Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

**Report to Council on the Review
of the School of Education**

May 2015

This report presents the outcome of a Quality Review of the School of Education which was undertaken from 9-11 February 2015 by Professor Justin Dillon, University of Bristol; Professor Lani Florian, University of Edinburgh and Professor Jonothan Neelands, University of Warwick. The internal facilitator was Dr Aileen Douglas.

The report attached includes (i) the External Reviewers' report received on the 25 May 2015, (ii) the response from the Head of School received on the 28 May 2015 and (iii) the response from the Faculty Dean received on the 28 May 2015.

The main purpose of the School review is (a) to provide a structured opportunity for the School to reflect on its activities and plans for development, while benefiting from a constructive commentary by senior colleagues external to College; (b) to ensure that quality and standards in teaching, research and administration are being maintained and enhanced and that areas of concern in this regard are identified and addressed. Each School in College is reviewed systematically once every seven years.

The Review Report and recommendations, along with the responses from the School and the Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences were discussed at the Quality Committee meeting on the 4 June 2015. The Head of School, Professor Carmel O'Sullivan, was in attendance.

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A REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

FEBRUARY 2015

Introduction

This review, part of a regular cycle carried out by the College, considers developments since the previous review of the School in 2008. The comments on the recent initial teacher education (ITE) work of the School should be seen in the context of the 2012 *Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland* (DES, 2012), commonly known as the 'Sahlberg report', which recommended that Trinity (TCD), Marino Institute of Education (MIE) and University College Dublin (UCD) should form one centre for teacher education. The report also recommended that teacher education at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) should be integrated into this centre. The report's authors suggested that 'United, these HEIs have the potential to become a flagship Institute of Teacher Education' (p.28). At the time of this review, progress had been made in progressing the transition towards the new Institute although the name had yet to be finalised.

The Sahlberg report noted that initial teacher education at both UCD and TCD were at post-primary level but argued that 'the potential strength of the combined research capacity at both universities [...] be harnessed in the interests of teacher education, forming a critical mass with MIE and NCAD, as required in the National Strategy, with the potential to develop a world class research base, particularly if common education programmes across the sectors were developed' (p.28).

The Sahlberg report had also commented that 'many programmes [throughout the Republic] are heavily dependent on part-time staff, particularly in the facilitation of subject-specific methodologies on the Professional Diploma in Education for post-primary teachers, and for the supervision of students on school placements on both primary and post-primary programmes' (p.21). The authors considered that this over-reliance 'was not conducive to high quality outcomes, particularly in the area of research and systematic quality improvement of HEIs' (p.21). Additionally, the 2008 College review noted that 'For a department within a research-intensive university the record of research is not out-standing' and that there was 'still much unexploited potential' (p.1). The authors of the 2008 review noted two major barriers to the achievement of further high quality research, 'staff workloads and a highly unfavourable staff-student ratio'. However, they also noted that the lack of strength in terms of publishing in internationally recognised journals was related to 'the need for the development of a strong research infrastructure and a culture which supports, encourages and rewards academic research' (p.2).

It is important to note that in the years following the 2008 College review the economic situation in Ireland changed radically and the country was the first in the eurozone to enter recession. Unemployment rose rapidly and levels of emigration increased. The severe economic downturn impacted substantially on the College and its effects can be seen at the School level. There is some evidence that the economic situation is beginning to recover and staff have maintained a commendable level of morale and professional commitment despite the pressures associated with working in an environment of diminishing resources and a reduction in the number of staff from 22 to 18.

In summary, the School of Education has faced substantial financial pressures for a number of years and is now going through a major change in its role and function in a wider Irish context.

(1) Existing Provisions

(a) Research and Scholarly Activity

Introduction
The judgement of the 2008 review panel that there was 'still much unexploited potential' still seems to hold true. Institutional change takes time and this fact coupled with the recession in the Irish economy have meant that progress towards the goal of being an internationally renowned research institution has not been as fast as might have been desired. There is evidence that things are moving in the right direction. There is a research strategy which covers the period 2014-2019 and 100% of the staff are designated as being research active. The research income is close to €1m and the number of academic outputs has increased from 271 (during the period 2004-9) to 542 (during the period 2009-14). The Director of Research is able to devote time to the varied tasks that are listed in the Strategy document.

The 2009-14 research strategy led to the creation of two research groups in 2010, Cultures, Academic Values and Education (CAVE) and Inclusion, Education and Society (IES). Two years later the Arts Education Research Group (AREG) and the Research in School Education (RISE) groups were set up. The most recent group, STEM Education, Research and Communication (STEM: ERC), was created in 2015. One of the groups, CAVE, became a College recognised research centre in 2014 and there is a determination that another of the groups becomes a research centre during the life of the new research strategy (2014-19).

