An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta
The Teaching Council

Report of the Review Panel

Approved by the Teaching Council

following the review of the

Post Graduate Diploma in Arts in Learning and Teaching,

National College of Ireland,

Dublin

11 June 2012

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Report of the Review Panel to the Teaching Council following the review of the Post Graduate Diploma in Arts and Education.

1 Background

The Teaching Council is the statutory body charged with setting the standards for entry to the teaching profession and ensuring that these standards are upheld.

In accordance with Section 38 of The Teaching Council Act, 2001, the Council shall:

(a) review and accredit programmes of teacher education and training provided by institutions of higher education

and training in the State,

(b) review the standards of education and training appropriate to a person entering a programme of teacher education and training, and

(c) review the standards of knowledge, skill and competence required for the practice of teaching, and shall advise the Minister and, as it considers appropriate, the instructions concerned.

The Teaching Council's role in relation to the review and accreditation of programmes of initial teacher education is distinct from the academic accreditation which programmes already undergo. Academic accreditation is based on the suitability of a programme for the award of a degree/diploma whereas professional accreditation for any profession is a judgement as to whether a programme prepares one for entry into that profession.

The review and accreditation of programmes of teacher education by The Teaching Council provides an opportunity for colleges and universities to demonstrate that they offer quality programmes of teacher education. It is expected that the graduates of such programmes achieve programme aims and learning outcomes which are aligned with the values and professional dispositions and the standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence which are central to the practice of teaching.

In order to guide its review of programmes, the Teaching Council has drafted its *Further Education: General and Programme Requirements for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications* (March 2011). In 2011 the Council invited expressions of interest from colleges and universities wishing to put forward programmes for review in accordance with the Council's review strategy. A number of programmes was subsequently put forward and it was agreed that these would be reviewed in the 2011/12 academic year. This report sets out the findings following one of those reviews, i.e. the review of the Post Graduate Diploma in Arts and Education in the National College of Ireland (NCI), Dublin.

2 Statement with regard to the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003 (FOI Act) and 2003 (FOI Act)

The Teaching Council routinely makes information available to the public in relation to its functions and activities and, in line with that practice, a summary of this report will be available on the Council's website, www.teachingcouncil.ie.

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 28 and 29 March 2012 in accordance with the Council's review strategy. The process was formally initiated when the Review Panel was appointed by the Teaching Council's Director with Stan McHugh as Chair. [1]

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 28 March 2011. At that meeting, the panel reviewed the documentation and considered the visit schedule prepared by NCI. 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.

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 outlined their findings in broad outline and the subsequent steps in the review process. This report sets out the findings of Review Panel following its review.

4 Documentation

The documentation submitted by the University was succinct 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

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

- 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 detailed manner which provided valuable evidence of the programme structure and delivery. It was of considerable assistance in assessing the quality of the various components and the programme overall.

5 Review Visit

The Review Panel's visit to the College took place on 28 and 29 March 2012. In broad outline, it consisted of continuous dialogue with relevant programme staff members and students, together with observation of the facilities provided. 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 programme be granted accreditation for its Post Graduate Diploma in Learning and Teaching. It is noted that the college has already satisfactorily addressed the recommendations outlined below and in particular the stipulation in respect of Practical Teaching Programme (Section 2.6 of Pro Forma).

7 Commendations

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

7.1 The submission document

The Panel recognises that the submission document bears witness to a praiseworthy determination to provide an inspiring, learner-centred experience through this programme.

7.2 Flexibility of the programme

The flexible nature of the programme is a particular strength. Its dual full time and part time structure builds on an already successful programme and meets admirably the needs of the Further Education (FE) sector where a significant proportion of the programme participants are already employed.

7.3 Pathway to further study

Given that the possibility of proceeding to a Master's degree is an integral feature of the programme, the Panel commends this as a valuable pathway to further study. Moreover, the overall lifelong learning elements of the programme are deemed to be very strong.

7.4 Commitment of staff

The commitment of the staff to the delivery of a quality programme is highly commendable and their competence combines with high levels of enthusiasm to offer students a valuable learning experience. Their efforts are characterised by generous levels of student support that reinforces an admirable student centred focus.

7.5 Student identity

The programme exhibits considerable sensitivity to the needs of its students and this is evidenced in a pronounced emphasis on realistic, clearly defined module learning outcomes that are grounded in a crucial recognition of individual learning styles and critical thinking.

