Periodic Review of the Institute of Education

Introduction

1  An internal review of programmes in the Institute of Education was held on Tuesday 21st and Wednesday 22nd May 2013. The members of the Panel were: -

- Dr Paddy Woodman, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science, University of Reading (Chair)
- Dr Andrew Nash, School Director of Teaching and Learning, School of Literature and Languages, University of Reading
- Dr Tobias Kuna, Lecturer in Mathematics, School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, University of Reading
- Dr Simon Thompson, Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Sussex
- Dr Jean Ashfield, Principal Lecturer in Education, Kingston University
- Ms Cindy Ikie, Student Panelist, University of Reading
- Ms Rosie Brown, Faculty Support Officer, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science (Secretary)

2  The Panel met the following: -

- Professor Andy Goodwyn (Head of the Institute of Education)
- Dr Elizabeth McCrum (School Director of Teaching and Learning)
- Dr Cathy Tissot (Programme Director for the MA in Education and SENCO Qualification)
- Ms Caroline Crolla (PGCE Secondary English Course Leader)
- Dr Eileen Hyder (Programme Director BA (Ed) programmes with QTS)
- Ms Cathy Wardale (Programme Director, Theatre, Arts, Education and Deaf Studies)
- Dr Carol Fuller (Educational Doctorate (Ed D) Programme Director)
- Mrs Helen Bilton (PGCE Primary Programme Director)
- Mrs Helen Heydon (PGCE Primary Admissions Officer and Associate Tutor)
- Mrs Amanda Cockayne (Assistant Director of the Primary PGCE)
- Ms Jo Elsey (Head of Early Years / Director of Early Years Professional Programmes)
- Dr Yola Dimitriadi (PGCE ICT Course Leader)
- Ms Yvonne Boyd (BA CDL Programme Director for 2013/4)
- Ms Susanna McFeely (Quality Assurance Manager)

3  The Panel met students and alumni who represented the following degree programmes:

- BA Education (Art) – 3 year and 4 year programmes
- BA Education Literacy – 4 year programme
- BA (Ed) Music - 3 year and 4 year programmes
- BA in Children's Development and Learning
- BA Theatre Arts, Education and Deaf Studies
- MA in Education
General observations

4 The Panel met with a wide range of students and staff and wished to express its gratitude to all those who had participated in the review process. The Panel thanked the Institute for the provision of the very well organised information Blackboard Organisation prior to the two day visit. It was clear to the Panel that the management and the leadership of the Institute has a strong forward looking agenda with the long term development of programmes and teaching and learning practices being carefully considered. There is excellent anticipation of any changes which could be brought about by changes to government policy or funding and the Panel noted that the Institute is pro-active in this area. There was an overwhelming impression that students are well supported throughout their time at Reading, including when on placements. The Panel also noted that there is a robust committee structure within the Institute with students being able to feedback into their programmes via the Staff-Student Liaison Committees. [Good practice (a) and (b)]

Academic Standards of the programmes

Educational aims of the provision and the learning outcomes

5 The programme specifications for the degree programmes considered in this review present clear and appropriate aims and related learning outcomes, confirmed also by external examiners associated with each programme. The range and scope of teaching, learning and assessment strategies across each programme are clearly outlined in broad terms, giving a clear sense of cohesive courses which meet the needs of the diverse range of students. The learning outcomes presented in some module descriptions suggest it might be helpful for tutors to establish a common understanding and interpretation of learning outcomes and articulate these in a more consistent form across all modules. [Advisable Recommendation (a)]

A varied range of teaching and learning strategies and summative assessments, appropriate to the related programmes are evident in the module descriptions; formative assessment strategies, however, could be articulated more clearly and specifically in some cases. [Advisable Recommendation (a) and (b)]

Curricula and assessment

6 The IoE offers a comprehensive and innovative range of degree programmes including undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral and those that are non-award bearing. A distinctive feature of the curricula portfolio is the emphasis on creativity and inclusiveness illustrated in
both the unique TAEDS and the success of subject specialisms in drama, art and music. The team are open to new opportunities and have developed an entrepreneurial attitude in response to changes in the context of teacher education. Curricula are designed to meet changes in externally driven professional expectations but ensure these are reflected, reconsidered and rebalanced through engagement with the best professional practice and interface with current research in education and related fields. Engagement with new technologies underpins both the content and delivery of the curricula. All of these features are shared and draw upon mature partnerships with outside agencies and school networks. On closer examination there is plenty of evidence which illustrates a cross programme interest and expertise in developing an understanding of global educational contexts, as such the IoE might consider how best to signpost these areas in a more explicit way. [Advisable recommendation (b) and (g)]

