

## **TDA Consultation: Revised Common Reference Framework**

### **UCET Response**

1. UCET welcomes the opportunity to make observations on the revised Common Reference Framework relating to the assessment of the bilateral 4-week school placement abroad. The fact that the progenitors of the handbook have now reached Draft 13 is a powerful testimony to their commitment to develop a programme of the highest quality, as is their willingness to seek the views of the wider UCET community.
2. The investment of time and effort already made is proving to be fully justified, for the current draft is excellent: clearly presented, well structured and well theorised. We particularly welcomed the structuring of the programme under the four areas of competence: professional values; pedagogy and practice; linguistic competence; and intercultural understanding; the three-phase model of professional learning and progression involving observation, implementation and evaluation, with their subsidiary objectives; the encapsulation of the spirals in a diagrammatic presentation which, it is a pleasure to record, genuinely clarifies rather than obfuscates; the commitment to personalising the programme to take account of the learning needs of individual students; the well structured and focussed mentoring arrangements; the careful delineation of roles; the incorporation of self-assessment in monitoring student progress and in the summative record of achievement on the programme; and the dovetailing of the programme with home and European professional standards for teaching, and with international expectations in regard to language learning.
3. Taken together, these features contribute to an impressive handbook and give promise of an extremely well planned and valuable professional experience for the students concerned. What is perhaps the most reassuring feature of all is that the handbook provides a framework, not a blueprint: those responsible for the programme will have ample scope for the exercise of their professional judgement and resourcefulness in ensuring that the actual programme matches the aspirations expressed in the handbook.
4. There are perhaps two areas to which further consideration might be given.
5. Firstly, all effective school placements require that students are fully prepared and are made fully aware of the context in which they will be learning to teach. The handbook might give a fuller account of the measures that will be put in place to ensure that the students concerned, perhaps through establishing internet communication with placement schools, are fully briefed about their particular placement school, and are familiar with the curricular and other arrangements there. A 4-week placement can pass quickly. It is surely desirable that, if they are to gain maximum benefit from the experience, students devote the very minimum of time to acclimatisation and orientation activities. It is imperative therefore that placement preparation is given the attention it merits.
6. Secondly, when describing the 'spiral' approach, the handbook insists that progression will be 'neither linear nor hierarchical'. It is to be hoped that such terminology is not intended to convey that in a professional sense students will be under-challenged. All effective programmes of professional preparation must involve professional progression in the sense that students engage in activities that are cumulatively demanding. Even in a 4-week placement it must be possible to structure the students' learning in such a way that by the end of the period they are capable of undertaking professional tasks of even greater sophistication and complexity than when the placement started. It would be encouraging to see an expectation of that kind made explicit in the handbook.

Gordon Kirk  
Academic Secretary  
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