Research support
The need for a research officer identified in the 2008 review is being addressed although it was not clear to the review panel just what provision was going to be. There was an indication that a 0.3fte appointment was planned but it emerged that this was still under discussion. The issue, perhaps, is not whether the School needs a dedicated research officer but whether enough support is provided either at the Faculty or the School level. The judgement of the review panel is that more support is needed if the School is to become an internationally renowned research institution.

Research areas
The post-2008 rationalisation of the research groups seems to have created a more effective and efficient structure. The five main areas around which the research of the school is generated are 'STEM education'; 'Inclusion'; 'higher education'; 'research in school education' and 'arts education'. The groups seem to have a clear identity within the School and they provide an opportunity for staff and students to 'find their tribe' as one person noted. Some of the groups provided evidence of impact in the community which the review panel found encouraging. The panel was aware, however, that the groups tended to depend on very small numbers of key staff and were, consequently, vulnerable if they left. This was the case with the Anti-Bullying Centre which was singled out for praise in the 2008 review but which was closed in 2013 when its Director retired. However, since the 2008 review, the National Institute of Intellectual Disability (NIID) has recently found a home in the School having moved from School of Social Work and Social Policy. The move presented the School with an opportunity to build on existing expertise to create an enlarged Centre for Inclusion in Education and Society.

Research strategy and vision
The panel thought that the draft research strategy as it stood at the time seemed to lack clarity of ambition. A series of meetings had been scheduled for mid-February and March, to develop the School's Strategic Plan, and to develop its research strategy for the new strategic planning period.

There was evidence of a long-term vision, particularly in terms of the STEM group, but it would be useful internally and externally to be able to articulate in the research strategy where the groups wished to be by the time of the next review. The School has made a number of appointments since the 2008 review all of whom have been integrated into the research culture of the School. The fact that many of these staff are on short-term contracts restricts the ability of the School management to confidently plan for the future. Having said that, the panel would have liked to have seen a more optimistic long-term vision of the future, particularly in light of the comment from the recent Sahlberg report that the combined academic strength of TCD and UCD had the 'potential to develop a world class research base'. In saying this we acknowledge that the process of establishing the institute of initial teacher education is at a very early stage.

The panel felt that a possible next step in the development of the research culture of the School would be a focus on developing staff capacity in terms of grant writing and project management. The panel also noted the limited number of staff in the School and was of the opinion that strategic recruitment of visiting staff using schemes such as Fulbright awards and EU mobility schemes might be utilised as part of an enhancement strategy. For example, each research group could be tasked with recruiting one senior academic visitor over the next three years.

Research funding
Funding for educational research in Ireland, particularly in recent years, has been severely restricted. That said, it is possible to carry out high quality research with relatively little funding and all the groups have the desire, the capacity and the track record to look for funding opportunities. The panel were optimistic about the potential of the School to continue to bring in research funding in future years, as evidenced by the recent partnership with Google and other funding.

Research students
The School has attracted a large number of full and part time research students (82 students enrolled on D.Ed. and PhD programmes). The students the panel met spoke highly of their experiences with particular praise for the research methods training, the quality of the support they received from staff and their involvement in the life of the School.

Although staff numbers have expanded since the 2008 review, some of them are on three-year contracts and are thus unable, according to TCD regulations, to be the lead supervisor for research students. As a result, several staff have far more doctoral students than the recommended limit (4). This situation poses a problem in that expansion of doctoral student numbers is necessarily restricted and so potentially good students may sometimes be turned away. The sooner that staff can be moved on to more secure contracts the more likely it will be that doctoral students can be recruited more freely.

Research students appreciate the physical resources that are provided including access to desk-space and the library services. There appears to be a sense of collegiality and there are opportunities to be part of the research groups and the life of the School as a whole. Some students had experience of teaching within the School although this was not common practice. Those students who had been able to get involved in teaching were positive about the experience. Since the 2008 review, the School has brought in a policy of encouraging staff and students to co-author papers and to co-present at conferences. This is an emerging policy and it will be interesting to see how effective the policy is in involving all students in the future.

Student-staff liaison
Research students appeared to be able to feedback their concerns to staff and there did not seem to be any major issues that have not been successfully addressed.

(b) Teaching and Learning

Introduction
Since the 2008 review there have been substantial and far-reaching changes to the courses offered by the School and to the relationships with other local higher education institutions. The student numbers have increased on the two-year Professional Master of Education (PME) (second level ITE) in comparison to its one-year predecessor, the Professional Diploma in Education (PDE). PDE numbers were typically 120-130 per annum over the previous 7-year period whereas there are 142 students registered on the first year of the PME (2014/15).

Staff workloads benefitted considerably from the removal of direct teaching and undergraduate thesis supervision on the BEd and H. Dip. Primary four years ago. The change from the PDE to the PME has increased staff workloads as the latter programme has a greater number of students enrolled, lasts for two years and involves supervision of minor theses at master's level.

