b) provide increased CPD for teaching staff to ensure that there is a clear understanding both of standards and of the Hibernia College vision for learning across all faculty staff and placement tutors.

8.3 School placement

increase the active engagement of students in classroom and related professional work throughout the 10 weeks of the Advanced School Placement and reduce time during which students are engaging *solely* on research activity. The panel wishes to see greater integration of these two processes and welcomes the revised plans presented by Hibernia College at the meeting on 7 May 2014.

8.4 Staffing

make progress in implementing the Council's required staff-student ratio, taking forward current plans to increase the number of full-time faculty staff who have suitable professional qualifications to undertake assessment and also seeking to reduce the number of staff employed on short-term and part-time contracts. The panel, while recognising that selection of staff is a matter for an employer, believes that the current proliferation of part-time staff risks undermining the planned cohesion of the course. Pending completion of that process, Hibernia College should review the number of student teachers enrolled on the programme.

9. National Issues

Having regard to:

- (i) the extensive documentation that was initially submitted
- (ii) the report of the independent expert on blended learning
- (iii) the supplementary documentation provided in response to requests from the panel
- (iv) the changes to be made to the programme arising from discussions with the panel

the panel has noted the following issues which it believes merit further attention by the Teaching Council and/or other national stakeholders.

9.1 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 improve student experience on school placement, the panel recommends that the Council, in conjunction with other agencies, refresh its current guidelines in order to underline the value of a consistent, balanced partnership between schools and HEIs. This revised documentation should emphasise the processes and practices which foster good teaching and learning on placement and should seek to ensure that students are routinely exposed to a wide range of contexts and experiences.

Consideration should also be given to the potential benefits of a gradual involvement of school staff as more active partners in the professional assessment of students during placement. This approach would be in line with current international thinking and in keeping with the spirit of the current *Droichead* pilot.

9.2 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.

9.3 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.

9.4 Guidance on accreditation meetings with and visits to providers

The panel notes that the Teaching Council has recently adapted its review process to address the needs of a large number of reconceptualised programmes and believes that the resultant process is fair and accountable.

The panel understands that the Council intends to revise its Strategy for the Review and Professional Accreditation of Existing Programmes when the current cycle of reviews has been completed. Consequently, the panel recommends that, in order to promote efficiency and consistency across review panels, consideration should be given to the provision of templates and practice guidelines for meetings and visits.

9.5 Clarification of support and assessment for student teachers on school placement

The panel considers that the Teaching Council should clarify the requirement that all student teachers 'would be supported and assessed by two or more HEI Placement Tutors' (*Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers*, p. 17) to ensure common understanding of whether this should apply to each school placement or the school placement experience as a whole.

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 Hibernia College staff and representatives on 10 March 2014

Timing: 14.00 to 16.30

Venue: Ashling Hotel, Dublin.

Attendance

For Hibernia College:

Meeting participants:

Dr. Nicholas Breakwell (Executive Dean)
Naomi Jackson (Registrar)
Karen O'Reilly (Assistant Registrar)
Dr. Siobhán Cahillane-McGovern (Programme Director)
Mary Kelly (Deputy Programme Director)
Anna Davitt (Head of Irish)
Brid O'Connell (Programme Manager)
Bernadette Stapleton (School Experience Manager)

Also in Attendance:

Dr. Don Thornhill (Chairman of the Board)
Dr. Seán Rowland (President)
Eileen Mooney (Chief Finance Officer)
Dara Cassidy (Director of Online Learning)
Sarah Haugh (Professional Practice Co-ordinator)
Sueanne O'Halloran (Programme Administrator)

For Teaching Council panel:

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

Appendix 3 - Meeting with Hibernia College staff and representatives on 7 May 2014

Timing: 09.00 to 13.00

Venue: Hibernia College, Fenian St., Dublin 2.

Attendance

For Hibernia College:

Meeting participants:

Dr Siobhán Cahillane-McGovern (Programme Director)
Mary Kelly (Deputy Programme Director)
Sara McDonnell (Executive Vice President)
Dr. Nicholas Breakwell (Executive Dean)
Naomi Jackson (Registrar)

Also in Attendance:

Dr. Seán Rowland (President)

For Teaching Council panel:

Prof. Anthony Finn, Chair,
Anne Feerick, Member,
Dr Pádraig Ó Donnabháin, Rapporteur.

The meeting included presentations on online learning and on Hibernia College's library provision by Dara Cassidy (Director of Online Learning) and Audrey Geraghty (Librarian).

The meeting also included an interview with two Hibernia College students.