

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/20/8h)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

4 June 2020

Agenda Item 5.4.5

EXTENSION OF APPROVAL

COVER SHEET

*Presenter: Professor R Fee*

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Unit 9Ai: PGCE Education

To consider a proposal for a two-year extension to the period of approval for PGCE Education.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

4 June 2020

**UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER**

**REQUEST TO EXTEND APPROVAL AND POSTPONE REVALIDATION**

**Form CA6b)**

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**SECTION A: FACULTY REQUEST**

FACULTY: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

SCHOOL: Education

REVALIDATION UNIT NUMBER AND NAME: 9A1 – Education (PGCE)

MONTH/YEAR CURRENTLY SCHEDULED: May 2019

PERIOD OF EXTENSION REQUESTED: 1.5 years (2021/22 academic year)  
(eg one year to include the September 2018 intake)

COURSE(S):  
(Identify specific courses unless the whole unit)

REASON FOR REQUEST: The COVID-19 outbreak has necessitated the postponement of remaining revalidations in the current year. Following discussions with the Executive Dean and Associate Dean, as part of a wider Faculty review of courses, the Faculty wishes to request a longer postponement of the PGCE Unit 9A1 provision to enable time to review the operation of the programmes within that unit and that will include a detailed consideration of the provision, engagement with stakeholders and government departments, to consider the effectiveness of the current operation of the programmes. This will require the reconsideration of the number of revalidation unit coordinators, to appoint one overall coordinator to lead the agreed actions from the review, and to implement in the revalidation process. The Faculty would appreciate a rescheduled date early in the 2021/22 academic year to facilitate this comprehensive review.

**CURRENCY AND VALIDITY:**

(Please confirm that the curriculum remains current and valid and provide evidence of this (eg extract from most recent external examiner reports and those of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body)

The work on the PGCE programmes within Unit 9A1 is reviewed by 10 external examiners (one for each PGCE subject area, including an overall external for all the post-primary programmes, and two for the PGCE Primary course). The external examiners continue to be exceptionally supportive of the currency and validity of the programmes and examples are included below:

PGCE Primary report (2019) confirmed this:

“I was impressed, yet again, by the volume and quality of candidates’ work covering all aspects of the Primary PGCE course. Considering the volume of work, evident from samples of assignments received and the ‘Teaching Folders’ on display in the PGCE room during the week of my visit, it is a credit to the students that they maintained such a high quality of work. As in previous years, PGCE students are graduates from a wide range of primary degree subjects with many not having prior experience of humanities style essay writing and

the initial assignments overlapping with preparation for the first teaching placement created difficulties for some students. This led to some of them focusing on one to the detriment of the other. It is a credit to the tutors and to the work of the students that any drop in standards was quickly identified and remedied following appropriate guidance and feedback with subsequent assignments being completed to a more consistently high standard.... The standards of academic and professional practice are favourably comparable with institutions that the EE team have knowledge of.

The extent of work and demands placed on Primary PGCE students was particularly evident in their 'Teaching Folders'. These volumes of copious preparatory notes, plans and resources for teaching exemplify outstanding practice. The initial, more detailed 'lesson plans' are of a very high standard, meticulously outlining each individual lesson taught. While students found these to be very time consuming and laborious, they laid strong foundations for the shorter lesson plan format later in the year and embedded good practice in all aspects of lesson planning. The continued use of these formats enables students to develop good habits from the outset and facilitates high quality learning and teaching during student placements."

PGCE Post Primary overall external examiner report (2019) confirmed this:

"The External Examiners recognise that the PGCE programme has a very good structure and the team keeps an eye on the balance between ongoing enhancements to promote employability whilst, mind-full of the well-being of students in a busy training year. Curriculum content is current and relevant to teaching and learning in the various subject areas.

The PGCE course team are to be congratulated on their inspection outcomes, and in managing the additional demands of the inspection without affecting the quality experienced by the students. The examiners commented that the students were more positive this year. The course is in excellent hands and continues to develop within a collaborative team. The students continue to hold in high regard their course tutors."

In 2019, the PGCE Primary and Post-Primary programmes were inspected by the Department of Education's Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) who rated both provisions as "outstanding", which is the highest level of inspection rating. Following this inspection, the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland subsequently re-accredited the PGCE Primary and Post-Primary provision until June 2023. The ETI confirmed that they are very happy with the PGCE 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."

#### STANDARDS AND QUALITY:

(Please confirm that quality is high and there are no concerns. Provide evidence of this through external examiner reports and annual monitoring datasets and reports)

The external examiners remain content with the quality of the PGCE programme and associated student work. The Overall PGCE post-primary external examiner confirmed this in the 2019 report:

"There was agreement across the EE team that the quality of the work of the students was of a standard equivalent to that demonstrated in similar programmes elsewhere in the UK.

This is supported by the report from the PGCE Primary external examiner:

"The main strength of Primary PGCE at Coleraine is the high standards set for all students, particularly in classroom practice. These standards are clearly conveyed, modelled and understood and a high level of practice is embedded and reinforced from the outset. This pattern of outstanding practice based on current ISEF Framework descriptors has been a consistent trait of PGCE at Coleraine for decades and has resulted in University of Ulster PGCE students being regarded as a 'cut above' other student teachers. Indeed, last year, one Principal went as far as stating that the University of Ulster was the only teacher training institution that she would be prepared to take students from."

The PGCE programmes continue to have low attrition rates, with an average of 3.5% withdrawal rate and no students failing the programme. Furthermore, the high number of external examiners across the PGCE programmes ensures extensive level of external ongoing scrutiny of the programme.

PSRB (if applicable):

(Please confirm that any deferral will be accommodated by the PSRB and that accreditation will be ongoing for the full duration of the deferral)

The General Teaching Council and Education and Training Inspectorate's approval lasts for a period of 4 and 5 years respectively, so the deferral of the PGCE revalidation to 2021/22 will not alter those timescales and both bodies will form part of the Faculty review of the programmes.

DEMAND:

Demand for PGCE programmes remains very strong with an average of 800-900 applications per year for a total of 113 places.

FACULTY PARTNERSHIP MANAGER'S ASSESSMENT (for partner institutions only):

**FACULTY CONFIRMATION:**

SIGNED:  \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: 20 May 2020 \_\_\_\_\_  
Associate Dean (Education)

The completed form should be returned to the Academic Office, Room J410, Tower Building, Coleraine.

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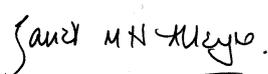
**SECTION B: ACADEMIC OFFICE COMMENTS:**

Unit 9A1 comprising the PGCE suite of programmes was due for revalidation in 2019/20 academic year and the request is for a two year extension of the period of approval and revalidation in the early part of the 2021/22 academic year. Review of external examiner reports indicated that the provision has an extremely strong reputation in the sector, indeed all the examiner reports provide extensive and very detailed positive comments on the both programmes and the learning of students and indicate excellence in quality and standards. The finding of the ETI of an 'outstanding' outcome on the provision gives further confidence to the view that there is little risk to quality and standards when considering an extension to approval.

SIGNED:  \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: 20 May 2020 \_\_\_\_\_  
Academic Policy and Standards Manager or Head of Academic Office

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**SECTION C: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT ASSESSMENT (reflecting annual monitoring data)**



SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: 21 May  
2020 \_\_\_\_\_  
Head of Quality Enhancement

**SECTION D: ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE  
(delegated authority from Senate)**

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING:

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

Late requests (in-year and no imminent Committee meeting) (actioned by Chair on behalf of ASQEC)

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair ASQEC

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE REPORTED TO ASQEC:

Academic Office  
July 2019