



Quality Review

Peer Review Report

Department of Educational  
Psychology, Inclusive &  
Special Education (EPISE)

January 2021



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## Introduction

MIC's quality review process, as applied to both academic departments and professional services, was developed and continues to evolve in order to satisfy the College's [Quality Policy](#) and meet legislative QA requirements. MIC complies with the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#), which places a legal responsibility on the provider and linked provider to establish procedures in writing for quality assurance for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training, research and related services. (Part 3, Section 28). These QA procedures must take due account of relevant quality guidelines issued by [Quality and Qualifications Ireland \(QQI\)](#) and/or predecessor organisations. QQI is the statutory body responsible for reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of QA procedures adopted and implemented by higher (and further) educational institutions within Ireland.

The periodic quality review of functional areas (academic and professional service) within the College represents a cornerstone institutional QA/QE mechanism.

### MIC's Quality Review Process

The purpose of the quality review process is:

- To provide a structured opportunity for the department to engage in periodic and strategic evidence-based self-reflection and assessment in the context of the quality of its activities and processes, and to identify opportunities for quality improvement
- To provide a framework by which external peers, in an evidence-based manner, can independently review, evaluate, report upon and suggest improvements to the quality of the department's activities and processes
- To provide a framework by which the department implements quality improvements in a verifiable manner
- To provide MIC, its students, its prospective students and other stakeholders with independent evidence of the quality of the department's activities
- To ensure that all MIC departments are evaluated in a systematic and standardised manner in accordance with good international practice and in support of the objectives of the College's Quality Policy
- To satisfy good international practice in the context of quality assurance in higher education and to meet statutory QA requirements as enshrined in national law

### Overview of the Quality Review Process for Academic Departments

The MIC Quality Review process consists of three phases:

**1. Self-Assessment**

The department under review conducts a self-evaluation exercise and writes a self-assessment report (SAR)

**2. Peer Review**

A Peer Review Group (PRG) comprising external experts, both national and international, review the SAR, meet with Department members and stakeholders and produce a report (this report), which is made publicly available on the MIC Quality Office webpage

### **3. Quality Improvement.**

The department considers the recommendations of the PRG, devises a quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to implement them and reports implementation progress to Quality Committee and MIC Executive Team.

### **Department of Educational Psychology, Inclusive and Special Education (EPISE)**

[The Department of Educational Psychology, Inclusive and Special Education](#) resides within the Faculty of Education. The Department's mission is to positively influence and lead, through the cultivation of collaborative research and knowledge exchange, a more inclusive society with the highest possible levels of inclusion and independence for learners with diverse needs.

The work of the EPISE Department is philosophically underpinned by a recognition of the importance of equipping our graduates with skills to promote maximum levels of independence and engagement in the wider community for diverse learners. The Department also recognises the distinct contribution of special education and educational psychology to the field of inclusive education, and as such provides a continuum of education, culminating in preparing early years and initial teachers as inclusive class teachers to support the needs of diverse learners, and in-service teachers and trainee educational and child psychologists with specialist knowledge, skills and competence to meet more unique and complex needs across the Continuum of Support.

The EPISE Department strives to build leadership skills and agency amongst our graduates to promote universal, collaborative, and interdisciplinary approaches to educational psychology, inclusive and special education.

The Department serves students in eleven programmes extending from Level 4 through to Level 10 on the [National Framework of Qualifications](#) (NQF). Seven of these programmes reside in the EPISE Department. The Department contributes modules to four other programmes offered in the Faculty of Education. EPISE staff also supervise student research for doctoral and masters' degrees, and undergraduate dissertations.

#### **EPISE Department Programmes and Module Contributions**

Programme	NFQ Level
<b>Department Owned</b>	
<a href="#"><u>Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology (DEC PSY)</u></a>	10
<a href="#"><u>Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education (PGDSE)</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Master of Education in Special Education (MEd in SE)</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Graduate Certificate in Autism Studies (GCAS)</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Graduate Diploma in Autism Studies (commencing AY 2021)</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Bachelor of Education in Education and Psychology (BEd &amp; Psychology)</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Certificate in General Learning and Personal Development (CGLPD)</u></a>	4
<b>Department Contributes to</b>	
<a href="#"><u>Bachelor of Education (BEd): 6 Core Modules</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Bachelor of Education- International (BEd-I): 6 Core Modules</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Bachelor of Education (BEdSE): Elective Modules (SE Specialism):</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Professional Masters in Education (PME): 3 Core Modules:</u></a>	9

## Peer Review Group Observations

The Quality Review was conducted during a period of significant, sector-wide challenge resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been directly apparent in the review process in two principal ways.

