



**Maynooth
University**
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Ollscoil Mhá Nuad

Maynooth University

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE

PEER REVIEW GROUP REPORT

FROEBEL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ACADEMIC YEAR 2016/17

24 June 2017

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1. Introduction

The following is the final report of the March 2017 review of the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth University. The Froebel Department of Education is the department of initial teacher education for primary and early childhood education at Maynooth University. It offers two full-time programmes of initial teacher education (primary): the Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Professional Master of Education (PMEd), as well as three part-time programmes: the Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education, the Postgraduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs, and the Master of Education with a specialism in Early Childhood Education (the latter in association with the University's Department of Education). In 2016/17 the Department reported having 449 students enrolled across all programmes, and employs __ full and __ part-time academic staff. This was the first Quality Review of the Froebel Department since it became part of Maynooth University in September 2013; prior to that it was an autonomous College of Education at Sion Hill, Blackrock, where it was run by the Dominican Congregation for more than 65 years.

The review was undertaken in March, 2017, beginning with the PRG members' receipt of the Froebel Department's Self Assessment on 2nd March, and was concluded with the writing of this report. The site visit, described below, took place on 22nd and 23rd March, and was preceded by a meeting of Peer Review Group (PRG) members with Aidan Mulkeen, Vice President Academic/Registrar, and Siobhan Harkin, Director of Quality. The 22nd began with a session devoted to familiarisation with the department, its staff and its facilities, followed by sessions with undergraduate and postgraduate students of the department. The PRG met with the University Executive on the first day, as well. The second day of the site visit commenced with a meeting with the Dean of the faculty and continued with telephone conferences with external stakeholders of the Department, followed by additional opportunities to meet with individual staff (some in pairs). The PRG then went into closed session to consider their findings and to prepare for the exit presentation, which was delivered to the staff of the department at a plenary session on the evening of 23rd March.

2. Peer Review Group Members

Name	Affiliation	Role
Dr Kristen Nawrotzki	University of Education, Heidelberg, Germany	
Prof Arnd Witte	Maynooth University	
Dr Shirley O'Dea	Maynooth University	
Prof Eugene Wall	Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	

3. Timetable of the site visit

The timetable (see Appendix 1) was extremely full and the meetings generally very rich in terms of the quality of the commentary and discussions. The session with students proved to be especially productive, such that the PRG allowed them to continue over time.

4. Peer Review Methodology

4.1 Site Visit

The site visit was conducted over two days during which the members of the PRG had the opportunity to interview all academic and administrative staff, relevant stakeholders and separate groups representative of UG and PG students. The PRG was struck by the expressions of passion for the Froebelian ethos and the work of the Department which came from members of the department (students and staff) and from external stakeholders. The site visit included an excursion into the new Education Building on Campus which was built in order to meet the specific requirements of a practitioner-based Froebelian education. The Head of Department and Director of Quality were very helpful in providing additional documentation as requested by the PRG, necessarily on extremely short notice.

4.2 Preparation of the Peer Review Group Report

At each meeting detailed in the schedule above, all members of the PRG made their own notes and asked questions of the interviewees as required. For the interview session with individual staff members and stakeholders, the PRG split into two teams, each having an external and internal peer reviewer. During breaks between meetings, the findings at each stage were discussed. For the exit presentation, the PRG discussed the four headings of Teaching and Learning, Research, Integration into Maynooth University and External Impact and developed a number of positive findings. A series of recommendations, based on these four categories, was then presented at the exit presentation. Subsequently, the PRG members all contributed jointly to writing up the final version of the PRG report.

5. Overall Assessment

5.1 Summary Assessment of the Department

The SWOT analysis of the Department is contained in an implicit, yet comprehensive manner in both the Self-Assessment Report and in the following Peer Review Report.

5.2 Self-Assessment Report

The self-assessment report (SAR) was overall a clear, concise and accurate representation of the Department's activities. It explained the Department's history and some of the challenges its members have faced in the transition to the University. The transition entailed an initial move to temporary accommodation and, recently, to a purpose-built permanent home for the Department. One notable absence was a comparison of research indicators, such as number and quality of publications and research supervision levels, with other Irish universities.

The appendix to the SAR was very comprehensive and it was clear that a lot of background research and reflection had been undertaken to compile the report.

The Department is to be highly commended for organising an Away Day to facilitate the final compilation of the Report and to include all staff views. It was stated during the group meeting with Departmental staff (Head of Department recused) that efforts had been made to ensure inclusivity during the preparation of the SAR.