In essence, now, the School is fundamentally a graduate school with a highly regarded but vestigial B. Mus. Ed. programme with around 15 students per year enrolled. This metamorphosis has been relatively well-managed and staff have worked well to provide high quality teaching to all students despite staring up radically new courses. Students spoke highly of the quality of teaching and tutorial support they had received.

A number of issues emerged during the review some of which are interrelated. The impact of the move from a one-year diploma course to a two-year master's level programme means that new partnerships have had to be formed with schools and with the other institutions who make up the new 'Institute'. This seems to be an area where the School has done particularly well and the school and college representatives who spoke to the panel all praised the commitment to effective partnership that they had sensed from the School.

The panel was convinced that the imposition of the PME has the potential to impact on recruitment to the School's existing and successful MEd courses. This seemed less of an issue to the staff than to the panel. There seemed to be a sense that the new Institute was a relatively self-contained entity that would focus solely on initial teacher education and particularly the PME while not impacting on the wider offering of the School. However, the extent to which the PME will influence future enrolment on the MEd and/or the D.Ed while unknown, is certain to have an impact and will need careful monitoring.

M-level strands
At M-level the School offers both general and specialised programmes in 10 strands as part of the Master in Education (M.Ed.) degree (n=197 students). This programme attracts a diverse group of professionals as well as practicing school teachers. The panel was surprised by the number of strands offered at and the small numbers of students on some of them. The Faculty has determined recommended minimum class sizes from an educational and cost efficiency basis, which is set at seven for Master's level. The School in keeping with the
tradition in the University of small class teaching at graduate level, adopts this policy, and ensures that most of its classes fall within a norm of between 10-15 students at graduate level. Some students were positive about being taught in what is effectively a tutorial-sized group.

As well as the MEd programme, the School runs the Master in Technology and Learning (MSc) in conjunction with the School of Computer Science and Statistics through the joint Centre for Research in IT in Education (CRITE). The panel was led to believe that some rationalisation of the M-level provision was underway but given the implications of the introduction of the PME, a thorough review, including and analysis of the demand for courses, might be both timely and beneficial.

Certificate courses and CPD
The School now offers a Certificate in 21st Century Teaching and Learning in association with the School of Computer Science and Statistics and the Trinity Access Programme (TAP). The course is one of the largest funded programmes of its kind in the State (with €1.5 million provided by Google Ireland to educate 1,000 second level teachers over a 3-year period). This targeted intervention is designed to support Computer Science (CS) and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) teaching and learning in schools, with specific attention to disadvantaged schools.

In terms of other continuing professional development (CPD) initiatives, the School collaborates with other schools within Trinity and external agencies, such as the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). One such initiative is a summer course on nano-technology for primary school teachers *(Magical Materials – nano & materials science in the classroom)* which is recognized by the Department of Education and Skills. The course is a collaboration between the Schools of Education and Physics, the AMBER Centre (Advanced Materials and Bio-Engineering Research), and the Science Gallery in TCD.

B.Mus.Ed.
The B. Mus. Ed., which enrols a small number of students and involves one core staff member from the School is in an anomalous position. Students spoke highly of the organisation and teaching of the course and they appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the cultural life of the College. The students spend a substantial amount of time in one of two prestigious institutions both of whom seem very committed to the course. The panel did not have a view on whether the programme was best placed in the School or not since no other options emerged during the visit.

Certificate in Contemporary Living
The Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) offers a two-year programme to adults with learning disabilities. It was the first full-time course for adults with intellectual disabilities in Ireland. The course is part of the National Institute of Intellectual Disability (NIID), which recently moved from School of Social Work and Social to the School of Education. The CCL is a specially designed third-level programme aimed at supporting a small number of students each year who are based in another building beyond the TCD campus. The course has yet to be accredited in part because the level it would seek is below that which the College ordinarily offers. However, accreditation is essential to the future integrity of the course as a legitimate offering of the College that entitles students to avail themselves of College resources and community life, moving beyond the isolation of a programme that is housed in a College building but not part of it. Accreditation will also help to secure government funding and reduce reliance on philanthropic giving.

Non-core staff
During the visit it emerged that a substantial number (70-80) casual staff were employed on the PME and other courses. The Sahlberg report commented on this issue in its review of teacher education in Ireland noting that the casualisation of staffing 'can result in a disconnect between the student teacher's development of subject knowledge and subject pedagogical knowledge'. The

substantial number of casual staff is a significant drain on the School's finances and is unsustainable. This is an issue that merits urgent attention.

Staff workloads
The panel did not fully appreciate the impact of the change in teacher education provision on staff workloads until late in the visit. Robust information about teaching loads was never made available either before or during the visit.