Firstly, the organisation, evidence collation and institutional visit have all been conducted in a virtual format. This represents a new way of working, for both the Peer Review Group (PRG) and for those providing evidence. The second impact has been that there have been elements of course organisation and delivery which, throughout almost a full academic year, have required adjustment and adaptation. Both these issues are significant contextual matters which are highlighted at various points throughout the review document.

The PRG wish to acknowledgement the assistance provided by all those who have been involved in the preparation of the supporting documentation for the process, including most notably the self-assessment report (SAR) and its abundant appendices.

Grateful thanks are extended to those staff with direct responsibility for QA at MIC, and in particular Dr Deidre Ryan. The PRG has received prompt and efficient responses to any queries raised during the review period, including requests for additional information.

The PRG offers its wholehearted thanks to all of those who have participated in our discussions; their involvement has been greatly appreciated. It is recognised that the circumstances encountered during the review period have resulted in an increased and often changed workload for colleagues across Inclusive and Special Education and Psychology: in spite of this colleagues without exception have been generous with their time in providing us evidence to support the summative observations contained in this Report.

The commendations and recommendations contained in this Report are intended to provide information and a framework to support EPISE in developing further a conceptual and organisational profile that will support its development over the next decade.

The PRG's observations demonstrate that there are many instances of synergy between each of the 6 sections on which we have been asked to report. The historically close alignment between Education and Psychology is central to this, and is a relationship which offers both opportunities and challenges.

The recommendations presented attempt to balance the 'real world' challenges and opportunities facing Higher Education in the 21st Century and its role in educating those who work directly or indirectly with children/young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The PRG has sought to celebrate and draw to wider attention the effective work being undertaken by colleagues within EPISE. These achievements represent a baseline for future development. In making recommendations, it has sought to place emphasis on what might be achievable in the short-term, so that they may function as starting points and catalysts for more long-term institutional change.

The PRG has operated in a collaborative and collegiate manner. Each of the 6 sections have been coordinated by two team members and then discussed and agreed by the PRG as a whole.

The PRG was invited to comment on four generic aspects of the quality review process itself. Preceding paragraphs have referred to aspects of these. However, for completeness, the observations of the PRG regarding each is provided below.

1. The extent to which the Department engaged enthusiastically, honestly and effectively in the self-evaluation exercise

- MIC colleagues have been fully committed and involved in the review process
  - Inputs have been inclusive from within EPISE, representing a diverse range of participants
  - The leadership of EPISE has been strongly invested in the process of QA review
  - Genuine sense of ownership of the overall effort, including the challenges being faced
  - Evidence of a 'Real world' and a grounded perspective of potential areas for development
2. The Department's openness during the visit
- The PRG had access to a wide range of evidence sources
  - Additional information was provided promptly for any issue that required elaboration
  - EPISE staff were professional in their contributions and modelled a collaborative/sharing culture
  - Staff inputs were respectful, transparent and critically reflective
  - The Quality Review has illustrated a person-centred commitment throughout EPISE
3. The quality of the self-assessment report (SAR)
- The SAR document has provided a systematic and comprehensive overview and critique of EPISE's programmes and their supporting infrastructures
  - Its detailed content is indicative of considerable time and effort on the part of MIC staff
  - The accompanying appendices were highly informative to the PRG
  - The SAR document would have benefitted from direct involvement by end-users themselves (students, professionals)
  - The SAR made integrated and thoughtful use of the SCOT, though it is recognised that some aspects of its content required an updated commentary in respect of subsequent action
  - The SAR process would have been enhanced and various challenges interrogated further with direct input from the MIC executive
4. Stakeholder feedback and the extent to which the Department is fulfilling stakeholder needs
- Diverse stakeholders had opportunity to provide first-hand evidence to the PRG
  - All those involved gave an open and honest account of their experiences
  - Stakeholders affirmed the high level of subject knowledge and expertise invested in EPISE
  - They emphasised the considerable commitment on the part of EPISE colleagues to students, including their solution-finding approach to queries raised and their timely responses
  - Stakeholders were keen to acknowledge the practical relevance of a range of curricula offered by EPISE
  - Several areas for potential further development and challenge were highlighted, both in respect of the courses offered and the mechanisms to support them

The PRG was invited to report on 6 aspects of EPISE's current operations, in respect of the quality of its activities and processes. Within this it considered specifically those programmes that were wholly owned by the Department. The PRG thus placed a focus on (i) Vision, Mission, Strategy and Governance (ii) Organisation, Management and Staffing (iii) Design, Content and Review of Curriculum (iv) Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Feedback (v) The Student Experience and (vi) Research Activity. Commendations and recommendations are presented in discrete sections of this Peer Review (PR) Report together with explanatory comments. Prior to these substantive observations, several defining characteristics of each aspect of EPISE's activities are highlighted.

