INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2012-2013 - Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PCET) Programme (Initial Teacher Training, Post Compulsory Education & Training)

Dear Ms Tracey,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the Cardiff School of Social Sciences in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

Issues Highlighted

Your Report raised issue(s) which have been referred for consideration by the School.

The following response has been provided on behalf of the School.

"1.[1.("Recommendations")] the External Examiner's recommendation "that more information be provided in the first weeks of the course about the choice between Level 6 and Level 7 assessments" and related comments.

The 20+part time students enrolling into year 1 of the two year Wednesday evening programme have always been provided with a talk on the different levels they can select for study ie level 6 and level 7. This year however, accompanying the talk were several samples of Assessment rubrics and anonymised examples of work submitted for the compulsory PGCE Modules. This exemplification of course work did enable a more informed choice to be made and students also had a two week window to reflect with employers and to finalise their enrolment level.

2. [1. ("Recommendations")] suggested enhancements in the area of "Key Skills".

All students undertake on–line diagnostic tests in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT during week 1 of the full time programme as part of the induction week. These results enable the staff team to identify areas of weakness and to provide a series of appropriate workshops, drop ins and tutorials which will assist in raising individual's standards and revising some knowledge and skills which from non –use may have "rusted " somewhat. In Wales a key ministerial priority is to raise literacy standards of pupils and students in the post compulsory sector and to this end - and with trainees' employment in mind - the PGCE staff team pay particular attention in weekly seminar, workshop and tutorial activities to the reinforcement of key skills.

For the last six years we have also employed an experienced Head of Department from a local FE college to deliver two lectures on Essential Key skills in which he shares how staff in his college and he himself embeds and integrates these into his teaching. Furthermore, all trainees are required to demonstrate planning and assessment of key skills during their Practicum.

The convenor and staff delivering the 20 credit Planning for teaching and learning module have identified a few more ways in which the emphasis on more inventive ways to teach and assess key skills will be provided. We intend during the February Recall (from Placement) Day to focus on this as students will be in a position to share witnessed practice.

3. [3 (second para)] in the context of changes to word lengths for assignments, the External Examiner's indication that "Assignment topics should be revisited, and redesigned where appropriate".

All the module assignment titles for level 7 and level 6 for the academic year 2013-14 have been revised and tailored appropriately. This will ensure that the assignment titles reflect the university's recommended 2,000 word limit for 10 credits and 4,000 word limit for 20 credits. Students to date have managed to address rubrics fairly well but staff feel the tight wordage somewhat thwarts a high performance especially for those trainee teachers of sciences and maths who are less familiar with "the essay" as an assessment mode.

All module convenors provide an assignment briefing session to specifically address the expectations requirements and potential caveats of assessment rubrics.

4. [4 (last two paras)] reports of student views on the nature of evening classes and suggested increase in "seminar work" and "tutorial time for support about matters such as lack of confidence about completing assignments".

All modules delivered in the 2 year part time in-service programme on Wednesdays 3pm–8pm include a final hour for library work, self-directed learning (SDL) or for small groups to meet to prepare their forthcoming group presentations. Thus the formal contact hours are 3-7pm and this has been the case for 10 years or so. This template reflects the fact that the majority of students are all employed full time and previous cohorts have requested and understood the necessity of this. Clearly, the more theoretical Social Science modules require some formal transmission teaching (lectures) before interactive seminar work, debates and discussions can occur. However all six modules delivered involve staff using a blend of lecture, discussion, debate and data workshops and these approaches enable us to assist students with meeting the diverse sets of learning outcomes.

We have for the last 3 academic years provided a dedicated tutor for learning support every Wednesday afternoon and, since doing so, the number of referred module assignments have reduced dramatically so we are somewhat baffled by this remark about having more tutorial time. We can only assume that year 1 students were not fully aware of this facility or that they can also negotiate an appointment with their personal tutor which is extra to the timetabled progress review ones. This year we have DOUBLED the size of the wall posters and flyers announcing this in the welcome and induction pack. We have also provided published office hours of personal tutors thereby making a "support tutorial" more easy to negotiate.

5. [6 ("Enhancement")] the External Examiner's suggested enhancements to a named module Psychology SIO222 and to the "e-learning project".

5.1 Response from the module convenor:
The psychology module is focussed on psychology for teachers. The lectures and seminars presented cover a broad range of topics including theories of learning (behaviourist, cognitivist and contemporary approaches); learning styles; human memory; motivation; intelligence; schemata; performance anxiety and attribution theory. As indicated previously Transactional Analysis is presented as an additional practical workshop to provide students with a practical toolkit. It was first introduced on the In-service course in discussion with students and was well received since it represents current practice across the occupational spectrum from which the students are drawn. TA as a practical management tool is currently being implemented within industry and education alike. This subject was extended to the full-time course at the request of students who were aware of its deployment on the in-service course and was again, and continues to be very well received. TA approaches are used extensively in psychological interventions including Clinical, Educational, Organisational and Counselling. The inclusion of TA simply reflects current practice. In the essays presented, students accurately represented current literature.

5.2 The external examiner saw a few exciting and very innovative Technology Enhanced Learning(TEL) projects and watched presentations of these at the Annual PGCE conference . She (and we) were disappointed to see one or two poorly proof read slides. A newly appointed module convenor and assessor of the TEL /ELearning module will ensure that students know how poor spelling and punctuation will impact upon their final module mark. Most importantly, when students present their TEL projects at the Annual PGCE conference, staff will ensure via a proof reading of students' prepared slides that no errors are present.

The new module convenor has also emphasised this matter in her revised specification for the TEL assignments at both level 6 and level 7."

Positive Comments

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments on the School's provision including:

a. **[1, 2 and 3] your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;**
b. **[4] your reports of student satisfaction with the programme;**
c. **[6] the number and breadth of noteworthy practices you reported, including commendation for the programme's "recognition of the importance of technology in teaching and learning [which] addresses this area to a greater extent than do other similar teacher education programmes".**

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your service as External Examiner.

In order to meet the expectations of the QAA Quality Code, both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on Registry web pages and will be available publically.

The University's provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Mrs Jill Bedford
Director of Registry and Academic Services