Teaching methods
As might be expected in a School of Education, students spoke highly of the quality of teaching that they encountered at all levels. These evaluations were echoed in the reports of external examiners that were provided to the panel. It would appear that the quality of teaching and the variety of methods used are in line with standards to be found at peer institutions.

Assessment
Assessment procedures appeared to be rigorous and fair. Again, comments from students and from external examiners across a number of programmes suggested that standards were in line with peer institutions.

The Academy for Teaching and Learning
Schools of Education have a role to play in informing and researching higher education pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. This activity goes beyond being a service provider for training new lecturers which, while important, is usually the remit of a cross-institution unit. There is often a tension between the role of a School of Education and the institution-wide provision. Evidence of this challenge and its implications emerged during the panel's visit. The latest incarnation of cross-College support involves the creation of a virtual Academy of Teaching and Learning to which a number of existing units, including the School of Education, are seen as contributing. The Academy will evolve over the next few years and there seems to be support within the School for it to play a significant role. One possibility would be to seek to appoint a Chair in Higher Education Practice and/or Policy who would have a remit to work closely with the new Academy to ensure that the School's research informs developments across the College. Such an appointment would be in addition to filling the School's vacant Chair of Education and should be funded centrally if its remit is to support a College-wide initiative. Such an arrangement would be mutually beneficial to the School and to the College as a whole.

(c) Engagement with Society and Service to College

Staff and students engage with a wide variety of individuals and institutions ranging from government-appointed commissions, learned societies, charities, other higher education institutes, businesses, charities and schools. Many of the representatives of these organisations that the panel met were very positive about the way in which the School had engaged in particular the focus on partnership and collaboration. The panel could not discern an obvious engagement strategy such as a drive towards increasing the impact of the School's research. The School would probably benefit from setting up an engagement and impact working group tasked with devising a strategy for the next few years. Despite the recession, some businesses and organisations still seem willing to fund research-informed initiatives particularly in STEM and IT, areas where the School has expertise and a track record of success. The success of the Google funded initiative suggests that the School has the potential to develop further links with the organisation.

The panel also met a number of representatives from across the College all of whom reported benefitting from the School's work. This level of engagement is critically important for a School of Education that might otherwise simply be seen as a service provider, turning out post-primary teachers and running professional development courses. The need to promote the value of a research engaged School of Education to the College as a whole and to the wider community is on-going and requires support and a degree of funding. There is clearly a role here for adroit use of social media which is an area that the School has some experience of utilising well.

(d) Resources

Introduction
The School benefits from being part of a large institution with a strong infrastructure and an excellent location. However, it has suffered the consequences of the implementation of IT systems that have yet to be fully embedded. Changes to the College financial systems have meant that administrative staff at both the Faculty and the School level have not always had adequate information available to them in a form that is easily useable. This is particularly unfortunate at a time when the economic situation has been so challenging. So, for example, the panel was unable to access robust information about staff workloads. Without adequate financial, management and IT tools, the task of running a School is almost impossible.

Teaching and learning
The 2008 review identified the relatively poor teaching room provision. The panel visited a number of rooms that had no windows which they did not consider fit for purpose. The School has made efforts to brighten these rooms up and there is no likelihood of the School moving to a different building. As such the provision falls below average for peer institutions. The inadequate rooming provision continues to be commented on by external examiners according to reports made available to the panel. The academic staff seem resigned to the spaces that they have and make the most of it.

Academic Staffing
Relative to peer institutions, the School is rather under-staffed. The age profile is reasonably typical but the proportion of staff on short-term contracts is disproportionately high and despite the increased research activity since the 2008 review, the School does not have a critical mass of permanent staff. Two scheduled new appointments are likely to improve the situation in the short-term. The School has two unfilled Chairs and the panel believes that the priority appointment would be one in higher education policy and/or practice.

Casual staff
The number of casual staff is a drain on the resources of the School and the situation is approaching crisis point. At the current rate of spending on casual staff the School will move into deficit within 12-18 months. The School staff were of the opinion that they needed 70-80 casual staff but as this level of provision is unsustainable other options need to be explored as a matter of urgency.

Support staffing
The quality of support staff seems high and the team are highly regarded by the academic staff and by the students. The support staff have managed the introduction of new systems which seem to have had a disproportionate number of problems in their design and implementation.

(e) Organisational Structures and Planning

School management
Management structures in the School seem fit for purpose. The Executive consists of the Head of School, the Director of Research, the Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate and Postgraduate), an Academic Staff representative, the School Administrator and a representative of the Administrative Staff. Five out of 18 academic staff on an Executive seems a rather higher proportion than one might expect for a School of this size.

Committee structures
The School's committee structures seem appropriate and appear to be functioning well.

School budget allocation and planning
In line with the rest of the College, the School has been working under very challenging financial circumstances for some years. The decision taken some years ago to build up the School's reserves has led to it being given a low non-pay allocation. At the current rate of spend, the School will be in deficit within 12-18 months. There seems to be little that the School can do to alter that situation and it will be up to the Faculty and the College to address the impending financial crisis.

