



NATIONAL REPORT ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN ADULT TEACHING, LEARNING AND GUIDANCE IN UNIVERSITY LIFELONG LEARNING IN IRELAND.

This report provides a picture of the current state of play in relation to quality assurance in research and professional practice in adult teaching, learning and guidance in university lifelong learning in Ireland. It is not a comprehensive review and any views expressed are those of the author. This report should be read in conjunction with the national report provided by NUI Maynooth for the Access TWG as it provides an overview of lifelong learning in Ireland.

Introduction

In Ireland quality assurance regulations for higher education are laid down in Acts of the Oireachtas (Irish parliament). All activities in the sector are subject to this legislation; the universities and Institutes of Technology are responsible for ensuring that their procedures are compliant with the Acts.

In addition, many professions, including teaching and guidance counselling, are also subject to quality assurance regulation by professional bodies. The Teaching Council of Ireland provides professional accreditation for teaching and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors provides it for school and adult guidance. Thus the higher education institutions are tasked with academic accreditation while the professional bodies have responsibility for professional accreditation.

ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION IN ADULT TEACHING, LEARNING AND GUIDANCE COUNSELLING

Higher Education

Higher education in Ireland is governed by two acts of parliament: The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 and 2001 and The Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill 2011. The Acts provides a framework for quality assurance; the awarding councils and HE institutions are required under the Acts to ensure compliance. HE institutions are charged with regulating quality in their organization.

HETAC (the Higher Education and Training Awards Council) the qualifications awarding body for third-level education and training institutions outside the university sector and FETAC (Further Education and Training Award Council) which is the national awarding body for further education and training were both established under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. They are responsible for quality assurance, accrediting programmes and awarding qualifications. FETAC has responsibility for awards from level 1-6 while HETAC is responsible for those from 6-10 on the national framework of qualifications. Their quality assurance processes included registering providers of education and training, validating programmes, monitoring quality, reviewing institutions and conducting related system-level research. They also ensure the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications and associated procedures.

The Irish **universities** make awards for programmes provided under their own aegis, and for some programmes provided in other institutions. The universities are: University of Limerick, Dublin City University, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, University College Cork, National University of Ireland Galway, National University of Ireland Maynooth. The National University of Ireland makes awards for programmes provided in its constituent colleges. The **Irish Universities Quality Board** has the responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of quality processes in Irish universities.

Under the Universities Act Section 12 (h) a university is required to: *Promote the highest standards in, and quality of, teaching and research.* A governing authority, in collaboration with academic councils in each institution is appointed to establish and implement the quality procedures for the institution. Under Section 35(2a) of the Universities Act the role of a governing authority is outlined. Quality procedures are required to cover the ‘quality of education’ and the quality of ‘related services’ provided by the university. The governing authority is required to ensure that the effectiveness of QA is evaluated on a regular basis “not less than once in every 10 years or such longer period as may be determined by the university in agreement with An tÚdarás (the Higher Education Authority). Thus they have responsibility that institutional quality reviews are carried out and that the results are published. Under Section 41:2 the universities must send a copy to the Minister for Education who ensures that they are ‘laid before each House of the Oireachtas’ (Irish parliament). All sectoral reports are available at <http://www.hea.ie>

At NUI Maynooth, all activities within the university are governed by the quality assurance procedures laid down by its governing authority in collaboration with academic council. Thus regular scheduled quality reviews take place and quality control procedures are rigorously adhered to in all departments, research centres, administration offices, student service centres across the university. There are no exceptions. It is likely that quality assurance procedures in all third level institutes in Ireland are equivalent.

However some significant changes are now in process in Irish higher education. The Qualification and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill, 2011 provides for the amalgamation of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, and the Further Education and Training Awards Council. The new organisation will also take responsibility for the external quality assurance review of the universities, a function which is currently performed by the Irish Universities Quality Board. The new body will have the official title of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland (QQAAI) but may have a different operational title. It anticipated that the authority will be established in 2012.¹

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

Teaching Council of Ireland

Professional accreditation for teachers in Ireland is governed by The Teaching Council Act, 2001. Under the Act a council was established on a statutory basis to promote teaching as a

¹ <http://www.oireachtas.ie>

profession at primary and post-primary levels; to promote the professional development of teachers; and to regulate standards in the profession.

The Teaching Council sets and upholds the standards for entry to the profession. One of the ways it does this is by reviewing and accrediting programmes of teacher education and training provided by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the State.

The Council's professional accreditation function is distinct from the process of academic accreditation which programmes already undergo. Academic accreditation is based on the suitability of a programme for the award of a degree/diploma; whereas professional accreditation is a judgment as to whether a programme prepares one for entry into that profession.

All teacher education programmes in Ireland that lead to registration must have professional accreditation. Existing programmes in Ireland that are recognised for registration purposes are deemed to have current accreditation, pending their review by the Teaching Council. All new teacher education programmes wishing to be recognised for registration purposes must be presented to the Council for review prior to accreditation.

In March 2011, the Teaching Council approved the general and programme requirements for the accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications [Further Education]. These will be used by the Council when assessing and accrediting further education teacher education programmes being offered by Higher Education Institutions.

