

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/19/7a

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

13 March 2019

Agenda Item 11.1

INSTITUTIONAL RE-APPROVAL: NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON SERVICE
COLLEGE (NIPSC), HYDEBANK WOOD

COVER SHEET

To receive the report for the Institutional Re-approval of NIPSC and to endorse the recommendation for continuing approval.

INSTITUTIONAL RE-APPROVAL: NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON SERVICE COLLEGE, HYDEBANK WOOD**1. INTRODUCTION**

The Northern Ireland Prison Service College (NIPSC) submitted an IA2 form to the University on 6 August 2018, seeking institutional re-approval. An initial assessment by Quality Enhancement (QE) recommended that the NIPSC be deemed 'low risk'. This recommendation was endorsed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) on 7 August 2018, resulting in a desk-based review undertaken by QE, supported by the Faculty Partnership Manager (FPM) and the subject expert.

A detailed Institutional Re-Approval Document (IRD) was received from NIPSC on 20 November 2018. This report details the findings of the review.

2. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) is an agency within the Department of Justice. It is responsible for the operation and delivery of services within the Northern Ireland prison system. Its main statutory duties are set out in the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1953.

The Prison Service headquarters is located at Dundonald House in the Stormont Estate. There are three prison establishments, namely, Maghaberry, Magilligan and Hydebank Wood College and Women's Prison.

The NIPSC is located at Hydebank Wood College. The Prison College moved to Hydebank Wood College from Millisle in 2016. The training wing is located within a live prison environment.

The role of the NIPSC is to support the NIPS in its objectives by:

- Developing and implementing training strategies which meets the business needs of the Service
- Supporting local management in identifying the skills, knowledge and aptitudes required for all posts and locations within the Service and developing staff training programmes to meet those needs
- Providing quality development and training to help staff carry out their agreed role and fulfil their agreed potential
- Evaluating training and development to ensure its effectiveness
- Producing and developing the training and development of NIPS specialists
- Managing the central training budget to ensure value for money.

The core business of the College includes induction training, discipline training for recruits and officers, management development, professional development through a wide range of nationally recognised vocational qualifications, specialist training including incident management, hostage awareness, level 2 search training and specialist dog training skills.

3. SCOPE OF ACTIVITY

The NIPSC offers a Certificate in Custody Prison Officer Practice approved by Ulster University. This is a nine-week intensive programme offered in Hydebank Wood for all new recruits into the Prison Service, followed by a further period of twenty-two months mentoring and assessment by NIPSC staff when the new recruits move out into a prison establishment. The award of the Certificate follows successful submission of a portfolio of work.

The teaching is led and managed by the Prison College staff with direct input into teaching and assessment by Ulster University staff.

The current contract between the NI Prison Service and Ulster University followed a competitive tender process in 2016. It is projected that there will be at least three hundred and sixty officers to be trained in the period of 2017 – 2020. The average cohort size is approximately fifteen students.

4. NIPS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND VISION

The core purpose of the NIPS is to improve public safety by reducing the risk of re-offending through the management and rehabilitation of offenders in our custody.

Vision

The Northern Ireland Prison Service will:

- Be well led and competently managed
- Have fit, flexible, motivated, well trained and well rewarded staff
- Be compact and cost effective
- Have the offender at the centre of its focus
- Reduce the risk of offenders re-offending on release
- Be respected and valued by the community we serve.

This collaboration with NIPSC contributes to the civic contribution priority within the University's Five & Fifty Strategy.

5. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The NIPSC has eight trainers who are responsible for delivering training to all staff within the NIPS as well as training new recruits to the service. This includes Custody Prison Officers (CPO), Night Custody Officers (NCO) and Prison Custody Officers (PCO). All CPO's are enrolled onto the Certificate of Competence (CoC) and complete an initial nine-week course and are then posted to an establishment to work. During the next 12 – 18 months they complete their portfolio which will be

the evidence for their CoC. NCO's also complete the nine-week course but their job shadowing is carried out on Night Shifts. PCO's work within the Courts and also complete a nine-week initial course.

The NIPSC has no formal committee with oversight of the Certificate programme. The Head of Learning and Development within the Prison College reports directly to the NIPS.

6. STANDARDS MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The admissions and enrolment procedures have been in place since the inception of the programme and are in line with Ulster University's requirements. There are some anomalies in the procedures due to the security situation and the risk this profession poses. These are managed through the FPM who has full oversight of all the procedures in place and manages them with support from the subject expert within the Faculty. All finances are paid directly in line with the University's policy.

The purpose of the assessment strategy on the Certificate is to ensure that the students have the skills, knowledge and experience to carry out the role of a CPO competently. The assessment methods act as a clear marker to students and the College of individual progress. Formative or summative feedback is provided.

The course uses five main methods of assessment and are:

- Class Tests
- Work based assignment
- Practical Exercises-both assessed and non assessed
- Reflective Logs
- Supervised Practice via Portfolio of Learning

The class tests are marked by the tutor using a marking guide and the results are given to each student. If they do not attain the required standard they will be given feedback on which areas they need to focus on.

Students have to pass each of their class tests. If they do not attain the pass mark, they will be given one opportunity to re-sit the class test and a developmental process will be put in place.

The results of the tests are moderated by the External Examiner to identify any potential issues with individual questions or students. The External Examiner, in his annual report, confirms that the standards are appropriate for the award of the Certificate. The External Examiner commented that he was impressed with the wide range of modules taught and the range of assessment methods.