7.6 Assessment

The Panel sees as a particular strength the variety of assessment approaches that leads students to a timely understanding of their progress and how best they might raise their achievement levels.

7.7 Facilities

The facilities available are impressive, not least the new and well-equipped lecture rooms that exhibit a broad range of technological learning tools.

The programme is characterised by a purposeful and creative integration of learning technologies that is well grounded in research undertaken by staff and students of the college and incorporated systematically in the learning. Particularly commendable are the development of research skills and competencies to undertake research at the Master's stage.

7.8 Promotion of reflective practice

The Panel is impressed that the promotion of reflection constitutes an integral part of the programme, and allied to this is the premium placed on life-long learning, a concept that is admirably in tune with the profile of current cohort of mature learners.

8 Recommendations

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

8.1 Award Level/Student Tracks

Anticipating a possible change of student profile from that which is currently presenting, the Panel encourages the College to consider the possibility of providing programmes at both Levels 8 and 9. This could lead to consideration of a programme realignment in the medium term that might see the introduction of a dedicated FE track, either instead of or in addition to the current mix, at the appropriate level.

8.2 The conceptual framework

The Panel recommends that the conceptual framework be further developed so that the relevant principles and values inherent in the programme are brought more clearly into focus. This would include a clearer statement of rationale for the model adopted, some elaboration of beliefs about teaching and learning and

a depiction of how the programme develops the "professional teacher identity" in students.

8.3 Principal aims of programme

Given that the programme aims to enable students to secure a qualification to teach in the FE sector, and having regard to the Teaching Council requirement that the student-teacher must be placed in an authentic FE setting, the Panel recommends that the conditions for teacher registration be made clear to prospective students from the outset. In addition, the Panel recommends that the term "teaching" be used instead of "instructing" (as in Module 1) to avoid the possibility of misunderstandings.

8.4 Programme outcomes

The Panel recommends that the Programme Director and colleagues identify the overall programme outcomes, and show how they are aligned to Teaching Council requirements, as set out in the Council document for Further Education, July 2011. They should also provide a commentary on how cross-programme/ cross-curricular curricular links are made, especially through the "Problem-based Learning" approach. In this regard and as part of the process, they may find it useful to devise a template that clearly depicts the relationships in grid form.

8.5 Programme design, structure and content

Length of programme

While it is readily apparent to the Review Panel that each element of the programme is of considerable merit, it is a matter of some concern that delivery over two semesters may lead to a level of intensity that could be excessively challenging. Accordingly, the Panel suggests that consideration be given to extending the programme to three semesters.

Sequencing of modules

The Panel recommends that the sequence in which the various modules are delivered should be reviewed to have regard for the observations made during the review process. Specifically, the Director and colleagues should consider if 'Strategies of Learning' may be better placed in Semester 1 and 'Educational Assessment ' be transferred to Semester 2.

Weighting of modules

The Panel notes that, currently, 25% of the overall programme credits (15) are assigned to the two technology related modules, whereas only 17% (10 credits) are assigned to the Practicum. Also, the module on Cultural and Individual Aspects of Learning seeks, appropriately, to address a very broad range of topics, while warranting just 5 credits. It includes, inter alia, curriculum studies, which might be considered worth a module in itself. The Panel, therefore recommends that the Director and colleagues review the weighting given to these modules and that a rebalancing be effected.

Module reading lists

The Panel recommends that the reading lists include a greater emphasis on literature that focuses on the FE sector, as opposed to the higher education sector. In addition, the library collection should be enlarged to reflect the FE orientation.

8.6 Staffing, governance and financing

An examination of the various elements of Section 2.7 of the *Pro Forma* will guide the Director and colleagues in delivering the greater level of specificity that the Teaching Council requires in this area. The Panel recommends that they include a reference to networking and/ or partnerships with other teacher educators and also to any memorandum of understanding with entities such as VECs.

The strategic importance of this programme to NCI might be commented upon and this could be usefully linked to the college strategic plan. Business Plans, balancing resources with expected student intake, for the next three years should also be referenced to indicate the sustainability of the programme.

9 Stipulation

9.1 Practical Teaching Programme: Stipulation

Given the very specific Teaching Council requirements in respect of teaching practice - as outlined in the various bullet points in Section 2.6 of the *Pro Forma* - the Panel stipulates that the Director and colleagues provide a much more detailed presentation of placement arrangements. Also, and in parallel with this, it would be of considerable benefit to students if they were facilitated in seeking

out links with relevant professional networks (such as teacher associations) in furthering the process developing their teacher identity.