6. Findings of the Peer Review Group: Commendations and Recommendations

6.1 Overview

- Department governance and organisation
 - In the view of a significant number of faculty members to whom we spoke, the process of integration into the University was unsettling and there was an extended period of adjustment required. There was also agreement by University administrators to whom we spoke that the transition period has been challenging. The key transitional issues that were raised related to changes in professional identity and the need for improved teaching and office accommodation. This latter issue had been resolved to the great satisfaction of virtually all staff members. In relation to professional identity, some staff members experienced a major disjunction between their former roles and their perception of a different academic culture within the University. Whereas they conceived of their former roles primarily in terms of teaching and school placement supervision, they were aware that within the University environment there was a definite expectation that research should form a core dimension of their professional work. Notwithstanding these tensions, and the resultant demoralisation mentioned by some staff members, there was a sense that collaborative involvement in the SAR process was beneficial and internal communication between staff members was reported to be positive.

- The view was expressed that regular staff meetings had improved communications within the Department and had led to a more democratic approach. Some concern was expressed, however, that the pressure of dealing with “technical matters” restricted the time available at monthly meetings for deeper engagement around other professional issues, including research.
- Teaching, learning, assessment
 - It is clear from the SAR, as well as from meetings with staff, that student-centred teaching is a point of particular pride and a key element of the Department’s ethos and identity. In particular, staff expressed their eagerness to retain the defining characteristics of the Froebelian approach to initial teacher education. The importance and quality of the Department’s teaching and supervision of students were underscored in meetings with students and discussions with staff. Our formal conversations with external stakeholders, such as national support agencies and the principals of schools that employ Department graduates, confirm that the work of the Froebel Department is held in high esteem and its graduates are highly regarded.
- Research activities and outputs
 - Research activities and outputs appear to be a point of tension in the Department, both for those who participate in research activities and for those who do not. The Department should take care to formulate and clarify its policies and priorities with regard to participation in, and support for, a diversity of research forms and modes. This should be done with a view to its own mission and strategic plan, so that the research agenda and activity of the Department are progressively enhanced.
- Staffing and staff development
 - Greater transparency is required in relation to workloads to address the belief of many staff that they are overworked. The development of a transparent workloads allocation may necessitate a review of the organisation and distribution of work activities, including issues such as class group sizes.
 - The work of administrative staff was highly commended. However, several staff highlighted a need for additional administrative staffing.
- Resourcing and Facilities
 - The new building provides excellent facilities for the Department, as well as providing opportunities for closer interactions with other Departments.
 - Some department staff have questions and concerns about the use of the new physical space which relate directly to their teaching philosophy and pedagogical practice.

- Internal and external engagement
 - Now that the transition into the new building is complete, the Department should develop a strategy with policies and plans around internal and external engagement. The Froebel Department is unique in the national context and this should be viewed as an opportunity for leadership, particularly in terms of research, as well as outreach and raising the profile of the University.

6.2 Commendations

1. The external examiners reports are notably positive, attesting to the high standards of the Department's programmes and of the graduates from those programmes.
2. Standards of teaching on the programme are high, reflecting an underlying conviction on the part of many staff that students can be inspired to become good teachers by experiencing excellent teaching.
3. The number and diversity of student placements and the quality of supervision garner high praise. The placement experiences are seen as very productive in terms of reflectivity and in critical problem-solving, equipping students with skills that serve them well in their teaching careers. In addition, students reported that they were encouraged to "try things out" or experiment while on placement, and this fostered self-confidence and ultimately promoted independence.
4. The lecturers in the Department are passionate, approachable and responsive.
5. The Department's efforts to align with university strategy is commended, for example with regard to diversification of student intake and inclusive education, as well as developing master and doctoral programmes.
6. The PRG welcomes and supports the Department's expressed interest in developing a departmental research strategy.
7. Collegiality, support and mentoring are emphases in the department.
8. The Department has succeeded in forging and maintaining successful partnerships with schools. This is particularly commendable given the considerable challenges posed by the move from its former school hinterland in south Dublin and at a time when there is increased pressure on schools for student placements.
9. At a time when the Department was under considerable pressure, it demonstrated commendable resourcefulness in developing new programmes and reconceptualising the initial teacher education programmes to meet the demands of the Teaching Council.

6.3 Recommendations for Improvement

1. Department Governance and Organisation
 - The Department has undergone an adaptation, stabilisation and consolidation process but now needs to move increasingly into a developmental phase where it

embraces new opportunities to diversify and expand. Specifically, it is recommended that the Department investigate opportunities to develop new programmes, particularly taught postgraduate programmes.

