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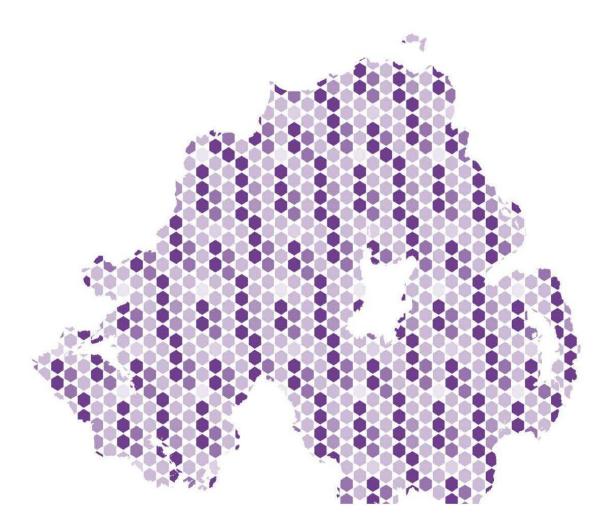

Education and Training Inspectorate

Postgraduate Certificates in Primary and Post-Primary Education

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences - Ulster University

Inspected: February 2019

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Appendices

1. **Context of the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) Programmes in primary and post-primary education**

Ulster University has been a provider of initial teacher education since 1968 (as the New University of Ulster). Postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) programmes have been offered to students since 1991-92. The transfer of PGCE teaching to the Coleraine campus was a gradual process beginning in 1995, with all provision centralised from 2017.

Applications for places on the PGCE programme remain significantly oversubscribed. In the inspection year, there were 80 students on the post-primary PGCE and 33 on the primary PGCE, as determined by Department of Education (DE) and the Department for the Economy. Four supernumerary post-primary places are funded in Irish-medium education (IME); those students undertake an enhancement programme provided by St Mary's University College leading to the award of a Certificate in Bilingual Education.

The PGCE is a unitary programme with two pathways: primary and post-primary. The primary PGCE is a specialism in its own right, comprising a thirty-eight week course, nineteen weeks of which is school placement, across the three primary key stages, and nineteen weeks, which is university-based comprising professional, curriculum and subject studies, designed to provide students with the competences required of a primary school teacher.

The post-primary PGCE consists of eight autonomous subject-based course programmes, each with its own programme director under the regulation of the university, but planned and provided as a coherent post-primary provision. Main subject teaching is provided in art and design, English, drama and media studies, geography, history, home economics, music, physical education and technology and design. As well as a main subject, students also select a subsidiary subject from a choice of personal development, citizenship, special educational needs, religious education, digital safety and drama. The post-primary pathway is a thirty-six week course that includes two twelve-week school placement sessions. The PGCE post-primary technology and design course is a forty-two week course; prior to enrolling on the PGCE, six weeks are spent in workshop health and safety training at the Fortwilliam Resource Centre, Belfast.

Both the primary and post-primary pathways provide a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum across the school-based and university-based work. The design of the pathways provides students with very good opportunities to offer a variety of specialist teaching, when employed.

Entry to the post-primary pathway is highly competitive; there is an excellent rate of retention over the course and high level for progression to employment. However, university careers service data does not reveal the status of that employment, whether temporary or permanent. Based on internal evidence, namely contacts sustained by the programme director, it varies from subject to subject.

2.   Focus of the inspection

The inspection was conducted in the terms of the DE *Circular 2010/03 Initial Teacher Education: Approval of Programmes* which sets out the requirements which programmes must meet to be approved by DE.

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all students the inspection evaluated:

- the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the students; and

- the School's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards.

Furthermore, the inspectors considered how well a number of broad themes, which reflect DE policy priorities for schools, are represented in the initial preparation of teachers.

The themes are:

- the extent of the students' understanding of the overarching aims, values and purposes of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC) and their preparation to put their understanding into practice in schools;

- the extent to which the students recognise, understand and respond to a wide range of individual difference amongst learners in schools; and

- how well the students are being developed to take an evaluative and critical approach to teaching, assessment and learning.

