

Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement
Programme for Academic Units
2003-2004



Peer Review Group Report
for the
Education Department

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- Dr. Padraig Walsh, Director of Quality Promotion, Dublin City University (Rapporteur)
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Introduction

This Quality review has been conducted in accordance with a framework model developed and agreed through the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) and which conforms with the provisions of Section 35 of the Universities Act (1997). The model consists of a number of basic steps.

1. An internal team in the Department reviewed completes a detailed self-assessment report (SAR). It should be noted that this document is confidential to the Department, the Review Panel and to the senior officers of the university.
 2. This report is sent to a team of peer assessors, the Peer Review Group (PRG) – composed (in this case) of one member of the staff of St Patrick’s College, one from Dublin City University (the validating and awarding institution for the degree programmes) and three external persons – which then visits the Department and conducts discussions with a range of staff, students and other stakeholders.
 3. The PRG then writes its own report
 4. The Department produces a response to the various issues and findings of the SAR and PRG Reports.
 5. The PRG Report and the Departmental response are then considered at a meeting of the relevant Senior Management of the College, who address recommendations in the Peer Review Group Report that fall outside the control of the Department or that require additional resources. Arising from this meeting, Department- and College-based action plans are approved. Together, these are termed the Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP)
 6. A summary of the Quality Review is sent to the Governing Body of the College, which may approve publication in a manner that it sees fit. Following the approval of the summary report by the Governing Body, it is published on the college website. The full text of the Peer Review Group Report is also published on the college website.
- **This document is the report referred to in Step 3 above.**

Glossary

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BEd	Bachelor of Education
DCU	Dublin City University
DES	Department of Education and Science
EdD	Doctor of Education
ERC	Education Research Centre (St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra)
EU	European Union
Grad Dip	Graduate Diploma in Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INTO	Irish National Teachers’ Organisation
IT	Information Technology
IUQB	Irish Universities Quality Board
LRC	Labour Relations Commission
MEd	Master of Education
PRG	Peer Review Group
QuIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QR	Quality Review
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SPCD	St Patrick’s College Drumcondra
SWOT analysis	Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TP	Teaching Practice

1. Profile of the Department

Staff

The Education Department currently employs 53 staff on a permanent or contract basis including a number of staff on secondment. The secondments include school principals, class teachers, members of the Inspectorate (from the national governmental Department of Education and Science) and the Primary Curriculum Support Programme. 16 of the staff possess a PhD degree while many of the remaining staff are pursuing doctoral programmes. Of the 53 staff, 42 have been employed by the college for 6 years or less.

Nature of Employment	Number of Staff
Permanent	41
Contract	5
Secondment	7
TOTAL	53

Programmes

The Department delivers two undergraduate programmes; a Bachelor of Education (BEd) and a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and two taught postgraduate programmes, a Master of Education (MEd) and a Graduate Diploma in Education (Grad Dip). Its contribution to the BA programme is confined to courses in Human Development. It also offers research degrees to Masters and Doctoral level. It proposes to deliver a BA (International) and a taught Doctor of Education (EdD) programme from 2004.

The College has established an award-bearing structure of in-career education. This allows modules to be taken for audit or credit towards a University validated Certificate, Diploma or Master of Education degree.

Programme	Abbreviation	Start Year	Number of Registered Students 2003-2004
Bachelor of Education	BEd	1974	1225
Bachelor of Arts in Humanities	BA	1993	289
Graduate Diploma in Education	Grad Dip	1975	184
Master of Education (Taught)	MEd	1993	56
Doctor of Education (Taught)	EdD	2004 (July)	-
MEd (By research)	MEd	1997	4
PhD (By research)	PhD	1997	15
In-service Education Modules	-	2003	17

2. The Self-Assessment Process

The Education Department Subcommittee on Quality Review was established in June 2003 to oversee the preparation of the self-assessment report of the Education Department. Membership includes a cross-section of representatives from curricular studies, foundation studies, human development and teaching practice. The Committee met approximately weekly to review progress and to plan future activity, and liaised with and reported to the College Quality Promotion Committee. Coordination of the process was the responsibility of Ms Bernie Collins, Quality Promotion (QP) coordinator.