Communications
The School appears to have good lines of communication and the panel did not get any sense that there were any problems in this area. Open communication is a strong and positive element of the School environment.

Student involvement in School decision-making
Students who met with the panel appeared to be content with the level of involvement that they had in the School's decision-making.

Support for School activities by central College services
Students were uniformly positive about the library and other support systems in the College.

(f) Overall view and recommendations

(i) The School's Self-assessment
The School of Education has undergone substantial changes since the 2008 review. It has responded positively to the revision of initial teacher education in Ireland and actively supports the formation of the new, as yet unnamed 'Institute for Teacher Education' which will involve creating a tranche of new partnerships. The number of academic staff has increased and is not far from achieving a critical mass sufficient to make the School nationally and internationally known. The research groups and centres have been reconfigured and seem to be realistic and effective in gaining funding and producing scholarly outputs. The School has good internal and external links and uses them well in its research and its teaching. It is now, in essence, a graduate school with a small vestigial undergraduate programme. The School has benefitted from the transfer of the NIID from another school in the College.

The School's self-assessment concludes:

In summary, the School of Education provides a variety of vibrant, exciting, demanding and relevant undergraduate and postgraduate courses for students, ranging from school leavers to advanced professionals. Demand for our courses is strong and we continue to innovative to meet the evolving needs of potential students. Our teaching is increasingly research-led, with many academic staff now publishing in high-impact international journals, and securing research funding, despite the very limited funds available for research in professional and applied disciplines. While there are considerable challenges and threats on the horizon, the strengths of the School and the opportunities that we are exploring will ensure that the School will continue to be at the forefront of teaching and research excellence well into the future.

The view of the panel is that this statement reflects many positive aspects of the School but the self-assessment does not adequately address a number of key issues which are identified below and might benefit from some more critical reflection.

(ii) The panel's view of the future direction of the School
The panel is of the view that the School of Education needs to consolidate its research groups and centres within an overall strategy that is both ambitious and realistic. The new 'Institute for Teacher Education' offers both challenges and opportunities which the School needs to address. The panel believes that the opportunities have not been fully appreciated and that there is a danger that the Institute will not be fully integrated into the School. The School has a major role to play in the Academy for Teaching and Learning which would be secured through the appointment of a chair in higher education policy and/or practice. The panel believes that the new PME offers challenges to the other M-level provision and that a review of the School's M-level provision is essential.

(iii) Recommendations

i. The College should prioritise the appointment of a Chair in higher education policy and/or practice;
ii. The School should undertake a review of the M-level provision to include pathways, markets, marketing, progression (from PME to M.Ed. and/or D.Ed.);
iii. The School should undertake a review of the use of casual staff within the School;
iv. The School should explore its potential role in the planned Academy for Teaching and Learning in the light of its previous work with the Centre for Academic Practice and E-learning.
v. The School should be supported in its plans to gain accreditation for the CCL.
vi. The School should revise its research strategy so that it incorporates an ambitious vision as to how it will become an internationally respected centre of excellence.
vii. The Faculty should consider how best to support the School's research administration centrally, through the provision of a part-time research officer or through some combination of the two.

(2) Strategic Direction

i. In the view of the panel, more consideration needs to be given to the strategic direction of the School. Particular issues to consider are:
ii. The relationship between the School and the planned new 'Institute for Teacher Education';
iii. The impact of the PME on the School's Master's level provision;
iv. The need to reduce the numbers of casual staff;
v. The long-term ambition for the School in terms of its national and international identity;
vi. The role that the school will have in the planned College-wide Academy for Teaching and Learning;

vii. The need to strengthen its research centres and groups so that they are less dependent on a very small number of key academic staff;

viii. The workloads of the academic staff which will increase in the future;

ix. The relationship between the research undertaken by the School and the taught courses that it offers;

x. The impact of an increased degree of internationalisation on the School in particular where is the balance between being reactive and proactive;

xi. The need to build a clear School of Education identity which makes the most of the TCD brand.

Reference

Department of Education and Skills [DES] (2012). Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland: Review conducted on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills. http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2012-Press-Releases/Report-of-the-International-Review-Panel-on-the-Structure-of-Initial-Teacher-Education-Provision-in-Ireland.pdf (accessed February 17, 2015).

Review Panel Membership

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Prof. Lani Florian, Bell Chair of Education, Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh

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*Internal reviewer

Site Visit

February 9-11, 2015

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Ms Helen Condon, Senior Executive Officer and Dr Liz Donnellan, Administrative Officer, Quality Office

Ms Paula Uhel, School Administrator

Ms Yseult Thornley, Meeting recorder and transcriber

2. School of Education's Response to the External Reviewers' Report

Overview

The School of Education would like to sincerely thank Prof. Justin Dillon, Prof. Lani Florian, Prof. Jonothan Neelands and Prof Aileen Douglas (internal) for engaging in a recent review of the School. The reviewers provided valuable feedback in their report, and the School looks forward to engaging constructively, as a whole staff, with its contents, and to working collectively with our College and external stakeholders and partners, to benefit fully from addressing the recommendations contained in the report.