Where evidence is available to report on aspects of the broad themes, they are included in this report. More detail on the purpose and method of inspection and of the evidence base is given in Appendix A. Visits to selected schools to inspect a sample of the students' school placement were undertaken towards the end of the first school placement; the campus inspection visit took place in the middle of the PGCE programme.

The aim of the DE Learning Leaders strategy is to, 'empower the teaching profession to strengthen its professionalism and expertise to meet the challenging educational needs of young people in the 21st century'. Therefore, the inspectors reviewed the 'opportunities and responsibilities,' (Learning Leaders: A strategy for teacher professional learning (DE, 2016, page 23)) of the strategy as they relate to student teachers. The PGCE programme, by design, enables the students to develop relevant responsibilities in an effective way for this stage of their development as teachers. Furthermore, the PGCE programme was reviewed against the expectations in the Learning Leaders strategy for 'providers of professional learning' (Ibid, page 25) and, where evidence of relevant expectations to initial teacher education was available there was a reasonable match with the strategy.

The inspection process also informs the self-evaluation and improvement planning of the provider.   The report contains brief illustrations of effective practice, as evaluated by the provider and validated by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

The Digital Leaders programme is designed to develop a collaborative community of practice focused on promoting the development of digital skills from current to 'next' practice.   Presently in the pilot phase (2018-19), the programme aligns with key aspects of the Learning Leaders strategy and endeavours to develop a disposition towards self-directed and peer-led professional learning.   All primary and post-primary PGCE students participate in the weekly sessions where digital skills are cascaded within subject groups by peers. In semester one there is a focus on skill development and attaining Apple Teacher status, while in semester two, work focuses on embedding strategies within classroom practice to support learning and teaching including assessment, lesson starters, plenaries and supporting pupils with additional educational needs. Students may elect to submit an optional assignment for Learning and Leading with Digital Technologies accruing an additional ten level 7 credits in readiness for future professional learning opportunities.

3.   Overall findings of the inspection of the Primary PGCE

Overall effectiveness	The provider has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Quality of provision	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

3.1   Outcomes for learners

The students are highly motivated, displaying high levels of commitment and professional behaviour in their interactions with staff and with one another.   They are developing well their personal teaching styles and work effectively independently, in pairs and small groups, showing interest and respect for the opinions of others.

The quality of the lessons taught by the students, which were observed on school placement, ranged from good to very good, with over one-quarter very good.   The students benefit to very good effect from applying their teaching skills and learning in different primary key stage contexts.

They reflect upon and challenge their own thinking to achieve a deeper understanding of their developing effectiveness as a teacher.   They develop and use competently a range of ICT skills and equipment to support and enhance their learning.

Creating Animation through Shared Education: Primary Five pupils from two local primary schools in collaboration with primary PGCE teacher education students, engage in shared workshops and explore themes of Identity and Rights and the Child through the following curriculum areas: ICT/PDMU/The Arts and Using Communication. The PGCE primary students are learning mentors for the pupils and use iPads with animation software as a vehicle to facilitate these workshops. Each learning mentor is assigned to a group of children from both primary schools to support the development of their animation project. The pupils produce animations based on their theme. Storyboarding helps scaffold this process encouraging children to reinforce their Literacy and ICT skills.

At the point of inspection almost all of the students were making very good progress measured against the General Teaching Council's (GTCNI) teacher competency framework as well as developing their capacity to reflect critically on their own practice. Their related knowledge and understanding of the overarching aims, principles and content of the Northern Ireland primary curriculum is also very well developed.

3.2   Quality of provision

The quality of the teaching sessions and practical activities observed during the inspection of on-campus teaching ranged from very good to outstanding. Most of the teaching and learning observed was very good or better, with one-quarter outstanding.

The lecturers work adeptly and as a cohesive team to support and guide the all-round development and progress of the students. The most effective practice was characterised by: well-planned activities which encouraged the students to lead, reflect on and redirect their own learning to improve further their teaching; the excellent working relationships between the lecturers and the students; and the effective use of small group and one-to-one support.

The students respond positively and enthusiastically to the very well-balanced combination of lectures, tutorials, micro-teaching, guest talks and coaching sessions. To improve further the provision, there is a need for the course team to keep under review the balance between the areas of primary learning across the foundation stage, key stage one and key stage two.