With respect to (i) **Vision, Mission, Strategy and Governance**, discussion with academic colleagues, students and external stakeholders has indicated the extent to which the Department's work has continued to provide a high-quality experience at a time of considerable challenge and change. Drawing on MICs substantial heritage of service to its community, both local and more distant, it is our perception that the Department has the potential to be both a catalyst and leader of change for the College during the next decade. Because of its size and significance within a free-standing university-sector College, the Department's ambitions will require structures and a progressive institutional outlook which are consistent with those of a place of learning which enables all those involved within it to reach their potential and which is outward-looking in its response to societal and cultural change. Conversations with diverse stakeholders have highlighted several structural constraints which compromise the aspirations of the Department. Accordingly, the PRG provides some practical starting points to enable progress to be made in reaching these significant goals.

Aspect (ii) **Organisation, Management and Staffing** provided indications of the high calibre of staff and leadership style which was evident throughout the discussions. Staff are fully committed to ensuring positive outcomes for all students. They are compassionate and sensitive with each other. With increasing workloads on many there is a need to balance personal life and work, alongside the ambition to develop future teaching initiatives and research-related activity. Increased student numbers, itself an indication of the Department's profile and esteem locally and nationally, brings with it a need for a viable structure to ensure that its work is distributed in such a way as to maintain the quality of provision for which it has come to be known. The PRG presents a clear viewpoint on the optimum way to address these challenges.

With regard to (iii) **Design, Content and Review of Curriculum**, the PRG acknowledged the complex and multidisciplinary nature of the academic and professional domains of Educational Psychology, Special and Inclusive Education. This is reflected in the range of programme provision overseen by EPISE. Each of these areas of subject activity is also subject to ongoing change, as a result of emerging research, shifting policy priorities and changed socio-economic and cultural circumstances. The Department has needed to be agile in its response, in order to meet the needs of its current and prospective students. PRG deliberations with stakeholders and the supporting evidence examined has identified potential opportunities for development which reflect this situation and help in adjusting current operations to better accommodate them. Several issues relating to the inter-relationships between the subject disciplines which define the Department's work have notably been acknowledged. The PRG's recommendations emphasise the balance that will be needed to ensure that existing course content remains relevant and of high quality whilst taking account of emerging opportunities for development.

In (iv) **Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Feedback**, it was evident that the quality of teaching and learning was noteworthy. The recommendations of the PRG mainly pertain to both summative and formative assessment practices, where there is an overreliance on the former and underuse of the latter. This results in higher workloads for students and staff, alike. Moreover, feedback from students

has indicated that formal assessment in some courses is nominal and does not reflect the recent trend of embedding the principles of 'assessment for learning' within the assessment process. Stakeholders recognised the pro-active responses of the Department as a result of Covid-19: the PRG recommends that these experiences are used as a way of stimulating a move towards more blended pedagogy, thus assisting in future-proofing EPISE's approach to Learning and Teaching.

The PRG noted that in the case of (v) **The Student Experience**, very positive opinions were expressed about the quality of teaching and learning and of the relationships between students and EPISE staff. Students spoke particularly highly of the commitment and support of staff, which was a consistent feature in the feedback received, at all levels. Undergraduate students were critical of the work load issues arising from the scheduling of work between the Education and Psychology Departments, which also resulted in them missing out on some elective modules. These students also recommended better coordination in relation to the assessment schedule and more variety of assessment type. Students welcomed choice in relation to essay titles. Students felt they should be asked for feedback throughout the year and get evidence that feedback was taken on board; in addition, they stated that they were not consulted on policy matters. Additionally, students recommended that placements should not coincide with exams. Students expressed a desire for EPISE-related extracurricular opportunities. Students saw these as opportunities to meet collectively and debate important educational matters. Students were highly complementary of the Course Coordinator and her commitment to address any issues arising. Students felt the class representative system was working well.

Finally, regarding (vi) **Research Activity**, discussions highlighted that the team at EPISE were very committed to being research active. This commitment is evidenced by the number of staff who have recently completed PhD / doctoral studies and the range of publications produced by the team. It equally became clear that while this commitment was very strong it was not supported by the current contractual obligations of staff. Consequently, research is often marginalised in terms of time, frequently being viewed as weekend or 'own time' work. In the past staff in Colleges of Education were not required to be research active and research was a choice made by individuals. It would appear that this culture prevails in current contractual arrangements in which teaching is front and centre in terms of expectations on staff time. This model is no longer in line with national policy (as intimated in the Sahlberg Report), nor does it constitute international best practice. The latter requires a model of teacher education that is research-led and university based. It is now timely to rebalance the expectations on staff outputs to ensure that this principle is upheld and is concretely defined in the work patterns of EPISE staff.