There is a good range of both formative and summative assessment methods evident across the programmes, which enable all learning outcomes to be addressed appropriately. These clearly take account of the diverse student population, providing scope for a variety of responses and presentations - this was particularly evident in the BACDL programme. Where formative assessment strategies were clearly outlined, it was evident that these supported and informed students’ learning. Detailed assessment criteria, which made clear the expectations for work in different grade bands is made available to students, markers and external examiners and provide the basis for written feedback. There is some inconsistency in the quality of written feedback provided for students within some programmes, an issue that is already being addressed by staff. In addition to written feedback there are some other creative and innovative practices, such as podcasts and video feedback; students very much appreciated these. [Advisable recommendation (c) and (d).]

Use of student management information

7 Beyond an excellent response to the Pathfinder process and subsequent preparation for the Periodic Review, it is clear that the regular and effective use of a comprehensive range of student data regularly informs a cycle of improvement planning in the IoE. The Pathfinder process has been exploited as an opportunity to further enhance these processes and as such different programme teams have sharpened their focus on using data to promote effective change management. A wide variety of evaluation tools and emerging student feedback is used critically to reflect upon curricula, assessment and teaching and learning approaches ensuring that cohorts benefit from adjustments or revisions in a timely and appropriate way. Each programme produces an annual report which from the sample examined are of good quality and external examiners are well informed of how their recommendations have been considered and implemented where appropriate. There is much to suggest that in self-evaluation and improvement planning the IoE offers a valuable model to other departments.

Quality of learning opportunities offered by the programmes

Teaching and learning

8 Student satisfaction across programmes is generally very high. There is clear evidence of students responding positively to the enthusiasm and commitment of their teachers and the personal and intellectual challenges of the programmes. Procedures for peer review are robust and well documented with good processes of training and induction of sessional staff. A recent development session, undertaken in collaboration with the Centre for Staff Training and Development, has enabled the Institute to develop improved models of peer review which will ensure continued successful monitoring of the quality of teaching across the various
programmes. [Good practice (d)]

Staff Development and Quality Enhancement is a notable area of strength with the regular professional development sessions and termly staff days outstanding examples of best practice. A notable feature of T&L development is the use of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), especially in the area of video and audio feedback. The work undertaken by the Blended Learning Group facilitates sharing of practice and contributes to a holistic sense of the effective deployment of TEL across the programmes. Continued monitoring of the use of Blackboard, including the introduction of a minimum expectation on its use, will improve student understanding of its role in their learning. [Good practice (c)] [Advisable recommendation (e)]

Student admission and progression

9 Admission figures remain very positive with increasing numbers of applications, consistent meeting of recruitment targets, and generally good retention and progression. There has been a positive decline in non-completion rates in PGCE Secondary, and the Institute also has in place strong support structures for mature and minority gender students to ensure retention and success. There is strong commitment to diversity in recruitment in the BACDL and TAEDS programmes with regular monitoring of marketing strategies.

Learning resources

10 The Institute benefits from purpose-refurbished facilities and learning space on the London Road campus. The extremely well-furnished resource room is a particular asset although its unavailability in the evening is a problem for those students on placements and postgraduate study. Students value the extended opening hours of the main library on Whiteknights during term-time and the examination period, but the lack of evening opening outside term-time means that those on some programmes cannot access learning materials. Use of e-books and other digital resources is welcomed but students would value the possibility of having a small collection of key texts available on the London Road campus. [Good practice (e)] [Advisable recommendation (f)]

Employer engagement

11 The programmes of the Institute, for most of them by their proper nature as preparing to a specific career, have a very tight link to their future employers. Key stakeholders have a large role in curriculum design and they are incorporated in the delivery and in the recruitment for different programmes. For example, the BoS of TAEDS contains representatives of employers; SENCO is jointly run by several local authorities from different counties. The school partners are part of the on-going planning of the degree programme. Focus groups have been used to evaluate and to guarantee the fitness of running programmes. [Good practice (f)]

Changes of the overall framework are anticipated on this level. A thorough support structure seems to be in place to prepare students for the workplace by various means like institutional and personal support starting early on in the degree programme. Students felt that this support was given at the right time. [Good practice (a)]
Enhancement of quality and academic provision

