

Initial Response of the Education Faculty to the Peer Review Group (PRG) Report

1. The Education Faculty welcomes the PRG report. This report endorses the work of the Faculty and supports the findings and orientation of the Self Assessment Report (SAR) that was carried out as the first part of Quality Assurance review. The Faculty wishes in particular to acknowledge the professional approach and courtesy with which the PRG conducted its business. The quality of engagement, experience and insight that the PRG brought to the QA/QI process was very high and was a very positive contribution to the work of the College and the Faculty.
2. The thrust of the PRG report is strongly affirmative of the work of the Faculty and staff members appreciate the supportive comments and advice of the PRG in respect of their work.
3. The Education Faculty has been engaged in a long process of review and reform, a process that had begun before the formal QA review commenced. The QA process has provided an important forum and focus for this professional process. It is particularly gratifying for the Faculty to note the positive comments that the PRG made in respect of the self-assessment review that the Faculty had prepared. The intention of that review was to provide a thorough and critical examination of current policies, processes and procedures. The PRG has endorsed the quality and integrity of that process, as well as the substantive policy recommendations that have emerged from this internal review.
4. This was the first review of a Faculty, as distinct from a Department, carried out in NCAD. Within the SAR, the difficulties that this raised were noted. In particular the distinctions between the teacher education (BA and HDip) courses within the Faculty, and CEAD, as a centre operating from within the Faculty, and the other elements of the Faculty work, were noted. The strategy adopted was to present the SAR in two parts: the first part dealt with the generic Faculty issues, the second part (more akin to a normal department review) dealt in particular with the teacher education courses.
5. The PRG report commends recent changes in the BA programme structure, including the incorporation of 1st year education students within the Core Studies year. The report also suggests that further integration of studio practice with other departments might be investigated. The Education Faculty has been exploring the potential of such arrangements. The 2003 discussion document *Restructuring the Faculty of Education* produced by the Faculty outlined some possibilities in this regard and a subsequent consultative process within the college revealed support for the development of a 'joint course' with other faculties and departments, but many structural blockages. A modular approach was seen as perhaps a more feasible model. Current initiatives in relation to modules are being developed and the PRG supports these developments.
6. The Faculty welcomes the commendation by the PRG of the development of post-graduate research capacities, including the introduction of the planned new Masters in Education course and the increased profile of the Faculty and the College through its hosting of the major national conference of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) in the spring of 2006.

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7. The PRG gives strong affirmation of developments in Continuing Education. The report is unequivocally critical of current facilities and resources provided for part-time learners. This points to a major deficit in current college provision. The Faculty is gratified to receive such a strong call for support for improved provision of continuing education.
8. The specific comments made by the PRG in relation to certificated courses offered by CEAD are particularly welcome at a time of significant development in this area. Since the PRG reported, Academic Council has adopted two further certificate courses developed within CEAD and a Diploma course is currently being drafted.

Conclusion

9. The Faculty will continue to address the QA/QI agenda as set out in our SAR report, and as endorsed and developed by the PRG. At present, the Faculty is preparing the Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP) guided by the set of recommendations contained within the PRG report.
10. In conclusion, the Faculty again wishes to acknowledge the very positive findings of the PRG and the serious and professional manner with which the PRG conducted its work. The report of the PRG constitutes a significant statement of validation and an important point of reference for the continuing process of professional reflection and improvement within the Faculty.

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