The Education Department Sub-committee undertook a fact-finding exercise as a basis for the review. It also conducted and facilitated an away day, compiled a departmental research profile and drafted a quality review self-assessment report for 2003/4.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COLLEGE QP COMMITTEE -

- Ms Maeve Fitzpatrick (Higher Executive Officer, Education Unit)
- Dr Patricia Flynn (Lecturer, Music Department)
- Dr Liam Mac Mathúna (Registrar)
- Dr Ruth McManus (Lecturer, Geography Department)
- Dr Mark Morgan (Head, Education Department)
- Ms Orla Nic Aodha (Assistant Librarian);
- Ms Celine O'Connell (Administration, Special Education Department)
- Ms Susan Pike (Lecturer, Education Department, College Co-ordinator Teaching and Learning)
- Dr Mary Shine Thompson (Lecturer, English Department, College Co-ordinator of Research)
- Mr Martin Ward (Secretary, Bursar)

MEMBERSHIP OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON Quality Review (QR) (all are academic staff in the Education Department) -

- Dr Catherine Maunsell (Chairperson)
- Ms Siobhan Cahillane-McGovern
- Ms Bernie Collins
- Dr Catherine Furlong
- Ms Margaret Leahy
- Dr Mark Morgan
- Ms Fionnuala Waldron

3. The Peer Review Group Process

Methodology

The review process consisted of three discrete activities:

1. Familiarisation with the self-assessment report provided by the Department in advance of the site visit.
2. A comprehensive site visit conducted over a period of two days and one evening to review and validate details of the self-assessment report.
3. The preparation and delivery of a review report documenting the findings and making recommendations for future development.

Overview of the Site Visit

On the evening of 17 February, the Peer Review Group (PRG) for the Education Department finalised its draft schedules, appointed Dr Jim Bennett as chairperson and Dr Padraig Walsh as rapporteur.

On 18 February, the PRG considered the self-assessment report, and dialogued with a selection of academic and administrative staff groupings, singly/ in pairs (covering a variety of disciplines). It toured the facilities: including large and small lecture rooms, seminar rooms, a computer laboratory, the Auditorium, the Gymnasium, the Resource Centre and the Library. The PRG met representatives of students from BEd, BA, Masters and Graduate Diploma programmes. The PRG split into subgroups of 2 and 3 persons for many of the meetings with staff and students.

The PRG believed that the schedule was very packed and it would have been useful to have had some time between meetings to reflect and prepare.

Site Visit Programme

Day 0 (Tuesday 17 February 2004)

17.30 – 18.00	Peer Review Groups for the Education Department and the Education Unit convened
18.00 – 20.00	Welcome by the College President and briefing by the Quality Promotion co-ordinator
	Meeting with the Head of the Education Department and Chairperson of the Education Department sub-committee on Quality Review
20.00	Dinner with President of the College and the Education Department Quality Committee

Day 1 (Wednesday 18 February 2004)

09.00 – 09.30	Convening of Peer Review Group
09.30 – 11.00	Consideration of Self-Assessment Report
11.30 – 13.30	Dialogue with staff groupings
13.30 – 15.00	Working lunch to review issues raised and finalise tasks for afternoon
15.00 – 17.00	Meetings with groups of students
17.00 – 17.30	Meeting with administrative staff
17.30 – 18.00	Meeting to review issues raised and finalise task for following day

Day 2 (Thursday 19 February 2004)

09.00 - 09.30	Convening of Peer Review Group
09.15 - 09.45	Meeting with the Head of Department
09.45 - 10.30	Meeting with the President, Bursar and Registrar
11.00 - 12.30	Meeting with post holders in the Department (Acting Director of Teaching Practice and Directors of Graduate Diploma, Masters, In-service)
12.30 – 13.00	Meeting with the Head of Education Department and Chairperson of Education Department sub-committee on QR to clarify any outstanding issues
13.00 – 13.30	Working Lunch
13.30 – 14.00	Visit to Departmental and College Facilities
14.00 – 16.30	Preparation of draft Report
16.30 – 17.00	Exit Presentation to all staff of the Education Department

Review Group's view of the Self-Assessment Report

The PRG found the self-assessment report very useful and informative. It provided considerable data on the department and its activities and this was presented in an honest and open way. The SWOT analysis at the end of each section was particularly helpful to the PRG. Some additional information was required which was provided on request, and clarification was available from members of the Department and from the QP Coordinator.