The students are provided with excellent opportunities to undertake a range of additional award-bearing courses, including work with a focus on: digital literacy, understanding difficulties in literacy development, physical literacy and fundamental movement skills. These opportunities enhance significantly the students' employability.

Students can add to their physical education (PE) competence through taking additional short training courses for teaching physical literacy, physical development and fundamental movement. Some of the key benefits of obtaining the following qualification has resulted in increased employability prospects and specialist PE knowledge and understanding. Student teachers avail of grassroots level coaching opportunities in the following sporting areas: Football (IFA); Volleyball (NIVB); Gaelic Athletic Association sports; Badminton (Ulster Badminton); Rugby (IRFU) and Hockey (IH).

A wide range of aspects of inclusion and diversity are addressed generally in the provision, as well as through a module on special education and inclusion which prepares the students to teach in classrooms where the learners present with an increasingly diverse range of needs.

The students respond well to the safe and secure environment created by the staff and their peers. The university-wide support services are designed well to support those students who may need more immediate access to care and welfare.

3.3 Leadership and management

The primary course team works very effectively to develop important partnerships with schools in the local and wider community. In many instances the course tutors maintain working relationships with the students after they have moved into the induction phase of their careers.

The PGCE course co-ordinator who leads skilfully, and by example, has inspired the commitment and confidence of the staff, based on a clear, perceptive understanding of the needs and interests of the students.

The course team have a shared strategic vision for the course, with an appropriate focus on broadening opportunities and progression to career entry for beginning teachers, and on raising the standards attained.

A priority is afforded to staff professional development through, for example, opportunities based on the latest educational research to inform teaching and to raise the standards.

There is an important focus on sustaining a strong culture of continuous improvement which permeates all aspects of provision, ensuring that the provision is aligned well to the current and emerging needs of children in primary schools.

As a result, and with the support, hard work and dedication of the team, the complementary internal and external quality assurance processes provide evidence of significant improvements in the quality of the provision over the past four years. The development plan and associated action plans take account of the developing needs and interests of the students. Changes to plans are supported by the module evaluations and by weekly online blogs which underpin an effective consultation with the students.

3.4 Overall effectiveness of the Primary PGCE

The provider has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

4. Overall findings of the inspection of the post-primary PGCE

Overall effectiveness	The provider has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Quality of provision	Very Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding

4.1 Outcomes for learners

The students are very well prepared to become teachers. They are highly motivated, displaying high levels of maturity and self-confidence in their interactions with lecturers and with one another.

They are developing very well the competencies appropriate for student teachers and are fully committed to upholding the core values of GTCNI. They understand well the overarching aims, values and purposes of the Northern Ireland curriculum.

In seminars and workshops time is given to explore the importance of the theory and practice of reflection with the view that students should be taught how to reflect rather than assume they can reflect.

On school placements, the annotation of daily lesson plans is a feature which the students regard as beneficial in identifying areas for improvement. There is a focus on students being able to evaluate and reflect both upon their teaching and on the learning. Across all subject areas, students produce weekly reflections that allow them to reflect in depth and post on a shared platform, enabling students to read one another's reflections, thereby contributing to a community of practice. The university has introduced various reflective frameworks including (Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, 1988 and Rolf et al Reflective Model, 2001) to support students in structuring their thoughts.

Based on ongoing research and feedback from students, the School continues to improve approaches to reflective practice. For example: during the past two years the university has introduced the use of audio and video-recorded reflections. Many students opt to audio-record their reflection, preferring this approach to written reflections; providing students with a choice of communication media has been a worthwhile development.

The students benefit from learning experiences that nurture independence, creativity and problem-solving skills, in order to ensure they are better equipped to grow as effective and reflective practitioners. They are able to apply their learning, skills and their theoretical understanding of education to their teaching. The quality of teaching by the students, which was observed during school placements, was mostly of a high standard.

The students are being well developed to take a reflective, evaluative and critical approach to teaching and learning.   They have excellent digital literacy skills and, as an example of a range of curricular enhancements, are on course to achieve the status of 'Apple Teacher'.