The PRG's summative commendations and recommendations on each of the 6 aspects it has scrutinised, with brief explanatory comments, are now presented in the remaining section of this document.

## Section 1: Vision, Mission, Strategy and Governance

### Commendations

1	Engagement with students in supporting their academic progression
2	Extensive academic and professional expertise exemplified by EPISE staff
3	Programmes which address vital local and national needs
4	Strong and committed leadership which is both enabling and inclusive
5	Forward-looking and expansive in vision of SEND and Inclusive practice
6	The Department's profile highlights its potential to look to the future with confidence

### Recommendations

Recommendation	Notes
1	Re-consider the benefits of a strategic alignment with University of Limerick (UL) to reflect the rapidly changing contexts for special and inclusive education in Ireland. EPISE's aspirations, direction of travel and associated opportunities have been extensively signalled in its SAR narrative. These efforts would be facilitated by a greater alignment with UL, (as mapped by the original Sahlberg Report). This would create the economies of scale necessary to sustain an expanding academic repertoire whilst retaining the distinctive features of EPISE.
2	Concentrated effort should be directed towards establishing a viable Workload Allocation Model (WAM) for MIC MIC colleagues work under consistent and intense pressure, but there is an absence of transparency regarding how workload is apportioned. Pilot work undertaken within EPISE suggests that a WAM is both feasible and necessary. It is recommended that this linked to an associated Resource Allocation Model (RAM) and should be College-wide and transparent in its application.
3	The number and range of programmes offered by EPISE should be reviewed EPISE provides an extensive range of courses (from U/G to Doctoral levels). A systematic review of current provision is necessary to enable new course content (e.g. leadership / EAL) to be accommodated. Sustainability planning should be a significant criterion for the continuation of existing courses.
4	EPISE's position as a 'Department' within MIC's organisational structure of schools/faculties A focus should be placed on rationalising the relationship with Psychology (within Arts), the conceptual links between Psychology and Education and the Department's operational links with the Graduate School. The emergence of a proposed

	should be examined and re-formulated.	'Centre for Inclusive Education' adds a further dimension to what is already a complex set of internal relationships between academic groupings. These are issues for MIC-wide consideration and link directly to R1, 2 and 3
5	Further scoping and development should be undertaken in configuring the proposed 'Centre for Inclusive Education'	'Inclusive Education' for the 21 century must more adequately reflect a progressive version of what this comprises in contemporary Irish and international contexts. Such a scoping exercise should include a whole-institution review of 'ethos', and its relation to broader aspects of diversity and difference. This will have major institutional implications for MIC in respect of student diversity and equality - core considerations which are aligned with authentic inclusive policy and practice
6	Teaching, learning and research needs of EPISE should be reflected in a systematic updating of some key teaching environments	Generic library accommodation and specialist IT labs for EPISE require development to ensure that student experience is of high-quality and is accessible to all.

## Section 2: Organisation, Management and Staffing

### Commendations

1	Knowledge/commitment/professionalism and a person-centred approach by staff
2	Quality of teaching across all programmes
3	Inclusive and problem-sharing approach - internal relationships are good
4	Leadership style- inclusive and distributed
5	Strong and proactive connections with constituency – schools, DES, NCSE, NEPS etc.
6	Academic activity is supported by efficient administration

### Recommendations

		Notes
1	Develop an agreed Workload Allocation Model (WAM) specific to EPISE	EPISE colleagues undertake a diverse set of duties. To ensure fairness, openness and equity of workloads across the Department, the WAM should factor in the time spent on key core areas such as teaching, research, supervision and administration. It should be developed based on pilot work within EPISE and aligned with an institution-wide WAM.
2	Establish a substantive new role of Assistant Head of Department (HoD) for EPISE	The HoD in EPISE role currently has an extensive range of significant roles and duties, often linked to administration and organisation of teaching and research. This extensive brief is likely to increase over time with the potential to deflect from strategic decision-making. An Assistant HoD would greatly assist in the sharing of academic administration, as well as providing opportunities for shared-decision making and succession-planning.
3	A review of arrangements for administrative support for all EPISE programmes should be undertaken.	The current administrative support within EPISE is under significant pressure in supporting the extensive, diverse and increasing demands by the Department and the student/staff ratios required for certain programmes: there is a rationale for additional administrative support. Consideration will need to be given to specific skill sets required for certain programmes. This exercise should link to ongoing development of the WAM.