The School welcomes the reviewers' comments in the introduction to their report which acknowledges that despite a severe economic downturn since our previous report in 2008, which impacted significantly at College and School level, Education has "maintained a commendable level of morale and professional commitment despite the pressures associated with working in an environment of diminishing resources and a reduction in the number of staff" (1). The reviewers recognise on a number of occasions throughout the report that "There is evidence that things are moving in the right direction" (2) in relation to research and new programme developments, and that despite facing "substantial financial pressures for a number of years … [the School] is now going through a major change in its role and function in a wider Irish context" (2).

Research strategy and research-led teaching

The reviewers' provide a fair and optimistic assessment of the research and scholarly activities of the School. They acknowledge that while 100% of academic staff in the School are designated as research active under the College system, and there has been "increased research activity since the 2008 review" (8), there is still some 'unexploited potential' in terms of the School realising its goal to become an internationally renowned centre of research. They highlight the pressing need for a research support officer, which was identified in 2008, but still only partially realised. This administrative post would both support the very large number of research students which the reviewers note the School has been successful in attracting, and also assist in helping the School develop staff capacity in research grant writing and project management, as recommended in the report. The reviewers commend the restructuring of research activity into five main areas, with each group finding a clear identity in the School, and they note that "Some of the groups provided evidence of impact in the community which the review panel found encouraging" (2). The issue of critical mass was identified as an area of potential vulnerability if a person leaves or retires, which the School concurs with in terms of the current College restrictions on recruitment. The report suggests that the research officer could be instrumental in supporting the research groups to attract visiting researchers on schemes such as the Fulbright and EU mobility awards. The School welcomes

the reviewers' acknowledgement that "all the groups have the desire, the capacity and the track record to look for funding opportunities. The panel were optimistic about the potential of the School to continue to bring in research funding in future years, as evidenced by the recent partnership with Google and other funding" (3). The reviewers note that at the time of their site visit, the School was involved in developing their next 5-year research strategy, and they acknowledge its draft status at the time of the review. The School welcomes the reviewers' encouragement to articulate its longer-term vision and ambition in its final draft of the research strategy, and their acknowledgement that all new appointments since 2008 have been integrated into the research culture of the School. It is very satisfying to read the reviewers' positive reports about the quality of teaching and supervision of research students, and the level of collegiality and opportunity which the students reported experiencing in relation to being part of the School of Education's scholarly community.

Teaching and Learning

The reviewers recognised that the School has successfully managed the transition to being "fundamentally a graduate school with a highly regarded but vestigial B.Mus.Ed. programme" (4), with high quality teaching provided to all students, and highly effective partnerships with local schools. The School appreciates the reviewers' praise of its efforts in this regard, but is concerned by the unusual choice of the word 'vestigial' to describe its highly specialised and widely acclaimed B.Mus. Ed. programme.

The reviewers acknowledge the emphasis on small group teaching at masters level, which is a common feature of Trinity postgraduate programmes. Whilst commenting on the success of the School's transition from a one-year initial teacher education diploma to a two-year full time masters programme (PME), they provide a helpful recommendation to closely monitor the situation to ensure that the growth in the PME does not impact negatively on the School's successful M.Ed. Recognition is given to the School's other programmes, and in particular, to the value of existing collaboration with other Schools and centres within Trinity on Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and other postgraduate programmes, and with the RIAM and Conservatory of Music and Drama in DIT, who are acknowledged as being very committed to the B.Mus. Ed. The reviewers identify the strengths of the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL), but also the challenges which face the School of Education in working to ensure that this valuable programme is accredited, and also in its aspiration to "move beyond the isolation of a programme that is housed in a College building but not part of it" (6). We welcome their recognition of the opportunity to "build on existing expertise to create an enlarged Centre for Inclusion in Education and Society" (3). The report comments favourably on the high quality of teaching, learning and assessment at all levels in the School, which is very encouraging to read, and identifies potentially strong synergies between the new College initiative on teaching and learning, and the role of a school of education "in informing and researching

higher education pedagogy, curriculum and assessment" (6). The School endorses the reviewers' comments that "This activity goes beyond being a service provider for training new lecturers" (6).