- We recommend the Department develop mechanisms for regular review of organisational structures and processes, including feedback for courses, time management, distribution of responsibilities, etc.
- Clarification of Departmental roles and responsibilities is needed, particularly pertaining to course leaders in terms of who has authority to make decisions with regard to teaching and placements.
- Many of the people we heard from described themselves as exceptionally busy, sometimes expressing regret about the things they are not able to achieve as a result. We recommend that the Department engage in an internal process to develop a transparent workload allocation model which valorises the full range of academic activities.
- We endorse the Department's intention to develop customised software to alleviate the administrative workload necessary to co-ordinate, supervise and evaluate student placements.
- While we recognize that students are positive in their feedback about communication (particularly postgraduate students), a number of issues did emerge which point to the need to develop an effective student-staff communication policy; we welcome the Department's commitment to doing this in its self-assessment report.
- Office hours should be clearly stated outside the respective office doors so students can be sure when to make personal contact with the lecturers; by extension, this might help lecturers reserve other hours for other aspects of their work, including those essential for the achievement of their own career-development or research-related goals.
- The University should provide technical support for seminars that take place outside of the normal working hours, e.g. on Saturdays or in the evenings.
- Students informed the PRG that there is no campus accommodation available outside of the University term times. However, this is needed, particularly early in their teaching placement. The University should try to resolve this issue.

2. Research and Scholarship

- We were made aware that there is a divergence of views within the Department

regarding the professional role of the academic within the university and we think this is something that could be constructively teased out in a session facilitated by an external person. This would provide an opportunity for the Department to demonstrate leadership in this area.

- We are aware that the question of what is recognised as research in the field of education can be problematic. We recommend the Department claim ownership and leadership of what research in their field – not only but especially practitioner-led research -- should be like.
- The University should recognise that the integration of the Froebel Department into the cluster of Education Departments provides an opportunity to support, develop and facilitate expertise in scholarship of pedagogy. As an exercise in capacity building, we recommend that the University make provision for a dedicated sabbatical scheme and also a dedicated seed-fund scheme for research and scholarship.
- For a transitional period, the University should ring-fence up two sabbaticals annually in order to facilitate research efforts by individual staff members.
- We recommend that staff members engage externally with local and international professional bodies in order to enhance research funding opportunities for staff.
- We note that the Department is intent on creating a 5-year Departmental research strategy and would recommend that this should include the articulation of a vision for research development and for research leadership, as well as specific and measurable research-related goals. The Department should consider plans for developing a pipeline of experienced practitioners whom it can encourage toward PhD/research degrees, thereby providing a pool of practitioner-researchers who might sustain and expand the Department's strengths in the short and long term. It should also support the dissemination of department-based researchers' work, e.g. by actively encouraging staff participation at conferences.
- We note that the Department has committed to maximizing opportunities for publicising its profile at national and international level and we recommend that the Department should as a matter of priority develop concrete proposals for how this is to be done.
- Having transitioned to the Maynooth University campus, the Department is now in a position to explore avenues for developing synergies with other Departments in terms of research and teaching and learning.
- We recommend the Department dedicate time at regular staff meetings for the discussion of research and research-related matters.

- We were made aware of the challenges to maintain a distinct Froebelian ethos in the Department following the move to Maynooth University and that this is viewed by some as posing a danger by diluting this ethos. We recommend that the Department should develop research programmes as a way forward to maintain and emphasize the strengths of the Froebelian ethos both within and outside of the University.

3. Teaching, learning, assessment and student feedback

- Several issues were raised by ITE students in relation to school placement, centring mainly on grading criteria and feedback. Although it was evident to the Panel that there are compelling reasons for many of the practices highlighted, these need to be discussed with students embarking on school placement, preferably in briefing sessions which openly address “difficult” issues and which provide rationales for how things operate. The student handbook for school placement should also refer to these rationales. It is recommended that there be student representation on the School Placement Committee.
- Some of the students we interviewed pointed out the need for clear statements of the marking criteria and for meaningful and timely feedback on assessed written work. We recommend that this should be implemented in an effort to contribute to making assessment and student feedback transparent and constructive.
- As resources allow, it is recommended that consideration should be given to increasing the number of elective slots on the BEd programme. This would allow students to pursue specialisms in areas such as early childhood education and special education. The availability of such specialisms would be an asset to graduates seeking employment and also subsequently in their professional work.
- Feedback from staff and students indicated that there is a need for more comprehensive guidelines for students in the Dissertation Handbook, especially in relation to supervision issues.
- Following each academic year, the Academic Committee should undertake a systematic review of all programmes, taking account of staff feedback, student exit survey data and the relevant external examiner’s/examiners’ report(s). A short written report should be produced on each programme which identifies key programme developments, emerging issues and recommendations for change. These reports should then be included for discussion at departmental meetings.
- The Department’s adoption in 2013 of the University’s Student Evaluation of Learning Experience (SELE) system is an important element in obtaining feedback from students. According to the SAR, the system currently does not have the potential to generate sufficient detail at module and programme level to contribute to an evaluation of module and programme effectiveness. The Department should