4. Findings of the Review Group

Background and Context

St Patrick's College (SPCD) is an affiliated college of DCU since 1992. Although the linkage agreements are under discussion, the relationships are very good. It is acknowledged in the Education Department that growth in staff numbers and the wider development of the College could not have taken place without the link with DCU.

The PRG were impressed by the enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of staff. Staff members, in general, were very happy in their work environment. There is a great sense of collegiality and a very high calibre of student intake. Students were uniformly positive on the approachability of and support from staff.

The PRG found the review process very positive. Students reported that they were happy in general with college life. Even those who were critical of some aspects of their courses were highly positive of the College experience. Courses were intellectually stimulating and challenging for students.

The College operates subject to a number of external constraints, which limit its flexibility and autonomy. Some of the recommendations in this report depend on progress being made in relation to matters such as:

- The control on the intake of students into the BEd and Grad Dip programme by the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the timing of such notification to the College
- The control on the creation of staff posts (in the area of Education) by the DES
- The academic career structure [which is currently being processed by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC)]
- The restarting of the New Building Programme for the College.

Staffing, Accommodation and Resources

The current level of staffing in the Department is adequate, in view of the size and scope of the activities and programmes in the Department, within a medium-sized teacher-education institution.

In view of the recent growth of staff and student numbers, the general procedures adhered to by the Education Department, in relation to staff recruitment protocol and appointments procedures are satisfactory and inclusive. The staff-training and professional staff development proposals, as outlined in the College's Strategic Plan are commendable and there is evidence that many of the excellent schemes are being implemented with positive effects.

Most staff members have recent and relevant experience in the field of education and the high proportion of staff with appropriate higher degrees is noteworthy and commendable. The PRG believes that the College's staff development initiatives contribute to the high percentage of staff undertaking study at doctoral level. This will serve to raise the research profile of the Department but care must be taken at management level that opportunities exist for all staff, particularly where only one person forms the core staffing for a subject.

Issues of inequity in relation to the number of core staff in subject teams were noted. Many subject areas are quite heavily staffed by part-time or short-term contract lecturers, which leads to some degree of frustration and over burdening of permanent staff members within a subject area.

Staff members are engaged in an appropriately diverse range of activities, which has many advantages in a college the size of St Patrick's, but which may lead to some degree of duplication. A more co-ordinated approach may reduce the amount of time that academic staff members spend on generic activities.

Although the data in the self-assessment report is not wholly representative of all staff members in the Department, it revealed a high incidence of academic staff carrying heavy teaching, administrative and teaching-practice supervisory duties. However, the load does not appear to be evenly spread in all cases and this has resulted in some degree of workload inequity in the Department.

In general, the Department provides an acceptable level of accommodation for both staff and students, resulting in a productive teaching and learning environment. However, the recent significant increase in both staff and student numbers has resulted in an unprecedented level

of pressure on the existing facilities, which has been further exacerbated by the pause in the proposed building programme.

The Department is adequately resourced and the Library houses an excellent collection of foundation and methodological texts in education and a reasonably extensive range of professional and academic journals, although its accommodation is cramped. Access to Information Technology (IT) facilities is adequate but will require expansion in the near future in line with the new programmes and increasing student numbers. It appears that little additional provision has been made, in terms of accommodation and resources, for the Grad Dip programme.

Organisation and Management

Planning occurs mainly at Education Department meetings (twice per term) or at committee level (Education Department Management Committee and Research Strategy Steering Committee) and/or a number of sub-committees with specific remits. The management structure, role and responsibilities need, however, to be more transparent and communicated to all staff, particularly in the light of the greatly increased size of the Department in recent years. However, members of staff are very positive about the ease with which they can approach the Head of Department.