Staffing and appointments

The report highlights the substantial number of part time academic staff employed in the School, and expresses considerable concern about the financial drain and sustainability of this practice. In addition, whilst acknowledging that the School has made a number of appointments since 2008, the reviewers identify the significant challenges facing the School relating to the appointment of staff on short-term contracts and their inability to supervise research students, which places an additional workload on their colleagues. The School supports the reviewers' call that "The sooner that staff can be moved on to more secure contracts the more likely it will be that doctoral students can be recruited more freely" (3). The School endorses the reviewers' assessment that relative to peer institutions, the School is under-staffed, lacks a critical mass of permanent staff, is carrying two unfilled Chairs, and has a disproportionately high number of staff on short-term contracts. It is encouraging to note the positive affirmation of the quality of the School's administrative team, who are reported as being highly regarded by staff and students, and of managing the introduction of new College wide systems, despite some of these having had problems in their design and implementation.

Engagement with Society and Service to College

The School was pleased to note the favourable comments on the role and identity of the School through its 'adroit' use of social media, and its active engagement "with a wide variety of individuals and institutions ranging from government-appointed commissions, learned societies, charities, other higher education institutes, businesses, charities and schools" (7). The reviewers also commend the School for fostering and developing constructive links with colleagues from across the College "all of whom reported benefitting from the School's work" (7). The report helpfully suggests the development of a formal engagement strategy, and the School welcomes the proposal to create an impact working group which would be tasked specifically with devising such a strategy for the next few years.

Organisational Structures and Planning

The School welcomes the constructive and positive feedback from the reviewers about its management and committee structures, which are reported as functioning well, with open and good lines of communication between staff and students being highlighted as a strong and positive element of the School environment. It is encouraging to note that students "were uniformly positive about the library and other support systems in the College" (9).

Conclusion

The report concludes with a positive and fair assessment of the School's progress since 2008:

The School of Education has undergone substantial changes since the 2008 review. It has responded positively to the revision of initial teacher education in Ireland and actively supports the formation of the new, as yet unnamed 'Institute for Teacher Education' which will involve creating a tranche of new partnerships. The number of academic staff has increased and is not far from achieving a critical mass sufficient to make the School nationally and internationally known. The research groups and centres have been reconfigured and seem to be realistic and effective in gaining funding and producing scholarly outputs. The School has good internal and external links and uses them well in its research and its teaching. It is now, in essence, a graduate school with a small vestigial undergraduate programme. The School has benefitted from the transfer of the NIID from another school in the College.

It also identifies constructive and realistic areas where the School can develop further in the coming strategic planning period, such as consolidating its research groups and centres, developing our longer-term ambition for the School in terms of our national and international identity to maximise the TCD brand, and addressing the opportunities and challenges posed by the new 'Institute for Teacher Education' and the new Academy for Teaching and Learning in TCD. The School welcomes these recommendations for its strategic direction over the next 7 years, and looks forward to working with the Faculty Dean and other appropriate College Officers to address them. The School will prepare a detailed Implementation Plan during the Summer outlining the timeframe for implementation.

On behalf of the School of Education, I would like to acknowledge and thank all who contributed to and participated in this External Review process, particularly the external and internal reviewers; the staff of the Quality Office; the Vice-Provost, College officers and senior administrative staff; the Faculty Dean, Pro-Dean and Faculty Office admin staff; our students and graduates; our Associated Colleges and programme partners; our Trinity colleagues, external partners, funders, research collaborators and partnership schools.

Signed: _____

Head of School

Date: _____27th May 2015_____

3. Response from the Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor Darryl Jones

I would like to begin by thanking the reviewers, Professors Justin Dillon (Bristol), Lani Florian (Edinburgh) and Jonothan Neelands (Warwick), for their diligence and commitment, and for producing such a detailed and helpful report, which will be of substantial use to the School and the Faculty, most particularly in its suggestions on matters of staffing and strategy, over the next years. I would also like to thank Professor Aileen Douglas for her work as internal facilitator during the review, and Professor David Scott, for standing in as pro-Dean during my absence when the site visit itself was underway.

The general tenor of the Review is supportive of the School and its activities, though sometimes in a measured way, and with passages of constructive criticism. I want to note, to begin with, the Review's awareness of the context in which the School has found itself operating over the past years, and particularly its observation that 'staff have maintained a commendable level of morale and professional commitment despite the pressures associated with working in an environment of diminishing resources and ... a reduction in the number of staff', and that 'the School has been working well under very challenging financial circumstances for some years' (pp 1, 8).

The Review makes a wide variety of suggestions and observations, and I know that many of them have been responded to in detail in the School's own response, which I have read.

In particular, I fully endorse the School's comments on **Teaching and Learning**, to which I have nothing substantial to add. I particularly note the Review's sense that the School's transition to postgraduate-only teaching 'has been relatively well-managed and staff have worked well to provide high-quality teaching to all students despite providing radically new courses' (p. 4). I note that the reviewers acknowledge the School of Education's own commitment to small-group teaching (p. 5). The Review itself seems equivocal about this ('The panel was surprised at the number of strands offered and the small numbers of students on some of them' – p. 5), but further acknowledges that 'In doing this the School is in keeping with the tradition in the University of small-class teaching at graduate level'. It is important that we maintain this tradition, and not just at graduate level: it is pedagogically central to much of what we do, and continues to make the Trinity education a distinctive one.