examine how it can gather student feedback that is sufficiently fine-grained to assist in programme evaluation.

- The Department should ensure that students on Erasmus placement are not disadvantaged by missing out on one semester's worth of programmed learning. This could be addressed by methods of blended learning or other internet-based forms of delivery.
- Some external examiners noted certain weaknesses of some students in English and Irish language competence. We recommend that the Department ensure that sufficient levels of language competence will be achieved by all students, if necessary by expanding the offerings in these fields; however, students should be held accountable for their own learning within the standard course schedules, without pressuring instructors to offer extra lectures as exams near.
- Given the marked difference in duration between the BEd and the PMEd, and the different structural requirements of the two programmes, it is recommended that the Department continue its efforts to differentiate appropriately between the two programmes in curriculum content terms.
- In order to exploit relevant offerings by existing MU Departments, the Department should initiate collaboration with cognate subjects, e.g. by establishing a teaching panel across relevant disciplines and by contributing to the University-wide Critical Skills stream in First Year. These efforts are likely to be supported by the Dean of Teaching and Learning.
- Students and members of staff referred to the Department's HOPE Partnership and DICE programme as very valuable offerings which are central to the Department's practice of Froebelian ideals. Concerns about these programmes' sustainability were also expressed; with these in mind, the Department should consider both the potential for research related to HOPE and DICE, as well as ways to garner support and recognition for them (and for staff who work on them) within the University context (such as their alignment with the University's internationalisation strategy).

4. Staffing and staff development

- The Department should develop a clearly formulated policy and application procedure for staff members seeking to spend time outside the Department doing something which furthers the Department's own goals (e.g. to attend conferences or participate in CPD activities, or go on research leave), whether during term time or outside of term. That way, staff members know in advance what is likely to be approved, when and how often, and need not worry about 'leaving colleagues or students in the lurch' in their pursuit of what are also departmental goals.

5. Resourcing and Facilities

- There is a high burden of administration associated with the organisation of teaching placements. We recommend that the Department should review how this is currently carried out and identify any resource requirements. The University should then look at ways to support provision of any resources identified.
- Department staff should meet with a representative of the University's Health and Safety Office to discuss questions and concerns about the use of the new physical space which relate directly to their teaching philosophy and practice, such as the possibility of using hallway space for display of 3-D objects, and easy access between indoor and outdoor spaces via classrooms.

6. Internal and external engagement

- During the period of consolidation, the Department has adopted an inward focus to its work. The Department should now grasp the opportunity to adopt a more outward looking profile. Efforts to publicise the Department's activities and profile should be made at the university level as well.
- The Department should be aware that some of its students have been having difficulties integrating with the rest of the University (mirroring the concerns of many staff members about their own experience). The students put this down to the course hours, and to their time spent in placements off campus, as well as to the lack of knowledge around the University as to what "Froebel" is. Students described the Froebel Society as one possible means to improve the social aspect of the Department but said that they often felt obliged to comply with staff requests regarding activities. We recommend that representatives of staff and students discuss the remit of the Society.
- Given the existence of three education Departments in the same building on MU campus, the Department should explore avenues for the three education Departments to develop synergies and cross-fertilisation in teaching, scholarship and research.
- The Department should strive to enhance its visibility across Maynooth University by fully engaging with the existing research clusters and Faculty roles, responsibilities and committees, including regular attendance of Faculty meetings and including Departmental research outputs in the University's searchable institutional repository, the ePrints Archive.
- It would have been helpful during the transition into the University if the Department had had a liaison to assist with integration. The Centre for Teaching and Learning has expressed a particular interest in this role now and we recommend that this be fully explored.