4	Develop formal mentoring, induction and supervision programmes for EPISE staff	A forward-looking approach to incorporating academic staff support systems/frameworks underpins the maintenance of staff well-being and impact on retention. They are vital in enabling staff to understand complex organisational features and processes. The informal mentoring arrangements that have been established can be a starting point for a more formal, institutionally-recognised approach.
5	Undertake and manage risk assessments (RAs) and review on a regular basis. An associated Risk Register to identify internal and external risks for EPISE should be compiled.	EPISE staff express concern about the future viability of some courses (e.g. DEC Psy and CGLPD) due to lack of funding. RAs will highlight key challenges and identify mitigating actions for such risks. Implications for the Department and wider community could be highlighted.
6	Review the level of part-time (p-t) teaching in EPISE and the current status of 'Teaching Fellows'; any unfilled teaching positions in the Department should be clearly specified and steps taken to appoint appropriate staff.	Inputs from key external staff are vital in ensuring that EPISE's courses retain credibility and 'work-place' authenticity. Teaching in some programmes is especially dependent on inputs from p-t lecturing staff. The added-value associated with their professional skills should be formally recognised by MIC. Greater transparency is also required regarding unfilled substantive posts within EPISE. Both issues should link with the proposed WAM.

## Chapter 3: Design, Content and Review of Curriculum

### Commendations

1	Courses responsive to both local and national needs and aligned to professional standards
2	Content is high-quality, geared to practice and is widely acknowledged as such by end-users
3	Rapid adaptations resulting from COVID reflect the flexibility all staff members to respond to emerging demands
4	Courses allow coherent institutional progression by students through levels- strong commitment evident to the principle of student progression
5	Internal QA is robust and critically reflective reports from external examiners underscore the quality of courses provided
6	A progressive and supportive model of mentorship and coaching is being developed

### Recommendations

		Notes
1	The development of a stand-alone leadership module(s)/strand(s) is required	Educational leadership is a major focus for professional development in SEND and Inclusive Education. To future-proof EPISE's repertoire of courses, a suitably accredited offer at post-graduate level (in particular the PGDSEN) would enable the Department to respond effectively to local/regional and national training needs in this area.
2	Re-visit extent of EAL coverage within some modules	As with many communities elsewhere in Ireland and beyond, the demographic profile served by EPISE has changed significantly in recent years. One effect of this is that schools now accommodate learners of diverse linguistic heritage. Auditing EAL inputs to existing programmes will enable EPISE to more accurately reflect this changing social and educational landscape.
3	Formalise the role of 'student voice' in course design and course experience	Providing opportunities for student 'voice' to be heard is an important dimension in current HE systems and is a criterion by which quality of learning experience is measured. EPISE should develop a common policy and practical arrangements to ensure that students registered for all courses have formal opportunities to make inputs to course design and to provide feedback on their experiences, including assessment (see Section 4).

4	Undertake an audit of blended learning across all courses within EPISE and strategically plan to enhance	The COVID-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for the adoption of increased and diverse virtual learning. EPISE should attempt to quantify its practices relating to this, so as to ensure equity across its programmes and the fitness-for-purpose of current provision. Such an exercise will assist the Department in its actions to innovate blended-learning solutions to future-proof its teaching.
5	Consider the introduction of Inter-professional learning (e.g. health/youth)	To greater reflect the interdisciplinary nature of SEND policy and practice in both Education and Psychology in schools, it is suggested that formal dialogue is started with professional bodies in health and youth work. This should be geared to enable discussion regarding course content, assessment, placement opportunities, and inputs from professional staff.
6	For the B.Ed in Education and Psychology, consider the introduction of a formal Psychology-related placement in a relevant setting, as part of AEE	A minimum 2 week professional placement in a psychology-related setting represents an important formative experience, enabling career opportunities to be signalled and personal and professional growth to be stimulated. This has been a significant observation from the students themselves and, as such, would broaden their exposure to professional settings.

## Chapter 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Feedback

### Commendations

1	Committed and informed teaching inputs, demonstrating professional awareness
2	Consistent level of support from teaching staff in many courses
3	Prompt and effective responses to External Examiner reports, with subsequent action being taken
4	Culture of supportive critique and knowledge sharing amongst teaching teams throughout EPISE
5	Importance and value of external professional inputs to courses is widely recognised