In terms specifically of the Faculty and actions which can be taken at Faculty level, I want to confine my response to three specific areas: **Management and Governance**, **Research**, and **Staffing**.

Management and Governance of School

I am particularly pleased to note (and to endorse) the Review's sense that the School is impressive in terms of its management, governance and planning structures. 'Management structures in the School are fit for purpose' (p. 8); 'The School's committee structures seem appropriate and appear to be functioning well' (p. 8); 'The School appears to have good lines of communication and the panel did not get any sense that there were problems in this area. Open communication is a strong and

positive element of the School environment' (p. 8); 'Students ... appeared to be content with the level of involvement that they had in the School's decision-making' (p. 9).

Over all, the Review gives the strong impression that the School is a well-governed and -run one, whose systems and structures are robust and working well – albeit that the School operates, like the rest of College, under very difficult financial conditions.

Research
I am glad to note that the reviewers observe an improvement in the School's research culture since the last review (2008), including a substantial increase in research outputs from 241 in 2004-9 to 542 in 2009-14, an increase in research income to c. €1 million, and a rise in research productive staff to 100% (p. 2). These are all significant achievements. I note also that the Review commends the formation of research groups in the School, and particularly the successful transformation of Cultures, Academic Values and Education (CAVE) into a College Research Centre in 2014.

Nevertheless, I note the Review's observation that 'there is still much unexplored potential'. The School has a research strategy for 2014-19, and needs to ensure its full implementation. I note the Review's sense that the School needs to consolidate its research strategy over the next years, and particularly its concern that 'the groups tended to depend on very small numbers of key staff and were, consequently, vulnerable if they left' (p. 2). I address some of these concerns under **Staffing** below.

In order to drive the School's research strategy, the Review makes one particular recommendation: 'The judgement of the review panel is that more support is needed if the School is to become an internationally renowned research institution' (p. 2). As Faculty Dean, I would strongly endorse this judgement. The School employed a dedicated Research Officer, though on a contractually-unstable basis. The post is currently occupied by a temp, who is by all accounts very efficient but nevertheless a temp, only with the School until September 2015. The Faculty considers it imperative, particularly in the light of the Review, that the post of Research Officer in the School be formalized, and has thus agreed to the appointment from September 2015 of a full-time, permanent EO who will act as in part Research Officer in the School of Education. This addresses the Review's **recommendation 1: vii**: 'The Faculty should consider how best to support the School's research administration centrally, through the provision of a part-time research officer, or through some combination of the two.

Staffing
I share the Review's concerns that the School is 'rather under-staffed' (p. 8), with too many contract staff (p. 8), and that currently both its established chairs are unfilled. While any large-scale staffing intervention is currently beyond the means of the College, I want to note here that the Faculty has agreed to the following:

1. *Contract Staff*: The Faculty Executive has agreed in principle to the mainstreaming of contract staff, subject to rigorous oversight of performance, and where the School agrees that such mainstreaming is in its best interests, financially or academically. These mainstreamings are being handled on a case-by-case basis as they arise. I

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would hope that this process will over the next few years begin to alleviate the School's problems with large numbers of contract staff, subject to finances being available.

2. *Professor of Education*: The filling of the vacant Chair of Education is in the Faculty Strategic Staffing Plan, to be filled in 2017/18. Obviously, like all appointments under current conditions, this is contingent upon finances, but the Faculty has signalled its clear intention to make this appointment.

3. *General understaffing*: It is worth observing that the reviewers all come from UK institutions whose Schools of Education are substantially larger than our own, and thus may be working under different expectations from our own. Nevertheless, like most areas in the Faculty, the School is understaffed. It's worth stressing that, under the last three Deans of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Education has done relatively well in staffing terms, by the standards of the Faculty. Since 2011, the School has made six academic appointments. While I acknowledge that these appointments have come from a diverse range of funding sources, this is nevertheless significantly above the norm for appointments in the Faculty. I commend the School for its resourcefulness in finding alternative sources of funding in these difficult times. A number of forthcoming appointments in the School should act as a clear signal of the Faculty's ongoing commitment.

Conclusion
I have discussed the Review, and our responses to it at School and Faculty level, at considerable length with Professor Carmel O'Sullivan, the Head of School. The School is aware that it needs to consolidate its research strategy, but also rightly conscious that doing this requires dedicated research support. In Faculty terms, we are both very clear on the commitment to the School, what needs doing in terms of academic staffing and support, as outlined above.

Professor Darryl Jones
Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

29 May 2015