- We recommend that the Department aim to increase their engagement with the wider university community, for example, with the Centre for Teaching and Learning, with cognate Departments (such as Irish, Music, Education), and at the level of the faculty. The Department may wish to liaise with HR and other relevant offices (e.g. Research Support Office) to identify professional development opportunities and to consider ways it can become more visible e.g. by offering brownbag presentations. Consultation with the University's Communications and Marketing Office may prove fruitful in this regard.
- The Department is encouraged to expand its palette of postgraduate offerings and to move toward recruiting international and research students, not only for generating research income but also for enhancing its international profile.
- The Department should consider the extent to which placements could serve as sites for research as well.
- The Department's website should be updated, e.g. by inserting biographic and research data (as well as links to online publications, reports, unpublished papers, etc. where relevant) for every staff member, so that the Department becomes more visible and recognisable on Campus and beyond.
- The Department should consider establishing a regular Research Seminar series to engage with the rich research culture at Maynooth University and to highlight (among other things) the value of the types of research done within the Department, including practitioner-led research.
- Given the unique experience with Froebelian ideas of early childhood primary education, the Department should continue expand their engagement with outreach initiatives.
- The recent Research Meeting held in the Department was highly commended by external stakeholders and was highlighted as an ideal example of external engagement, outreach and research leadership. Activities such as these should become regular.
- External stakeholders commented that Froebel tends to be associated only with early years teaching and the move to Maynooth is an opportunity to work with stakeholders in the sector outside of primary schools. The Department should consider how it will address this perception, how it will engage with these sectors and how it will communicate its strategy and achievements in this area in the future.

The tables below categorise recommendations as being institutional/strategic or department level, in line with the guidance notes accompanying this template.

Institutional/Strategic Recommendations

Number	Recommendation	Additional PRG Comments
S.1	As an exercise in capacity building, we recommend that the University make provision for a dedicated sabbatical scheme and also a dedicated seed-fund for research and scholarship.	This recommendation should be considered for a transitional period of up to 5 years.
S.2	Students informed the PRG that there is no campus accommodation available outside of the University term times. However, this is needed, particularly early in their teaching placement. The University should try to resolve this issue.	
S.3	The University should provide technical support for seminars outside of the normal working hours, e.g. on Saturdays or in the evenings.	
S.4	There is a high burden of administration associated with organisation of teaching placements. We recommend that the Department should review how this is currently carried out and identify any resource requirements. The University should then look at ways to support provision of any resources identified.	
S.5	During the period of consolidation, the Department has adopted an inward focus to its work. The Department should now grasp the opportunity to adopt a more outward looking profile. Efforts to publicise the Department's activities and profile should be made at the university level as well.	

S.6	It would have been helpful during the transition into the University if the Department had had a liaison to assist with integration. The Centre for Teaching and Learning has expressed a particular interest in this role now and we recommend that this be fully explored.	

Recommendations to the Department

Number	Recommendation	Additional PRG Comments
U.1	The Department should consider engaging in an internal process to develop a transparent workload allocation model which valorises the full range of academic activities.	
U.2	We recommend the Department develop mechanisms for regular review of organisational structures and processes, including feedback for courses, time management, distribution of responsibilities, etc.	Clarification of Departmental roles and responsibilities is needed, particularly pertaining to course leaders in terms of who has authority to make decisions with regard to teaching and placements.
U.3	There is a high burden of administration associated with the organisation of teaching placements. We recommend that the Department should review how this is currently carried out and identify any resource requirements. We endorse the	The University should then examine ways to support provision of any resources where the need for these has been demonstrated by the Department.

	Departments' intention to develop customised software to alleviate the administrative workload necessary to co-ordinate, supervise and evaluate student placements.	
U.4	Office hours should be clearly stated outside the respective office doors so students can be sure when to make personal contact with the lecturers.	By extension, this might help lecturers reserve other hours for other aspects of their work, including those essential for the achievement of their own career-development or research-related goals.
U.5	We welcome the Department's commitment to developing an effective student-staff communication policy as expressed in its self-assessment report.	
U.6	We recommend the Department claim ownership and leadership of what research in their field – not only but especially practitioner-led research -- should be like.	We are aware that the question of what is recognised as research in the field of education can be problematic, but see this as an opening for the Department to step into and define the state of the art.
U.7	We recommend that the Department investigate opportunities to develop new programmes, particularly taught postgraduate programmes.	The Department has undergone an adaptation, stabilisation and consolidation process but now needs to move increasingly into a developmental phase where it embraces new opportunities to diversify and expand.
U.8	We suggest the Department organise a session, facilitated by an external person, to constructively address the divergent views within the Department regarding the professional role of the academic within the University.	This would provide an opportunity for the Department to demonstrate leadership in this area.
U.9	We recommend that staff members engage externally with local and international professional bodies in order to enhance	E.g. The Froebel Trust