In accordance with Regulation Five of the Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations, 2009, with effect from 1 April 2013, applicants for registration for the further education sector,² must have attained a Council approved further education teacher education qualification.²

Up until this point professional accreditation of adult educators was unregulated in Ireland. Academic accreditation was provided through many universities and institutes of higher education (see Appendix 1)³. These new regulations indicate a considerable new development in the sector. There are no plans to at the moment to regulate vocational teaching or lecturing in higher education in the same way.

Institute of Guidance Counsellors

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors established in 1968, is the professional body representing over 1200 practitioners in second level schools, third level colleges, adult guidance services, private practice and in other settings.

On behalf of its members and their clients the Institute has a liaison and advocacy role with government departments, management and trade union organisations, national parent bodies, higher and further education institutions, employment and training agencies.

² <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie>

³ A list of adult teaching and guidance programmes offered in higher education institutions in Ireland is provided in Appendix 1. It is offered as an illustration of the level of academic accreditation currently on offer in Ireland. Please note that it is not a comprehensive list.

Their constitution outlines their objects. Their main object is established is the advancement of the personal, social, educational and career development of individuals and groups through supporting guidance counselling practice; discussing, promoting and researching matters relating to guidance counselling services, and the sharing of the results of the Institute's work with the general public, statutory bodies and government departments.

Membership of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors is open to those individuals, who have successfully completed a programme of study, recognised by the institute, for the purpose of admission to membership.

The institute recognises two strands, through which individuals can obtain membership.

1. The first of these strands admits to membership graduates of professional training programmes, constituted to prepare individuals to work as Guidance Counsellors in second level and further and higher education
2. The second strand admits to membership graduates of programmes constituted to work with adults in a guidance and counselling role.

Both strands admit suitably qualified applicants to full membership of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, upon successful completion of their separate courses. Such membership does not of itself confer any employment rights, in specific Guidance and Counselling roles, given that employers of Guidance and Counselling graduates may lay down a range of other qualification requirements, for employment in their specific sector. The Institute requires individuals presenting qualifications obtained from colleges in other jurisdictions must include the following generic core components.

1. Knowledge

- Role and functions of the guidance counsellor (managing the guidance service)
- Career development and the nature of work 24 hours
- The Psychology of Human Development and Behaviour 24 hours
- Counselling theory 24 hours
- Professional issues (e.g. ethics, record keeping) 12 hours
- Multicultural, Special Educational and equality issues 6 hours
- Guidance programme planning / Whole school planning 6 hours

2. Skills Development

- Guidance skills development 24 hours
- Counselling skills development 24 hours
- Experiential group work 24 hours
- Psychometric testing 30 hours
- Information management and systems 12 hours
- Personal growth/development 12 hours

3. Field Practice

- Guidance practice and supervision. 24 hours
- Counselling practice and supervision. 24 hours
- Appropriate placements 48 hours⁴

⁴ <http://www.igc.ie>



The only programme currently listed by the institute on their website as meeting its entry requirements, for those seeking employment in an adult guidance role is the Higher Diploma/Diploma in Adult Guidance, currently being offered by the Department of Adult and Community Education, NUI Maynooth. All courses are reviewed every three years.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report provides an overview of the legislative context and institutional framework for quality assurance in Irish higher education. An outline of the role of the professional bodies for adult education teachers and adult guidance counsellors is also included. Professionalisation of the sector is at an early stage in Ireland, it is likely to be ongoing over the next decade.

Bibliography

Department of Education and Science (2000) *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 and 2001 at www.irishstatutebook.ie

The Qualification and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill, 2011 at <http://www.oireachtas.ie>

The Universities Act 1997 at www.irishstatutebook.ie

<http://www.teachingcouncil.ie>

<http://www.igc.ie>

<http://www.hetac.ie>

<http://www.hea.ie>

<http://www.iuqb.ie>

APPENDIX 1

National University of Ireland Galway

Level 9 award

MA Adult Learning and Development

National University of Ireland Maynooth

Level 7 award

Certificate in Training and Continuing Education

Certificate in Integrating Literacy

Certificate in Adult Guidance Counselling

Level 8 awards

Certificate in Adult and Community Education

Modules in Adult and Community Education as part of BA Community Studies

Level 9 awards (Taught)

- Postgraduate Diploma in Arts: Adult, Community and Further Education
- Postgraduate Diploma in Arts: Adult Guidance and Counselling
- MA Community Education, Equality and Social Activism
- MEd in Adult and Community Education / MEd in Adult Guidance and Counselling

Level 9 award (Research)

- MLitt

Level 10 awards (Taught)

- Doctorate in Education

Level 10 award (Research)

- PhD

Waterford Institute of Technology

Level 6 awards

Certificate in Practical Teaching Skills for Adult Tutors

Certificate in Groupwork and Facilitation Skills

Certificate in Adult Education

Higher Certificate in Arts in Adult Education

Higher Certificate in Arts in Community Education and Development

Level 8 awards

BA (Hons) in Adult Education

Level 9 awards

Postgraduate Diploma/Masters in Teaching Learning in Further and Higher Education

Please note this is not a comprehensive list of all adult education teaching and guidance courses offered in higher education institutions in Ireland.