The structures and policies of the College (and Department) are available on the website in the form of the Section 15 and 16 manuals required by the Freedom of Information Act. Greater visibility and awareness of this information would be useful. Greater use of the web for communication purposes should be encouraged, including the availability of minutes of meetings.

Planning and Evaluation

A biennial 'away day' forum was introduced in 2000. Departmental staff members engage in a process of reviewing Department activity and planning the Department's actions for the following two years. This development was spoken of highly and obviously valued by all members of staff interviewed. However, some indicated that many issues discussed at the last away day had not been dealt with.

Routine planning and administrative activity of the Department in relation to the collection of assignments, collation of examination results and maintenance of student records are dealt with centrally by the Education Department administration personnel.

Interviews with staff also revealed that they were not very aware of planning outside their own subject areas. Most agreed that programme boards for all pathways, including the BEd and Grad Dip programmes would be useful.

Programmes and Courses

The PRG considered the workload of students to be very high, by contemporary third-level standards.

BEd Programme: The study of an academic subject by students on the BEd programme is generally valued by staff in the department as making an important contribution to the personal development of the students. However, it is situated within a BEd and is not a separate degree. Students interviewed recognised its value but were concerned about the resulting workload.

BA in Human Development: This programme has benefited tremendously from a process of recent review. The PRG met a number of highly-motivated (mature) students, who were uniformly positive in their comments on this programme. The students felt fully supported by staff.

Master's/Doctoral Programmes: The Department is involved in the delivery of several programmes at postgraduate level. The taught Master's programme has several specialist components and on completion of prescribed coursework students are eligible to enter for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma. Successful completion of a dissertation leads to the award of MEd. The Department is also engaged in the supervision of a small number of research students leading either to the award of a Master's or a PhD.

The strength of the postgraduate work in the Department lies in the staff's commitment to postgraduate level work and the level of expertise of several members of the Department who are international experts in their respective fields. A further strength is reflected in the ability of the Department to respond to the need for curriculum leaders in schools.

Appropriate quality assurance measures are in place in the taught Master's programme. Currently all staff involved in the delivery of the taught Master's programme sit on the Programme Board, but with the recent expansion of initiatives such as the taught doctoral programme, a middle tier of management may be required to carry out the day-to-day running and administration of postgraduate programmes. It may also serve to formalise reportage structures in the Department and facilitate greater communication.

Staff members who contribute to the programme are paid for their teaching and assessment duties but it may be more administratively effective to integrate the activities directly into the Department. This would also serve to monitor individual lecturer's workloads and increase the ability to plan strategically within the Department as a whole.

Quality Assessment and Improvement

The self-assessment report indicates that it is common practice for members of the Department to evaluate their courses on an individual basis. There is no common format for such an evaluation, although the report indicates that staff members are encouraged to engage in this practice. The results of any such evaluation, where it is practised, do not appear to feed back to the College or to the Department Head. The self-assessment report indicates that the most valuable way of utilising such feedback is by making the process as informal as possible.

The students who met the PRG indicated that formal evaluation of individual courses by staff was uncommon. Students on the BEd programme indicated that some evaluation of courses had taken place in 3rd year but not in 1st or 2nd year.

The self-assessment report indicates that formal feedback has been sought from graduates about the programmes as a whole and on individual components in the programme. This has been common practice for some years for both the Graduate Diploma and Human Development programmes. For the purposes of this quality review, a survey of over 460 graduates (from 2001 and 2002) of the BEd and Graduate Diploma programmes was conducted.

Teaching and Learning

General: The range of innovative teaching methods employed by staff is impressive. The PRG believes that greater sharing of good teaching practice among colleagues might be beneficial. There are many models to enhance the sharing of good practice, one of which is peer review, in which staff members observe and evaluate each other's classes.

In interviews, several staff members raised the issue of the lack of collaboration. Members felt that both themselves and the students would benefit from more joint planning of and collaboration in the delivery of courses. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) staff in particular indicated that all would benefit from more fluid structures and interdisciplinarity in relation to integrating ICT more into the learning and teaching processes.