	research funding and research-related networking opportunities for staff.	
U.10	We note that the Department is intent on creating a 5-year Departmental research strategy and would recommend that this include the articulation of a vision for research development and for research leadership, as well as specific and measurable research-related goals.	As part of its strategy, the Department should consider plans for developing a pipeline of experienced practitioners whom it can encourage toward PhD/research degrees, thereby providing a pool of practitioner-researchers who might sustain and expand the Department's strengths in the short and long term. It should also support the dissemination of department-based researchers' work, e.g. by actively encouraging staff participation at conferences.
U.11	We were made aware of the challenges of maintaining a distinct Froebelian ethos in the Department following the move to Maynooth University, which is seen by some as posing a threat to this ethos. We recommend that the Department should develop research programmes as a way forward to maintain and emphasise the strengths of the Froebelian ethos, both within and outside of the University.	
U.12	We recommend the Department dedicate time at regular staff meetings for the discussion of research and research-related matters.	
U.13	We note that the Department has committed to maximising opportunities for publicising its profile at national and international level and we recommend that the Department should as a matter of priority develop concrete proposals for how this is to be done.	

U.14	The student handbook for school placement should refer to rationales on grading criteria and feedback. It is further recommended that there be student representation on the School Placement Committee.	Several issues were raised by ITE students in relation to school placement, centring mainly on grading criteria and feedback. Although it was evident to the Panel that there are compelling reasons for many of the practices highlighted, these need to be discussed with students embarking on school placement, preferably in briefing sessions which openly address “difficult” issues and which provide rationales for how things operate.
U.15	Some of the students we interviewed pointed out the need for clear statements of the marking criteria and for meaningful and timely feedback for assessed written work. We recommend that this should be implemented in an effort to contribute to making assessment and student feedback transparent and constructive.	
U.16	As resources allow, it is recommended that the BEd programme should offer students a greater range of electives.	
U.17	Feedback from staff and students indicated that there is a need for more comprehensive guidelines for students in the Dissertation Handbook, especially in relation to supervision issues.	
U.18	Following each academic year, the Academic Committee should undertake a systematic review of all programmes, taking account of staff feedback, student exit survey data and the relevant	A short written report should be produced on each programme which identifies key programme developments, emerging issues and recommendations for change. These

	external examiner's/examiners' report(s).	reports should then be included for discussion at meetings of the Department.
U.19	The Department's adoption in 2013 of the University's Student Evaluation of Learning Experience (SELE) system is an important element in obtaining feedback from students. According to the SAR, the system currently does not have the potential to generate sufficient detail at module and programme level to contribute to an evaluation of module and programme effectiveness. The Department should examine how it can gather student feedback that is sufficiently fine-grained to assist in programme evaluation.	
U.20	The Department should ensure that students on Erasmus placement are not disadvantaged by missing out on one semester's worth of programmed learning.	This could be addressed by methods of blended learning or other internet-based forms of delivery.
U.21	Some external examiners noted certain weaknesses of some students in English and Irish language competence. We recommend that the Department ensure that sufficient levels of language competence will be achieved by all students, if necessary by expanding the offerings in these fields; however, students should be held accountable for their own learning within the standard course schedules, without pressuring	

	instructors to offer extra lectures as exams near.	
U.22	Given the marked difference in duration between the BEd and the PMEd, and the different structural requirements of the two programmes, it is recommended that the Department continue its efforts to differentiate appropriately between the two programmes in curriculum content terms.	
U.23	In order to exploit relevant offerings by existing MU Departments, the Department should, with the support of the Centre for Teaching and Learning, endeavour to initiate collaboration with cognate subjects. This could, for example, result in developing and contributing to a Critical Skills module, or other forms of interdisciplinary co-operation.	These efforts are likely to be supported by the Dean of Teaching and Learning.
U.24	Students and members of staff referred to the Department's HOPE Partnership and DICE programme as very valuable offerings which are central to the Department's practice of Froebelian ideals. Concerns about these programmes' sustainability were also expressed; with these in mind, the Department should consider both the potential for research related to HOPE and DICE, as well as ways to garner support and recognition for them (and for staff who work on them) within the University context (such as their alignment with the University's internationalization strategy).	