Quality assurance processes are in place to ensure the assessments are fair, valid, reliable and standardised. These include rotating markers for each cohort the use of second marking and Ulster University oversight and contributions. University staff teach "approaches to reflective writing" in week one of each course. Throughout the course students are given full detail of the assessments being conducted and the assessment criteria being used. The Prison College

team also maintain a course policy log throughout the year to capture all key activities within the course.

The students are fully involved in the quality process through regular Staff Student Consultative Committee meetings, regular one-to-one feedback sessions and reflective practice. This take place during the initial nine-weeks and the following twenty-two months. The FPM and External Examiner meet regularly with students affording them a safe environment to voice any concerns or developmental points. The External Examiner states that staff create a climate of openness, rapport and professional purpose from the outset. Students are immersed in a team ethos with a common purpose and a sense of belonging to encourage them to quality assure and future proof everything they do.

There are no specific Committees within the NIPSC overseeing standards and quality assurance for the Certificate programme. The FPM and subject expert from Ulster University ensure that all of the University's quality assurance processes are followed, taking account of the mode of delivery and the security aspects associated with delivering this programme. The External Examiner is fully engaged in ensuring academic standards are met.

The NIPSC fully engages in the University's annual course review process and no significant areas of concern have been identified. A representative from the NIPSC is a member of the Collaborative Partnerships Forum.

7. STUDENT SUPPORT

There is a detailed induction process for all students delivered by both NIPSC and Ulster University staff. It is structured to ensure students are fully aware of the course regulations, requirements and policies. The induction also provides detailed procedures based on student support and guidance as highlighted in the course handbook.

New recruits and their families are invited to the Prison Service College at Hydebank Wood the week before their course commences for an open night. This is the start of the induction process. It is an opportunity for recruits and their family to see the College and meet tutors.

Lead tutors talk the recruits through the nine-week programme. Recruits are also given a Student Handbook to read. The Handbook also contains information on the nine-week course, professional standards as well as ethical and professional frameworks, portfolio of learning, practical assessments, class tests and written assignments. Upon commencement of the nine-week course the students are again given an overview of the course. They are given a full tour of the College, including library and IT resources.

During week one of initial training all students are interviewed on a one-to-one basis and any special needs identified are addressed and relevant adjustments made. Each cohort is also assigned a Support Officer who will also make interventions if appropriate.

Students with special educational needs will be encouraged to seek support from college staff in order to ensure their needs are met. One of the two Lead Tutors is responsible for Student Support and Welfare.

The appeals and complaints procedures are highlighted in the student handbook. These meet the Ulster quality assurance requirements. However students are not informed that they have a final right of appeal to the University.

The Lead Tutor also goes over the appeals and complaints process during the first day's induction. During the first week of initial training there is a session on the assignment overview during which the appeals and assessment procedures are covered again. This ensures the students are clear about the process and who they should approach if they need to make a complaint or appeal. Students will be fully supported throughout the process if they need to use it.

8. RESOURCES

8.1 Human Resources

There are currently nine training staff, three of whom were selected in late November 2017. As a minimum all tutors hold the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) award. The six established trainers also hold additional teaching qualifications. Tutors continue to develop by attending relevant courses that help maintain their knowledge and skills. Other areas such as safe TALK facilitators, Health and Safety trainers have also been taken on by the staff. NIPSC staff attend Ulster University staff development events.

Each training unit in Maghaberry, Magilligan and Hydebank has an administration officer who takes care of all administration functions (bookings, class set up, record updates etc). The NIPSC has three Administration Officers and one vacant post. They also have a manager who answers directly to the Head of Learning and Development. The establishment admin staff and NIPSC admin staff also assist in the management of the programme as and when required.

Staff CVs are currently up to date and new members complete them as required. Staff CVs are approved by the FPM

8.2 IT and Library Resources

The NIPSC moved from Millisle to Hydebank Wood in December 2015.

The College has its own facilities within Hydebank which consists of seven multifunctional rooms. There are two classrooms which hold eighteen students, and one classroom that can hold twenty five students. One classroom is used as a large break out area that can also be set up in a boardroom fashion or as a standard class holding twenty. There are three other smaller rooms which are used as break out areas, meeting rooms or small classrooms.

Six of the rooms have large screen TV's with PC's. Various styles of seating are provided. Flip charts and writing materials are also provided.

There is a dedicated room for reading materials.

The IT facility has been upgraded with the acquisition of a further two computers for students. The suite now has twelve computers. The accommodation at Hydebank has undergone extensive renovation to make it suitable as a training venue. This included painting rooms, new flooring, new furniture and a new IT suite. A major gain has been the development of a prison wing as a dedicated training venue used for a wide range of training exercises and is vastly superior to what was formerly available.

Library resources are somewhat limited but are sufficient to enable students to research the necessary literature as required within the programme. Some efforts are being made to upgrade the facilities such as considering the possibility of setting up a BBL area to be populated for the students in the future. The FPM and subject expert have confirmed that library services are adequate.

There is also a dedicated training office in Maghaberry which also provides two additional classrooms for teaching. Other specialist training such as Control and Restraint is also carried out in Maghaberry.

9. CONCLUSION AND CONDITION OF APPROVAL

The review of documentation provided by the NIPSC, together with the Faculty and University's ongoing monitoring and review arrangements, continue to provide broad confidence in the ability of NIPSC to fulfil the requirements of the Memorandum of Recognition.

Committee is asked to endorse the recommendation that the NIPSC be approved as a collaborative partner of Ulster University for a further period of five years subject to the following condition:

- i) As part of the University's student complaints procedures students must be made aware at induction and in the Guide for New Recruits that they have a final right of appeal to the University.