Entry to the post-primary pathway is very competitive; there is a high rate of retention over the course, and also of progression to employment. However, university careers service data does not reveal the status of that employment, whether temporary or permanent.   Based on contacts sustained by the programme directors it varies considerably from subject to subject.

4.2   Quality of provision

The quality of the lessons and practical activity sessions observed during the inspection ranged from good to outstanding.   Nearly all of the teaching and learning observed was very good.   A high-quality, supportive learning environment is provided for the students within which there are excellent working relationships.

A significant strength of the provision is the high quality modelling by the lecturers of good practice, which sets high standards in utilising appropriate methodologies, as well as promoting a tenacious reflective focus on the learning and pastoral needs of all pupils.

The students respond positively and enthusiastically to the very well-balanced combination of specialist workshops, mixed seminars and practical sessions; teaching is research-informed and a particular strength is the appropriate focus on self-review and critical reflection.

The curriculum is supplemented appropriately with input provided by specialist external agencies and current school practitioners to enrich and extend further the positive learning experiences provided for the students.   A well-developed virtual learning environment supports learning and teaching across the PGCE.

The PGCE is designed effectively to develop the students' knowledge and critical appraisal of the Northern Ireland curriculum.   It addresses a wide range of challenges arising for teachers from increasingly diverse school populations and prepares the students to be inclusive in their teaching responses.

The curriculum is designed to enable each student to enrol both in a main subject course and in a subsidiary course.   In principle, the provision of a subsidiary subject is advantageous for students by broadening their capacity to offer to teach more than one main subject, when employed.

However, the course team recognises that not all of the current subsidiary courses are well enough attuned to the needs of subjects and pathways provided currently across post-primary schools, particularly at key stage four and at post-16 level.   The findings of the inspection confirm that their intention to review the subsidiary choices is timely and appropriate.

A level 7 Masters module on SEN and inclusion offers students the option to combine their main subject with expertise related to learning support for the inclusion of vulnerable groups. The module is designed specifically to develop the skills of post-primary subject specialists in supporting young people who have difficulties reading fluently. Across the first school placement each student works closely with one child identified by the school as needing support to read fluently. The student teacher produces a criteria-based portfolio of evidence for the assessment of the module.

All of the programme directors are research-active, publishing refereed research papers and/or undertaking doctorate research, in some cases in collaboration with academic colleagues in other higher education institutions in this and other jurisdictions, including through the SCoTENS organisation.   The school is rated joint first in the research excellence framework amongst UK higher education institutions for the impact of its research in education. Importantly, the research infuses the teaching, models for the students the place of research-informed practice and, through course assignments and reflective practice exercises and influences the development of their enquiry-based approach to self-evaluation.

Geography and Technology and Design tutors have been using 360 degree camera technology for micro-teaching and virtual fieldtrips as a means of developing pedagogy in initial teacher education.   Additionally, collaborative work between Geography and Technology and Design lecturers with colleagues in Computing at Queen's University Belfast, develops students' skills in the creation of reusable digital learning objects to support subject teaching through virtual and augmented realities.   It is planned that the capacity of virtual reality to connect learning across classrooms, schools and sectors in the spirit of creating shared learning experiences across Northern Ireland and, potentially, across the island of Ireland will become the focus of research led by Ulster University.

Four supernumerary places are available each year for students interested in teaching in post- primary Irish-medium education (IME).   The students are identified during recruitment to the PGCE and undergo selection by St Mary's University College to join an IME enhancement course taught by the College, in coordination with the University, and leading to the award of a Certificate in Bilingual Education by the College.   The course aims to prepare post-primary PGCE students to teach in Irish by developing their Irish language competence and their knowledge and understanding of immersion education, in parallel with their PGCE studies. The co-ordination of the enhancement course is effective and, as a result develops: the students' knowledge and understanding of IME; their awareness of the professional skills required to teach their specialist subject(s) through the medium of Irish; and their independence, flexibility and creativity to improve their competence in Irish (Learning Leaders: A strategy for teacher professional learning (DE, 2016, page 23)).

The PGCE curriculum ensures that the students are familiar with the 'opportunities and responsibilities'[9] for student teachers set out in DE's Learning Leaders strategy. Furthermore, the capacity of the students to develop a critical, reflective approach to practice is developed well through the design of the curriculum, the teaching, assessment and self-assessment of their coursework, in particular the Professional Development Project, and their school experience.