### Recommendations

		Notes
1	Attention should be directed towards refining and diversifying assessment practices; efforts should be made to simplify credit allocations and align them with Bologna specifications.	There is a tendency to either over-assess in some courses, or to adopt a narrow range of practices to assess student achievement. Consideration should be given to incorporating more formative assessment practices (e.g., self-assessment, dialogic feedback, peer assessment). There is a complex array of mini modules, accompanied by assessments, resulting in high workload for students and staff. Greater communication between departments regarding timing of assessment deadlines is suggested.
2	Expand and personalise assessment criteria	Some assessment rubrics are limited in scope, and thus do not offer students a sufficiently transparent template from which they can develop their work. More informative assessment rubrics and success criteria should be established and applied to specific course content. The <i>Céim</i> Report on Standards for Initial Teacher Education from the Teaching Council should be given immediate consideration.
3	Develop greater standardisation and depth in feedback and feedforward practices	Time-pressure on staff who are teaching large student cohorts results in a tendency to provide only brief summative feedback on student work. It is suggested that a review of time-allocation for marking and support (standardisation) is undertaken, and that this aspect of academic practice is built-in to a proposed WAM.
4	Evaluate and more clearly define role of external teaching inputs	Whilst EPISE's engagement with its school partners was rightly acknowledged, there is insufficient clarity regarding the modus operandi of education experts

		from outside of EPISE. Ensuring that EPISE's courses provide practical applications to professional practice in schools and other educational settings will enable courses to retain their distinctiveness. This task will be greatly enhanced by more strategic use of external professionals, whose inputs should be quantified and supported by extending their professional development opportunities.
5	Increase the available and appropriate T&L environments (e.g. library/IT lab) for EPISE courses	EPISE caters for a high % of students enrolled in MIC; this is not wholly reflected in the availability of dedicated study space. Given current demand, there is an urgent need for designated computer labs for courses offered by EPISE.
6	Enhance blended learning pedagogy based on an analysis of professional development needs of EPISE staff	A strategic plan for developing EPISE's collective expertise in blended learning should be developed. This could be based on an audit of staff needs and be supported by whole-MIC thinking as it will inform wider, institutional actions.

## Chapter 5: The Student Experience

### Commendations

1	High level of student support, recognised as 'wonderful' - an integral characteristic of the EPISE experience
2	Students value the expertise of staff across all courses, with quality lecturing resulting in professional learning
3	Students value the legacy resources they have access to by being involved in EPISE courses (e.g. AEN)
4	Students indicate that courses are directly relevant to their professional needs within work settings
5	Value of practical placement visits by EPISE staff is widely acknowledged
6	Evidence of some student autonomy and voice in selecting learning pathways and assessments

### Recommendations

1	A systematic and ongoing discussion on assignment feedback (U/G) standardisation and refinement should be established.	Students highlighted some notable discrepancies in the volume/quality of feedback they received, according to the course/module on which they were registered. EPISE should consider the development of an agreed feedback loop for students' assessed work, in line with an 'assessment for learning' approach. Increase opportunities for individual assignment feedback would be particularly welcomed at U/G level. Consider the potential feedback to occur as a dialogue between student and lecturer.
2	EPISE-related extra-curricular opportunities should be expanded.	Feedback suggests that the 'MIC' experience will be enhanced by supporting the emergence and growth of EPISE-based clubs, societies and volunteer groups promoting opportunities to debate important educational and related policy matters, both linked to SEND, Inclusive Education and Psychology, as well as more generic educational and social issues. Seen as a value-added dimension.
3	Access for all doctoral-level students to internal subject-based seminars etc. should be facilitated	Doctoral-level students indicated a lack of awareness or signposting of EPISE/MIC seminars, research conferences and presentations. Access should be given, <i>de facto</i> , to such events organised by EPISE and the wider MIC community. This aspect of extended learning should be viewed as a two-way exchange of

		knowledge, skills and understandings. It is a means of further enhancing the academic/professional learning community of EPISE at zero resource cost. It is also an integral part of a doctoral level experience in contemporary HE.
4	EPISE, with the support of institutional Teaching and Learning leaders, should attempt a scoping exercise to gain insight into differences in assessment feedback according to student pathways/module choices or electives	Evidence suggests imbalances, especially amongst U/G students, of disparities between Psychology and Education in respect of tutor feedback. Some feedback is highly summative and - as such - does not add value to the student's overall learning experience.
5	Concentrated effort should be made to ensure that increased individual learning space is made available for students on campus.	Student participants hinted at the unequal access to certain dedicated work-spaces which had negatively impacted on their academic performance. They noted a capacity issue in certain learning environments, notably the main MIC library and IT labs. Both are crucial to ensure effective student learning, and are especially important for those who experience less-advantaged circumstances off-campus.
6	Consideration should be given to the development of a formal alumni for EPISE students.	Past students of EPISE/MIC are significantly represented in the schools and other educational settings in the local and regional areas served by the College. These represent influential professional gatekeepers and influencers, who in turn can add value to the EPISE 'brand' as ambassadors, visiting lecturers and by providing placement opportunities. The establishment of a bespoke EPISE alumni association can be a source of professional support, ideas and feedback as the Department moves into its next phase of development.