U.25	The Department should develop a clearly formulated policy and application procedure for staff members seeking to spend time outside the Department doing something which furthers the Department's own goals (e.g. to attend conferences or participate in CPD activities, or go on research leave), whether during term time or outside of term.	In this way staff members know in advance what is likely to be approved, when and how often, and need not worry about 'leaving colleagues or students in the lurch' in their pursuit of what are also Departmental goals.
U.26	Having transitioned to the Maynooth University campus, the Department is now in a position to explore avenues for developing synergies with other Departments in terms of research and teaching and learning.	
U.27	Department staff should meet with a representative of the University's Health and Safety Office to discuss questions and concerns about the use of the new physical space which relate directly to their teaching philosophy and practice, such as the possibility of using hallway space for display of 3-D objects, and easy access between indoor and outdoor spaces via classrooms.	
U.28	During the period of consolidation, the Department has adopted an inward focus to its work. The Department should now grasp the opportunity to adopt a more outward-looking profile.	Efforts to publicise the Department's activities and profile should be made at the University level as well.
U.29	The Department should be aware that some of its students have been having difficulties integrating with the rest of the University (mirroring the concerns of many staff members about their own experience). The students put this down to the course hours, and	

	<p>to their time spent in placements off campus, as well as to the lack of knowledge around the University as to what “Froebel” is. Students described the Froebel Society as one possible means to work on the latter, but found its ability to do so curtailed by its often functioning as an organ of the Department. As a student society, the Froebel Society should be left to the students themselves.</p>	
U.30	<p>Given the existence of three Education Departments in the same building on MU campus, the Department should explore avenues for the three Departments to develop synergies and cross-fertilisation in teaching, scholarship and research.</p>	
U.31	<p>The Department should strive to enhance its visibility across Maynooth University by fully engaging with the existing research clusters and Faculty roles, responsibilities and committees, including regular attendance of Faculty meetings and including Departmental research outputs in the University’s searchable institutional repository, the ePrints Archive.</p>	
U.32	<p>It would have been helpful during the transition into the University if the Department had had a liaison to assist with integration. The Centre for Teaching and Learning has expressed a particular interest in this role now and we recommend that this be fully explored.</p>	

U.33	We recommend that the Department aim to increase their engagement with the wider university community, for example, with the Centre for Teaching and Learning, with cognate Departments (such as Irish, Music, Education), and at the level of the Faculty. The Department may wish to liaise with HR and other relevant offices (Research Support Office) to identify professional development opportunities and to consider ways it can become more visible e.g. by offering brownbag presentations.	Consultation with the University's Communications and Marketing Office may prove fruitful in this regard.
U.34	The Department is encouraged to expand its palette of postgraduate offerings and to move toward recruiting international and research students, not only for generating research income but also for enhancing its international profile.	
U.35	The Department should consider the extent to which placements could serve as sites for research as well.	
U.36	The Department's website should be updated, e.g. by inserting biographic, research and data (as well as links to online publications, reports, unpublished papers, etc. where relevant) for every staff member, so that the Department becomes more visible and recognisable on Campus and beyond.	
U.37	The Department should consider establishing a regular Research Seminar series to engage with the rich research culture at Maynooth University, to highlight the various research activities of the Department and to explore and expand the diverse range	

	of modes of research in the field.	
U.38	Given the unique experience with Froebelian ideas of early childhood primary education, the Department should continue to expand their engagement with outreach initiatives.	
U.39	The recent Research Meeting held in the Department was highly commended by external stakeholders and was highlighted as an ideal example of external engagement, outreach and research leadership. Activities such as these should become regular.	
U.40	External stakeholders commented that Froebel tends to be associated only with early years teaching and the move to Maynooth is an opportunity to work with stakeholders in the sector outside of primary schools. The Department should consider how it will address this perception, how it will engage with these sectors and how it will communicate its strategy and achievements in this area in the future.	