Both staff and students complained of student work overload caused, to some extent, by lack of communication between staff in relation to the broad overview of what students are expected to submit by way of assignments. Interviews with staff revealed that they would benefit from structured feedback from students in relation to courses and their assessment. Staff members interviewed were unclear about the nature of student workload outside of their own subjects, although they did acknowledge that students were overburdened with assignments.

The PRG noted the appointment (on a half-time basis) of a college-wide teaching and learning co-ordinator and also noted the developments in the area of a virtual learning environment.

Teaching Practice: In view of the fact that the 'defining responsibility' of the College is the education of primary teachers, teaching practice occupies a pivotal position in the lives of all BEd and Grad Dip students. The core teaching practice team consists of the Acting Director and three full-time personnel. The management and administration of teaching practice are conducted with admirable efficiency. The documentation for the students, supervisors and school personnel is commendably detailed and was organised in sufficient time for all concerned to have assimilated its contents. The expectations of the students in terms of teaching and learning and the requirements for the various grades are clearly expressed. The number of part-time supervisors (over half of the total) involved in teaching practice is a serious concern for students due to differing expectations and possible variations in grading. In the interests of Quality Assurance, it is also an issue that the Department must urgently address.

In-Service: The appointment of a Director of In-Service Education in Autumn 2002 gave an impetus to the process of addressing what the *Strategic Plan* referred to as a notable weakness. At this juncture, the number of participants involved in in-service courses is not substantial, but it is vitally important that partnerships with the other stakeholders such as the Education Centre network, other Colleges of Education, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and parent groups are further developed. The framework for providing accreditation for the facilitators who work with the Primary Curriculum Support Programme is a valuable initiative. The use of distance education for the provision of in-service education could be developed to a far greater extent. The issue of personnel to provide in-service courses has not been addressed sufficiently within the context of overall workloads. It would not be beneficial for the Education Department or its in-service students for their courses to be taught on the basis of the goodwill of full-time staff or taught entirely by part-time staff.

Scholarship and Research

The Departmental research profile indicates a high level of research activity, and some individual members of the Department are internationally recognised experts in their fields. It is clear that the traditions both of individual and collaborative research are well established in the Department, and that the Department makes a unique contribution to research in the field of childhood and education. Teams from within the College have formed a number of significant strategic research alliances and some attract considerable funding. The PRG has noted that significant numbers of staff hold PhDs or are currently pursuing doctoral degrees. It also notes the considerable rise in the number of students registered in the Department who are pursuing higher degrees, and the demands that supervision of research degrees make on staff members. It is clear that research is encouraged in the Department, that many undertake it with considerable enthusiasm and commitment, and that it is integrated into teaching.

The majority of members of the Department record their research activities on the Research Support System (Genius), operated in association with DCU. A departmental research strategy steering committee informs policy on research.

The range of research activity is in line with the College's commitment to education as outlined in its strategic plan. Sharing the SPCD campus are two bodies with specific research interests, the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education run jointly by SPCD and Dublin Institute of Technology and the Education Research Centre (ERC), with which individual members of the Education Department academic staff have research links. Teams within the College also collaborate with the DES in research activities and the College participates in a research consortium that includes all the state's Colleges of Education. Some research students in the Department are recipients of Government of Ireland Fellowships.

Among the supports for research activity which the College provides are: the appointment of a College Research Coordinator (a half position); the establishment of a research fellowship which may be awarded annually to a member of staff; an annual scholarship, which may be awarded to a research student of the College and two research fellowships supported by a commercial body; a scheme of paid leave of absence for research purposes; the provision of 1% of the College's annual budget for research-related activities; the publication of an annual College-wide research report; the provision of €630 annually for members of staff to attend conferences.

The PRG commends the Department for the high level of participation in research. The expectation that a member of academic staff would contribute to the College research profile is relatively recent and an addition to the teaching work of the Department. The current career structure does not acknowledge excellence in research.

Community Contributions

The Education Department does not have a formal written policy in respect of the contributions that its members make to the college community or to the wider community.