## Chapter 6: Research Activity

### Commendations

1	Extensive involvement by high % of staff in research and scholarship activity
2	Large numbers of Doctoral candidates, who add diversity and depth to EPISE's knowledge portfolio
3	Research outputs are of relevance and usefulness to end-users and are often of high quality
4	Active involvement in research networks and related organisations enhances the profile of the Department
5	An extensive range of publications (including those from doctoral students) contributes further to reputational enhancement
6	Supervision and support for Doctoral students is of very high quality

### Recommendations

		Notes
1	<p><b>Workload Allocation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of dedicated research time within a WAM;</li> <li>• Recognition of dedicated time for doctoral level supervision within a WAM</li> <li>• Review current timetabling practices</li> </ul>	<p>EPISE staff currently undertake most research and scholarly publication without a time allowance (even notional). Given teaching pressures this is not sustainable. Link to WAM</p> <p>Staff supervise a majority of doctoral-level students in MIC but this carries no workload allowance</p> <p>It is suggested that a review of existing timetabling practice might achieve more efficient blocking of time to free up dedicated time for research activity.</p>
2	<p><b>Research Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the staffing and administrative supports needed to assist EPISE academics to capture external grants</li> <li>• Identify an agreed support mechanism from MIC's centralised research services</li> <li>• Refine and revise EPISE research plan</li> </ul>	<p>EPISE staff indicate an ongoing challenge in meeting the administrative demands involved in bid writing, tendering for external grants and managing and disseminating research projects. Link to staffing and admin support</p> <p>Insufficient support for academics at different phases of the bidding process has been indicated by EPISE staff. An agreed mechanism or formula should be negotiated through the MIC research office or alternatively through a strategic alignment with UL</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify leads for research methods across all programmes by planned staff development to enhance capacity</li> </ul>	<p>The content of the existing EPISE Research Plan does not fully reflect its potential as a strategic planning tool which projects the Departments intentions over the short/medium and longer terms</p> <p>There is an absence of clarity regarding the focal point of expertise relating to individual research methods. This lack of transparency is inefficient and has potential for duplication and inefficient use of methodological know-how.</p>
3	<p><b>Visibility and Recognition</b></p> <p>Urgent review and action is required to address the public-facing representation/dissemination of the research effort</p>	<p>There is only nominal evidence that EPISE is one of the principal research-lead teaching institutions for SEND and Inclusive Education and Psychology in Ireland; individual research profiles are only partially representative of the research outputs of the Department and the research outputs of EPISE are not profiled in the public-facing website of the College. Actions should be taken to ensure that all publications and research outcomes are available to view on staff web profiles within both the Department and College websites.</p>
4	<p><b>Conceptual Orientation and Relevance</b></p> <p>Undertake a systematic change process targeted at achieving a fundamental conceptual shift in the function of research within EPISE</p>	<p>Higher Education systems globally are now required to demonstrate that their teaching is research-led. It is no longer a personal choice whether or not to engage research. The concept of research-led teacher education is a 21st Century reality and is indicative of state-of-the-art practice in the field. A fundamental shift is needed to allow EPISE to more fully aligned to this way of operating. This has implications for the development of a viable WAM.</p>

## Annex 1: Peer Review Group Members

Member	Background
<p><b>Mr Enda Cunningham</b>            Senior Educational Psychologist &amp;            Professional and Academic Tutor,            Doctorate in Educational, Child &amp;            Adolescent Psychology</p> <p><b>School of Psychology, Queen's University Belfast</b></p>	<p>Enda Cunningham is a practicing Senior Educational Psychologist and a part-time Professional and Academic Tutor. He currently manages a team of Educational Psychologists and Psychology Assistants and carries out some casework while also working as a Tutor at QUB.</p> <p>Enda was instrumental in setting up and managing a secondary school support centre for post primary pupils experiencing complex learning difficulties. This was in the largest post primary school in Northern Ireland. The project was based on research about the effectiveness of using classroom assistants to support SEN. Many of the pupils have made significant progress.</p> <p>During his career he has supervised many trainee Educational Psychologists. He has arranged and organised research carried out by trainees into issues affecting practice e.g. investigating the educational outcomes of children attending Learning Support Centres compared with similar children who attend mainstream schools, investigating the pros and cons of over age retention and the impact of intervention services on referrals to the Educational Psychology Service.</p>
<p><b>Professor Philip Garner (Chairperson)</b>            Professor of Education, School of Education,  <b>Brunel University London,</b></p>	<p>Philip Garner is an established academic with significant expertise in the area of inclusive and special education and educational psychology. He taught in mainstream and special schools for 17 years. He has held Chairs at Nottingham Trent University, University of Northampton and Brunel University London. Philip has published widely on issues relating to SEN and SEBD. He was the National Director of the Teacher Training Agency's Initial Teacher Training Professional Resource Network (IPRN) on behaviour and classroom management (Behaviour4Learning). Philip is a British Academy Fellow, the editor of Support for Learning and is an Expert Assessor in Education and Psychology at the European Commission's Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). He has acted as consultant to government education departments in Malaysia, Ireland, Croatia, Australia, FYR Macedonia and Hong Kong.</p>