The array of support services provided by the University for the students and the 'triage' approach for those students who require immediate help and support impacts positively on their care and welfare.

4.3   Leadership and management

The strategic direction of the leadership, planning and provision of the PGCE to meet the needs of schools in Northern Ireland in the future is outstanding and reflected in the excellent outcomes and achievements attained by the students.

The post-primary PGCE coordinator provides highly effective strategic leadership and inspires collegiality, trust and respect amongst the post-primary team. The team share a vision for improvement underpinned by rigorous self-evaluation, effective analysis of data and the sharing of good practice. There is an embedded culture of critical reflection and self- evaluation, highly informed through ongoing research.

The PGCE subject course programme directors have a very good range of experience and expertise. They are highly skilled professionals, who lead by example, provide excellent role models for the students and are exemplary advocates for their subject areas. The students' views are sought and acted upon and effective consultation leads to a perceptive understanding of their needs and interests.

The lecturers work collegially to plan and enhance the provision to ensure that the students have consistent high quality teaching and learning experiences and, to challenge them to be effective practitioners. While the 2018-19 Programme Development Plan identifies an appropriate number of actions for continued improvement, the process for monitoring, evaluation and review is not sufficiently well set out and needs developed in more detail.

4.4   Overall effectiveness of the post-primary PGCE

The provider has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The inspection was conducted within the terms of the Department of Education (DE) *Circular 2010/03 Initial Teacher Education: Approval of Programmes* which sets out the requirements which programmes must meet to be approved by DE. In order to meet the standard of being at least *satisfactory* as evaluated by the ETI (as set out in the Circular), the provision may have some areas for improvement which are judged by the ETI to be within the capacity of the provider to amend, but must not require significant or urgent improvement in any aspect.

The ETI document Self-evaluation and inspection of initial teacher education provision (ETI 2018) sets out the approach for the inspection in more detail.

In advance of the visit, the provider produced a portfolio for the reaccreditation process as required by for the General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland (GTCNI).

Lecturers were also invited to identify and describe briefly instances of good practice which illustrate aspects of the self-evaluation and inspection framework. A selection of these is included in this report.

The arrangements for this inspection included: a meeting with representatives from the senior University leaders, including the vice-chancellor, pro-vice chancellor, deans and provost; formal discussions with students (in groups) and staff with specific responsibilities; review of documentation and data.

PRIMARY

The ETI inspected a sample of seven school experience sessions and observed the assessment of and feedback to the students. The visits to schools also allowed for a range of informal talks with, for example, teacher-tutors, teachers, and principals in primary schools. Inspectors also held discussions with students during visits to school-based work placements.

In the week of 11 February 2019 a team of inspectors carried out a campus based inspection at the Ulster University. The inspectors observed instances of learning and teaching first-hand; including eight sessions taught by two academic staff, ranging from lectures, seminars and practical workshops in specialist subjects, to presentations by students.

POST-PRIMARY

The ETI inspected a sample of nine school experience sessions and observed the assessment of and feedback to the students. The visits to schools also allowed for a range of informal talks with, for example, teacher-tutors, teachers, heads of department and principals in post- primary schools. Inspectors also held discussions with students during visits to school-based work placements.

In the week of 11 February 2019 a team of inspectors carried out a campus based inspection at the Ulster University. The inspectors observed instances of learning and teaching first-hand; including 31 sessions taught by eight academic staff, ranging from lectures, seminars and practical workshops in specialist subjects, to presentations by students.

During the campus based inspection of the primary and post-primary PGCE inspectors talked, formally and informally, to a selection of students and lecturers; discussed samples of the students' work with the lecturers and students concerned; attended leadership meetings and discussions; scrutinised policy, planning, quality assurance and evaluation documents; and reviewed the resources, including the provision for learning online. The inspectors and the academic staff engaged in significant discussions which focused on their roles, responsibilities and processes in place for self-evaluation to inform ongoing improvement.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management (and the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable):

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the provider for this programme:

The provider has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.
The provider demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.
The provider needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The provider needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.