

QUALITY REVIEW FOLLOW-UP REPORT

EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES PROGRAMME

Introduction

A meeting to discuss progress made in implementing recommendations for improvement arising from the review of the Early Childhood Studies programmes was held on 19 October 2007.

Present: Professor David Cox, Head, College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences
Professor Francis Douglas, Director, Early Childhood Studies Board of Studies
Ms. Lorraine Crossan, Programme Administrator, Early Childhood Studies
Dr. Norma Ryan, Director, Quality Promotion Unit
Ms Deirdre O'Brien, Administrator, Quality Promotion Unit

Abbreviations

PRG: Peer Review Group

QPC: Quality Promotion Committee

HR: Human Resources

ACSSS: Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences

RAM: Resource Allocation Model

VP: Vice-President

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

ECS: Early Childhood Studies

MH: Medicine & Health

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct 07
That a separate budget line for Early Childhood Studies (ECS) be created under the control of the Director of the Programme to ensure the long-term viability of the programme	Endorsed.	Not implemented This recommendation is for the University to implement. A satisfactory method of funding and staffing of interdisciplinary courses has yet to be established. ECS has a separate budget line within the College of ACSSS. However, Paediatrics & Child Health make no contribution from its budget to the central administration of ECS. Currently, Paediatrics/CH receive no budget for p/t staffing, equipment and consumables for ECS from the College of ACSSS.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct 07
<p>That serious consideration be given to the filling of a permanent full-time Lecturer position in Applied Social Studies relevant to the content of the Early Childhood Degree.</p>	<p>Not endorsed.</p> <p>When the RAM is fully implemented the resources accruing to the Programme will become fully transparent. Staffing for the Programme will then be a matter for the Director of the Programme within available resources.</p>	<p>Not implemented.</p> <p>A satisfactory method of funding and staffing of interdisciplinary courses has yet to be established.</p> <p>It was noted that a number of appointments have been made in departments because of FTEs from ECS programme, as follows:</p> <p>Paediatrics/College MH (delivering ¼ degree): 3 staff (1 to retire at December 07; 1 F/T Temp to commence in Jan.);</p> <p>Applied Social Studies (delivering ⅓ degree): 2 staff;</p> <p>Education (delivering ⅓ degree): 3 staff;</p> <p>Applied Psychology (delivering 1/9 degree): ½ staff</p>
<p>That a Curriculum Committee to oversee the overall consistency and coherence of the programme be established.</p>	<p>Endorsed the need to oversee the overall consistency and coherency of the Programme. However the QPC were of the view that this is the responsibility of the Board of Studies and that a separate curriculum committee is not required, or, that if it is formed it is a subset of the Board of Studies and not comprised of individuals who are not members of the Board of Studies.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>A Curriculum Committee was established as a subset of the Board of Studies. A revised programme was devised as a result, but was not implemented as the consent of all departments contributing to the degree is required in order to implement change.</p>
<p>That a multi-disciplinary research committee which would develop and highlight such research opportunities and, furthermore, seek to source external funding for multi-disciplinary research initiatives, be established.</p>	<p>Endorsed the need to develop and highlight research opportunities.</p> <p>The QPC noted that the remit of the Board of Studies should include research and should lead on this action.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>A research committee has been established and is in the early stages of exploring a potential research strategy for the programme.</p>