APPENDIX 1: DEPARTMENT OF FROEBEL: PEER REVIEW GROUP SITE VISIT TIMETABLE

Tuesday, 21st March, 2017																
Time	Description	Venue														
19:00	<p>Convening of the Peer Review Group.</p> <p>Briefing by: Siobhán Harkin, Director of Strategy and Quality PRG agrees a Chair, and discuss the visit. Identification of any aspects requiring clarification or additional information.</p> <p>Dinner for members of the Peer Review Group and Director for Strategy & Quality & University Executive Member</p>	<p>Booked Carton House Hotel at 7pm for 6 people under the name Harkin</p> <p>Siobhan Harkin Aidan Mulkeen Eugene Wall Kristen Nawrotzki Arnd Witte Shirley O'Dea</p>														
Wednesday, 22nd March, 2017																
Time	Description	Venue														
8:00- 8.15	Convening of Peer Review Group; Director of Quality available to group	Council Room														
8:15 -9:00	Professor Marie McLoughlin, Head of Department	Council Room														
9:00 -10:00	Group meeting with all Department staff (Head of Department recused)	Council Room														
10:00 -10:45	Visit to core facilities of Department, escorted by Professor Marie McLoughlin	School of Education / Library/North Campus														
10:45 -11:10	Refreshments	Council Room														
11.10-11.30 11:30-11.50 11.50-12.10 12.10-12.30 12.30-12.50 12.50-13.10	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Parallel Session1/CR</th> <th>Parallel Session2/PB</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Ms Phyllis Clegg</td> <td>Ms Deirdre Forde</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr Patricia Kennon</td> <td>Ms Grainne Deery</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr Bernadette Wrynn</td> <td>Dr Triona Stokes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr Ruth Forrest</td> <td>Ms Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ms Niamh Fortune</td> <td>Mr Tony Sweeney</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ms Katherine Lally</td> <td>Mr Gerard O'Floinn</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Parallel Session1/CR	Parallel Session2/PB	Ms Phyllis Clegg	Ms Deirdre Forde	Dr Patricia Kennon	Ms Grainne Deery	Dr Bernadette Wrynn	Dr Triona Stokes	Dr Ruth Forrest	Ms Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich	Ms Niamh Fortune	Mr Tony Sweeney	Ms Katherine Lally	Mr Gerard O'Floinn	<p>Council Room & Presidents Boardroom Booked</p>
Parallel Session1/CR	Parallel Session2/PB															
Ms Phyllis Clegg	Ms Deirdre Forde															
Dr Patricia Kennon	Ms Grainne Deery															
Dr Bernadette Wrynn	Dr Triona Stokes															
Dr Ruth Forrest	Ms Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich															
Ms Niamh Fortune	Mr Tony Sweeney															
Ms Katherine Lally	Mr Gerard O'Floinn															
13.30 -14:30	Working Lunch	Reserve Pugin Hall/ Table with service for Quality/4 people														
14:30 -15:15	Meet with Students: Undergraduate Students (12)	Council Room														
15.15.-16.00	PG Taught Students (6)															

16.00-16:30	Break	Council Room
16.30-17.00	Professor Ray O'Neill, VP for Research	Council Room
17.00-17.30	Professor Aidan Mulkeen, VP Academic and Registrar	
17.30	PRG meeting – identification of any areas for clarification and finalisation of tasks for following day	Council Room
19.00	PRG private working dinner	Booked Carton House Hotel at <u>7.00pm</u> for 4 people under the name Witte

Thursday, 23rd March, 2017

Time	Description		Venue
8:00-8:15	Convening of Peer Review Group		Council Room
8.15-8.30	External Stakeholders	Mr Michael Maher School Principal/Partner School	Council Room/President Boardroom Booked
8.30-8.45	Mr Tomas Ó Ruairc Director of Teaching Council		
8.45:-9.00	Ms Maresa Duignan Early Childhood Education Specialist/DES/	Ms Ber O'Sullivan Oatlands Primary/ Graduates	
9.00-9.15	Ms Mairín Ní Chéilleachair National Coordinator NIPT		
9.15-9.45	Professor Maurice Devlin, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences		Council Room
9.45 - 10:15	Dr Mike O'Malley, Bursar & Secretary		Council Room
10.15-10.45	Dr Alison Hood, Dean of Teaching & Learning		Council Room
10.45-11.00	Break		
11.00-11.20 11.20-11.40 11.40-12.00 12.00-12.20 12.20-12.50	Parallel Session1/CR Mr Eddie Costello Mr Seamie O'Neill Ms Aoife Titley Ms Annette Kearns & Ms Phil Lynch	Parallel Session2/PB Ms Therese Hegarty Ms Maire Nic an Bhaird Ms Rebecca Boyle & Ms Vera Timmons Ms Laura Thornton Ms Patsy Stafford & Mr Brian Tubbert	Council Room & PB Booked
13:00-14:15	Working Lunch		Pugin Hall/Reserved Table with service for Quality, 4 people
14:15-16:30	Preparation of Exit Presentation		Council Room
16:30-17:00	Exit presentation to all departmental staff, made by the Chair of the PRG, summarising the principal commendations and recommendations of the Peer Review Group		Council Room
17:00	Refreshments and Exit of the PRG		Council Room