The PRG commends the substantial contribution of the Education Department to the arts.

The involvement of Education Department personnel in over 50 committees within the College is indicative of the very substantial contribution that the Department makes to the continued development of the College.

The Education Department co-operates actively with the education departments of the other colleges of education, and the establishment of a research consortium of the other colleges of education is an important initiative. The Department's involvement with the INTO in a major in-service project, with FORÓIGE, and with the DES in planning and research activities is indicative of the advances which have been made since 1999. The National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction represents one of the many possibilities which exist when the DES, Education Departments of the other colleges of education and schools co-operate in order to develop an effective, systematic and rigorous approach to the induction of newly qualified teachers.

The work of the Educational Disadvantage Centre constitutes a good example of the Education Department's involvement in the wider community. The Centre provides many opportunities for the College and its students to respond to the changing nature of Irish society and to its changing educational needs. The Centre provides a wide range of programmes at pre-service and in-service levels, in addition to its developmental work in the national and international spheres of activity.

The lack of a formal policy on involvement in schools means that for the most part these initiatives are dependent on the goodwill of individual staff members and the voluntary co-operation of schools.

5. Recommendations for Improvement

To facilitate planning of quality improvement measures, the recommendations has been qualified by an indication of priority, where the use of **bold** type indicates a stronger recommendation.

Staffing, Accommodation and Resources

- **The immediate establishment of a career structure that will reward and recognise excellence in research, teaching, the arts and community contribution is essential to the restructuring of the Department along the lines that its size and complexity demand.**
- **A risk assessment exercise needs to be conducted in relation to the size of core staffing within the different subject areas in the Department.**
- **The issue of designated holiday periods and entitlements should be addressed in the context of employment contracts.**
- **The proposed building programme needs to be re-instated immediately.**
- **Dedicated workstations and work space needs to be provided for research students.**
- Additional lecture theatre space is required to alleviate the demand on the current provision.
- There is a need for more dedicated accommodation to facilitate small-group teaching and IT-related courses.
- There is a need to further provide facilities such as offices, dedicated teaching spaces for curriculum studies, resource, reflection and study areas.

Organisation and Management

- **The size of the Department (at 53) requires a formally defined and articulated organisational structure with consistent and transparent management structures and clear, accessible documentation describing this.**
- **The relationship between the academic and administrative sections needs to be clarified and formalised to reflect adequately the input from administrative staff.**
- **There is a need to look at further post holder roles and subject to progress on the career structure, posts of responsibility should be rotated.**
- **It is recognised that there are limits to the amount of devolved budgeting that is possible in a College of this size. However it is recommended that the Head of Education needs to participate in drawing up the budget for his Department and should assume responsibility for its administration.**
- **An agreed and transparent framework needs to be developed for academic workload in relation to contact hours, course allocation, administration, research and contributions to college life.**
- **In-service education, MEd and upcoming EdD should be core activities of the Department and be included in academic teaching duties.**
- Students should be encouraged to play a more active role in the decision-making process of the Department.
- The student handbook should be extended to include full information on marks and standards, evaluation and assessment procedures. It should be available in electronic form.

Planning and Evaluation

- **The Department should seek from the DES a commitment to longer-term planning in relation to its role in teacher education, e.g., funding graduate and**

research programmes and anticipated numbers of students, in order to facilitate planning at SPCD Departmental level.

- In view of the nature and extent of the external constraints on the College, a policy should be developed which identifies those areas that are in the control of the Department and such areas should be prioritised and further developed (e.g. postgraduate programmes). This is particularly important in view of the continual flux of the education sector.
- Following an away day, a list of priorities for action and a timetable and procedure for implementation should be produced.
- The Education Department should continue the phased implementation of its strategic plan. In addition, each subject group within the Department should devise its own strategic plan, which is fed into the departmental plan. This could be facilitated and collated by programmes boards.
- The relationship with the ERC and DCU should be extended.