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct 07
That the proposed development of a Model Crèche and Pre-school does not proceed.	Endorsed.	Not implemented The Board of Studies proceeded with this development, contrary to the recommendation of the PRG, as the establishment of the Model Crèche and Pre-School was considered to be critical to the training of students in practical childcare skills and self-protection before going on placement, in the new childcare profession in Ireland. The Professional Practice Room has been established at St Vincent's Primary School with a grant from the College of ACSSS.
That a dedicated Early Childhood Studies Resource Centre is not established.	Endorsed.	Not implemented The Board of Studies decided to proceed with the development of a Resource Centre, contrary to the recommendation of the PRG. The creation of the new childcare profession in Ireland requires that students are familiar with the most recent legislation, government regulations, videotapes of good practice etc. before going on placement. A Resource Centre has been established at St Vincent's Primary School with a grant from the College of ACSS.
That the proposal to develop a more comprehensive programme of Pastoral Care not be implemented	Endorsed recommendation.	The Department has not progressed with the development of a more comprehensive programme of Pastoral Care, however, the Department has continued with the level of care given to date. The Department feels that its low drop out rate is largely due to the level of support afforded to the students.
That the University develop its policies and workable formula for budgetary aspects and resource allocation for interdisciplinary degree programmes in the context of the RAM.	Endorsed.	Not yet implemented This recommendation is for the University to implement. A satisfactory method of funding and staffing of interdisciplinary courses has yet to be established.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct 07
That the Board of Studies review the management structure for the degree programme as a matter of immediate urgency and consider a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities.	Strongly endorsed.	Implemented and ongoing The Board of Studies meets twice a year. An Executive Management Group meets weekly. A Research Committee and Staff/Student Committee have also been established.
That consideration be given to means of incentivising the participation of schools and colleges in interdisciplinary degrees.	Endorsed. The QPC noted that this is an issue the UMG are aware of and are taking into account in development of the RAM.	Not implemented. Under consideration by the University.
That the Chair in Early Childhood Studies be filled as soon as possible.	Endorsed. The QPC noted that this recommendation has been implemented and that the appointee has taken up position.	Implemented. The Chair has been filled.
That the Director be given access on the DMIS to all modules taken by all students in all years of the Degree programme with immediate effect.	Strongly endorsed.	Implemented.
That consideration be given to the provision of appropriate dedicated space and facilities for the administrative and pastoral support of the degree programme and in particular for the support of research postgraduate students.	QPC noted that postgraduates in the Faculty of Arts have been allocated shared facilities. The Board of Studies should discuss the issues with the Head of the College of ACSSS.	Implemented in relation to facilities for postgraduate students – the Head of College of ACSSS has developed facilities. The administrative space is still less than adequate.
That, in the interests of the students and the ongoing viability of the degree, the role of the Department of Applied Psychology in provision of service teaching in the degree programme be re-evaluated, with consideration being given to the appointment of a staff member with expertise in psychology in one of the other participating departments to contribute to this aspect of the programme.	The QPC referred consideration of this issue to the Head of College of ACSSS. The QPC noted that the Department of Applied Psychology were unhappy with this recommendation and did not agree. The QPC also noted the response of the Head of College of ACSSS, where he expressed a willingness to positively consider the recommendation.	Not implemented. The College of ACSSS has funded half a lectureship in Applied Psychology for ECS. The representative of AP now attends management and board meetings.
That all assignments be returned to students by a specified date, communicated to students at the commencement of the academic year.	Strongly endorsed.	Partially implemented and ongoing Results are now posted on Blackboard, however, there remains an issue regarding timelines.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct 07
That serious consideration be given to double marking and moderation of both assignments and written examinations at the level of final year, initially, with a view to ensuring consistency of standards at all levels eventually.	Endorsed double marking for assignments but not for all written examinations, in line with University policy.	Partially implemented Sampling and moderation are now taking place across all areas. Additional resources would need to be allocated to ECS if the recommendation is to be implemented in its entirety.
That the staff/student committee be reformulated with representation from all participating departments and a rotating Chair	Strongly endorsed.	Implemented
That the timeframe of work placements and their function within the curriculum be re-considered.	Endorsed. QPC referred this recommendation to the Board of Studies (not a Curriculum Committee) in the context of adequate preparation for and support during placements	Implemented and ongoing Suggestions made by Curriculum Committee were vetoed due to timetabling problems. All 3 rd years are now brought in for 20 hours before 3 rd year placement. All students are brought into UCC on Wednesday during their placement period.
That greater use be made of central resources available, in particular the Boole Library, rather than in the Dept of Education Resource Centre and the Department of Applied Social Studies Off-print Collection.	Endorsed. The QPC noted the response of the Board of Studies. However it re-iterated the need to have such resources available centrally and as widely as possible.	Ongoing Students are encouraged to use the main Library and the Health Science Library as well as consulting the programme's off-print collection which is now available on Blackboard.com.

Recommendation of PRG	Recommendation of QPC	Follow-up Report Oct 07
<p>That greater focus be placed on research-led teaching and learning with a concentration on theoretical currency in all reading lists and encouragement of students to make maximum use of library resources, including journal and electronic sources, and to be trained in research methods at undergraduate level.</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p> <p>The Board of Studies should examine the programme objectives and the expected learning outcomes, with a view to focusing on the research-led teaching and learning.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Board of Studies is aware of this issue and is working to increase their focus on research-led teaching and research methods.</p>
<p>That the Board of Studies examine possibilities and ways of encouraging interdisciplinary research projects with a focus on pursuit of external research funding and increasing publication in peer reviewed and international journals, by, for example,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introduction of a research seminar series; b. Formation of an interdisciplinary research committee; c. Organisation of research presentation/away days 	<p>Endorsed.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>The programme have introduced a research seminar series and formed an interdisciplinary committee. The programme has also contributed to OMEP¹ with research publications undertaken by the staff of ECS.</p>
<p>That the potential for interdisciplinary PhD research across disciplines with co-supervision of students be actively promoted.</p>	<p>Strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC urged immediate action on this.</p>	<p>Not implemented</p>
<p>Research-active staff should develop a formal peer mentoring programme, and modelling, in order to encourage all staff to become research active and engaged in a research culture.</p>	<p>Strongly endorsed.</p> <p>QPC urged immediate action on this.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>However, each of the contributing departments have their own PhD Programmes and so far 10 (BA (ECS) students have graduated with Ph.D's (9 in Education; 1 in Paediatrics). 12 PhD students are currently registered in the participating departments.</p>
<p>That negotiations actively continue to have the degree fully recognised by the Health Service Executive/Department of Health and Children.</p>	<p>Strongly endorsed.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

¹ OMEP: l' Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire [World Organisation for Early Childhood Education]

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<p>That the new Curriculum Development Committee, which is to be established, reconceptualise the purpose of the degree in relation to vocational training and the variety of accreditation procedures required for different professional outlets.</p>	<p>Endorsed recommendation and referred for action to the Board of Studies</p>	<p>Ongoing The Curriculum Committee is working to implement this recommendation but are encountering difficulties as currently the participating departments have the right of veto.</p>
<p>That the Board of Studies considers the development of a range of pathways and options to address the needs of students wishing to pursue particular careers in the field of early childhood services.</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p>	<p>Ongoing This was discussed at a one day seminar in Rochestown Park Hotel but no progress can be made whilst the participating departments have the right of veto. Graduates are currently being surveyed on this issue. The results of this survey will inform the work of the Board of Studies and the Executive Management Group.</p>
<p>That the excellent high level of support available to students in the UCC Library be retained in future developments.</p>	<p>Endorsed.</p>	<p>Ongoing The programme is happy with the level of support from the Library and the Information Literacy Programme is now being delivered to students.</p>
<p>That access to student counselling supports be improved with consideration being given to providing increased training for putting in place a peer-mentoring process for students.</p>	<p>Endorsed. The QPC also referred this recommendation to the Head of the Student Counselling & Development Service for consideration.</p>	<p>Ongoing A 'buddy' system is currently being piloted with first year students.</p>