12 The school has strong mechanisms to channel students and alumni feedback and suggestions. The latter felt that their voices were heard and that changes were made following their recommendation. A robust mechanism of peer observation and staff development is in place, sessional staff included. The Pathfinder process was a catalyst for a large range of initiatives in the school. In particular, the Pathfinder away day seems to have been quite successful in that. Initiatives were started responding to particular weaknesses identified in the process, in particular as the most successful example the “Blended Learning Group”. Self-reflection and review are perceived as being part of the culture of the Institute. Professional development is institutionally supported and an afternoon is exclusively reserved for staff and a termly programme of research and teaching and learning sessions are held. Members of staff are encouraged to attend external events. Besides the obvious need for short and middle term adaptation the school has in place plans for longer term development to diversify the target employers; to mention one the development of a professional doctorate.

Main characteristics of the programmes under review

13 The programmes under review are highly regarding providing students with a stimulating and unique teaching experience. The facilities at the London Road campus are of an exceptionally high standard and provide students with a range of purpose built teaching spaces. The programmes provide excellent preparation for professional careers in an Institute which has created a positive and welcoming community for its staff, students and alumni.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

14 The Panel **commends** the Institute on the following examples of good practice:

a. The Panel praised the support which is available to students on placements. There is a variety of mentor training support provided across a wide range of programmes.

b. The Panel commends the Institute on the wide range of student led working groups across all programmes.

c. There is excellent use of technology enhanced learning being guided by the Blended Learning Group. This represents some exceptionally innovative practice which is then well shared across the IoE. The use of podcasts for supporting students who are on placements is excellent.

d. The Panel highly commends the Institute's use of staff development sessions and peer observation. There is a robust structure in place to ensure that staff, including sessional staff, are supported.

e. The Panel highly commends the excellent campus at London Road. It is clear that the dedicated and flexible space works well and in appreciated by both staff and students. The Resource Room was noted as exceptional.

f. The Institute has fostered strong working partnerships with local schools.
g. Staff have created a strong sense of identity across the Institute and maintain strong relationships with alumni.

h. The introduction of the International Student Enrichment module was highly commended by both the Panel and current students.

i. Students, both past and present, were exceptionally positive about the Institutes’ use of guest speakers and professional practitioners throughout the programmes. It was felt that employing up-to-date and informed speakers was an integral part of studying for a professional programme.

Conclusions on quality and standards

15 The Panel felt that the intended learning outcomes of the programmes are being obtained by students; that the quality and standards are being achieved to a good standard; and that the programme specifications for the degrees are appropriate.

Recommendations

16 The Panel recommends to the Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning in Arts, Humanities and Social Science that the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years:

The Panel recommends that the following issues should be addressed by the Institute:

Advisable

a. The Panel recommends that the Institute develop a shared understanding of learning outcomes and articulate this more clearly in module descriptions.

b. The Panel recommends increased sign posting to students to ensure that the value of some activities is more explicit to students, i.e. highlighting when work is being undertaken to improve on leveling and behaviour management.

c. The Institute is asked to review the practice of anonymous marking and ensure that it is fit for purpose for professional programmes.

d. The Panel notes the work being undertaken to improve the quality of feedback on assignments and encourages the Institute to continue to improve on this.

e. The Institute should continue to share and embed the use of technology enhanced learning for the benefit of students and to ensure that all staff have the skills to use Blackboard to its fullest extent.

f. The Panel recommends that the Institute consider the opening hours of the Resources Room on the London Road campus as access can be difficult for students on placements.

g. The Panel encourages the Institute to highlight good practice more clearly, including research
informed practice, the international dimension of programmes, the use of TEL and formative assessment.

h. The Panel encourages the Institute to continue to work towards a consistent method of submissions and the use of Turnitin, particularly within programmes.

i. The Panel recommends that the Institute transfer the existing good practice available in mentoring to the also include the PGCAP programme.

The Panel recommends that the following issues should be addressed by the University:

**Necessary**

a. The Panel encourages that the University consider the current parking and catering arrangements available to students on the London Road campus.

b. The Panel recommends that the University consider out of term time opening hours for the main Library on the Whiteknights campus to ensure that students from the Institute of Education can maintain access to teaching resources.

c. The University is encouraged to consider the use of Blackboard and its fitness for purpose when using video materials to support students.

d. The Panel recommends that representatives from IT Services meet with students from the London Road campus to pursue a solution to alleviate the current difficulties regarding printing materials.

Conclusions on new degree programme proposals [where appropriate]

17 The Panel does not have a recommendation to the Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning as to whether any proposal(s) for new degree programmes should be approved as this is not applicable.