Appendix I – Review Panel Members

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

Evan Buckley, Education Officer, City of Dublin VEC

Dr Patricia Eaton, Department of School of Education, NUIG

Edward McArdle, Former CEO of Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Nuala Hunt, Head of Continuing Education, NCAD

Dr Patrick O'Connor, former school principal and Divisional Inspector, DES, and Rapporteur for the Panel

Appendix II – Attendees at the Preliminary Meeting, 28 March 2012

Mr John McGarrigle, Registrar

Dr Pramod Pathak, Dean of School of Computing

Dr Leo Casey, Programme Director

Ms Sinead O'Sullivan, Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services

Appendix III - Visit Schedule

National College of Ireland, Wednesday 28th and Thursday 29th March, 2012

Location: Room 3.25

Wednesday 28th March 2012 (Day 1 of Site Visit)

Time	Panel Activity	NCI Staff
9.00 a.m	Arrival of Panel at National College of Ireland followed by pre-assessment meeting of Panel until 11.30 a.m	*Dr Phillip Matthews welcomes the Panel and provides brief overview of NCI*
11.30 a.m	***Tea/coffee break***	
11.45 a.m.	Panel meeting with Director of programme and senior management	*Mr John McGarrigle, Registrar,* *Dr Pramod Pathak Dean of School of Computing,* *Dr Leo Casey Programme Director* *Ms Sinead O'Sullivan, Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services*
12.15 p.m.	Introductory presentation by National College of Ireland – overview of the programme	*NCI Staff as for previous session*
12.45 p.m.	**Lunch**	
1.30 p.m	General requirements of the programme	*Dr Leo Casey,* *Dr Patrick Quinn, Associate Faculty Lecturer & Head of Philosophy Department, All Hallows* *Dr Arlene Egan, Associate Faculty Lecturer & Education Director Building2Think* *Ms Rachel Doherty, Lecturer NCI* *Mr Conor O Reilly, Associate Faculty Lecturer* *Ms Sinead O'Sullivan,*
1.45 p.m.	Conceptual framework / programme aims and outcomes	*NCI Staff as for previous session*
2.30 p.m.	Design, structure and content / teaching, learning and assessment	*NCI Staff as for previous session*
3.30 p.m.	**Tea/coffee break**	
3.45 p.m.	Practical Teaching	*NCI Staff as for previous session joined by,* *Mr Brendan Lally, Work Placement Co-ordinator*
4.15 p.m.	Attitudes, Values / Lifelong Learning / Reflective Practice	*NCI Staff as for previous session,*
5.00 p.m.	Panel Discussion	

Thursday 29th March (Day 2 of Site Visit)

Time	Panel Activity	NCI Staff
9.15 a.m	Arrival of Panel	
9.30 a.m	Student Facilities / Student Support	*Dr Josephine Bleach, Early Learning Initiative* *Ms Mary Buckley, NCI Librarian* *Ms Niamh McAuley Director of Student Services* *Mr Jonathan Lambert Learner Support Services* *Mr Brendan Lally, Work Placement Co-ordinator*
10.00 a.m.	Students from the programme	*Students confirmed* *Ms Patricia Byron,* *Ms Lillian McDermott* *Ms Barbara Sneyd* *Ms Brigina Crowe* *There may be more students available on the day*
10.30 a.m.	Staffing / Governance / Financial Resources	*Mr John McGarrigle* *Dr Leo Casey* *Mr Donnchadh O'Madagain Director of Finance* *Ms Sinéad O'Sullivan*
11:15 a.m.	***Tea/coffee break***	
11:30 a.m.	Tour of student facilities	*Visit to the Centre for Research and Innovation in Learning and Teaching* *E-learning usability testing with Dr Stephan Weibelzahl* *Blended learning demonstration, Ms Sara Kyofuna*
12:00 p.m.	Panel Discussion	
1.00 p.m.	**Lunch**	
1:45 p.m.	Panel Discussion reconvenes	
2:45 p.m.	Brief Feedback to senior management team	*Dr Phillip Matthews,* *Mr John McGarrigle* *Dr Pramod Pathak* *Dr Leo Casey*
3:30 p.m.	End of session	