<p><b>Dr Lainey Keane</b> Educational Psychologist <b>HSE Waterford</b></p>	<p>Lainey Keane is a graduate of the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology programme in Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Education and Psychology from MIC and a Graduate Diploma in Early Intervention from Trinity College, Dublin. Having previously worked as a primary school teacher, Lainey is now practicing as an educational and child psychologist in Children's Disability Services. Lainey's doctoral research focussed on the utility of cognitive assessments in distinguishing between children who have English as an Additional Language and children who have Developmental Language Disorder.</p>
<p><b>Professor Gerry Mac Ruairc</b> Professor of Education and Head of the School of Education <b>National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG)</b></p>	<p>Gerry Mac Ruairc is the Established Professor of Education and Head of School in the School of Education, NUI Galway and Senior Research Fellow with the UNESCO Child and Family Centre and the Institute for Lifecourse and Society NUI Galway. Prior to taking up these roles at NUI Galway, Gerry was a teacher, School Inspector and Associate Professor in the School of Education in University College Dublin. He has published widely in the areas of leadership for inclusive schooling, language and social class, literacy as well as in the areas of leadership and school improvement for equity and social justice. He has worked extensively on a number of European projects with the EU Commission including expert advisor to the EU Commission European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL), leadership reform and development with the Polish Ministry of Education, and advisor to the leadership development units of Lower Saxony, NLQ (Hildesheim) and LISUM (Berlin). He has a strong record in the area of funded research and leadership development work including projects funded by SIFI, Atlantic Philanthropies, the World Bank and the EU.</p>
<p><b>Mr Barry Morrissey</b> Principal <b>Limerick School Project (Educate Together Primary School)</b></p>	<p>Barry Morrissey is principal of the Limerick School Project – an 'Educate Together', equality-based primary school in the heart of Limerick City. Prior to this post he was seconded full-time to the <i>Professional Development Service for Teachers</i> (PDST) as a Health and Wellbeing advisor, supporting primary and special schools in pedagogy, policy, curriculum and practice. His qualifications include a B.Ed. (MIC), M.Ed. (NUI) and PGDSEN (MIC). At present he is completing his doctorate (Ed.D in Inclusion and Special Education) at the Institute of Education in Dublin City University, where he is researching the curricular component to child protection in special schools. In 2019, he was one of seventy doctoral scholars from across the European Union selected to participate in the <i>European Educational</i></p>

	<p><i>Research Association doctoral summer school on publishing</i>, in the University of Brno, Czechia. A number of his articles on inclusion have been published in international peer-reviewed journals and he has also presented his research at conferences in Ireland and abroad.</p>
<p><b>Ms Ann O'Dwyer</b></p> <p>Director of Schools, Music and Youth Affairs</p> <p><b>Kerry Education and Training Board</b></p>	<p>Ann O'Dwyer has been Director of Schools with Kerry Education and Training Board since 2007. She was Acting CEO of Kerry Education Service/ Kerry VEC during the period 2011-13. Prior to that, she worked in social inclusion with Kerry County Council. She also worked as Youth Services Manager with the Kerry Diocesan Youth Service for over 10 years. She started her career as a teacher and completed a Masters in Educational Leadership with Trinity College Dublin in 2000. Ann is very committed to equality and inclusion and has prioritised the setting up of 9 special classes across the Kerry ETB Post Primary Schools. She is the chairperson of the Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) Patronage Task Group and has been instrumental in developing the first agreed core values and characteristic spirit of publically funded, publically managed, state primary and post primary schools in Ireland.</p>

Annex 2: Schedule of meetings with stakeholders

Date	Stakeholder
Monday 11 January	Introductory Briefing – Overview of MIC Governance and Structures VP Academic Affairs, VP Governance & Strategy, Director of Quality, Quality Assurance Manager
	SAR Coordinators
Wednesday 13 January	Undergraduate Programme Teaching Staff
	Doctoral Supervisors
	Dean- Faculty of Education
	Head of Department
Thursday 14 January	Postgraduate Teaching Staff
	Research Active Staff
	BEd & Psychology Students
	PhD Students
	SENCo Representative
	Postgraduate (MEd/Diploma) Students
Monday 18 January	Doctorate Education and Child Psychology (DEC Psy) Students
	School Principal – Post Primary
	CGLPD Coordinators, Student Advocate, Parent Advocate