Programmes and Courses

- **Programme Boards should be established for the BA, BEd, and Grad Dip.**
- **The courses that comprise the BEd and Grad Dip should be urgently reviewed with a view to considerably reducing student contact hours, creating more electives; avoiding duplication, over-teaching or over-examination and ensuring equitable distribution of marks for elements of the courses.**
- **There needs to be more co-ordination re submission and timing of assignments.**
- **A more formal and clearly understood system of student representation needs to be developed and the minutes of staff-student meetings need to be made available to all students.**
- The form that the study of an academic subject to full degree level takes should be further evaluated in the context of a review of the organisation and structure of the Department and in particular the BEd programme.
- There is a need to appoint a series of coordinators who would work together on reviewing and balancing programme elements.
- The participation of student representatives on all relevant committees and transparent reporting of decision-making processes should be encouraged.
- **BEd**
 - **The proposal to set a limit on maximum number of contact hours need to be put into operation as a matter of urgency and assessment levels of students needs to be reduced.**
- **Grad Dip**
 - **There is a need to consider the position of exemptions or electives to reflect the heterogeneous background of the intake.**
- Human Development
 - Human Development should be offered as an academic option to BEd students.

Quality Assessment and Improvement

- **A more formal system of student evaluation of individual courses and programmes is necessary, for the purposes of good practice and particularly in the light of the requirements throughout the third-level sector to involve assessment by students availing of the teaching provided by an institution.**
- **Students should formally evaluate each course. Data from these evaluations should be used for future planning by individual tutors, subject groups and programme boards. Evaluation pro-formas should be structured in such a way as to provide information from which detailed planning can be made which will improve the quality of the courses delivered by each programme.**

- Review of courses and programmes should be systematic and carried out annually in response to student feedback as well as other factors.
- Administrative and IT support is required for the design and management of such evaluations of teaching.
- A forward timetable of quality review of other academic departments and support units should follow this initial review.

Teaching and Learning

- **Assignments should be standardised in terms of length and expected time for completion so that students in all subjects carry an equivalent assignment load. There should be a timetable for submission for all student assignments, which is made available to all staff and students.**
- **There should be at least one different external examiner for each programme whose subject expertise should be closely related to the courses for which s/he is responsible, particularly at Master's level and higher.**
- The Education Department should explore and implement further ways in which staff can share ideas and practices regarding innovative teaching methodologies in order to reduce the proportion of 'lecture-based' teaching.
- All MEd assignments which are graded as top grade, fail, or borderline between grades by a first marker should be blind second-marked as far as is practicable. Consensus should be reached, using a third party as necessary.
- Marking of examination scripts should be anonymous.
- Feedback should be standardised and matched to the assignment criteria to ensure transparency and consistency in marking across a range of modules.
- Internal moderation should be used to check fairness and consistency of marking across modules.
- The Department is well placed to develop its virtual learning environment and funding should be extended to facilitate further development.
- Teaching Practice
 - **Teaching Practice should be evaluated formally by the students after each module and period of school-based practice.**
 - **The proportion of part-time supervisors involved in teaching practice needs to be reduced appreciably.**
 - Greater involvement of schools is recommended at all levels of teaching practice.
 - The requirement that third year students and graduate students teach for the entire school day may need to be examined.
- In service
 - **Additional resources are required for the development of in-service as a priority especially in view of changes in demand for initial teacher education.**
 - There is a need to examine links between content of pre-service, induction and in-service education with a view to lessening demand on pre-service students.
 - There is a need to examine institutional links between in-service and induction courses.

Scholarship and Research

- **Research must be recognised as part of academic staff workload.**
- Rotated block release should be available to enable staff to participate in research.
- The Department should extend its planning and coordination of research activity.
- The Department should explore the establishment of centres of research excellence.

- The Department should extend, formalise and deepen its links with other research bodies, in particular the ERC and DCU.
- The Department should extend its participation in EU research initiatives, as it is evident that there is sufficient expertise in the Department to lead and direct such research programmes.
- The Department should seek a review of the College's current support of commitment to research and scholarship with a view to extending it.

Community Contributions

- The community contribution should be recognised formally in the career structure.
- The Department should promote more positive links with schools, parents and the public in general, and disseminate details of its work.